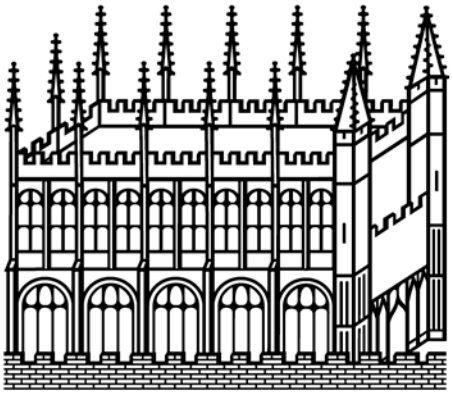


Bodleian Libraries

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

This book is part of the collection held by the Bodleian Libraries and scanned by Google, Inc. for the Google Books Library Project.

For more information see:

http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dbooks

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) licence.

CHARLES
BLANCHE

1st ED.
348574
c/crr
XN 56.1 [Ord]

Clarke Collection
Bristol.

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
ENGLISH FACULTY LIBRARY

This book was bought with the help of the

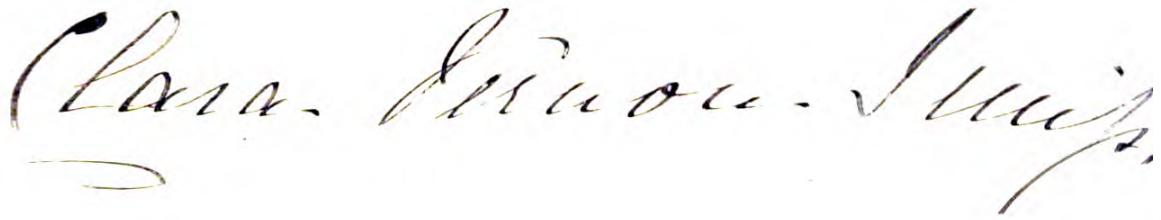
ALL SOULS (G. M. YOUNG) BENEFACTION

3 vols. First Edition

£5-5-0

Cat 61

ENGLISH
OXFORD
LIBRARY



THE ORDEAL

OF

RICHARD FEVEREL.

A History of Father and Son.

BY

GEORGE MEREDITH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.
1859.

[*The Right of Translation is reserved.*]

PRINTED BY

JOHN EDWARD TAYLOR, LITTLE QUEEN STREET,

LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS, LONDON.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I. PAGE

THE PILGRIM'S SCRIP 1

CHAPTER II.

A GLIMPSE BEHIND THE MASK 22

CHAPTER III.

MRS. MALEDICTION 37

CHAPTER IV.

THE INMATES OF RAYNHAM ABBEY 47

CHAPTER V.

SHOWING HOW THE FATES SELECTED THE FOURTEENTH BIRTHDAY TO TRY THE STRENGTH OF THE SYSTEM 73

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAGIAN CONFLICT 95

CHAPTER VII.

ARSON 104

CHAPTER VIII.

ADRIAN PLIES HIS HOOK 124

CHAPTER IX.

PAGE

JUVENILE STRATAGEMS 133

CHAPTER X.

DAPHNE'S BOWER 149

CHAPTER XI.

THE BITTER CUP 160

CHAPTER XII.

A FINE DISTINCTION 176

CHAPTER XIII.

RICHARD PASSES THROUGH HIS PRELIMINARY ORDEAL, AND IS THE OCCASION OF AN APHORISM . 187

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH THE LAST ACT OF THE BAKEWELL COMEDY IS CLOSED IN A LETTER 200

CHAPTER XV.

THE BLOSSOMING SEASON 213

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MAGNETIC AGE 236

CHAPTER XVII.

AN ATTRACTION 255

CHAPTER XVIII.

FERDINAND AND MIRANDA 268

CHAPTER XIX.

UNMASKING OF MASTER RIPTON THOMPSON . . . 286

THE ORDEAL

OF

RICHARD FEVEREL.

CHAPTER I.

THE PILGRIM'S SCRIP.

SOME years ago was printed, and published anonymously, dedicated to the author's enemies, a small book of original Aphorisms, under the heading, THE PILGRIM'S SCRIP. The book was noticeable for its quaint earnestness, and a perversity of view regarding Women, whom the writer seldom extolled, and appeared with all conscience to rank as creatures still doing service to the Serpent: bound to their instincts, and happily subordinate in public affairs, though but too powerful in their own walk. Modern Aphorists are accustomed to make their phrases a play of wit, flashing antithetical brilliancies,

rather than condensing profound truths. This one, if he did not always say things new, evidently spoke from reflection, feeling, and experience: the Triad which gives a healthy utterance to Wisdom: and omitting one of which, or with the three not in proper equipoise and junction, admirable sentences may survive as curiosities, and aptly quoted may clinch a debate, but are as Dead Sea Apples to a thirsting mind, and to men at large incomprehensible juggleries usurping dominion of their understandings without seal of authority. His thoughts were sad enough; occasionally dark; here and there comical in their oddness: nevertheless there ran through the volume a fire of Hope; and they did him injustice who said he lacked Charity.

Thus he wrote:

'I am happy when I know my neighbour's vice.'

And it was set down as the word of a cynic; when rightly weighed, it was a plea for tolerance.

He said, again:

'Life is a tedious process of learning we are Fools.'

And this also is open to mild interpretation,

if we do not take special umbrage at the epithet. For, as he observes, by way of comment: 'When we know ourselves Fools, we are already something better.'

He made no pretension to Novelty. 'Our new thoughts have thrilled dead bosoms,' he wrote; by which avowal may be seen that Youth had manifestly gone from him, since he had ceased to be jealous of the ancients, his forefathers. There was a half sigh floating through his pages for those days of intellectual coxcombry, when Ideas come to us affecting the embraces of Virgins, and swear to us, they are ours alone, and no one else have they ever visited: and we believe them.

On the subject of Women, certainly, the Aphorist seemed to lose his main virtue. He was not splenetic: nay, he proved in the offending volume he could be civil, courteous, chivalrous, towards them: yet, by reason of a twist in his mental perceptions, it was clear he looked on them as domesticated Wild Cats, ready, like the lady in the fable, to resume their natural habits when there was a little mouse to tear, and, after they had done so, not to be allowed to reappear

as the seraphs we thought them when they had a silly male mortal to lure: in fact, to be stamped Wild Cats, to the dissipation of Illusion.

He gravely declared, as one whose postulate was accepted universally:

'I expect that Woman will be the last thing civilized by Man.'

And from this tremendous impertinence, he stalked on like a Colossus to treat of other matters, worldly and spiritual, with the calm of a superior being who has avowed a most hopeful opinion: as indeed it was. He conceived that the Wild Cats would some day be actually tamed. At present it was best to know them what they were.

Singular to say, the one dangerous and objectionable feature in this little volume, preserved it from limbo. Men read, and tossed it aside, amused, or weary. They set the author down as a Sentimentalist jilted; commonly known to be a savagely vindictive wretch, who deserves to be listened to solely when he dresses a gay shaft, and that for the fun. They were angry at his ponderous intentness. They, let us suppose, were Sentimentalists not yet jilted.

By the ladies, however, who took the Dedication to themselves, he was welcomed otherwise. These extraordinary creatures, whose moves it is impossible to predict, and who will, now and then, love, or affect to love, their enemies better than their friends, cherished his book, and asked for him. He had fortunately not put his name to the title-page. In the place of a signature of authorship, stood a Griffin between Two Wheatsheaves. It became a question, then, whether this might be symbolic, or a family crest. Several ladies detected symbolism in the aspect of the Griffin, which had a snarling hostile air to them, and seemed to mean that the author was a double-animal, and could do without them, being well fortified by Life's Wherewithal to right and left. Other ladies, arguing from the latent vanity in man, would insist upon the Crest. Bodies of ladies made application to the publisher, who maintained the good repute of his craft in keeping his secret, and was not to be seduced, and increased the mystery.

'Thou that thinkest thyself adored,' says THE PILGRIM'S SCRIP, 'O Fool! it is not Thou she loveth, but the Difficulty.'

To manifest the truth in which, one adventurous fair one betook herself to the Herald's College, and there, after immense labour, ascertained that a Griffin between Two Wheatsheaves formed the crest of Sir Austin Absworthy Bearne Feverel, Baronet, of Raynham Abbey, in a certain Western County folding Thames: a man of wealth, and honour, and a somewhat lamentable history.

The discovery of a Secret implies no obligation to retain it; and the lady in question treated her capture as a prisoner of war, whom, like Tamerlane, she exhibited in a cage to her friends: that is, it was shared with them, and was presumed to belong to her: but they, considering a Secret to be of so rich an essence that it can only be enjoyed diluted, had also their confidences, and the Secret soon broke through its solemn bars, and evaporated in soft whispers, by which in the end Sir Austin Feverel, much to his amazement, became famous as The Griffin, and learnt what it was to give Woman a clue.

The Baronet became famous, and tasted the fruits of celebrity. His breakfast-table grew odoriferous with dainty notes from fair correspon-

dents, deploring their non-intimacy, and begging the favour of a Copy of his Beautiful Book, while remonstrating humbly against the severity of his judgment pronounced on a sex, which, whatever its shortcomings, could, and did, reverence a Sage. Showers of the enthusiastic rose-pink descended on Raynham. One lady addressed the Aphorist as England's Christian La Rochefoucauld. One went so far as to propose herself to him as An Uncorrupted Eve: and there is no knowing what a disinherison of Posterity may have sprung from his persistent evasion of their pointed flatteries. For he was a soured Adam whom not even an uncorrupted Eve might tempt.

"We live and learn," said the Baronet to young Adrian Harley, his nephew and intimate; "but it is odd that, when we whip her, Madam should love us the more."

"You have propounded it frequently, Sir," replied that clever youth, "in the GREAT SHADDOCK DOGMA." (For so, on account of its constant and ungenerous citation of the primal slip in Paradise, Adrian chose to entitle THE PILGRIM'S SCRIP). "You say:

"'Woman when she wrestles for supremacy

with every one she encounters, is but seeking her Master.'

"She's a Tyrant till she's reduced to bondage, and a rebel till she's well beaten. She worships strength, whether of the physique or of the intellect, and likes to feel it. Poet, Philosopher, or Athlete, come not amiss to her; and could she get the three in one—"

"Ay, then," Sir Austin took him up, "farewell Duty! Women are born Pagans, ever on the look-out for material Gods!"

"Whom, if they can't discover, they create!" added Adrian. "Witness many a gentle joy of an Ass. To be distinguished by Woman is to wear Bully Bottom's Garland."

"Preserve me from that!" exclaimed the Baronet, shuddering devoutly.

His own written enunciations were adverse to his chances of escape, and Adrian capitulated them:

"'Man is the speculative animal: Woman the practical.'

"Wherefore:

"'Tempt her not to swear to her soul she will have thee—thou art lost!'"

But he had written a book; he had made

himself an object: Miss Blewins was in the field; the lean, the long-nosed, the accomplished, the literary: Miss Joy Blewins, sister to the aforesaid, was in the field; the half-man, who cut her hair short, and parted it on the left side: Lady Blandish was in the field; the fairest sweetest sensible widow ever seen, a dead shot with her eyes, when she used them: The Hon. Mrs. Breakyeline was in the field; who had in her time plunged through countless ethical hedges and ditches, without apparent discomfiture to her muslin. A dozen emulous young persons in, or just out of, pinafores, swift-runners, had taken the field. Half the number of habituated old ones were there, formidable with experience and wigs. Poetesses, authoresses, heiresses, were there. In the field, too, was Mrs. M'Murphy, an Irish Giantess, who made a point of asking directly of men whatever she wanted; terrible to deal with! Mrs. Cashentire, a banker's wife, who behaved as if she had been his relict: Lady Attenbury, who followed the fashion: Lastly, Camilla Duvergey, the fastest young woman of the day. All these female harriers were in the field prepared to give chase to the Griffin.

Miss Blewins said, he must be converted to a nobler conception of the Dignity of Woman, and her Mission.

Mrs. M'Murphy averred, "she should be dis-'pinted if she didn't marr' him," and, hearing that he was already married, shrieked "Ow;" for which the Hon. Mrs. Breakyeline sneered at her, and scandalously declared, he was still to be had: but Lady Blandish, and Lady Attenbury, were neighbours of his, and knew that the game was scarce tractable.

In pursuance of their resolve, the hardiest of these terrible persecutors announced their intention of coming down to Raynham to sit at Gamaliel's feet and drink of wisdom from its course.

"What am I to do?" cried the unhappy Griffin, when the news reached him.

"Hire a Boy and a Mantle, Sir. I see nothing else for it," said Adrian.

The Baronet stroked his brow, as if he already felt Bully Bottom's Garland.

"But when they have read my opinion of them," he exclaimed fretfully, "what do they want with me?"

"That's it," Adrian remarked. "They want to change it. Sheba once made a far journey!"

Solomon shook his head.

The ladies were true to their threat. Miss Blewins, the long-nosed, the literary, was the first to arrive. Her followed the short-haired Joy, the half-man. Then came Mrs. Cashentire, succeeded by the bony big Celt, and the swift Camilla, and nameless worshipers, who all introduced themselves, and claimed admittance, on the strength of their admiration of THE PILGRIM'S SCRIP.

Sir Austin did his best to receive them graciously, and his sister, Mrs. Doria Forey, the female Head of his house, kept her eyes in wakeful watch on them. They came, and did not go. They formed a Court about him; listening to him eagerly, and sighing at his inveterate conclusions: hoping higher things of Woman, and meekly combating till they fell. A Tournament was held nightly.

Miss Blewins, the long-nosed, the literary, elected herself spokeswoman, and held the post in spite of vehement obstructions from Mrs. M'Murphy.

"Oh, Sir Austin," she ejaculated, "it is surely

our Education which causes us to shine at such a disadvantage! You make dolls of us! puppets! Are we not something—something more?"

"Aren't we yer mothers?" shouts the M'Murphy.

"Are we not delegated to a higher office in conjunction with Man?" continued the Maiden, heedless of the vulgar interruption. "Is it only for our beauty you take us?" And she lifted her length of nose pathetically.

"You compel us," stammered Miss Joy, who knew the sequence.

"You compel us," Miss Blewins caught her by the skirt, "you compel us to lean on our acquirements utterly, and you wonder that Woman, deprived of inner life, is found wanting in moral self-support!"

This was not going to the root of the matter. The Baronet would smile in pity, and put a case to her.

"A Woman, Madam, the sole representative of her sex! Suppose her upon an Island peopled by nothing but men.—"

"Horrut!" the M'Murphy howls, and the exclamation was repeated in English by the whole Court.

"I ask you," he calmly resumed, "to accord me your candid opinion how that woman would be treated, even though the men were hinds—all but savages?"

The Court mutely consulted, and Miss Blewins was approved in observing, that she really did honestly think that the single representative of her sex would—shocking as her situation must be deemed—be treated with due respect, and esteem, if not with reverence, nay, worship!

Then the ladies, warming to the notion, cried out with one voice, that it would be delightful! that she would be a Queen, a Priestess among them. Numbers pined for such a fate. The swift Camilla vowed she never should be happy till she reigned in that blissful Island.

"Good!" said Sir Austin. "And now reverse the case. Conceive an Island peopled by Women, and but one Man in their Society: tossed there, say, by shipwreck.—Hem!" and the Aphorist looked arch. "What course of treatment might that one Man anticipate at their hands?"

Silence, and abashed blushes, and smothered silver laughter, received this second Supposition.

How indeed would he be treated? To which of the ladies would he belong? A shipwrecked mariner is not easily made a Priest of; and if they crowned him King, the prime consideration still remained at issue—to whom would he belong? He must belong to some one of them! The Court was split. A few ladies faintly maintained that he would be prudently impounded till such time as they could make suitable use of him, and despatch him in safety, sound of limb, from the Isle. Lady Blandish, too, suggested the present instance of an Aphorist, and a hostile one, alone in their company, and undamaged, she hoped: and Miss Blewins desperately attempted to claim the triumph of the illustration for Woman; inasmuch as it was admitted, that Woman would leaven the male mass by her presence, whereas a feminine community, hitherto smiling and uncorrupt, was, by the inauspicious sea-gift of one of the opposite sex, depraved. It was barely necessary that Sir Austin should expose her as a sophist, to stride victorious through the field. A Majority of the ladies, headed by Mrs. M'Murphy, who was very outspoken about the claims she should put forth to the Man, let

it be seen that in their gentle bosoms they believed that unfortunate male would fare sadly, if he did not ultimately suffer the fate of a celebrated mythic Singer. Torn in pieces! was the all but unanimous Verdict on the Wretch. There was no Chivalry in Woman. So these ladies confessed. Her spirit of appropriation was too strong!

That some great things are done without design, and that certain wonderful victories may be found more costly than a defeat, it were loss of time to insist upon. The ladies who formed the Court at Raynham had doubtless no conspiracy to succumb to the insult of the SHADDOCK DOGMA, thereby to ensnare and make foolish its pronouncer; and the Baronet assuredly entertained no idea than an uninterrupted career of logical conquest endangered his stability. He thought, naturally, that the more he overthrew her in argument, the safer his position. Nevertheless, he was melting to Woman. Woman appreciated his Aphorisms, and Man did not. That was possibly a reason. When the inferior creature appreciates us, we cease to despise her. When the inferior crea-

ture acknowledges her fault, she is already rising in the scale. She exhibits Intelligence; she gives proof of Humility; two excellent bases for the building of a better hope for her. The change was insensible in Sir Austin; a work of months and years. He was surrounded by an admiring circle of sweet women, and against the charm of their society what Shaddock Dogmatist, however soured and reluctant, can hold out lastingly? It is an opposite extreme of the peril of entire abstraction from them, which has ruined renowned Saints, who had trusted that way to solve man's problem. Sir Austin's state was nearly as precarious as Saint Anthony's. The vision of a single young woman is said to have overcome the inflammable Monk: twenty of these were now besetting our fire-proof Baronet. The fact of a Shaddock Dogmatist resisting them to any extent, may account for his being so pertinaciously pursued. Be it said, for the honour of the sex, Women esteem not easy game. Adonis is wished for his beauty, and Lovelace for his naughty character: but Beauty and Wickedness, though desirable, are small deer. It is the rank misogynist, who flees

them, whom they hunt down as far as he will go. Him they regard as the noble stag of the forest, and to catch him they disencumber themselves of many garments retained in a common chase.

From THE PILGRIM'S SCRIP, it was clear that Sir Austin knew them mighty hunters: as thus:

'The Amazon cut off a breast to battle: How will not Woman disfigure and unsex herself to gain her end?'

And further, mournfully:

'To withstand them, must we first annihilate our Mothers within us: die half!'

The poor gentleman, seriously believing Woman to be a Mistake, had long been trying to do so. Had he succeeded, he would have died his best half, for his mother was strong in him. The very acridity of the Aphorisms, the GREAT SHADDOCK DOGMA itself, sprang from wounded softness, not from hardness. It may be that the unerring scent of the hounds in pursuit told them this. One who really despised them had left them in peace.

Beyond dispute, Sir Austin must have fallen a prey to them, and they were to have added

a Griffin to their Zoological Garden of tributaries: the greater his æsthetic, the more positive their earthy, triumphs: and he might say, 'If I fall, I fall perforce of spiritual superiority, for they can but tempt my baser nature, and were they to rise to me, there would be no jeopardy.' He must have been ultimately betrayed by his softness, but, as often happens, he was fully armed at his weakest point; namely, the heart. He had a son, and his heart was filled by him. He had a son, and he was incubating a System.

To the Son, and to the System, the stranger ladies of the Court were introduced. In the former, they beheld a handsome, graceful, boy, not unlike other boys, but looking the pick of them. The latter was a puzzle.

Sir Austin explained it in his Aphoristic fashion.

"Sin is an alien element in our blood. 'Tis the Apple-Disease with which Nature has striven since Adam. To treat Youth as naturally sinful, is, therefore, false, and bad; as it is bad, and false, to esteem it radically pure. We must consider that we have forfeited Paradise, but were yet grown there.

"Belonging, then, by birth to Paradise, our tendency should even be towards it: allowing no lower standard than its Perfection.

"The Triumph of man's intellect, the proof of his power, is to make the Serpent who inhabits us fight against himself, till he is destroyed.

"My son possesses Pride, say. Human Pride is a well-adjusted mixture of Good and Evil. Well; it tempts him to conceive that he is more than his fellows. Let it, as it can, lift him to *be* more than his fellows, and at once he will cease to conceive it: the fight will have been fought: the Devil will be dead.

"For this is our divine consolation: that Evil may be separated from Good: but Good cannot be separated from Evil: the Devil may, the Angel will not, be driven out from us. A truly good man is possible upon Earth: a thoroughly bad man is not possible. This you admit?"

The poor ladies murmured, that they admitted it. Man! Man! Man! they began to feel in their souls a dreadful antagonism to Man.

"Well!" and the Baronet sententiously pursued.

He did right to preach to women: men would not have listened to him. As it was, Miss Joy Blewins, and Mrs. M'Murphy, were restive.

The gist of the System set forth: That a Golden Age, or something near it, might yet be established on our sphere, when fathers accepted their solemn responsibility, and studied human nature with a Scientific eye, knowing what a high Science it is, to live: and that, by hedging round the Youth from corruptness, and at the same time promoting his animal health, by helping him to grow, as he would, like a Tree of Eden; by advancing him to a certain moral fortitude ere the Apple-Disease was spontaneously developed, there would be seen something approaching to a perfect Man, as the Baronet trusted to make this one Son of his, after a receipt of his own.

What he exactly meant by the Apple-Disease, he did not explain: nor did the ladies ask for an explanation. Intuitively they felt hot when it was mentioned.

Miss Blewins said the idea was very original.

"A gigantic task!" said Mrs. Cashentire.

"It's more than ye'll do though. Take my word for it," said the M'Murphy, and the Hon. Mrs. Breakyeline vowed, "She liked a man to be a man." She was evidently not the Uncorrupted Eve.

But whatever folly there was in the System, it saved its author for awhile, at least, and cleansed his Court of such ladies as had come there for a lower motive than the Adoration of Wisdom. The swift Camilla wished she could have waited for the youth. She could not, she declared, and retired, followed in her secession by the M'Murphy, who plainly told Sir Austin, that, now young men had got the taste for Apples, they would bite at them. Others departed to combat the GREAT SHADDOCK DOGMA in books, and justify it by their acts. The System was left with a few occasionally-visiting old Maids, and eccentric wives, and the neighbouring fair Widow Blandish, to work itself out, and then was peace again at Raynham Abbey.

CHAPTER II.

A GLIMPSE BEHIND THE MASK.

FAME, the chief retainer of distinguished families, has first sounded the origin of the Feverels where their line of Ancestry blossoms with a Baronet; and Rumour, the profane vagabond, who will not take service in any respectable household, whispers that he was a Villain. At all events, for this proud race, behind his dazzling appearance sits Darkness and democratic Adam, and they cling to him as an ark of pure aristocracy. Sir Pylcher Feverel, they will tell you, assuming a Norman air to deliver it, spelt his name (or meant to spell it) Fiervarelle; a name hearing which you seem to hear a trumpet blown remote, from the Conqueror's ranks, in the morning, in the mists, over Pevensey: youthful Feverels of the latest generation have been known to challenge the Saxon towards the same hour,

by announcing themselves as formidably. This luminous Knight (still to follow the traditions of the family, for the sake of avoiding a challenge), having quarters on the Welsh frontier, mixed his blood with the royal blood ap Gruffudh: from whose fair Princess the Welsh estates were inherited, and who must at the same time have endowed them with that Cymric tinge to their habits and mental cast observable in the fortunes of the race. At what period they quitted Cheshire and settled upon Thames is matter of family controversy, and History, unable to decide, has declined to speak on the point. They were great on their pedigree, and held that an old Baronetcy is worth any new Dukedom, and that good blood is Heaven's first-gift. Occasionally in its downward course the blood branched into many channels: and again it shrunk into one. Sir Caradoc Feverel, the predecessor of Sir Austin, was an only son; twice, it was said, on the verge of death before he had a successor, and then they came in numbers. There was a Mrs. Malediction in the House (bequeathed by the great Sir Pylcher). Often had she all but cut them off from their old friend, Time, and they re-

vived again. Whether it was the Apple-Disease, or any other, strong constitutions seemed struggling in them with some peculiar malady. Of course, members of the family were foremost in spilling loyal blood on Marston Moor, that great field of phlebotomy to so many Cavaliers. With the increase of their wealth, owing to the discovery of mineral treasures on their ap Gruffudh grounds, they sank into quiescent Tories, and spent the better portion of their time in essays at Agriculture and Park-planting at home, while abroad they did battle on behalf of Protection.

The house they lived in, called an Abbey from some tradition of its site, was a heterogeneous architectural jumble, which nevertheless presented a generous front to a broad westward valley of green pastures, fruitful tillage, and a pure-flowing wave; and seen from the river, on its platform of greensward, backed by lofty pines, and flanked with beechwoods midway down a hillocky roll of grass, that ended in flat rich meadows extending to the river-side, deserved some better title than that of Raynham Ramshackle, as the Papworths, old political antagonists of the Feverels, delighted to term it. A child, with two

perpendicular lines and one horizontal, could have designed the mansion of Sir Miles Papworth, shining down the valley, towards Lobourne; and a child, too, might have designed Sir Miles, and accurately sketched him when it drew a round impending upon a round of exaggerated girth, from which two stumpy down-strokes stuck forth to prop the fabric. Sir Miles was a Saxon born and bred, and (though not consequently) a Whig. He was a mature specimen of modern England's vaunted race: or let us say, the vaunted race of modern England's novelists. He was the heroic grain they cut types from. In his youth he had amassed good muscle, and sank down on it, in his decline, to drink Port. Prosperous, pig-headed, and just in proportion: bald and rubicund: corpulent, hearty, and bandy: a domestic despot, a staunch subject, a fair-dealing father, a foe to innovation and ideas, a devoted worshiper of himself against the world, this old hero was the contrast of the Head of the Fiervarelles, and fought the Battle of Hastings with him more than once, and beat him on one field. Sir Austin was unhappy in his Marriage, and Sir Miles, entrenched in a well-drilled, many-

childed, timid little shadow of a wife, vastly enjoyed his social advantage over the lord of Raynham. Not to have mastered a woman, he thought the meanest confession a man could make, and, apart from political feud, he had no pity for his wretched rival Baronet, though, between his port, he vented much damnable condolence. THE PILGRIM'S SCRIP he held in contempt, being an admirer of Woman, whom, he said, he never had any difficulty in understanding. His way of reading them was decidedly straightforward. On the field of politics, he had to lay down his arms to Sir Austin. Feverel was the richer man, and the County was agricultural and Tory. Hence their dissension. The battle was well-fought, and, though beaten, the Saxon did not give in: but he was no match for the Conqueror's Cook. The strategy of Raynham's Dining-hall overpowered him. Of that hall, at least, the Papworths could say nothing derogatory without betraying miserable envy. Jolly farmers had sighed in it; influential tradesmen with a taste for land, had there been kindled into high enthusiasm for the Old Blood. The legs of devoted plumpers had grown weak

under Raynham's famous mahogany, and their heads strong. Sir Austin's Cook thrice returned him to Parliament.

The Dining-hall had been closed seven years when THE PILGRIM'S SCRIP appeared: closed seldom to hear revel again. There at one end drooped two mouldy standards, wrung from the foeman by a Feverel on the battle-field: between them a Golden Torque set in a frame, said to have belonged once to a warrior of the ap Gruffudh. A sense of cobwebs and the reign of the spider hung about its heavy oak-carvings. The music of glasses, the laughter of freemen, was dumb there. The place seemed to have forgotten how once within the jovial four walls Britons had been touched to the quick by great wines, shrewd dishes! how whiskers had been widened by the grin!

In those days Sir Austin Feverel was thought a royal man, and was in a fair way to be beloved. He was frank and warm with his friends; generous to the poor, and above all, delicate with them, who have the keenest instinct for a gentleman, and venerated him accordingly. When his disaster befell him, and

his home was suddenly desolate, it was as though his tree of life had shrunk under a blight. He shut himself up as he did his Dining-hall; relinquished Parliament, and bade a mute adieu to Ambition. People were astonished at the utter change wrought in so apparently proud and self-reliant a man: but old folks, that knew the family, said, they expected it some day or other. It was in the blood, they said: Sir Caradoc, his father, was a strange hand, and so was his father, Sir Algernon, before him: they were all sure to turn out a little wrong some day or other. And the old folks tapped their foreheads meaningly.

Sir Austin also came to their conclusion, that it was in his blood; a superstition he had aforetime smiled at. He had regarded his father, Sir Caradoc, as scarce better than a madman when he spoke of a special Ordeal for their race; and when, in his last hour (the sails of the knightly bark then loosening to the night wind on the fast-ebbing tide), the old Baronet caught his elder son's hand, and desired him to be forewarned, Austin had, while bowing respectfully, wondered that Reason was not vouchsafed to his parent at that supreme instant. From the morn-

ing hills of existence he beheld a clear horizon. He was no sooner struck hard than Sir Caradoc's words smote him like a revelation. He believed that a curse was in his blood; a poison of Retribution, which no life of purity could expel; and grew, perhaps, more morbidly credulous on the point than his predecessor: speaking of the Ordeal of the Feverels, with sonorous solemnity, as a thing incontrovertibly foredecreed to them. Vainly his friends argued, that men commonly calculated on wounds and bruises, and were not disappointed. Sir Austin, strong in the peculiar sharpness of the sting darted into him, held that there was an entire distinction in their lot: that other men were tried by puny ailments; were not searched and shaken by one tremendous shock, as of a stroke of Heaven's lightning. He indicated that the Fates and Furies were quite as partial as Fortune. Stricken Pride, and a feverish blood, made him seek consolation in this way.

The outline of the Baronet's story was by no means new. He had a wife, and he had a friend. His marriage was for love; his wife was a beauty; his friend was a poet. Sir Austin Feverel did

nothing by halves. His wife had his whole heart, and his friend all his confidence. When he selected Denzil Somers from among his College chums, it was not on account of any similarity of disposition between them, but from his intense worship of Genius, which made him overlook the absence of principle in his associate, for the sake of such brilliant promise. Denzil had a small patrimony to lead off with, but that he dissipated before he left College, and thenceforth he was dependent upon his admirer, with whom he lived, filling a nominal post of bailiff to the estates, and launching forth Verse of some satiric and sentimental quality; for being inclined to vice, and occasionally, in a quiet way, practising it, he was, of course, a sentimentalist and a satirist, entitled to lash the Age, and complain of human nature. His earlier Poems, published under the pseudonym of Diaper Sandoe, were so pure and bloodless in their love-passages, and at the same time so biting in their moral tone, that his reputation was great among the virtuous, who form the larger portion of the English book-buying public. Election-seasons called him to ballad-poetry on behalf of the Tory

party, and lines of his on "Sir Miles Paunch," adapted to the dialect of the County (wherein two Countrymen meet to discuss the nation's affairs, and contend, in iambics, one, that all goes wrong for want of a Head in Parliament—a clear allusion to the Feverel faction—the other, that the country labours lacking Paunch there —grotesquely describing the Papworth minority —and the arguments of the two end in a fight, when the Head-man finishes by doubling-up the Paunch-man), appealed triumphantly to popular British humour, and shared in routing the Saxon at the hustings. Diaper possessed undoubted fluency, but did little, though Sir Austin was ever expecting much of him.

A pale, languishing, inexperienced, woman, whose husband, in mental, and in moral, stature is more than the ordinary height above her, and who, now that her first romantic admiration of his lofty bearing has worn off, and her little fretful refinements of taste and sentiment are not instinctively responded to, is thrown into no wholesome household collision with a fluent man, fluent in prose and rhyme. Lady Feverel, when she first entered on her duties at Raynham,

was jealous of her husband's friend, and moved the very foundation-stones of the house to get his dismissal; ineffectually: Sir Austin reasoned with her,—an insult in such cases, as a woman knows, and that she does not pardon. Diaper remained, and led his old chrysalis life from which he was some day to emerge a resplendent butterfly. Good cellars, choice company, a house in town, pocket-money at command, one may believe (Sir Austin did) that it was not he who sought the ruin, and courted temptation. By degrees the lady tolerated him. In time he touched his guitar in her chamber, and they played Rizzio and Mary together.

> "For I am not the first who found
> The name of Mary fatal!"

says a subsequent sentimental alliterative love-poem of Diaper's.

Such was the outline of the story. But the Baronet could fill it up. He had opened his soul to these two. He had been noble Love to the one, and to the other perfect Friendship. He had bid them be brother and sister, whom he loved, and live a Golden Age with him at Rayn-

ham. In fact, he had been prodigal of the excellencies of his nature, which it is not good to be, and, like Timon, he became bankrupt, and fell upon bitterness.

"Didn't he expect his luck?" cried Sir Miles.

The old Saxon understood women, he did. And he affirmed that the best way to continue their warm admirer was to keep the bit well in their mouths, and lay on the whip now and then. They laugh who win. His wife was a faithful woman.

The faithless lady was of no particular family —an orphan daughter of an Admiral who educated her on his half-pay, and her conduct struck but at the man whose name she bore.

After five years of Marriage, and twelve of Friendship, Sir Austin was left to his loneliness with nothing to ease his heart of love upon save a little baby-boy in a cradle. He forgave the man: he put him aside as poor for his wrath. The woman he could not forgive. She had sinned everyway. Simple ingratitude to a benefactor was a pardonable transgression, for he was not one to recount, and crush the culprit under the heap of, his good deeds. But her he had raised

to be his equal, and he judged her as his equal. She had blackened the world's fair aspect for him.

In the presence of that world, so different to him now, he preserved his wonted demeanour, and made his features a flexible mask. Mrs. Doria Forey, his widowed sister, said: "Austin might have retired from his Parliamentary career for a time, and given up gaieties, and that kind of thing: her opinion, founded on observation of him in public and private, was, that the light thing that had taken flight was but a feather on her brother's Feverel-heart,—and his ordinary course would be resumed." There are times when common men cannot bear the weight of just so much. Hippias Feverel thought him immensely improved by his misfortune, if the loss of such a person could be so designated; and seeing that Hippias received in consequence free quarters at Raynham, and possession of the wing of the Abbey she had inhabited, it is profitable to know his thoughts. If the Baronet had given two or three blazing dinners in the great Hall, he would have deceived people generally, as he did his relations and intimates. He was too sick for that: fit only for passive acting.

A stern cold man, it was said: touched in his Pride—nowhere but there.

