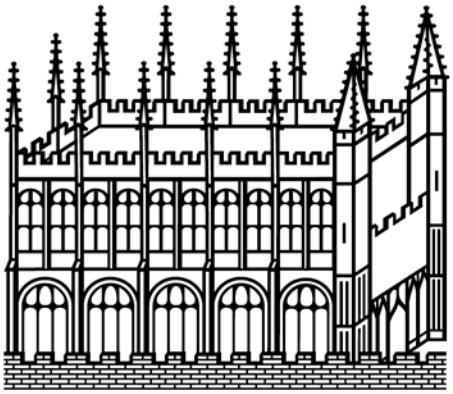

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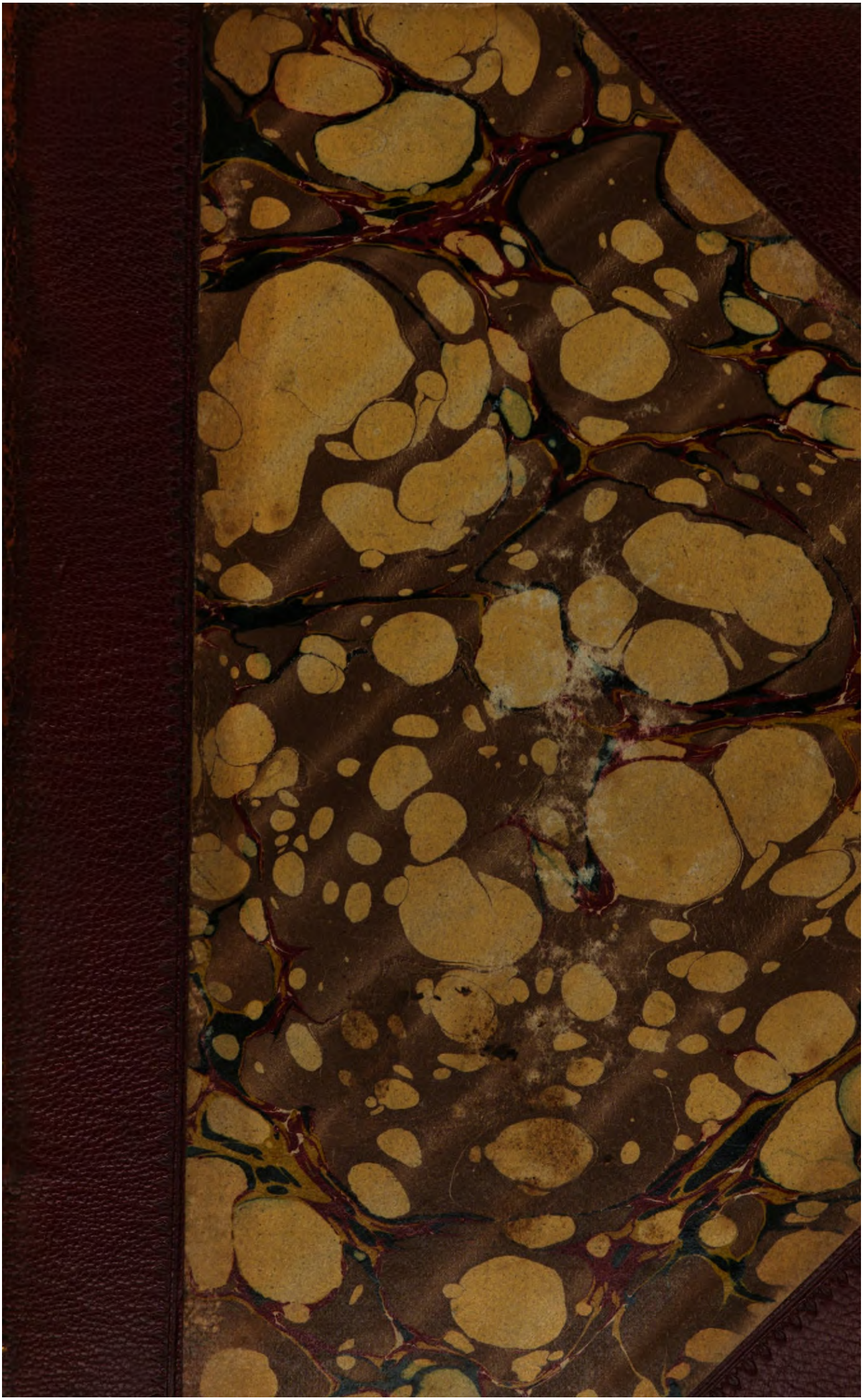

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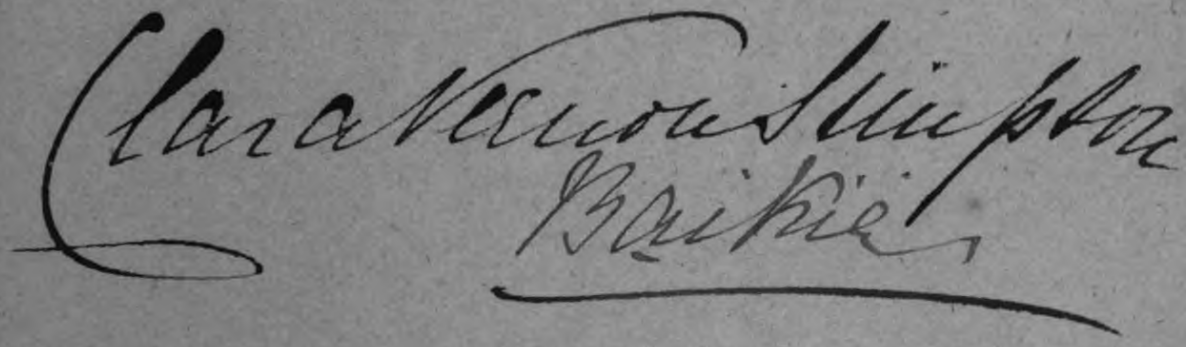

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THE ORDEAL

OF

RICHARD FEVEREL.

A History of Father and Son.

BY

GEORGE MEREDITH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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

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THE ORDEAL

OF

RICHARD FEVEREL.

CHAPTER I.

GOOD WINE AND GOOD BLOOD.

The conversation between Solicitor and Client was resumed.

"Is it possible," quoth Mr. Thompson, the moment he had ushered his client into his private room, "that you will consent, Sir Austin, to see him, and receive him, again?"

"Certainly!" the Baronet replied. "Why not? This by no means astonishes me. When there is no longer danger of contamination to my son, he will be welcome as he was before. He is a school-boy. I knew it—I expected it. The results of your principle, Thompson!"

"One of the very worst books of that abomi-

nable class!" exclaimed the old lawyer, opening at the coloured frontispiece, from which brazen Miss Random smiled bewitchingly out, as if she had no doubt of captivating Time and all his veterans on a fair field. "Pah!" he shut her to with the energy he would have given to the office of publicly slapping her face; "from this day I diet him on bread and water—rescind his pocket-money!—How he could have got hold of such a book! How he—! And what ideas! Concealing them from me as he has done so cunningly! He trifles with Vice! His mind is in a putrid state! I might have believed—I did believe—I might have gone on believing my son Ripton to be a moral young man!" The old lawyer interjected on the delusions of fathers, and sat down in a lamentable abstraction.

"The lad has come out!" said Sir Austin. "His adoption of the legal form is amusing. He trifles with Vice, true: people newly initiated are as hardy as its intimates, and a young sinner's amusements will resemble those of a confirmed debauchee. The satiated, and the insatiate, appetite alike appeal to extremes. You are astonished at this revelation of your son's condition.

I expected it—though assuredly—believe me—not this sudden and indisputable proof of it. But I knew that the seed was in him, and therefore I have not latterly invited him to Raynham. School, and the corruption there, will bear its fruits, sooner or later. I could advise you, Thompson, what to do with him: it would be my plan—"

Mr. Thompson murmured, like a true courtier, that he should esteem it an honour to be favoured with Sir Austin Feverel's advice: secretly resolute, like a true Briton, to follow his own.

"Let him, then," continued the Baronet, "see Vice in its nakedness. While he has yet some innocence, nauseate him! Vice, taken little by little, usurps gradually the whole creature. He has sisters?—"

"Four," said the old lawyer, with melancholy voice. "But would you, Sir Austin, really advise?—"

"My counsel to you, Thompson, would be, to drag him through the sinks of Town! Then, when he is sickened, let his sisters do the rest—the recovering work."

"Good girls! good girls!" muttered the old lawyer. "Boys will be boys, I suppose!"

"A palliation, remember, which is frequently an incentive."

Mr. Thompson began to wink again.

"Oh, I shall punish him, Sir Austin! Do not fear me, Sir. I have no tenderness for Vice."

"That is not what is wanted, Thompson. You mistake me. He should be dealt with gently. Heavens! do you hope to make him hate Vice, by making him a martyr for its sake? Totally wrong, Thompson! You must descend from the pedestal of Age to become his Mentor: cause him to see how certainly and pitilessly Vice itself punishes: accompany him into its haunts—"

"Over Town?" broke forth Mr. Thompson.

"Over Town," said the Baronet.

"But, my dear Sir Austin," the old lawyer interposed, "what would Mrs. Thompson say? at me?—"

"Mrs. Thompson!" the Baronet ejaculated very scornfully. "I really doubt!" Mr. Thompson saw that he had slipped in citing the possible disapproval of his spouse, and diverted drearily to the figure he would cut in the haunts of Vice.

Sir Austin said he should not hesitate.

Mr. Thompson declared that whoso could do it, he honoured. In his heart, he thought it the most ridiculous idea in the world.

"And depend upon it," added the Baronet, "that until fathers act thoroughly up to their duty, we shall see the sights we see in great cities, and hear the tales we hear in little villages, with death and calamity in our homes, and a legacy of sorrow and shame to the generations to come. I do aver," he exclaimed, becoming excited, "that, if it were not for the duty to my son, and the hope I cherish in him, I, seeing the accumulation of misery we are handing down to an innocent posterity—to whom, through our sin, the fresh breath of life will be foul—I—yes! I would hide my name! For whither are we tending? What home is pure absolutely? What cannot our Doctors and Lawyers tell us?"

Mr. Thompson acquiesced significantly.

"And what is to come of this?" Sir Austin continued. "When the sins of the fathers are multiplied by the sons, is not Perdition the final sum of things? And is not Life, the boon of

Heaven, growing to be the Devil's game utterly? But for my son, I would hide my name. I would not bequeath it to be cursed by them that walk above my grave!"

This was indeed a terrible view of existence. Mr. Thompson felt uneasy. There was a dignity in his Client, an impressiveness in his speech, that silenced remonstrating Reason and the cry of long years of comfortable respectability. Mr. Thompson went to Church regularly; paid his rates and dues without overmuch, or at least more than common, grumbling. On the surface he was a good citizen, fond of his children, faithful to his wife, devoutly marching to a fair seat in Heaven on a path paved by something better than a thousand a year. But here was a man sighting him from below the surface, and though it was an unfair, unaccustomed, not to say un-English, method of regarding one's fellow-man, Mr. Thompson was troubled by it. What though his Client exaggerated? Facts were at the bottom of what he said. And he was acute—he had unmasked Ripton! Since Ripton's exposure he winced at a personal application in the text his Client preached from. Possibly this

was the secret source of part of his anger against that peccant youth.

Mr. Thompson shook his head, and with dolefully puckered visage, and a pitiable contraction of his shoulders, rose slowly up from his chair. Apparently he was about to speak, but he straightway turned and went meditatively to a side-recess in the room, whereof he opened a door, drew forth a tray, and a decanter labelled PORT, filled a glass for his Client, deferentially invited him to partake of it; filled another glass for himself, and drank.

That was his reply.

Sir Austin never took wine before dinner. Thompson had looked as if he meant to speak: he waited for Thompson's words.

Mr. Thompson saw that, as his Client did not join him in his glass, the eloquence of that Porty reply was lost on his Client.

Having slowly ingurgitated, and meditated upon, this precious draught and turned its flavour over and over with an aspect of potent Judicial Wisdom (one might have thought that he was weighing mankind in the balance), the old lawyer heaved, and said, sharpening his lips

over the admirable vintage, "The world is in a very sad state, I fear, Sir Austin!"

His Client gazed at him queerly.

"But that," Mr. Thompson added immediately, ill-concealing by his gaze the glowing intestinal congratulations going on within him, "that is, I think you would say, Sir Austin—if I could but prevail upon you—a tolerably good character wine!"

"There's Virtue somewhere, I see, Thompson!" Sir Austin murmured, without disturbing his legal adviser's dimples.

The old lawyer sat down to finish his glass, saying, that such a wine was not to be had everywhere.

They were then outwardly silent for a space. Inwardly one of them was full of riot and jubilant uproar: as if the solemn fields of Law were suddenly to be invaded and possessed by troops of Bacchanals: and to preserve a decently wretched physiognomy over it, and keep on terms with his companion, he had to grimace like a melancholy clown in a pantomime.

Mr. Thompson brushed back his hair. The Baronet was still expectant. Mr. Thompson

sighed deeply, and emptied his glass. He combated the change that had come over him. He tried not to see Ruby. He tried to feel miserable, and it was not in him. He spoke, drawing what appropriate inspirations he could from his Client's countenance, to show that they had views in common: "Degenerating sadly, I fear!"

The Baronet nodded.

"According to what my wine-merchants say," continued Mr. Thompson, "there can be no doubt about it."

The Baronet stared.

"It's the grape, or the ground, or something," Mr. Thompson went on. "All I can say is, our youngsters will have a bad look-out! In my opinion Government should be compelled to send out a Commission to inquire into the cause. To Englishmen it would be a Public Calamity. It surprises me—I hear men sit and talk despondently of this extraordinary disease of the Vine, and not one of them seems to think it incumbent on him to act, and do his best to stop it." He fronted his Client like a man who accuses an enormous public delinquency. "Nobody makes a stir! The apathy of Englishmen

will become proverbial. Pray try it, Sir Austin! Pray allow me. Such a wine cannot disagree at any hour. Do! I am allowanced two glasses three hours before dinner. Stomachic. I find it agree with me surprisingly. Quite a new man. I suppose it will last our time. It must! What should we do? There 's no Law possible without out. Not a Lawyer of us could live. Ours is an occupation which dries the blood. We require—Ahem! have I taken my second glass?"

Mr. Thompson meditated; conceived that he had, and again that he had not. The same luxury of indecision occurred daily, and daily another glass solved the difficulty.

"Too much is decidedly bad," he continued, looking firmly convinced. "But just the quantum makes men of us."

Launched on the theme, he determined to overbear his Client vinously.

"Now that very wine, Sir Austin—I think I do not err in saying, that very wine your respected father, Sir Pylcher Feverel, used to taste whenever he came to consult my father, when I was a boy. And I remember one day being

called in, and Sir Pylcher himself poured me out a glass. I wish I could call in Ripton now, and do the same. No! Leniency in such a case as that!—The wine would not hurt him—I doubt if there be much left for him to welcome his guests with. Ha! ha! Now if I could persuade you, Sir Austin, as you do not take wine before dinner, some day to favour me with your company at my little country cottage—I have a wine there—the fellow to that—I think you would, I do think you would"—Mr. Thompson meant to say, he thought his Client would arrive at something of a similar jocund contemplation of his fellows in their degeneracy that inspirited lawyers after potation, but condensed the sensual promise into, "highly approve."

Sir Austin speculated on his legal adviser with a sour mouth comically compressed.

It stood clear to him that Thompson before his Port, and Thompson after, were two different men. To indoctrinate him now was too late: it was perhaps the time to make the positive use of him he wanted.

Drawing forth the Note-Book, and pencilling roughly: 'Two prongs of a fork: the World

stuck between them: Port, and the Palate: 'T is one which fails first—Down goes World:' and again the hieroglyph—'Port-spectacles:' he said: "I shall gladly accompany you this evening, Thompson,"—words that transfigured the delighted lawyer—and restored the skeleton of a great Aphorism to his pocket, there to gather flesh and form, with numberless others in a like condition.

"I came to visit my lawyer," he said to himself. "I think I have been dealing with The World in epitome!"

CHAPTER II.

THE SYSTEM ENCOUNTERS THE WILD OATS SPECIAL PLEA.

THE Rumour circulated that Sir Austin Feverel, the Recluse of Raynham, the rank misogynist, the rich Baronet, was in Town, looking out a Bride for his only son and uncorrupted heir. Doctor Benjamin Bairam was the excellent authority. Doctor Benjamin Bairam had safely delivered Mrs. Deborah Gossip of this interesting bantling, which was forthwith dandled in dozens of feminine laps. Doctor Benjamin Bairam could boast the first interview with the famous Recluse: he had it from his own lips that the object of the Baronet was, to look out a Bride for his only son and uncorrupted heir: "and," added the Doctor, "she'll be lucky who gets him." Which was interpreted to mean, that he would be a catch; the Doctor probably

intending to allude to certain extraordinary difficulties in the way of a choice.

A demand was made on the publisher of THE PILGRIM'S SCRIP, for all his outstanding copies. Conventionalities were defied. A summer-shower of cards fell on the Baronet's table. The old feminine enthusiasm for his productions revived. He was threatened with the formation of a new Court at his hotel. Miss Joy Blewins, now an Authoress of greater celebrity than her sister, and even more the man than formerly, came to him repentant of her attacks on his private history (which she called her exhibition of their common difference of view regarding Woman, whose champion she was acknowledged to be), trusting to convert him to support her. The swift Camilla, transformed by tricksy Time into the fat wife of a wheezy Squire, paid him a flying visit during the wretched two weeks she was annually allowed in Town, to call his attention to a tiny paragon daughter she possessed, with none of its father's complaints and all her youthful energies. Mrs. M'Murphy also, after writing innumerable novels of which he was the villain and she the heroine, tried to get admittance to him, but the

Baronet shudderingly gave orders to be denied to her, and the rest of them. As in other interesting cases, no Irish were tolerated.

He had few male friends. He shunned the Clubs as nests of scandal. The cards he contemplated were mostly of that sex, with the husband, if there was a husband, evidently dragged in for Propriety's sake. He read their cards, and smiled. He knew their purpose. What terrible light Thompson and Bairam had thrown on some of them! Heavens! in what a state was the blood of this Empire.

Before commencing his campaign, he called on two ancient intimates, Lord Heddon, and his distant cousin Darley Absworthy, both Members of Parliament, useful men, though gouty, who had sown in their time a fine crop of Wild Oats, and advocated the advantage of doing so, seeing that they did not fancy themselves the worse for it. He found one with an imbecile son, and the other with consumptive daughters. "So much," he wrote in the Note-book, "for the Wild Oats theory!"

Darley was proud of his daughters' white and pink skins. "Beautiful complexions," he called

them. The eldest was in the market, immensely admired. Sir Austin was introduced to her. She talked fluently and sweetly. A youth not on his guard, a simple schoolboy youth, or even a man, might have fallen in love with her, she was so affable and fair. There was something poetic about her. And she was quite well, she said, the Baronet frequently questioning her on that point. She intimated that she was robust; but towards the close of their conversation, her hand would now and then travel to her side, and she breathed painfully an instant, saying, "Isn't it odd? Dora, Adela, and myself, we all feel the same queer sensation—about the heart I think it is—after talking much."

Sir Austin nodded, and blinked sadly; exclaiming to his Soul, "Wild Oats! Wild Oats!"

He did not ask permission to see Dora and Adela.

Lord Heddon vehemently preached Wild Oats.

"It's all nonsense, Feverel," he said, "about bringing up a lad out of the common way. He's all the better for a little racketing when he's green—feels his bone and muscle—learns to know the world. He'll never be a man if he hasn't played at the old game one time in his

life, and the earlier the better. I've always found the best fellows were wildish once. I don't care what he does when he's a greenhorn:—besides he's got an excuse for it then. You can't expect to have a man, if he doesn't take a man's food. You'll have a milksop. And depend upon it, when he does break out, he'll go to the Devil, and nobody pities him. Look what those fellows, the grocers, do when they get hold of a young—what d'ye call 'em?—apprentice. They know the scoundrel was born with a sweet tooth. Well! they give him the run of the shop, and in a very short time he soberly deals out the goods, a devilish deal too wise to abstract a morsel even for the pleasure of stealing. I know you have contrary theories. You hold that the young grocer should have a soul above sugar. It won't do! Take my word for it, Feverel, it's a dangerous experiment, that of bringing up flesh and blood in harness. No colt will bear it, or he's a tame beast. And look you: take it on medical grounds. Early excesses the frame will recover from: late ones break the constitution. There's the case in a nutshell. How's your son?"

"Sound and well!" replied Sir Austin. "And yours?"

"Oh, Lipscombe's always the same!" Lord Heddon sighed peevishly. "He's quiet—that's one good thing; but there's no getting the Country to take him, so I must give up hopes of that."

Lord Lipscombe entering the room just then, Sir Austin surveyed him, and was not astonished at the refusal of the Country to take him.

"Wild Oats! Wild Oats!" again thinks the Baronet, as he contemplates the headless, degenerate, weedy, issue and result.

Both Darley Absworthy and Lord Heddon spoke of the marriage of their offspring as a matter of course. "And if I were not a coward," Sir Austin confessed to himself, "I should stand forth and forbid the banns! This universal ignorance of the inevitable consequence of Sin is frightful! The Wild Oats plea is a torpedo that seems to have struck the world, and rendered it morally insensible." However, they silenced him. He was obliged to spare their feelings on a subject to him so deeply sacred. The healthful image of his noble boy rose before

him, a triumphant living rejoinder to any hostile argument.

He was content to remark to his Doctor, that he thought the third generation of Wild Oats would be a pretty thin crop!

Families against whom neither Thompson, lawyer, nor Bairam, physician, could recollect a progenitorial blot, either on the male, or female, side, were not numerous. "Only," said the Doctor, "you really must not be too exacting in these days, my dear Sir Austin. It is impossible to contest your principle, and you are doing mankind incalculable service in calling its attention to this the gravest of its duties: but as the stream of civilization progresses, we must be a little taken in the lump, as it were. The world is, I can assure you—and I do not look only above the surface, you can believe—the world is awakening to the vital importance of the question."

"Doctor," replied Sir Austin, "if you had a pure-blood Arab barb, would you cross him with a hack?"

"Decidedly not," said the Doctor.

"Then permit me to say, I shall employ every

care to match my son according to his merits," Sir Austin returned. "I trust the world is awakening, as you observe. I have been to my publisher, since my arrival in Town, with a Manuscript 'Proposal for a New System of Education of our British Youth,' which may come in opportunely. I think I am entitled to speak on that subject—eh?"

"Certainly," said the Doctor. "You will admit, Sir Austin, that, compared with continental nations—our neighbours for instance—we shine to advantage, in morals, as in everything else. I hope you admit that?"

"I find no consolation in shining by comparison with a lower standard," said the Baronet. "If I compare the enlightenment of your views—for you admit my principle—with the obstinate incredulity of a country Doctor's, who sees nothing of the world, you are hardly flattered, I presume?"

Doctor Bairam would hardly be flattered at such a comparison, assuredly, he interjected.

"Besides," added the Baronet, "the French make no pretences, and thereby escape one of the main penalties of hypocrisy. Whereas we!

—but I am not their advocate, credit me. It is better, perhaps, to pay our homage to Virtue. At least it delays the spread of entire corruptness."

Doctor Bairam wished the Baronet success, and diligently endeavoured to assist his search for a mate worthy of the pure-blood barb, by putting several Mamas, whom he visited, on the alert.

CHAPTER III.

A SHADOWY VIEW OF CŒLEBS PATER GOING ABOUT WITH A GLASS-SLIPPER.

One of these Mamas favoured by Doctor Benjamin Bairam, was Mrs. Caroline Grandison, said to be a legitimate descendant of the great Sir Charles: a lady who, in propriety of demeanour and pious manners, was the petticoated image of her admirable ancestor. The clean-linen of her morality was spotless as his. As nearly she neighboured Perfection, and knew it as well. Let us hope that her History will some day be written, and the balance restored in Literature which it was her pride to have established for her sex in Life.

Mrs. Caroline was a colourless lady of an unequivocal character, living upon drugs, and governing her husband and the world from her sofa. Woolly Negroes blest her name, and

whiskered John-Thomases deplored her weight. The world was given to understand that Sorrows and Disappointments had reduced her to the contemplative posture which helped her to consider the urgent claims of her black fellow-creatures, and require the stalwart services of her white. In her presence the elect had to feel how very much virtue is its own reward; for if they did not rightly esteem the honour she did them, they had little further encouragement from Mrs. Caroline Grandison. On the other hand her rigour towards vice was unsparing; especially in the person of one of her own sex, whom she treated as Heaven treats fallen Angels. A sinful man—why Mrs. Caroline expected nothing better: but a sinful woman—Oh! that was a scandal, a shame! And you met no sinful woman at Mrs. Caroline Grandison's parties. As a consequence, possibly, though one hardly dares suppose it, her parties were the dullest in London, and gradually fell into the hands of popular preachers, Specific Doctors, raw Missionaries with their passage paid for, and a chance Dean or so; a non-dancing, stout-dining congregation, in the midst of which a gay young

guardsman was dismally out of his element, and certainly would not have obtruded his unsodden spirit, had there been no fair daughters.

The completeness of the lady's reputation was rounded by the whispers of envious tongues; which, admitting the inviolability of her character, remarked that indeed she was a little too careful to appear different from others, and took an ascetic delight in the contrast. There is no doubt that she took a great deal of medicine. Dr. Bairam may have contributed towards her asceticism somewhat. The worthy Doctor may even, perhaps, have contributed a trifle towards her perfection.