The nursemaid waking in the night, beheld a solitary figure darkening a lamp above her little sleeping charge, and became so used to the sight as never to wake with a start. One night she was strangely aroused by a sound of sobbing. The Baronet stood beside the cot in his long black cloak and travelling-cap. His fingers shaded a lamp, and reddened against the fitful darkness that ever and anon went leaping up the wall. She could hardly believe her senses to see the austere gentleman, dead silent, dropping tear upon tear before her eyes. She lay stone-still in a trance of terror and mournfulness, mechanically counting the tears as they fell, one by one. The hidden face, the fall and flash of those heavy drops in the light of the lamp he held, the upright, awful figure, agitated at regular intervals, like a piece of clockwork, by the low murderous catch of his breath: it was so painfully piteous to her poor human nature that her heart began wildly palpitating. Involuntarily the poor girl cried out to him, "Oh, Sir!" and fell a-weeping. Sir

Austin turned the lamp on her pillow, and harshly bade her go to sleep, striding from the room forthwith.

To express sympathy for a Feverel during his Ordeal, was a grave misdemeanour: to surprise the Head of the family unmanned was a mortal offence. Dian was not more chastely jealous of her bath, than Sir Austin of the moment when his knightly chainmail was removed, and his heart stood bare.

Poor Polly-Actæon was summoned to the Baronet's study next morning, and was shortly afterwards deported from the Abbey by his man, like a guilty thing whose touch to the rest of the inmates was contagion: her cheeks in a deluge, and a seal on her mouth.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. MALEDICTION.

On one occasion in the year, the old Hall tried to know itself again. The logs blazed, and the table was laid to celebrate young Richard's birthday. October summoned every connection of the Feverels to this festivity. The boy's uncles, Algernon, the guardsman, Cuthbert, the sailor, Vivian, the diplomatist and beau, made a point of coming, for not to be present on that great day of the golden month, was to encounter a cold eye and a colder forefinger when they at other times required the Baronet's consideration and an order on his Bankers. Hippias was always on the spot, prepared to drink anybody's health. The ladies of the family were likewise assembled. Notwithstanding their goodwill in seconding the gentlemen, it was a frigid feast. Sir Austin sat in the presence of a phantom.

He brightened after dinner, as the young heir was trotted in to hear himself toasted. Possibly that was his one happy moment of the year. Mr. Justice Harley, the husband of a Feverel, proposed the toast; supported by Colonel Wentworth, another husband of a Feverel. The ladies smiled, nodded, and kissed the boy. The Baronet drank him solemnly exuberant. Then a glass of wine is poured out for Master Richard, and his father's one happy moment is over.

"You have given him port, Algernon," he says. "I think it not good for him."

"Better accustom him to the best at once," pleads Algernon.

"A little mulled claret, very weak," the Baronet suggests.

"Deprave his young taste?" cries Vivian.

"Let it be half water," the Baronet falters.

"Worst thing for his health!" growls Hippias, deep in his second bottle.

Sir Austin still hesitating, Mr. Justice Harley cites a Greek proverb pointing out the deadliness of water to the soul: Colonel Wentworth comes down on him with a camp-couplet sparkling with the virtues of the pure vintage: minor cousins

and remote Feverels raise a hum of supplication for the little gaping fellow. Simultaneously Vivian and Cuthbert announce, that they expect to be thanked in form, and that it 's only once a year.

"Only once a year!" echo the ladies. "Only one glass!" And those born Pagans carry the day. The wine is applied to little Ricky's mouth, who sucks and sucks, winking fearful satisfaction under his father's alarmed eyes, and coughing violently halfway down the glass, which fortunate interposition rescues him from the remaining portion; every Feverel declaring that he does it like a man: whereupon the young heir is kissed half out of his scarlet frock by the women, and, after giving an honest fist to the men all round, and an embrace to his father, marches off to bed, and stomach-ache.

It may be conceived, that while Sir Austin could hesitate and permit himself to be overborne in his judgment of what was good for his son, his System was not yet ripe. In fact, it grew as the boy grew. On Richard's seventh birthday, it was excited to some definite shape, and was not so pliable. The members of the family

were at breakfast with little Richard, and Sir Austin had joked his brother-in-law Wentworth on his habit of excessive early rising, as his man had seen the Colonel coming across the Park, apparently from the village, at six in the morning: to which the Colonel carelessly replied, that he could not sleep, and the matter was passing off, when Ricky cries out: "Oh, Papa! and I couldn't sleep, too! Oh, you know, I was dreaming all night long! And first I dreamed I was a ship sailing on the sea, like Nurse sings. And then I dreamed I was a bird, and flew, and felt so funny—just here," traversing his birthday diaphragm with a finger. "And then I dreamed—what was it? Oh! up I started in bed, and there was a beautiful lady! beautifuller than my Nurse, or you, or you, or you," pointing to his Aunts, "and she kissed me."

Sir Austin had listened with a pleased attention to his boy's prattle. The mention of the Lady changed his face.

"Kissed you, my child?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes, Papa. On the forehead—here."

The Baronet turned sharply to his sister. "Have they been talking to him of ghosts?"

"Certainly not," replied Mrs. Doria, "They dared not. I think you had better let it drop, before the children."

Sir Austin held back his son, as the other young ones flew forth to their games, and took him to a window.

"Kissed you, my son? where?"

"Here, Papa." The boy touched the centre of his forehead.

"And what then? what did she do then?"

"I don't remember any more, Papa. I was so sleepy."

"You are sure she did not speak to you, my son?"

"Oh, yes, Papa! quite sure of that."

Little Richard had spoken what he knew, but observing an inquiring hesitation linger in his father's eyes, and loath to let it go unsatisfied, he drew upon his imagination instantly, and began to pour forth what he now remembered the Lady next did, and next did, with astounding readiness. "And then she stood me up in bed, and said, I could kiss you all to rags, you darling pet—how you 're growing! And she said, If I had you with me, wouldn't you have nice things.

And told me she would give me a pony, a better one than you 're going to give me, Papa—all white, with a spot between his eyes, and a silver bit, and a gold bridle. And he 's called Prince Jack ! "

Sir Austin listened credulously to it all, and was only persuaded to let the child follow his playmates, by Mrs. Doria's impetuous assurance that he was ruining his son.

" Can you not perceive, Austin," she said, " you are teaching him to invent ? "

" Helen ! " returned the Baronet. " What he has seen, has been seen in this house before, and is not a good omen. I do not perhaps altogether believe in supernatural visitations. Call it an optical delusion. It is in the habit of coming to us when something is about to happen."

Master Richard threw gallons of cold water on the pleasures of the day by his morning's eloquence, and had his enjoyments thwarted at every turn. His uncle Cuthbert had proposed to take him for a sail on the river. A peremptory message arrived just as they were getting ready, that the boy was on no account to go on the water. His tears were dried by the promise

of a ride on horseback with his uncle Vivian, and the horse was brought round, Vivian in the saddle, and the boy just being lifted up to him, when Sir Austin appeared, and forbade it, to the grief and rage of the poor little fellow. Then he was to have fired off with his own hand some beautiful pieces of small brass cannon, his uncle Algernon's birthday present, and again his father was on the spot, and would only allow him to take hold of Algernon's coat-skirt while the match was applied. On the cricketing field, whither he went later in the day, to witness the match played by the lads of Lobourne, with his uncle Algernon, against the lads of Bursley, and a terrible-swift bowler, his temper was so put to it that he exhibited the gravest sign of a precocious intelligence: he swore. He had requested the favour of an ice: but was begged by his father to consider that it would not agree with him. He petitioned for a cake, and Reason again stept forward, like a detestable friend, to ask him to withstand his inclinations till dinner-time. Ricky bore it. He was in that calm mood when the cup is full. Now fell a Lobourne-wicket to Bursley's terrible-swift bowler,

and, amid cheers from the spectators, Captain Algernon Feverel shouldered his bat, and leisurely strode to his innings, the Hope of Lobourne. He was settling his preliminaries (the most important of which seemed to be to attain the extreme salient posture of his manly person in the eyes of the ladies), when a messenger reached Sir Austin, and spoke a few words to him, who now, jogging his son's hand, said in a cheerful voice; "Come along, my son! the Doctor is waiting for us."

"The Doctor!" exclaimed sweet Lady Blandish, standing by with her old lord not yet gone. "Whatever can the dear boy want with a Doctor?"

"He is seven years old to-day, Madam," replied Sir Austin. "I wish him to be examined medically from head to foot, that I may be sure he is physically sound for his second seven-years' march, as he is morally promising."

The Baronet smiled down on his son, and beheld a cloud not at all morally promising on the brows of him.

"Come!" he said.

"No!" cried Richard, releasing his hand.

"Come!" his father repeated, while his brows went up.

Richard fell back sullenly.

"I desire you to come, my boy," said his father, with the gentle severity of a last command.

And the young seven-year-old, wrought to the furthest pitch of endurance, stamped his foot, and flushed, as he cried, looking his father full in the face, "I won't! Damned if I do!"

Of course, he had to go; but when he came back, approved robust, he was covered with the caresses of the field, and enjoyed an enraptured hug from Lady Blandish: the lady provoking thereby those reflections in THE PILGRIM'S SCRIP, 'On the Popularity of the Forbidden Fruit, and the preference we have for it, provided an Innocent offer it us.'

Little Ricky returned from his Examination in time to witness the Catastrophe of the day. His Uncle Algernon was still in, batting gloriously: his elegant figure and fine legs deservedly admired by the ladies. A shot from Bursley's terrible-swift bowler took him on the forward thigh, and he was seen limping towards the

tents with considerable lack of grace, and a ruefully animated expression. Dr. Clifford of Lobourne was present, and perused the bruise. He had him conveyed immediately to the house, where, towards night, it was debated whether there was to be a leg less in the family, as was soon the case.

"Said I not, Something would happen?" remarked Sir Austin, not altogether dissatisfied.

"Oh, confound Mrs. Malediction!" Algernon groaned to Colonel Wentworth.

"You're as staunch a believer in her now as Austin," said the Colonel. "It's true that the boy did see a woman."

"What woman?" asked Algernon.

"His mother!" replied the Colonel.

"Confound the women, then!" cried the poor one-legged Guardsman.

Colonel Wentworth did not make this revelation to Sir Austin, and the latter from that day incorporated a little of his superstition with his System.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INMATES OF RAYNHAM ABBEY.

RICHARD'S Uncles pass out of his history after this sacrifice of a leg for him. Cuthbert, the sailor, perished in a spirited boat-expedition against a slaving Negro-chief up the Niger. Some of the gallant lieutenant's trophies of war decorated the little boy's play-shed at Raynham, and he bequeathed his sword to Richard, whose hero he was. The diplomatist and beau, Vivian, ended his flutterings from flower to flower by making an improper marriage, as is the fate of many a beau, and was struck out of the list of visitors. Algernon generally occupied the Baronet's disused Town house, a wretched being, dividing his time between horse, and card, exercise: possessed, it was said, of the absurd notion, that a man who has lost his balance by losing his leg, may regain it by sticking to the Bottle. At

least, whenever he and Hippias got together, they never failed to try whether one leg, or two, stood the Bottle best, and it was known that the ardour of the contest now and then put them both in a position not to require a balance. They were stout drinkers, and the primogenital cellars were not niggard of their stores. Much of a Puritan as Sir Austin was in his habits, he was too good a host, and too thorough a gentleman, to impose them upon his guests. The brothers, and other relatives, might do as they would while they did not disgrace the name, and then it was final: they must depart to behold his countenance no more.

Algernon Feverel was a simple sort of man, who felt, subsequent to his misfortune, as he had perhaps dimly fancied it before, that his career lay in his legs, and was now irrevocably cut short. He taught the boy boxing, and shooting, and the arts of fence, and superintended the direction of his animal vigour with a melancholy vivacity. The remaining energies of Algernon's mind were devoted to animadversions on Swift-bowling. He preached it over the County, struggling through laborious literary composi-

tions, addressed to sporting newspapers, on the Decline of Cricket. In Adrian Harley's words, he bored everybody so that he took off the bales of Forbearance and knocked down the stumps of Patience. It was Algernon who witnessed and chronicled Richard's first fight, a very plucky combat with young Tom Blaize of Belthorpe Farm, three years the boy's senior, whom, with the aid of Science, he defeated.

Hippias Feverel was once thought to be the genius of the family. It was his ill luck to have strong appetites and a weak stomach; and, as one is not altogether fit for the Battle of Life who is engaged in a perpetual contention with his dinner, Hippias forsook his prospects at the Bar, and, in the embraces of dyspepsia, compiled his ponderous work on the Fairy Mythology of Europe. He had little to do with the Hope of Raynham, beyond what he endured from his juvenile tricks.

A venerable lady, known as Great-Aunt Grantley, who had money to bequeath to the Heir, and whom Adrian called The Eighteenth Century, occupied with Hippias the back ground of the house, and shared her caudles with him. These

two were seldom seen till the dinner-hour, for which they were all day preparing, and probably all night remembering: for The Eighteenth Century was an admirable trencherman, and cast age aside while there was a dish on the table.

Very much against her will, Mrs. Doria Forey, though the female head of the house, was not allowed to come to the fore, while the System was at work, as she would have done in any other establishment but that of the author of the PILGRIM'S SCRIP. She was the elder of the three sisters of the Baronet, a florid affable woman, with fine teeth, exceedingly fine light wavy hair, a Norman nose, and a reputation for understanding men, which, with these practical creatures, always means, the art of managing them. She had married an expectant younger son of a good family, who deceased before fulfilment; and, casting about in her mind the future chances of her little daughter, and sole child, Clare, she marked down a probability; and the far sight, the deep determination, the resolute perseverance, of her sex, where a daughter is to be provided for, and a man to be overthrown, instigated her to invite herself to Raynham, and, with that

daughter, she fixed herself there, to watch the System, and sap it. Not that she did not love her brother, Austin; she thought him an incomparable man, and tenderly pitied him: but that she deemed the System Nonsense: its interdict against the espousals of cousins, Nonsense: all experiments in education, Nonsense.

'Women,' says the PILGRIM'S SCRIP, 'are, by nature, our staunchest Conservatives. We must look on them as the Bulwarks of Society.'

Which may, or may not, be true, but is surely in a manner complimentary, and was true in Mrs. Doria's case. She had never forgiven Cromwell the execution of the Martyr Charles; and to extenuate the conduct of the great Roundhead Captain, was to make Mrs. Doria despise and detest you, if you did not lie direct in her line of tactics for the time being: in which instance she would sigh, and deplore your mistake, and draw melting pictures of the sufferings of her Martyr, and ask you whether you had a heart. Adrian Harley, who sided with the Commonwealth, not from any sympathy, for he abjured politics, as a Wise Youth should, but for the pleasure of taking an adverse view, and to tease

her,—him she was, during the first period of her residence at Raynham, inclined for that sole reason to hate, till she perceived his influence with the Baronet, and then she said, lamenting for him, he had no heart: but Austin Wentworth, the Colonel's son, a Republican on principle, as true a Christian and kindly a spirit as ever walked the earth, who had small influence with the Baronet, she for her sole reason quite hated, and conscientiously damaged him wherever she could; not shrinking from frequent hints and amplifications of an unhappy story of the poor youth's, in support of the Cause of her Martyr; and it is certain that Mrs. Doria's constant insinuations made the Baronet look dubiously on one who was ever his son's best friend.

Austin's story was of that wretched character which to be comprehended, that justice should be dealt him, must be told out, and openly; which no one dares now do.

For a fault in early youth, redeemed by him nobly, according to his light, he was condemned to undergo the world's harsh judgment: not for the fault—for its atonement.

"—Married his mother's housemaid," whispered Mrs. Doria, with a ghastly look, and a shudder at Republicans.

And women gavè the young man a cold shoulder. Marble-cold they can make that lovely feature of their persons, when they please; in a way unknown to men. What right had he, for a whim, for a folly, to destroy for ever his prospects?—and theirs? It was true, he was not rich. Still he had an independence. And he was extremely presentable: fair-haired, with a smile sweet as a woman's: gentle as a child: a face set with the seal of a courageous calm: so pure a face that looking on it you seemed to see into his soul. You could not misdoubt him. And he had gone and ruined himself: married that creature! The world of women turned from him as from a blighted rose.

'The compensation for Injustice,' says the PILGRIM'S SCRIP, 'is, that in that dark Ordeal we gather the worthiest around us.'

And Lady Blandish, and some few true men and women held Austin Wentworth high.

"He was, I think—I do not know—mistaken," the fair widow pleaded for him to the

Baronet, "but I cannot cannot blame him. It is so rare to meet that nobleness in men."

Her widow's privilege permitted her to distantly allude to the circumstances of the case.

Sir Austin was a man to estimate and welcome nobleness. He ranked it more, and it was more akin to him, than Intellect. Very different for young Richard would it have been had Austin taken his right place in the Baronet's favour: but Austin had offended against the Baronet's main crotchet: who said, in answer to Lady Blandish, that, to ally oneself randomly was to be guilty of a crime before Heaven greater than the offence it sought to extinguish; and he had heard that his nephew was the one seduced. Wherefore he was doubly foolish; a thing in Sir Austin's opinion, he said, almost equal to depravity.

"Think, Madam," he argued, "think of the children."

"There may be none," she said.

"They live apart: the woman is vicious, true," the Baronet resumed. "Think then, Madam—I may speak to you,—think that he, a young man of excellent qualities, has madly disinherited his

future, and is barren to posterity, while knaves are propagating. I do not forgive him. The nobler he, the worse his folly. I do not forgive him."

This it was to look on Life as a Science.

Adrian Harley, who had no views of his own on the subject, except that it was absurd when you were in the mud to plunge in deeper instead of jumping out, cleverly interpreted his Chief's, and delighted him with swelling periods.

"Marriage," flourished Adrian, "is more than a creation of the Laws. As the solemn deed of Life, the culminating act of our existence, an anticipation of its ordinances is not to be cancelled by seeking their countenance; which endeavour may expose penitence in the offender, but generates for him Retribution rather than Absolution, in lives unborn, misbegotten, in a callous companion, in an outraged future bearing with it a life-long ill-assortedness." And so forth.

Adrian, the Wise Youth Adrian, would never have made such a mistake. Some people are born green: others yellow. Adrian was born yellow. He was always on the ripe sensible side of a question.

'In action,' the PILGRIM'S SCRIP observes, 'Wisdom goes by majorities.'

Adrian had an instinct for the majorities, and as the world invariably found him enlisted in its ranks, his appellation of Wise Youth was generally acquiesced in.

The Wise Youth, then, had the world with him, but no friends. Nor did he wish for those troublesome appendages of success. He caused himself to be required by people who could serve him; feared by such as could injure. Not that he went out of the way to secure his end, or risked the expense of a plot. He did the work as easily as he ate his daily bread. Adrian was an Epicurean: one whom Epicurus would have scourged out of his Garden, certainly: an Epicurean of our modern notions. To satisfy his appetites without rashly staking his character, was the Wise Youth's problem for life. He had no intimates save Gibbon and Horace, and the society of these fine aristocrats of literature helped him to accept humanity as it had been, and was; a Supreme Ironic Procession, with Laughter of Gods in the background. Why not Laughter of Mortals also? Adrian had his

laugh in his comfortable corner. He possessed peculiar attributes of a Heathen God. He was a disposer of men: he was polished, luxurious, and happy—at their cost. He lived in eminent self-content, as one lying on soft cloud, lapt in sunshine. Nor Jove, nor Apollo, cast eye upon the maids of earth with cooler fire of selection, or pursued them in the covert with more sacred impunity. And he enjoyed his reputation for virtue, as something additional. Stolen fruits are said to be sweet. Undeserved rewards are very exquisite.

The best of it was, that Adrian made no pretences. He did not solicit the favourable judgment of the world. Nature and he attempted no other concealment than the ordinary mask men wear. And yet the world would proclaim him moral, as well as wise, and the pleasing converse everyway of his disgraced cousin, Austin. Adrian had a logical contempt for creatures who do things for mere show, as losing, he said, the core of enjoyment for the rind of respectability. The world might find itself in the wrong: it would find him the same. His ambition, within the reserved limits, was to please himself, as being

the best judge and the absolute gainer. Placed on Crusoe's Island, his first cry would have been for clean linen: his next for the bill-of-fare: and then, for that Grand Panorama of the Mistress of the World falling to wreck under the barbarians, which had been the spur and the seal to his mind: twittering Horace in Roman feast-attendant's tunic, twanging his lyre, might charm him to sleep, careless of the morrow, since the day was good.

In a word Adrian Harley had mastered his philosophy at the early age of one-and-twenty. Many would be glad to say the same at that age twice-told: they carry in their breasts a burden with which Adrian's was not loaded. Mrs. Doria was nearly right about his heart. A singular mishap (at his birth, possibly, or before it) had unseated that organ, and shaken it down to his stomach, where it was a much lighter, nay, an inspiring, weight, and encouraged him merrily onward. Throned in that region, it looked on little that did not arrive to gratify it. Already that region was a trifle prominent in the person of the Wise Youth, and carried, as it were, the flag of his philosophical tenets in front of him.

A fat Wise Youth, digesting well: charming after dinner, with men, or with women: soft, dimpled, succulent-looking as a sucking-pig: delightfully sarcastic: perhaps a little too unscrupulous in his moral tone, but that his moral reputation belied him, and it must be set down to generosity of disposition.

Such was Adrian Harley, another of Sir Austin's intellectual favourites, chosen from mankind to superintend the education of his son at Raynham. Adrian had been destined for the Church. He did not enter into Orders. He and the Baronet had a conference together one day, and from that time Adrian became a fixture in the Abbey. His father, Mr. Justice Harley, died in his promising son's College term, bequeathing him nothing but his legal complexion, and Adrian became stipendiary officer in his Uncle's household.

The Wise Youth spread out his mind to the System like a piece of blank paper.

Another chief personage of the establishment was Benson, the butler: Heavy Benson, Adrian called him, from the mace-like fashion with which he wielded his respectability, and the fact of a

connubial misfortune. The latter had recommended him to his patron. Benson was the GREAT SHADDOCK DOGMA condensed in a look: potential with silence:—a taciturn hater of Woman; burly, flabby, and implacable. In him Sir Austin had his only faithful believer, and Adrian his solitary rival. When, after THE PILGRIM'S SCRIP was published, the fair ladies, its admirers, swarmed down to form a Court at Raynham, they were soon taught to stand in fear of Heavy Benson, who read their object, and, if one by chance got closeted with the Baronet, as they were all seeking to do, a knock was sure to come, and Heavy Benson obtruded his glum person into the room on pressing business, and would not go till he had rescued the prey. As Dragons of old guarded the dwellings of beautiful princesses, Heavy Benson stood sentinel over the Baronet. He held the door to them, as they severally departed, and took their discomfiture to his own praise.

With these intimates young Richard Feverel lived in the great House, unconscious of the tight jacket he was gathering flesh to feel. The System hung loosely on his limbs at first. The Curate

of Lobourne attended to his rudimentary lessons: a Papworth being sometimes invited to Raynham to play with him, who said, he was a lucky fellow not to be sent to school, and tried to make the boy think so, for which purpose he had, perhaps, been brought over. Now and then a well-meaning friend of Sir Austin's ventured to remonstrate on the dangerous trial he was making in modelling any new plan of Education for a youth, but the Baronet was firm. He pointed to his son, and said, "Match him."

Towards his fourteenth year, however, the young Experiment began to grow exceedingly restless. The Curate of Lobourne sent in a report that Master Richard's lessons were contumaciously disregarded: that in his Latin and Greek he was retrograding: in propriety of behaviour likewise; for witness, exhibiting a broken slate and a broken window of the room set apart for his studies. Heavy Benson also laid a portentous book on the Baronet's table, found by him in Master Richard's bedroom, proving to be a Lemprière, and a rather grave sign in Sir Austin's estimation.

"What can this be?" the Baronet meditated,

and referred to his Note-Book (a famous and much-feared Instrument at Raynham, which held the bare bones of THE PILGRIM'S SCRIP), wherein the youth's progressionary phases were mapped out in sections, from Simple Boyhood to the Blossoming Season, The Magnetic Age, The Period of Probation, from which, successfully passed through, he was to emerge into a Manhood worthy of Paradise. It was now Simple Boyhood; The Ante-Pomona Stage, as Adrian named it. A slate sent through a window was mere insubordination: a Lemprière in the bedroom looked like precocity,—looked like Pomona in person. Supposing the boy to be precocious, the whole System was disorganized; based as it was upon concordant Nature, after that saying of THE PILGRIM'S SCRIP:

'Health is the Body's Virtue: Truth, the Soul's: Valour springs but from the unison of these twain.'

Sir Austin consulted with his young Achates, and old Dr. Clifford, who were not so perplexed in arriving at a simple conclusion as the philosopher, and said, that the boy only wanted companions of his own age.

"Some one to rub his excessive vitality against, you mean?" ask the Baronet.

"Ay, Sir," Adrian replied. "He is now laden with that superabundant energy which makes a fool of a man, and a scapegrace of a boy, and he wants to work it off."

"Too much Health," added the Doctor, "is inductive Disease."

"Scarcely sound. Scarcely sound," remarked the Baronet, "on that ground you tolerate much. You give human nature but a short tether. Our Virtues, then, are pigmies, Doctor, that daren't grow for fear of the sty?"

"Circe looks out for strapping fellows, I fancy," said Adrian, and closed the session with laughter.

Sir Austin continued to meditate some days, and then requested the Wise Youth's advice on a proposition conceived by him, to have a boy of Richard's age to stay with him in the house and be his comrade.

"I think your idea excellent," said Adrian, giving him all the credit of it. "And I know the very boy that will suit. Thompson, your solicitor, has a son. Poor fellow! only one, I

believe, and about a dozen girls with parchment exteriors and snub noses. The whole family 's a genesis of sheepskin. But they're well brought up. You might try the lad, Sir. The Thompsons stuck by my father in his Brief days."

Sir Austin determined to try the lad whose sisters were so innocuous. A message was forwarded to Mr. Thompson, for the loan of his son for a term; and, his son's holidays being in that season, his son was, in compliance, joyfully packed down to Raynham Abbey, big with anticipations of aristocratic intimacies. In this way Richard was gifted with a comrade, and Master Ripton Thompson became an inmate of Raynham.

Master Ripton Thompson was quite a common boy; shy, and awkward, and prepared to be totally subservient to the young Prince whose Court he had come to. His hair and his eyes were of no colour, and everybody said, there was nothing in him; to which Mrs. Doria excepted 'sound principle,' finding that he had the proper Old Lawyer's view of Life and History, and sincerely thought her Charles a Martyr. Sound principle was all Sir Austin required of him in

his probational contact with the Hope of Raynham. The two boys soon assumed their relative positions. Richard led, and Ripton followed. Ripton thought one or two things in his leader rather odd: for instance, his proficiency in manly sports and exercises, joined to his habit of calling his father, Papa, and not Governor, and his entire ignorance about the ways of the girls, and indifference to them; but he concealed his surprise, having been primed by his parents to behave acquiescently, whatever he saw to astonish him.

On the morning of the fourteenth birthday, Ripton had to stow away loud bursts of laughter in the capacious sleeve his provident parents had furnished him with. The day was to be a great day. The boys were to join the Lobourne Eleven against swift-bowling Bursley: dinner on the field; fireworks at night; supper in the Hall: the Cornucopia of Raynham Abbey playing on them exhaustlessly from morning to night. If this were the System, Ripton thought it a fine thing. He was standing waiting for the favoured boy on the gravel-walk fronting the breakfast-room from which he had escaped five minutes

before, when forth started Richard, and, catching him by the arm, bore him hurriedly towards the darkest corner of the clustered beeches, and then told him, he would see nobody—he would leave Raynham—he would quit the country, if he could—be a sailor—a cabin-boy—a common soldier—anything, that he might never be seen there again. All this he uttered between a gnawing of the lips, and a blinking of the eyes, a flushing of the cheeks, and a clenching of the fists, showing a frenzy of shamefacedness. He seemed in the gripe of his birthday devil, as they called it at Raynham, where, till that day, he was generally a brisk happy boy.

Ripton kindly endeavoured to console him, but was silenced by a fiercer repetition of the threats.

"Well, then—what is it?" Ripton jerked out at last. "What ever's the matter?"

"I have been insulted," cried Richard; "insulted by my own father. Lucky it wasn't anyone else! Come along!" and he dragged Ripton further into the covert.

"But what is it?" asked Ripton once more, when he could grasp at a halt. "You may as well tell a friend."

"I tell you I've been insulted! Isn't that enough?" Richard replied. "Come along!" and Ripton had to resume his trot.

By-and-by, after deep dark hints, under the deepest darkest shelter of the foliage, the intimacy of boys brought it all out.

Sir Austin had asked his son to submit to medical examination, and strip!

"Don't laugh!" shouted Richard menacingly, as he saw the great mute O of Ripton's mouth stretch its length towards explosion.

With an effort that cost him tears, Ripton swallowed his guffaw.

"And don't speak of it, or allude to it, if you do n't wish mortally to offend me," said the outraged youth. "Come along!" and poor Ripton was soon far from the preparations for the festivities dear to his ears.

The author of the System sat in his study with old Dr. Clifford, much aggrieved.

"A boy who has no voice but mine, Doctor," he said; "whose spirit is clear to me as day—he enters another Circle of nature, and I require to be assured of his bodily well-being, and this boy, educated in the seclusion of a girl, refuses—nay, swears he will not."

"From which, my dear Sir Austin, you have to learn, that your son is no longer a child," was the Doctor's comment.

"A beautiful shamelessness is not necessarily dependent upon a state of childhood," returned the Baronet. "In a boy properly looked to, as this boy has been, there should not be the most distant sense of indelicacy in such a request. He registers revolt, too, with an oath:—The old way! The moment he breaks from me, in a moment he is like the world, and claims Cousinship with an oath for his password."

Sir Austin put a finger to his temple and stared at the fire.

"What do you attribute it to, Doctor?" he asked presently.

"The System, Sir," quietly replied the Doctor.

"Excellent!" Sir Austin exclaimed. "It is I who teach him bad language?"

"At a school," said the Doctor, "there are the two extremes: good boys, and the reverse. Your son does not see that distinction here. He is a heathen as to right and wrong. Good from instinct—not from principle: a creature of impulse. A noble lad, I admit, but—you know, I

am of the old school, Sir Austin. I like boys to be boys, and mix together. Christians are not born in hermitages."

"Very well said, Doctor!" remarked the Baronet, always alive to a phrase, even in his tribulation. "A spice of the Devil, then, is necessary for a Christian?"

Dr. Clifford stroked his chin. "I don't say that," he replied. "But I don't mind saying that a fair stand-up fight with him is."

"For a boy, Doctor?"

"For a boy, Sir Austin. He can't have it out too soon."

"Listen, Doctor," said the Baronet, after turning in his chair uneasily two or three times. "I think you none of you understand my System. My good Doctor! I am not preparing my son to avoid the fight. I know it is inevitable. I brace him for the struggle."

"By keeping him out of his element?" quoth the Doctor.

"By giving him all the advantages of Science," Sir Austin emphasized. "By training him. Our theory is the same, with this difference: that you set the struggle down at an earlier date than do

I. It may be true I sacrifice two or three little advantages in isolating him at present: he will be the better fortified for his trial to come. You know my opinion, Doctor: we are pretty secure from the Serpent till Eve sides with him. I speak, of course, of a youth of good pure blood."

"I don't think the schools would harm such a youth," said the Doctor.

"The schools are corrupt!" said the Baronet.

Dr. Clifford could not help thinking there were other temptations than that one of Eve. For youths and for men, Sir Austin told him, She was the main bait: the sole to be dreaded for a youth of good pure blood: the main to resist.

Dr. Clifford inquired whether it was good for such a youth to be half a girl? Whereat Sir Austin smiled a laugh.

"You see him one instant a shamefaced girl, and the next, a headlong boy," the Doctor explained. "Is that good?"

"Yes, yes; I caught your meaning," said Sir Austin. "You suppose shame to be the property of innocence, and therefore of womankind. A wonderful double deduction!" He went into

scientific particulars which would reduce the reader to greater confusion that it did the Doctor. They then fell upon the question of Richard's marrying.

"He shall not marry till he is thirty!" was the Baronet's Spartan Law.

"He need not marry at all," said Dr. Clifford. "Birth and death are natural accidents: Marriage we *can* avoid!" The Doctor had been jilted by a naughty damsel.

"On my System he must marry," said the Baronet, and again dissected the frame of man, and entered into scientific particulars: ending their colloquy, "However! I thank you, Doctor, for speaking as you think, and the proof that I know how to profit by it, is seen in my admission of the boy, Thompson, to my household. Perhaps our only difference, after all, is not a pathologic one. I acknowledge your diagnosis, but mollify the prescription. I give the poison to my son in small doses; whereas you prescribe large ones. You naturally contend with a homœopathist—Eh? You are inimical to that heresy?"

"With your permission, Sir Austin, I hate

that humbug." The Doctor nodded grimly, and the Baronet laughed, in his stiff way, to have turned the tables on his staunch old adversary, calling him forth into the air to look after the boy, and inspect the preparations for his day's pleasure.

CHAPTER V.

SHOWING HOW THE FATES SELECTED THE FOURTEENTH BIRTHDAY TO TRY THE STRENGTH OF THE SYSTEM.

October shone royally on this day of the completion of the Second Seven years' march of the Hope of Raynham. The brown beechwoods and golden birches glowed to a brilliant sun. Banks of moveless cloud hung about the horizon, mounded to the West, where slept the wind. Promise of a great day for Raynham, as it proved to be, though not in the manner Raynham had marked out.

Already archery booths and cricketing tents were rising on the lower grounds towards the river, whither the lads of Bursley and Lobourne, in boats and in carts, shouting for a day of ale and honour, jogged merrily to match themselves anew, and pluck at the living laurel from each

other's brows, like manly Britons. The whole park was beginning to be astir and resound with holiday cries. Sir Austin Feverel, a thorough good Tory, was no game-preserver, and could be popular whenever he chose, which Sir Miles Papworth, a fast-handed Whig and terror to poachers, never could be. Half the village of Lobourne was seen trooping through the avenues of the park. Fiddlers and gypsies clamoured at the gates for admission: white smocks, and slate, surmounted by hats of serious brim, and now and then a scarlet cloak, smacking of the old country, dotted the grassy sweeps to the levels.

And all the time the star of these festivities was receding further and further, and eclipsing himself with his reluctant serf, Ripton, who kept asking, what they were to do, and where they were going, and how late it was in the day, and suggesting that the lads of Lobourne would be calling out for them, and Sir Austin requiring their presence, without getting any attention paid to his misery or remonstrances. For in Richard's bosom a fate was working, and the shame of the insult, as he thought it, rankled.

Now it happened that, as the two boys wan-

dered kicking the clods disconsolately, they started a pheasant. The bird, with its fellow in the brake, drummed, and whirred, and to the misfortune of its species made its plumage seem a prize to them.