In her sweet youth this lady fell violently in love with the great Sir Charles, and married him in fancy. The time coming when maiden fancy must give way to woman fact, she compromised her reverent passion for the hero by declaring that she could never change the name he had honoured her with, and must, if she espoused any mortal, give her widowed hand to a Grandison. Accordingly two cousins were proposed to her; but the moral reputation of these Grandisons was so dreadful, and such a disgrace to the

noble name they bore, that she rejected them with horror. Woman's Mission, however, being her perpetual precept, she felt, at the age of twenty-three, bound to put it in practice, and, as she was handsome, and most handsomely-endowed, a quite unobjectionable gentleman was discovered who, for the honour of assisting her in her Mission, agreed to disembody himself in her great name, and be lost in the blaze of Sir Charles. With his concurrence she rapidly produced eight daughters. A son was denied to her. This was the second generation of Grandisons denied a son. Her husband, the quite unobjectionable gentleman, lost heart after the arrival of the eighth, and surrendered his mind to more frivolous pursuits. She also appeared to lose heart. It was her saintly dream to have a Charles. So assured she was that he was coming at last, that she prepared male baby-linen with her own hands for the disappointing eighth. When, in that moment of creative suspense, Dr. Bairam's soft voice, with sacred melancholy, pronounced, "A Daughter, Madam!" Mrs. Caroline Grandison covered her face, and wept. She afterwards did penance for her want

of resignation, and relapsed upon Religion and little dogs.

Mrs. Caroline Grandison appeared to lose heart. But people said, she was not really solaced by Religion and little dogs. People said, that her repeated consultations with Dr. Bairam had one end in view, and that all those quantities of medicine were consumed for a devout purpose. Eight is not a number to stop at. Nine if you like, but not eight. No one thinks of stopping at eight. People said, that the pertinacity of her spirit weakened her mind, and that she consulted cards and fortune-tellers, and cast horoscopes, to discover if there would be a ninth, and that ninth a Charles. They might truly have said, that the potency of Dr. Bairam's prescriptions weakened the constitution. Mrs. Caroline Grandison grew fretful, and reclined on an invalid couch, while her name hunted foxes. Time flew: the faint-hearted Unobjectionable refused to participate in Dr. Bairam's prescriptions: there was a close to all concert between them: instead of a Charles, bare-backed poodles and pendent fox-tails reigned in the House of Grandison.

The disappointing Eighth was on the verge of her teens when Sir Austin visited Town. None of Mrs. Caroline Grandison's daughters had married: owing, it was rumoured, to the degeneracy of the males of our day. The elder ones had, in their ignorance, wished to marry young gentlemen of their choosing. Mrs. Caroline Grandison bade them wait till she could find for them something like Sir Charles: she was aware that such a man would hardly be found alive again. If they rebelled, as model young ladies occasionally will, Mrs. Caroline Grandison declared that they were ill, and called in Dr. Bairam to prescribe, who soon reduced them. Physic is an immense ally in bringing about filial obedience.

No lady living was better fitted to appreciate Sir Austin, and understand his System, than Mrs. Caroline Grandison. When she heard of it from Dr. Bairam, she rose from her couch, and called for her carriage, determined to follow him up and come to terms with him. All that was told her of the Baronet conspired to make her believe he was Sir Charles in person fallen upon evil times: the spirit of Sir Charles revived to mix his blood with hers and produce a

race of moral Paladins after Sir Charles's pattern. She reviewed her daughters. Any one of the three younger ones would be a suitable match, and if he wanted perfectly-educated young women, where else could he look for them? But he was difficult to hunt down. He went abroad shyly. He was never to be met in general Society. The rumour of him was everywhere, and an extremely unfavourable rumour it was, from mothers who had daughters, and hopes for their daughters, which a few questions of his had kindled, and a discovery of his severe requisitions extinguished. It appeared that he had seen numerous young ladies. He had politely asked them to sit down and take off their shoes; but such monstrous feet they had mostly, that he declined the attempt to try on the Glass Slipper, and politely departed; or tried it on, and with a resigned sad look declared that it would not, would not fit!

"And I assure you, my dear," said Mrs. Rectangle, one of these outraged mothers, to Mrs. Caroline Grandison, "he does not scruple to ask the most abominable things of you, where this son of his is concerned. He made me quite

blush, and but for his manner, which, I admit, is dignified, I should have been indignant. He asked absolutely —" and she sank her voice. "I really now believe everything Miss Joy and Mrs. M'Murphy say of him. What does the man want?"

"What none of you can give him," was Mrs. Caroline Grandison's mental ejaculation.

Some of the young ladies had been to schools. Their feet were all enormously too big, and there was no need for them to take off their shoes. Some had been very properly educated at home; and to such, if Bairam, physician, and Thompson, lawyer, did not protest, the Slipper was applied; but by occult arts of its own it seemed to find out that their habits were somehow bad, and incapacitated them from espousing the Fairy Prince. The Slipper would not fit at all.

Unsuspecting damsels were asked, at what time they rose in the morning; and would reply, at any hour. Some said, they finished in the morning the Romance they had relinquished to sleep overnight; little considering how such a practice made the feet swell. Selina Rectangle thought it a fine thing to tell him, she took Metastasio to

bed with her and pencilled translations of him when she awoke.

There was a damsel closer home, who did not take Metastasio to bed with her, and who ate dewberries early in the morning, whose foot, had Sir Austin but known it, would have fitted into the intractable Slipper as easily and neatly as if it had been a soft kid glove made to her measure. Alas! the envious Sisters were keeping poor Cinderella out of sight. Dewberries still abounded by the banks of the river; and thither she strolled, and there daily she was met by one who had the test of her merits in his bosom: and there, on the night the Scientific humanist conceived he had alighted on the identical house which held the foot to fit the Slipper, there, under consulting stars, holy for ever more henceforth, the Fairy Prince, trembling and with tears, has taken from her lips the first ripe fruit of Love, and pledged himself hers.

A night of happy augury to Father and Son. They were looking out for the same thing; only one employed Science, the other Instinct; and which hit upon the right it was for Time to

decide. Sir Austin dined with Mrs. Caroline Grandison. They had been introduced by Sir Miles Papworth.

"What!" said Sir Miles, when Mrs. Caroline expressed her wish for an introduction, "you want to know Feverel? Aha! Why, you are the very woman for him, Ma'am. It's one of the strong-minded he's after. So you shall. So you shall. I'll give a dinner tomorrow. And let me tell you in confidence, that the value of his mines is increasing, Ma'am. You need n't be afraid about his crotchets. Feverel has his eye on the main chance as well as the rest of us."

"You do not believe, Sir Miles, that one may esteem him for his principles, and sympathize with his object?" said Mrs. Caroline.

"Well, Ma'am," Sir Miles returned, "I'm a plain man. I said to my wife the other day—she was talking something in that way—and I said to her, If Feverel had five hundred, instead of fifty thousand, a-year—he's got that clear, Ma'am, and it'll double—how about his principles then? Aha! A rich man can play the fool if he likes, and you women clap your hands, and cheer him. Now if I were to have a System for

all my rascals, you 'd call me something like what I should be—eh? You would, though! And I wish I had sometimes, for they 're every one of 'em in scrapes, and I 've got to pay the piper. But that 's part of their education, to my mind, so down goes the money."

"Have you seen much of his son?" Mrs. Caroline inquired, restraining an appearance of particular interest.

"Not much, Ma'am; not much. Aha! I expect it 's the mothers 'll be asking about *his* son, and the daughters about mine—eh?" Sir Miles indulged in a stout laugh.

"He 's a fine lad. I 'll say that for him, Ma'am. He 'll go a long way when he 's once loose, that lad will. I came to hear the other day that I was pretty near transporting him once, the young villain!"

Sir Miles told Mrs. Caroline certain facts that had gradually become public intelligence about his neighbourhood concerning the Bakewell Comedy.

Mrs. Caroline threw her hands aloft.

"Have I frightened you a bit, Ma'am?" said twinkling Sir Miles; but the perverse woman,

with the downfall of her hands, checked his exultation by exclaiming: "Is it not a proof of his father's wisdom to watch him so rigorously!"

Next day, at Sir Miles Papworth's hastily-ordered dinner, Mrs. Caroline Grandison, who had summoned her great dormant energies successfully to stand upon her feet, was handed down by Sir Austin. They sat together, and talked together. Those who were near and could catch scraps of their conversation, said, that they were engaged in mutually dissecting the frame of man: which perhaps was the origin of Mrs. Caroline's fame as a proficient in Anatomy, and of the honourable mention made of her in Miss Joy Blewins' pamphlet 'On the Educational Claims of Woman,' wherein Mrs. Caroline Grandison was cited as a woman, pure, delicate, beautiful, a pattern Wife and Mother, who had superintended many cuttings-up, and knew Man from top to toe, as was the undoubted right, Miss Joy vehemently urged, of every Woman upon earth.

At all events, Sir Austin and Mrs. Caroline discovered that they had in common from an early period looked on life as a Science: and having arrived at this joint understanding, they,

with the indifference of practised dissectors, laid out the world and applied the knife to the people they knew. In other words, they talked most frightful scandal. It is proverbial what a cold Torturer Science can be. Malice is nothing to it. They reviewed their friends. Pure blood was nowhere. Sir Austin hinted his observations since his arrival in town, and used a remark or two from Bairam and Thompson. Mrs. Caroline cleverly guessed the families, and still further opened his eyes. Together they quashed the Wild-Oats special plea. Mrs. Caroline gave him a clearer idea of his system than he had ever had before. She ran ahead of his thoughts like nimble fire. She appeared to have forethought them all, and taken a leap beyond. When he plodded and hesitated on his conception, she, at a word, struck boldly into black and white, making him fidget for his Note-Book to reverse a sentence or two on Woman. And she quoted The Pilgrim's Scrip.

"How true are some of the things you say, Sir Austin! And how false, permit me to add, are others!" she deprecatingly remarked. "That for instance on Domestic Differences. How could

you be so cynical as to say, that '*In a dissension between man and wife, that one is in the right who has most friends.*' It really angered me. Cannot one be absolutely superior—notoriously the injured one?" (Mrs. Caroline was citing her own case against the faint-hearted fox-hunting Unobjectionable.) "But you amply revenge it. You say: '*Great Hopes have lean offspring.*' How true that is! How I know it myself! How true every disappointed woman must know it to be! And what you say of the Instincts and the Mind —something—that our Instincts seek Stability here below, and are always casting anchor—something—without the Captain's consent—and that it is at once the fruitful source of unhappiness and the proof of immortality—I 'm making nonsense of it, but I appreciated the Wisdom fully."

In this way she played with him. The Theorist was dazzled, delighted. Lady Blandish was too like a submissive slave to the System. Mrs. Caroline wedded it on the equal standing of an English wife, who gives her half, and more, to the union.

Her name appeared on his card-table the day after the dinner. Six of her eight daughters and

a sprinkling of her little dogs, were ready for his visit by the afternoon, or fashionable morning. Charlotte and Harriet were absent. Clementina was the elder in attendance, and the rest presented fairly decreasing heights down to the disappointing last, Carola, called as near Charles as was permissible, a rigid ruddy young woman out of the Nursery.

"We receive you into the family," the fond mother leaned on her elbows maternally smiling, to welcome her visitor. "I wished my daughters to share with me the pleasure of your acquaintance."

"And knew well, Madam, how to gratify me most." Sir Austin bowed to the ceremony of introduction, and took a hand of each, retaining Carola's.

"This is your youngest, Madam?"

"Yes!" Mrs. Caroline suppressed a sigh.

"And how old are you, my dear?"

Carola twisted, and tried to read the frill of her trousers. She was dressed very young.

"My child!" her mother admonished her; whereat Carola screwed out a growl: "Thirteen."

"Thirteen this day," said her mother.

"Allow me to congratulate you, my dear."

Sir Austin bent forward, and put his lips to her forehead.

Carola received the salute with the stolidity of a naughty doll.

"She is not well today," said Mrs. Caroline. "She is usually full of life and gaiety; almost too much of an animal, I sometimes think."

"At her age she can scarcely be that," observed Sir Austin.

"She's the maddest creature I ever knew," Mrs. Caroline immediately went upon his tack with unction. "Today she is shy. She is not herself. Possibly something has disagreed with her."

"That nasty medicine, it is, Mama," mumbled wilful Carola, swinging her frock.

Sir Austin turned to Mrs. Caroline, and inquired anxiously if the child took much medicine.

"The smallest occasional doses," Mrs. Caroline remarked, to an accompaniment of interjectory eyebrows and chins from all her younger daughters, and a reserved demure aspect of the elder ones.

"I do not like much medicine for children," said the Baronet, a little snappishly.

"Only the smallest occasional doses?" Mrs. Caroline repeated, making her voice small, and the doses sound sweet.

"My son has had little, or nothing," said the Baronet.

The young ladies looked on the father of that son with interest.

"Will you come and see our gymnasium?" Mrs. Caroline asked quickly.

"It is," she added, rising with heroic effort, "not to be compared to our country one. But it is of excellent use, and all my girls exercise in it, when in Town, once a day, without intermission. My principle is, that girls require a development of their frames as well as boys; and the more muscle they have, the better women they make. I used it constantly till disappointment and sorrow broke the habit."

"On my honour, Madam," said the enraptured Baronet, "you are the only sensible woman I have met," and he offered his arm to conduct the strenuous invalid.

Daughters and little dogs trooped to the Gymnasium, which was fitted up in the court below, and contained swing-poles, and stride-poles, and

newly invented instruments for bringing out special virtues: an instrument for the lungs: an instrument for the liver: one for the arms and thighs: one for the wrists: the whole for the promotion of the Christian accomplishments.

Owing, probably, to the exhaustion consequent on their previous exercises of the morning, the young ladies, excepting Carola, looked fatigued, and pale, and anything but well-braced; and for the same reason, doubtless, when the younger ones were requested by their mother to exhibit the use of the several instruments, each of them wearily took hold of the depending strap of leather, and wearily pulled it, like mariners oaring in the deep sea; oaring to a haven they have no faith in.

"I sometimes hear them," said their Mama, "while I am reclining above, singing in chorus. 'Row, brothers, row,' is one of their songs. It sounds pretty and cheerful."

The Baronet was too much wrapped up in the enlightenment of her principle, to notice the despondency of their countenances.

"We have a Professor of Gymnastics, who comes twice a week to superintend," said Mrs.

Caroline, breathing fresh fumes to the pleased reverie of her guest.

"How old did you say your daughter is, Madam?" the Baronet abruptly interrogated her.

"Which?—Oh!" she followed his eye and saw it resting on ruddy Carola, "thirteen. She this day completes her thirteenth year. That will do, dears; much of it is not good after your dinners."

The Baronet placidly nodded approval of all her directions, and bestowed a second paternal kiss upon Carola.

"They talk of the Future Man, Madam," he said. "I seem to be in the house of the Future Woman."

"Happy you that have a son!" exclaimed Mrs. Caroline, and, returning to the Drawing-room, they exchanged Systems anew, as a preparatory Betrothal of the Objects of the Systems.

CHAPTER IV.

A DIVERSION PLAYED ON A PENNY-WHISTLE.

Away with Systems! Away with a corrupt World! Let us breathe the air of the Enchanted Island!

Golden lie the meadows: golden run the streams: red gold is on the pine-stems. The Sun is coming down to Earth, and walks the fields and the waters.

The Sun is coming down to Earth, and the fields and the waters shout to him golden shouts. He comes, and his heralds run before him, and touch the leaves of oaks, and planes, and beeches, lucid green, and the pine-stems redder gold; leaving brightest foot-prints upon thickly weeded banks, where the foxglove's last upper-bells incline, and bramble-shoots wander amid moist rich herbage. The plumes of the woodland are alight; and beyond them, over the open, 'tis a

race with the long-thrown shadows; a race across the heaths and up the hills, till, at the farthest bourne of mounted eastern cloud, the heralds of the sun lay rosy fingers, and rest.

Sweet are the shy recesses of the woodland. The ray treads softly there. A film athwart the pathway quivers many-hued against purple shade fragrant with warm pines, deep moss-beds, feathery ferns. The little brown squirrel drops tail, and leaps: the inmost bird is startled to a chance tuneless note. From silence into silence things move.

Peeps of the revelling splendour above, and around, enliven the conscious full heart within. The flaming West, the crimson heights, shower their glories through voluminous leafage. But these are bowers where deep bliss dwells, imperial joy, that owes no fealty to yonder glories in which the young lamb gambols, and the spirits of men are glad. Descend, Great Radiance! embrace Creation with beneficent fire, and pass from us! You, and the vice-regal Light that succeeds to you, and all heavenly pageants, are the ministers and the slaves of the throbbing Content within.

For this is the home of the Enchantment. Here, secluded from vexed shores, the Prince and Princess of the Island meet; here like darkling nightingales they sit, and into eyes, and ears, and hands, pour endless ever-fresh treasures of their souls.

Roll on, grinding wheels of the world: cries of ships going down in a calm; groans of a System which will not know its rightful hour of exultation; complain to the Universe. You are not heard here.

He calls her by her name, Lucy: and she, blushing at her great boldness, has called him by his, Richard. Those two names are the key-notes of the wonderful harmonies the Angels sing aloft.

"Lucy! my beloved!"

"O Richard!"

Key-notes of the harmonies Earth even now revolves to, shadowing slowly to its bright-eyed kindred.

Out in the world there, on the skirts of the woodland, a sheep-boy pipes to meditative Eve on a penny-whistle.

Love's musical Instrument is as old, and as

poor; it has but two stops; and yet, you see, the Cunning Musician does thus much with it!

Other speech they have little; light foam playing upon waves of feeling, and of feeling compact, that bursts only when the sweeping volume is too wild, and is no more than their sigh of tenderness spoken.

Perhaps Love played his tune so well, because their natures had unblunted edges, and were keen for bliss, confiding in it as natural food. To gentlemen and ladies he fine-draws upon the viol, ravishingly; or blows into the mellow bassoon; or rouses the heroic ardours of the trumpet; or, it may be, commands the whole Orchestra for them. And they are pleased. He is still the Cunning Musician. They languish, and taste ecstasy: but it is, however sonorous, an earthly concert. For them the spheres move not to Two Notes. They have lost, or forfeited and never known, the first super-sensual spring of the ripe senses into passion; when they carry the soul with them, and have the privileges of spirits to walk disembodied, boundlessly to feel. Or one has it, and the other is a dead body! Ambrosia let them eat, and drink the Nectar: here

sit a couple to whom Love's simple Bread and Water is a finer feast.

Pipe, happy sheep-boy, Love! Irradiated Angels, unfold your wings and lift your voices!

They have outflown Philosophy. Their Instinct has shot beyond the ken of Science. Imperiously they know we were made for this Eden: and would you gainsay them who are outside the Gates, and argue from the Fall?

"And this divine Gift was in store for me!"

So runs the internal outcry of each, clasping each: their recurring refrain to the harmonies. How it illumined the years gone by, and suffused the living Future!

"You for me: I for you!"

"We are born for each other!"

They believe that the Angels have been busy about them from their cradles. The celestial hosts have worthily striven to bring them together. And, O Victory! O Wonder! after toil, and pain, and difficulties exceeding, the celestial hosts have succeeded!

"Here we two sit who are written above as one!"

Pipe, happy Love! pipe on to these dear Innocents!

The tide of colour has ebbed from the upper-sky. In the West the sea of sunken fire draws back; and the stars leap forth, and tremble, and retire before the advancing moon, who slips the silver train of cloud from her shoulders, and, with her foot upon the pine-tops, surveys Heaven.

"Lucy, did you never dream of meeting me?"

"O Richard! yes; for I remembered you."

"Lucy! and did you pray that we might meet?"

"I did!"

Young as when she looked upon the Lovers in Paradise, the Fair Immortal journeys onward. Fronting her, it is not Night but veiled Day. Full half the sky is flushed. Not Darkness; not Day; the Nuptials of the twain.

"My own! my own for ever! You are pledged to me? Whisper!"

He hears the delicious music.

"And you are mine?"

A soft beam travels to the fern-covert under the pine-wood where they sit, and for answer he has her eyes: turned to him an instant, timidly fluttering over the depths of his, and then down-

cast; for through her eyes her soul is naked to him.

"Lucy! my bride! my life!"

The night-jar spins his dark monotony on the branch of the pine. The soft beam travels round them, and listens to their hearts. Their lips are locked.

Pipe no more, Love, for a time! Pipe as you will you cannot express their first kiss; nothing of its sweetness, and of its sacredness nothing. St. Cecilia up aloft, before the silver organ-pipes of Paradise, pressing fingers upon all the notes of which Love is but one, from her you may hear it.

So Love is silent. Out in the world there, on the skirts of the woodland, the self-satisfied sheep-boy delivers a last complacent squint down the length of his penny-whistle, and, with a flourish correspondingly wry-faced, he also marches into silence, hailed by supper. The woods are still. There is heard but the night-jar spinning on the pine-branch, circled by moonlight.

CHAPTER V.

CELEBRATES THE TIME-HONOURED TREATMENT OF A DRAGON BY THE HERO.

ENCHANTED Islands have not yet rooted out their old brood of Dragons. Wherever there is Romance, these Monsters come by inimical attraction. Because the Heavens are certainly propitious to true lovers, the Beasts of the Abysses are banded to destroy them; stimulated by innumerable sad victories; and every love-tale is an Epic War of the Upper, and Lower, Powers. I wish Good Fairies were a little more active. They seem to be cajoled into security by the happiness of their favourites; whereas the Wicked are always alert, and circumspect. They let the little ones shut their eyes to fancy they are not seen, and then commence.

These appointments and meetings, involving a start from the dinner-table at the hour of con-

templative digestion and prime Claret; the hour when the Wise Youth Adrian delighted to talk at his ease—to recline in dreamy consciousness that a work of good was going on inside him; these abstractions from his studies, excesses of gaiety, and glumness, heavings of the chest, and other odd signs, but mainly the disgusting behaviour of his pupil at the dinner-table, taught Adrian to understand, though the young gentleman was clever in excuses, that he had somehow learnt there was another half to the divided Apple of Creation, and had embarked upon the great voyage of discovery of the difference between the two halves. With his usual coolness Adrian debated whether he might be in the philosophic, or the practical, stage of the voyage. For himself, as a man and a philosopher, Adrian had no objection to it being either; and he had only to consider which was temporarily most threatening to the ridiculous System he had to support. Richard's absence annoyed him. The youth was vivacious, and his enthusiasm good fun; and besides, when he left table, Adrian had to sit alone with Hippias and the Eighteenth Century, from both of whom he had extracted all the

amusement that could be got, and he saw his digestion menaced by the contagious society of two ruined stomachs, who bored him just when he loved himself most. Poor Hippias was now so reduced that he had profoundly to calculate whether a particular dish, or an extra-glass of wine would have a bitter effect on him and be felt through the remainder of his years. He was in the habit of uttering his calculations half aloud, wherein the prophetic doubts of experience, and the succulent insinuations of appetite, contended hotly. It was horrible to hear him, so let us pardon Adrian for tempting him to a decision in favour of the moment.

"Happy to take wine with you," Adrian would say, and Hippias would regard the decanter with a pained forehead, and put up the Doctor.

"Drink, nephew Hippy, and think of the Doctor tomorrow!" the Eighteenth Century cheerily ruffles her cap at him, and recommends her own practice.

"It 's this literary work!" interjects Hippias, handling his glass of Remorse. "I don't know what else it can be. You have no idea how

anxious I feel. I have frightful dreams. I 'm perpetually anxious."

"No wonder," says Adrian, who enjoys the childish simplicity to which an absorbed study of his sensational existence has brought poor Hippias. "No wonder. Ten years of Fairy Mythology! Could any one hope to sleep in peace after that? As to your digestion, no one has a digestion who is in the Doctor's hands. They prescribe from dogmas, and don't count on the system. They have cut you down from two bottles to two glasses. It 's absurd. You can't sleep, because your system is crying out for what it 's accustomed to."

Hippias sips his Madeira with a niggardly confidence, but assures Adrian, that he really should not like to venture on a bottle now: it would be rank madness to venture on a bottle now, he thinks. Last night only, after partaking, under protest, of that rich French dish, or was it the duck?—Adrian advised him to throw the blame on that vulgar bird.—Say the duck, then. Last night, he was no sooner stretched in bed, than he seemed to be of an enormous size: all his limbs—his nose, his mouth, his

toes—were elephantine! An elephant was a pigmy to him. And his hugeousness seemed to increase the instant he shut his eyes. He turned on this side; he turned on that. He lay on his back; he tried putting his face to the pillow; and he continued to swell. He wondered the room could hold him—he thought he must burst it—and absolutely lit a candle, and went to the looking-glass to see whether he was bearable.

By this time Adrian and Richard were laughing uncontrollably. He had, however, a genial auditor in the Eighteenth Century, who declared it to be a new disease, not known in her day, and deserving investigation. She was happy to compare sensations with him, but hers were not of the complex order, and a potion soon righted her. In fact, her system appeared to be a debatable ground for aliment and medicine, on which the battle was fought, and, when over, she was none the worse, as she joyfully told Hippias. Never looked ploughman on prince, or village belle on Court Beauty, with half the envy poor Nineteenth-Century Hippias expended in his gaze on the Eighteenth. He was too serious to note much the laughter of the young men.

"I fancy, Uncle, you have swallowed a Fairy," says Richard. "You know what malicious things they are. Is there a case in the Mythology of anybody swallowing a Fairy?"

Hippias grimly considered, and thought, there was not.

"Upon my honour," Adrian composes his features to remark, "I think Ricky has hit the right nail. You have not only swallowed one, you have swallowed the whole Mythology! I'm not astonished you suffer so. I never could, I confess, so they don't trouble me; but, if I had, I should pour a bottle of the best on him every night. I should indeed."

"Can my Uncle," Richard meditates, his eyes on Hippias's weazened face, "ever have been, as my father says, happy, and like other men? Was he ever in love?"

Alas, and alack a day! Yes! Love had once piped even to Hippias in dewy shade. He was once an ardent youth, the genius of the family, master of his functions. 'Which, when one ceases to be,' says the PILGRIM'S SCRIP, 'one is no longer man:' and appends that 'it is the tendency of very fast people to grow organically

downward.' Pity the sorrows of a poor dyspepsy! Like an Actinia, poor Hippias had grown to be all stomach—though not so pretty to look at.

"You will drink a bottle and drown the Fairy on the day Ricky's married," says Adrian, eyeing the traitor blush he calls up on the ingenuous cheeks.

Hippias realizes distant consequences immediately, and contracts his jaw to stipulate for it at night, then: not in the morning at the breakfast. He is capable of nothing but very weak tea and dry toast, or gruel, in the morning. He adds that, how people can drink wine at that early hour, amazes him. "I should," he exclaims energetically, "I should be afraid to go to bed that night, if I did such a thing!"

Adrian leans to Richard, and bids the blush-mantled youth mind he does not swallow his Fairy, or he may have a similar unbewitching fear upon him on the awful occasion. Richard cocks his ear. His hour has struck. His Heaven awaits him in the wood, and he is off.

This 'Tragedy of a Cooking-Apparatus,' as Adrian designated the malady of Hippias, was

repeated regularly every evening. It was natural for any youth to escape as quick as he could from such a Table of Stomachs.

Adrian bore with his conduct considerately, until a letter from the Baronet, describing the house and maternal System of Mrs. Caroline Grandison, and the rough grain of hopefulness in her youngest daughter, spurred him to think of his duties, and see what was going on. He gave Richard half-an-hour's start, and then put on his hat to follow his own keen scent, leaving Hippias and the Eighteenth Century to piquet.

In the lane near Belthorpe he met a maid of the farm not unknown to him, one Molly Davenport by name, a buxom lass, who, on seeing him, invoked her Good Gracious, the generic Maid's Familiar, and was instructed by reminiscences vivid, if ancient, to giggle.

"Are you looking for your young gentleman?" Molly presently asked.

Adrian glanced about the lane like a cool brigand, to see if the coast was clear, and replied to her; "I am, Miss. I want you to tell me about him."

"Dear!" said the buxom lass, "was you coming for me tonight?"

Adrian rebuked her: for her bad grammar, apparently.

"'Cause I can't stop out long tonight," Molly explained, taking the rebuke to refer altogether to her bad grammar.

"You may go in when you please, Miss. Is that any one coming? Come here in the shade."

"Now, get along!" said Miss Molly.

It was hard upon the Wise Youth, and he felt it so, that she would not accept his impeccability. He said austerely: "I desire you to know, Miss, that, notwithstanding your unprotected situation and the favouring darkness, a British female, in all places, and at all seasons, may confidently repose the precious Jewel—"

The buxom lass interrupted the harangue by an explosion of giggles. "I declare," she cried, "I used for to believe you at fust; and when you begin you looks like it now. You're al'ays as good as a play. I say—don't you remember—"

Adrian spoke with resolution. "Will you listen to me, Miss Davenport!" He put a coin in her hand which had a medical effect in calming her to attention. "I want to know whether you have seen him at all?"

"Who? Your young gentleman? I sh'd

think I did. I seen him tonight only. Ain't he growed handsome. He 's al'ays about Beltharp now. It ain't to fire no more ricks, I gesses. He 's afire 'unself. Ain't you seen 'em together? He 's after the missis, and you 're after the—"

Adrian checked the audacious accusation. He requested Miss Davenport to be respectful, and confine herself to particulars. The buxom lass then told him that her young Missis was farmer Blaize's niece, and that she and Adrian's young gentleman were a pretty couple, and met one another every night. The girl swore for their innocence.

"As for Miss Lucy, she haven't a bit of art in her, nor have he."

"They 're all nature, I suppose," said Adrian. "How is it I don't see her at Church?"

"She 's Catholic, or somethink," said Molly. "Her feyther was, and a leftenant. She 've a Cross in her bed-room. She don't go to Church. I see you there last Sunday a-lookin' so solemn," and Molly stroked her hand down her chin to give it length.

Adrian insisted on her keeping to facts. It was dark, and in the dark he was indifferent to

the striking contrasts suggested by the buxom lass, but he wanted to hear facts, and he again bribed her to distil nothing but facts. Upon which she told him further, that her young lady was an innocent artless creature who had been to school upwards of three years with the nuns, and had a little money of her own, and was beautiful enough to be a lord's lady, and had been in love with Master Richard ever since she was a little girl. Molly had got from a friend of her's up at the Abbey, Mary Garner, the housemaid who cleaned Master Richard's room, a bit of paper once with the young gentleman's handwriting, and had given it to her Miss Lucy, and Miss Lucy had given her a gold sovereign for it—just for his handwriting! Miss Lucy did not seem happy at the farm, because of that young Tom who was always leering at her, and to be sure she was quite a lady, and could play, and sing, and dress with the best.

"She looks like a Angel in her nightgown!" Molly wound up.

"Can one be favoured with the opportunity . . . . ?" said Adrian.

"That you shan't," Molly cried.

"I only want to see, and worship," said Adrian.

"Worship—you!" Molly stepped jeeringly back from him.

The next moment she ran up close, and, speaking for the first time as if there were a distinction of position between them, as well as gender, petitioned: "Mr. Harley! you won't go for a-doin' any harm to 'em 'cause of what I said, will you now? Do say, you won't now, Mr. Harley? She is good, though she 's a Catholic. She was kind to me when I was ill, and I wouldn't have her crossed—I'd rather be showed up myself, I would!"

The Wise Youth gave no positive promise to the buxom lass, and she had to read his consent in a relaxation of his austerity. The noise of a lumbering foot plodding down the lane caused her to be abruptly dismissed. Molly took to flight, the lumbering foot accelerated its pace, and the pastoral appeal to her flying skirts was heard: "Moll! yau, theyre! It be I—Bantam!" But the sprightly Silvia would not stop to his wooing, and Adrian turned away laughing at these Arcadians.

Adrian was a lazy Dragon. All he did for the present was to hint, and tease. "It's the Inevitable!" he said, and asked himself why he should seek to arrest it. He had no faith in the System. Heavy Benson had. Benson of the slow thick-lidded Antediluvian eye and loose-crumpled skin: Benson, the Saurian, the Woman-hater: Benson was wide awake. A sort of rivalry existed between the Wise Youth and Heavy Benson. The fidelity of the latter dependant had moved the Baronet to commit to him a portion of the management of the Raynham estate, and this Adrian did not like. No one who aspires to the honourable office of leading another by the nose, can tolerate a party to his ambition. Benson's surly instinct told him he was in the Wise Youth's way, and he resolved to give his Master a striking proof of his superior faithfulness. For some weeks the Saurian eye had been on the two secret creatures. Heavy Benson saw letters come and go in the day, and now the young gentleman was off and out every night, and seemed to be on wings. Heavy Benson knew whither he went, and the object he went for. It was a woman, that was enough. The Saurian eye had actually

seen the sinful thing lure the Hope of Raynham into the shades. He composed several epistles of warning to the Baronet of the work that was going on; but before sending one, he wished to record a little of their guilty conversation; and for this purpose the faithful fellow nightly trotted over the dews to eavesdrop, and thereby aroused the Good Fairy, in the person of Tom Bakewell, the sole confidant of Richard's state.

Tom said to his young Master: "Do you know what, Sir? You be watched!"

Richard, in a fury, bade him name the wretch, and Tom hung his arms, and aped the respectable protrusion of the butler's head.

"It 's he, is it?" cried Richard. "He shall rue it. Tom! if I find him near me when we 're together, he shall never forget it."

"Don't hit too hard, Sir," Tom suggested. "You hit mortal hard when you 're in earnest, you know."

Richard averred he would forgive anything but that, and told Tom to be within hail tomorrow night—he knew where. By the hour of the appointment it was out of the lover's mind.

Heavy Benson's Epistle of Warning, addressed

to Sir Austin Absworthy Bearne Feverel, Bart., and containing an extraordinary travesty of the mutual converse of two love-sick beings, specially calculated to alarm a moral parent, was posted and travelling to Town. His work was done. Unluckily for his bones, he had, in the process, acquired a prurient taste for the service of spy upon Cupid; and, after doing duty at table, he was again out over the dews, hoping to behold the extreme wickedness of the celestial culprit.

Lady Blandish dined that evening at Raynham, by Adrian's pointed invitation. According to custom, Richard started up and off, with few excuses. The lady exhibited no surprise. She and Adrian likewise strolled forth to enjoy the air of the Summer night. They had no intention of spying. Still they may have thought that, by meeting Richard and his innamorata, there was a chance of laying a foundation of ridicule to sap the passion. They may have thought so—they were on no spoken understanding.

"I have seen the little girl," said Lady Blandish. "She is pretty—she would be telling if she were well set up. She speaks well. How absurd it is of that class to educate their women

above their station! The child is really too good for a farmer. I noticed her before I knew of this. She has enviable hair. I suppose she doesn't paint her eyelids. Just the sort of person to take a young man. I thought there was something wrong. I received, the day before yesterday, an impassioned poem evidently not intended for me. My hair was gold: my meeting him was foretold. My eyes were homes of light fringed with night. I sent it back, correcting the colours."

"Which was death to the rhymes," said Adrian. "I saw her this morning. The boy hasn't bad taste. As you say, she is too good for a farmer. Such a spark would explode any System. She slightly affected mine. The Huron is stark mad about her."

"But we must positively write, and tell his father," said Lady Blandish.

The Wise Youth did not see why they should exaggerate a trifle. The lady said she would have an interview with Richard, and then write, as it was her duty to do. Adrian shrugged, and was for going into the scientific explanation of Richard's conduct, in which the lady had to discourage him.

"Poor boy!" she sighed. "I am really sorry for him. I hope he will not feel it too strongly. They feel strongly, father and son."

"And select wisely?" Adrian slyly appended.

"That's another thing," said Lady Blandish. "You have heard about the Grandisons, I presume?"

"Yes. A perfect woman, mirrored in her progeny."

"I detest a perfect woman," said Lady Blandish.

"I should like her better than her progeny."

"I pity her husband," said Lady Blandish.

"As the PILGRIM'S SCRIP would remark—There's his recompense."

"I'm afraid some one is easily hoodwinked," said Lady Blandish.

The Wise Youth smiled.

Their talk was then of the dulness of neighbouring county people, about whom, it seemed, there was little or no scandal afloat: of the lady's loss of the Season in Town, which she professed not to regret, though she complained of her general weariness: of whether Mr. Morton of Poer Hall would propose to Mrs. Doria, and of the

probable despair of the hapless Curate of Lobourne; and other gossip, partly in French.

They rounded the lake, and got upon the road through the park to Lobourne. The moon had risen. The atmosphere was warm and pleasant.

"Quite a lover's night," said Lady Blandish.

"And I, who have none to love—pity me!" The Wise Youth attempted a sigh.

"And never will have," said Lady Blandish curtly. "You *buy* your loves."

"Good Heavens, Madam!" Adrian protested. This was Science with a vengeance. However, he did not plead verbally against the impeachment, though the lady's decisive insight astonished him. He began to respect her—scarce relishing her exquisite contempt—and reflected that Widows were terrible creatures.

He had hoped to be a little sentimental with Lady Blandish, knowing her romantic. This mixture of the harshest Common Sense and an air of, "*I* know you men," with Romance and refined temperament, subdued the Wise Youth more than a positive accusation supported by witnesses would have done. He looked at the lady. Her face was raised to the moon. She

knew nothing—she had simply spoken from the fulness of her human knowledge, and had forgotten her words. Perhaps, after all, her admiration, or whatever feeling it was, for the Baronet was sincere, and really the longing for a virtuous man. Perhaps she had tried the opposite set pretty much. Adrian shrugged. Whenever the Wise Youth encountered a mental difficulty he instinctively lifted his shoulders to equal altitudes, to show that he had no doubt there was a balance in the case,—plenty to be said on both sides, which was the same to him as a definite solution.

At their tryst in the wood abutting on Raynham Park, wrapped in themselves, piped to by tireless Love, Richard and Lucy sat, toying with the eternal moments. How they seem as if they would never end! What mere sparks they are when they have died out! And how in the distance of time they revive, and extend, and glow, and make us think them full the half, and the best of the fire, of our lives!

With the onward flow of intimacy, the two happy lovers ceased to be so shy of common themes, and their speech did not reject all as

dross that was not pure gold of emotion. Lucy was very inquisitive about everything and everybody at Raynham. Whoever had been about Richard since his birth, she must know the history of, and he for a kiss will do her bidding.

Thus goes the tender duet.

"You should know my cousin Austin, Lucy. —Darling! Beloved!"

"My own! Richard!"

"You should know my cousin Austin. You shall know him. He would take to you best of them all, and you to him. He is in the Tropics now, looking out a place—it's a secret —for poor English working-men to emigrate to and found a colony in that part of the world —my white Angel!"

"Dear love!"

"He is such a noble fellow! Nobody here understands him but me. Isn't it strange? Since I met you I love him better! That's because I love all that's good and noble better now—Beautiful! I love—I love you!"

"My Richard!"

"What do you think I've determined, Lucy? If my father—but no! my father does love me

—No! he will not; and we will be happy together here. And I will win my way with you. And whatever I win will be yours; for it will be owing to you. I feel as if I had no strength but yours — none! and you make me—Oh, Lucy!"

His voice ebbs. Presently Lucy murmurs:

"Your father, Richard."

"Yes? my father?"

"Dearest Richard! I feel so afraid of him."

"He loves me, and will love you, Lucy."

"But I am so poor and humble, Richard."

"No one I have ever seen is like you, Lucy."

"You think so, because you—"

"What?"

"Love me," comes the blushing whisper, and the duet gives place to dumb variations, performed equally in concert.

It is resumed.

"You are fond of the knights, Lucy. Austin is as brave as any of them.—My own bride! O how I adore you! When you are gone, I could fall upon the grass you tread upon, and kiss it. My breast feels empty of my heart.—Lucy! if we lived in those days, I should have been

a Knight, and have won honour and glory for you. Oh! one can do nothing now. My lady-love! My lady-love!—A tear!—Lucy?"

"Dearest! Ah, Richard! I am not a lady."

"Who dares say that? Not a lady—the Angel I love!"

"Think, Richard, who I am."

"My beautiful! I think that God made you, and has given you to me."

Her eyes fill with tears, and, as she lifts them heavenward to thank her God, the light of Heaven strikes on them, and she is so radiant in her pure beauty that the limbs of the young man tremble.

"Lucy! O heavenly spirit! Lucy!"

Tenderly her lips part: "I do not weep for sorrow."

The big bright drops lighten, and roll down, imaged in his soul.

They lean together: shadows of ineffable tenderness playing on their thrilled cheeks and brows.

He dare not touch her lips. He lifts her hand, and presses his mouth to it. She has seen little of mankind, but her soul tells her this one is different from others, and at the thought,

in her great joy, tears must come fast, or her heart will break: tears of boundless thanksgiving. And he, gazing on those soft, ray-illumined, dark-edged, eyes, and the grace of her loose falling tresses, feels a scarce-sufferable holy fire streaming through his members.

It is long ere they speak in open tones.

"Oh happy day when we met!"

What says the voice of one, the soul of the other echoes.

"Oh glorious Heaven looking down on us!"

Their souls are joined, are made one for evermore beneath that bending benediction.

"Oh Eternity of bliss!"

Then the diviner mood passes, and they drop to earth.

"Lucy! come with me tonight, and look at the place where you are some day to live. Come, and I will row you on the lake. You remember what you said in your letter that you dreamt?—that we were floating over the shadow of the Abbey to the nuns at work by torchlight felling the Cypress, and they handed us each a sprig. Why, darling, it was the best omen in the world, their felling the old trees. And you write such

lovely letters. So pure and sweet they are. I love the nuns for having taught you."

"Ah, Richard! See! we forget! Ah!" she lifts up her face pleadingly, as to plead against herself, "even if your father forgives my birth, he will not my Religion. And, dearest, though I would die for you, I cannot change it. It would seem that I was denying God; and, oh! it would make me ashamed of my love."

"Fear nothing!" He winds her about with his arm. "Come! He will love us both, and love you the more for being faithful to your father's creed. You don't know him, Lucy. He seems harsh and stern—he is full of kindness and love. He isn't at all a bigot. And besides, when he hears what the nuns have done for you, won't he thank them, as I do? And, Oh! I must speak to him soon, and you must be prepared to see him soon, for I cannot bear your remaining at Belthorpe, like a jewel in a sty. Mind! I'm not saying a word against your Uncle. I declare I love everybody and everything that sees you and touches you. Stay! it *is* a wonder how you could have grown there. But you were not born there, and your father

had good blood. Desborough!—there was a Colonel Desborough—never mind! Come!"

She dreads to. She begs not to. She is drawn away.

The woods are silent, and then:

"What think you of that for a pretty pastoral?" says a very different voice.

Adrian reclined against a pine overlooking the fern-covert. Lady Blandish was recumbent upon the brown pine-droppings, gazing through a vista of the lower greenwood which opened out upon the moon-lighted valley, her hands clasped round one knee, her features almost stern in their set hard expression.

She did not answer. A movement among the ferns attracted Adrian, and he stepped down the decline across the pine-roots to behold Heavy Benson below shaking fern-seed and spidery substances off his crumpled skin.

"Is that you, Mr. Hadrian," called Benson, starting, as he puffed, and exercised his handkerchief.

"Is it *you*, Benson, who have had the audacity to spy upon the Mysteries, and are not struck blind?" Adrian called back, and coming

close to him, added: "You look as if you had just been well thrashed."

"Isn't it dreadful, Sir?" snuffled Benson. "And his father in ignorance, Mr. Hadrian!"

"He shall know, Benson! He shall know how you have endangered your valuable skin in his service. If Mr. Richard had found you there just now, I wouldn't answer for the consequences."

"Ha!" Benson spitefully retorted. "This won't go on, Mr. Hadrian. It shan't, Sir. It will be put a stop to tomorrow, Sir. I call it corruption of a young gentleman like him, and harlotry, Sir, I call it. I'd have every jade flogged that made a young innocent gentleman go on like that, Sir."

"Then why didn't you stop it yourself, Benson? Ah, I see! you waited for the worst—eh? Hm!—or what? Benson? This is not the first time you have been attendant on Mr. Apollo and Miss Dryope? You have written to head-quarters, have you? Nothing like zeal, Benson!"

"I did my dooty, Mr. Hadrian."

"Don't let it rob you of your breath, Benson."

The Wise Youth returned to Lady Blandish, and informed her of Benson's zeal. The lady's eyes flashed. "I hope Richard will treat him as he deserves," she said.

"Shall we home?" Adrian inquired.

"Do me a favour," the lady replied. "Get my carriage sent round to meet me at the park-gates."

"Won't you— ?"

"I want to be alone."

Adrian bowed, and left her. She was still sitting with her hands clasped round one knee, gazing towards the dim ray-strewn valley.

"An odd creature!" muttered the Wise Youth. "She's as odd as any of them. She ought to be a Feverel. I suppose she's graduating for it.— Hang that confounded old ass of a Benson! He has had the impudence to steal a march on me! Not a bad suggestion of the Blandish. We 'll see about it."

The shadow of the Cypress was lessening on the lake. The moon was climbing high. As Richard rowed the boat, Lucy sung to him softly. She sang first a fresh little French song; reminding him of a day when she had been asked

to sing to him before, and he did not care to hear. "Did I live?" he thinks. Then she sang to him a bit of one of those majestic old Gregorian chaunts, that, wherever you may hear them, seem to build up cathedral walls about you. The young man dropped the sculls. The strange solemn notes gave a religious tone to his love, and wafted him into the Knightly Ages and the reverential Heart of Chivalry.

Hanging between two Heavens on the lake: floating to her voice; the moon stepping over and through white shoals of soft high clouds above, and below: floating to her voice—no other breath abroad! His soul went out of his body as he listened.

They must part. He rows her gently shoreward.

"I never was so happy as tonight," she murmurs.

"Look, my Lucy. The lights of the old place are on the Lake. Look, where you are to live."

"Which is your room, Richard?"

He points it out to her.

"Oh, Richard! that I were one of the women who wait on you! I should ask nothing more. How happy she must be!"

"My darling Angel-love! You shall be happy, but all shall wait on you, and I foremost, Lucy."

"Dearest! may I hope for a letter?"

"By eleven tomorrow. And I?"

"Oh! you will have mine, Richard."

"Tom shall wait for it. A long one, mind! Did you like my last song?"

She puts her hand quietly against her bosom, and he knows where it rests. Oh, Love! Oh, Heaven!

They are aroused by the harsh grating of the bow of the boat against the shingle. He jumps out, and lifts her ashore.

"See," she says, as the blush of his embrace subsides: "See!" and prettily she mimics awe and feels it a little, "the Cypress does point towards us. Oh, Richard! it does!"

And he, looking at her rather than at the Cypress, delighting in her arch grave ways:

"Why, there's hardly any shadow at all, Lucy. She mustn't dream, my darling! or dream only of me."

"Dearest! but I do."

"Tomorrow, Lucy! The letter in the morning, and you at night. Oh, happy tomorrow!"

"You will be sure to be there, Richard?"

"If I am not dead, Lucy."

"Oh, Richard; pray, pray do not speak of that. I shall not survive you."

"Let us pray, Lucy, to die together, when we are to die. Death, or Life, with you!—Who is it, yonder? I see some one—is it Tom?—It's Adrian!"

"Is it Mr. Harley?" The fair girl shivered.

"How dare he come here!" cried Richard.

The figure of Adrian, instead of advancing, discreetly circled the lake. They were stealing away, when he called. His call was repeated. Lucy entreated Richard to go to him, but the young man preferred to summon his attendant Tom from within hail, and send him to know what was wanted.

"Will he have seen me? Will he have known me?" whispered Lucy tremulously.

"And if he does, love?" said Richard.

"Oh! if he does, dearest—I don't know, but I feel such a presentiment. You have not spoken of him tonight, Richard. Is he good?"

"Good?" Richard clutched her hand for the innocent maiden phrase. "He's very fond of eating; that's all I know of Adrian."

Her hand was at his lips when Tom returned.

"Well, Tom?"

"Mr. Adrian wishes particular to speak to you, Sir," said Tom, emphasizing his achievement of a four-syllable word.

"Do go to him, dearest. Do go!" Lucy begs him.

"Oh, how I hate Adrian!" The young man grinds his teeth.

"Do go!" Lucy re-urges him. "Tom—good Tom—will see me home. Tomorrow, dear love! Tomorrow!"

"You wish to part from me?"

"Oh, unkind! but you must not come with me now. It may be news of importance, dearest. Think, Richard!"

"Tom! go back!"

At the imperious command the well-drilled Tom strides off a dozen paces, and sees nothing. Then the precious charge is confided to him. A heart is cut in twain.

Richard made his way to Adrian. "What is it you want with me, Adrian?"

"Are we seconds, or principals, O fiery one?" was Adrian's answer. "I want nothing with

you, except to know whether you have seen Benson."

"Where should I see Benson? What do I know of Benson's doings?"

"Of course not—such a secret old fist as he is! I want some one to tell him to order Lady Blandish's carriage to be sent round to the park-gates. I thought he might be round your way over there—I came upon him accidentally just now in Abbey-wood—Hey! what's the matter, boy?"

"You saw him *there?*"

"Hunting Diana, I suppose. He thinks she's not so chaste as they say," continued Adrian. "Are you going to knock down that tree?"

Richard had turned to the cypress, and was tugging at the tough wood. He left it, and went to an ash.

"You'll spoil that weeper," Adrian cried. "Down she comes!—all but! Good night, Ricky! If you see Benson, mind you tell him."

Doomed Benson following his burly shadow hove in sight on the white road while Adrian spoke. The Wise Youth chuckled and strolled round the lake, glancing over his shoulder every now and then.

It was not long before he heard a bellow for help—the roar of a Dragon in his throes. Adrian placidly sat down on the grass, and fixed his eyes on the water. There, as the roar was being repeated, amid horrid resounding echoes, the Wise Youth mused in this wise:

"'The Fates are Jews with us when they delay a punishment,' says the PILGRIM'S SCRIP, or words to that effect. Not a bad idea, that of the Fates being Jews—Jewesses more classically speaking. The Heavens evidently love Benson, seeing that he gets his punishment on the spot. He don't like it. What a lovely night! Those two young ones do it well. Master Ricky is a peppery young man. Love and War come as natural to him as bread and butter. He gets it from the ap Gruffudh. I rather believe in race. What a noise that old ruffian makes! He'll require poulticing with the PILGRIM'S SCRIP. We shall have a message tomorrow, and a hubbub, and perhaps all go to Town, which won't be bad for one who's been a prey to all the desires born of dulness for a decade. Benson howls: there's life in the old dog yet! He bays the moon. Look at her. She doesn't care. It's

the same to her whether we coo like turtle-doves, or roar like twenty lions. Most beauteous Moon! How complacent she looks! How admirably equable! And yet she has just as much sympathy for Benson as for Cupid. She would smile on if both were being birched. She is Perfect Justice. Was that a raven or Benson? He howls no more. It sounds guttural: frog-like—something between old brek-kek-kek and the hoarse raven's croak. That fellow 'll be killing him. It's time to be to the rescue. A deliverer gets more honour by coming in at the last gasp, than if he forestalled catastrophe.—Ho, there! What's the matter?"