"I know what we'll do," cries Richard, his features suddenly lighting up, "we'll have a day's shooting! We'll shoot all day, and we won't go home till night."

He turned to his friend to see how his proposal was received. Master Ripton, whose mind was set on Raynham and the fun there, listened but half cheerfully, and hinted that any other day would do for shooting.

"No!" said Richard, "look what a day it is. We shall kill lots of birds, and give everybody the slip. You'll have a gun and I'll have a gun, and we'll have better fun than any of them at Raynham. Come along!" And he made Ripton moodily retrace his steps. It seemed mad and stupid to Ripton's sense of reason, but he was a bondsman and bound to acquiesce. He mumbled something about not having a license, and was putting that in for a plea against the expedition, till Richard assured him positively

that every gentleman had a license, and Ripton, who deeply delighted in the notion of belonging to that privileged class, and walked with tight boots, and underwent daily tortures, to induce the world to accept him as one, admitted it was the case that every gentleman had a license, and therefore he must have one.

So back they ran to the Abbey, dodged the Baronet, armed themselves, got the old pointer Mark'em (named after his profession and the keeper at a blow) close to their heels, and, by skirting outhouses and slinking under walls, escaped in the security that favours the commencement of adventures of this sort, and made for the coverts of the park.

Rearward of the Abbey lay a lake that took the morning sun, and the shadow of a solitary cypress, planted by some sad-minded Ancestress. The boys had to round the lake before they could plunge into perfect concealment, and as they did so, Richard cried out, "Look! do you see how that shadow follows me?—just look."

Ripton cast a dissatisfied eye on the phenomenon, not a whit inclined to express any wonder, if he felt it.

"Do you see it, Rip?" Richard moved forward and back on the brink of the lake, pretending that the reflection of the cypress pointed after him.

"What do you think!" he continued. "They say in our family that when we any of us come across it in this way—like this, look!—there 's going to be mischief. My father doesn't believe in that kind of thing: nor more do I. But it 's strange, isn't it? Look!" The boy held to the spot like one fascinated. "It 's true my great-grandfather, Sir Algernon Feverel, noticed it pointing at him as he passed the morning he fought the duel, and was killed. And he went half round the lake. Of course I don't believe there's anything in it. Do you?"

Ripton said, he did not, because all shadows seemed to do the same, in a modified way: but there, Richard assured him, he was wrong, as this cypress was the only tree ever known to do it.

"Though I don't believe it means anything," he added. "Mind you hold your gun properly and don't shoot me, and I 'll take care I don't shoot you. If we get lots of birds we 'll take

some over to Lady Blandish to-morrow, and she 'll ask us to dine there, and she has capital wine, and no Benson, and all sorts of fun, and you may do as you like there."

"Any girls?" asked Ripton.

"I don't know." The young gentleman was violently contemptuous in his reply.

They entered the wood, and from its eastern border could see the people of Lobourne trooping along the main road to Raynham: horsemen and horsewomen; carriages, carts, cricketers, from whose entertainment the heart was running away. He had a little touch of compunction as he beheld them; but immediately putting the blame on his father, branched off in a contrary direction, and so eulogized the house of Lady Blandish to Ripton, and the reception she would give them and their birds to-morrow, that the unlucky youth began to get consoled. Richard shouldered his own gun, a light single-barrel, suitable for his years. Ripton had made free with Captain Feverel's. He was rather short-sighted and inexperienced in guns, though it was out of the question he should admit the fact, every gentleman being familiar with guns from

his birth. It was not in bravado that he carried a rifle instead of a fowling-piece. Both boys were warming at the prospect of sport. Old Mark'em joined in the conspiracy nose and tail; a dog's equivalent for heart and soul; generally one as good.

"Are you a prime shot?" said Richard.

Ripton nodded knowingly, and answered, "Pretty good."

"Then we'll have a dozen brace apiece to-day," said Richard.

On nosed old Mark'em, bent upon work. Out of the wood into a field of stubble, and onward they went at a trot, and down plumped old Mark'em, true as the needle to the pole. Then the cat-like steps of the juvenile sportsmen were fine to see. Ripton surpassed his comrade in velvety paw and professional attitude, crouching his body in the most hopeful manner. But when this moment of exquisite expectancy was cut short by the birds rising, the hapless youth suddenly remembered he had forgotten to load. Earth reeled round his figure of confusion as Richard fired. He fired, but old Mark'em made no blithe bounds in advance. The sagacious old

dog looked sulky and disgusted. A dead miss! Richard reproached his friend bitterly.

"Why did you bawl out just as I was aiming? Who can aim with a fellow bawling in his ear? I've lost the birds through it. At least I should have had one of the two."

Ripton explained humbly that he had forgotten to load.

"Always load at home," said Richard. "Then you're ready for anything. And don't make that noise another time."

His eye fell on the instrument Ripton carried to make war on the feathery creation, and he recognized his Uncle's rifle.

"Do you know what you've got in your hands?" he said.

"I think it's not the right gun," stammered Ripton.

"You *think* it's not! Well! You must be accustomed to sport."

He looked scornfully, and the next minute called his friend, Ripton, a fool.

Now Ripton was not in the best of tempers. He was a disappointed boy that morning, and a Briton in bondage—a very dangerous animal at all times. Richard had added the emphasis of

conviction to the insulting epithet. A boy does not like to be called a fool, and is usually ready to try the question with his fists when a doubt is once cast on him; as of old Valour asserted the spotlessness of fair dames; and if he conquers it is clear that he cannot be a fool. These primitive courts of appeal despise casuistries.

Feeling that circumstances were making him look wonderfully like one, Ripton lifted his head and retorted defiantly, "I 'm not!"

This angry contradiction, so very uncalled-for, offended Richard, who was still smarting at the loss of his birds, and was really the injured party. He therefore bestowed the abusive epithet on Ripton anew, and with increase of emphasis.

"You shan't call me so, then, whether I am or not," says Ripton, and sucks his lips, looking wicked.

This was becoming personal. Richard sent up his brows, and stared at his defier an instant. He then informed him that he certainly should call him so, and would not object to call him so twenty times.

"Do it, and see!" returns Ripton, rocking on his pins, and breathing quick.

With a gravity of which only boys and other barbarians are capable, Richard went through the entire number stressing the epithet to increase the defiance and avoid monotony, as he progressed, while Ripton bobbed his head every time in assent, as it were, to his comrade's accuracy, and as a record for his profound humiliation. Old Mark'em gazed at the extraordinary performance with interrogating wags of the tail.

Twenty times, duly and deliberately, Richard repeated the obnoxious word.

At the twentieth solemn iteration of Ripton's capital shortcoming, old Mark'em started up to action. Ripton had delivered a smart backhander on Richard's mouth, and squared precipitately; perhaps sorry when the deed was done, for he was a kind-hearted lad, and as Richard simply bowed in acknowledgment of the blow, he thought he had gone too far. He did not know the young gentleman he was dealing with. Richard was extremely cool.

"Shall we fight here?" he said.

"Anywhere you like," replied Ripton.

"A little more into the wood, I think. We may be interrupted." And Richard led the way

with a courteous reserve that somewhat chilled Ripton's ardour for the contest. On the skirts of the wood, Richard threw off his jacket and waistcoat, and, quite collected, waited for Ripton to do the same. The latter boy was flushed and restless; older and broader, but not so tight-limbed and well-set. The gods, sole witnesses of their battle, betted dead against him. Richard had mounted the white cockade of the Feverels, and there was a look in him that asked for tough work to extinguish. His brows, slightly lined upward at the temples, converging to a knot about the well-set straight nose; his full grey eyes, open nostrils, and planted feet, and a gentlemanly air of calm and alertness, formed a spirited picture of a young combatant. As for Ripton, he was all abroad, and fought in school-boy style: that is, he rushed at the foe head foremost, and struck like a windmill. He was a lumpy boy. When he did hit, he made himself felt; but he was at the mercy of Science. To see him come dashing in, blinking, and puffing, and whirling his arms abroad while the felling blow went straight between them, you perceived that he was fighting a fight of desperation, and knew it. For the dreaded alternative glared him

in the face that, if he yielded, he must look like what he had been Twenty Times calumniously called; and he would die rather than yield, and swing his windmill till he dropped. Poor boy! he dropped pretty frequently. The gallant fellow fought for appearances, and down he went. The gods favour one of two parties. Prince Turnus was a noble youth; but he had not Pallas at his elbow. Ripton was a capital boy, but he had no Science. Minerva turned her back on him. He could not, could not prove he was not a fool! When one comes to think of it, Ripton did choose the only possible way, and we should all of us have considerable difficulty in proving the negative by any other. Ripton came on the unerring fist again and again, and if it was true, as he said in short colloquial gasps, that he required as much beating as an egg to be beaten thoroughly, a fortunate interruption alone saved our friend from resembling that substance. The boys heard summoning voices, and beheld Mr. Morton of Poer Hall and Austin Wentworth stepping towards them.

A truce was sounded, jackets were caught-up, guns shouldered, and off they trotted in concert through the depths of the wood, not stopping till

that and half-a-dozen fields and a larch plantation were well behind them.

When they halted to take breath, there was a mutual study of faces. Ripton's was much discoloured and looked fiercer with its natural war-paint than the boy felt. Nevertheless he squared up dauntlessly on the new ground, and Richard, whose wrath was appeased, could not refrain from asking him whether he had not really had enough.

"Never!" shouts the noble enemy.

"Well, look here," said Richard, appealing to common sense, "I'm tired of knocking you down. I'll say you're not a fool, if you'll give me your hand."

Ripton demurred an instant to consult with Honour, who bade him catch at his chance.

He held out his hand. "There!" and the boys grasped hands and were fast friends. Ripton had gained his point, and Richard decidedly had the best of it. So they were on equal ground. Both could claim a victory, which was all the better for their friendship.

Ripton washed his face and comforted his nose at a brook, and was now ready to follow his

friend wherever he chose to lead. They continued to beat about for birds. The birds on the Raynham estates were found singularly cunning, and repeatedly eluded the aim of these prime shots, so they pushed their expedition into the lands of their neighbours, in search of a stupider race, happily oblivious of the laws and conditions of trespass: unconscious too that they were poaching on the demesne of the notorious farmer Blaize, the free-trade farmer under the shield of the Papworths, parent of Richard's first defeated foe, and no worshiper of the Griffin between Two Wheatsheaves: destined to be much allied with Richard's fortunes from beginning to end. Farmer Blaize hated poachers, and especially young chaps poaching, who did it mostly from impudence. Farmer Blaize heard the audacious shots popping right and left, and going forth to have a glimpse at the intruders, and observing their size, swore he would teach my gentlemen a thing, lords or no lords.

Richard had brought down a beautiful cock-pheasant, and was exulting over it, when the farmer's portentous figure burst upon them, cracking an avenging horsewhip. His salute was ironical.

"Havin' good sport, gentlemen, are ye?"

"Just bagged a splendid bird!" radiant Richard informed him.

"Oh! y' ave!" Farmer Blaize gave an admonitory flick of the whip. "Jest let me clap eye on 't, then."

"Say, please," interposed Ripton, who, not being the possessor of the bird, was not blind to doubtful aspects.

Farmer Blaize threw up his chin, and grinned grim.

"Please to yew, Sir? Why, my chap, yew looks as if ye din't much mind what come t' yer nose, I reckon. Yew looks an old poacher, yew do. Tall ye what 'tis!" He changed his banter to business, "bird 's mine! Now yew jest hand 'un over, and sheer off, ye dam young scoundrels! I knows ye!" And he became exceedingly opprobrious and uttered contempt at the name of Feverel.

Richard opened his eyes.

"If ye wants to be horse'upp'd, ye 'll stay where y'are!" continued the farmer irate. "Giles Blaize never stands no nonsense!"

"Then we'll stay," quoth Richard.

"Good! so be't! If ye wull have't, have't, my men! Have't, ye young suckin' poachers!"

As a preparatory measure, Farmer Blaize seized a wing of the bird, on which both boys flung themselves desperately, and secured it minus the pinion.

"That 's your game," cried the farmer. "Here 's a taste of horse'up for ye. I never stands no nonsense," and sweetch went the mighty whip, well swayed. The boys tried to close with him. He kept his distance, and lashed without mercy. Black blood made Farmer Blaize that day! The boys wriggled, in spite of themselves. It was like a relentless serpent coiling, and biting, and stinging their young veins to madness. Probably the boys felt the disgrace of the contortions they were made to go through, more than the pain, but the pain was fierce, for the farmer laid about from a practised arm, and did not consider that he had done enough till he was well breathed and his ruddy jowl inflamed. He paused, to receive the remainder of the cock-pheasant in his face.

"Take your beastly bird," cried Richard.

"Money, my lads, and interest," roared the farmer, lashing out again.

Shameful as it was to retreat, there was but that course open to them. They decided to surrender the field.

"Look! you big brute," Richard shook his gun, hoarse with passion, "I'd have shot you, if I'd been loaded. Mind! if I come across you when I'm loaded, you coward! I'll fire."

The un-English nature of this threat exasperated Farmer Blaize, and he pressed the pursuit in time to bestow a few farewell stripes as they were escaping, tight-breeched, into neutral territory. At the hedge they parleyed a minute, the farmer to inquire if they had had a mortal good tanning and were satisfied, for when they wanted a further instalment of the same, they were to come for it to Belthorpe Farm, and there it was in pickle: the boys meantime exploding in menaces and threats of vengeance, on which the farmer contemptuously turned his back. Ripton had already stocked an armfull of flints for the enjoyment of a little skirmishing. Richard, however, knocked them all out, saying, "No! a gentleman don't fling stones: leave that to the blackguards."

"Just one shy at him?" pleaded Ripton, with his eye on Farmer Blaize's broad mark, and his whole mind drunken with a sudden revelation of the advantages of light troops in opposition to heavies.

"No," said Richard, imperatively, "no stones," and marched briskly away. Ripton followed with a sigh. His leader's magnanimity was wholly beyond him. A good spanking mark at the farmer would have relieved Master Ripton: it would have done nothing to console Richard Feverel for the ignominy he had been compelled to submit to. Ripton was familiar with the rod, a monster much despoiled of his terrors by intimacy. Birch-fever was past with this boy. The horrible sense of shame, self-loathing, universal hatred, impotent vengeance, as if the spirit were steeped in abysmal blackness, which comes upon a courageous and sensitive youth condemned for the first time to taste this piece of fleshly bitterness and suffer what he feels is a defilement, Ripton had weathered, and forgotten. He was seasoned wood, and took the world pretty wisely; not reckless of castigation, as some boys become, nor over-sensitive as to dishonour, as his friend and comrade beside him was.

Richard's blood was poisoned. He had the fever on him severely. He would not allow stone-flinging, because it was a habit of his to discountenance it. Mere gentlemanly considerations had scarce shielded Farmer Blaize, and certain very ungentlemanly schemes were coming to ghastly heads in the tumult of his brain; rejected solely from their glaring impracticability even to his young intelligence. A sweeping and consummate vengeance for the indignity alone should satisfy him. Something tremendous must be done, and done without delay. At one moment he thought of killing all the farmer's cattle: next of killing him; challenging him to single combat with the arms, and according to the fashion, of gentlemen. But the farmer was a coward; he would refuse. Then he, Richard Feverel, would stand by the farmer's bedside, and rouse him; rouse him to fight with powder and ball in his own chamber, in the cowardly midnight, where he might tremble, but dare not refuse.

"Lord!" cried simple Ripton, while these hopeful plots were raging in his comrade's brain, now sparkling for immediate execution, and

anon lapsing disdainfully dark in their chances of fulfilment, "how I wish you 'd have let me notch him, Ricky!—I 'm a safe shot. I never miss. I should feel quite jolly, if I 'd spanked him once. We should have had the best of him at that game.—I say!" and a sharp thought drew Ripton's ideas nearer home: "I wonder whether my nose is as bad as he says? Where can I see myself? Gracious! what shall I do when we get to Raynham, if it is? What 'll the ladies think of me? O Lord, Ricky! suppose it turns blue?"

Ripton moved a meditative forefinger down the bridge of his nose, as this horrible suspicion clouded him. Farmer Blaize passed from his mind. The wretched boy called aloud in agony that his nose was turning blue. "Oh, if I had a bit of raw meat to lay across it!" he cried. "What a fool I was to fight!—Won't I learn boxing!—What shall I look like?" To these doleful exclamations Richard was deaf, and trudged steadily forward, facing but one object.

After tearing through innumerable hedges, leaping fences, jumping dykes, penetrating bram-

bly copses, and getting dirty, ragged, and tired, Ripton awoke from his dream of Farmer Blaize and a blue nose, to the vivid consciousness of hunger; and this consciousness grew with the rapidity of light upon him, till in the course of another minute he was enduring the extremes of famine, and ventured to question his leader whither he was being conducted. Raynham was out of sight. They were a long way down the valley, miles from Lobourne, in a country of sour pools, yellow brooks, rank pasturage, desolate heath. Solitary cows were seen; the smoke of a mud-cottage; a cart piled with peat; a donkey grazing at leisure, oblivious of an unkind world; geese by a horsepond, gabbling as in the first loneliness of Creation: uncooked things that a famishing boy cannot possibly care for, and must despise. Ripton was in despair.

"Where *are* you going to?" he inquired with a voice of the last time of asking, and halted resolutely.

Richard now broke his silence to reply, "Anywhere."

"Anywhere!" Ripton took up the moody word. "But ain't you awfully hungry?" he

gasped vehemently in a way that showed the total emptiness of his stomach.

"No," was Richard's brief response.

"Not hungry!" Ripton's amazement lent him increased vehemence. "Why, you haven't had anything to eat since breakfast! Not hungry? Well! that beats me! Why, I declare I 'm starving. I feel such a gnawing I could eat dry bread and cheese!"

Richard sneered: not for reasons that would have actuated a similar demonstration of the philosopher.

"Come," cried Ripton, "at all events, tell us where you 're going to stop?"

Richard faced about to make a querulous retort. The injured and hapless visage that met his eye disarmed him. The lad's unhappy nose, though not exactly of the dreaded hue, was really becoming discoloured. To upbraid him would be cruel. Richard lifted his head, surveyed the position, and exclaiming, "Here!" dropped down on a withered bank, leaving Ripton to contemplate him as a puzzle whose every new move was a worse perplexity.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAGIAN CONFLICT.

Among boys there are laws of honour and chivalrous codes, not written, or formally taught, but intuitively understood by all, and invariably acted upon by the loyal and the true. The race is only half civilized, we must remember. Thus, not to follow your leader whithersoever he may think proper to lead; to back out of an expedition because the end of it frowns dubious, and the present fruit of it is discomfort; to quit a comrade on the road, and return home without him: these are tricks which no boy of spirit would be guilty of, let him come to any description of mortal grief in consequence. Better so, than have his own conscience denouncing him sneak. Some boys who behave boldly enough, are not troubled by this conscience, and the eyes and the lips of their fellows have to supply the

deficiency. They do it with just as haunting, and even more horrible, pertinacity than the inner voice, and the result, if the probation be not very severe and searching, is the same. The leader can rely on the faithfulness of his host: the comrade is sworn to serve. Master Ripton Thompson was naturally loyal. The idea of turning off and forsaking his friend, never once crossed his mind, though his condition was desperate, and his friend's behaviour that of a Bedlamite. He announced several times impatiently that they would be too late for dinner. His friend did not budge. Dinner seemed nothing to him. There he lay plucking grass, and patting old Mark'em's nose, as if incapable of conceiving what a thing hunger was. Ripton took half-a-dozen turns up and down, and at last flung himself down beside the taciturn boy, accepting his fate.

Now the chance that works for certain purposes sent a smart shower from the sinking sun, and the wet sent two strangers for shelter in the lane behind the hedge where the boys reclined. One was a travelling Tinker, who lit a pipe and spread a tawny umbrella. The other was a burly young

countryman, pipeless, and tentless. They saluted with a nod, and began recounting for each other's benefit the day-long doings of the weather, as it had affected their individual experience, and followed their prophecies. Both had anticipated and foretold a bit of rain before night, and therefore both welcomed the wet with satisfaction. A monotonous betweenwhiles kind of talk they kept droning in harmony with the still hum of the air. From the weather theme they fell upon the blessings of Tobacco; how it was the poor man's friend: his company, his consolation, his comfort, his refuge at night, his first thought in the morning.

"Better than wife!" chuckled the Tinker. "No curtain-lectu'rin' with pipe. Pipe an't shrew. Pipe 's sweet creetur."

"That be ut!" the other chimed in. "Doan't tax ye wi' pot'us. Doan't mak' ye out wi' all the cash Saturday evenin', pipe doan't."

"Take one," said the Tinker, in the enthusiasm of the moment handing a grimy short clay. Speed-the-Plough filled from the Tinker's pouch, and continued his praises.

"Pipe 's a rare 'un! Penny a day, and there

y'are! primed! Better than wife? ha, ha! Shud think 'twaws! Pipe an't no vexation."

"And you can get rid of it, if ye wants for to, and when ye wants," added Tinker.

"So ye can!" Speed-the-Plough took him up, "So ye can! And ye doan't want for to. Leastways, t'other case. I means pipe."

"And," continued Tinker, comprehending him perfectly, "it don't bring repentance after it."

"Not nohow, master, it doan't! And,"—Speed-the-Plough cocked his eye,—"it doan't eat up half the victuals, pipe doan't."

Here the honest yeoman gesticulated his keen sense of a clincher, which the Tinker acknowledged; and having, so to speak, sealed up the subject by saying the best thing that could be said, the two smoked for some time in silence to the drip and patter of the shower.

Ripton solaced his wretchedness by watching them through the briar hedge. He saw the Tinker stroking a white cat, and appealing to her, every now and then, as his Missus, for an opinion, or a confirmation: and he thought that a curious sight. Speed-the-Plough was stretched at full length, with his boots in the rain, and

his head amidst the Tinker's pots, smoking profoundly contemplative. The minutes seemed to be taken up alternately by the gray puffs from their mouths.

It was Tinker who renewed the colloquy. Said he: "Times is bad!"

His companion assented: "Sure-ly!"

"But it somehow comes round right," resumed the Tinker. "Why, look here. Where's the good o' moping? I sees it all come round right and tight. Now I travels about. I've got my beat. 'Casion calls me t'other day to Newcastle!—Eh?"

"Coals!" ejaculated Speed-the-Plough, sonorously.

"Coals!" echoed the Tinker. "Y' ask what I goes there for, mayhap? Never you mind. One sees a mort o' life in my trade. Not for coals it isn't. And I don't carry 'em there, neither. Anyhow, I comes back. Lunnon's my mark. Says I, I'll see a bit o' the sea, and steps aboard a collier. We were as nigh wracked as the prophet Paul."

"A—who's him?" the other wished to know.

"Read your Bible," said the Tinker. "We

pitched and tossed—'tain't that game at sea 'tis on land, I can tell ye. I thinks, down we 're a-going—Say your prayers, Bob Tiles! That was a night, to be sure! But God 's above the Devil, and here I am, ye see."

Speed-the-Plough lurched round on his elbow and regarded him indifferently. "Moighty foin, that be! D'ye call that Doctrin'? He bean't al'ays, or I shoon't be scrapin' my heels wi' nothin' to do, and what 's warse, nothin' to eat. Why, look heer. Luck 's luck, and bad luck 's the con-trary. Varmer Bollop, t'other day, has 's rick burnt down. Next night his gran'ry 's burnt. What do he tak' and go and do? He takes, and goes, and hangs unsel', and turns us out o' 'ploy. God warn't above the Devil then, I thinks, or I can't make out the reckonin'."

The Tinker cleared his throat, and said, it was a bad case.

"And a darn'd bad case. I 'll tak' my oath on 't?" cried Speed-the-Plough. "Wall! look heer. Heer 's another darn'd bad case. I threshed for Varmer Blaize—Blaize o' Beltharpe—afore I goes to Varmer Bollop. Varmer Blaize misses pilkins. He swears soam o' our chaps steals

pilkins. 'Twarn't me steals 'em. What do *he* tak' and go and do? He takes and tarns us off, me and another, neck and crop, to scuff about and starve, for all *he* keers. God warn't above the Devil then, I thinks? Not nohow, as I can see!"

The Tinker shook his head, and said, that was a bad case also.

"And ye can't mend ut," added Speed-the-Plough. "Ut's bad, and there ut be. But I'll tall ye what, master. Bad wants payin' for." He nodded and winked mysteriously. "Bad has ut's wages as well's honest work, I'm thinkin'. Varmer Bollop I don't owe no grudge to: Varmer Blaize I do. And I shud like to stick a Lucifer in his rick soam dry windy night." Speed-the-Plough screwed up an eye villanously. "He wants hittin' in the wind,—jest where the pocket is, master, do Varmer Blaize, and he'll cry out 'Oh, Lor!' Varmer Blaize wull. Ye won't get the better o' Varmer Blaize by no means, as I makes out, if ye doan't hit into 'un jest there."

The Tinker sent a rapid succession of white clouds from his mouth and said, that would be

taking the Devil's side of a bad case. Speed-the-Plough observed energetically that, if Farmer Blaize was on the other, he should be on that side.

There was a young gentleman close by, who thought with him. The Hope of Raynham had lent a careless, half-compelled, attention to the foregoing dialogue, wherein a common labourer and a travelling Tinker had propounded and discussed one of the most ancient theories of transmundane dominion and influence on mundane affairs. He now started to his feet, and came tearing through the briar hedge, calling out for one of them to direct him the nearest road to Bursley. The Tinker was kindling preparations for his tea, under the tawny umbrella. A loaf was set forth, on which Ripton's eyes, stuck in the hedge, fastened ravenously. Speed-the-Plough volunteered information that Bursley was a good three mile from where they stood, and a good eight mile from Lobourne.

"I'll give you half-a-crown for that loaf, my good fellow," said Richard to the Tinker.

"It 's a bargain," quoth the Tinker, "eh, Missus?"

Missus replied by humping her back at old Mark'em.

The half-crown was tossed down, and Ripton, who had just succeeded in freeing his limbs from the briar, prickly as a hedgehog, collared the loaf.

"Those young squires be sharp-set and no mistake," said the Tinker to his companion. "Come! we'll to Bursley after 'em, and talk it out over a pot o' beer." Speed-the-Plough was nothing loath, and in a short time they were following the two lads on the road to Bursley, while a horizontal blaze shot across the Autumn land from the western edge of the rain-cloud.

CHAPTER VII.

ARSON.

SEARCH for the missing boys had been made everywhere over Raynham, and Sir Austin was in grievous discontent. None had seen them save Austin Wentworth and Mr. Morton. The Baronet sat construing their account of the flight of the lads when they were hailed, and resolved it into an act of rebellion on the part of his son. At dinner he drank the young heir's health in ominous silence. The Wig of Mr. Justice Harley was low, and Adrian stood up in his place to propose the health. His speech was a fine piece of rhetoric. He warmed in it till, after the Ciceronic model, inanimate objects were personified, and Richard's table-napkin and vacant chair were invoked to follow the steps of a peerless father, and uphold with his dignity the honour of the Feverels. Austin Wentworth'

whom also a soldier's death compelled to take his father's place in support of the toast, was tame after such magniloquence. But the reply, the thanks which young Richard should have delivered in person were not forthcoming. Adrian's oratory had given but a momentary life to napkin and chair. The company of honoured friends, and Aunts, and Uncles, and remotest Cousins, were glad to disperse and seek amusement in music and tea. Sir Austin did his utmost to be hospitably cheerful, and requested them to dance. If he had desired them to laugh, he would have been obeyed, and in as hearty a manner.

"How triste!" said Mrs. Doria Forey to Lobourne's Curate, as that most enamoured automaton went through his paces beside her with professional stiffness.

"One who does not suffer can hardly assent," the Curate answered, basking in her beams.

"Ah, you are good!" exclaimed the lady. "Look at my Clare. She will not dance on her cousin's birthday with any one but him. What are we to do to enliven these people?"

"Alas, Madam! you cannot do for all what

you do for one," the Curate sighed, and wherever she wandered in discourse, drew her back with silken strings to gaze on his enamoured soul.

He was the only gratified stranger present. The others had designs on the young heir. Lady Attenbury of Longford House, had brought her highly polished specimen of market-ware, the lady Juliana Jaye, for a first introduction to him, thinking he had arrived at an age to estimate and pine for her black eyes and pretty pert mouth. The lady Juliana had to pair off with a dapper Papworth, and her Mama was subjected to the gallantries of Sir Miles, who talked land and Steam-Engines to her till she was sick, and had to be impertinent in self-defence. Lady Blandish sat apart with Adrian, and enjoyed his sarcasms on the company. By ten at night, the poor show ended, and the rooms were dark, dark as the prognostics multitudinously hinted by the disappointed and chilled guests, concerning the probable future of the Hope of Raynham. Little Clare kissed her Mama, curtsied to the lingering Curate, and went to bed like a very good girl. Immediately the maid had departed, little Clare deliberately exchanged night attire

for that of day. She was noted as an obedient child. Her light was always allowed to burn in her room for half an hour, to counteract her fears of the dark. She took the light, and stole on tiptoe to Richard's room. No Richard was there. She peeped in further and further. A trifling agitation of the curtains shot her back through the door and along the passage to her own bedchamber with extreme expedition. She was not much alarmed, but feeling guilty she was on her guard. In a short time, she was prowling about the passages again. Richard had slighted and offended the little lady, and was to be asked whether he did not repent such conduct towards his cousin; not to be asked whether he had forgotten to receive his birthday kiss from her; for if he did not choose to remember that, Miss Clare would never remind him of it, and to-night should be his last chance of a reconciliation. Thus she meditated, sitting on a stair, and presently heard Richard's voice below in the hall, shouting for supper.

"Master Richard has returned," old Benson tolled out intelligence to Sir Austin.

"Well?" said the Baronet.

"He complains of being hungry," the butler hesitated, with a look of solemn disgust.

"Let him eat."

Heavy Benson hesitated still more as he announced that the boy had called for wine. It was an unprecedented thing. Sir Austin's brows were portending an arch, but Adrian suggested that he wanted possibly to drink his birthday, and Claret was conceded.

The boys were in the vortex of a partridge-pie when Adrian strolled in to them. They had now changed characters. Richard was uproarious. He drank a health with every glass. His cheeks were flushed, and his eye brilliant. Ripton looked very much like a rogue on the tremble of detection, but his honest hunger and the partridge-pie shielded him awhile from Adrian's scrutinizing glance. Adrian saw there was matter for study, if it were only on Master Ripton's betraying nose, and sat down to hear and mark.

"Good sport, gentlemen, I trust to hear?" he began his quiet banter, and provoked a loud peal of laughter from Richard.

"Ha, ha! I say, Rip! 'Havin' good sport, gentlemen, are ye?' You remember the farmer?

Your health, Parson! We haven't had our sport yet. We're going to have some first-rate sport. Oh, well! we haven't much show of birds. We shot for pleasure, and returned them to the proprietors. You're fond of game, Parson! I wish I'd thought of it. Rip took uncle's rifle out on purpose to knock down his birds clean for you. And he didn't miss, either. He's a dead shot in what cousin Austin calls the Kingdom of 'Would-have-done,' and 'Might-have-been.' Up went the birds, and, cries Rip, 'I've forgotten to load!' O ho!—Rip! some more claret.—Do just leave that nose of yours alone.—Your health, Ripton Thompson! The birds hadn't the decency to wait for him, and so, Parson, it's their fault, and not Rip's, you haven't a dozen brace at your feet. What have you been doing at home, Cousin Rady?"

"Playing Hamlet, in the absence of the Prince of Denmark. The day without you, my dear boy must be dull, you know."

"'He speaks: can I trust what he says is sincere?
There's an edge to his smile which cuts much
like a sneer.'

Sandoe's poems! You know the couplet, Mr.

Rady. Why shouldn't I quote Sandoe? You know you like him, Rady. But if you've missed me, I'm sorry. Rip and I have had a beautiful day. We 've made new acquaintances. We 've seen the world. I 'm the monkey that has seen the world, and I'm going to tell you all about it. First, there's a gentleman who takes a rifle for a fowling-piece. Next, there 's a farmer who warns everybody, gentleman and beggar, off his premises. Next, there 's a tinker and a ploughman, who think that God is always fighting with the Devil which shall command the kingdoms of the earth. The tinker 's for God, and the ploughman—"

"I 'll drink your health, Ricky," said Adrian, interrupting.

"Oh, I forgot, Mr. Parson!—I mean no harm, Adrian. I 'm only telling what I 've heard."

"No harm, my dear boy," returned Adrian. "I 'm perfectly aware that Zoroaster is not dead. You have been listening to a common creed. Drink the Fire-worshipers, if you will."

"Here 's to Zoroaster, then!" cried Richard. "I say, Rippy! we 'll drink the Fire-worshipers to-night, won't we?"

A fearful conspiratorial frown, that would not have disgraced Guido Fawkes, was darted back from the plastic features of Master Ripton.

Richard gave his lungs loud play.

"Why, what did you say about Blazes, Rippy? Didn't you say it was fun?"

Another hideous silencing frown was Ripton's answer. Adrian watched the innocent youths, and knew that there was talking under the table. 'See,' thought he: 'This boy has tasted his first scraggy morsel of life to-day, and already he talks like an old-stager, and has, if I mistake not, been acting too. My respected Chief,' he apostrophized Sir Austin, 'combustibles are only the more dangerous for compression. This boy will be ravenous for Earth when he is let loose, and very soon make his share of it look as foolish as yonder game-pie!'—a prophecy Adrian kept to himself.

Uncle Algernon shambled in to see his nephew before the supper was finished, and his more genial presence brought out a little of the plot.

"Look here, Uncle!" said Richard. "Would you let a churlish old brute of a farmer strike you without making him suffer for it?"

"I fancy I should return the compliment, my lad," replied his Uncle.

"Of course you would! So would I. And he shall suffer for it." The boy looked savage, and his Uncle patted him down.

"I've boxed his son; I'll box him," said Richard, shouting for more wine.

"What, boy! Is it old Blaize has been putting you up?"

"Never mind, Uncle!" the boy nodded mysteriously.

"Look there!" Adrian read on Ripton's face, 'he says 'never mind,' and lets it out!"

"Did we beat to-day, Uncle?"

"Yes boy; and we'd beat them any day they bowl fair. I'd beat them on one leg. There's only Natkins and Featherdene among them worth a farthing."

"We beat!" cries Richard. "Then we'll have some more wine, and drink their healths."

The bell was rung; wine ordered. Presently comes in Heavy Benson to say, supplies are cut off. One bottle, and no more. The Captain whistles: Adrian shrugs.

"Don't you know it's my birthday, Benson?"

Benson knew it, but had positive orders.

He withdraws, and to the delight of all present, Adrian, ever provident, puts his hand behind him and leads forth a flask, saying that he had anticipated this possibility.

One subject was at Richard's heart, about which he was reserved in the midst of his riot. Too proud to inquire how his father had taken his absence, he burned to hear whether he was in disgrace. He led to it repeatedly, and it was constantly evaded by Algernon and Adrian. At last, when the boy declared a desire to wish his father good night, Adrian had to tell him that he was to go straight to bed from the supper-table. Young Richard's face fell at that, and his gaiety forsook him. He marched to his room without another word.

Adrian gave Sir Austin an able version of his son's behaviour and adventures; dwelling upon this sudden taciturnity when he heard of his father's resolution not to see him. The Wise Youth saw that his Chief was mollified behind his moveless mask, and went to bed and Horace, leaving Sir Austin in his study. Long hours the Baronet sat alone. The house had not its usual in-

flux of Feverels that day. Austin Wentworth was staying at Poer Hall, and had only come over for the day. At midnight the house breathed sleep. Sir Austin put on his cloak and cap, and took the lamp to make his rounds. He apprehended nothing special, but with a mind never at rest, he constituted himself the sentinel of Raynham. He passed the chamber where the Great-Aunt Grantley lay, who was to swell Richard's fortune, and so perform her chief business on earth. By her door he murmured, "Good creature! you sleep with a sense of duty done," and paced on, reflecting, "She has not made Money a demon of discord," and blessed her. He had his thoughts at Hippias's somnolent door, and to them the world might have subscribed. Algernon challenged him, and was quieted by two knocks which he knew. Algernon's voice was thick. Sir Austin excused the cause. "He saved my son that day!" the Baronet murmured, and devoutly believed it.

"A monomaniac at large, watching over sane people in slumber!" thinks Adrian Harley, as he hears Sir Austin's footfall, and truly that was a strange object to see, but one not so strange in

his service. Where is the fortress that has not one weak gate? where the man who is sound at each particular angle? "Ay," meditates the recumbent cynic, "more or less mad is not every mother's son? Favourable circumstances; good air, good company, two or three good rules rigidly adhered to; keep the world out of Bedlam. But let the world fly into a passion, and is not Bedlam its safest abode? What seemed inviolable barriers are burst asunder in a trice: men, God's likeness, are at one another's throats, and the Angels may well be weeping. In youth, 'tis love, or lust, makes the world mad: in age, 'tis prejudice. Superstition holds a province: Pride an empire. Tinker's right! There's a battle raging above us. One can't wonder at Ploughman's contrary opinion, as to which is getting the upper hand. If we were not mad, we should fight it for ourselves, and end it. We are; and we make Life the disease, and Death the cure. Good night, my worthy Uncle! Can I deem the man mad who holdeth me much?" And Adrian buried a sleepy smile in his pillow, and slept, knowing himself wise in a mad world.

Sir Austin ascended the stairs, and bent his

steps leisurely towards the chamber where his son was lying in the left wing of the Abbey. At the end of the gallery which led to it, he discovered a dim light. Doubting it an illusion, Sir Austin accelerated his pace. This wing had aforetime a bad character. Notwithstanding what years had done to polish it into fair repute, the Raynham kitchen stuck to tradition still, and preserved certain stories of ghosts seen there, and thought to have been seen, that effectually blackened it in the susceptible minds of new housemaids and under-cooks, whose fears would not allow the sinner to wash his sins. Sir Austin had heard of the tales circulated by his domestics underground. He cherished his own belief, but discouraged theirs, and it was treason at Raynham to be caught traducing the left wing. As the Baronet advanced, the fact of a light burning was clear to him. A slight descent brought him into the passage, and he beheld a poor human candle standing outside his son's chamber. At the same moment a door closed hastily. He entered Richard's room. The boy was absent. The bed was unpressed: no clothes about: nothing to show that he had been there that night.

Sir Austin felt vaguely apprehensive. "Has he gone to my room to await me?" thought the father's heart. Something like a tear quivered in his arid eyes as he meditated and hoped this might be so. His own sleeping-room faced that of his son. He strode to it with a quick heart. It was empty. "My son! my son! what is this?" he murmured. Alarm dislodged anger from his jealous heart, and dread of evil put a thousand questions to him that were answered in air. After pacing up and down his room, he determined to go and ask the boy Thompson, as he called Ripton, what was known to him.

The chamber assigned to Master Ripton Thompson was at the northern extremity of the passage, and overlooked Lobourne and the valley to the west. The bed stood between the window and the door. Sir Austin found the door ajar, and the interior dark. To his surprise, the boy Thompson's couch, as revealed by the rays of his lamp, was likewise vacant. He was turning back, when he fancied he heard the sibilation of a whispering in the room. Sir Austin cloaked the lamp and trod silently towards the window. The heads of his son Richard and the boy Thompson

were seen crouched against the glass, holding excited converse together. Sir Austin listened, but he listened to a language of which he possessed not the key. Their talk was of Fire, and of delay: of expected agrarian astonishment: of a farmer's huge wrath: of violence exercised towards gentlemen, and of vengeance: talk that the boys jerked out by fits, and that came as broken links of a chain impossible to connect. But they awoke curiosity. The Baronet condescended to play the spy upon his son.

Over Lobourne and the valley lay black night and innumerable stars.

"How jolly I feel!" exclaimed Ripton, inspired by Claret; and then, after a luxurious pause, "I think that fellow has pocketed his guinea, and cut his lucky."

Richard allowed a long minute to pass, during which the Baronet waited anxiously for his voice: hardly recognizing it, when he heard its altered tones.

"If he has, I'll go, and I'll do it myself."

"You would?" returned Master Ripton. "Well, I'm hanged!—I say, if you went to school, wouldn't you get into rows! Perhaps he

hasn't found the place where the box was stuck in. I think he funks it. I almost wish you hadn't done it, upon my honour—eh? Look there! what was that? That looked like something.—I say! do you think we shall ever be found out?"

Master Ripton intoned this abrupt interrogation very seriously.

"I don't think about it," said Richard, all his faculties bent on signs from Lobourne.

"Well, but," Ripton persisted, "suppose we are found out?"

"If we are, I must pay for it."

Sir Austin breathed the better for this reply. He was beginning to gather a clue to the dialogue. His son was engaged in a plot, and was moreover the leader of the plot. He listened for further enlightenment.

"What was the fellow's name?" inquired Ripton.

His companion answered, "Tom Bakewell."

"I 'll tell you what," continued Ripton. "You let it all clean out to your cousin and Uncle at supper.—How capital Claret is with Partridge Pie! What a lot I ate!—Didn't you see me frown?"

The young sensualist was in an ecstasy of gratitude to his late refection, and the slightest word recalled him to it. Richard answered him:

"Yes. And felt your kick. It doesn't matter. Rady's safe, and Uncle never blabs."

"Well, my plan is to keep it close. You're never safe if you don't.—I never drank much Claret before," Ripton was off again, "Won't I now, though! Claret's my wine. You know, it may come out any day, and then we're done for," he rather incongruously appended.

Richard only took up the business-threads of his friend's rambling chatter, and answered:

"You've got nothing to do with it, if we are."

"Haven't I, though! I didn't stick in the box, but I'm an accomplice, that's clear. Besides," added Ripton, "do you think I should leave you to bear it all on your shoulders? I ain't that sort of chap, Ricky, I can tell you."

Sir Austin thought more highly of the boy Thompson. Still it looked a detestable conspiracy, and the altered manner of his son impressed him strangely. He was not the boy of yesterday. To Sir Austin it seemed as if a gulf had suddenly opened between them. The boy had

embarked, and was on the waters of life in his own vessel. It was as vain to call him back as to attempt to erase what Time has written with the Judgment Blood! This child for whom he had prayed nightly in such a fervour and humbleness to God, the dangers were about him, the temptations thick on him, and the Devil on board piloting. If a day had done so much, what would years do? Were prayers and all the watchfulness he had expended, of no avail?

A sensation of infinite melancholy overcame the poor gentleman: a thought that he was fighting with a fate in this beloved boy.

He was half disposed to arrest the two conspirators on the spot, and make them confess, and absolve themselves: but it seemed to him better to keep an unseen eye over his son: Sir Austin's old system prevailed.

Adrian characterized this system well, in saying that Sir Austin wished to be Providence to his son.

If immeasurable Love were perfect Wisdom, one human being might almost impersonate Providence to another. Alas! Love, divine as it is, can do no more than lighten the house it inhabits: must take its shape, sometimes intensify

its narrowness: can spiritualize, but not expel, the old life-long lodgers above-stairs and below.

Sir Austin decided to continue quiescent.

The valley still lay black beneath the large Autumnal stars, and the exclamations of the boys were becoming fevered and impatient. By-and-by one insisted that he had seen a twinkle. The direction he gave was out of their anticipations. Again the twinkle was announced. Both boys started to their feet. It was a twinkle in the right direction now.

"He 's done it!" cried Richard in great heat. "Now you may say old Blaize 'll soon be old Blazes, Rip. I hope he 's asleep."

"I 'm sure he 's snoring!—Look there! He 's alight fast enough. He 's dry. He 'll burn.—I say," Ripton reassumed the serious intonation, "do you think they 'll ever suspect us?"

"What if they do? We must brunt it."

"Of course we will. But I say! I wish you hadn't given them the scent, though. I like to look innocent. I can't, when I know people suspect me. Lord! look there! Isn't it just beginning to flare up!"

The farmer's grounds were indeed gradually standing out in sombre shadows.

"I 'll fetch my telescope," said Richard. Ripton, somehow not liking to be left alone, caught hold of him. "No, don't go and lose the best of it. Here, I 'll throw open the window, and we can see."

The window was flung open, and the boys instantly stretched half their bodies out of it: Ripton appearing to devour the rising flames with his mouth: Richard with his eyes.

Opaque and statuesque stood the figure of the Baronet behind them. The wind was low. Dense masses of smoke hung amid the darting snakes of fire, and a red malign light was on the neighbouring leafage. No figures could be seen. Apparently the flames had nothing to contend against, for they were making terrible strides into the darkness.

"Oh!" shouted Richard, overcome by excitement, "if I had my telescope! We must have it! Let me go and fetch it! I will!"

The boys struggled together, and Sir Austin stepped back. As he did so, a cry was heard in the passage. He hurried out, closed the chamber, and came upon little Clare lying senseless along the floor.

CHAPTER VIII.

ADRIAN PLIES HIS HOOK.

In the morning that followed this night, great gossip was interchanged between Raynham and Lobourne. The village told how farmer Blaize, of Belthorpe farm, had had his rick feloniously set fire to; his stables had caught fire, himself been all but roasted alive in the attempt to rescue his cattle, of which numbers had perished in the flames. Raynham counterbalanced Arson with an authentic Ghost seen by Miss Clare in the left wing of the Abbey; the Ghost of a Lady, dressed in deep mourning, a scar on her forehead, and a bloody handkerchief at her breast, frightful to behold! and no wonder the child was frightened out of her wits and lay in a desperate state awaiting the arrival of the London Doctors. It was added that the servants had all threatened to leave in a body, and that Sir Austin to appease

them had promised to pull down the entire left wing, like a gentleman; for no decent creature, said Lobourne, could consent to live in a haunted house.

Rumour for the nonce had a stronger spice of truth than usual. Poor little Clare lay ill, and the calamity that had befallen farmer Blaize, as regards his rick and his cattle, was not much exaggerated. Sir Austin caused an account of it to be given him at breakfast, and appeared so scrupulously anxious to hear the exact extent of injury sustained by the farmer, that Heavy Benson went down to inspect the scene. Mr. Benson returned, and, acting under Adrian's malicious advice, framed a formal Report of the Catastrophe, in which the farmer's breeches figured, and certain cooling applications to a part of the farmer's person. Sir Austin perused it without a smile. He took occasion to have it read out before the two boys, who listened very demurely, as to an ordinary newspaper incident: only when the Report particularized the peculiar garments damaged, and the unwonted distressing position farmer Blaize was reduced to in his bed, an indecorous fit of sneezing laid hold of Master Ripton Thomp-

son, and Richard bit his lip and burst into loud laughter, Ripton joining him, lost to consequences.

"I trust you feel for this poor man," said Sir Austin to his son, somewhat sternly.

"I 'm sorry about the poor horses, Sir," Richard replied, looking anything but sorry about the poor man.

It was a difficult task for Sir Austin to keep his old countenance towards the Hope of Raynham, knowing him the accomplice-incendiary, and believing the deed to have been unprovoked and wanton. But he must do so, he knew, to let the boy have a fair trial against himself. Be it said, moreover, that the Baronet's possession of his son's secret flattered him. It allowed him to act, and in a measure to feel, like Providence; enabled him to observe and provide for the movements of creatures in the dark. He therefore treated the boy as he commonly did, and young Richard saw no change in his father to make him think he was suspected.

The game was not so easy against Adrian. Adrian did not shoot or fish. Voluntarily he did nothing to work off the destructive nervous fluid, or whatever it may be, which is in man's nature;

so that two culprit boys once in his power were not likely to taste the gentle hand of Mercy, and Richard and Ripton paid for many a trout and partridge spared. At every minute of the day Ripton was thrown into sweats of suspicion that discovery was imminent, by some stray remark or message of Adrian. He was as a fish with the hook in his gills, mysteriously caught without having nibbled; and dive into what depths he would, he was sensible of a summoning force that compelled him perpetually towards the gasping surface, which he seemed inevitably approaching when the dinner-bell sounded. There the talk was all of farmer Blaize. If it drooped, Adrian revived it, and his caressing way with Ripton was just such as a keen sportsman feels towards the creature that has owned his skill and is making its appearance for the world to acknowledge the same. Sir Austin saw the manœuvres, and admired Adrian's shrewdness. But he had to check the young natural lawyer, for the effect of so much masked examination upon Richard was growing baneful. This fish also felt the hook in its gills, but this fish was more of a pike, and lay in different waters, where there

were old stumps and black roots to wind itself about, and defy alike strong pulling and delicate handling. In other words, Richard showed symptoms of a disposition to take refuge in lies.

"You know the grounds, my dear boy," Adrian observed to him. "Tell me. Do you think it easy to get to the rick unperceived? I hear they suspect one of the farmer's turned-off hands."

"I tell you I don't know the grounds," Richard sullenly replied.

"Not?" Adrian counterfeited courteous astonishment. "I thought Mr. Thompson said you were over there yesterday?"

Ripton, glad to speak a truth, hurriedly assured Adrian that it was not he had said so.

"Not? You had good sport, gentlemen, hadn't you?"

"Oh, yes!" mumbled the wretched victims, reddening as they remembered, in Adrian's slightly drawled rusticity of tone, farmer Blaize's first address to them.

"I suppose you were among the Fire-worshipers last night, too?" persisted Adrian. "In some countries, I hear, they manage their best sport at night-time, and beat up for game with

torches. It must be a fine sight. After all, the Country would be dull if we hadn't a rip here and there to treat us to a little conflagration."

"A rip!" laughed Richard, to his friend's disgust and alarm at his daring: "You don't mean this Rip, do you?"

"Mr. Thompson fire a rick? I should as soon suspect you, my dear boy.—You are aware, young gentlemen, that it is rather a serious thing —Eh? In this country, you know, the landlord has always been the pet of the Laws. By the way," Adrian continued, as if diverging to another topic, "You met two gentlemen of the road in your explorations yesterday, Magians. Now, if I were a magistrate of the County, like Sir Miles Papworth, my suspicions would light upon those gentlemen. A tinker and a ploughman, I think you said, Mr. Thompson. Not? Well, say two ploughmen."

"More likely two tinkers," said Richard.

"Oh! if you wish to exclude the ploughman —was he out of employ?"

Ripton, with Adrian's eyes inveterately fixed on him, stammered an affirmative.

"The tinker, or the ploughman?"

"The ploughm—." Ingenuous Ripton looking about, as if to aid himself whenever he was able to speak the truth, beheld Richard's face blackening at him, and swallowed back half the word.

"The ploughman!" Adrian took him up cheerily. "Then we have here a ploughman out of employ. Given a ploughman out of employ, and a rick burnt. The burning of a rick is an act of vengeance, and a ploughman out of employ is a vengeful animal. The rick and the ploughman are advancing to a juxtaposition. Motive being established, we have only to prove their proximity at a certain hour, and our ploughman voyages beyond seas."

"Dear me! is it transportation for rick-burning?" inquired Ripton aghast.

Adrian spoke solemnly: "They shave your head. You are manacled. Your diet is sour bread and cheese-parings. You work in strings of twenties and thirties. ARSON is branded on your backs in an enormous A. Theological works are the sole literary recreation of the well-conducted and deserving. Consider the fate of this poor fellow, and what an act of vengeance brings him to! Do you know his name?"

"How should I know his name?" said Richard, with a stubborn assumption of innocence sad to see.

Sir Austin remarked that no doubt it would soon be known, and Adrian perceived that he was to quiet his line, marvelling a little at the Baronet's blindness to what was so clear. He would not tell, for that would ruin his future influence with Richard; still he wanted some present credit for his discernment and devotion. The boys got away from dinner, and, after deep consultation, agreed upon a course of conduct, which was, to commiserate farmer Blaize loudly, and make themselves look as much like the public as it was possible for two desperate young malefactors to look, one of whom already felt Adrian's enormous A devouring his back with the fierceness of the Promethean Eagle, and isolating him for ever from mankind. Adrian relished their novel tactics sharply, and led them to lengths of lamentation for farmer Blaize. Do what they might, the hook was in their gills. The farmer's whip had reduced them to bodily contortions: these were decorous compared with the spiritual writhings they had to perform under

Adrian's skilful manipulation. Ripton was fast becoming a coward, and Richard a liar, when next morning Austin Wentworth came over from Poer Hall bringing news that one Mr. Thomas Bakewell, yeoman, had been arrested on suspicion of the crime of Arson and lodged in jail, awaiting the magisterial pleasure of Sir Miles Papworth. Austin's eye rested on Richard, as he spoke these terrible tidings. The Hope of Raynham returned his look, perfectly calm, and had, moreover, the presence of mind not to look at Ripton.

CHAPTER IX.

JUVENILE STRATAGEMS.

As soon as they could escape, the boys got away together into an obscure corner of the park, and there took counsel of their extremity.

"Whatever shall we do now?" asked Ripton of his leader.

Scorpion girt with fire was never in a more terrible prison-house than poor Ripton, around whom the raging element he had assisted to create seemed to be drawing momently narrower circles.

"There 's only one chance," said Richard, coming to a dead halt, and folding his arms resolutely.

His comrade inquired with the utmost eagerness, what that chance might be?

Richard fixed his eyes on a flint, and replied: "We must rescue that fellow from jail."

"Rescue him from jail!" Ripton gazed at his leader, and fell back with astonishment. "My dear Ricky! but how are we to do it?"

Richard still perusing his flint, replied: "We must manage to get a file in to him, and a rope. It can be done, I tell you. I don't care what I pay. I don't care what I do. He must be got out."

"Bother that old Blaize!" exclaimed Ripton, taking off his cap to wipe his frenzied forehead, and brought down his friend's severe reproof.

"Never mind old Blaize now. Talk about letting it out. Look at you. I'm ashamed of you. You talk about Robin Hood and King Richard! Why, you haven't an atom of courage. Why, you let it out every second of the day. Whenever Rady begins speaking, you start, I can see the perspiration rolling down you. Are you afraid?——And then you contradict yourself. You never keep to one story. Now, follow me. We must risk everything to get him out. Mind that! And keep out of Adrian's way as much as you can. And keep to one story."

With these sage directions, the young leader

marched his companion-culprit down to inspect the jail where Tom Bakewell lay groaning over the results of the super-mundane conflict, and the victim of it that he was.

In Lobourne Austin Wentworth had the reputation of the poor man's friend; a title he earned more largely ere he went to the reward God alone can give to that supreme virtue. Dame Bakewell, the mother of Tom, on hearing of her son's arrest, had run to comfort him and render him what help she could; but this was only sighs and tears, and, Oh deary me! which only perplexed poor Tom, who bade her leave an unlucky chap to his fate and not make him feel himself a thundering villain. Whereat the dame begged him to take heart, and he should have a true comforter. "And though it's a gentleman that's coming to you, Tom—for he never refuses a poor body," said Mrs. Bakewell, "it's a true Christian, Tom! and the Lord knows if the sight of him mayn't be the saving of you, for he's light to look on, and a sermon to listen to, he is!"

Tom was not prepossessed by the prospect of a sermon, and looked a sullen dog enough when Austin entered his cell. He was surprised at

the end of half an hour to find himself engaged in man-to-man conversation with a gentleman and a Christian. When Austin rose to go, Tom begged permission to shake his hand.

"Yew 've doan me good, Sir," said Tom, "and made me feel—there! I knows I 'm a sinner, though yew an't said ut—that 's where 't is! —like a man! And a man I intends to be let coam what coam may! Now, Sir, Muster Went'orth! you knows what a bad chap I be. But I an't a blackguard. Now, Sir, 'skews me for sayin' I moight 'a doan your fam'ly a bad turn. But I an't a-goin' to. Leastways, if I was ever a-minded to, which I warn't. Leastways, not now, I an't. Yew tak' and tall young Measter up at t' Abbey, that I an't the chap to peach. He 'll know. He 's a young gentleman as 'll mak' any man do as he wants 'em! He 's a mortal wild young gentleman! And I'm a Ass! That's where 't is. But I an't a blackguard. Tall 'n that, Sir! That 'll mak' un easy, or he 'll mayhap be funkin'-loike. They knows at Beltharpe ut 's all on moy shoolders. I did ut. Thay 're broad 'nough. Tall 'n that, Sir. Sure-ly they be!" And Tom shook his much-burdened shoulders with a grin.

This was how it came that Austin eyed young Richard seriously while he told the news at Raynham. The boy was shy of Austin more than of Adrian. Why, he did not know; but he made it a hard task for Austin to catch him alone, and turned sulky that instant. Austin was not clever like Adrian: he seldom divined other people's ideas, and always went the direct road to his object; so instead of beating about and setting the boy on the alert at all points, crammed to the muzzle with lies, he just said, "Tom Bakewell told me to let you know he does not intend to peach on you," and left him.

Richard repeated the intelligence to Ripton, who cried aloud that Tom was a brick.

"He shan't suffer for it," said Richard, and pondered on a thicker rope and sharper file.

"But will your cousin tell?" was Ripton's reflection.

"He!" Richard's lip expressed contempt. "A ploughman refuses to peach, and you ask if a Feverel will?"

Ripton stood for the twentieth time reproved on this point.

The boys had examined the outer walls of the jail, and arrived at the conclusion that Tom's escape might be managed, if Tom had spirit, and the rope and file could be anyway reached to him. But to do this, somebody must gain admittance to his cell, and who was to be taken into their confidence?

"Try your cousin," Ripton suggested, after much debate.

Richard, smiling, wished to know if he meant Adrian?

"No, no!" Ripton hurriedly reassured him. "Austin."

The same idea was knocking at Richard's head.

"Let 's get the rope and file first," said he, and to Bursley they went for those implements to defeat the law, Ripton procuring the file at one shop, and Richard the rope at another; with such masterly cunning did they lay their measures for the avoidance of every possible chance of detection. And better to assure this, in a wood outside Bursley Richard stripped to his shirt and wound the rope round his body, tasting the tortures of anchorites and penitential friars, that nothing should be risked to make

Tom's escape a certainty. Sir Austin saw the marks at night, as his son lay asleep, through the half-opened folds of his bed-gown, and wondered afresh, but decided still to watch.

It was a severe stroke when, after all their stratagems and trouble, Austin Wentworth refused the office the boys had zealously designed for him. Time pressed. In a few days poor Tom would have to face the redoubtable Sir Miles, and get committed, for rumours of overwhelming evidence to convict him were rife about Lobourne, and farmer Blaize's wrath was unappeasable. Again and again young Richard begged his cousin not to see him disgraced, and to help him in this extremity. Austin was firm in his refusal.

"My dear Ricky," said he, "there are two ways of getting out of a scrape: a long way, and a short way. When you 've tried the roundabout method, and failed, come to me, and I 'll show you the straight route."

Richard was too entirely bent upon the roundabout method to consider this advice more than empty words, and only ground his teeth at Austin's unkind refusal.

He imparted to Ripton, at the eleventh hour, that they must do it themselves, to which Ripton heavily assented.

On the day preceding poor Tom's doomed appearance before the magistrate, Dame Bakewell had an interview with Austin, who went to Raynham immediately, and sought Adrian's counsel what was to be done. Homeric laughter and nothing else could be got out of Adrian when he heard of the doings of these desperate boys: How they had entered Dame Bakewell's smallest of retail shops, and purchased tea, sugar, candles, and comfits of every description, till the shop was clear of customers: how they had then hurried her into her little back-parlour, where Richard had torn open his shirt and revealed the coils of rope, and Ripton displayed the point of a file from a serpentine recess in his jacket: how they had then told the astonished woman that the rope she saw and the file she saw were instruments for the liberation of her son; that there existed no other means on earth to save him, they, the boys, having unsuccessfully attempted all: how upon that Richard had tried with the utmost earnestness to persuade her to disrobe

and wind the rope round her own person; and Ripton had aired his eloquence to induce her to secrete the file: how, when she resolutely objected to the rope, both boys began backing the file, and in an evil hour, she feared, said Dame Bakewell, she had rewarded the gracious permission given her by Sir Miles Papworth to visit her son, by tempting Tom to file the Law. Though, thanks be to the Lord! Dame Bakewell added, Tom had turned up his nose at the file, and so she had told young Master Richard, who swore very bad for a young gentleman.

"Boys are like monkeys," remarked Adrian, at the close of his explosions, "the gravest actors of farcical nonsense that the world possesses. May I never be where there are no boys! A couple of boys left to themselves will furnish richer fun than any troop of trained comedians. No: no Art arrives at the artlessness of Nature in matters of Comedy. You can't simulate the Ape. Your antics are dull. They haven't the charming inconsequence of the natural animal. Look at these two! Think of the shifts they are put to all day long! They know I know all about it, and yet their serenity of innocence is all

but unruffled in my presence.—You 're sorry to think about the end of the business, Austin? So am I! I dread the idea of the curtain going down. Besides, it will do Ricky a world of good. A practical lesson is the best lesson."

"Sinks deepest," said Austin, "but whether he learns good or evil from it is the question at stake."

Adrian stretched his length at ease.

"This will be his first nibble at Experience, old Time's fruit, hateful to the palate of youth! for which season only hath it any nourishment! Experience! You know Coleridge's capital simile?—Mournful you call it? Well! all Wisdom is mournful. 'T is therefore, coz, that the Wise do love the Comic Muse. Their own high food would kill them. You shall find great poets, rare philosophers, night after night on the broad grin before a row of yellow lights and mouthing masks. Why? because all 's dark at home. The Stage is the pastime of great minds. That 's how it comes that the Stage is now down. An Age of rampant little minds—pshaw! my dear Austin! how I hate that cant of yours about an Age of Work—you, and your Mortons, and your

parsons Brawnley, rank Radicals all of you, base Materialists! What does Diaper Sandoe sing of your Age of Work? Listen!

"An Age of petty tit for tat,
An Age of busy gabble:
An Age that's like a brewer's vat
Fermenting for the rabble!

"An Age that's chaste in Love, but lax
To virtuous abuses:
Whose gentlemen and ladies wax
Too dainty for their uses.

"An Age which drives an Iron Horse
Of Time and Space defiant:
Exulting in a Giant's Force,
And trembling at the Giant.

"An Age of Quaker hue and cut,
By Mammon misbegotten;
See the mad Hamlet mouth and strut!
And mark the Kings of Cotton!

"From this unrest, lo, early wreck'd,
A Future staggers crazy,
Ophelia of the Ages, deck'd
With woful weed and daisy!"

Murmuring, "Get your parson Brawnley to

answer that!" Adrian changed the resting-place of a leg, and smiled. The AGE was an old battle-field between him and Austin.

"My parson Brawnley, as you call him, has answered it," said Austin, "not by hoping his best, which would probably leave the Age to go mad to your satisfaction, but by doing it. And he has and will answer your Diaper Sandoe in better verse, as he confutes him in a better life."

"You don't see Sandoe's depth," Adrian replied. "Consider that phrase, 'Ophelia of the Ages!' Is not Brawnley, like a dozen other leading spirits—I think that 's your term—just the metaphysical Hamlet to drive her mad? She, poor maid! asks for Marriage and smiling babes, while my lord lover stands questioning the Infinite, and rants to the Impalpable."

Austin laughed. "Marriage, and smiling babes she would have in abundance, if Brawnley legislated. Wait till you know him. He will be over at Poer Hall shortly, and you will see what a Man of the Age means. But now pray consult with me about these boys."

"Oh, those boys!" Adrian tossed a hand.

"Are there boys of the Age as well as men? Not? Then boys are better than men: boys are for all Ages. What do you think, Austin? They 've been studying Latude's Escape. I found the book open in Ricky's room, on the top of Jonathan Wild. Jonathan preserved the secrets of his profession, and taught them nothing. So they 're going to make a Latude of Mr. Tom Bakewell. He 's to be Bastille Bakewell, whether he will or no. Let them. Let the wild colt run free! We can't help them. We can only look on. We should spoil the play. Keep out of it, if you 're wise, Austin, or possibly they 'll be turning from Tom to you and insist on your swallowing the famous file to save Tom from transportation."

Adrian always made a point of feeding the fretful beast, Impatience, with pleasantries; a not congenial diet; and Austin, the most patient of human beings, began to lose his self-control.

"You talk as if Time belonged to you, Adrian. We have but a few hours left us. Work first, and joke afterwards. The boy's fate is being decided now."

"So is everybody's, my dear Austin!" yawned the Epicurean.

"Yes, but this boy is at present under our guardianship: under yours especially."

"Not yet! not yet!" Adrian interjected languidly. "No getting into scrapes when I have him. The leash, young hound! The collar, young colt! I'm perfectly irresponsible at present."

"You may have something different to deal with, when you are responsible, if you think that."

"I take my young Prince as I find him, coz: a Julian, or a Caracalla: a Constantine, or a Nero. Then if he will play the fiddle to a conflagration, he shall play it well: if he must be a disputatious apostate, at any rate, he shall understand logic and men, and have the habit of saying his prayers."

"Then you leave me to act alone?" said Austin, rising.

"Without a single curb!" Adrian gesticulated an acquiesced withdrawal. "I'm sure you would not, still more certain you cannot, do harm. And be mindful of my prophetic words:

Whatever's done, Old Blaize will have to be bought off. There's the affair settled at once. I suppose I must go to the Chief to-night, and settle it myself. We can't see this poor devil condemned, though it's nonsense to talk of a boy being the prime instigator."

Austin cast an eye at the complacent languor of the Wise Youth, his cousin, and the little that he knew of his fellows told him he might talk for ever here, and not be comprehended. The Wise Youth's two ears were stuffed with his own wisdom. One evil only Adrian dreaded, it was clear: the action of the Law. Austin saw it sadly, and foreboded of Richard's future.

As he was moving away, Adrian called out to him, "Stop, Austin! There! don't be anxious! You invariably take the glum side. I've done something. Never mind what. If you go down to Belthorpe, be civil, but not obsequious. You remember the tactics of Scipio Africanus against the Punic elephants? Well, don't say a word: —in thine ear, coz: I've turned Master Blaize's elephants. If they charge, 'twill be a feint, and back to the destruction of his serried ranks! You understand. Not? Well, 'tis as well. Only let

none say that I sleep. If I must see him to-night, I go down knowing he has not got us in his power." The Wise Youth yawned, and stretched out a hand for any book that might be within his reach. Austin left him, to look about the grounds for Richard.

CHAPTER X.

DAPHNE'S BOWER.

A LITTLE laurel-shaded Temple of white marble looked out on the river from a knoll bordering the Raynham beechwoods, and was dubbed by Adrian Daphne's Bower. To this spot Richard had retired, and there Austin found him with his head buried in his hands, a picture of Desperation whose last shift has been defeated. He allowed Austin to greet him, and sit by him, without lifting his head. Perhaps his eyes were not presentable.

"Where's your friend?" Austin began.

"Gone!" was the answer, sounding cavernous from behind hair and fingers. An explanation presently followed, as Ripton's due, that a summons had come for him in the morning from Mr. Thompson; and that Ripton had departed against his will.

In fact Ripton had protested that he would

defy his parent and remain by his friend in the hour of adversity and at the post of danger. Sir Austin signified his opinion that a boy should obey his parent, by giving orders to Heavy Benson for Ripton's box to be packed and ready before noon; and Ripton's alacrity in taking the Baronet's view of filial duty, was as little feigned as his offer to Richard to throw filial duty to the winds. He rejoiced that the Fates had agreed to remove him from the very hot neighbourhood Lobourne, while he grieved, like an honest lad, to see his comrade left to face calamity alone. The boys parted amicably as they could hardly fail to do, when Ripton had sworn fealty to the Feverels with a fervour that made him declare himself bond and due to appear at any stated hour and at any stated place to fight all the farmers in England, on a mandate from the heir of the House.

"So you're left alone," said Austin, contemplating the boy's shapely head. "I'm glad of it. We never know what's in us till we stand by ourselves."

There appeared to be no answer forthcoming. Vanity, however, replied at last: "He wasn't much support."

"Remember his good points, now he's gone, Ricky."

"Oh! he was staunch," the boy grumbled.

"And a staunch friend is not always to be found. Now, have you tried your own way of rectifying this business, Ricky?"

"I've done everything."

"And failed!"

There was a pause, and then the deep-toned evasion,

"Tom Bakewell's a coward!"

"I suppose, poor fellow," said Austin, in his kind way, "he doesn't want to get into a deeper mess. I don't think he's a coward."

"He is a coward," cried Richard fiercely. "Do you think, if I had a file, I would stay in prison? I'd be out the first night! The miserable churl! And he might have had the rope, too—a rope thick enough for a couple of men his size and weight. Ripton and I and Ned Markham swung on it for an hour, and it didn't give. He's a coward, and deserves his fate. I've no compassion for a coward."

"Nor I much," said Austin.

Richard had raised his head in the heat of his

denunciation of poor Tom. He would have hidden it, had he known the thought in Austin's clear eyes while he faced them.

"I never met a coward myself," Austin continued. "I have heard of one or two. One let an innocent man die for him."

"How base!" exclaimed the boy.

"Yes, it was bad," Austin acquiesced.

"Bad!" Richard scorned the poor contempt. "How I would have spurned him! He was a coward!"

"I believe he pleaded the feelings of his family in his excuse, and tried every means to get him off. I have read also in the Confessions of a celebrated philosopher, that in his youth he committed some act of pilfering, and accused a young servant-girl of his own theft, who was condemned and dismissed for it, pardoning her guilty accuser."

"What a coward!" shouted Richard. "And he confessed it publicly?"

"You may read it yourself."

"He actually wrote it down, and printed it?"