So saying, the Wise Youth rose, and leisurely trotted to the scene of battle, where stood St. George puffing over the prostrate Dragon.

"Holloa, Ricky! is it you?" said Adrian. "What's this? Whom have we here?—Benson, as I live!"

"Make this beast get up," Richard returned, breathing hard, and shaking his great ash-branch. "Make him get up."

"He seems incapable, my dear boy. What

have you been up to?—Benson! Benson!—I say, Ricky, this looks bad."

"He's shamming!" Richard clamoured like a savage. "Spy upon me, will he? I tell you, he's shamming. He hasn't had half enough. Nothing's too bad for a spy. Let him get up! Let him get up!"

"Insatiate youth! do throw away that enormous weapon."

"He has written to my father," Richard shouted. "The miserable spy! Let him get up! Let him get up!"

"Ooogh! I won't! huskily groaned Benson. "Mr. Hadrian, you're a witness he's murdered —my back!"—Cavernous noises took up the tale of his maltreatment.

"I dare say you love your back better than any part of your body now!" Adrian muttered. "Come, Benson! be a man. Mr. Richard has thrown away the stick. Come, and get off home, and let's see the extent of the damage."

"Ooogh! he's a devil! Mr. Hadrian, Sir, he's a devil!" groaned Benson, turning half over in the road to ease his aches.

Adrian caught hold of Benson's collar and

lifted him to a sitting posture. He then had a glimpse of what his hopeful pupil's hand could do in wrath. The wretched butler's coat was slit and welted; his hat knocked in; the stain of a tremendous blow across his nose, which made one of his eyes seem gone; his flabby spirit so broken that he started and trembled if his pitiless executioner stirred a foot. Richard stood over him with folded arms, grasping his great stick: no dawn of mercy for Benson in any corner of his features.

Benson screwed his neck round to look up at him, and immediately gasped, "I won't get up! I won't get up! He's ready to murder me again! —Mr. Hadrian! if you stand by and see it you're liable to the law, Sir—I won't get up while he's near." No persuasion could induce Benson to try his legs while his executioner stood by.

Adrian took Richard aside: "You've almost killed the poor devil, Ricky. You must be satisfied with that. Look at his face."

"The coward bobbed while I struck," said Richard. "I marked his back. He ducked. I told him he was getting it worse."

At this civilized piece of savagery, Adrian

opened his mouth to shake out a coil of laughter.

"Did you really? I admire that. You told him he was getting it worse? I thought you were in a passion. Beautifully cool! Bravo!—You are politely informed that if you take that posture, in the nature of things, and by reasonable calculation, you will get it worse."

Adrian opened his mouth again to shake another coil of laughter out.

"Come," he said, "Excalibur has done his work. Pitch him into the lake. And see—here comes the Blandish. You can't be at it again before a woman. Go and meet her, and tell her the noise was an ox being slaughtered. Or say, Argus."

With a whirr that made all Benson's bruises moan and quiver, the great ash-branch shot aloft, and Richard swung off to intercept Lady Blandish.

Adrian got Benson on his feet. The heavy butler was disposed to summon all the commiseration he could feel for his bruised flesh. Every half step he attempted was like a dislocation. His groans and grunts were frightful.

"How much did that hat cost, Benson?" said Adrian, as he put it on his head.

"A five-and-twenty shilling beaver, Mr. Hadrian!" Benson caressed its injuries.

"The cheapest policy of Insurance I remember to have heard of!" said Adrian. "Never part with that hat, Benson! Love it as you love yourself."

Benson staggered, moaning at intervals to his cruel comforter:

"He's a devil! Mr. Hadrian. He's a devil, Sir, I do believe, Sir. Ooogh! he's a devil!—I can't move, Mr. Hadrian. I must be fetched. And Dr. Clifford must be sent for, Sir. I shall never be fit for work again. I haven't a sound bone in my body, Mr. Hadrian."

"You see, Benson, this comes of your declaring war upon Venus. 'Twas Venus, Venus struck the deadly blow! I hope the maids will nurse you properly. Let me see—you are friends with the housekeeper, aren't you? All depends upon that."

"I'm only a faithful servant, Mr. Hadrian," the miserable butler snarled.

"So you've got no friend but your bed. Get to it as quick as possible, Benson."

"I can't move." Benson made a resolute halt. "I must be fetched," he whinnied. "It's a shame to ask me to move, Mr. Hadrian."

"You will admit that you are heavy, Benson," said Adrian, "so I can't carry you. However, I see Mr. Richard is very kindly returning to help me."

At these words Heavy Benson instantly found his legs, and shambled on.

Lady Blandish met Richard in dismay.

"I have been horribly frightened," she said. "Tell me, what was the meaning of those cries I heard?"

"Only some one doing justice on a spy," said Richard, and the lady smiled, and looked on him fondly, and put her hand through his hair.

"Was that all? I should have done it myself if I had been a man. Kiss me."

CHAPTER VI.

RICHARD IS SUMMONED TO TOWN TO HEAR A SERMON.

By twelve o'clock at noon next day, the inhabitants of Raynham Abbey knew that Berry, the Baronet's man, had arrived post haste from Town, with orders to conduct Mr. Richard thither, and that Mr. Richard had refused to go: had sworn he would not, defied his father, and despatched Berry to the shades. Berry, the Baronet's man, was all that Benson, the butler, was not. Whereas Benson hated Woman, Berry admired her warmly. Second to his own stately person, Woman occupied his reflections, and commanded his homage. Berry was of majestic port, and used dictionary words. Among the maids of Raynham his conscious conquering calves produced all the discord and the frenzy those adornments seem destined to create in

tender bosoms. He had, moreover, the reputation of having suffered terribly for the sex; which assisted his object in inducing the sex to suffer terribly for him. What with his calves, and his dictionary words, and the attractive halo of the mysterious vindictiveness of Venus surrounding him, this Adonis of the lower household was a mighty man below, and he moved as one.

On hearing the tumult that followed Berry's arrival, Adrian sent for him, and was informed of the nature of his mission, and its result.

"You should come to me first," said Adrian. "I should have imagined you were shrewd enough for that, Berry?"

"Pardon me, Mr. Adrian," Berry doubled his elbow to explain. "Pardon me, Sir. Acting recipient of special injunctions, I was not a free agent."

Adrian tacitly acknowledged the choiceness of the phraseology, and asked, if he had seen Benson.

"I have enjoyed an interview with Mr. Benson, Sir."

"I dare say you did enjoy it, Berry!"

Berry protested: "On my honour, Sir! From

the plenitude of health and spirits, I regarded Mr. Benson with profound—a—profound—" a word fine enough for his emotion seemed wanting.

" Mr. Richard have shattered his ganglions, Sir."

" His what?" Adrian asked.

Berry corrected the casual error: " I should say, his idioshincr*a*zy, Sir."

" Accentuate the fourth, not the fifth, syllable, Berry."

" Exactly, Sir. His idih*os*hincrazy. I may have my own retrospections against Mr. Benson; but, hem! as homo,"—and Berry ventured a familiar smile as he joined Adrian on classical ground; " as homo, Sir, I am concerned."

" But if you discovered that Benson dogged you in the woods with Betsy Sommersault—eh, Berry? How then?"

" O fie, Mr. Adrian! a Spy, Sir?" Berry expanded his magnificent chest, and stated his opinion that, " That quite altered the catastrophe."

" Benson wishes it did, no doubt," said Adrian. " So Mr. Richard refuses to go?"

" Voiciferously, Sir."

"What did he say?"

"His accentuation was of the wildest. Sir. Erratic."

"Trochaic, you mean, Berry! On the first syllable altogether, I suppose? Trochaic running into the anapæstic," Adrian suggested, drumming the measure.

That was what Berry meant. On the first syllable altogether! Trochaic.

Adrian soon got tired of Berry, who was poor fun to him, and occupied the rank in his order of household amusement that a pun does to wit.

"Go to him again, Berry. There will be a little confusion if he holds back. Just go to him, and perhaps you had better throw out a hint or so of apoplexy. A slight hint will do. And here—Berry! when you return to Town, you had better not mention anything—to quote Johnson—of Benson's spiflication."

"Certainly not, Sir."

Berry retired, saying to himself: "What I like, is to confabulate with educated people. You always learn something new from them." And he drew forth his pocket-Johnson that he might commit the new words he had learnt to memory.

The Wise Youth's hint had the desired effect on Richard. He dashed off a hasty letter by Tom to Belthorpe, and, mounting his horse, galloped to the Bellingham station.

Sir Austin was sitting down to a quiet early dinner at his hotel, when the Hope of Raynham burst into his room.

The Baronet was not angry with his son. On the contrary, for he was singularly just and self-accusing while Pride was not up in arms, he had been thinking all day after the receipt of Benson's letter, that he was deficient in cordiality, and did not, by reason of his excessive anxiety, make himself sufficiently his son's companion: was not enough, as he strove to be, Mother and Father to him; Preceptor and Friend; Previsor and Associate. He had not to ask his conscience where he had lately been to blame towards the System. He had slunk away from Raynham in the very crisis of the Magnetic Age, and this young woman of the parish (as Benson had termed sweet Lucy in his letter) was the consequence.

Yes! Pride and Sensitiveness were his chief foes, and he would trample on them. To begin,

he embraced his son: hard upon an Englishman at any time—doubly so to one so shamefaced at emotion in cold blood, as it were. It gave him a strange pleasure, nevertheless. And the youth seemed to answer to it: he was excited. Was his love, then, commencing to correspond with his father's, as in those intimate days before the Blossoming season?

But when Richard, inarticulate at first, in his haste, cried out: "My dear, dear father! You are safe! I feared—You are better, Sir? Thank God!" Sir Austin stood away from him.

"Safe?" he said, "What has alarmed you?"

Instead of replying, Richard dropped into a chair, and seized his hand, and kissed it, murmuring again, that he thanked God.

Sir Austin took a seat, and waited for his son to explain.

"Those Doctors are such fools!" Richard broke out. "I was sure they were wrong. They don't know headache from apoplexy. It's worth the ride, Sir, to see you. You left Raynham so suddenly—But you are well! It was not an attack of real apoplexy?"

His father's brows contorted, and he said, No, it was not. Richard pursued.

"If you were ill, I couldn't come too soon, though, if Coroners' inquests sat on Horses, those Doctors would be found guilty of mare-slaughter. Cassandra 'll be knocked up. I was too early for the train at Bellingham, and I wouldn't wait. She did the distance in four hours and three quarters. Pretty good, Sir, wasn't it?"

"It has given you an appetite for dinner, I hope," said the Baronet, not so well pleased to find that it was not simple obedience that had brought the youth to him in such haste.

"I'm ready," replied Richard. "I shall be in time to return by the last train to-night. I will leave Cassandra in your charge for a rest."

His father quietly helped him to soup, which he commenced gobbling with an eagerness that might pass for appetite.

"All well at Raynham?" said the Baronet.

"Quite, Sir."

"Nothing new?"

"Nothing, Sir.

"The same as when I left?"

"No change whatever!"

"I shall be glad to get back to the old place," said the Baronet. "My stay in Town has certainly been profitable. I have made some pleasant acquaintances who may probably favour us with a visit there in the late Autumn—people you may be pleased to know. Hem! They are very anxious to see Raynham."

"I love the old place," cried Richard. "I never wish to leave it."

"Why, boy, before I left, you were constantly begging to see Town."

"Was I, Sir? How odd! Well! I don't want to remain here. I've seen enough of it."

"How did you find your way to me?"

Richard laughed, and related his bewilderment at the miles of brick, and the noise, and the troops of people: concluding: "There's no place like home!"

The Baronet watched his symptomatic brilliant eyes, and favoured him with a double-dealing sentence:

"To anchor the heart by any object, ere we have half traversed the world, is Youth's Foolishness, my son. Reverence Time! A better maxim, that, than your Horatian."

"He knows all!" thought Richard, and instantly drew away leagues from his father, and threw up fortifications round his love and himself.

Dinner over, Richard looked hurriedly at his watch, and said, with much briskness, "I shall just be in time, Sir, if we walk. Will you come with me to the station?"

The Baronet did not answer.

Richard was going to repeat the question, but found his father's eyes fixed on him so meaningly, that he wavered, and played with his empty glass.

"I think we will have a little more claret," said the Baronet.

Claret was brought, and they were left alone.

The Baronet then drew within arm's-reach of his son, and began:

"I am not aware what you may have thought of me, Richard, during the years we have lived together: and indeed, I have never been in a hurry to be known to you: and, if I had died before my work was done, I should not have complained at losing half my reward, in hearing you thank me. Perhaps, as it is, I never may.

Everything, save Selfishness, has its recompense. I shall be content, if you prosper."

He fetched a breath, and continued: "You had, in your infancy, a great loss." Father and son coloured simultaneously. "To make that good to you, I chose to isolate myself from the world, and devote myself entirely to your welfare; and I think it is not vanity that tells me now, that the son I have reared is one of the most hopeful of God's creatures. But for that very reason, you are open to be tempted the most, and to sink the deepest. It was the First of the Angels who made the road to Hell."

He paused again. Richard fingered at his watch.

"In our House, my son, there is peculiar blood. We go to wreck very easily. It sounds like superstition,—I cannot but think we are tried as most men are not. I see it in us all. And you, my son, are compounded of two races. Your passions are violent. You have had a taste of Revenge: You have seen, in a small way, that the pound of Flesh draws rivers of Blood. But there is now in you another power. You are mounting to the Table-land of Life, where

mimic battles are changed to real ones. And you come upon it laden equally with force to create and to destroy." He deliberated to announce the intelligence, with deep meaning: "There are women in the world, my son!"

The young man's heart galloped back to Raynham.

The Baronet gravely repeated his last sentence.

"It is when you encounter them that you are thoroughly on trial. It is when you know them that Life is either a mockery to you, or, as some find it, a gift of blessedness. They are our Ordeal. Love of any human object is the soul's Ordeal; and they are ours, loving them, or not."

The young man heard the whistle of the train. He saw the moon-lighted wood, and the vision of his beloved. He could barely hold himself down, and listen.

"I believe," the Baronet spoke with little of the cheerfulness of belief, "good women exist."

Oh, if he knew Lucy!

"But," and the Baronet gazed on Richard intently, "it is given to very few to meet them on the threshold. I may say, to none. We find

them after hard buffeting, and usually we find the one fitted for us, when our madness has mis-shaped our destiny, our lot is cast! For women are not the end, but the means, of life. In youth we think them the former, and thousands, who have not even the excuse of youth, select a mate—or worse—with that sole view. I believe women punish us for so perverting their uses. They punish Society."

The Baronet put his hand to his brow as his mind travelled into Consequences.

'Our most diligent pupil learns not so much as an earnest teacher,' says the PILGRIM'S SCRIP; and Sir Austin, in schooling himself to speak with moderation of women, was beginning to get a glimpse of their side of the case.

Cold Blood now touched on Love to hot Blood.

Cold Blood said, "It is a passion coming in the order of Nature, the ripe fruit of our animal being."

Hot Blood felt: "It is a Divinity! All that is worth living for in the world."

Cold Blood said: "It is a fever which tests our strength, and too often leads to perdition."

Hot Blood felt: "Lead whither it will, I follow it!"

Cold Blood said: "It is a name men and women are much in the habit of employing to sanctify their appetites."

Hot Blood felt: "It is Worship; Religion; Life!"

And so the two parallel lines ran on.

The Baronet became more personal:

"You know my love for you, my son. The extent of it you cannot know; but you must know that it is something very deep, and—I do not wish to speak of it—but a father must sometimes petition for gratitude, since the only true expression of it is his son's moral good. If you care for my love, or love me in return, aid me with all your energies to keep you what I have made you, and guard you from the snares besetting you. It was in my hands once. It is ceasing to be so. Remember, my son, what my love is. It is different, I fear, with most fathers: but I am bound up in your welfare: what you do affects me vitally. You will take no step that is not intimate with my happiness, or my misery. And I have had great disappointments, my son."

So far it was well. Richard loved his father, and even in his frenzied state he could not without emotion hear him thus speak.

Unhappily, the Baronet, who by some fatality never could see when he was winning the battle, thought proper in his wisdom to water the dryness of his sermon with a little jocoseness, on the subject of young men fancying themselves in love, and, when they were raw and green, absolutely wanting to be—that most awful thing, which the wisest and strongest of men undertake in hesitation and after self-mortification and penance—married! He sketched the Foolish Young Fellow—the object of general ridicule and covert contempt. He sketched the Woman—the strange thing made in our image, and with all our faculties—passing to the rule of one who in taking her proved that he could not rule himself, and had no knowledge of her save as a choice morsel which he would burn the whole world, and himself in the bargain, to possess. He harped upon the Foolish Young Fellow, till the Foolish Young Fellow felt his skin tingle and was half suffocated with shame and rage.

After this, the Baronet might be as wise as

he pleased: he had quite undone his work. He might analyze Love, and anatomize Woman. He might accord to her her due position, and paint her fair: he might be shrewd, jocose, gentle, pathetic, wonderfully wise: he spoke to deaf ears.

Closing his sermon with the question, softly uttered: "Have you anything to tell me, Richard?" and hoping for a confession, and a thorough re-establishment of confidence, the callous answer struck him cold: "I have not."

The Baronet relapsed in his chair, and made diagrams of his fingers.

Richard turned his back on further dialogue by going to the window. In the section of sky over the street twinkled two or three stars; shining faintly, feeling the moon. The moon was rising: the woods were lifting up to her: his star of the woods would be there. A bed of moss set about flowers in a basket under him breathed to his nostril of the woodland keenly, and filled him with delirious longing.

A succession of great sighs brought his father's hand on his shoulder.

"You have nothing you could say to me, my son?—Tell me, Richard! Remember, there is

no home for the soul where dwells a shadow of untruth!"

"Nothing at all, Sir," the young man replied, meeting him with the full orbs of his eyes.

The Baronet withdrew his hand, and paced the room.

At last it grew impossible for Richard to control his impatience, and he said: "Do you intend me to stay here, Sir? Am I not to return to Raynham at all tonight?"

The Baronet was again falsely jocular:

"What? and catch the train after giving it ten minutes start?"

"Cassandra will take me," said the young man earnestly. "I needn't ride her hard, Sir. Or perhaps you would lend me your Winkelried? I should be down with him in little better than three hours."

"Even then, you know, the park-gates would be locked."

"Well, I could stable him in the village. Dowling knows the horse, and would treat him properly.—May I have him, Sir?"

The cloud cleared off Richard's face as he asked. At least, if he missed his love that night,

he would be near her, breathing the same air, marking what star was above her bed-chamber, hearing the hushed night-talk of the trees about her dwelling: looking on the distances that were like Hope half-fulfilled and a bodily presence bright as Hesper, since he knew her. There were two swallows under the eaves shadowing Lucy's chamber-windows: two swallows, mates in one nest, blissful birds who twittered and cheep-cheeped to the sole-lying beauty in her bed. Around these birds the lover's heart revolved, he knew not why. He associated them with all his close-veiled dreams of happiness. Seldom a morning passed when he did not watch them leave the nest on their breakfast-flight, busy in the happy stillness of dawn. It seemed to him now that if he could be at Raynham to see them in tomorrow's dawn, he would be compensated for his incalculable loss of tonight: he would forgive and love his father, London, life, the world. Just to see those purple backs and white breasts flash out into the quiet morning air! He wanted no more.

The Baronet's trifling had placed this enormous boon within the young man's visionary grasp.

He still went on trying the temper of poor Tantalus:

"You know there would be nobody ready for you at Raynham. It is unfair to disturb the maids."

Richard overrode every objection.

"Well, then, my son," said the Baronet, preserving his half-jocular air, "I must tell you that it is my wish to have you in town."

"Then you have not been ill at all, Sir!" cried Richard, as in his despair he seized the whole plot.

"I have been as well as you could have desired me to be," said his father.

"Why did they lie to me?" the young man wrathfully exclaimed.

"I think, Richard, you can best answer that," rejoined Sir Austin, kindly severe.

Dread of being signalized as the Foolish Young Fellow prevented Richard from expostulating further. Sir Austin saw him grinding his passion into powder for future explosion, and thought it best to leave him for awhile.

CHAPTER VII.

INDICATES THE APPROACHES OF FEVER.

For three weeks Richard had to remain in town and endure the teachings of the System in a new atmosphere. He had to sit and listen to men of science who came to renew their intimacy with his father, and whom of all men his father wished him to respect and study: practically scientific men being, in the Baronet's estimation, the only minds thoroughly mated, and enviable. He had to endure an introduction to the Grandisons, and meet the eyes of his kind, haunted as he was by the Foolish Young Fellow. The idea that he might by any chance be identified with him held the poor youth in silent subjection. And it was horrible. For it was a continued outrage on the fair image he had in his heart. The notion of the world laughing at him because he loved sweet Lucy stung him to momentary frenzies, and

developed premature misanthropy in his spirit. Also the System desired to show him whither young women of the Parish lead us, and he was dragged about at night-time to see the sons and daughters of darkness, after the fashion prescribed to Mr. Thompson: how they danced and ogled down the high-road of Perdition. But from this sight possibly the teacher learnt more than his pupil, since we find him seriously asking his meditative hours, in the Note-Book: 'Wherefore Wild Oats are only of one gender?' a question certainly not suggested to him at Raynham; and again: 'Whether men might not be attaching too rigid an importance? . . .' to a subject with a dotted tail apparently, for he gives it no other in the Note-Book. But, as I apprehend, he had come to plead in behalf of women here, and had deduced something from positive observation. To Richard the scenes he witnessed were strange wild pictures, likely if anything to have increased his misanthropy, but for his love.

Mrs. Grandison appeared to be in raptures with the son of a System. What her daughters thought of a young gentleman who did nothing

but frown and bite his lips in their company, may be imagined. With Carola, however, he got on better.

Riding in the park one morning, Carola beheld her intended galloping furiously down the Row, and left her sister Clementina's side to waylay him. He pulled up smartly, and this young person's frank accost was:

"I say! are you afraid of girls?"

He stared at her, and did his salute laughing: upon which she said:

"No, I see you're not. My sisters all say you are. I should think you were not afraid of anything. A man afraid of girls! I never heard the like!"

"Well!" said Richard, "at all events I'm not afraid of you. Are you a girl?"

Carola immediately became pensive.

"Yes," she sighed, striping her pony's ears with her whip, "I 'm afraid I am! I used to keep hoping once that I wasn't. I 'm afraid it's no use." She seriously shook her curls, and looked up at him. Richard shouted with laughter.

"But what do you want to be?" he asked, scrutinizing the comical young person.

"A boy, to be sure!" said Carola, and pouted proudly, as if the wish had raised her out of her sex. At this Richard laughed again, and took to the young woman. They trotted on in company. Within five minutes he had all the secrets of the family.

"When I like anybody," said Carola, "I always speak out everything I know."

"And you like me?"

"Yes, I do.—What do you think they call your father?—the Griffin! That's what they call him. I don't know why. I like him. Do you know who gave me this pony? He did, to be sure! He bought it the day after my birthday. He's fonder of me than you are.—I like fathers better than mothers. My Pa and Ma don't agree. I say! what may I call you?"

Richard gave her permission to call him what she pleased.

"Well, then, Richard—if you don't really mind.—What a nice fellow you are, and we all thought you so nasty!—I was going to say, I wish they'd let us ride our ponies stride-ways?"

Richard, with all the muscles of his face in play, lamented the severe restriction.

"It's so much handier," Carola continued. "Look at this! all on one side!—I used to when I was little, though. Not here, you know,—in the country. And Ma knew of it. She didn't interfere. She wanted me to be a boy, Ma did. —What do you think?—Ma smokes! Not before people! She says, it's for her complaint. I wish she had a little of our medicine instead. She gives us all such quantities of medicine—the big ones as well as me. I shall smoke for my complaint when I grow up—see if I don't! If I call you Richard, you'll call me Carl, won't you? That's the German for Charles. In the country the boys call me, Charley.—Can't I ride slapping?"

"Capital!" said Richard. "Let's have a gallop."

After a short heat, Carola slackened her pace to re-commence:

"Do you know why none of my sisters 'll have you? Because they've all got lovers themselves—all but me. And they have letters from them, too, and write back. I shouldn't know what to say. Ma would let us have you, but she wouldn't let us have anybody else."

"Really?" said Richard.

"Yes," Carola nodded. "Ma says, you're going to be a hero. One of us is to be married to you.—Do you call me good-looking?"

Richard complimented her by saying, he thought she would grow to be a very handsome chap.

Carola assured him, she could not think it. "My nose turns up, and my cheeks are so red. Pa calls them cabbage-roses.—I don't mind the 'roses,' but I can't bear the 'cabbage!'—Why is it you laugh so?"

"Because you're such a funny fellow, Carl."

"Am I? Do you like funny fellows?"

"Of course I do. The funny fellows are always my best friends."

"Why, now, that's just like me," exclaimed Carola. "We're just alike. I hate people who mope. I thought you moped at first. I suppose you were only a little put out—were n't you?"

"Only a little!" sighed poor Richard.

"I declare if you don't talk exactly like my sister Clem!—She's moping in love, you know. —Richard!"

"Well, old friend?"

"You don't hear me. Why are you so sad in a minute? Why do you call me 'old friend'?"

"Because"—he bent down and put his hand on her neck—"because, because—well! why?—I suppose it's because I like you better than any of my new friends."

"Do you?" cried the joyful Carola, clapping her hands. "That's right! I'm so glad. Mind you always do, Richard!—won't you? And I will you.—Are you fond of theatres?"

Richard informed her, he had never been to one in his life, which caused lively astonishment to Miss Carl.

"Then you don't know what a beautiful lady is, if you've never been to a theatre," she said authoritatively.

"I'm afraid I do!" replied the lover.

"There you are again—just like Clem!—Are you in love, too? Oh, I hope it is n't with Clem! She'll never have you. I heard her say, she 'd die first. I did indeed!—It's a secret—his name's Walter. I've seen her letters: Lieutenant Papworth, in the Hussars. She begins them—'Dearest Dearest Walter!—and they take her hours to write.—I shouldn't write

like that. I should say, 'Dear Richard! I love you. I hope we shall be married soon. Your faithful Carl!' That would do—wouldn't it?"

Richard looked down on her with something like veritable affection. Almost every turn in the artless little maid's prattle touched a new mood in him, and beguiled away his melancholy.

"That would just do," he said. "All we want is to be married soon!"

Carola flushed up, and was quiet. Clementina cantered to join them, bowing distantly to Richard, as if anything like familiarity involved the fate of her adored hussar.

After this conversation with the daughter of a System, Richard informed his father that he thought girls were very like boys.

"I think they are," said his father. "I am beginning to think that the subsequent immense distinction is less one of sex than of education. They are drilled into hypocrites."

"When they much prefer riding strideways," said Richard, and repeated some of his young friend's remarks, which his father evidently thought charming, and chuckled over frequently. A girl so like a boy was quite his ideal of a girl.

Certain sweet little notes from Lucy sustained the lover during the first two weeks of exile. Suddenly they ceased; and now Richard fell into such despondency that his father in alarm had to take measures to hasten their return to Raynham. At the close of the third week Berry laid a pair of letters, bearing the Raynham post-mark, on the breakfast-table, and after reading one attentively the Baronet asked his son if he was inclined to quit the metropolis.

"For Raynham, Sir?" cried Richard, and relapsed, saying, "As you will!" aware that he had given a glimpse of the Foolish Young Fellow.

Berry accordingly received orders to make arrangements for their instant return to Raynham.

The letter Sir Austin lifted his head from to bespeak his son's wishes, was a composition of the Wise Youth Adrian's, and ran thus:

"Benson is doggedly recovering. He requires great indemnities. Happy when a faithful fool is the main sufferer in a household! I quite agree with you that a faithful fool is the best servant of great schemes. Benson is now a piece of history.

I tell him that this is indemnity enough, and that the sweet Muse usually insists upon gentlemen being half flayed before she will condescend to notice them; but Benson, I regret to say, ignobly rejects the comfort so fine a reflection should offer, and had rather keep his skin and live opaque. Heroism seems partly a matter of training. Faithful folly is Benson's nature: the rest has been thrust upon him.

"The young person has resigned the neighbourhood. I had an interview with the Fair Papist myself, and also with the man, Blaize. They were both very sensible, though one swore, and the other sighed. She is pretty. I hope she does not paint. As to her appearance she would affect Adam more than me; but as I did not see her as Eve was seen, I cannot tell how the likeness may be. I can affirm that her legs are strong, for she walks to Bellingham twice a week to take her Scarlet bath, when, having confessed and being made clean by the Romish unction, she walks back the brisker, of which my Protestant muscular system is yet aware. It was on the road to Bellingham I engaged her. She is well in the matter of hair. Madam Godiva might

challenge her: it would be a fair match. Has it never struck you that Woman is nearer the *vegetable* than Man?—Mr. Blaize intends her for his son—a junction that every lover of Fairy Mythology must desire to see consummated. Young Tom is heir to all the *agrémens* of the Beast. The maids of Lobourne say (I hear) that he is a very Proculus among them. Possibly the envious men say it for the maids. Beauty does not speak bad grammar—and altogether she is better out of the way. Allow me to congratulate you on having found Richard's Unripe Half in good condition, and rosy. I shall be glad to see the Original Man again, to whom his Tutor's salute and benediction."

The other letter was from Lady Blandish, a lady's letter, and said:

"I have fulfilled your commission to the best of my ability, and heartily sad it has made me. She is indeed very much above her station—pity that it is so! She is almost beautiful—*quite* beautiful at times, and not in *any way* what you have been led to fancy. The poor child had no story to tell. I have again seen

her, and talked with her for an hour as kindly as I could. I could gather nothing more than we know. It is just a woman's history as it invariably commences (not with *all*—Is it fortunate for us, or the reverse?). Richard is the God of her idolatry. She will renounce him, and sacrifice herself for his sake. Are we so bad? She asked me what she was to do. She would do whatever was imposed upon her—all but pretend to love another, and that she never would, and I believe *never will.* You know I am sentimental, and I confess we dropped a *few tears* together. Her Uncle has sent her for the Winter to the Institution where it appears she was educated, and where they are very fond of her and want to keep her, which it would be a good thing if they were to do. The man is a good sort of man. She was entrusted to him by her father, and he never interferes with her Religion and is very scrupulous about all that pertains to it, though, as he says, he is a Christian himself. In the Spring (but the poor child does not know this) she is to come back, and be married to his lout of a son. I am *determined* to prevent that. May I not reckon on your promise

to aid me? When you see her, I am sure you will. It would be sacrilege to look on and permit such a thing. You know, they are *cousins*. She asked me, where in the world was there one like Richard? What could I answer? They were your own words, and spoken with a depth of conviction! I hope he is really calm. I shudder to think of him when he comes, and discovers what I have been doing. I hope I have been really doing right! A good deed, you say, never dies; but we cannot always know—I must rely on you. Yes, it is, I should think, easy to suffer martyrdom when one is sure of one's cause! but then one *must* be sure of it. I have done nothing lately but to repeat to myself that saying of yours, No. 54., C. 7., P. S.: and it has consoled me, I cannot say why, except that all wisdom consoles, whether it applies directly or not:

"'For this reason so many fall from God, who have attained to him; that they cling to him with their Weakness, not with their Strength.'

"I like to know of what you were thinking when you composed this or that saying—what *suggested* it. May not one be admitted to in-

spect the machinery of Wisdom? I feel curious to know how thoughts—*real* thoughts are born. Not that I hope to win the secret. Here is the beginning of one (but we poor women can never put together even two of the three ideas which you say go to form a thought): 'When a wise man makes a false step, will he not go further than a fool?' It has just flitted through me.

"I cannot get on with Gibbon, so wait your return to recommence the readings. I dislike the *sneering essence* of his writings. I keep referring to his face, until the dislike seems to become personal. How different is it with Wordsworth! And yet I cannot escape from the thought that he is always solemnly thinking of himself (but I *do* reverence him). But this is curious: Byron was a greater egotist, and yet I do not feel the same with him. He reminds me of a beast of the desert, savage and beautiful: and the former is what one would imagine a superior donkey reclaimed from the heathen, to be—a *very* superior donkey, I mean, with great power of speech and great natural complacency, and whose stubbornness you must admire as part of his mission. The worst is that no one will imagine anything

sublime in a superior donkey, so my simile is unfair and false. Is it not strange? I love Wordsworth best, and yet Byron has the greater power over me. How is that?"

('Because,' Sir Austin wrote beside the query in pencil, 'Women are cowards, and succumb to Irony and Passion, rather than yield their hearts to Excellence and Nature's Inspiration.')

The letter pursued:

"I have finished Boiardo and have taken up Berni. The latter offends me. I suppose we women do not really care for humour. You are right in saying we have none ourselves, and 'cackle' instead of laugh. It is true (of me, at least) that 'Falstaff is only to us an incorrigible fat man.' I want to know what he *illustrates*. And Don Quixotte—what end can be served in making a noble mind ridiculous?—I hear you say—practical! So it is. We are very narrow, I know. But we like wit—practical again? Or in your words (when I really *think* they generally come to my aid—perhaps it is that it is often all *your thought*): we 'prefer the rapier thrust, to the broad embrace, of Intelligence.'

By the way, is there a characteristic in Mrs. Grandison? Or is she only *good?* If so, how tired you must be! I hope Richard really *is* beginning to take an interest in the child. I sincerely trust that this young creature is *not so good as her mother.* I wish indeed the Experiment were well 'launched through the surf,' as you do us the honour to term it.

"Heigho! I have given up a Season to you. What is to be my reward?—"

Something, no doubt, the Baronet had in store for her, and possibly the lady's instinct made her meditate the day when Richard should be 'launched through the surf' in earnest.

He trifled with the letter for some time, rereading chosen passages as he walked about the room, and considering he scarce knew what. There are ideas language is too gross for, and shape too arbitrary, which come to us and have a definite influence upon us, and yet we cannot fasten on the filmy things and make them visible and distinct to ourselves, much more to others. Why did he twice throw a look into the glass in the act of passing it? Why did he for a moment stand with erect head facing it? His eyes for

the nonce seemed little to peruse his outer features: the grey-gathered brows and the wrinkles, much action of them had traced over the circles half up his high straight forehead: the iron-grey hair that rose over his forehead and fell away in the fashion of Richard's plume. His general appearance showed the tints of years, but none of their weight, and nothing of the dignity of his youth was gone. It was so far satisfactory, but his eyes were wide, as one who looks at his essential self through the mask we wear. Perhaps he was speculating as he looked, on the sort of aspect he presented to the lady's discriminative regard. Of her feelings he had not a suspicion. But he knew with what extraordinary lucidity women can, when it pleases them, and when their feelings are not quite boiling under the noonday sun, seize all the sides of a character, and put their fingers on its weak point. He was cognizant of the total absence of the humorous in himself (the want that most shut him out from his fellows), and perhaps the clear-thoughted intensely self-examining gentleman filmily conceived: Me also, in common with the poet, she gazes on as one of the superior—greybeasts!

He may have so conceived the case: he was capable of that great-mindedness, and could at times snatch very luminous glances at the broad Reflector which the world of Fact lying outside our narrow compass holds up for us to see ourselves in when we will. Unhappily, the faculty of laughter, which is due to this gift, was denied him; and having once seen, he, like the companion of friend Balaam, could go no further. For a good wind of laughter had relieved him of much of the blight of self-deception, and oddness, and extravagance; had given a healthier view of our atmosphere of life: but he had it not.

Journeying back to Bellingham in the train, with the heated brain and brilliant eye of his son beside him, Sir Austin tried hard to feel infallible, as a man with a System should feel; and because he could not do so, after much mental conflict, he descended to entertain a personal antagonism to the young woman who had stepped in between his Experiment, and success. He did not think kindly of her. Lady Blandish's encomiums of her behaviour and her beauty annoyed him. Forgetful that he had in a measure for-

feited his rights to it, he took the common ground of fathers, and demanded, Why he was not justified in doing all that lay in his power to prevent his son from casting himself away upon the first creature with a pretty face he encountered. Deliberating thus, he lost the tenderness he should have had for his Experiment—the living, burning, youth at his elbow, and his excessive love for him took a rigorous tone. It appeared to him politic, reasonable, and just, that the Uncle of this young woman who had so long nursed the prudent scheme of marrying her to his son, should not only not be thwarted in his object, but encouraged, and even assisted. At least, not thwarted. Sir Austin had no glass before him while these ideas hardened in his mind, and he had rather forgotten the letter of Lady Blandish.

Father and son were alone in the railway carriage. Both were too pre-occupied to speak. As they neared Bellingham, the dark was filling the hollows of the country. Over the pine-hills beyond the station a last rosy streak lingered across a green sky. Richard eyed it while they flew along. It caught him forward: it seemed full of the spirit of his love, and brought tears of mourn-

ful longing to his eyelids. The sad beauty of that one spot in the heavens seemed to call out to his soul to swear to his Lucy's truth to him: was like the sorrowful visage of his fleur-de-luce, as he called her, appealing to him for faith. That tremulous tender way she had of half-closing and catching light on the nether-lids, when sometimes she looked up in her lover's face—a look so mystic-sweet it had grown to be the fountain of his dreams: he saw it yonder, and his blood thrilled.

Know you those wand-like touches of I know not what, before which our grosser being melts, and we, much as we hope to be in the Awaking, stand etherealized, trembling with new joy? They come but rarely; rarely even in Love, when we fondly think them Revelations. Mere Sensations they are, doubtless: and we rank for them no higher in the spiritual scale than so many translucent glorious *polypi* that quiver on the Celestial Shores, the hues of Heaven running through them. Yet in the harvest of our days it is something for the animal to have had such mere fleshly polypian experiences to look back upon, and they give him an horizon,—pale seas

of luring splendour. One who has had them (when they do not bound him), may find the Isles of Bliss sooner than another. Sensual faith in the upper glories is something. 'Let us remember,' says The PILGRIM'S SCRIP, 'that Nature, though heathenish, reaches at her best to the footstool of the Highest. She is not all dust, but a living portion of the spheres. In aspiration it is our error to despise her, forgetting that through Nature only can we *ascend*. Cherished, trained, and purified, she is then partly worthy the Divine mate who is to make her wholly so. St. Simeon saw the Hog in Nature, and took Nature for the Hog.'

It was one of these strange bodily exaltations which thrilled the young man, he knew not how it was, for his sadness and his forebodings vanished. The soft wand touched him. At that moment had Sir Austin spoken openly, Richard might have fallen upon his heart. He could not. He chose to feel injured on the common ground of fathers, and to pursue his System by plotting. Lady Blandish had revived his jealousy of the creature who menaced it, and jea-

lousy of a System is unreflecting and vindictive as jealousy of woman.

Heath-roots and pines breathed sharp in the cool Autumn Evening about the Bellingham Station. Richard stood a moment as he stepped from the train, and drew the country air into his lungs with large heaves of the chest. Leaving his father to the felicitations of the Station-Master, he went into the Lobourne road to look for his faithful Tom, who had received private orders through Berry to be in attendance with his young master's mare, Cassandra, and was lurking in a plantation of firs unenclosed on the borders of the road, where Richard, knowing his retainer's zest for conspiracy too well to seek him anywhere but in the part most favoured with shelter and concealment, found him furtively whiffing tobacco.

"What news, Tom?—Is she well? Is she ill? Is she safe?"

Tom smuggled his pipe into his pocket. He sent his undress cap on one side to scratch at Dilemma, an old agricultural habit to which he was still a slave in moments of abstract thought, or sudden difficulty.

"No, I don't want the rake, Mr. Richard," he whinnied with a deprecating false grin, as he beheld his master's eye vacantly following the action. "You're looking uncommon well, Sir."

"D'you hear, Tom?" cried Richard, imperatively. "I haven't had a letter for a week! How is she? Where is she?"

Tom stepped back to Cassandra's hind-quarters, and round to her fore-feet, pretending to be spying after furze-thorns. Between anger and alarm at Tom's hesitation to answer honestly, a quality that served for patience restrained his master; but Tom saw that this trifling would not do, and he got up from the mare's loins, and said, holding forth both hands open, "There, Sir! I don't mind saying it. I know I ought for to have powsted a letter, tall'n you all of it as much as I'd come to hear—but there, Mr. Richard, I do writ so shocken bad, and that's the truth, I wasn't the man for 't. Well, Sir," Tom warmed to speak out now he had begun, "I shewd 'a stopped her. I know that, Sir. I know'd how it 'd knock you down. But I ain't a scholar! I ain't what you thinks, or hopes for—bain't a bit of a hero! I never can do anything 'less it 's in company. I

can't do 't by myself. *I'm* no hero. I know very well Lord Nelson 'd 'a done it," continued Tom, remembering, doubtless, many a lecture on the darling hero of Britain. "*He* 'd 'a done it. So 'd the Duke o' Wellington, or any 'o them Peninsoolar War chaps. But I hadn't the speert to step in and say—You shan't take her away! I thought about 't, but there — I couldn't! There's no more mistakes between us now, Mr. Richard. You see, I ain't a bit better than any other chap."

Thus Richard learnt the news. He took it with surprising outward calm, only getting a little closer to Cassandra's neck, and looking very hard at Tom without seeing a speck of him, which had the effect on Tom of making him sincerely wish his master would punch his head at once rather than fix him in that owl-like way.

"Go on, Tom!" said Richard huskily. "Yes? She's gone! Well?

Tom was brought to understand he must make the most of trifles, and recited how he had heard from a female domestic at Belthorpe of the name of Davenport, formerly known to him,

that the young lady never slept a wink from the hour she knew she was going, but sat up in her bed till morning crying most pitifully, though she never complained. Hereat the tears unconsciously streamed down Richard's cheeks. Tom said, he had tried to see her, but Mr. Adrian kept him at work ciphering at a terrible sum—that and nothing else all day! saying, it was to please his young master on his return. "Likewise something in Lat'n," added Tom. "Nom-'tive Mouser!—'nough to make ye mad, Sir!" he exclaimed with pathos. The wretch had been put to acquire a Latin declension.

Tom saw her on the morning she went away, he said: she was very sorrowful-looking, and nodded kindly to him as she passed in the fly along with young Tom Blaize. "She have got uncommon kind eyes, Sir," said Tom, "and cryin' don't spoil them." For which his hand was violently wrenched.

Tom had no more to tell, save that, in rounding the road, the young lady had hung out her hand, and seemed to move it forward and back, as much as to say, Good bye, Tom! "And though she couldn't see me," said Tom, "I took

off my hat. I did take it so kind of her to think of a chap like me." Tom was at high-pressure sentiment, what with his education for a hero, and his master's love-stricken state.

"You saw no more of her, Tom?"

"No, Sir. That was the last!" said Tom, imitating the forlornness of his master's voice.

"That was the last you saw of her, Tom?"

"Well, Sir! I saw nothin' more."

"You didn't go to the corner of the road to see—?"

"Dash'd if I thought o' doin' that, Sir!"

"And so she went out of sight, Tom?"

"Clean gone, that she were, Sir!"

"Why did they take her away? what have they done with her? where have they taken her to?"

These red-hot questionings were addressed to the universal heaven rather than to Tom.

"Why didn't she write?" they were resumed. "Why did she leave? She's mine! She belongs to me! Who dared take her away? Why did she leave without writing?——Tom!"

"Yes, Sir," said the well-drilled recruit, dressing himself up to the word of command. He expected a variation of the theme from the

change of tone with which his name had been pronounced, but it was again, "Where have they taken her to?" and this was even more perplexing to Tom than his hard sum in arithmetic had been. He could only draw down the corners of his mouth hard, and glance up queerly.

"She *had* been crying—you saw that, Tom?"

"No mistake about that, Mr. Richard. Cryin' all night and all day, I sh'd say."

"And she was crying when you saw her?"

"She looked as if she'd just done for a moment, Sir," Tom insinuated.

"But her face was white?"

"White as a sheet."

Richard paused to discover whether his instinct had caught a new view from these facts. He was in a cage, always knocking against the same bars, fly as he might. Her tears were the stars in his black night. He clung to them as golden orbs. Inexplicable as they were, they were at least pledges of love. She could not have been too miserable to please him.

"Tom!" he said, "I'll follow her at once."

"Better wait," Tom advised, "till I search out where the young lady is—hadn't you, Sir?"

The hues of sunset had left the West. No light was there but the stedfast pale eye of twilight. Thither he was drawn: thither he must go. He had not listened to Tom's sound sense, but it appeared to guide him, for he mounted Cassandra, saying: "Tell them something, Tom. I shan't be home to dinner," and rode off towards the forsaken home of light over Belthorpe, wherein he saw the wan hand of his Lucy, waving farewell, receding as he advanced. His Jewel was stolen,—he must gaze upon the empty box.

CHAPTER VIII.

CRISIS IN THE APPLE-DISEASE.

NIGHT had come on as Richard entered the old elm-shaded, grass-bordered, lane leading down from Raynham to Belthorpe. The pale eye of twilight was shut. The wind had tossed up the bank of western cloud, which was now flying broad and unlighted across the sky, broad and balmy,—the charioted South-west at full charge behind his panting coursers. As he neared the farm his heart fluttered and leapt up. He was sure she must be there. She must have returned. Why should she have left for good without writing? He caught suspicion by the throat, making it voiceless, if it lived: he silenced Reason. Her not writing was now a proof she had returned. He listened to nothing but his imperious passion, and murmured sweet words for her, as if she were by: tender cherishing

epithets of love in the nest. She was there,—she moved somewhere about like a silver flame in the dear old house doing her sweet household duties. His blood began to sing: O happy those within, to see her and be about her! By some extraordinary process he contrived to cast a sort of glory round the burly person of farmer Blaize himself. And Oh! to have companionship with a seraph one must know a seraph's bliss, and was not young Tom to be envied? The smell of late clematis brought on the wind enwrapped him, and went to his brain, and threw a light over the old red-brick house, for he remembered where it grew, and the winter rose-tree, and the jessamine, and the passion-flower: the garden in front with the standard-roses tended by her hands; the long wall to the left striped by the branches of the cherry; the peep of a further garden through the wall, and then the orchard, and the fields beyond—the happy circle of her dwelling! it flashed before his eyes while he looked on the darkness. And yet it was the reverse of hope which kindled this light and inspired the momentary calm he experienced: it was despair exaggerating delusion, wil-

fully building up on a groundless basis. 'For the tenacity of true passion is terrible,' says The PILGRIM'S SCRIP: 'it will stand against the hosts of Heaven, God's great array of Facts, rather than surrender its aim, and must be crushed before it will succumb—sent to the lowest pit!'—He knew she was not there: she was gone. But the power of a will strained to madness fought at it, kept it down, conjured forth her ghost, and would have it as he dictated. Poor youth! the great array of Facts was in due order of march.

He had breathed her name many times, and once overloud; almost a cry for her escaped him. He had not noticed the opening of a door, and the noise of a foot along the gravel-walk. He was leaning over Cassandra's uneasy neck watching the one window intently, when a voice addressed him out of the darkness.

"Be that you, young gentleman?—Mr. Fev-'rel?"

Richard's trance was broken. "Mr. Blaize!" he said, recognizing the farmer's voice.

"Good even'n t' you, Sir," returned the farmer. "I knew the mare, though I didn't know you. Rather bluff t' night it be. Wull ye step

in, Mr. Fev'rel? it 's beginnin' to spit—goin' to be a wildish night, I reckon."

Richard dismounted. The farmer called one of his men to hold the mare, and ushered the young man in. Once there Richard's conjurations ceased. There was a deadness about the rooms and passages that told of her absence. The walls he touched—these were the vacant shell of his divinity. He had never been in the house since he knew her, and now, what strange sweetness, and what pangs!

Young Tom Blaize was in the parlour squared over the table in open-mouthed examination of an ancient book of the Fashions for a Summer month which had elapsed during his mother's minority. Young Tom was respectfully studying the aspects of the radiant beauties of the polite work. He also was a thrall of woman, newly enrolled, and full of wonder.

"What, Tom!" the farmer sung out as soon as he had opened the door; "there ye be! at yer Folly agin, are ye? What good 'll them Fashens do to *yew*, I'd like t' know? Come, shut up, and go and see Mr. Fev'rel's mare taken into stables.—He 's al'ays at that ther' Folly now,"

the farmer addressed Richard, as he of the seraph's bliss sullenly cast the Fashions among the musk-pots, and stumped off mumbling unintelligible grumblings. "I say there never were a better name for a book than that ther' Folly! Talk about attitoods! Why, they 're all attitood! they're nothin' else!" The farmer laughed broadly. "If we went about in that style I don't think we sh'd do much work, and get much t' eat—in style o' that ther' Folly!—ha, ha! 'counts for ther 'bein' se thin, mayhap—ha, ha, ha! Thin ain't lissome, though, in style o' that ther' Folly."

The farmer laughed his fat sides into a chair and motioned his visitor to do likewise.

"It's a comfort they're most on'em females," he pursued, sounding a thwack on his knee as he settled himself agreeably in his seat. "It don't matter much what they does—'cept pinchin' in—waspin' it—at the waist. Give me Natur', I say—woman as she's made! eh, young gentleman?"

A blush went over Richard: he was thinking —'Is this the chair she sat in?'—She seemed to put her arms about him, and say, 'Suppose I

have gone? Shall I not soon be back to you? Why are you so downcast?'

"I asks 'un," the farmer was unable to quit the subject his humour had fixed on, "I asks 'un, what he expects out of a Folly but fools? And take care he don't get among 'em!—Seems Folly's a new name for them Fashens. So they tells me. Not a bad 'un, I think!—Hope yer father's well, Mr. Fev'rel? Ah! if he'd been the man he bid fair to be—though we was opp'site pol'tics—well! it's a loss anyhow!—Not the first time you've bin in this apartment, young gentleman?"

"No, Mr. Blaize! it is not," Richard now spoke. "I think I ought to have—you see, that was my book of Folly, and I shall be glad to think it's closed."

To this proper speech, the farmer replied dryly: "Wall! so long as that sort of Folly don't grow to be the Fashen! 'somever that's over and past—no more said about 't!"

A rather embarrassing silence ensued, broken by a movement of legs changing places, like evolutions of infantry before the dread Artillery opens.

"You seem very lonely here," said Richard, glancing round, and at the ceiling.

"Lonely?" quoth the farmer. "Well, for the matter o' that, we be!—jest now, so 't happens; I've got my pipe, and Tom 've got his Folly. He's on one side the taable, and I'm on t'other. He gaapes, and I gazes. We are a bit lonesome. But there—it's *for* the best!"

Richard resumed: "I hardly expected to see you tonight, Mr. Blaize."

"Y' acted like a man in coming, young gentleman, and I does ye honour for it!" said farmer Blaize with sudden energy and directness.

The thing implied by the farmer's words caused Richard to take a quick breath. They looked at each other, and then looked away, the farmer thrumming on the arm of his chair.