"You have the book in your Father's library. Would you have done so much?"

Richard faltered. No! he admitted that he never could have told people.

"Then who is to call that man a coward?" said Austin. "He expiated his cowardice, as all who give way in moments of weakness, and are not cowards, must do. The coward chooses to think 'God does not see. I shall escape.' He who is not a coward, and has succumbed, knows that God has seen all, and it is not so hard a task for him to make his heart bare to the world. Worse, I should fancy it, to know myself an impostor when men praised me."

Young Richard's eyes were wandering on Austin's gravely cheerful face. A keen intentness suddenly fixed them, and he dropped his head.

"So I think you're wrong, Ricky, in calling this poor Tom a coward, because he refuses to try your means of escape," Austin resumed. "A coward hardly objects to drag in his accomplice. And where the person involved belongs to a great family, it seems to me that for a poor ploughlad to volunteer not to do so, speaks him anything but a coward."

Richard was silent. Altogether to surrender

his Rope and File was a fearful sacrifice, after all the time, trepidation, and study, he had spent on those two saving instruments. If he avowed Tom's manly behaviour, Richard Feverel was in a totally new position. Whereas, by keeping Tom a coward, Richard Feverel was the injured one, and to seem injured is always a luxury; sometimes a necessity, whether among boys or men.

In Austin the Magian conflict would not have lasted long. He had but a blind notion of the fierceness with which it raged in young Richard. Happily for the boy, Austin was not a preacher. A single insistance, a cant phrase, a fatherly manner, might have wrecked him, by arousing ancient, or latent, opposition. The born preacher we feel instinctively to be our foe. He may do some good to the wretches that have been struck down, and lie gasping on the battle-field: he rouses deadly antagonism in the strong. Richard's nature, left to itself, wanted little more than an indication of the proper track, and when he said, "Tell me what I can do, Austin?" he had fought the best half of the battle. His voice was subdued. Austin put his hand on the boy's shoulder.

"You must go down to farmer Blaize."

"Well!" said Richard, sullenly divining the deed of penance.

"You 'll know what to say to him when you 're there."

The boy bit his lip, and frowned. "Ask a favour of that big brute, Austin? I can't!"

"Just tell him the whole case, and that you don't intend to stand by and let the poor fellow suffer without a friend to help him out of his scrape."

"But, Austin!" the boy pleaded, "I shall have to ask him to help off Tom Bakewell! How can I ask him, when I hate him?"

Without seeking to confute this logical proposition, Austin bade him go, and think nothing of the consequences till he got there.

Richard groaned in soul.

"You 've no pride, Austin."

"Perhaps not," Austin calmly avowed.

"You don't know what it is to ask a favour of a brute you hate."

Richard stuck to that view of the case, and stuck to it the faster the more imperatively the urgency of a movement dawned upon him.

"Why," continued the boy, "I shall hardly be able to keep my fists off him!"

"Surely you've punished him enough, boy?" said Austin.

"He struck me!" Richard's lip quivered. "He dared not come at me with his hands. He struck me with a whip. He'll be telling everybody that he horsewhipped me, and that I went down and begged his pardon. Begged his pardon! A Feverel beg his pardon! Oh, if I had my will!"

"The man earns his bread, Ricky. You poached on his grounds. He turned you off, and you fired his rick."

"And I'll pay him for his loss. And I won't do any more."

"Because you won't ask a favour of him?"

"No! I will not ask a favour of him."

Austin looked at the boy steadily. "You prefer to receive a favour from poor Tom Bakewell?"

At Austin's slow enunciation of this obverse view of the matter, Richard raised his brow. Dimly a new light broke in upon him. "Favour from Tom Bakewell, the ploughman? How do you mean, Austin?"

To save yourself an unpleasantness, you permit a country lad to sacrifice himself for you? I confess I should not have so much pride."

"Pride!" shouted Richard, stung by the taunt, and set his sight hard at the blue ridges of the hills.

Not knowing for the moment what else to do, Austin drew a picture of Tom in prison, and repeated Tom's volunteer statement. The picture, though his intentions were far from designing it so, had to Richard, whose perception of humour was infinitely keener, a horrible chaw-bacon smack about it. Visions of a grinning lout, open from ear to ear, unkempt, coarse, splay-footed, rose before him and afflicted him with the strangest sensations of disgust and comicality, mixed up with pity and remorse: a sort of twisted pathos. There lay Tom; hob-nail Tom! a bacon-munching, reckless, beer-swilling animal! and yet a man; a dear brave human heart notwithstanding; capable of devotion and unselfishness. The boy's better spirit was touched, and kindled his imagination to realize the abject figure of poor clodpole Tom, and surround it with a halo of mournful light. His soul was alive. Feelings he

had never known streamed in upon him, as from an ethereal casement: an unwonted tenderness: an embracing humour: a consciousness of some ineffable glory: an irradiation of the features of humanity. All this was in the bosom of the boy, and through it all, the vision of an actual hob-nail Tom, coarse, unkempt, open from ear to ear; whose presence was a finger of shame to him, and an oppression of clodpole; yet towards whom he felt just then a loving-kindness beyond what he felt for any living creature. He laughed at him, and wept over him. He prized him, while he shrank from him. It was a genial strife of the Angel in him with constituents less divine: but the Angel was uppermost and led the van: extinguished loathing: humanized laughter: transfigured Pride—Pride that would persistently contemplate the corduroys of gaping Tom, and cry to Richard, in the very tone of Adrian's ironic voice: 'Behold your benefactor!'

Austin sat by the boy, unaware of the sublimer tumult he had stirred. Little of it was perceptible in Richard's countenance. The lines of his mouth were slightly drawn; his eyes still hard set into the distance. He remained thus many

minutes. Finally he jumped to his legs, saying, "I'll go at once to old Blaize, and tell him."

Austin grasped his hand, and together they issued out of Daphne's Bower, in the direction of Lobourne.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BITTER CUP.

Farmer Blaize was not so astonished at the visit of Richard Feverel, as that young gentleman expected him to be. The farmer, seated in his easy chair in the little low-roofed parlour of an old-fashioned farmhouse, with a long clay-pipe on the table at his elbow, and a veteran pointer at his feet, had already given audience to three distinguished members of the Feverel blood, who had come separately, according to their accustomed secretiveness, and with one object. In the morning it was Sir Austin himself. Shortly after his departure, arrived Austin Wentworth; close on his heels, Algernon, known about Lobourne as, the Captain, popular wherever he was known. Farmer Blaize reclined in considerable elation. He had brought these great people to a pretty low pitch. He had welcomed them hospitably, as a

British yeoman should; but not budged a foot in his demands: not to the Baronet: not to the Captain: not to good young Mr. Wentworth. For farmer Blaize was a solid Englishman, and on hearing from the Baronet a frank confession of the hold he had on the family, he determined to tighten his hold, and only relax it in exchange for tangible advantages: compensation to his pocket, his wounded person, and his still more wounded feelings: the total indemnity being, in round figures, three hundred pounds, and a spoken apology from the prime offender, young Mister Richard. Even then, there was a reservation. Provided, the farmer said, nobody had been tampering with any of his witnesses. In that case, farmer Blaize declared, the money might go, and he would transport Tom Bakewell, as he had sworn he would. And it goes hard, too, with an accomplice, by Law, added the farmer, knocking the ashes leisurely out of his pipe. He had no wish to bring any disgrace anywhere, had farmer Blaize. He respected the inmates of Raynham Abbey, as in duty bound. He should be sorry to see them in trouble. Only no tampering with his witnesses. He was a man for Law. Rank was much:

money was much: but Law was more. In this country, Law was above the sovereign. To tamper with the Law was treason to the realm.

"I come to you direct," the Baronet explained: "I tell you candidly in what way I discovered my son to be mixed up in this miserable affair. I promise you indemnity for your loss, and an apology that shall, I trust, satisfy your feelings, assuring you that to tamper with witnesses is not the province of a Feverel. All I ask of you in return is, not to press the prosecution. At present it rests with you. I am bound to do all that lies in my power for this imprisoned man. How and wherefore my son was prompted to suggest, or assist in, such an act, I cannot explain, for I do not know."

"Hum!" said the farmer. "I think I do."

"You know the cause?" Sir Austin stared. "I beg you to confide it to me."

"—Least, I can pretty nigh neighbour it with a guess," said the farmer. "We an't good friends, Sir Aust'n, me and your son, jest now: not to say cordial. I, ye see, Sir Aust'n, I'm a man as don't like young gentlemen a-poachin' on his grounds without his permission,—in 'special when birds is

plentiful on their own. It appear he do like it. Consequently I has to flick this whip—as them fallers at the races: All in this 'ere Ring 's mine! as much as to say; and who 's been hit, he 's had fair warnin'. I'm sorry for 't, but that 's jest the case."

Sir Austin retired to communicate with his son, when he should find him.

Algernon's interview passed off in Ale and promises. He also assured farmer Blaize that no Feverel could be affected by his proviso.

No less did Austin Wentworth. The farmer was satisfied. "Money 's safe, I know," said he; "now for the 'pology!" and Farmer Blaize thrust his legs further out, and his head further back.

The farmer naturally reflected that the three separate visits had been conspired together. Still the Baronet's frankness, and the Baronet's not having reserved himself for the third and final charge, puzzled him. He was considering whether they were a deep, or a shallow, lot, when young Richard was announced.

A pretty little girl with the roses of thirteen springs in her cheeks, and abundant beautiful bright tresses, tripped before the boy, and loi-

tered shyly by the farmer's arm-chair to steal a look at the handsome new-comer. She was introduced to Richard as the farmer's niece, Lucy Desborough, the daughter of a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, and, what was better, though the farmer did not pronounce it so loudly, a real good girl.

Neither the excellence of her character, nor her rank in life, tempted Richard to inspect the little lady. He made an awkward bow, and sat down.

The farmer's eyes twinkled. "Her father," he continued, "fought and fell for his coontry. A man as fights for 's coontry, 's a right to hould up his head—ay! with any in the land. Desb'rough's o' Dorset! d' ye know that family, Master Feverel?"

Richard did not know them, and, by his air, did not desire to become acquainted with any offshoot of that family.

"She can make puddens and pies," the farmer went on, regardless of his auditor's gloom. "She 's a lady, as good as the best of 'em. I don't care about their being Catholics—the Desb'roughs o' Dorset are gentlemen. And she 's good for

the pianer, too! She strums to me of evenin's. I'm for the old tunes: she's for the new. Gal-like! While she's with me, she shall be taught things use'l. She can parleyvoo a good 'un and foot it, as it goes: been in France a couple o' year. I prefer the singin' of 't, to the talkin' of 't. Come, Luce! toon up—eh?—Ye wun't? That song about the Viffendeer—a female"—farmer Blaize volunteered the translation of the title—"who wears the—you guess what! and marches along with the French sojers: A pretty brazen bit o' goods! I sh'd fancy."

Mademoiselle Lucy corrected her uncle's French, but objected to do more. The handsome cross boy had almost taken away her voice for speech, as it was, and sing in his company she could not; so she stood, a hand on her uncle's chair to stay herself from falling, while she wriggled a dozen various shapes of refusal, and shook her head at the farmer with fixed eyes.

"Aha!" laughed the farmer, dismissing her, "they soon learn the difference 'twixt the young 'un and the old 'un. Go along, Luce! and learn yer lessons for tomorrow."

Reluctantly the daughter of the Royal Navy glided away. Her uncle's head followed her to the door, where she dallied to catch a last impression of the young stranger's lowering face, and darted through.

Farmer Blaize laughed and chuckled. "She an't so fond of her uncle as that, every day! Not that she an't a good nurse—the kindest little soul you 'd meet of a winter's walk! She 'll read t' ye, and make drinks, and sing, too, if ye likes it, and she won't be tired. A obstinate good 'un, she be! Bless her!"

The farmer may have designed, by these eulogies of his niece, to give his visitor time to recover his composure, and establish a common topic. His diversion only irritated and confused our shame-eaten youth. Richard's intention had been to come to the farmer's threshold: to summon the farmer thither, and in a loud and haughty tone then and there to take upon himself the whole burden of the charge against Tom Bakewell. He had strayed, during his passage to Belthorpe, somewhat back to his old nature; and his being compelled to enter the house of his enemy, sit in his chair, and endure an intro-

duction to his family, was more than he bargained for. He commenced blinking hard in preparation for the horrible dose to which delay and the farmer's cordiality added inconceivable bitters. Farmer Blaize was quite at his ease: nowise in a hurry. He spoke of the weather and the harvest: of recent doings up at the Abbey: glanced over that year's cricketing: hoped that no future Feverel would lose a leg to the game. Richard saw and heard Arson in it all. He blinked harder, as he neared the cup. In a moment of silence, he seized it with a gasp.

"Mr. Blaize! I have come to tell you that I am the person who set fire to your rick the other night."

An odd contraction formed about the farmer's mouth. He changed his posture, and said, "Ay? that 's what ye 're come to tall me, Sir?"

"Yes!" said Richard firmly.

"And that be all?"

"Yes!" Richard reiterated.

The farmer again changed his posture. "Then, my lad, ye 've come to tall me a lie!"

Farmer Blaize looked straight at the boy, undismayed by the dark flush of ire he had kindled.

"You dare to call me a liar!" cried Richard, starting up.

"I say," the farmer renewed his first emphasis, and smacked his thigh thereto, "that 's a lie!"

Richard was mounting the white cockade of the Feverels. He held out his clenched fist. "You have twice insulted me. You have struck me: you have dared to call me a liar. I would have apologized—I would have asked your pardon, to have got off that fellow in prison. Yes! I would have degraded myself that another man should not suffer for my deed—"

"Quite proper!" interposed the farmer.

"And you take this opportunity of insulting me afresh. You 're a coward, Sir! nobody but a coward would have insulted me in his own house."

"Sit ye down, sit ye down, young Master," said the farmer, indicating the chair and cooling the outburst with his hand. "Sit ye down. Don't ye be hasty. If ye hadn't been hasty

t' other day, we sh'd a been friends yet. Sit ye down, Sir. I sh'd be sorry to reckon you out a liar, Mr. Feverel, or anybody o' your name. I respects yer father, though we 're opp'site pol'tics. I 'm willin' to think well o' you. What I say is, that as you say an't the trewth. Mind! I don't like you none the worse for 't. But it an't what is. That 's all! You knows it as well 's I!"

Richard, disdaining to shows signs of being pacified, angrily reseated himself. The farmer spoke sense, and the boy, after his late interview with Austin, had become capable of perceiving vaguely that a towering passion is hardly the justification for a wrong course of conduct.

"Come," continued the farmer, not unkindly, "what else have you to say?"

Here was the same bitter cup he had already once drained, brimming at Richard's lips again! Alas, poor human nature! that empties to the dregs a dozen of these evil drinks, to evade the single one Destiny, less cruel, had insisted upon.

The boy blinked, and tossed it off.

"I came to say, that I regretted the revenge I had taken on you for your striking me."

Farmer Blaize nodded.

"And now ye 've done, young gentleman?"

Still another cupful!

"I should be very much obliged," Richard formally began: but his stomach was turned; he could but sip and sip, and gather a distaste which threatened to make the penitential act impossible. "Very much obliged," he repeated: "much obliged, if you would be so kind," and it struck him that had he spoken this at first, he would have given it a wording more persuasive with the farmer and more worthy of his own pride: more honest, in fact: for a sense of the dishonesty of what he was saying, caused him to cringe and simulate humility to deceive the farmer, and the more he said, the less he felt his words, and feeling them less, he inflated them more. "So kind," he stammered, "so kind" (fancy a Feverel asking this big brute to be so kind!) "as to do me the favour" (*me* the favour!) "to exert yourself" (it's all to please Austin) "to endeavour to—hem! to" (there's no saying it!)

The cup was full as ever. Richard dashed at it again.

"What I came to ask is, whether you would

have the kindness to try what you could do" (what an infamous shame to have to beg like this!) "do to save—do to ensure—whether you would have the kindness—". It seemed out of all human power to gulp it down. The draught grew more and more abhorrent. To proclaim one's iniquity: to apologize for one's wrong-doing: thus much could be done: but to beg a favour of the offended party—that was beyond the self-abasement any Feverel could consent to. Pride, however, whose inevitable battle is against itself, drew aside the curtains of poor Tom's prison, crying a second time, 'Behold your Benefactor!' and with the words burning in his ears, Richard swallowed the dose:

"Well, then! I want you, Mr. Blaize,—if you don't mind—will you help me to get this man Bakewell off his punishment?"

To do farmer Blaize justice, he waited very patiently for the boy, though he could not quite see why he did not take the gate at the first offer.

"Oh!" said he, when he heard and had pondered on the request: "Hum! hah! we'll see about it t'morrow. But if he's inn'cent, ye know, we shan't make 'n guilty."

"It was I did it!" Richard declared.

The farmer's half-amused expression sharpened a bit.

"So, young gentleman! and yer sorry for the night's work?"

"I shall see that you are paid the full extent of your losses."

"Thank'ee," said the farmer drily.

"And if this poor man is released tomorrow, I don't care what the amount is."

Farmer Blaize deflected his head twice in silence. 'Bribery,' one motion expressed: 'Corruption,' the other.

"Now," said he, leaning forward, and fixing his elbows on his knees, while he counted the case at his fingers' ends, "ascuse the liberty, but wishin' to know where this 'ere money 's to come from, sh'd like jest t' ask if so be Sir Aust'n know o' this?"

"My father knows nothing of it," replied Richard.

The farmer flung back in his chair. 'Lie number Two,' said his shoulders, soured by the British aversion to being plotted at, and not dealt with openly.

"And ye 've the money ready, young gentleman?"

"I shall ask my father for it."

"And he 'll hand 't out?"

"Certainly he will!"

Richard had not the slightest intention of ever letting his father into his counsels.

"A good three hundred pounds, ye know?" the farmer suggested.

No consideration of the extent of damages, and the size of the sum, affected young Richard, who said boldly, "He will not object to pay it, when I tell him."

It was natural Farmer Blaize should be a trifle suspicious that a youth's guarantee would hardly be given for his father's readiness to disburse such a thumping bill, unless he had previously received his father's sanction and authority.

"Hum!" said he, "why not 'a told him before?"

The farmer threw an objectionable shrewdness into his query, that caused Richard to compress his mouth and glance high.

Farmer Blaize was positive 't was a lie.

"Hum!" "Ye still hold to 't you fired the rick?" he asked.

"The blame is mine!" quoth Richard, with the loftiness of a patriot of old Rome.

"Na, na!" the straightforward Briton put him aside. "Ye did 't, or ye didn't do 't. Did ye do 't, or no?"

Thrust in a corner, Richard said, "I did it."

Farmer Blaize reached his hand to the bell. It was answered in an instant by little Lucy, who received orders to fetch in a dependant at Belthorpe going by the name of the Bantam, and made her exit as she had entered, with her eyes on the young stranger.

"Now," said the farmer, "these be my principles. I 'm a plain man, Mr. Feverel. Above board with me, and ye 'll find me handsome. Try to circumvent me, and I 'm a ugly customer. I 'll show you I 'ven't any-mosity. Your father pays—you 'pologize. That 's enough for me! I'm a plain man. Let Tom Bakewell fight 't out with the Law, and I 'll look on. The Law wasn't on the spot, I suppose? so the Law ain't much witness. But I am. Leastwise the Bantam is. I tell you, young gentleman, the Bantam saw 't! It 's no mortal use whatever your denyin' that ev'dence. And where 's the good, Sir, I ask?

What comes of 't? Whether it be you, or whether it be Tom Bakewell—ain't all one? If I holds back, ain't it sim'lar? It 's the Trewth I want! And here 't comes," added the farmer, as Miss Lucy ushered in the Bantam, who presented a curious figure for that rare divinity to enliven.

CHAPTER XII.

A FINE DISTINCTION.

In build of body, gait, and stature, Giles Jinkson, the Bantam, was a tolerably fair representative of the Punic Elephant, whose part, with diverse anticipations, the generals of the Blaize, and Feverel, forces, from opposing ranks, expected him to play. Giles, surnamed the Bantam, on account of some forgotten sally of his youth or infancy, moved and looked elephantine. It sufficed that Giles was well fed, to assure that Giles was faithful—if uncorrupted. The farm which supplied to him ungrudging provender, had all his vast capacity for work in willing exercise: the farmer who held the farm his instinct reverenced as the fountain-source of Beef and Bacon, to say nothing of Beer, which was plentiful at Belthorpe, and good. This, farmer Blaize well knew, and reckoned consequently that here was an animal always to be re-

lied on—a sort of human composition out of dog, horse, and bull, a cut above each of these quadrupeds in usefulness, and costing proportionately more, but on the whole worth the money, and therefore invaluable, as everything worth its money must be to a wise man. When the stealing of grain had been made known at Belthorpe, the Bantam, a fellow-thresher with Tom Bakewell, had shared with him the shadow of the guilt. Farmer Blaize, if he hesitated which to suspect, did not debate a second as to which he would discard; and when the Bantam said he had seen Tom secreting pilkins in a sack, farmer Blaize chose to believe him, and off went poor Tom, told to rejoice in the clemency that spared his appearance at Sessions.

The Bantam's small sleepy orbits saw many things, and just at the right moment, it seemed. He was certainly the first to give the clue at Belthorpe on the night of the conflagration, and he may, therefore, have seen poor Tom retreating stealthily from the scene, as he averred he did. Lobourne had its say on the subject. Rustic Lobourne hinted broadly at a young woman in the case, and, moreover, told a tale of how these fellow-

threshers had, in noble rivalry, one day turned upon each other to see which of the two threshed the best; whereof the Bantam still bore marks, and malice, it was said. However, there he stood, and tugged his forelocks to the company, and if Truth really had concealed herself in him, she must have been hard set to find her unlikeliest hiding-place.

"Now," said the farmer, marshalling forth his elephant with the confidence of one who delivers his ace of trumps, "tall this young gentleman what ye saw on the night of the Fire, Bantam!"

The Bantam jerked a bit of a bow to his patron, and then swung round, fully obscuring him from Richard.

Richard fixed his eyes on the floor, while the Bantam in rudest Doric commenced his narrative. Knowing what was to come, and thoroughly nerved to confute the main incident, Richard barely listened to his barbarous locution: but when the recital arrived at the point where the Bantam affirmed he had seen "T'm Baak'll wi 's owen hoies," Richard faced him, and was amazed to find himself being mutely addressed by a series of intensely significant grimaces, signs, and winks.

"What do you mean? Why are you making those faces at me?" cried the boy, indignantly.

Farmer Blaize leaned round the Bantam to have a look at him, and beheld the stolidest mask ever given to man.

"Bain't makin' no faces at nobody," growled the sulky elephant.

The farmer commanded him to face about and finish.

"A see T'm Baak'll," the Bantam recommenced, and again the contortions of a horrible wink were directed at Richard. The boy might well believe this churl was lying, and he did, and was emboldened to exclaim,

"You never saw Tom Bakewell set fire to that rick!"

The Bantam swore to it, grimacing an accompaniment.

"I tell you," said Richard, "I put the lucifers there myself!"

The suborned elephant was staggered. He meant to telegraph to the young gentleman that he was loyal and true to certain gold-pieces that had been given him, and that in the right place

and at the right time, he should prove so. Why was he thus suspected? Why was he not understood?

"A thowt I see 'un, then," muttered the Bantam, trying a middle course.

This brought down on him the farmer, who roared, "Thought! Ye thought! What d'ye mean? Speak out, and don't be thinkin.' Thought? What the devil 's that?"

"How could he see who it was on a pitch dark night?" Richard put in.

"Thought!" the farmer bellowed louder. "Thought—Devil take ye, when ye took yer oath on 't." Hulloa! what are ye screwin' yer eye at Mr. Feverel for?—I say, young gentleman, have you spoke to this chap before now?"

"I?" replied Richard, "I have not seen him before."

Farmer Blaize grasped the two arms of the chair he sat on, and glared his doubts.

"Come," said he to the Bantam, "speak out, and ha' done wi' t. Say what ye saw, and none o' yer thoughts. Dam yer thoughts! Ye saw Tom Bakewell fire that there rick!" The farmer pointed at some musk-pots in the window.

"What business ha' you to be a-thinkin'? You 're a witness! Thinkin' an't ev'dence. What 'll ye say tomorrow before magistrate? Mind! what you says today, you'll stick by tomorrow."

Thus adjured, the Bantam hitched his breech. What on earth the young gentleman meant, he was at a loss to speculate. He could not believe that the young gentleman wanted to be transported, but if he had been paid to help that, why, he would. And considering that this day's evidence rather bound him down to the morrow's, he determined, after much ploughing and harrowing through obstinate shocks of hair, to be not altogether positive as to the person. It is possible that he became thereby more a mansion of Truth than he previously had been; for the night, as he said, was so dark that you could not see your hand before your face; and though, as he expressed it, you might be mortal sure of a man, you could not identify him upon Oath, and the party he had taken for Tom Bakewell, and could have sworn to, might have been the young gentleman present, especially as he was ready to swear to it upon Oath.

So ended the Bantam.

No sooner had he ceased, than Farmer Blaize jumped up from his chair, and made a fine effort to lift him out of the room from the point of his toe. He failed, and sank back groaning with the pain of the exertion, and disappointment.

"They 're liars, every one!" he cried. "Liars, Perj'rers, Bribers, and C'rrupters!—Stop!" to the Bantam, who was slinking away. "You 've done for yerself already! You swore to it!"

"A din't!" said the Bantam, doggedly.

"You swore to 't," the farmer vociferated afresh.

The Bantam played a tune upon the handle of the door, and still affirmed that he did not; a double contradiction at which the farmer absolutely raged in his chair, and was hoarse, as he called out a third time that the Bantam had sworn to it.

"Noa!" said the Bantam, ducking his poll. "Noa!" he repeated in a lower note; and then, while a sombre grin betokening idiotic enjoyment of his profound casuistical quibble worked at his jaw:—

"Not up'n O-ath!" he added, with a twitch of the shoulder and an angular jerk of the elbow.

Farmer Blaize looked vacantly at Richard, as if to ask him what he thought of England's peasantry after the sample they had there. Richard would have preferred not to laugh, but his dignity gave way to his sense of the ludicrous, and he let fly an irrepressible peal. The farmer was in no laughing mood. He turned a wide eye back to the door, "Lucky for 'm!" he exclaimed, seeing the Bantam had vanished, for his fingers itched to break that stubborn head. He grew very puffy, and addressed Richard solemnly:

"Now, look ye here, Mr. Feverel! You 've been a-tampering with my witness. It 's no use denyin'! I say y' 'ave, Sir! You, or some of ye. I don't care about no Feverel! My witness there has been bribed. The Bantam's been bribed," and he shivered his pipe with an energetic thump on the table—"Bribed! I knows it! I could swear to 't!—"

"Upon oath?" Richard inquired, with a grave face.

"Ay, upon oath!" said the farmer, not observing the impertinence.

"I 'd take my Bible oath on 't! He 's been corrupted, my principal witness! Oh! it 's dam

cunnin', but it won't do the trick. I 'll transpoort Tom Bakewell, sure as a gun. He shall travel, that man shall. Sorry for you, Mr. Feverel—sorry ye haven't seen how to treat me proper—you, or yours. Money won't do everything—no! it won't. It 'll c'rrupt a witness, but it won't clear a felon. I 'd ha' 'scused you, Sir! You 're a boy and 'll learn better. I asked no more than payment and a 'pology; and that I 'd ha' taken content—always provided my witnesses weren't tampered with. Now you must stand yer luck, all o' ye."

Richard stood up, and replied, "Very well, Mr. Blaize."

"And if," continued the farmer, "Tom Bakewell don't drag you into 't after 'm, why, you 're safe, as I hope ye 'll be, sincere!"

"It was not in consideration of my own safety that I sought this interview with you," said Richard, head erect.

"Grant ye that," the farmer responded. "Grant ye that! Yer bold enough, young gentleman—comes of the blood that should be! If y' had only ha' spoke Trewth!—I believe yer father—believe every word he said. I do wish I could ha' said as much of Sir Aust'n's son and heir."

"What!" cried Richard with an astonishment hardly to be feigned, "you have seen my father?"

But Farmer Blaize had now such a scent for lies, that he could detect them where they did not exist, and mumbled gruffly,

"Ay, we knows all about that!"

The boy's perplexity saved him from being irritated. Who could have told his father? The old fear came upon him, and a touch of the old inclination to revolt.

"My father knows of this?" said he, very loudly, and staring, as he spoke, right through the farmer. "Who has played me false? Who would betray me to him? It was Austin! No one knew it but Austin. Yes, and it was Austin who persuaded me to come here, and submit to these indignities. Why couldn't he be open with me? I shall never trust him again!—"

"And why not you with me, young gentleman?" said the farmer. "I sh'd trust you if ye had."

Richard did not see the analogy. He bowed stiffly and bade him good afternoon.

Farmer Blaize pulled the bell. "'Company the young gentleman out, Lucy," he waved to

the little damsel in the doorway. "Do the honours. And Mr. Richard, ye might ha' made a friend o' me, Sir, and it 's not too late so to do. I 'm not crool, but I hate lies. I whipped my boy Tom, bigger than you, for not bein' aboveboard, only yesterday,—ay! made 'un stand within swing o' this chair, and take 's measure. Now, if ye 'll come down to me, and speak Trewth before the Trial—if it 's only five minutes before 't; or if Sir Aust'n, who 's a gentleman, 'll say there 's been no tamperin' with any o' my witnesses, his word for 't—well and good! I 'll do my best to help off Tom Bakewell. And I 'm glad, young gentleman, you 've got a conscience about a poor man, though he 's a villain. Good afternoon, Sir."

Richard marched hastily out of the room, and through the garden, never so much as deigning a glance at his wistful little guide, who hung at the garden gate to watch him up the lane, wondering a world of fancies about the handsome proud boy.

CHAPTER XIII.

RICHARD PASSES THROUGH HIS PRELIMINARY ORDEAL, AND IS THE OCCASION OF AN APHORISM.

To have determined upon an act something akin to heroism in its way, and to have fulfilled it by lying heartily, and so subverting the whole structure built by good resolution, seems a sad downfall if we forget what human nature, in its green weedy Spring, is composed of. Young Richard had quitted his cousin Austin fully resolved to do his penance and drink the bitter cup; and he had drunk it; drained many cups to the dregs; and it was to no purpose. Still they floated before him, brimmed, trebly bitter. Away from Austin's influence, he was almost the same boy who had slipped the guinea into Tom Bakewell's hand, and the Lucifers into Farmer Blaize's rick. For good seed is long ripening: a good boy is not made in a minute.

Enough that the seed was in him. He chafed on his road to Raynham, at the scene he had just endured, and the figure of Belthorpe's fat tenant burnt like hot copper on the tablet of his brain, insufferably condescending, and, what was worse, in the right. Richard, obscured as his mind's eye was by wounded pride, saw that clearly, and hated his enemy for it the more.

Heavy Benson's tongue was knelling Dinner, as Richard arrived at the Abbey. He hurried up to his room to dress. Accident, or design, had laid the book of Sir Austin's Aphorisms open on the dressing-table. Hastily combing his hair, Richard glanced down, and read:

'The Dog returneth to his Vomit: the Liar must eat his Lie.'

Underneath was interjected in pencil: 'The Devil's mouthful!'

Young Richard ran downstairs feeling that his father had struck him in the face.

Sir Austin marked the scarlet stain on his son's cheek-bones. He sought the youth's eye, but Richard would not look, and sat conning his

plate, an abject copy of Adrian's succulent air at that employment. How could he pretend to the relish of an Epicure, when he was painfully endeavouring to masticate The Devil's Mouthful?

Heavy Benson sat upon the wretched dinner. Hippias, usually the silent member, as if awakened by the unnatural stillness, became sprightly, like the goatsucker owl at midnight, and spoke much of his book, his digestion, and his dreams; and was spared both by Algernon and Adrian. One inconsequent dream he related, about fancying himself quite young and rich, and finding himself suddenly in a field cropping razors around him, when, just as he had, by steps dainty as those of a French dancing-master, reached the middle, he to his dismay beheld a path clear of the bloodthirsty steel-crop, which he might have taken at first had he looked narrowly; and there he was.

Hippias's brethren regarded him with eyes that plainly said they wished he had remained there. Sir Austin, however, drew forth his notebook, and jotted down a reflection. A composer of Aphorisms can pluck blossoms even from a

razor-crop. Was not Hippias's dream the very counterpart of Richard's position? He, had he looked narrowly, might have taken the clear path: he, too, had been making dainty steps till he was surrounded by the grinning blades. And from that text Sir Austin preached to his son when they were alone. Little Clare was still too unwell to be permitted to attend the dessert, and father and son were soon closeted together.

It was a strange meeting. They seemed to have been separated so long. The father took his son's hand. They sat without a word passing between them. Silence said most. The boy did not understand his father: his father frequently thwarted him: at times he thought his father foolish: but that paternal pressure of his hand was eloquent to him how warmly he was beloved. He tried once or twice to steal his hand away, conscious it was melting him. The spirit of his pride, and old Rebellion, whispered him to be hard, unbending, resolute. Hard he had entered his father's study: hard he had met his father's eyes. He could not meet them now. His father sat beside him gently; with a manner that was almost meekness, so he loved

this boy. The poor gentleman's lips moved. He was praying internally to God for him.

By degrees an emotion awoke in the boy's bosom. Love is that blessed wand which wins the waters from the hardness of the heart. Richard fought against it, for the dignity of old Rebellion. The tears would come; hot and struggling over the dams of Pride. Shamefully fast they began to fall. He could no longer conceal them, or check his sobs. Sir Austin drew him nearer and nearer, till the beloved head was on his breast.

An hour afterwards, Adrian Harley, Austin Wentworth, and Algernon Feverel, were summoned to the Baronet's study.

Adrian came last. There was a style of affable omnipotence about the Wise Youth as he slung himself into a chair, and made an arch of the points of his fingers, through which to gaze on his blundering kinsmen. Careless as one may be whose sagacity has foreseen, and whose benevolent efforts have forestalled, the point of danger at the threshold of his apprehensive fellows, Adrian crossed his legs, and only intruded on their introductory remarks so far as to hum half audibly at intervals,

'Ripton and Richard were two pretty men,'

in parody of the old Ballad. Young Richard's red eyes, and the Baronet's ruffled demeanour, told him that an explanation had taken place, and a reconciliation. That was well. The Baronet would now pay cheerfully. Adrian summed and considered these matters, and barely listened when the Baronet called attention to what he had to say: which was, elaborately to inform all present what all present very well knew: that a rick had been fired: that his son was implicated as an accessory to the fact: that the perpetrator was now imprisoned: and that Richard's family were, as it seemed to him, bound in honour to do their utmost to effect the man's release.

Then the Baronet stated that he had himself been down to Belthorpe, his son likewise: and that he had found every disposition in Blaize to meet his wishes.

The lamp which ultimately was sure to be lifted up to illumine the acts of this secretive race, began slowly to dispread its rays; and as statement followed statement, they saw that all had known of the business: that all had been

down to Belthorpe: all save the Wise Youth Adrian, who, with due deference and a sarcastic shrug, objected to the proceeding, as putting them in the hands of the man Blaize. His wisdom shone forth in an oration so persuasive and aphoristic, that, had it not been based on a plea against Honour, it would have made Sir Austin waver. But its basis was Expediency, and the Baronet had a better Aphorism of his own to confute him with.

"'Expediency is man's wisdom, Adrian Harley. Doing Right is God's.'"

Adrian curbed his desire to ask Sir Austin whether an attempt to counteract the just working of the Law, was Doing Right. The direct application of an Aphorism was unpopular at Raynham.

"I am to understand, then," said he, "that Blaize consents not to press the prosecution."

"Of course he won't," Algernon remarked. "Confound him! he'll have his money, and what does he want besides?"

"These agricultural gentlemen are delicate customers to deal with. However, if he really consents—"

"I have his promise," said the Baronet, fondling his son.

Young Richard looked up to his father, as if he wished to speak. He said nothing, and Sir Austin took it as a mute reply to his caresses, and caressed him the more. Adrian perceived a reserve in the boy's manner, and as he was not quite satisfied that his Chief should suppose him to have been the only idle, and not the most acute and vigilant, member of the family, he commenced a cross-examination of him by asking, who had last spoken with the tenant of Belthorpe?

"I think I saw him last," murmured Richard, and relinquished his father's hand.

Adrian fastened on his prey. "And left him with a distinct and satisfactory assurance of his amicable intentions?"

"No," said Richard.

"Not?" the Feverels joined in astounded chorus.

Richard sidled away from his father, and repeated a shamefaced "No."

"Was he hostile?" inquired Adrian, smoothing his palms, and smiling.

"Yes," the boy confessed.

Here was quite another view of their position. Adrian, generally patient of results, triumphed strongly at having evoked it, and turned upon Austin Wentworth, reproving him for inducing the boy to go down to Belthorpe. Austin looked grieved. He feared that Richard had failed in his good resolve.

"I thought it his duty to go," he observed.

"It was!" said the Baronet emphatically.

"And you see what comes of it, Sir," Adrian put in. "These agricultural gentlemen, I repeat, are delicate customers to deal with. For my part I would prefer being in the hands of a policeman. We are decidedly collared by Blaize. What were his words, Ricky? Give it in his own Doric."

"He said he would transport Tom Bakewell."

Adrian smoothed his palms, and smiled again. Then they could afford to defy Mr. Blaize, he informed them significantly, and made once more a mysterious allusion to the Punic Elephant, bidding his relatives be at peace. They were attaching, in his opinion, too much importance to Richard's complicity. The man was a fool, and a very extraordinary Arsonite to have an accomplice at all. It was a thing unknown in the an-

nals of rick-burning. But one would be severer than Law itself to say that a boy of fourteen had instigated to crime a full-grown man. At that rate the boy was 'father of the man' with a vengeance, and one might hear next that 'the baby was father of the boy.' They would find Common Sense a more benevolent ruler than Poetical Metaphysics.

When he had done, Austin, with his customary directness, asked him what he meant.

"I confess, Adrian," said the Baronet, hearing him expostulate with Austin's stupidity, "I for one am at a loss. I have heard that this man, Bakewell, chooses voluntarily not to inculpate my son. Seldom have I heard anything that so gratified me. It is a view of innate nobleness in the rustic's character which many gentlemen might take example from. We are bound to do our utmost for the man." And saying that he should pay a second visit to Belthorpe, to inquire into the reasons for the farmer's sudden exposition of vindictiveness, Sir Austin rose.

Before he left the room, Algernon asked Richard if the farmer had vouchsafed any reasons, and the boy then spoke of the tampering with the witnesses, and the Bantam's "Not upon oath!"

which caused Adrian to choke with laughter. Even the Baronet smiled at so cunning a distinction as that involved in swearing a thing, and not swearing it upon oath.

"How little," he exclaimed, "does one yeoman know another! To elevate a distinction into a difference, is the natural action of their minds. I will point that out to Blaize. He shall see that that idea is native born."

Remorsefully Richard saw his father go forth. Adrian, too, was ill at ease.

"This trotting down to Belthorpe spoils all," said he. "The affair would pass over tomorrow—Blaize has no witnesses. The old rascal is only standing out for more money."

"No, he isn't," Richard corrected him. "It's not that. I'm sure he believes his witnesses have been tampered with, as he calls it."

"What if they have, boy?" Adrian put it boldly. "The ground is cut from under his feet."

"Blaize told me that, if my father would give his word there had been nothing of the sort, he would take it. My father will give his word."

"Then," said Adrian, "you had better stop him from going down."

Austin looked at Adrian keenly, and questioned him, whether he thought the farmer was justified in his suspicions. The Wise Youth was not to be entrapped. He had only been given to understand that the witnesses were tolerably unstable, and like the Bantam, ready to swear lustily, but not upon the Book. How given to understand, he chose not to explain, but he reiterated that the Chief should not be allowed to go down to Belthorpe.

Sir Austin was in the lane leading to the farm, when he heard steps of some one running behind him. It was dark, and he shook off the hand that laid hold of his cloak, roughly, not recognizing his son.

"It 's I, Sir," said Richard, panting. "Pardon me. You musn't go in there."

"Why not?" said the Baronet, putting his arm about him.

"Not now," continued the boy. "I will tell you all to-night. I must see the farmer myself. It was my fault, Sir. I—I lied to him—the Liar must eat his Lie. Oh, forgive me for disgracing you, Sir. I did it—I hope I did it to save Tom Bakewell. Let me go in alone, and speak the truth."

"Go, and I will wait for you here," said his father.

The wind that bowed the old elms, and shivered the dead leaves in the air, had a voice and a meaning for the Baronet, during that half-hour's lonely pacing up and down under the darkness, awaiting his boy's return. The solemn gladness of his heart gave Nature a tongue. Through the desolation flying overhead—the wailing of the Mother of Plenty across the bare-swept land—he caught intelligible signs of the beneficent order of the universe, from a heart newly confirmed in its grasp of the principle of human goodness, as manifested in the dear child who had just left him: confirmed in its belief in the ultimate Victory of Good within us, without which Nature has neither music, nor meaning, and is rock, stone, tree, and nothing more.

In the dark, the dead leaves beating on his face, he drew forth the Note-book, and with groping fingers traced out: 'There is for the mind but one grasp of Happiness: from that uppermost pinnacle of Wisdom, whence we see that this world is well-designed.'

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH THE LAST ACT OF THE BAKEWELL COMEDY IS CLOSED IN A LETTER.

Of all the chief actors in The Bakewell Comedy, Master Ripton Thompson awaited the fearful morning which was to decide Tom's fate, in dolefulest mood, and suffered the gravest mental terrors. Adrian on parting with him, had taken casual occasion to speak of the position of the Criminal in modern Europe, assuring him that International Treaty now did what Universal Empire had aforetime done, and that among Atlantic Barbarians now, as among the Scythians of old, an offender would find precarious refuge, and an emissary haunting him. In the paternal home, under the roofs of Law, and removed from the influence of his conscienceless young Chief, the staggering nature of the act he had put his hand to, its awful felonious aspect, overwhelmed

poor Ripton. He saw it now for the first time. "Why it's next to murder!" he cried out to his amazed soul, and wandered about the house with a prickly skin. Thoughts of America, and commencing life afresh as an innocent gentleman, had crossed the agitated brain of Ripton. He wrote to his friend Richard, proposing to collect disposable funds, and embark, in case of Tom's breaking his word, or of accidental discovery. He dared not confide the secret to his family, as his leader had sternly enjoined him to avoid any weakness of that kind; and being by nature honest and communicative, the restriction was painful, and melancholy fell upon the boy. Mama Thompson attributed it to love. The daughters of parchment rallied him concerning Miss Clare Forey. His hourly letters to Raynham, his silence as to everything and everybody there, his loss of appetite, nervousness, and unwonted propensity to sudden inflammation of the cheeks, were set down for sure signs of the passion. Miss Letitia Thompson, the pretty and least parchmenty one, destined by her Mama for the heir of Raynham, and perfectly aware of her brilliant future, up to which

she had, since Ripton's departure, dressed, and grimaced, and studied cadences (the latter with such success, though not yet fifteen, that she languished to her maid, and melted the very marrow of the small factotum footman),—Miss Letty, whose insatiable thirst for intimations about the young heir, Ripton could not satisfy, tormented him daily in revenge, and once, quite unconsciously, gave the lad a fearful turn: for after dinner, when Mr. Thompson read the paper by the fire, preparatory to sleeping at his accustomed post, and Mama Thompson and her submissive female brood sat tasking the swift intricacies of the needle, and emulating them with the tongue, Miss Letty stole behind Ripton's chair, and introduced between him and his book the Latin initial letter, large and illuminated, of the theme she supposed to be absorbing him, as it did herself. The unexpected vision of this accusing Captain of the Alphabet, this resplendent and haunting A, fronting him bodily, threw Ripton straight back in his chair, while Guilt, with her ancient indecision what colours to assume on detection, flew from red to white, from white to red, across his fallen chaps. Letty laughed triumphantly.

"Ah—a!" she sang, "you are found out, Mr. Mum!" and innocently followed up the attack, by asking him how he would wear his badge, before, or behind? which precipitated Ripton from the room, in sick certainty that he was discovered, and thrilled the motherly heart of Mama Thompson with the blissful prospect of marrying two of her brood to the House of Feverel.

"Why, what does A stand for? Silly!" said Letitia, after rallying her brother next morning at breakfast, "For Angel, doesn't it?"

"Yes: and for America," Ripton answered gloomily.

"Yes, and you know what else!" rejoined his persecutor, while another sister, previously instructed, presumed it might possibly stand for Amor.

"And for Arson," added the deep paternal voice, unwittingly springing a mine under poor Ripton.

Letty's study of the aspects of love, and of the way young people should look, and of the things they should do, under the dominion of the passion, was not much assisted by its outward de-

velopment in the supposed love-stricken youth. "I 'm sure," she thought, "I shall never be like that. He bounds in his seat. He never looks comfortable. He seems to hate us all, and does nothing but mumble his food, and growl, and frown. If that 's love, I can't do it!" she sorrowfully concluded her reflections.

The delivery of a letter into Master Ripton's hands, however, furnished her with other and likelier appearances to study. For scarce had Ripton plunged his head into the missive, than he gave way to violent transports, such as the healthy-minded little damsel, for all her languishing cadences, deemed she really could express, were a downright declaration to be made to her. The boy did not stop at table. Quickly recollecting the presence of his family, he rushed to his own room. And now Miss Letty's ingenuity was tasked to gain possession of that letter. In love, it is said, all stratagems are fair, and many little ladies transverse the axiom by applying it to discover the secrets of their friends. Letty ransacked the drawers in Ripton's rooms, she dived her hands into the pockets of his garments lying about, she turned down the pillow, she spied under the

mattress of his bed, with an easy conscience; and if she found nothing, of course, as she was doing a wrong, she did not despair of gaining her object, and soon knew that Ripton carried it about in his left jacket-pocket, persecuting Ripton with her caresses, till she felt the tantalizing treasure crack beneath her fingers. Some sisters would have coaxed him for a sight of it. Letty was not so foolish: she did not allude to it, and was still hovering round the pocket, at a loss to devise any new scheme, when accident bestowed on her what artifice denied. They were standing on a hill together, and saw some people of their acquaintance coming up in a pony-chaise. Letty told Ripton to wave his handkerchief, which he snatched from the very pocket, and waved vigorously, and continued waving, heedless that his sister had on a sudden lost her interest in the pony-chaise. Indeed she presently commanded him to turn a contrary way, and was voluble with reasons for getting home immediately, though they had set out for a long walk into the country. Once home, Letitia darted up stairs to be alone with her naughty self. She had the letter. Ripton had dropped

it as he drew forth his handkerchief. With the eyes of amazement, she read this foreign matter :—

"Dear Ripton,

"If Tom had been committed I would have shot old Blaize. Do you know my father was behind us that night when Clare saw the Ghost and heard all we said before the fire burst out. It is no use trying to conceal anything from him. Well as you are in an awful state I will tell you all about it. After you left Ripton I had a conversation with Austin and he persuaded me to go down to old Blaize and ask him to help off Tom. I went for I would have done anything for Tom after what he said to Austin and I defied the old churl to do his worst. Then he said if my father paid the money and nobody had tampered with his witnesses he would not mind if Tom did get off and he had his chief witness in called the Bantam very like his master I think and the Bantam began winking at me tremendjously as you say and said he had sworn he saw Tom Bakewell but not upon Oath. He meant not on the Bible. He could swear to it but not on the

Bible. I burst out laughing and you should have seen the rage old Blaize was in. It was splendid fun. Then we had a consultation at home Austin Rady my father Uncle Algernon who has come down to us again and your friend in prosperity and adversity R. D. F. My father said he would go down to old Blaize and give him the word of a gentleman we had not tampered with his witnesses and when he was gone we were all talking and Rady says he must not see the farmer. I am as certain as I live that it was Rady bribed the Bantam. Well I ran and caught up my father and told him not to go in to old Blaize but I would and eat my words and tell him the truth. He waited for me in the lane. Never mind what passed between me and old Blaize. He made me beg and pray of him not to press it against Tom and then to complete it he brought in a little girl a niece of his and says to me she 's your best friend after all and told me to thank her. A little girl twelve years of age. What business had she to mix herself up in my matters. Depend upon it Ripton wherever there is mischief there are girls I think. She had the insolence to notice my face

and ask me not to be unhappy. I was polite of course but I would not look at her. Well the morning came and Tom was had up before Sir Miles Papworth. It was Sir Miles gout gave us the time or Tom would have been had up before we could do anything Adrian did not want me to go but my father said I should accompany him and held my hand all the time. I shall be careful about getting into these scrapes again. When you have done anything honourable you do not mind but getting among policemen and magistrates makes you ashamed of yourself. Sir Miles was very attentive to my father and me and dead against Tom. We sat beside him and Tom was brought in. Sir Miles told my father that if there was one thing that showed a low villain it was rick-burning. What do you think of that. I looked him straight in the face and he said to me he was doing me a service in getting Tom committed and clearing the country of such fellows and Rady began laughing. I hate Rady. My father said his son was not in haste to inherit and have estates of his own to watch and Sir Miles laughed too. I thought we were discovered at first. Then they began the examina-

tion of Tom. The Tinker was the first witness and he proved that Tom had spoken against old Blaize and said something about burning his rick. I wished I had stood in the lane to Bursley with him alone. Our country lawyer we engaged for Tom cross-questioned him and then he said he was not ready to swear to the exact words that had passed between him and Tom. I should think not. Then came another who swore he had seen Tom lurking about the farmer's grounds that night. Then came the Bantam and I saw him look at Rady. I was tremendjously excited and my father kept pressing my hand. Just fancy my being brought to feel that a word from that fellow would make me miserable for life and he must perjure himself to help me. That comes of giving way to passion. My father says when we do that we are calling in the devil as doctor. Well the Bantam was told to state what he had seen and the moment he began Rady who was close by me began to shake and he was laughing I knew though his face was as grave as Sir Miles. You never heard such a rigmarole but I could not laugh. He said he thought he was certain he had seen somebody by

the rick and it was Tom Bakewell who was the only man he knew who had a grudge against farmer Blaize and if the object had been a little bigger he would not mind swearing to Tom and would swear to him for he was dead certain it was Tom only what he saw looked smaller and it was pitch dark at the time. He was asked what time it was he saw the person steal away from the rick and then he began to scratch his head and said supper-time. Then they asked what time he had supper and he said nine o'clock by the clock and we proved that at nine o'clock Tom was drinking in the ale-house with the Tinker at Bursley and Sir Miles swore and said he was afraid he could not commit Tom and when he heard that Tom looked up at me and I say he is a noble fellow and no one shall sneer at Tom while I live. Mind that. Well Sir Miles asked us to dine with him and Tom was safe and I am to have him and educate him if I like for my servant and I will. And I will give money to his mother and make her rich and he shall never repent he knew me. I say Rip. The Bantam must have seen *me*. It was when I went to stick in the Lucifers. As we were all going home from Sir Miles's at night

he has lots of red-faced daughters but I did not dance with them though they had music and were full of fun and I did not care to I was so delighted and almost let it out. When we left and rode home Rady said to my father the Bantam was not such a fool as he was thought and my father said one must be in a state of great personal exaltation to apply that epithet to any man and Rady shut his mouth and I gave my pony a clap of the heel for joy. I think my father suspects what Rady did and does not approve of it. And he need not have done it after all and might have spoilt it. I have been obliged to order him not to call me Ricky for he stops short at Rick so that everybody knows what he means. My dear Austin is going to South America. My pony is in capital condition. My father is the cleverest and best man in the world. Clare is a little better. I am quite happy. I hope we shall meet soon my dear old Rip and we will not get into any more tremendjous scrapes will we.

"I remain

"Your sworn friend

"RICHARD DORIA FEVEREL.

"P.S. I am to have a nice River Yacht. Good

bye Rip. Mind you learn to box. Mind you are not to show this to any of your friends on pain of my displeasure.

"N.B. Lady B. was so angry when I told her that I had not come to her before. She would do anything in the world for me. I like her next best to my father and Austin. Good bye old Rip."

Poor little Letitia, after three perusals of this ingenuous epistle, where the laws of punctuation were so loftily disregarded, resigned it to one of the pockets of her brother Ripton's best jacket, deeply smitten with the careless composer. And so ended the last act of the Bakewell Comedy, on which the curtain closes with Sir Austin's pointing out to his friends the beneficial action of the System in it from beginning to end.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BLOSSOMING SEASON.

LAYING of Ghosts is a public duty, and as the mystery of the Apparition that had frightened little Clare was never solved on the stage of events at Raynham, where dread walked the Abbey, let us go behind the scenes a moment. Morally superstitious as the Baronet was, the character of his mind was opposed to anything like spiritual agency in the affairs of men, and when the matter was made clear to him, it shook off a weight of weakness, and restored his mental balance; so that from this time he went about more like the man he had once been, grasping more thoroughly the great truth that, This World is well designed. Nay, he could laugh on hearing Adrian, in reminiscence of the ill luck of one of the family members at its first manifestation, call the uneasy spirit, Algernon's Leg.

Mrs. Doria was outraged. She maintained that her child had seen—. Not to believe in it was almost to rob her of her personal property. After satisfactorily studying his old state of mind in her, Sir Austin, moved by pity, took her aside one day, and showed her that her Ghost could write words in the flesh. It was a letter from the unhappy lady who had given Richard birth, —brief cold lines, simply telling him his house would be disturbed by her no more. Cold lines, but penned by what heart-broken abnegation, and underlying them what anguish of soul! Like most who dealt with him, Lady Feverel thought her husband a man fatally stern and implacable, and she acted as silly creatures will act when they fancy they see a fate against them: she neither petitioned for her right, nor claimed it: she tried to ease her heart's yearning by stealth, and now she renounced all. Mrs. Doria, not wanting in the family tenderness and softness, shuddered at him for accepting the sacrifice so composedly: but he bade her to think how distracting to this boy would be the sight of such relations between mother and father. A few years, and as man he should know, and judge,

and love, her. "Let this be her penance, not inflicted by me!" Mrs. Doria bowed to the System for another, not opining when it would be her turn to bow for herself.

Further behind the scenes we observe Rizzio and Mary grown older, much disenchanted: she discrowned, dishevelled,—he with gouty fingers on a greasy guitar. The Diaper Sandoe of promise lends his pen for small hires. His fame has sunk; his bodily girth has sensibly increased. What he can do, and will do, is still his theme; meantime the juice of the juniper is in requisition, and it seems those small hires cannot be performed without it. Returning from her wretched journey to her wretcheder home, the lady had to listen to a mild reproof from easy-going Diaper,—a reproof so mild that he couched it in blank verse: for seldom writing metrically now, he took to talking it. With a fluent sympathetic tear, he explained to her that she was damaging her interests by these proceedings; nor did he shrink from undertaking to elucidate wherefore. Pluming a smile upon his succulent mouth, he told her that the poverty she lived in was utterly unbefitting her gentle nur-

ture, and that he had reason to believe—could assure her—that an annuity was on the point of being granted her by her husband. And Diaper broke his bud of a smile into full flower, as he delivered the radiant information. She learnt that he had applied to her husband for money. It is hard to have one's last prop of self-respect cut away just when we are suffering a martyr's agony at the stake. There was a five-minutes' tragic colloquy in the recesses behind the scenes,—totally tragic to Diaper, who had fondly hoped to bask in the warm sun of that annuity, and re-emerge from his state of grub. The lady then wrote the letter Sir Austin held open to his sister. I think the atmosphere behind the scenes is not wholesome, so, having laid the Ghost, we will return and face the curtain.

That infinitesimal dose of THE WORLD which Master Ripton Thompson had furnished to the System with such instantaneous and surprising effect, was considered by Sir Austin to have worked well, and to be for the time quite sufficient, so that Ripton did not receive a second invitation to Raynham, and Richard had no special

intimate of his own age to rub his excessive vitality against, and wanted none. His hands were full enough with Tom Bakewell. Moreover, his father and he were heart in heart. The boy's mind was opening, and turned to his father affectionately reverent. At this period, when the young savage grows into higher influences, the faculty of worship is foremost in him. At this period Jesuits stamp the future of their chargeling flocks; and all who bring up youth by a System, and watch it, know that it is the malleable moment. Boys possessing any mental or moral force to give them a tendency, then predestinate their careers; or, if under supervision, take the impress that is given them: not often to cast it off, and seldom to cast it off altogether.

In Sir Austin's Note-book was written: 'Between Simple Boyhood, and Adolescence—The Blossoming Season—on the threshold of Puberty, there is one Unselfish Hour: say, Spiritual Seedtime.'

He took care that good seed should be planted in Richard, and that the most fruitful seed for

a youth, namely, Example, should be of a kind to germinate in him the love of every form of nobleness.

"I am only striving to make my son a Christian," he said, answering them who persisted in expostulating with the System. And to these instructions he gave an aim: "First be virtuous," he told his son, "and then serve your country with heart and soul." The youth was instructed to cherish an ambition for Statesmanship, and he and his father read History and the Speeches of British Orators to some purpose; for one day Sir Austin found him leaning cross-legged and with his hand to his chin, against a pedestal supporting the Bust of Chatham, contemplating the Hero of our Parliament, his eyes streaming with tears.

People said, the Baronet carried the principle of Example so far, that he only retained his boozing dyspeptic brother Hippias at Raynham, in order to exhibit to his son the woful retribution Nature wreaked upon a life of indulgence: poor Hippias having now become a walking Complaint. This was unjust, but there is no doubt he made use of every illustration to disgust, or encourage,

his son, that his neighbourhood afforded him, and did not spare his brother, for whom Richard entertained a contempt in proportion to his admiration of his father, and was for flying into penitential extremes, which Sir Austin had to soften.

The boy prayed with his father morning and night.

"How is it, Sir," he said, one night, "I can't get Tom Bakewell to pray?"

"Does he refuse?" Sir Austin asked.

"He seems to be ashamed to," Richard replied. "He wants to know, What is the good? and I don't know what to tell him."

"I'm afraid it has gone too far with him," said Sir Austin, "and until he has had some deep sorrows he will not find the divine want of Prayer. Strive, my son, when you represent the People, to provide for their education. He feels everything now through a dull impenetrable rind. Culture is halfway to Heaven. Tell him, my son, should he ever be brought to ask how he may know the efficacy of Prayer, and that his prayer will be answered, tell him (he quoted The PILGRIM'S SCRIP):

'Who rises from Prayer a better man, his prayer *is* answered.' "

"I will, Sir," said Richard, and went to sleep happy.

Happy in his father and in himself the youth now lived. Conscience was beginning to inhabit him, and he carried some of the freightage known to men; though in so crude a form that it overweighed him, now on this side, now on that.

The Wise Youth Adrian observed these further progressionary developments in his pupil, soberly cynical. He was under Sir Austin's interdict not to banter him, and eased his acrid humours inspired by the sight of a felonious young rick-burner turning Saint, by grave affectations of sympathy and extreme accuracy in marking the not widely-distant dates of his various changes. The Bread-and-water phase lasted a fortnight: the Vegetarian (an imitation of his cousin Austin), little better than a month: the religious, somewhat longer: the religious-propagandist (when he was for converting the Heathen of Lobourne and Bursley, and the domestics of the Abbey, including Tom Bakewell), longer still, and hard

to bear: he tried to convert Adrian! All the while Tom was being exercised like a raw recruit. Richard had a drill-serjeant from the nearest barracks down for him, to give him a proper pride in himself, and marched him to and fro with immense satisfaction, and nearly broke his heart trying to get the round-shouldered rustic to take in the rudiments of letters: for the boy had unbounded hopes for Tom, as a hero in grain.

Richard's pride also was cast aside. He affected to be, and really thought he was, humble. Whereupon Adrian, as by accident, imparted to him the fact that men were animals, and he an animal with them.

"*I* an animal!" cries Richard in scorn, and for weeks he was as troubled by this rudiment of self-knowledge as Tom by his letters. Sir Austin had him instructed in the Wonders of Anatomy, to restore his self-respect.

SEED-TIME passed thus smoothly, and Adolescence came on, and his cousin Clare felt what it was to be of an opposite sex to him. She too was growing, but nobody cared how she grew. Outwardly even her mother seemed absorbed in the sprouting of the green off-shoot of the Fe-

verel Tree, and Clare was his handmaiden, little marked by him.

The ladies of the Court who had not published, or put their names to what they published denouncing Sir Austin and his System, wrote for tidings, and were overjoyed to hear of its success. Lady Blandish was the only lady by to witness to it. She honestly loved the boy. She would tell him: "If I had been a girl, I would have had you for my husband." And he with the frankness of his years would reply: "And how do you know I would have had you?" causing her to laugh and call him a silly boy, for had he not heard her say, She would have had him? Terrible words, he knew not then the meaning of!

"You don't read your father's Book," she said. Her own Copy was bound in purple velvet, gilt-edged, as decorative ladies like to have holier books, and she carried it about with her, and quoted it, and (Adrian remarked to Mrs. Doria) hunted a noble quarry, and deliberately aimed at him, therewith, which Mrs. Doria chose to believe, and regretted her brother would not be on his guard.

"See here," said Lady Blandish, pressing an almondy finger-nail to one of the Aphorisms, which instanced how Age and Adversity must clay-enclose us ere we can effectually resist the Magnetism of any human creature in our path. "Can you understand it, child?"

Richard informed her that when she read he could.

"Well, then, my Squire," she touched his cheek and ran her fingers through his hair, "learn as quick as you can not to be all hither and yon with a hundred different attractions, as I was before I met a wise man to guide me."

"Is my father very wise?" Richard asked.

"I think so," the lady emphasized her individual judgment.

"Do you—" Richard broke forth, and was stopped by a beating of his heart.

"Do I— what?" she calmly queried.

"I was going to say, do you— I mean, I love him so much."

Lady Blandish smiled and slightly coloured.

They frequently approached this theme, and always retreated from it; always with the same beating of heart to Richard, accompanied by the

sense of a growing Mystery, which however did not as yet generally disturb him.

Life was made very pleasant to him at Raynham, as it was part of Sir Austin's principle of education, that his boy should be thoroughly joyous and happy; and whenever Adrian sent in a satisfactory report of his pupil's advancement, which he did pretty liberally, diversions were planned, just as prizes are given to diligent school-boys, and Richard was supposed to have all his desires gratified, while he attended to his studies. The System flourished. Dr. Clifford had nothing but his old stock phrases to reply with: the boy was a living argument against him. Tall, strong, bloomingly healthy, he took the lead of his companions on land and water, and had more than one bondsman in his service besides Ripton Thompson—the boy without a Destiny! Perhaps the boy with a Destiny, was growing up a trifle too conscious of it. His generosity to his occasional companions was princely, but was exercised something too much in the manner of a Prince; and notwithstanding his contempt for baseness, he would overlook that more easily than an offence to his pride,

which demanded an utter servility when it had once been rendered susceptible. If Richard had his followers, he had also his feuds. The Papworths were as subservient as Ripton, but young Ralph Morton, the nephew of Mr. Morton, and a match for Richard in numerous promising qualities, comprising the noble science of fisticuffs, this youth spoke his mind too openly, and moreover would not be snubbed. There was no middle course for Richard's comrades between high friendship, or absolutely slavery. He was deficient in those cosmopolite habits and feelings which enable boys and men to hold together without caring much for each other; and, like every insulated mortal, he attributed the deficiency, of which he was quite aware, to the fact of his possessing a superior nature. Young Ralph was a lively talker: therefore, argued Richard's vanity, he had no intellect. He was affable: therefore he was frivolous. The women liked him: therefore he was a butterfly. In fine, young Ralph was popular, and our superb Prince, denied the privilege of despising, ended by detesting, him.

Early in the days of their contention for lea-

dership, Richard saw the absurdity of affecting to scorn his rival. Ralph was an Eton boy, and hence, being robust and shrewd, a swimmer and a cricketer. A swimmer and a cricketer is nowhere to be scorned in youth's Republic. Finding that manœuvre would not do, Richard was prompted once or twice to entrench himself behind his greater wealth, and his position; but he soon abandoned that also, partly because his chilliness to ridicule told him he was exposing himself, and chiefly that his heart was too chivalrous. And so he was dragged into the lists by Ralph, and experienced the luck of champions. For cricket, and for diving, Ralph bore away the belt: Richard's middle-stump tottered before his ball, and he could seldom pick up more than three eggs under-water to Ralph's half-dozen. He was beaten, too, in jumping and running. Why will silly mortals strive to the painful pinnacles of championship? Or why, once having reached them, not have the magnanimity and circumspection to retire into private life immediately? Stung by his defeats, Richard sent one of his dependent Papworths to Poer Hall, with a challenge to Ralph Barthrop Morton; matching

himself to swim across the Thames and back, once, twice, or thrice, within a less time than he, Ralph Barthrop Morton, would require for the undertaking. It was accepted, and a reply returned, equally formal in the trumpeting of Christian names, wherein Ralph Barthrop Morton acknowledged the challenge of Richard Doria Feverel, and was his man. The match came off on a Midsummer morning, under the direction of Captain Algernon. Sir Austin was a spectator from the cover of a plantation by the river-side, unknown to his son, and, to the scandal of her sex, Lady Blandish accompanied the Baronet. He had invited her attendance to try her, and she, obeying her frank nature, and knowing what THE PILGRIM'S SCRIP said about Prudes, at once agreed to view the match, pleasing him mightily. For was not here a woman worthy the golden Ages of the world? one who could look upon man as a creature divinely made, and look with a mind neither tempted, nor taunted, by the Serpent! Such a woman was rare. Sir Austin did not discompose her by uttering his praises. She was conscious of his approval only in an increased gentleness of manner, and some-

thing in his voice and communications, as if he were speaking to a familiar, a very high compliment from him. While the lads were standing ready for the signal to plunge from the steep decline of greensward into the shining waters, Sir Austin called upon her to admire their beauty, and she did, and even advanced her head above his shoulder delicately. In so doing, and just as the start was given, a bonnet became visible to Richard. They saw him suddenly catch his hand to his side, and hesitate. Young Ralph was heels in air before he moved, and then he dropped like lead. He was beaten by several lengths.

The result of the match was unaccountable to all present, and Richard's friends unanimously pressed him to plead a false start. But though the youth, with full confidence in his better style and equal strength, had backed himself heavily against his rival, and had lost his little river-yacht to Ralph, he would do nothing of the sort. It was the Bonnet had beaten him, not Ralph. The Bonnet, typical of the Mystery that caused his heart those violent palpitations, the Bonnet was his dear, detestable enemy. He took a sa-

vage pleasure in attributing his evil luck to the Bonnet. It distilled an exquisite bitter-sweet, the notion that he was the victim of the Bonnet!

And now as he progressed from mood to mood, his ambition turned towards a field where Ralph could not rival him, and where the Bonnet was etherealized, and reigned glorious mistress. A check to the pride of a boy will frequently divert him to the path where lie his subtlest powers. Richard gave up his companions, servile, or antagonist: he relinquished the material world to young Ralph, and retired into himself, where he was growing to be lord of kingdoms: where Beauty was his Handmaid, and History his Minister, and Time his ancient Harper, and sweet Romance his Bride: where he walked in a realm vaster and more gorgeous than the great Orient, peopled with the heroes that have been. For there is no princely wealth, and no loftiest heritage to equal this early one that is made bountifully common to so many, when the ripening blood has put a spark to the imagination, and the earth is seen through rosy mists of a thousand fresh-awakened nameless and aimless desires, panting for bliss, and taking it as it comes;

making of any sight or sound, perforce of the enchantment they carry with them, a key to infinite, because innocent, pleasure. The passions then are gambolling cubs; not the ravaging gluttons they grow to. They have their teeth and their talons, but they neither tear nor bite. They are in counsel and fellowship with the quickened heart and brain. The whole sweet system moves to music.

Something akin to the indications of a change in the spirit of his son, which were now seen, Sir Austin had marked down to be expected, as due to his plan. The blushes of the youth, his long vigils, his clinging to solitude, his abstraction, and downcast, but not melancholy, air, were matters for rejoicing to the prescient gentleman. "For it comes," said he to Dr. Clifford, after consulting him medically on the youth's behalf and being assured of his soundness, "it comes of a thoroughly sane condition. The blood is healthy, the mind virtuous: neither instigates the other to evil, and both are perfecting toward the flower of manhood. If he reach that pure—in the untainted fulness and perfection of his natural powers, I am indeed a happy father! But one thing he will owe

to me: that at one period of his life he knew Paradise, and could read God's handwriting on the earth! Now those abominations whom you call precocious boys—your little pet monsters, Doctor!—and who can wonder that the world is what it is, when it is full of them!—as they will have no divine time to look back upon in their own lives, how can they believe in innocence and goodness, or be other than sons of selfishness and the Devil? But my boy," and the Baronet dropped his voice to a key that was touching to hear, "my boy, if he fall, will fall from an actual region of purity. He dare not be a sceptic as to that. Whatever his darkness, he will have the guiding light of a memory behind him. So much is secure."

To talk nonsense, or poetry, or the dash between the two, in a tone of profound sincerity, and to enunciate solemn discordances with received opinion so seriously as to convey the impression of a spiritual insight, is the peculiar gift by which monomaniacs, having first persuaded themselves, contrive to influence their neighbours, and through them to make conquest of a good half of the world, for good or for ill. Sir Austin

had this gift. He spoke as if he saw the Truth, and persisting in it so long, he was accredited by those who did not understand him, and silenced them that did. "We shall see," was now all the argument left to Dr. Clifford, and other unbelievers.