Above the mantel-piece, surrounded by tarnished indifferent miniatures of high-collared well-to-do yeomen of the anterior generation, trying their best not to grin, and high-waisted old ladies smiling an encouraging smile through plentiful cap-puckers, there hung a passably executed half-figure of a Naval Officer in uniform, grasping a telescope under his left arm, who stood forth clearly as not of their kith and kin.

His eyes were blue, his hair light, his bearing that of a man who knows how to carry his head and shoulders. The artist, while giving him an epaulette to indicate his rank, had also recorded the juvenility which a Lieutenant in the Naval service can retain after arriving at that position, by painting him with smooth cheeks and fresh ruddy lips. To this portrait Richard's eyes were directed. Farmer Blaize observed it, and said:

"Her father, Sir!"

Richard moderated his voice to praise the likeness.

"Yes," said the farmer, "pretty well. Next best to havin' *her*, though it's a long way off that!"

"An old family, Mr. Blaize—is it not?" Richard asked in as careless a tone as he could assume.

"Gentlefolks—what's left of 'em," replied the farmer, with an equally affected indifference.

"And that's her father?" said Richard, growing bolder to speak of her.

"That's her father, young gentleman!"

"Mr. Blaize," Richard turned to face him, and burst out, "where is she?"

"Gone, Sir! packed off!—Can't have her

here now." The farmer thrummed a step brisker, and eyed the young man's wild face resolutely.

"Mr. Blaize," Richard leaned forward to get closer to him. He was stunned, and hardly aware of what he was saying or doing: "Where has she gone? Why did she leave?"

"Ye needn't to ask, Sir—ye know," said the farmer with a side shot of his head.

"But *she* did not—it was not her wish to go?"

"No! I think she likes the place. Mayhap she likes 't too well?"

"Why did you send her away to make her unhappy, Mr. Blaize?"

The farmer bluntly denied it was he was the party who made her unhappy. "Nobody can't accuse *me*. Tall ye what, Sir. I wunt have the busybodies set to work about her, and there's all the matter. So let you and I come to an understandin'."

A blind inclination to take offence made Richard sit upright. He forgot it the next minute, and said humbly: "Am I the cause of her going?"

"Wall!" returned the farmer, "to speak straight—ye be!"

"What can I do, Mr. Blaize, that she may come back again?" the young hypocrite asked.

"Now," said the farmer, "ye're coming to business. Glad to hear ye talk in that sensible way, Mr. Fev'rel. You may guess I wants her bad enough. The house ain't itself now she's away, and I ain't myself. Wall, Sir! This ye can do. If yew gives me yew're promus not to meddle with her at all—I can't mak' out how ye come to be acquainted—not to try to get her to be meetin' you—and if you'd 'a seen her when she left, ye would—when did ye meet?—last grass wasn't it?—your word as a gentleman not to be writing letters, and spyin' after her—I'll have her back at once. Back she shall come!

"Give her up?" cried Richard.

"Ay, that's it!" said the farmer. "Give her up."

The young man checked the annihilation of Time that was on his mouth.

"You sent her away to protect her from me, then?" he said savagely.

"That's not quite it, but that'll do," rejoined the farmer.

"Do you think I shall harm her, Sir?"

"People sim to think she'll harm you, young gentleman," the farmer said with some irony.

"Harm *me*—she? What people?"

"People pretty intimet with you, Sir."

"What people? Who spoke of us?" Richard began to scent the plot, and would not be baulked.

"Wall, Sir, look heer," said the farmer. "It an't no secret, and if it be, I don't see why I'm to keep it. It appear your eddication's peculiar." The farmer drawled out the word as if he were describing the figure of a snake. "You an't to be as other young gentlemen. All the better! You're a fine bold young gentleman, and your father's a right to be proud of ye. Wall, Sir—I'm sure I thank him for 't—he comes to hear of you and Luce, and of course he don't want nothin' o' that—more do I. I meets him there! What's more I won't have nothin' of it. She be my gal. She were left to my pertection. And she's a lady, Sir. Let me tall ye, ye won't find many on 'em so well looked to as she be—my Luce! Well Mr. Fev'rel, it's you, or it's her—one of ye must be out o' the way. So

we're towld. And Luce—I do believe she's just as anxious about yer eddication as yer father—she says she'll go, and wouldn't write, and 'd break it off for the sake o' your eddic*a*tion. And she've kep her word, haven't she?—Ah! she's a true 'n. What she says she'll do!—True blue she be, my Luce! So now, Sir, you do the same, and I'll thank ye."

Any one who has tossed a sheet of paper into the fire, and seen it gradually brown with heat, and strike to flame, may conceive the mind of the lover as he listened to this speech.

His anger did not evaporate in words, but condensed and sank deep. "Mr. Blaize," he said between his set teeth, "this is very kind of the people you allude to, but I am of an age now to think and act for myself.—I love her, Sir!" His whole countenance changed, and the muscles of his face quivered.

"Wall!" said the farmer appeasingly, "we all do at your age—somebody or other. It's nat'ral!"

"I love her!" the young man thundered afresh, too much possessed by his passion to have a sense of shame in the confession.—"Farmer!"

his voice fell to supplication, "will you bring her back?"

Farmer Blaize made a queer face. He asked —what for? and where was the promise required! But was not the lover's argument conclusive? He said he loved her! and he could not see why her uncle should not in consequence immediately send for her, that they might be together.—All very well, quoth the farmer, but what's to come of it?—What was to come of it? Why, love, and more love!—And a bit too much! the farmer added grimly.

"Then you refuse me, farmer," said Richard. "I must look to you for keeping her away from me, not to—to—these people. You will not have her back, though I tell you I love her better than my life?"

Farmer Blaize now had to answer him plainly, he had a reason and an objection of his own. And it was, that her character was at stake, and God knew whether she herself might not be in danger. He spoke with a kindly candour, not without dignity. He complimented Richard personally, but young people were young people: Ba-

ronets' sons were not in the habit of marrying farmers' nieces.

At first the son of a System did not comprehend him. When he did, he said: "Farmer! if I give you my word of honour, as I hope for Heaven, to marry her when I come of age, will you have her back?"

He was so fervid that, to quiet him, the farmer only shook his head doubtfully at the bars of the grate, and let his chest fall slowly. Richard caught what seemed to him a glimpse of encouragement in these signs, and observed: "It's not because you object to me, Mr. Blaize?"

The farmer signified it was not that.

"It's because my father is against me," Richard went on, and undertook to show that love was so sacred a matter that no father could entirely and for ever resist his son's inclinations. Argument being a cool field where the farmer could meet and match him, the young man got on the tramroad of his passion, and went ahead. He drew pictures of Lucy, of her truth, and his own. He took leaps from Life to Death, from Death to Life, mixing imprecations and prayers in a torrent. Perhaps he did move the stolid old En-

glishman a little, he was so vehement, and made so visible a sacrifice of his pride.

Farmer Blaize tried to pacify him, but it was useless. His Jewel he must have.

The farmer stretched out his hand for the pipe that allayeth botheration.—"May smoke heer now," he said. "Not when—somebody's present. Smoke in the kitchen then. Don't mind smell?"

Richard nodded, and watched the operations while the farmer filled, and lighted, and began to puff, as if his fate hung on them.

"Who'd 'a thought, when you sat over there once, of it's comin' to this!" ejaculated the farmer, drawing ease and reflection from tobacco. "You didn't think much of her that day, young gentleman? I introdooced ye. Wall! things comes about. Can't ye wait till she returns in doo coorse, now?"

This suggestion, the work of the pipe, did but bring on him another torrent.

"It's queer," said the farmer, putting the mouth of the pipe to his wrinkled up temples.

Richard waited for him, and then he laid down the pipe altogether as no aid in perplexity,

and said, after leaning his arm on the table and staring at Richard an instant:

"Look, young gentleman! My word's gone. I've spoke it. I've given 'em the 'surance she shan't be back till the spring, and then I'll have her, and then—wall! I do hope, for more reasons than one, ye'll both on ye be wiser—I've got my own notions about her. But I an't the man to force a gal to marry 'gainst her inclines. 'Pend upon it I'm not yer enemy, Mr. Fev'rel. Yer jest the one to mak' a young gal proud. So jest wait,—and see. That's my 'dvice. Jest tak' and wait. I've no more to say."

Richard's impetuosity had made him really afraid of speaking his notions concerning the projected felicity of young Tom, if indeed they were serious.

The farmer repeated that he had no more to say, and Richard with, "Wait till the spring! Wait till the spring!" dinning despair in his ears, stood up to depart. Farmer Blaize shook his slack hand in a friendly way, and called out at the door for young Tom, who, dreading allusions to his Folly, did not appear. A maid rushed by Richard in the passage, and slipped something

into his grasp, which fixed on it without further consciousness than that of touch. The mare was led forth by the Bantam. A light rain was falling down strong warm gusts, and the trees were noisy in the night. Farmer Blaize requested Richard at the gate to give him his hand, and say all was well. He liked the young man for his earnestness and honest outspeaking. Richard could not say all was well, but he gave his hand, and knit it to the farmer's in a sharp squeeze, when he got upon Cassandra, and rode into the tumult.

A calm clear dawn succeeded the roaring west, and threw its glowing grey image on the waters of the Abbey-lake. Before sunrise Tom Bakewell was abroad, and met the missing youth, his master, jogging Cassandra leisurely along the Lobourne park-road, a sorry couple to look at. Cassandra's flanks were caked with mud, her head drooped: all that was in her had been taken out by that wild night. On what heaths and heavy fallows had she not spent her noble strength, recklessly fretting through the darkness!

"Take the mare," said Richard, dismounting and patting her between the eyes. "She's done

up, poor old gal! Look to her, Tom, and then come to me in my room."

Tom asked no questions. He saw that he was in for the first Act of the new Comedy.

Three days would bring the anniversary of Richard's birth, and though Tom was close, the condition of the mare, and the young gentleman's strange freak in riding her out all night becoming known, prepared everybody at Raynham for the usual bad-luck birthday, the prophets of which were full of sad gratification. Sir Austin had an unpleasant office to require of his son: no other than that of humbly begging Benson's pardon, and washing out the undue blood he had spilt in taking his Pound of Flesh. Heavy Benson was told to anticipate the demand for pardon, and practised in his mind the most melancholy Christian deportment he could assume on the occasion. But while his son was in this state, Sir Austin considered that he would hardly be brought to see the virtues of the act, and did not make the requisition of him, and heavy Benson remained drawn up solemnly expectant at doorways, and at the foot of the staircase, a Saurian Caryatid, wherever he could get a step in ad-

vance of the young man, while Richard heedlessly passed him, as he passed everybody else, his head bent to the ground, and his legs bearing him like random instruments of whose service he was unconscious. It was a shock to Benson's implicit belief in his patron; and he was not consoled by the philosophic explanation, 'That Good in a strong many-compounded nature is of slower growth than any other mortal thing, and must not be forced.' Damnatory doctrines best pleased Benson. Benson was ready to pardon, as a Christian should, but he did want his enemy before him on his knees. And now, though the Saurian Eye saw more than all the other eyes in the house, and saw that there was matter in hand between Tom and his master to breed exceeding discomposure to the System, Benson, as he had not received his indemnity, and did not wish to encounter fresh perils for nothing, held his peace.

Sir Austin partly divined what was going on in the breast of his son, without conceiving the depths of distrust his son cherished towards him, and all, or quite measuring the intensity of the passion that consumed him. He was very kind,

and tender with him. Like a cunning physician who has, nevertheless, overlooked the change in the disease superinduced by one false dose, he meditated his prescriptions carefully and confidently, sure that he knew the case, and was a match for it. He decreed that Richard's erratic behaviour should pass unnoticed. Two days before the birthday, he asked him whether he would object to the Grandisons coming, and having company? To which Richard said: "Have whom you will, Sir." The preparation for festivity commenced accordingly.

On the birthday eve he dined with the rest. Lady Blandish was there, and sat penitently at his right. Hippias prognosticated certain indigestion for himself on the morrow. The Eighteen Century wondered whether she should live to see another birthday. Adrian drank the two-years' distant term of his tutorship, and Algernon went over the list of the Lobourne men who would cope with Bursley on the morrow. Sir Austin gave ear and a word to all, keeping his mental eye for his son. To please Lady Blandish also, Adrian ventured to make trifling jokes about Mrs. Grandison; jokes delicately not decent, but

so delicately so that it was not decent to perceive it. He desired to know whether Berry was in sufficient muscular condition to transport the lady up-stairs and down; and being told that no doubt Berry would be, were the service required of him, Adrian appeared to reflect profoundly, and thought that on no account must the precious freight be consigned to the inflammable Berry; in support of which Adrian mildly cited certain grievous instances in the Pagan mythology of breach of trust, even when the offenders were Gods, which Berry had no pretence to be, utter animal man that he was.

"Then you must do it," said Richard, just waking up, and for want of something to say.

"Even I dare not! Such an Ordeal as that!"—Adrian gravely replied, shaking a meek sinner's head, and it was impossible to help laughing at his solemn manner. Algernon, knowing him better than the others, laughed aloud.

"I suppose I must be the man!" he said.

"Remember," said Adrian, "that you have already had your Ordeal."

"Well, then, Hip!" Algernon turned to his melancholy brother, "Hip will do for it exactly."

"Happy one!" Adrian apostrophized Hippias reverently, "behold in his arms the fruit of a thousand indigestions!"

And at this picture of the virtuous lady borne as aprize by the Dyspepsy, there was laughter all round the board, Sir Austin himself reticently joining in.

After dinner Richard left them. Nothing more than commonly peculiar was observed about him, beyond the excessive glitter of his eyes, but the Baronet said, "Yes, yes! that would pass." He, and Adrian, and Lady Blandish, took tea in the library, and sat till a late hour discussing casuistries relating mostly to the Apple-Disease. Converse very amusing to the Wise Youth, who could suggest to the two chaste minds situations of the shadiest character, with the air of a seeker after truth, and lead them, unsuspecting, where they dare not look about them. The Aphorist had elated the heart of his constant fair worshiper with a newly-rounded, if not newly-conceived, sentence, when they became aware that they were four. Heavy Benson stood among them. He said he had knocked, but received no answer. There was,

however, a vestige of surprise and dissatisfaction on his face beholding Adrian of the company, which had not quite worn away, and gave place, when it did vanish, to an aspect of flabby severity.

"Well, Benson? well?" said the Baronet, not understanding the interruption, and impatient at Benson's presence.

Benson persisted in the flabby-severe without speaking, and the appearance of this strange owl presiding stupidly over them, was so astonishing as to keep them all looking at him. They had disconcerted Benson, who was of slow wit, by being three, instead of two, and he was troubled what to say for himself. At last he said the thing he would have said had they been but two, and one of the two a born Pagan.

"If you please, Sir Austin! it's very late."

Benson regarded the impression he had made. It was not a very distinct one. Lady Blandish laughed and said: "I see. Benson wishes to have us up early in the morning! Hasn't my maid gone to bed?"

"She has gone, my Lady."

"Are you sure?" said Adrian.

"To the best of my knowledge, Mr. Hadrian,

she has gone to her bed." Benson's tone defied misconstruction or imputation.

"Then I will follow soon to mine, Benson," said Lady Blandish.

This should have satisfied Benson, but still he did not go.

"Well, Benson? well?" said the Baronet.

The unmoving man replied: "If you please Sir Austin—Mr. Richard!"

"Well?"

"He's out!"

"Well?"

"With Bakewell!"

"Well?"

"And a carpet-bag!"

Benson had judged his climax properly. And a carpet-bag! The Baronet looked blank. Adrian raised his brows. Lady Blandish glanced at one, and at the other.

Out he was, and with a carpet-bag, which Tom Bakewell carried. He was on the road to Bellingham, under heavy rain, hasting like an escaped captive, wild with joy, while Tom shook his skin, and grunted at his discomforts. The mail-train was to be caught at Bellingham. He knew

where to find her now, through the intervention of Miss Davenport, and thither he was flying, an Arrow loosed from the bow: thither, in spite of fathers, and friends, and plotters, to claim her, and take her, and stand with her against the world.

They were both thoroughly wet when they entered Bellingham, and Tom's visions were of hot drinks. He hinted the necessity for inward consolation to his master, who could answer nothing but, "Tom! Tom! I shall see her to-morrow!" It was bad—travelling in the wet, Tom hinted again, to provoke the same insane outcry, and have his arm seized and furiously shaken into the bargain. Passing the principal Inn of the place, Tom spoke plainly for brandy.

"No!" cried Richard, "there's not a moment to be lost!" and as he said it, he reeled, and fell against Tom, muttering indistinctly of faintness, and that there was no time to lose. Tom lifted him in his arms, and got admission to the Inn. Brandy, the country's specific, was advised by host and hostess, and forced into his mouth, reviving him sufficiently to cry out, "Tom! the bell's ringing: we shall be late,"

after which he fell back insensible on the sofa where they had stretched him. Excitement of blood and brain had done its work upon him. The poor youth suffered them to undress him and put him to bed, and there he lay, forgetful even of Love; a drowned weed borne onward by the tide of the hours. There his father found him.

Was the Scientific Humanist remorseful? Not he. He had looked forward to such a crisis as that point in the disease his son was the victim of, when the body would fail and give the spirit calm to conquer the malady, knowing very well that the seeds of the evil were not of the spirit. Moreover to see him, and have him, was a repose after the alarm Benson had sounded. Anxious he was, and prayerful; but with faith in the physical energy he attributed to his System. This providential stroke had saved the youth from Heaven knew what! "Mark!" said the Baronet to Lady Blandish, "when he recovers, he will not care for her."

The lady had accompanied him to the Bellingham Inn on first hearing of Richard's seizure.

"Oh! what an iron man you can be," she ex-

claimed, smothering her intuitions. She was for giving the boy his bauble; promising it him, at least, if he would only get well and be the bright flower of promise he once was.

"Can you look on him," she pleaded, "can you look on him, and persevere?"

It was a hard sight for this man who loved his son so deeply. The youth lay in his strange bed, straight and motionless, with fever on his cheeks, and altered eyes.

"See what you do to us!" said the Baronet, sorrowfully eyeing the bed.

"But if you lose him?" Lady Blandish whispered.

Sir Austin walked away from her, and probed the depths of his love. "The stroke will not be dealt by me," he said.

His patient serenity was a wonder to all who knew him. Indeed to have doubted and faltered now was to have subverted the glorious fabric just on the verge of completion. He believed that his son's pure strength was fitted to cope with any natural evil: that such was God's Law. To him Richard's passion was an ill incident to the ripeness of his years, and his perfect inno-

cence; and this crisis the struggle of the poison passing out of him—not to be deplored. He was so confident that he did not even send for Dr. Bairam. Old Dr. Clifford of Lobourne was the medical attendant, who, with head-shaking, and gathering of lips, and reminiscences of ancient arguments, guaranteed to do all that leech could do in the matter. The old Doctor did admit that Richard's constitution was admirable, and answered to his prescriptions like a piano to the musician. "But," he said, at a family consultation, for Sir Austin had told him how it stood with the young man, "drugs are not much in cases of this sort. Change! That's what's wanted, and as soon as may be. Distraction! He ought to see the world, and know what he's made of. It's no use my talking, I know," added the Doctor.

"On the contrary," said Sir Austin. "I am quite of your persuasion. And the world he shall see—now."

"We have dipped him in Styx, you know, Doctor," Adrian remarked.

"But, Doctor," said Lady Blandish, "have you known a case of this sort before?"

"Never, my lady," said the Doctor, "they 're not common in these parts. Country people are tolerably healthy-minded."

"But people—and country people—have died for love, Doctor?"

The Doctor had not met any of them.

"Men, or women?" inquired the Baronet.

Lady Blandish believed, mostly women.

"Ask the Doctor whether they were healthy-minded women," said the Baronet. "No! you are both looking at the wrong end. Between a highly-cultured being, and an emotionless animal, there is all the difference in the world. But of the two, the Doctor is nearer the truth. The healthy nature is pretty safe. If he allowed for organization he would be right altogether. To feel, but not to feel to excess, that is the problem."

> "If I can't have the one I chose,
> To some fresh maid I will propose,"

Adrian hummed a country ballad.

"That couplet," said Sir Austin, "exactly typifies the Doctor's hero. I think he must admire Agamemnon—eh, Doctor? Chryseïs taken from us, let us seize Bryseïs!—Children cry, but

don't die, for their lumps of sugar. When they grow older, they—"

"Simply have a stronger appreciation of the sugar, and make a greater noise to obtain it," Adrian took him up, and elicited the smile which usually terminated any dispute he joined.

CHAPTER IX.

OF THE SPRING PRIMROSE AND THE AUTUMNAL.

When the young Experiment again knew the hours that rolled him onward, he was in his own room at Raynham. Nothing had changed: only a strong fist had knocked him down and stunned him, and he opened his eyes to a grey world. He had forgotten what he lived for. He was weak, and thin, and with a pale memory of things. His functions were the same, everything surrounding him was the same: he looked upon the old blue hills, the far-lying fallows, the river, and the woods: he knew them, but they seemed to have lost recollection of him. Nor could he find in familiar human faces the secret intimacy of heretofore. They were the same faces: they nodded and smiled to him. What was lost he could not tell. Something had been knocked out of him! He was sensible of his

father's sweetness of manner, and he was grieved that he could not reply to it, for every sense of shame and reproach had strangely gone. He felt very useless. In place of the fiery love for one, he now bore about a cold charity to all.

Thus in the heart of the young man died the Spring Primrose, and while it died another heart was pushing forth the Primrose of Autumn.

The wonderful change in Richard, and the wisdom of her admirer, now positively proved, were exciting matters to Lady Blandish. She was rebuked for certain little rebellious fancies concerning him that had come across her enslaved mind from time to time. For was he not almost a prophet? It distressed the sentimental lady that a love like Richard's could pass off in mere smoke, and words such as she had heard him speak in Abbey-wood resolve to emptiness. Nay, it humiliated her personally, and the Baronet's shrewd prognostication humiliated her. For how should he know, and dare to say, that Love was a thing of the dust that could be trodden out under the heel of Science? But he had said so, and he had proved himself right. She heard with wonderment that Richard of his

own accord had spoken to his father of the folly he had been guilty of, and had begged his pardon. The Baronet told her this, adding that the youth had done it in a cold unwavering way, without a movement of his features: had evidently done it to throw off the burden of the duty he had conceived, and thereafter passed by. He had thought himself bound to acknowledge that he had been the Foolish Young Fellow, wishing, possibly, to abjure the fact by an act of penance. He had also given satisfaction to Benson, and was become a renovated peaceful spirit, whose main object appeared to be to get up his physical strength by exercise and no expenditure of speech. In her company he was composed and courteous: even when they were alone together, he did not exhibit a trace of melancholy. Sober he seemed, as one who has recovered from a drunkenness and has determined to drink no more. The idea struck her that he might be playing a part, but Tom Bakewell, in a private conversation they had, informed her, that he had received an order from his young master, one day while boxing with him, not to mention the young lady's name to him so long as he lived:

and Tom could only suppose that she had offended him. Theoretically wise Lady Blandish had always thought the Baronet: she was unprepared to find him thus practically sagacious. She fell many degrees: she wanted something to cling to: so she clung to the man who struck her low. Love, then, was earthly: its depth could be probed by Science! A man lived who could measure it from end to end; foretell its term; handle the young cherub as were he a shot owl! We who have flown into cousinship with the empyrean, and disported among immortal hosts, our base birth as a child of Time is made bare to us!—our wings are cut! Oh, then, if Science is this victorious enemy of Love, let us love Science! was the logic of the lady's heart: and secretly cherishing the assurance that she should confute him yet, and prove him utterly wrong, she gave him the fruits of present success, as it is a habit of women to do: involuntarily partly. The fires took hold of her. She felt soft emotions such as a girl feels, and they flattered her. It was like youth coming back. Pure women have a second youth. The Autumn primrose flourished.

We are advised by the PILGRIM'S SCRIP that:

'The ways of women, which are Involution, and their practices, which are Opposition, are generally best hit upon by guess-work, and a bold word:'—it being impossible to track them and hunt them down in the ordinary style.

So that we may not ourselves become involved and opposed, let us each of us venture a guess and say a bold word as to how it came that the lady, who trusted Love to be eternal, grovelled to him that shattered her tender faith, and loved him.

Hitherto it had been simply a sentimental dalliance, and gossips had maligned the lady. Just when the gossips grew tired of their slander, and inclined to look upon her charitably, she set about to deserve every word they had said of her: which may instruct us, if you please, that gossips have only to persist in lying to be crowned with verity, or that one has only to endure evil mouths for a period to gain impunity. She was always at the Abbey now. She was much closeted with the Baronet. It seemed to be understood that she had taken Mrs. Doria's place. Benson in his misogynic soul perceived

that she was taking Lady Feverel's; but any report circulated by Benson was sure to meet discredit, and drew the gossips upon himself; which made his meditations tragic. No sooner was one woman defeated than another took the field! The object of the System was no sooner safe than its great author was in danger! Benson alone was sincere, and wretched! Consequently he turned prophet. He foretold the Downfall of the System, and carried it in his face. There was no escaping from his horrible heaviness. The Baronet complained of it. At a time of exuberant self-congratulation, a dear lady worshiping, a beloved boy obedient, a System triumphant, and scoffers confounded, Benson's dead weight was offensive.

"I can't think what has come to Benson," he said to Adrian.

"He seems to have received a fresh legacy of several pounds of lead," returned the Wise Youth, and imitating Dr. Clifford's manner, "Change is what he wants! distraction! send him to Wales, Sir, for a month, and let Richard go with him. The two victims of Woman may do each other good."

"Unfortunately I can't do without him," said the Baronet.

"Then we must continue to have him on our shoulders all day, and on our chests all night!" Adrian ejaculated.

"I think while he preserves this aspect, we won't have him at the dinner-table," said the Baronet.

Adrian thought that would be a relief to their digestions; and added: "You know, Sir, what he says?"

Receiving a negative, Adrian delicately explained to him that Benson's excessive ponderosity of demeanour was caused by anxiety for the safety of his master.

"You must pardon a faithful fool, Sir," he continued, for the Baronet became red, and exclaimed:

"His stupidity is past belief! I have absolutely to bolt my study-door against him."

"Have you indeed, Sir!" said Adrian, and at once beheld a charming scene in the interior of the study, not unlike one that Benson had visually witnessed. For, like a wary prophet, Benson, that he might have warrant for what he

foretold of the future, had a care to spy upon the present: warned haply by the PILGRIM'S SCRIP, of which he was a diligent reader, and which says, rather enigmatically: 'Could we see Time's full face we were wise of him.' Now to see Time's full face, it is sometimes necessary to look through keyholes, the veteran having a trick of smiling peace to you on one cheek, and grimacing confusion on the other, behind the curtain. Decency and a sense of honour restrain most of us from being thus wise, and miserable, for ever. Benson's excuse was that he believed in his master, who was menaced. And moreover, notwithstanding his previous tribulation, to spy upon Cupid was sweet to him. So he peeped, and he saw a sight. He saw Time's full face; or, in other words, he saw the wiles of woman and the weakness of man: which is our history, as Benson would have written it, and a great many poets and philosophers have written it.

Yet it was but the plucking of the Autumn primrose that Benson had seen: a somewhat different operation from the plucking of the Spring one: very innocent! Our staid elderly sister has paler blood, and has, or thinks she has, a reason

or two about the roots. She is not all instinct. 'For this high cause, and for that I know men, and know him to be the flower of men, I give myself to him!' She makes that lofty inward exclamation while the hand is detaching her from the roots. Even so strong a self-justification she requires. She has not that blind glory in excess which her younger sister can gild the longest leap with. And if, mothlike, she desires for the star, she is nervously cautious of candles. Hence her circles about the dangerous human flame are wide and shy. She must be drawn nearer and nearer by a fresh *reason*. She loves to sentimentalize. Lady Blandish had been sentimentalizing for ten years. She would have preferred to pursue the game. The dark-eyed dame was pleased with her smooth life and the soft excitement that did not ruffle it. Not willingly did she let herself be won.

'Sentimentalists,' says the PILGRIM'S SCRIP, 'are they who seek to enjoy Reality, without incurring the Immense Debtorship for a thing done.'

'It is,' the writer says of Sentimentalism elsewhere, 'a happy pastime, and an important science, to the timid, the idle, and the heartless:

but a damning one to them who have anything to forfeit.'

However, one who could set down, Dying for Love, as a Sentimentalism, can hardly be accepted as a clear authority. Assuredly he was not one to avoid the incurring of the immense Debtorship in any way: but he was still a bondsman to the woman who had forsaken him, and a spoken word had made it seem duty to face that public scandal which was the last evil to him. What had so horrified the virtuous Benson, Richard had already beheld in Daphne's Bower; a simple kissing of the fair white hand! Doubtless the keyhole somehow added to Benson's horror. The two similar performances, so very innocent, had wondrous opposite consequences. The first kindled Richard to adore Woman: the second destroyed Benson's faith in Man. But Lady Blandish knew the difference between the two. She understood why the Baronet did not speak: excused, and respected him for it. She was content, since she must love, to love humbly, and she had, besides, her pity for his sorrows to comfort her. A hundred fresh reasons for loving him arose and multiplied every day. He read to

her the secret book in his own handwriting, composed for Richard's Marriage Guide: containing Advice and Directions to a Young Husband, full of the most tender wisdom, and delicacy: so she thought: nay, not wanting in poetry, though neither rhymed nor measured. He expounded to her the distinctive character of the divers ages of Love, giving the palm to the flower she put forth, over that of Spring, or the Summer Rose. And while they sat and talked, "My wound has healed," he said. "How?" she asked. "At the fountain of your eyes," he replied, and drew the joy of new life from her blushes, without incurring further debtorship for a thing done.

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH THE HERO TAKES A STEP.

Let it be some apology for the damage caused by the careering hero, and a consolation to the quiet wretches dragged along with him at his chariot-wheels, that he is generally the last to know when he has made an actual start: such a mere creature is he, like the rest of us, albeit the head of our fates. By this you perceive the true hero, whether he be a prince or a pot-boy, that he does not plot: Fortune does all for him. He may be compared to one to whom, in an electric circle, it is given to carry the *battery*. We caper and grimace at his will: yet not his the will, not his the power. 'Tis all Fortune's, whose puppet he is. She deals her dispensations through him. Yea, though our capers be never so comical, he laughs not. Intent upon his own business, the true hero asks little services of us here and there;

thinks it quite natural that they should be acceded to, and sees nothing ridiculous in the lamentable contortions we must go through to fulfil them. Probably he is the elect of Fortune, because of that notable faculty of being intent upon his own business: 'Which is,' says the PILGRIM'S SCRIP, 'with men to be valued equal to that force which in water *makes a stream.*' This prelude was necessary to the present chapter of Richard's history.

It happened that in the turn of the year, and while old Earth was busy with her flowers, the fresh wind blew, the little bird sang, and Hippias Feverel, the Dyspepsy, amazed, felt the Spring move within him. He communicated his delightful new sensations to the Baronet, his brother, whose constant exclamation with regard to him, was: "Poor Hippias! All his machinery is bare!" and had no hope that he would ever be in a condition to defend it from view. Nevertheless Hippias had that hope, and so he told his brother, making great exposure of his machinery to effect the explanation. He spoke of all his physical experiences exultingly, and with wonder.

The achievement of common efforts, not usually blazoned, he celebrated as mighty triumphs, and, of course, had Adrian on his back very quickly. But he could bear him, or anything, now. It was such ineffable relief to find himself looking out upon the world of mortals instead of into the black phantasmal abysses of his own complicated frightful structure. "My mind doesn't so much seem to haunt itself, now," said Hippias, nodding shortly and peering out of intense puckers to convey a glimpse of what hellish sufferings his had been: "I feel as if I had come above-ground."

A poor Dyspepsy may talk as he will, but he is the one who never gets sympathy, or experiences compassion: and it is he whose groaning petitions for charity do at last rout that Christian virtue. Lady Blandish, a charitable soul, could not listen to Hippias, though she had a heart for little mice and flies, and Sir Austin had also small patience with his brother's gleam of health, which was just enough to make his disease visible. He remembered his early follies and excesses, and bent his ear to him as one man does to another who complains of having to pay a debt legally incurred.

"I think," said Adrian, seeing how the communications of Hippias were received, "that when our Nemesis takes lodgings in the stomach, it's best to act the Spartan: smile hard, and be silent."

"Exactly," replied the Baronet. "Mankind has some instinctive disgust for the victims of their appetites. We pity any other functional derangement than that."

Richard alone was decently kind to Hippias; whether from opposition, or real affection, could not be said, as the young man was mysterious. He advised his uncle to take exercise, walked with him, cultivated cheerful impressions in him, and pointed out innocent pursuits. He made Hippias visit with him some of the poor old folks of the village, who bewailed the loss of his cousin, Austin Wentworth, and did his best to waken him up, and give the outer world a stronger hold on him. He succeeded in nothing but in winning his Uncle's gratitude. The Season bloomed scarce longer than a week for Hippias, and then began to languish. The poor Dyspepsy's eager grasp at beatification relaxed: he went underground again. He announced that he

felt "spongy things"—one of the more constant miseries of his malady. His bitter face recurred. He chewed the cud of horrid hallucinations. He told Richard he must give up going about with him: people telling of their ailments made him so uncomfortable—the birds were so noisy, pairing—the rude bare soil sickened him.

"Besides," said Hippias, "it's singular, but at this time of the year, Richard, I always have the same idea. I can't go out and see a garden without thinking I ought to be upside down, and have the bulbous part underneath me, like those—what do you call those flowers?—yes, like those crocuses. And you can't imagine how distressing it really is when you think those things in earnest."

Richard treated him with a gravity equal to his father's. He asked what the Doctors said.

"Oh! the Doctors!" cried Hippias with vehement scepticism. "No man of sense believes in medicine for chronic disorder. Do you happen to have heard of any new remedy then, Richard? No? They advertise a great many

cures for Indigestion, I assure you, my dear boy. I wonder whether one can rely upon the authenticity of those signatures? I see no reason why there should be *no* cure for such a disease?—Eh? And it's just one of the things a quack, as they call them, would hit upon sooner than one who is in the beaten track. Do you know, Richard, my dear boy, I've often thought that if we could by any means appropriate to our use some of the extraordinary digestive power that a Boa Constrictor has in his gastric juices, there is really no manner of reason why we should not comfortably dispose of as much of an ox as our stomachs will hold, and one might eat French dishes without the wretchedness of thinking what's to follow. And this makes me think that those fellows *may*, after all, have got some truth in them; some prodigious secret that, of course, they require to be paid for. We distrust each other in this world too much, Richard. I've felt inclined once or twice—but it's absurd!—If it only alleviated a few of my sufferings *I* should be satisfied. I've no hesitation in saying that I should be quite satisfied if it only did away with one or two, and left me free to eat

and drink as other people do. Not that I mean to try them. It's only a fancy—Eh? What a thing health is, my dear boy! Ah! if I were like you! I was in love once!"

"Were you!" said Richard coolly regarding him.

"I've forgotten what I felt!" Hippias sighed. "You've very much improved, my dear boy."

"So people say," quoth Richard.

Hippias looked at him anxiously: "If I go to town and get the Doctor's opinion about trying a new course—Eh, Richard? will you come with me? I should like your company. We could see London together, you know. Enjoy ourselves," and Hippias rubbed his hands.

Richard smiled at the feeble glimmer of enjoyment promised by his Uncle's eyes, and said he thought it better they should stay where they were,—an answer that might mean anything. Hippias immediately became possessed by the beguiling project. He went to the Baronet, and put the matter before him, instancing Doctors as the object of his journey, not quacks, of course; and requesting leave to take Richard. Sir Austin was getting uneasy about his son's

manner. It was not natural. His heart seemed to be frozen: he had no confidences: he appeared to have no ambition—to have lost the virtues of youth with the poison that had passed out of him. He was disposed to try what effect a little travelling might have on him, and had himself once or twice hinted to Richard that it would be good for him to move about; the young man quietly replying that he did not wish to quit Raynham at all; which was too strict a fulfilment of his father's original views in educating him there entirely. On the day that Hippias made his proposal, Adrian, seconded by Lady Blandish, also made one. The sweet Spring season stirred in Adrian as well as in others: not to pastoral measures: to the joys of the Operatic world and bravura glories. He also suggested that it would be advisable to carry Richard to town for a term, and let him know his position, and some freedom. Sir Austin weighed the two proposals. He was pretty certain that Richard's passion was consumed, and that he was now only under the burden of its ashes. He had found against his heart, at the Bellingham Inn, a great lock of golden hair.

He had taken it, and the lover, after feeling about for it with faint hands, never asked for it. This precious lock (Miss Davenport had thrust it into his hand at Belthorpe as Lucy's last gift), what sighs and tears it had weathered! The Baronet laid it in Richard's sight one day, and beheld him take it up, turn it over, and drop it down again, calmly as if he were handling any common curiosity. It pacified him on that score. The young man's love was dead. Dr. Clifford said right: he wanted distractions. The Baronet determined that Richard should go. Hippias and Adrian then pressed their several suits as to which should have him. Hippias, when he could forget himself, did not lack sense. He observed that Adrian was not at present a proper companion for Richard, and would teach him to look on life from the false point.

"You don't understand a young philosopher," said the Baronet.

"A young philosopher's an old fool!" returned Hippias, not thinking that his growl had begotten a phrase.

His brother smiled with gratification, and applauded him loudly: "Excellent! worthy of

your best days! That is as good a thing as I have heard, Hippias. You're wrong, though, in applying it to Adrian. He has never been precocious. All he has done has been to bring sound common sense to bear upon what he hears and sees. I think, however," the Baronet added, "he may want faith in the better qualities of men." And this reflection inclined him not to let his son be alone with Adrian. He gave Richard his choice, who saw which way his father's wishes tended, and decided so to please him. Naturally it annoyed Adrian extremely. He said to his chief:

"I suppose you know what you are doing, Sir. I don't see that we derive any advantage from the family name being made notorious for twenty years of obscene suffering, and becoming a by-word for our constitutional tendency to stomachic distension before we fortunately encountered O'Quackem's Pill. My Uncle's tortures have been huge, but I would rather society were not intimate with them under their several headings." Adrian enumerated some of the most abhorrent. "You know him, Sir. If he conceives a duty, he will do it in the face of every

decency,—all the more obstinate because the conception is rare. If he feels a little brisk the morning after the Pill, he sends the letter that makes us famous! We go down to posterity with heightened characteristics, to say nothing of a contemporary celebrity nothing less than our being turned inside-out to the rabble. I confess I don't desire to have my machinery made bare to them."

Sir Austin assured the Wise Youth that Hippias had arranged to go to Dr. Bairam. He softened Adrian's chagrin by telling him, that in about two weeks they would follow to London; hinting also at a prospective Summer campaign. The day was fixed for Richard to depart, and the day came. Madam The Eighteenth Century called him to her chamber and put into his hand a fifty-pound note, as her contribution towards his pocket expenses. He did not want it, he said, but she told him he was a young man, and would soon make that fly when he stood on his own feet. The old lady did not at all approve of the System in her heart, and she gave her grand-nephew to understand that, should he require more, he knew where to apply, and secrets would be kept. His father

presented him with a hundred pounds, which also Richard said he did not want—he did not care for money. "Spend it or not," said the Baronet, perfectly secure in him. All he desired of him was, to go and see the Grandisons, and give his love to little Carola.

"I wonder how my cabbage-rose is looking," Richard remarked. "She was disappointed at not seeing me when she came, wasn't she, Sir?"

"Well, she cried about you," said the Baronet, content to hear his son add: "Poor little thing!" however coldly.

Hippias had few injunctions to observe, beyond that of going to the Grandisons. They were to take up quarters at the hotel, Algernon's general run of company at the house not being altogether wholesome. The Baronet particularly forewarned Hippias of the imprudence of attempting to restrict the young man's movements, and letting him imagine he was under surveillance. Richard having been, as it were, pollarded by Despotism, was now to grow up straight, and bloom again, in complete independence, as far as he could feel. So did this Sage decree: and we may pause

a moment to reflect how wise were his previsions, and how successful they must have been, had not Fortune, the great foe to human cleverness, turned against him.

The departure took place on a fine March morning. The bird of Winter sang from the budding tree; in the blue sky sang the bird of Summer. Adrian rode between Richard and Hippias to the Bellingham station, and vented his disgust on them after his own humorous fashion, because it did not rain and damp their ardour. In the rear came Lady Blandish, and the Baronet, conversing on the calm summit of Success.

"You have shaped him exactly to resemble yourself," she said, pointing with her riding-whip to the grave stately figure of the young man.

"Outwardly, perhaps!" he answered, and led to a discussion on Purity, and Strength, the lady saying that she preferred Purity.

"But you do not," said the Baronet. "And there I admire the always true instinct of woman, that they *all* worship Strength in whatever form, and seem to know it to be the child of Heaven; whereas Purity is but a characteristic,

a garment, and can be spotted—how soon! For there are questions in this life with which we must grapple, or be lost; and when, hunted by that cold eye of intense inner-consciousness, the clearest soul becomes a cunning fox, if it have not courage to stand and do battle. Strength indicates a boundless nature—liker the Maker. Strength is a God to you: Purity a toy. A pretty one, and you seem to be fond of playing with it," he added with unaccustomed slyness.

The lady listened pleased at the sportive malice which showed that the constraint on his mind had left him. It was for women to fight their fight now: she only took part in it for amusement. This is how the ranks of our enemies are thinned: no sooner do poor women put up a champion in their midst than she betrays them.

"I see," she said archly, "we are the lovelier vessels: you claim the more direct descent. Men are seedlings: Women—slips!—Nay, you have said so," she cried out at his gestured protestation, laughing.

"But I never printed it."

"Oh! what you speak answers for print with me."

Exquisite Blandish! He could not choose but love her.

"Tell me, what are your plans?" she asked. "May a woman know?"

He replied: "I have none, or you would share them." No longer the old watchful nervous air about him, as of one who dared not sleep upon advantage. "I shall study him in the world. This indifference must wear off. I shall mark his inclinations now, and he shall be what he inclines to. Occupation will be his prime safety. That, and the feeling of guardianship to this child. His cousin Austin's plan of life appears most to his taste, and he can serve the people that way as well as in Parliament, should he have no stronger ambition. The clear duty of a man of any wealth is to serve the people as he best can. He shall go among Austin's set, if he wishes it, though personally I find no pleasure in rash imaginations, and undigested schemes built upon the mere instinct of principles."

"Look at him now," said the lady. "He seems to care for nothing; not even for the beauty of the day."

"Or Adrian's jokes," added the Baronet.

Adrian could be seen to be trying zealously to torment a laugh, or a confession of irritation, out of his hearers, stretching out his chin to one, and to the other, with audible Asides. Richard he treated as a new instrument of destruction about to be let loose on the slumbering Metropolis; Hippias as one in an interesting condition: and he got so much fun out of the notion of these two journeying together, and the mishaps that might occur to them, that he esteemed it almost a personal insult for his hearers not to laugh. The Wise Youth's dull life at Raynham had afflicted him with many peculiarities of the professional joker.

"Oh! the Spring! the Spring!" he cried, as in scorn of his sallies they exchanged their unmeaning remarks on the sweet weather across him. "You seem both to be uncommonly excited by the operations of turtles, rooks, and daws. Why can't you let them alone?

"Wind bloweth,
Cock croweth,
Doodle-doo:
Hippy verteth,
Ricky sterteth,
Sing Cuckoo!

"There's an old native pastoral!—Why don't you write a Spring sonnet, Ricky? The asparagus-beds are full of promise, I hear, and eke the strawberry. No lack of inspiration for you. Berries I fancy your Pegasus has a taste for. What kind of berry was that I saw some verses of yours about once?—amatory verses to some kind of berry—yewberry, blueberry, glueberry! I can't remember rightly. Pretty verses, though decidedly warm. Lips, eyes, bosom, legs—legs? I don't think you gave her any legs. No legs and no nose. That appears to be the poetic taste of the day. It shall be admitted that you create the very beauties for a chaste people.

'O might I lie where leans her lute!'

and offend no moral community. "I say, that's not a bad image of yours, my dear boy:

"'Her shape is like an antelope
Upon the Eastern hills.'

"But as a candid critic, I would ask you if the likeness can be considered correct when she has no legs? But you will see at the Ballet, that you are quite in error about women at present, Richard. That admirable institution which our venerable elders have imported from Gallia

for the instruction of our gaping youth, will edify, and astonish you. I assure you I used, from reading the PILGRIM'S SCRIP, to imagine all sorts of things about them, till I was taken there, and learnt that they are very like us after all, and then they ceased to trouble me. Mystery is the great danger to youth, my son! Mystery is woman's redoubtable weapon, O Richard of the Ordeal! I'm aware that you've had your lessons in Anatomy, but nothing will persuade you that an anatomical figure means flesh and blood. You can't realize the fact. Do you intend to publish when you're in town? It'll be better not to put your name. Having one's name to a Volume of Poems is as bad as to an advertising Pill. My uncle, I dread, is madly bent upon returning thanks publicly for the Pill, so you must be content to let Ignotus wear your laurels, or the critics will confound you together. 'Notwithstanding the deplorable state of this gentleman's stomach,' they will say, 'the Muse and Cupid have taken so strong a hold on him, that he is evidently one of those who, to avoid more punishable transgressions, must commit verse, and we prefer to attribute any shortcom-

ings which it may be our duty to indicate, rather to the utter distraction of his internal economy than to a want of natural propensity.' "

"I will send you an early copy, Adrian, when I publish," quoth Richard. "Hark at that old blackbird, Uncle."

"Yes!" Hippias quavered, looking up from the usual subject of his contemplation, and trying to take an interest in him, "fine old fellow!"

"What a chuckle he gives out before he flies! Not unlike July nightingales. You know that bird I told you of—the blackbird that had its mate shot, and used to come to sing to old dame Bakewell's bird from the tree opposite. A rascal knocked it over the day before yesterday, and the dame says her bird hasn't sung a note since."

"Extraordinary!" Hippias muttered abstractedly. "I remember the verses."

"But where's your moral?" interposed the wrathful Adrian. "Where's Constancy Rewarded?

"The ouzel-cock so black of hue,
With orange-tawny bill;
The rascal with his aim so true;
The Poet's little quill!

"Where's the moral of that? except that all's game to the poet! Certainly we have a noble example of the devotedness of the female, who for three entire days refuses to make herself heard, on account of a defunct male. I suppose that's what Ricky dwells on."

"As you please, my dear Adrian," says Richard, and points out larch-buds to his Uncle, as they ride by the young green wood.

The Wise Youth was driven to extremity. Such a lapse from his pupil's heroics to this last verge of Arcadian coolness, Adrian could not believe in. "Hark at this old blackbird!" he cried, in his turn, and pretending to interpret his fits of song:

"O what a pretty comedy!—Don't we wear the mask well, my Fiesco?—Genoa will be our own tomorrow!—Only wait until the train has started—jolly! jolly! jolly! We'll be winners yet!

"Not a bad verse—eh, Ricky? my Lucius Junius!"

"You do the blackbird well," said Richard, and looked at him in a manner mildly affable.

Adrian shrugged. "You're a young man of wonderful powers," he emphatically observed;

meaning to say that Richard quite beat him: for which opinion Richard gravely thanked him, and with this they rode into Bellingham.

There was young Tom Blaize at the station, in his Sunday beaver and gala waistcoat and neckcloth, coming the lord over Tom Bakewell, who had preceded his master in charge of the baggage. He likewise was bound for London. Richard, as he was dismounting, heard Adrian say to the Baronet: "The Beast, Sir, appears to be going to fetch Beauty;" but he paid no heed to the words. Whether young Tom heard them or not, Adrian's look took the lord out of him, and he shrunk away into obscurity, where the nearest approach to the Fashions which the tailors of Bellingham could supply to him, sat upon him more easily, and was not unaccountably stiffened by the eyes of the superiors whom he sought to rival. The Baronet, Lady Blandish, and Adrian, remained on horseback, and received Richard's adieux across the palings. He shook hands with each of them in the same kindly cold way, eliciting from Adrian a marked encomium on his style of doing it. The train came up, and Richard stepped after his uncle into one of the carriages.

Now surely there will come an Age when the presentation of Science at war with Fortune and the Fates, will be deemed the true Epic of modern life; and the aspect of a Scientific Humanist who, by dint of incessant watchfulness, has maintained a System against those active forces, cannot be reckoned less than sublime, even though at the moment he but sit upon his horse, on a fine March morning such as this, and smile wistfully to behold the son of his heart, his System incarnate, wave a serene adieu to tutelage, neither too eager nor morbidly unwilling to try his luck alone for a term of two weeks. At present, I am aware, an audience impatient for Blood and Glory scorns the stress I am putting on incidents so minute, a picture so little imposing. One will come to whom it will be given to see the elementary machinery at work: who, as it were, from some slight hint of the straws, will feel the winds of March when they do not blow. To them will nothing be trivial, seeing that they will have in their eyes the invisible conflict going on around us, whose features a nod, a smile, a laugh, of ours perpetually changes. And they will perceive, moreover, that in real life all

hangs together: the train is laid in the lifting of an eyebrow, that bursts upon the field of thousands. They will see the links of things as they pass, and wonder not, as foolish people now do, that this great matter came out of that small one.

Such an audience, then, will participate in the Baronet's gratification at his son's demeanour, wherein he noted the calm bearing of Experience not gained in the usual wanton way: and will not be without some excited apprehension at his twinge of astonishment, when, just as the train went sliding into swiftness, he beheld the grave, cold, self-possessed, young man throw himself back in the carriage violently laughing. Science was at a loss to account for it. Sir Austin checked his mind from inquiring, that he might keep suspicion at a distance, but he thought it odd, and the jarring sensation that ran along his nerves at the sight, remained with him as he rode home.

Lady Blandish's tender womanly intuition bade her say: "You see, it was the very thing he wanted. He has got his natural spirits already."

"It was," Adrian put in his word, "the exact thing he wanted. His spirits have returned miraculously."

"Something amused him," said the Baronet, with an eye on the puffing train.

"Probably something his Uncle said or did," Lady Blandish suggested, and led off at a gallop.

Her conjecture chanced to be quite correct. The cause for Richard's laughter was simple enough. Hippias, on finding the carriage-door closed on him, became all at once aware of the bright-haired Hope who dwells in Change, for one who does not woo her too frequently; and to express his sudden relief from mental despondency at the amorous prospect, the Dyspepsy bent and gave his hands a sharp rub between his legs: which unlucky action brought Adrian's pastoral,

'Hippy verteth,
Sing cuckoo!'

in such comic colours before Richard, that a demon of laughter seized him.

'Hippy verteth!'

Every time he glanced at his Uncle the song sprang up, and he laughed so immoderately that it looked like madness come upon him.

"Why, why, why, what are you laughing at, my dear boy," said Hippias, and was provoked by the contagious exercise to a modest "ha! ha!"

"Why, what are *you* laughing at, Uncle?" cried Richard.

"I really don't know," Hippias chuckled.