So far certainly the experiment had succeeded. A comelier, braver, better boy, was nowhere to be met. His promise was undeniable. The vessel, too, though it lay now in harbour, and had not yet been proved by the buffets of the elements on the great Ocean, had made a good trial trip, and got well through stormy weather, as the records of the Bakewell Comedy witnessed to at Raynham. No augury could be hopefuler. The Fates must indeed be hard, the Ordeal severe, the Destiny dark, that could destroy so bright a Spring! But bright as it was, the Baronet relaxed nothing of his vigilant supervision. He said to his intimates: "Every act, every fostered inclination, almost every thought, in this Blossoming Season, bears its seed for the Future. The living Tree now requires incessant watchfulness." And acting up to his light, Sir Austin did watch. The youth submitted to an hour's examination

every night before he sought his bed; professedly to give an account of his studies; but really to recapitulate his moral experiences of the day. He could do so, for he was pure. Any wildness in him that his father noted, any remoteness, or richness, of fancy in his expressions, was set down as incidental to the Blossoming Season. The Blossoming Season explained and answered for all. There is nothing like a Theory for blinding the wise. Sir Austin, despite his rigid watch and ward, knew less of his son than the servant of his household. And he was deaf, as well as blind. Adrian thought it his duty to tell him that the youth was consuming paper. Lady Blandish likewise hinted at his mooning propensities. Sir Austin from his lofty watch-tower of the System, had foreseen it, he said. But when he came to hear that the youth was writing Poetry, his wounded heart had its reasons for being much disturbed.

"Surely," said Lady Blandish, "you knew he scribbled?"

"A very different thing from writing Poetry, Madam," said the Baronet. "No Feverel has ever written Poetry."

"I don't think it 's a sign of degeneracy," the lady remarked. "He rhymes very prettily to me."

A London Phrenologist, and a friendly Oxford Professor of Poetry quieted Sir Austin's fears.

The Phrenologist said, he was totally deficient in the imitative faculty; and the Professor, that he was equally so in the rhythmic, and instanced several consoling false quantities in the few effusions submitted to him. Added to this, Sir Austin told Lady Blandish, that Richard had, at his hest, done what no poet had ever been known to be capable of doing: he had, with his own hands, and in cold blood, committed his virgin Manuscript to the flames: which made Lady Blandish sigh forth, "Poor boy!"

Killing one's darling child is a painful imposition. For a youth in his Blossoming Season, who fancies himself a poet, to be requested to destroy his first-born, without a reason (though to pretend a reason cogent enough to justify the request were a mockery), is a piece of abhorrent despotism, and Richard's blossoms withered under it. A strange man had been introduced to him, who traversed and bisected his skull with sagacious stiff fingers, and crushed his soul while, in an in-

fallible voice, declaring him the animal he was: making him feel such an animal! Not only his blossoms withered, his being seemed to draw in its shoots and twigs. And when, coupled thereunto (the strange man having departed, his work done), his father, in his tenderest manner, stated that it would give him pleasure to see those same precocious, utterly valueless, scribblings among the cinders, the last remaining mental blossoms spontaneously fell away. Richard's spirit stood bare. He protested not. Enough that it could be wished! He would not delay a minute in doing it. Desiring his father to follow him, he went to a drawer in his room, and from a clean-linen recess, never suspected by Sir Austin, the secretive youth drew out bundle after bundle: each neatly tied, named, and numbered: and despicably pitched them into the flames. And so Farewell my young Ambition! and with it Farewell all true confidence between Father and Son.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MAGNETIC AGE.

It was now, as Sir Austin had written it down, The Magnetic Age: the Age of violent attractions; when to hear mention of Love is dangerous, and to see it, a communication of the disease. People at Raynham were put on their guard by the Baronet, and his reputation for wisdom was severely criticized in consequence of the injunctions he thought fit to issue through butler and housekeeper down to the lower household, for the preservation of his son from any visible symptom of the passion. A footman and two housemaids are believed to have been dismissed on the report of Heavy Benson that they were in, or inclining to, the state; upon which an under-cook and a dairymaid voluntarily threw up their places, averring that "they did not want no young men, but to have their sex spied after by an old wretch

like that," indicating the ponderous butler, "was a little too much for a Christian woman," and then they were ungenerous enough to glance at Benson's well-known marital calamity, hinting that some men met their deserts. So intolerable did Heavy Benson's espionage become, that Raynham would have grown depopulated of its womankind, had not Adrian interfered, who pointed out to the Baronet what a fearful arm his butler was wielding. Sir Austin acknowledged it despondently. "It only shows," said he, with a fine spirit of justice, "how all but impossible it is to legislate where there are women!"

"I do not object," he added, "I hope I am too just to object to the exercise of their natural inclinations. All I ask from them is discreetness."

"Ay," said Adrian, whose discreetness was a marvel.

"No gadding about in couples," continued the Baronet, "no kissing in public. Such occurrences no boy should witness. Whenever people of both sexes are thrown together, they will be silly, and where they are high-fed, uneducated, and barely occupied, it must be looked for as a

matter of course. Let it be known that I only require discreetness."

Discreetness, therefore, was instructed to reign at the Abbey. Under Adrian's able tuition, the fairest of its domestics acquired that virtue.

Discreetness, too, was enjoined to the upper household. Sir Austin, who had not previously appeared to notice the case of Lobourne's hopeless curate, now desired Mrs. Doria to interdict, or at least discourage, his visits, for the appearance of the man was that of an embodied sigh and groan.

"Really, Austin!" said Mrs. Doria, astonished to find her brother more awake than she had supposed, "I have never allowed him to hope."

"Let him see it, then," replied the Baronet, "let him see it."

"The man amuses me," said Mrs. Doria. "You know, we have few amusements here, we inferior creatures. I confess I should like a barrel-organ better: that reminds one of town and the Opera; and besides, it plays more than one tune. However, since you think my society bad for him, let him stop away."

The sight of the Note-Book backing a sardo-

nic smile, caused Mrs. Doria her unusual flash of irony; and truly it was hard upon a lady to mark this cold Rhadamanthus deliberately and openly jotting her down to fire judgment and condemnation at her sex in some future edition of the Verdicts. With the self-devotion of a woman, she abjured it, and grew patient and sweet the moment her daughter Clare was spoken of, and the business of her life in view. Mrs. Doria's maternal heart had betrothed the two cousins, Richard and Clare; had already beheld them espoused, and fruitful. For this she yielded the pleasures of town: for this she immured herself at Raynham: for this she bore with a thousand follies, exactions, inconveniences, things abhorrent to her, and Heaven knows what forms of torture and self-denial, which are smilingly endured by that greatest of voluntary martyrs, a mother with a daughter to marry. Mrs. Doria, an amiable widow, had surely married but for her daughter Clare. The lady's hair no woman could possess without feeling it her pride. It was the daily theme of her lady's-maid,—a natural aureole to her head. She was gay, witty, still physically youthful enough to claim a destiny: and she

sacrificed it to accomplish her daughter's! sacrificed, as with heroic scissors, hair, wit, gaiety—let us not attempt to enumerate how much! more than may be said. And she was only one of thousands: thousands who have no portion of the hero's reward: for he may reckon on applause, and condolence, and sympathy, and honour; they, poor slaves! must look for nothing but the opposition of their own sex, and the sneers of ours. Oh, Sir Austin! had you not been so blinded, what an Aphorism might have sprung from this point of observation! Mrs. Doria was coolly told, between sister and brother, that, during the Magnetic Age, her daughter's presence at Raynham was undesirable. Instead of nursing offence, her sole thought was, the mountain of prejudice she had to contend against. She bowed, and said, Clare wanted sea-air—she had never quite recovered the shock of that dreadful night. How long, Mrs. Doria wished to know, might the Peculiar Period be expected to last?

"That," said Sir Austin, "depends. A year perhaps. He is entering on it. I shall be most grieved to lose you, Helen. Clare is now—how old?"

"Seventeen."

"She is marriageable."

"Marriageable, Austin! at seventeen! don't name such a thing. My child shall not be robbed of her youth."

"Our women marry early, Helen."

"My child shall not!"

The Baronet reflected a moment. He did not wish to lose his sister.

"As you are of that opinion, Helen," said he, "perhaps we may still make arrangements to retain you with us. Would you think it advisable to send Clare—she should know discipline—to some Establishment for a few months? . . ."

"To an Asylum, Austin?" cried Mrs. Doria, controlling her indignation as well as she could.

"To some select superior Seminary, Helen. There are such to be found."

"Austin!" Mrs. Doria exclaimed, and had to fight with a moisture in her eyes. Unjust! absurd! she murmured. The Baronet thought it a natural proposition that Clare should be a bride, or a schoolgirl.

"I cannot leave my child." Mrs. Doria trembled. "Where she goes, I go. I am aware

that she is only one of our sex, and therefore of no value to the world, but she is my child. I will see, poor dear, that you have no cause to complain of her."

"I thought," Sir Austin remarked, "that you acquiesced in my views with regard to my son."

"Yes—generally," said Mrs. Doria, and felt culpable that she had not before, and could not then, tell her brother that he had set up an Idol in his house—an Idol of flesh! more retributive and abominable than Wood, or Brass, or Gold. But she had bowed to the Idol too long,—she had too entirely bound herself to gain her project by subserviency, to enjoy that gratification now. She had, and she dimly perceived it, committed a greater fault in tactics, in teaching her daughter to bow to the Idol also. Love of that kind, Richard took for tribute. He was indifferent to Clare's soft eyes. The parting kiss he gave her was ready and cold as his father could desire, and Sir Austin had hardly slept overnight for thinking of the effect it might have on the Magnetic youth. He caressed his son as if Richard had done something virtuous. Compensation his boy should have for any trifling crosses to his

feelings. He should have yachts, horses, whatever he fancied. Sir Austin now grew eloquent to him in laudation of manly pursuits: but Richard thought his eloquence barren, his attempts at companionship awkward, and all manly pursuits and aims, life itself, vain and worthless. To what end? sighed the blossomless youth, and cried aloud, as soon as he was relieved of his father's society, what was the good of anything? Whatever he did—whichever path he selected, led back to Raynham. And whatever he did, and however wretched and wayward he showed himself, only confirmed Sir Austin more and more in the truth of his previsions. Tom Bakewell, now the youth's groom, had to give the Baronet a report of his young master's proceedings, in common with Adrian, and while there was no harm to tell, Tom spoke out. "He do ride like fire every day to Pig's Snout," naming the highest hill in the neighbourhood, "and stand there, and stare, never movin', like a mad 'un. And then hoam agin all slack as if he 'd been beaten in a race by summody."

To the interrogation—Did he look East, or West? Tom, dreading a snare, replied, that he

had not marked: "He seemed for to look where he could look fur away."

"There is no woman in that!" mused the Baronet. "He would have ridden back as hard as he went," reflected this profound Scientific Humanist, "had there been a woman in it. He would shun vast expanses, and seek shade, concealment, solitude. The desire for distances betokens emptiness and undirected hunger: when the heart is possessed by an image we fly to wood and forest, like the guilty."

Adrian's report accused his pupil of an extraordinary access of cynicism.

"Exactly," said the Baronet. "Just so. As I foresaw. At this period an insatiate appetite is accompanied by a fastidious palate. Nothing but the quintessences of existence, and those in exhaustless supplies, will satisfy this craving, which is not to be satisfied! Hence his bitterness. Life can furnish no food fitting for him. The strength and purity of his energies have reached to an almost divine height, and roam through the Inane. Poetry, Love, and such-like, are the drugs Earth has to offer to high natures, as she offers to low ones Debauchery. 'Tis a

sign, this sourness, that he is subject to none of the empiricisms that are afloat. Now to keep him clear of them!"

The Titans had an easier task in storming Olympus. As yet, however, it could not be said that Sir Austin's System had failed. On the contrary, it had reared a youth, handsome, intelligent, well-bred, and, observed the ladies, with acute emphasis, innocent. Where, they asked, was such another young man to be found?

"Oh!" said Lady Blandish to Sir Austin," if men could give their hands to women unsoiled—how different would many a marriage be! She will be a happy girl who calls Richard, husband."

"Happy indeed!" was the Baronet's caustic ejaculation. "But where shall I meet one equal to him, and his match?"

"I was innocent when I was a girl," said the lady.

Sir Austin bowed a reserved opinion.

"Do you think no girls innocent?"

Sir Austin gallantly thought them all so.

"No, that you know they are not," said the lady, stamping. "But they are more innocent than boys, I am sure."

"Because of their Education, Madam. You see now what a youth can be. Perhaps, when my System is published, or rather—to speak more humbly—when it is practised, the balance may be restored, and we shall have virtuous young men."

"It 's too late for poor me to hope for a husband from one of them," said the lady, pouting and laughing.

"It is never too late for Beauty to waken Love," returned the Baronet, and they trifled a little. They were approaching Daphne's Bower, which they entered, and sat there to taste the coolness of a descending Midsummer day.

The Baronet seemed in a humour for dignified fooling; the lady for serious converse.

"I shall believe again in Arthur's knights," she said. "When I was a girl I dreamed of one."

"And he was in quest of the San Greal?"

"If you like."

"And showed his good taste by turning aside for the more tangible San Blandish?"

"Of course you consider it would have been so," sighed the lady, ruffling.

"I can only judge by our generation," said Sir Austin, with a bend of homage.

The lady gathered her mouth. "Either we are very mighty, or you are very weak."

"Both, Madam."

"But whatever we are, and if we are bad, bad! we love virtue, and truth, and lofty souls, in men: and when we meet those qualities in them, we are constant, and would die for them —die for them. Ah! you know men, but not women."

"The knights possessing such distinctions must be young, I presume?" said Sir Austin.

"Old, or young!"

"But if old, they are scarce capable of enterprise?"

"They are loved for themselves, not for their deeds."

"Ah!"

"Yes—Ah!" said the lady, mocking him. "Intellect may subdue women—make slaves of them; and they worship Beauty perhaps as much as you do. But they only love for ever and are mated when they meet a noble nature."

Sir Austin looked at her wistfully.

"And did you encounter the knight of your dream?"

"Not then." She lowered her eyelids. It was prettily done.

"And how did you bear the disappointment?"

"My dream was in the Nursery. The day my frock was lengthened to a gown I stood at the altar. I am not the only girl that has been made a woman in a day, and given to an ogre instead of a true knight."

"Good God!" exclaimed Sir Austin, "women have much to bear."

Here the couple changed characters. The lady became gay as the Baronet grew earnest.

"You know it is our lot," she said. "And we are allowed many amusements. If we fulfil our duty in producing children, that, like our virtue, is its own reward. Then, as a widow, I have wonderful privileges."

"To preserve which, you remain a widow?"

"Certainly," she responded. "I have no trouble now in patching and piecing that rag the world calls—a character. I can sit at your feet every day unquestioned. To be sure, Miss Blewins and Mrs. Cashentire do the same, but

they are female eccentrics, and have cast off the rag altogether: mine mends itself."

Sir Austin drew nearer to her. "You would have made an admirable mother, Madam."

The lady smiled. This from Sir Austin was very like positive wooing.

"It is," he continued, "ten thousand pities that you are not one."

"Do you think so?" She spoke with an extreme humility.

"I would," he went on, "that Heaven had given you a daughter."

"Would you have thought her worthy of Richard?"

"Our blood, Madam, should have been one!"

The lady tapped her toe with her parasol, blushing. "But I am a mother," she said.

Sir Austin's brows started up.

"Richard is my son."

Sir Austin looked relieved. That he could look relieved by so presumptuous a speech, was a sign how far the lady had gone with him.

"Yes! Richard is my boy," she reiterated.

Sir Austin most graciously appended: "Call him ours, Madam," and held his head as if to

catch the word from her lips, which, however, she chose to refuse, or defer. They made the coloured West a common point for their eyes several minutes, and then Sir Austin said: "Listen, Madam."

Lady Blandish turned to him very sweetly.

"As you will not say 'ours,' Madam, let me. And as you have therefore an equal claim in the boy, I will confide to you a project I have lately conceived."

The announcement of a project hardly savoured of a coming proposal, but for Sir Austin to confide one to a woman was almost tantamount to a declaration. So Lady Blandish thought, and so said her soft, deep-eyed, smile, as she perused the ground while listening to the project. It concerned Richard's nuptials. He was now nearly eighteen. He was to marry when he was five-and-twenty. Meantime a young lady, some years his junior, was to be sought for in the homes of England, who would be every way fitted by education, instincts, and blood—on each of which qualifications Sir Austin unreservedly enlarged—to espouse so perfect a youth and accept the honourable duty of assisting in the

perpetuation of the Feverels. The Baronet went on to say that he proposed to set forth immediately, and devote a couple of months, to the first essay in his Cœlebite search.

"I fear," said Lady Blandish, when the project had been fully unfolded, "you have laid down for yourself a difficult task. You must not be too exacting."

"I know it." The Baronet's shake of the head was piteous. "Even in England she will be rare. But I confine myself to no class. If I ask for blood, it is for untainted, not what you call high blood. I believe many of the middle classes are frequently more careful—more pure-blooded—than our aristocracy. Show me among them a God-fearing family who educate their children—I should prefer a girl without brothers and sisters—as a Christian damsel should be educated—say, on the model of my son, and she may be penniless, I will pledge her to Richard Feverel."

Lady Blandish bit her lip. "And what do you do with Richard while you are absent on this expedition?"

"Oh!" said the Baronet, "he accompanies his father."

"Then give it up. His future bride is now pinafored, and bread-and-buttery. She romps, she cries, she dreams of play and pudding. How can he care for her? He thinks more at his age of old women like me. He will be certain to kick against her, and destroy your plan, believe me, Sir Austin."

"Ay? ay? do you think that?" said the Baronet.

Lady Blandish gave him a multitude of reasons.

"Ay! true," he muttered. "Adrian said the same. He must not see her. How could I think of it! The child is naked woman. He would despise her. Naturally!"

"Naturally!" echoed the lady.

"Then, Madam," and the Baronet rose, "there is one thing for me to determine upon. I must, for the first time in his life, leave him."

"Will you, indeed?" said the lady.

"It is my duty, Madam, having thus brought him up, to see that he is properly mated,—not wrecked upon the quicksands of Marriage, as a youth so delicately trained might be; more easily than another! Betrothed, he will be safe from a

thousand snares. I may, I think, leave him for a term. My precautions have saved him from the temptations of his season."

"And under whose charge will you leave him?" Lady Blandish inquired.

She had emerged from the Temple, and stood beside Sir Austin on the upper steps, under a clear Summer twilight.

"Madam!" he took her hand, and his voice was gallant and tender, "under whose but yours?"

As the Baronet said this, he bent above her hand, and raised it to his lips.

Lady Blandish felt that she had been wooed and asked in wedlock. She did not withdraw her hand. The Baronet's salute was flatteringly reverent. He deliberated over it, as one going through a grave ceremony. And he, the scorner of women, had chosen her for his homage! Lady Blandish forgot that she had taken some trouble to arrive at it. She received the exquisite compliment in all its unique honey-sweet: for in love we must deserve nothing, or the fine bloom of fruition is gone.

The lady's hand was still in durance, and the Baronet had not recovered from his profound

inclination, when a noise from the neighbouring beechwood startled the two actors in this courtly pantomime. They turned their heads, and beheld the Hope of Raynham on horseback, surveying the scene aghast. The next moment he had galloped away.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN ATTRACTION.

All night Richard tossed on his bed with his heart in a rapid canter, and his brain bestriding it, traversing the rich untasted world, and the great Realm of Mystery, from which he was now restrained no longer. Months he had wandered about the gates of the Bonnet, wondering, sighing, knocking at them, and getting neither admittance nor answer. He had the key now. His own father had given it him. His heart was a lightning steed, and bore him on and on over limitless regions bathed in superhuman beauty and strangeness, where cavaliers and ladies leaned whispering upon close green swards, and knights and ladies cast a splendour upon savage forests, and tilts and tourneys were held in golden Courts lit to a glorious day by ladies' eyes, one pair of which, dimly visioned, constantly distin-

guishable, followed him through the boskage and dwelt upon him in the press, beaming while he bent above a hand glittering white and fragrant as the frosted blossom of a May-night. Awhile the heart would pause and flutter to a shock: he was in the act of consummating all earthly bliss by pressing his lips to the small white hand. Only to do that, and die! cried the Magnetic Youth: to fling the Jewel of Life into that one cup, and drink it off! He was intoxicated by anticipation. For that he was born. There was, then, some end in existence, something to live for! to kiss a woman's hand, and die! He would leap from the couch, and rush to pen and paper to relieve his swarming sensations. Scarce was he seated, when the pen was dashed aside, the paper sent flying, with the exclamation, "Have I not sworn I would never write again?" Sir Austin had shut that safety-valve. The nonsense that was in the youth might have poured harmlessly out, and its urgency for ebullition was so great that he was repeatedly oblivious of his oath, and found himself seated under the lamp in the act of composition, before Pride could speak a word. Possibly the pride even of

Richard Feverel had been swamped if the act of composition were easy at such a time, and a single idea could stand clearly foremost; but myriads were demanding the first place; chaotic hosts, like ranks of stormy billows, pressed impetuously for expression, and despair of reducing them to form, quite as much as pride, to which it pleased him to refer his incapacity, threw down the powerless pen, and sent him panting to his outstretched length and another headlong career through the rosy-girdled land.

Towards morning the madness of the fever abated somewhat, and he went forth into the air. A lamp was still burning in his father's room, and Richard thought, as he looked up, that he saw the ever-vigilant head on the watch. Instantly the lamp was extinguished, the window stood cold against the hues of dawn. Had he cast a second glance at his own chamber, he might then have seen the ever-vigilant head on the watch. Sir Austin had slept no more than his son. Beholding him so early abroad, his worst fears were awakened. He hurried to gaze at the forsaken couch, a picture of tempest: the papers. with half-written words ending in reckless

tails and wild dashes, strewn everywhere about, blankly eloquent: chairs upset, drawers left open, companion slippers astray about the room. The abashed Baronet dared not whisper to his soul what had thus distracted the youth. As little could he make self-confession that it was impossible for him to face his son for some time to come. No doubt his conscious eye looked inward, and knew; but he chose to juggle with it, and say to himself, that not an hour must be lost in betrothing Richard, and holding him bond to virtue, and therefore he would immediately depart on his expedition. The pain of not folding the beloved son to his breast before he went, was moreover a fortunate beguilement of the latent dread that his going just now was a false step. It would be their first separation. Sir Austin ascended to the roof of the Abbey, and descried him hastening to the boat-house by the river-side. Ere he was out of sight, the Baronet's sense of sacrifice had blinded his conscious eye, and enabled him to feel altogether a martyr to Duty.

Strong pulling is an excellent medical remedy for certain classes of fever. Richard took to it

instinctively. The clear fresh water, burnished with sunrise, sparkled against his arrowy prow: the soft deep shadows curled smiling away from his gliding keel. Overhead solitary morning unfolded itself, from blossom to bud, from bud to flower; still delicious changes of light and colour, to whose influences he was heedless as he shot under willows and aspens, and across sheets of river-reaches, pure mirrors to the upper glory, himself the sole tenant of the stream. Somewhere at the founts of the world lay the land he was rowing towards: something of its shadowed lights might be discerned here and there. It was not a dream, now he knew. There was a secret abroad. The woods were full of it; the waters rolled with it, and the winds. Oh, why could not one in these days do some high knightly deed which should draw down ladies' eyes from their heaven, as in the days of Arthur! To such a meaning breathed the unconscious sighs of the youth, when he had pulled through his first feverish energy.

He was off Bursley, and had lapsed a little into that musing quietude which follows strenuous exercise, when he heard a hail and his own name

called. It was no lady, no fairy, but young Ralph Morton, an irruption of miserable masculine prose. Heartily wishing him abed with the rest of mankind, Richard rowed in and jumped ashore. Ralph immediately seized his arm, saying that he desired earnestly to have a talk with him, and dragged the Magnetic Youth from his water-dreams, up and down the wet mown grass. That he had to say seemed to be difficult of utterance, and Richard, though he barely listened, soon had enough of his old rival's gladness at seeing him, and exhibited signs of impatience; whereat Ralph, as one who branches into matter somewhat foreign to his mind, but of great human interest and importance, put the question to him:

"I say, what woman's name do you like best?"

"I don't know any," quoth Richard indifferently. "Why are you out so early?"

In answer to this, Ralph suggested that the name of Mary might be considered a pretty name.

Richard agreed that it might be: the housekeeper at Raynham, half the women cooks and all the housemaids enjoyed that name: the name of Mary was equivalent for woman at home.

"Yes, I know," said Ralph. "We have lots

of Marys. It 's so common. Oh ! I don't like Mary best. What do you think of Lucy ?"

Richard thought it just like another.

"Do you know," Ralph continued, throwing off the mask and plunging into the subject, "I 'd do anything on earth for some names—one or two. It 's not Mary, or Lucy. Clarinda's pretty, but it 's like a novel. Claribel I like. Names beginning with 'Cl' I prefer. The 'Cl's' are always gentle and lovely girls you would die for ! Don't you think so ?"

Richard had never been acquainted with any for them to inspire that emotion. Indeed these urgent appeals to his fancy in feminine names at five o'clock in the morning, slightly surprised him, though he was but half awake to the outer world. By degrees he perceived that Ralph was quite changed. Instead of the lusty boisterous boy, his rival in manly sciences, who spoke straightforwardly and acted up to his speech, here was an abashed and blush-persecuted youth, who sued piteously for a friendly ear wherein to pour the one idea possessing him. Gradually, too, Richard apprehended that Ralph likewise was on the frontiers of the Realm of Mystery,

perhaps further towards it than he himself was; and then, as by a sympathetic stroke, was revealed to him the wonderful beauty and depth of meaning in feminine names. The theme appeared novel and delicious, fitted to the season and the hour. But the hardship was that Richard could choose none from the number; all were the same to him; he loved them all.

"Don't you really prefer the 'Cl's?" said Ralph, most persuasively.

"Not better than the names ending in 'a' and 'y'," Richard replied, wishing he could, for Ralph was evidently ahead of him.

"Come under these trees," said Ralph. And under the trees Ralph unbosomed. His name was down for the army: Eton was quitted for ever. In a few days he would have to join his regiment, and before he left he must say good bye to his friends .... would Richard tell him Mrs. Forey's address? he had heard she was somewhere by the sea. Richard did not remember the address, but said he would willingly take charge of any letter and forward it.

"Will you?" cried Ralph, diving his hand into his pocket, "here it is. But don't let anybody see it."

"My aunt's name is not Clare," said Richard, perusing what was composed of the exterior formula.

"Ah! why, you've addressed it to Clare herself."

"Have I?" murmured Ralph, hiding his hot face in a stumble, and then peeping at the address to verify. "So I have. The address, you know . . . . It's because I like to write the name of Clare," he added hurriedly, by way of excellent justification.

"Is that the name you like best?"

Ralph counterqueried, "Don't you think it very nice—beautiful, I mean?"

"Not so good as Clara," said Richard.

"Oh! a hundred times better," shouted young Ralph in a fervour.

Richard meditated unwittingly: "I suppose we like the names of the people we like best."

No answer from Ralph.

"Emmeline Clementina Matilda Laura, Countess Blandish," Richard continued in a low tone, transferring the names, and playing on them like musical strings.

"Eh?" quoth Ralph.

"I 'm certain," said Richard, as he finished his performance, "I 'm certain we like the names

of the people we like best." And having made this great discovery for himself, he fixed his eyes on blushing Ralph. If he discovered anything further, he said nothing, but bade him good bye, jumped back into his boat, and pulled down the tide. The moment Ralph was hidden by an abutment of the banks, Richard reperused the address. For the first time it struck him that his cousin Clare was a very charming creature: he remembered the look of her eyes, and especially the last reproachful glance she gave him at parting. What business, pray, had Ralph to write to her? Did she not belong to him, Richard Feverel? He read the words again and again: Clare Doria Forey. Why, Clare was the name he liked best: nay, he loved it. Doria, too: she shared his own name with him. Away went his heart, not at a canter now, at a gallop, as one who sights the quarry. He felt too weak to pull. Clare Doria Forey—oh, perfect melody! Sliding with the tide, he heard it fluting in the bosom of the hills.

When Nature has made us ripe for Love, it seldom occurs that the Fates are behindhand in furnishing a Temple for the flame.

Above green-flashing plunges of a weir, and shaken by the thunder below, lilies, golden and white, were swaying at anchor among the reeds. Meadow-sweet hung from the banks thick with weed and trailing bramble, and there also hung a daughter of Earth. Her face was shaded by a broad straw-hat with a flexile brim that left her lips and chin in the sun, and sometimes nodding, sent forth a light of promising eyes. Across her shoulders, and behind, flowed large loose curls, brown in shadow, almost golden where the ray touched them. She was simply dressed, befitting decency and the season. On a closer inspection you might see that her lips were stained. This blooming young person was regaling on dew-berries. They grew between the bank and the water. Apparently she found the fruit abundant, for her hand was making pretty progress to her mouth. Fastidious youth, which shudders and revolts at woman plumping her exquisite proportions on bread-and-butter, and would (we must suppose) joyfully have her quite scraggy to have her quite poetical, can hardly object to dew-berries. Indeed the act of eating them is dainty and induces musing. The dewberry is a sister

to the lotos, and an innocent sister. You eat: mouth, eye, and hand, are occupied, and the undrugged mind free to roam. And so it was with the damsel who knelt there. The little skylark went up above her, all song, to the smooth southern cloud lying along the blue: from a dewy copse standing dark over her nodding hat, the blackbird fluted, calling to her with thrice mellow note: the kingfisher flashed emerald out of green osiers: a bow-winged heron travelled aloft, searching solitude: a boat slipped towards her, containing a dreamy youth, and still she plucked the fruit, and ate, and mused, as if no fairy prince were invading her territories, and as if she wished not for one, or knew not her wishes. Surrounded by the green shaven meadows, the pastoral summer buzz, the weir-fall's thundering white, amid the breath and beauty of wildflowers, she was a bit of lovely human life in a fair setting: a terrible attraction. The Magnetic Youth leaned round to note his proximity to the weir-piles, and beheld the sweet vision. Stiller and stiller grew Nature, as at the meeting of two electric clouds. Her posture was so graceful that, though he was making straight for the weir,

he dared not dip a scull. Just then one most enticing dewberry caught her eye. He was floating by unheeded, and saw that her hand stretched low, and could not gather what it sought. A stroke from his right brought him beside her. The damsel glanced up dismayed, and her whole shape trembled over the brink. Richard sprang from his boat into the water. Pressing a hand beneath her foot, which she had thrust against the crumbling wet sides of the bank to save herself, he enabled her to recover her balance, and gain safe earth, whither, emboldened by the incident, touching her finger's tip, he followed her.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FERDINAND AND MIRANDA.

He had landed on an Island of the still-vexed Bermoothes. The world lay wrecked behind him: Raynham hung in mists, remote, a phantom to the vivid reality of this white hand which had drawn him thither away thousands of leagues in an eye-twinkle. Hark, how Ariel sung overhead! What splendour in the Heavens! What marvels of beauty about his enchanted head! And, O you Wonder! Fair Flame! by whose light the glories of being are now first seen. . . . . Radiant Miranda! Prince Ferdinand is at your feet.

Or is it Adam, his rib taken from his side in sleep, and thus transformed, to make him behold his Paradise, and lose it? . . .

The youth looked on her with as glowing an eye. It was the First Woman to him.

And she—mankind was all Caliban to her, saving this one princely youth.

So to each other said their changing eyes in the moment they stood together; he pale, and she blushing.

She was indeed sweetly fair, and would have been held fair among rival damsels. On a magic shore, and to a youth educated by a System, strung like an arrow drawn to the head, he, it might be guessed, could fly fast and far with her. The soft rose in her cheeks, the clearness of her eyes, bore witness to the body's virtue; and health, and happy blood was in her bearing. Had she stood before Sir Austin among rival damsels, that Scientific Humanist, for the consummation of his System, would have thrown her the handkerchief for his son. The wide summer-hat nodding over her forehead to her brows, seemed to flow with the flowing heavy curls, and those fire-threaded mellow curls, only half-curls, waves of hair, call them, rippling at the ends, went like a sunny red-veined torrent down her back almost to her waist: a glorious vision to the youth, who embraced it as a flower of beauty, and read not a feature. There were curious features of

colour in her face for him to have read. Her brows, thick and brownish against a soft skin showing the action of the blood, met in the bend of a bow, extending to the temples long and level: you saw that she was fashioned to peruse the sights of earth, and by the pliability of her brows, that the wonderful creature used her faculty, and was not going to be a statue to the gazer. Under the dark thick brows an arch of lashes shot out, giving a wealth of darkness to the full frank blue eyes a mystery of meaning —more than brain was ever meant to fathom: richer henceforth than all mortal wisdom to Prince Ferdinand. For when Nature turns artist, and produces contrasts of colour on a fair face, where is the Sage, or what the Oracle, shall match the depth of its lightest look?

Prince Ferdinand was also fair. In his slim boating-attire his figure looked heroic. His hair, rising from the parting to the right of his forehead, in what his admiring Lady Blandish called his plume, fell away slanting silkily to the temples across the nearly imperceptible upward curve of his brows there—felt more than seen, so slight it was—and gave to his profile a bold beauty, to

which his bashful breathless air was a flattering charm. An arrow drawn to the head, capable of flying fast and far with her! He leaned a little forward to her, drinking her in with all his eyes, and young Love has a thousand. Then truly the System triumphed, just ere it was to fall; and could Sir Austin have been content to draw the arrow to the head, and let it fly, when it would fly, he might have pointed to his son again, and said to the world, "Match him!" Such keen bliss as the youth had in the sight of her, an innocent youth alone has powers of soul in him to experience.

'O Women!' says THE PILGRIM'S SCRIP, in one of its solitary outbursts, 'Women, who like, and will have for hero, a rake! how soon are you not to learn that you have taken bankrupts to your bosoms, and that the putrescent gold that attracted you, is the slime of the Lake of Sin.'

If these two were Ferdinand and Miranda, Sir Austin was not Prospero, and was not present, or their fates might have been different.

So they stood a moment, changing eyes, and

then Miranda spoke, and they came down to earth, feeling no less in heaven.

She spoke to thank him for his aid. She used quite common simple words; and used them, no doubt, to express a common simple meaning; but to him she was uttering magic, casting spells, and the effect they had on him was manifested in the incoherence of his replies, which were too foolish to be chronicled.

The couple were again mute. Suddenly Miranda, with an exclamation of anguish, and innumerable lights and shadows playing over her lovely face, clapped her hands, crying aloud, "My book! my book!" and ran to the bank.