"Nor I, Uncle! Sing, Cuckoo!"

They laughed themselves into the pleasantest mood imaginable. Hippias not only came aboveground, he flew about in the very skies, *verting* like any blithe creature of the season. He remembered old legal jokes, and anecdotes of Circuit; and Richard laughed at them all, but more at him—he was so genial, and childishly fresh, and innocently joyful at his own transformation, while a lurking doubt in the bottom of his eye now and then, that it might not last, and that he must go underground again, lent him a look of pathos and humour which tickled his youthful companion irresistibly, and made his heart warm to him.

"I tell you what, Uncle," said Richard. "I think travelling 's a capital thing."

"The best thing in the world, my dear boy," Hippias returned. "It makes me wish I had

given up that Work of mine, and tried it before, instead of chaining myself to a task. We 're quite different beings in a minute. I am. Hem! What shall we have for dinner?"

"Leave that to me, Uncle. I shall order for you. You know, I intend to make you well.— How gloriously we go along! I should like to ride in a Railway every day."

Hippias assumed a mysterious sadness, and remarked:—

"They say, I've heard, Richard, that it rather injures the digestion."

"Nonsense! see how you 'll digest tonight, and write tomorrow."

"Perhaps I shall do something yet!" sighed Hippias, alluding to the vast literary fame he had aforetime dreamed: "I hope I shall have a good night tonight."

"Of course you will! What! after laughing like that?"

"Ugh!" Hippias grunted, "I dare say, Richard, you sleep the moment you get into bed!"

"The instant my head 's on my pillow, and up the moment I wake. Health 's everything!"

"Health 's everything!" echoed Hippias, from an immense distance.

"And if you 'll put yourself in my hands," Richard continued, "you shall do just as I do. You shall be well and strong, and sing 'Jolly!' like Adrian's blackbird. You shall, upon my honour, Uncle!"

He specified the hours of devotion to his Uncle's recovery—no less than twelve a day—that he intended to expend, and his cheery robustness almost won his Uncle to leap up recklessly and clutch Health as his own.

"Mind," quoth Hippias, with a half-seduced smile, "mind your dishes are not too savoury!"

"Light food, and claret! Regular meals, and amusement! Lend your heart to all, but give it to none!" exclaims Young Wisdom, and Hippias mutters, "Yes! yes!" and intimates that the origin of his malady lay in his not following that maxim earlier.

"Love ruins us, my dear boy," he said, thinking to preach Richard a lesson, and Richard boisterously broke out:

"The love of Monsieur Francatelli,
It was the ruin of—*et cætera!*"

Hippias blinked, exclaiming: "Really, my dear boy! I never saw you so excited."

"It 's the Railway! It 's the fun, Uncle!"

"Ah!" Hippias wagged a melancholy head, "you 've got the Golden Bride! Keep her if you can. That 's a pretty fable of your father's. I gave him the idea, though. Austin filches a great many of my ideas!"

"Here 's the idea in verse, Uncle.

"'O sunless walkers by the tide!
O have you seen the Golden Bride?
They say that she is fair beyond
All women; faithful, and more fond!'

"You know, the young inquirer comes to a group of penitent sinners by the brink of a stream. They howl, and answer:

"'Faithful she is, but she forsakes:
And fond, yet endless woe she makes:
And fair! but with this curse she 's cross'd:
To know her not till she is lost!'

"Then the doleful party march off in single file solemnly, and the fabulist pursues:

"'She hath a palace in the West:
Bright Hesper lights her to her rest:
And him the Morning-Star awakes
Whom to her charmëd arms she takes.

"'So lives he till he sees, alas!
The maids of baser metal pass:'

"And prodigal of the happiness she lends him, he asks to share it with one of them. There is the Silver Maid, and the Copper, and the Brassy, Maid, and others of them. First, you know, he tries Argentine, and finds her only twenty to the pound, and has a worse experience with Copperina, till he descends to the scullery; and the lower he goes, the less obscure become the features of his Bride of Gold, and all her radiance shines forth, my Uncle!"

"Verse rather blunts the point.—Well, keep to her, now you've got her," says Hippias.

"We will, Uncle! Look how the farms fly past! Look at the cattle in the fields! And how the lines duck, and swim up!

"'She claims the whole, and not the part—
The coin of an unusëd heart!
To gain his Golden Bride again,
He hunts with melancholy men,'

—"and is waked no longer by the Morning-star!"

"Not if he doesn't sleep till an hour before it rises!" Hippias interjected. "You don't rhyme

badly. But stick to Prose. Poetry's a Base-metal-maid. I'm not sure that any writing's good for the digestion. I'm almost afraid it has spoilt mine." Hippias did look doubtful.

"Fear nothing, Uncle!" laughed Richard. "You shall ride in the park with me every day to get an appetite. You, and I, and little Carola—a splendid little girl. I shall call her my Golden Bride. You know that little poem of Sandoe's?

"'She rides in the park on a prancing bay,
She and her squires together:
Her dark locks gleam from a bonnet of gray,
And toss with the tossing feather.

"'Too calmly proud for a glance of pride
Is the beautiful face as it passes:
The cockneys nod to each other aside,
The coxcombs lift their glasses.

"'And throng to her, sigh to her, you that can breach
The ice-wall that guards her securely:
You have not such bliss, though she smile on you each,
As the heart that can image her purely.'

"Wasn't Sandoe once a friend of my father's? I suppose they quarrelled. He understands the heart. What does he make his 'Humble Lover' say?

"'True, Madam, you may think to part
Conditions by a glacier-ridge,
But Beauty's for the largest heart,
And all abysses Love can bridge!"

Hippias now laughed; grimly, as men laugh at the emptiness of words.

"Largest heart!" he sneered. "What's a glacier-ridge?' I've never seen one. I can't deny it rhymes with 'bridge.' But don't go parading your admiration of that person, Richard. Your father will speak to you on the subject when he thinks fit."

"I thought they had quarrelled," said Richard. "What a pity!" and he murmured to a pleased ear:

"'Beauty's for the largest heart!'"

The flow of their conversation was interrupted by the entrance of passengers at a station. Richard examined their faces with pleasure. All faces pleased him. Human nature sat tributary at the feet of him and his Golden Bride. As he could not well talk his thoughts before them, he looked out at the windows, and enjoyed the changing landscape, projecting all sorts of delights for his old friend Ripton, and little Carola, and musing

hazily on the wondrous things he was to do in the world; of the great service he was to be of to his fellow-creatures. In the midst of his reveries he was landed in London. Tom Bakewell stood at the carriage-door. A glance told Richard that his squire had something curious on his mind, and he gave Tom the word to speak out. Tom edged his master out of hearing, and began sputtering a laugh.

"Dash'd if I can help it, Sir!" he said. "That young Tom! He 've come to Town dressed that spicy! and he dunnow his way about no more than a stag. He' s come to fetch somebody from another Rail, and he dunnow how to get there, and he ain't sure about which Rail 'tis. Look at 'un, Mr. Richard! There he goes."

Young Tom appeared to have all London on his beaver.

"Who has he come for?" Richard asked.

"Don't you know, Sir? You don't like me to mention the name," mumbled Tom, bursting to be perfectly intelligible.

"Is it for her, Tom?"

"Miss Lucy, Sir."

Richard turned away, and was seized by Hip-

pias, who begged him to get out of the noise and pother, and caught hold of his slack arm to bear him into a conveyance; but Richard, by wheeling half to the right, or left, always got his face round to the point where young Tom was manœuvring to appear at his ease. Even when they were seated in the conveyance, Hippias could not persuade him to drive off. He made the excuse that he did not wish to start till there was a clear road. At last young Tom cast anchor by a policeman, and, doubtless at the official's suggestion, bashfully took seat in a cab, and was shot into the whirlpool of London. Richard then angrily asked his driver what he was waiting for.

"Are you ill, my boy?" said Hippias. "Where's your colour."

He laughed oddly, and made a random answer that he hoped the fellow would drive fast.

"I hate this slow motion after being in the Railway," he said.

Hippias assured him there was something the matter with him.

"Nothing, Uncle! nothing!" said Richard, looking fiercely candid.

They say, that when the skill and care of men rescue a drowned wretch from extinction, and warm the flickering spirit into steady flame, such pain it is, the blood forcing its way along the dry channels, and the heavily-ticking nerves, and the sullen heart—the struggle of Life and Death in him—grim Death relaxing his gripe: such pain it is, he cries out no thanks to them that pull him by inches from the depths of the dead River. And he who has thought a love extinct, and is surprised by the old fires, and the old tyranny, he rebels, and strives to fight clear of the cloud of forgotten sensations that settle on him: such pain it is, the old sweet music reviving through his frame, and the charm of his passion fixing him afresh. Still was fair Lucy the One woman to Richard. He had forbidden her name but from an instinct of self-defence. Must the maids of baser metal dominate him anew, it is in Lucy's shape. Thinking of her now so near him—his darling! all her graces, her sweetness, her truth—for, despite his bitter blame of her, he knew her true—swam in a thousand visions before his eyes: visions pathetic, and full of glory, that now wrung his

heart, and now elated it. As well might a ship attempt to calm the sea, as this young man the violent emotion that began to rage in his breast. "I shall not see her!" he said to himself exultingly, and at the same instant thought, how black was every corner of the earth but that one spot where Lucy stood! how utterly cheerless the place he was going to! Then he determined to bear it; to live in darkness: there was a refuge in the idea of a voluntary martyrdom. "For if I chose I could see her—this day—within an hour!—I could see her, and touch her hand, and, oh, Heaven!—But I do not choose." And a great wave swelled through him, and was crushed down only to swell again more stormily.

Then Tom Bakewell's words recurred to him, that young Tom Blaize was uncertain where to go for her, and that she might be thrown on this Babylon alone. And flying from point to point, it struck him that they had known at Raynham of her return, and had sent him to Town to be out of the way,—they had been miserably plotting against him once more. "They shall see what right they have to fear me. I'll shame them!" was the first turn taken by his wrathful

feelings, as he resolved to go, and see her safe, and calmly return to his Uncle, whom he sincerely believed not to be one of the conspirators. Nevertheless, after forming that resolve, he sat still, as if there were something fatal in the wheels that bore him away from it—perhaps because he knew, as some do when passion is lord, that his intelligence juggled with him; though none the less keenly did he feel his wrongs and suspicions. His Golden Bride was waning fast. But when Hippias ejaculated to cheer him: "We shall soon be there!" the spell broke. Richard stopped the cab, saying he wanted to speak to Tom, and would ride with him the rest of the journey. He knew well enough which line of railway his Lucy must come by. He had studied every town and station on the line. Before his Uncle could express more than a mute remonstrance, he jumped out and hailed Tom Bakewell, who came behind with the boxes and baggage in a companion cab, his head a yard beyond the window to make sure of his ark of safety, the vehicle preceding.

"What an extraordinary, impetuous boy it is!" said Hippias. "We 're in the very street!"

Within a minute, the stalwart Berry, despatched by the Baronet to arrange everything for their comfort, had opened the door, and made his bow.

"Mr. Richard, Sir?—evaporated?" was Berry's modulated inquiry.

"Behind—among the boxes, fool!" Hippias growled, as he received Berry's muscular assistance to alight. "Lunch ready—eh?"

"Luncheon was ordered precise at two o'clock, Sir—been in attendance one quarter of an hour. —Heah!" Berry sang out to the second cab, which, with its pyramid of luggage, remained stationary some thirty paces distant. At his voice the majestic pile deliberately turned its back on them, and went off in a contrary direction.

CHAPTER XI.

RECORDS THE RAPID DEVELOPMENT OF THE HERO.

On the stroke of the hour when Ripton Thompson was accustomed to consult his gold-watch for practical purposes, and sniff freedom and the forthcoming dinner, a burglarious foot entered the clerk's office where he sat, and a man of a scowling countenance, who looked a villain, and whom he was afraid he knew, slid a letter into his hands, nodding that it would be prudent for him to read, and be silent. Ripton obeyed in alarm. Apparently the contents of the letter relieved his conscience; for he reached down his hat, and told Mr. Beazley to inform his father that he had business of pressing importance in the West, and should meet him at the station. Mr. Beazley zealously waited upon the paternal Thompson without delay, and together making

their observations from the window, they beheld a cab of many boxes, into which Ripton darted and was followed by one in groom's dress. It was Saturday, the day when Ripton gave up his Law-readings, magnanimously to bestow himself upon his family, and Mr. Thompson liked to have his son's arm as he walked down to the Station; but that third glass of port which always stood for his second, and the groom's suggestion of aristocratic acquaintances, prevented Mr. Thompson from interfering: so Ripton was permitted to depart.

In the cab Ripton made a study of the letter he held. It had the preciseness of an Imperial mandate.

"Dear Ripton,

"You are to get lodgings for a lady immediately. Not a word to a soul. Then come along with Tom.

"R. D. F."

"Lodgings for a lady!" Ripton meditated aloud: "What sort of lodgings? Where am I to get lodgings? Who's the lady?—I say!" he addressed the mysterious messenger, "so you're Tom Bakewell, are you, Tom?"

Tom grinned his identity.

"Do you remember the rick, Tom? Ha! ha! We got out of that neatly, didn't we, Tom? We might all have been transported, though. I could have convicted you, Tom! safe! It's no use coming across a practised lawyer.—Now tell me." Ripton, having flourished his powers, commenced his examination: "Who's this lady?"

"Better wait till ye see Mr. Richard, Sir." Tom resumed his scowl to reply.

"Ah!" Ripton acquiesced. "Is she young, Tom?"

Tom said she was not old.

"Handsome, Tom?"

Some might think one thing, some another, Tom said.

"And where does she come from, now?" asked Ripton, with the friendly cheerfulness of a baffled counsel.

"Comes from the coontry, Sir."

"A friend of the family, I suppose? a relation?"

Ripton left this insinuating query to be answered by a look. Tom's face was a dead blank.

"Ah!" Ripton took a breath, and eyed the

mask opposite him. "Why, you're quite a scholar, Tom! Mr. Richard is quite well? Father's quite well? All right at home?—eh, Tom?"

"Come to Town this mornin' with his Uncle," said Tom. "All quite well, thank'ee, Sir."

"Ha!" cried Ripton, more than ever puzzled, "now I see. You all came to Town today, and these are your boxes outside. So, so! But Mr. Richard writes for me to get lodgings for a lady. There must be some mistake—he wrote in a hurry. He wants lodgings for you all—eh?"

"'M sure *I* d'n know what he wants," said Tom. "You'd better go by the letter, Sir."

Ripton re-consulted that document. "'Lodgings for a lady, and then come along with Tom. Not a word to a soul.' I say! that looks like—But he never cared for *them*. You don't mean to say, Tom, he's been running away with anybody?"

Tom fell back upon his first reply: "Better wait till ye see Mr. Richard, Sir," and Ripton exclaimed: "Hanged if you ain't the tightest witness I ever saw! I shouldn't like to have you in a box. Some of you country fellows beat any number of cockneys. You do!"

Tom received the compliment stubbornly on his guard, and Ripton, as nothing was to be got out of him, set about considering how to perform his friend's injunctions; deciding firstly, that a lady fresh from the country ought to lodge near the parks, in which direction he told the cabman to drive. Thus, unaware of his high destiny, Ripton joined the hero, and accepted his character in the New Comedy.

It is, nevertheless, true that certain favoured people do have beneficent omens to prepare them for their parts, when the Hero is in full career, so that they really may be nerved to meet him; ay, and to check him in his course, had they that signal courage. For instance, Mrs. Elizabeth Berry, a ripe and wholesome landlady of advertised Lodgings, on the borders of Kensington, noted, as she sat rocking her contemplative person before the parlour fire this very March afternoon, a supernatural tendency in that fire to burn *all on one side:* which signifies that a Wedding approaches the house. Why—who shall say? Omens are as impassible as Heroes. It may be because in these affairs the fire is thought to be all on one side. Enough that the

omen exists, and spoke its solemn warning to the devout woman. Mrs. Berry, in her circle, was known as a certificated lecturer against the snares of Matrimony. Still that was no reason why she should not like a Wedding. Expectant, therefore, she watched the one glowing cheek of Hymen, and with pleasing tremors beheld a cab of many boxes draw up by her bit of garden, and a gentleman emerge from it in the act of consulting an Advertisement-paper. The gentleman required lodgings for a lady. Lodgings for a lady Mrs. Berry could produce, and a very roseate smile for a gentleman; so much so that Ripton forgot to ask about the terms; which made the landlady in Mrs. Berry leap up to embrace him as the happy man. But her experienced woman's eye checked her enthusiasm. He had not the air of a bridegroom: he did not seem to have a weight on his chest, or an itch to twiddle everything with his fingers. At any rate, he was not the bridegroom for whom Omens fly abroad. Promising to have all ready for the lady within an hour, Mrs. Berry fortified him with her card, curtsied him back to his cab, and floated him off on her smiles.

The remarkable vehicle which had woven this thread of intrigue through London streets, now proceeded sedately to finish its operations. Ripton was landed at an hotel in Westminster. Ere he was halfway up the stairs, a door opened, and his old comrade in adventure rushed down. Richard allowed no time for salutations. "Have you done it?" was all he asked. For answer Ripton handed him Mrs. Berry's card. Richard took it, and left him standing there. Five minutes elapsed, and then Ripton heard the gracious rustle of feminine garments above. Richard came a little in advance, leading and half-supporting a figure in a black-silk mantle and small black-straw bonnet: young—that was certain, though she held her veil so close he could hardly catch the outlines of her face: girlishly slender, and sweet and simple in appearance. The hush that came with her, and her soft manner of moving, stirred the silly youth to some of those ardours that awake the Knight of Dames in our bosoms. He felt that he would have given considerable sums for her to lift her veil. He could see that she was trembling—perhaps weeping. It was the master of her fates she clung to.

They passed him without speaking. As she went by, her head passively bent, Ripton had a glimpse of noble tresses and a lovely neck: great golden curls hung loosely behind, pouring from under her bonnet. She looked a captive borne to the sacrifice. What Ripton, after a sight of those curls, would have given for her just to lift her veil an instant and strike him blind with beauty, was, fortunately for his exchequer, never demanded of him. And he had absolutely been composing speeches as he came along in the cab! gallant speeches for the lady, and sly congratulatory ones for his friend, to be delivered as occasion should serve, that both might know him a man of the world, and be at their ease. He forgot the smirking immoralities he had revelled in. This was clearly serious. Ripton did not require to be told that his friend was in love and meant that life-and-death business called marriage, parents and guardians consenting or not.

Presently Richard returned to him, and said hurriedly: "I want you now to go to my uncle, at our hotel. Keep him quiet till I come. Say I had to see you—say anything. I shall be there by the dinner-hour. Rip! I must talk to you alone after dinner."

Ripton feebly attempted to reply that he was due at home. He was very curious to hear the plot of the New Comedy: and besides, there was Richard's face questioning him sternly and confidently for signs of unhesitating obedience. He finished his grimaces by asking the name and direction of the hotel. Richard pressed his hand. It is much to obtain even that recognition of our devotion from the Hero.

Tom Bakewell also received his priming, and, to judge by his chuckles and grins, rather appeared to enjoy the work cut out for him. In a few minutes they had driven to their separate destinations: Ripton was left to the unusual exercise of his fancy. Such is the nature of youth and its thirst for Romance, that only to act as a subordinate is pleasant. When one unfurls the standard of Defiance to parents and guardians, he may be sure of raising a lawless troop of adolescent ruffians, born rebels, to any amount. The beardless crew know that they have not a chance of pay: but what of that when the rosy prospect of thwarting their elders is in view? Though it is to see another eat the Forbidden Fruit, they will run all his risks with him.

Gaily Ripton took rank as lieutenant in the enterprise, and the moment his heart had sworn the oaths, he was rewarded by an exquisite sense of the charms of existence. London streets wore a sly laugh to him. He walked with a dandified heel. The generous youth ogled aristocratic carriages, and glanced intimately at the ladies, overflowingly happy. The crossing-sweepers blessed him. He hummed lively tunes, he turned over old jokes in his mouth unctuously, he hugged himself, he had a mind to dance down Piccadilly, and all because a friend of his was running away with a pretty girl, and he was in the secret!

It was only when he stood on the doorstep of Richard's hotel, that his jocund mood was a little dashed by remembering that he had then to commence the duties of his office, and must fabricate a plausible story to account for what he knew nothing about—a part that the greatest of Sages would find it difficult to perform. The young, however, whom Sages well may envy, seldom fail in lifting their inventive faculties to the level of their spirits, and two minutes of Hippias's angry complaints against the friend he serenely inquired for, gave Ripton his cue.

"We're in the very street—within a stone's-throw of the house, and he jumps like a harlequin out of my cab into another,—he must be mad—that boy's got madness in him!—and carries off all the boxes—my dinner-pills, too! and keeps away the whole of the day, though he promised to go to the Doctor, and had a dozen engagements with me," said Hippias, venting an enraged snarl to sum up his grievances.

Ripton at once told him that the Doctor was not at home.

"Why, you don't mean to say he's been to the Doctor?" Hippias cried out.

"He has called on him twice, Sir," said Ripton, expressively. "On leaving me he was going a third time. I shouldn't wonder that's what detains him—he's so determined."

By fine degrees, beyond the reach of art, Ripton ventured to grow circumstantial, saying that Richard's case was urgent and required immediate medical advice; and that both he and his father were of opinion Richard should not lose an hour in obtaining it.

"He's dreadfully alarmed about himself," said Ripton, and tapped his chest, and threw up his lips and brows.

Hippias protested he had never heard a word from his nephew of any physical affliction.

"No," groaned Ripton, "he was afraid of making you anxious."

Algernon Feverel and Richard came in while he was hammering at the Alphabet to recollect the first letter of the Doctor's name. They had met in the hall below, and were laughing heartily as they entered the room. Ripton jumped up to get the initiative.

"Have you seen the Doctor?" he asked, significantly plucking at Richard's fingers.

Richard was all abroad at the question.

"Why, the Doctor you were going to for the third time when you left me," said Ripton, in a manner not to be mistaken. "What does he say?"

Richard sought in turn the countenances of all present, and settled upon Ripton's with a ludicrous stare.

Algernon clapped him on the back. "What the deuce do you want with Doctors, boy?"

The solid thump awakened him to see matters as they were. "Oh, ay! the Doctor!" he said, smiling frankly at his lieutenant. "Why,

he tells me he'd back me to do Milo's trick in a week from the present day.—Uncle," he came forward to Hippias, "I hope you'll excuse me for running off as I did. I was in a hurry. I left something at the Railway. This stupid Rip thinks I went to the Doctor about myself. The fact was, I wanted to fetch the Doctor to see you here—so that you might have no trouble, you know. You can't bear the sight of his instruments and skeletons—I've heard you say so. You said, it set all your marrow in revolt—'fried your marrow,' I think were the words, and made you see twenty thousand different ways of sliding down to the chambers of the Grim King. Don't you remember?"

Hippias emphatically did not remember, and he did not believe the story. Irritation at the mad ravishment of his pill-box rendered him incredulous. As he had no means of confuting his nephew, all he could do safely to express his disbelief in him, was to utter petulant remarks on his powerlessness to appear at the dinner-table that day: upon which—Berry just then trumpeting dinner—Algernon seized one arm of the Dyspepsy, and Richard another, and the

laughing couple bore him into the room where dinner was laid, Ripton sniggering in the rear, the really happy man of the party.

They had fun at the dinner-table. Richard would have it; and his gaiety, his by-play, his princely superiority to truth and heroic promise of overriding all our Laws, his handsome face, the lord and possessor of Beauty that he looked, as it were a star shining on his forehead, gained the old complete mastery over Ripton, who had been, mentally at least, half patronizing him till then, because he knew more of London and life, and was aware that his friend now depended upon him almost entirely.

After a second circle of the claret, the hero caught his lieutenant's eye across the table, and said:

"We must go out and talk over that law-business, Rip, before you go. Do you think the old lady has any chance?"

"Not a bit!" said Ripton authoritatively.

"But it's worth fighting—eh, Rip?"

"Oh, certainly!" was Ripton's matured opinion.

Richard observed that Ripton's father seemed

doubtful. Ripton cited his father's habitual caution. Richard made a playful remark on the necessity of sometimes acting in opposition to fathers. Ripton agreed to it—in certain cases.

"Yes, yes! in certain cases," said Richard.

"Pretty legal morality, gentlemen!" Algernon interjected; Hippias adding: "And lay, too!"

The pair of Uncles listened further to the fictitious dialogue, well kept up on both sides, and in the end desired a statement of the old lady's garrulous case; Hippias offering to decide what her chances were in Law, and Algernon to give a common-sense judgment.

"Rip will tell you," said Richard, deferentially signalling the lawyer. "I 'm a bad hand at these matters. Tell them how it stands, Rip."

Ripton disguised his excessive uneasiness under endeavours to right his position on his chair, and, inwardly praying speed to the claret-jug to come and strengthen his wits, began with a careless aspect: "Oh, nothing! She—very curious old character! She—a—wears a wig. She—a—very curious old character indeed! She—a—quite the old style. There's no doing

anything with her!" and Ripton took a long breath to relieve himself after his elaborate fiction.

"So it appears," Hippias commented, and Algernon asked: "Well? and about her wig? Somebody stole it?" while Richard, whose features were grim with suppressed laughter, bade the narrator continue.

Ripton lunged for the claret-jug. He had got an old lady like an oppressive bundle on his brain, and he was as helpless as she was. In the pangs of ineffectual authorship, his ideas shot at her wig, and then at her one characteristic of extreme obstinacy, and tore back again at her wig, but she would not be animated. The obstinate old thing would remain a bundle