Prince Ferdinand was at her side. "What have you lost?" he said.

"My book! my book!" she answered, her long delicious curls swinging across her shoulders to the stream. Then turning to him, divining his rash intention, "Oh, no, no! let me entreat you not to," she said. "I do not so very much mind losing it." And in her eagerness to restrain him, she unconsciously laid her gentle hand upon his arm, and took the force of motion out of him.

"Indeed I do not really care for the silly book,"

she continued, withdrawing her hand quickly, and reddening. "Pray do not!"

The young gentleman had kicked off his shoes. No sooner was the spell of contact broken, than he jumped in. The water was still troubled and discoloured by his introductory adventure, and, though he ducked his head with the spirit of a dabchick, the book was missing. A scrap of paper floating from the bramble just above the water, and looking as if fire had caught its edges and it had flown from one adverse element to the other, was all he could lay hold of, and he returned to land disconsolately, to hear Miranda's murmured mixing of thanks and pretty expostulations.

"Let me try again," he said.

"No, indeed!" she replied, and used the awful threat: "I will run away if you do," which effectually restrained him.

Her eye fell on the fire-stained scrap of paper, and brightened, as she cried, "There—there! you have what I want. It is that. I do not care for the book.—No, please! You are not to look at it. Give it me."

Before her playfully-imperative injunction was

fairly spoken, Richard had glanced at the document, and discovered a Griffin between Two Wheatsheaves: his Crest, in silver: and below, O wonderment immense! his own handwriting! remnant of his burnt Offering! a page of the sacrificed Poems! one Blossom preserved from the deadly universal blight.

He handed it to her in silence. She took it, and put it in her bosom.

Who would have said, have thought, that, where all else perished, Odes, fluttering bits of broad-winged Epic, Idyls, Lines, Stanzas, this one Sonnet to the Stars should be miraculously reserved for such a starry fate! passing beatitude!

As they walked silently across the meadow, Richard strove to remember the hour, and the mood of mind, in which he had composed the notable production. The stars were invoked, as seeing, and foreseeing, all, to tell him where then his love reclined, and so forth; Hesper was complacent enough to do so, and described her in a couplet:

'Through sunset's amber see me shining fair,
As her blue eyes shine through her golden hair.'

And surely no words could be more prophetic. Here were two blue eyes, and golden hair; and by some strange chance, that appeared like the working of a divine finger, she had become the possessor of the prophecy, she that was to fulfil it! The youth was too charged with emotion to speak. Doubtless the damsel had less to think of, or had some trifling burden on her conscience, for she seemed to grow embarrassed. At last she threw up her chin to look at her companion under the nodding brim of her hat (and the action gave her a charmingly freakish air), crying, "But where are you going to? You are wet through. Let me thank you again, and pray leave me, and go home, and change instantly."

"Wet?" replied the Magnetic muser, with a voice of tender interest, "not more than one foot, I hope? I will leave you while you dry your stocking in the sun."

At this she could not withhold a shy and lovely laugh.

"Not I, but you. You know you saved me, and would try to get that silly book for me, and you are dripping wet. Are you not very uncomfortable?"

In all sincerity he assured her that he was not.

"And you really do not feel that you are wet?"

He really did not: and it was a fact that he spoke truth.

She pursed her sweet dewberry mouth in the most comical way, and her blue eyes lightened laughter out of the half-closed lids.

"I cannot help it," she said, her mouth opening, and sounding harmonious bells of laughter in his ears. "Pardon me, won't you?"

His face took the same soft smiling curves in admiration of her.

"Not to feel that you have been in the water, the very moment after!" she musically interjected, seeing she was excused.

"It's true," he said; and his own gravity then touched him to join a duet with her, which made them no longer feel strangers, and did the work of a month of intimacy. Better than sentiment Laughter opens the breast to Love; opens the whole breast to his full quiver, instead of a corner here and there for a solitary arrow. Hail the occasion propitious, O ye British young! and laugh, and treat Love as an honest God, and

dabble not with the spiritual rouge. These two laughed, and the souls of each cried out to other, 'It is I,' 'It is I.'

They laughed and forgot the cause of their laughter, and the sun dried his light river-clothing, and they strolled towards the blackbird's copse, and stood near a stile, in sight of the foam of the weir, and the many-coloured rings of eddies streaming forth from it.

Richard's boat, meanwhile, had contrived to shoot the weir, and was swinging, bottom upwards, broadside with the current down the rapid backwater.

"Will you let it go?" said the damsel, eyeing it curiously.

"Yes," he replied, and low, as if he spoke in the core of his thought: "What do I care for it now?"

His old life was whirled away with it, dead, drowned. His new life was with her, alive, divine.

She flapped low the brim of her hat. "You must really not come any further," she softly said.

"And will you go, and not tell me who you are?" he asked, growing bold as the fears of

losing her came across him: "And will you not tell me before you go," his face burned, "how you came by that—that paper?"

She chose to select the easier question to reply to: "You ought to know me; we have been introduced." Sweet was her winning off-hand affability.

"Then who, in Heaven's name, are you? Tell me! I never could have forgotten you."

"You have, I think," she said demurely.

"Impossible that we could ever have met, and I forget you!"

She looked up to him quickly.

"Do you remember Belthorpe?"

"Belthorpe! Belthorpe!" quoth Richard, as if he had to touch his brain to recollect there was such a place. "Do you mean old Blaize's farm?"

"Then I am old Blaize's niece." She tripped him a soft curtsey.

The Magnetized youth gazed at her. By what magic was it that this divine sweet creature could be allied with that old churl!

"Then what—what is your name?" said his mouth, while his eyes added, "O wonderful creature! How came you to enrich the earth?"

"Have you forgot the Desboroughs of Dorset, too?" she peered at him archly from a side bend of the flapping brim.

"The Desboroughs of Dorset?" A light broke in on him. "And have you grown to this? That little girl I saw there!"

He drew close to her to read the nearest features of the vision. She could no more laugh off the piercing fervour of his eyes. Her volubility fluttered under his deeply wistful look, and now neither voice was high, and they were mutually constrained.

"You see," she murmured, "we are old acquaintances."

Richard, with his eyes still intently fixed on her, returned: "You are very beautiful!"

The words slipped out. Perfect simplicity is unconsciously audacious. Her overpowering beauty struck his heart, and like an instrument that is touched and answers to the touch, he spoke.

Miss Desborough made an effort to trifle with this terrible directness: but his eyes would not be gainsaid, and checked her lips. She turned away from them, her bosom a little rebellious. Praise so passionately spoken, and by one who

has been a damsel's first dream, dreamed of nightly many long nights, and clothed in the virgin silver of her thoughts in bud, praise from him is coin the heart cannot reject, if it would. She quickened her steps to the stile.

"I have offended you!" said a mortally wounded voice across her shoulder.

That he should think so were too dreadful.

"Oh, no, no! you would never offend me." She gave him her whole sweet face.

"Then why—why do you leave me?"

"Because," she hesitated, "I must go."

"No. You must not go. Why must you go? Do not go."

"Indeed, I must," she said, pulling at the obnoxious broad brim of her hat; and, interpreting a pause he made for his assent to her sensible resolve, shyly looking at him, she held her hand out, and said, "Good-bye," as if it were a natural thing to say.

The hand was pure white: white and fragrant as the frosted blossom of a May-night. It was the hand whose shadow, cast before, he had last night bent his head reverentially above, and kissed—resigning himself thereupon over to exe-

cution for payment of the penalty of such daring: by such bliss well rewarded.

He took the hand, and held it; gazing between her eyes.

"Good bye," she said again, as frankly as she could, and at the same time slightly compressing her fingers on his in token of adieu. It was a signal for his to close firmly upon hers.

"You will not go?"

"Pray let me," she pleaded, her sweet brows suing in wrinkles.

"You will not go?" Mechanically he drew the white hand nearer his thumping heart.

"I must," she faltered piteously.

"You will not go?"

"Oh yes! yes!"

"Tell me. Do you wish to go?"

The question was subtle. A moment or two she did not answer, and then forswore herself, and said, Yes.

"Do you—do you wish to go?" He looked with quivering eyelids under hers.

A fainter, Yes, responded to his passionate repetition.

"You wish—wish to leave me?" His breath went with the words.

"Indeed I must."

Her hand became a closer prisoner.

All at once an alarming delicious shudder went through her frame. From him to her it coursed, and back from her to him. Forward and back Love's electric messenger rushed from heart to heart, knocking at each, till it surged tumultuously against the bars of its prison, crying out for its mate. They stood trembling in unison, a lovely couple under these fair Heavens of the morning.

When he could get his voice, it was, "Will you go?"

But she had none to reply with, and could only mutely bend upward her gentle wrist.

"Then, farewell," he said, and dropping his lips to the soft fair hand, kissed it, and hung his head, swinging away from her, ready for death.

Strange, that now she was released she should linger by him. Strange, that his audacity, instead of the executioner, brought blushes and timid tenderness to his side, and the sweet words, "You are not angry with me?"

"With you, O Beloved!" cried his soul. "And you forgive me, Fair Charity!"

She repeated her words in deeper sweetness to

his bewildered look; and he, inexperienced, possessed by her, almost lifeless with the divine new emotions she had realized in him, could only sigh, and gaze at her wonderingly.

"I think it was rude of me to go without thanking you again," she said, and again proffered her hand.

The sweet Heaven-bird shivered out his song above him. The gracious glory of Heaven fell upon his soul. He touched her hand, not moving his eyes from her, nor speaking, and she, with a soft word of farewell, passed across the style, and up the pathway through the dewy shades of the copse, and out of the arch of the light, away from his eyes.

And away with her went the wild enchantment: he looked on barren air. But it was no more the world of yesterday. The marvellous splendours had sown seeds in him, ready to spring up and bloom at her gaze; and in his bosom now the vivid conjuration of her tones, her face, her shape, makes them leap and illumine him like fitful summer lightnings—ghosts of the vanished Sun.

There was nothing to tell him that he had been making love and declaring it with extraordinary rapidity: nor did he know it. Soft-flushed cheeks! sweet mouth! strange sweet brows! eyes of softest fire! how could his ripe eyes see you, and not plead to keep you? Nay, how could he let you go? And he seriously asks himself that question.

Tomorrow this spot will have a memory—the river, and the meadow, and the white, falling weir: his heart will build a temple here; and the skylark will be its high-priest, and the old blackbird its glossy-gowned chorister, and there will be a sacred repast of dewberries. Today the grass is grass: his heart is chased by phantoms, and finds rest nowhere. Only when the most tender freshness of his flower comes across him, does he taste a moment's calm; and no sooner does it come than it gives place to keen pangs of fear that she may not be his for ever.

Ere long he learns that her name is Lucy. Ere long he meets Ralph, and discovers that in a day he has distanced him by a sphere. Ere long, he, and Ralph, and the Curate of Lobourne, join in their walks, and raise classical discussions

on ladies' hair, fingering a thousand delicious locks, from those of Cleopatra to the Borgia's. "Fair! fair! all of them fair!" sighs the melancholy Curate, "as are those women formed for our perdition! I think we have in this country what will match the Italian, or the Greek." His mind flutters to Mrs. Doria: Richard blushes before the vision of Lucy: and Ralph, whose heroine's hair is a dark luxuriance, dissents, and claims a noble share in the slaughter of men for dark-haired Wonders. They have no mutual confidences, but they are singularly kind to each other, these three children of instinct.

CHAPTER XIX.

UNMASKING OF MASTER RIPTON THOMPSON.

Lady Blandish, and others who professed an interest in the fortunes and future of the systematized youth, had occasionally mentioned names of families whose alliance, according to apparent calculations, would not degrade his blood; and over these names, secretly preserved on an open leaf of the Note-Book, Sir Austin, as he neared the Metropolis, distantly dropped his eye. There were names historic, and names mushroomic; names that the Conqueror might have called in his muster-roll; names that had been, clearly, tossed into the upper stratum of civilized life by a mill-wheel, or a merchant-stool. Against them the Baronet had written M., or Po., or Pr.: signifying, Money, Position, Principles: favouring the latter with special brackets.

The wisdom of a worldly man, which he could now and then adopt, determined him, before he commenced his round of visits, to consult and sound his Solicitor and his Physician thereanent: Lawyers and Doctors being the rats who know best the merits of a House, and on what sort of foundation it is standing.

Sir Austin entered the great City with a sad mind. The memory of his misfortune came upon him vividly, as if no years had intervened, and it were but yesterday that he found the letter telling him that he had no wife, and his son no mother. He wandered on foot through the streets the first night of his arrival, looking strangely at the shops, and shows, and bustle of the World from which he had divorced himself; feeling as destitute as the poorest vagrant. He had almost forgotten how to find his way about, and came across his old mansion in his efforts to regain his hotel. The windows were alight; signs of merry life within. He stared at it from the shadow of the opposite side. It seemed to him he was a ghost gazing upon his living past. And then the Phantom which had stood there mocking while he felt as other men—the Phan-

tom now flesh and blood Reality seized and convulsed his heart, and filled its unforgiving crevices with bitter ironic venom. He remembered by the time reflection returned to him that it was Algernon, who had the house at his disposal, probably giving a card-party, or something of the sort. In the morning, too, he remembered that he had divorced the World to wed a System, and must be faithful to that exacting Spouse, who, now alone of things on earth, could fortify and recompense him.

Mr. Thompson received his client with the dignity and emotion due to such a rent-roll and the unexpectedness of the honour. He was a thin stately man of Law, garbed as one who gave audience to acred Bishops, and carrying on his countenance the stamp of paternity to the parchment-skins, and of a Virtuous attachment to port-wine sufficient to increase his respectability in the eyes of moral Britain. After congratulating Sir Austin on the fortunate issue of two or three suits, and being assured that the Baronet's business in town had no concern therewith, Mr. Thompson ventured to hope that the young heir was all his father could desire him to be, and

heard with satisfaction that he was a pattern to the youth of the Age.

"A difficult time of life, Sir Austin!" said the old lawyer, shaking his head. "We must keep our eyes on them—keep awake! The mischief is done in a minute."

"We must take care to have seen where we planted, and that the root was sound, or the mischief will do itself in spite of, or under the very spectacles of, Supervision," said the Baronet.

His legal adviser murmured "Exactly," as if that were his own idea; adding, "It is my plan with Ripton, who has had the honour of an introduction to you, and a very pleasant time he spent with my young friend, whom he does not forget. Ripton follows the Law. He is articled to me, and will, I trust, succeed me worthily in your confidence. I bring him into town in the morning: I take him back at night. I think I may say that I am quite content with him."

"Do you think," said Sir Austin, fixing his brows, "that you can trace every act of his to its motive?"

The old lawyer bent forward and humbly requested that this might be repeated.

"Do you," Sir Austin held the same searching expression, "do you establish yourself in a radiating centre of intuition—do you base your watchfulness on so thorough an acquaintance with his character—so perfect a knowledge of the instrument, that all its movements—even the eccentric ones—are anticipated by you, and provided for?"

The explanation was a little too long for the old lawyer to entreat another repetition. Winking with the painful deprecation of a deaf man, Mr. Thompson smiled urbanely, coughed conciliatingly, and said he was afraid he could not affirm that much, though he was happily enabled to say that Ripton had borne an extremely good character at school.

"I find," Sir Austin remarked, as sardonically he relaxed his inspecting pose and mien, "there are fathers who are content to be simply obeyed. Now I require not only that my son should obey, I would have him guiltless of the impulse to gainsay my wishes: feeling me in him stronger than his undeveloped nature, up to a certain period, where my responsibility ends and his commences. Man is a self-acting machine. He

cannot cease to be a machine; but, though self-acting, he may lose the powers of self-guidance, and in a wrong course his very vitalities hurry him to perdition. Young, he is an organism ripening to the set mechanic diurnal round, and while so he needs all the Angels to hold watch over him that he grow straight, and healthy, and fit for what machinal duties he may have to perform . . ."

Mr. Thompson agitated his eyebrows dreadfully. He was utterly lost. He respected Sir Austin's estates too much to believe for a moment he was listening to downright folly. Yet how otherwise explain the fact of his excellent client being incomprehensible to him? For a middle-aged gentleman, and one who has been in the habit of advising and managing, will rarely have a notion of accusing his understanding, and Mr. Thompson had not the slightest notion of accusing his. But the Baronet's condescension in coming thus to him, and speaking on the subject nearest his heart, might well affect him, and he quickly settled the case in favour of both parties, pronouncing mentally that his honoured Client had a meaning, and so deep it

was, so subtle, that no wonder he experienced a difficulty in giving it fitly significant words.

Sir Austin elaborated his theory of the Organism and the Mechanism, for his lawyer's edification. At a recurrence of the word, healthy, Mr. Thompson caught him up:

"I apprehend you! Oh, I agree with you, Sir Austin! Entirely! Allow me to ring for my son Ripton. I think, if you condescend to examine him, you will say that regular habits, and a diet of nothing but law-reading—for other forms of literature I strictly interdict—have made him all that you instance."

Mr. Thompson's hand was on the bell. Sir Austin arrested him.

"Permit me to see the lad at his occupation," said he.

Our old friend Ripton sat in a room apart with the confidential clerk, Mr. Beazley, a veteran of Law, now little better than a Document, looking already signed and sealed, and shortly to be delivered, who enjoined nothing from his pupil and companion save absolute silence, and sounded his praises to his father at the close of days when it had been rigidly observed—not caring, or con-

sidering, the finished dry old Document that he was, under what kind of spell a turbulent commonplace youth could be charmed into stillness six hours a day. Ripton was supposed to be devoted to the study of Blackstone. A tome of the classic legal Commentator lay extended outside his desk; under the partially lifted lid of which nestled the assiduous student's head—Law being thus brought into direct contact with his brain-pan. The office-door opened, and he heard not: his name was called, and he remained equally moveless. His method of taking in Blackstone seemed absorbing as it was novel.

"Comparing notes, I dare say," whispered Mr. Thompson to Sir Austin. "I call that study!"

The Confidential Clerk rose, and bowed obsequious senility.

"Is it like this every day, Beazley?" Mr. Thompson asked with parental pride.

"Ahem!" the old Clerk replied, "He is like this every day, Sir. I could not ask more of a mouse."

Sir Austin stepped forward to the desk. His proximity roused one of Ripton's senses, which

blew a call to the others. Down went the lid of the desk. Dismay, and the ardours of Study, flashed together in Ripton's face. He slouched from his perch with the air of one who means rather to defend his position than welcome a superior, the right hand in his waistcoat pocket fumbling a key, the left catching at his vacant stool.

Sir Austin put two fingers on the youth's shoulder, and said, leaning his head a little on one side, in a way habitual to him, "I am glad to find my son's old comrade thus profitably occupied. I know what Study is myself. But beware of prosecuting it too excitedly! Come! you must not be offended at our interruption—you will soon take up the thread again. Besides, you know, you must get accustomed to the visits of your Client."

So condescending and kindly did this speech sound to Mr. Thompson, that seeing Ripton still preserve his appearance of disorder and sneaking defiance, he thought fit to nod and frown at the youth, and desired him to inform the Baronet what particular part of Blackstone he was absorbed in mastering at that moment.

Ripton hesitated an instant, and blundered out, with dubious articulation, "The Law of Gravelkind."

"What Law?" said Sir Austin, perplexed.

"Gravelkind," again rumbled Ripton's voice.

Sir Austin turned to Mr. Thompson for an explanation. The old lawyer was shaking his lawbox.

"Singular," he exclaimed. "He will make that mistake!—What Law, Sir?"

Ripton read his error in the sternly painful expression of his father's face, and corrected himself: "Gavelkind, Sir."

"Ah!" said Mr. Thompson, with a sigh of relief. "Gravelkind, indeed! Gavelkind!—An old Kentish——" he was going to expound, but Sir Austin assured him he knew it, and a very absurd Law it was: adding, "I should like to look at your son's notes, or remarks on the judiciousness of that family arrangement, if he has any."

"You were making notes, or referring to them, as we entered," said Mr. Thompson to the sucking lawyer; "a very good plan, which I have always enjoined to you. Were you not?"

Ripton stammered that he was afraid he had not any Notes to show—worth seeing.

"What were you doing, then, Sir?"

"Making notes," muttered Ripton, looking incarnate subterfuge.

"Exhibit!"

Ripton glanced at his desk, and then at his father: at Sir Austin, and at the confidential clerk. He took out his key. It would not fit the hole.

"Exhibit!" was peremptorily called again.

In his praiseworthy efforts to accommodate the keyhole, Ripton discovered that the desk was already unlocked. Mr. Thompson marched to it, and held the lid aloft. A book was lying open within, which Ripton immediately hustled among a mass of papers and tossed into a dark corner: not before the glimpse of a coloured frontispiece was caught by Sir Austin's eye.

The Baronet smiled, and said, "You study Heraldry, too? Are you fond of the Science?"

Ripton replied that he was very fond of it—extremely attached; and threw a further pile of papers into the dark corner.

The Notes had been less conspicuously placed,

and the search for them was tedious and vain. Papers, not legal, or the fruits of study, were found that made Mr. Thompson more intimate with the condition of his son's exchequer: nothing in the shape of a Remark on the Law of Gavelkind.

Mr. Thompson suggested to his son that they might be among those scraps he had thrown carelessly into the dark corner. Ripton, though he consented to inspect them, was positive they were not there.

"What have we here?" said Mr. Thompson, seizing a neatly folded paper addressed to the Editor of a Law publication, as Ripton brought them forth, one by one. Forthwith Mr. Thompson fixed his spectacles and read aloud:

'*To the Editor of the Jurist.*

'Sir,

'In your recent of observations on the great case of Crim —'

Mr. Thompson hem'd! and stopped short like a man who comes unexpectedly upon a snake in his path. Mr. Beazley's feet shuffled. Sir Austin changed the position of an arm.

"It's on the other side, I think," gasped Ripton.

Mr. Thompson confidently turned over, and intoned with emphasis.

'To Absalom, the son of David, the little Jew usurer of Bond Court, Whitecross Gutters, for his introduction to Venus, I.O.U. Five Pounds, when I can pay.

'Signed: RIPTON THOMPSON.'

Underneath this fictitious legal instrument was discreetly appended:

'(Mem. Document not binding.)'

There was a pause: an awful under-breath of sanctified wonderment and reproach passed round the office. Sir Austin assumed an attitude. Mr. Thompson shed a glance of severity on his confidential clerk, who parried by throwing up his hands.

Ripton, now fairly bewildered, stuffed another paper under his father's nose, hoping the outside perhaps would satisfy him: it was marked 'Legal Considerations.' Mr. Thompson had no idea of sparing or shielding his son. In fact, like

many men whose self-love is wounded by their offspring, he felt vindictive, and was ready to sacrifice him up to a certain point, for the good of both. He therefore opened the paper, expecting something worse than what he had hitherto seen, despite its formal heading, and he was not disappointed.

The 'Legal Considerations' related to the Case regarding which Ripton had conceived it imperative upon him to address a letter to the Editor of the 'Jurist,' and was indeed a great case, and an ancient; revived apparently for the special purpose of displaying the forensic abilities of the Junior Counsel for the Plaintiff, Mr. Ripton Thompson, whose assistance the Attorney-General, in his opening statement, congratulated himself on securing; a rather unusual thing, due probably to the eminence and renown of that youthful gentleman at the Bar of his country. So much was seen from the Copy of a Report purporting to be extracted from a Newspaper, and prefixed to the Junior Counsel's Remarks, or Legal Considerations, on the Conduct of the Case, the admissibility and non-admissibility of certain Evidence, and the ultimate Decision of the Judges.

Mr. Thompson, Senior, lifted the paper high, with the spirit of one prepared to do execution on the criminal, and in the voice of a town-crier, varied by a bitter accentuation and satiric sing-song tone, deliberately read:

'VULCAN *v.* MARS.

'The Attorney-General, assisted by Mr. Ripton Thompson, appeared on behalf of the Plaintiff. Mr. Serjeant Cupid, Q.C., and Mr. Capital Opportunity, for the Defendant.'

"Oh!" snapped Mr. Thompson, Senior, peering venom at the unfortunate Ripton over his spectacles, "your Notes are on that issue, Sir! Thus you employ your time, Sir!"

With another side-shot at the Confidential Clerk, who retired immediately behind a strong entrenchment of shrugs, Mr. Thompson continued to read:

'This Case is too well known to require more than a partial summary of particulars . . .'

"Ahem! we will skip the particulars, however partial," said Mr. Thompson. "Ah?—what do you mean here, Sir, by the 'chief of the Olympic games,' which you eulogize?"

"Not I," answered Ripton, from under his head. "It's Mr. Cap— Mr. Opp— It's the Defendant's Counsel. I'm against."

Outraged by hearing the culprit speak at all, his father broke in, "How dare you talk so unblushingly, Sir!"

Ripton dropped his head a degree lower.

"Enough!" cried Mr. Thompson, appealing mutely to all present, and elongating his syllables with a vehement sneer; "I think we may be excused your Legal Considerations on such a Case. This is how you employ your Law-studies, Sir! You put them to this purpose! Mr. Beazley! you will henceforward sit alone. I must have this young man under my own eye. Sir Austin! permit me to apologize to you for subjecting you to a scene so disagreeable. It was a father's duty not to spare him!"

Mr. Thompson wiped his forehead, as Brutus might have done after passing judgment on the scion of his house.

"These papers," he went on, fluttering Ripton's precious lucubrations in a wavering judicial hand, "I shall retain. The day will come when he will regard them with shame. And it shall

be his penance, his punishment, to do so! Stop!" he cried, as Ripton was noiselessly shutting his desk, "have you more of them, Sir! of a similar description? Rout them out! Let us know you at your worst. What have you there —in that corner?"

Ripton was understood to say, he devoted that corner to old briefs on important cases.

Mr. Thompson thrust his trembling fingers among the old briefs, and turned over the volume Sir Austin had observed, but without much remarking it, for his suspicions had not risen to print.

"A Manual of Heraldry?" the Baronet politely inquired, before it could well escape.

"I like it very much," says Ripton, clutching the book in dreadful torment.

"Allow me to see that you have our Arms and Crest correct." The Baronet proffered a hand for the book.

"A Griffin between two Wheatsheaves," cries Ripton, still clutching it nervously.

Mr. Thompson, without any notion of what he was doing, drew the book from Ripton's hold; whereupon the two Seniors laid their grey heads

together over the title-page. It set forth in attractive characters beside a coloured frontispiece, which embodied the promise displayed there, the entrancing Adventures of Miss Random, a strange young lady.

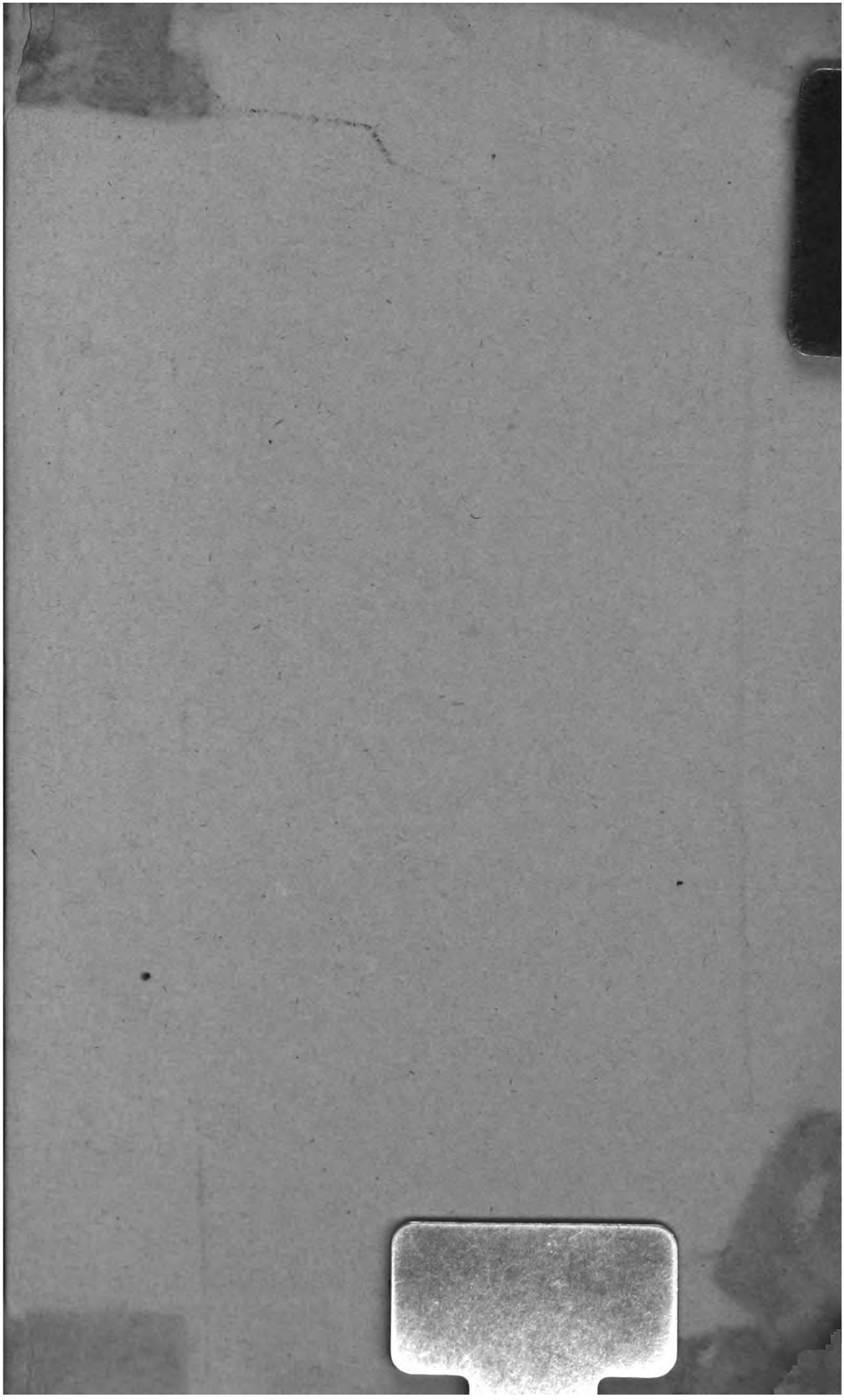
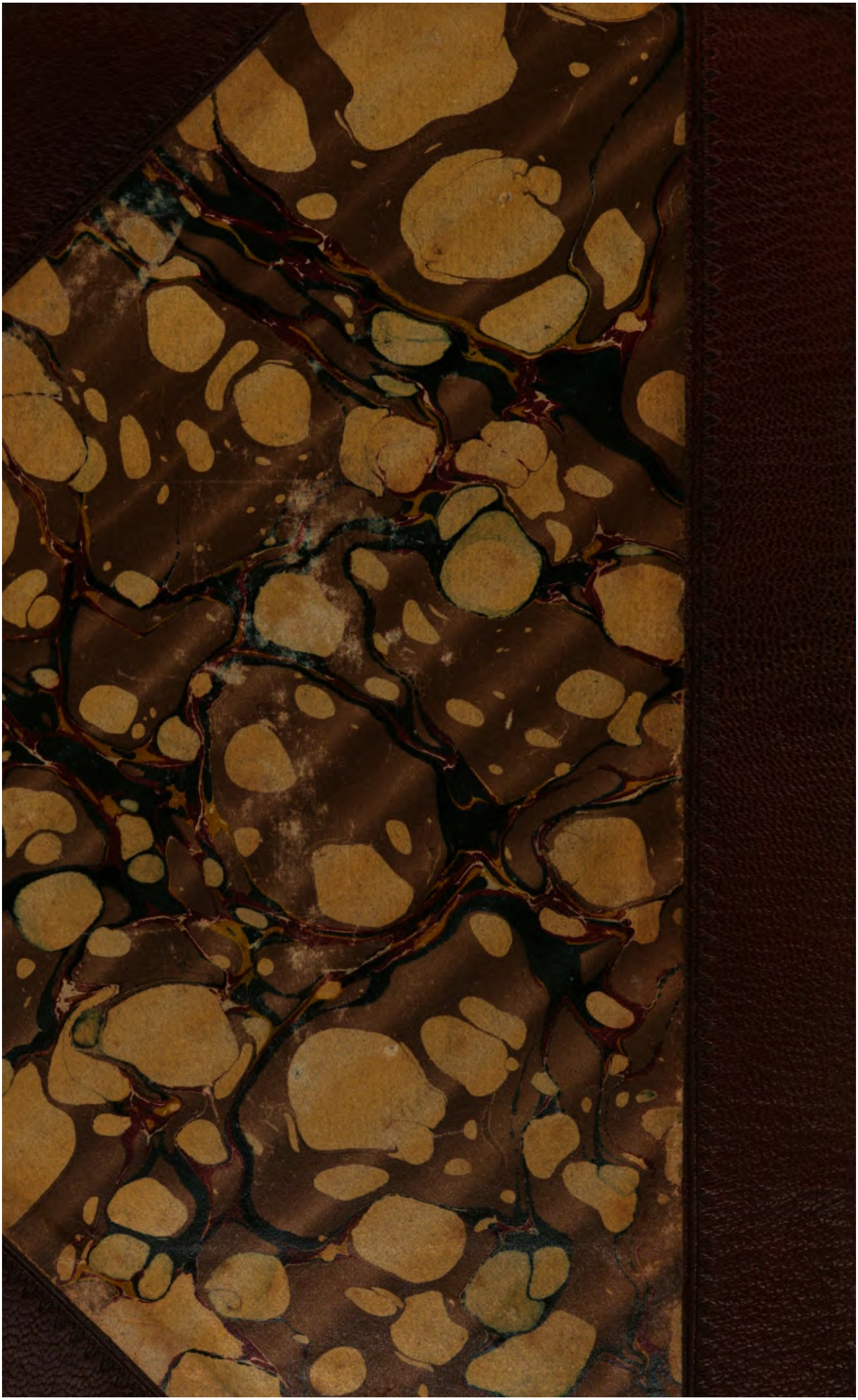
Had there been a Black Hole within the area of those Law regions to consign Ripton to there and then, or an Iron Rod handy to mortify his his sinful flesh, Mr. Thompson would have used them. As it was, he contented himself by looking Black Holes and Iron Rods at the detected youth, who sat on his perch insensible to what might happen next, collapsed.

Mr. Thompson cast the wicked creature down with a "Pah!" He, however, took her up again, and strode away with her. Sir Austin gave Ripton a forefinger, and kindly touched his head, saying, "Good bye, boy! at some future date Richard will be happy to see you at Raynham."

Undoubtedly this was a great triumph to the System!

END OF VOLUME I.

PRINTED BY

JOHN EDWARD TAYLOR, LITTLE QUEEN STREET,

LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS.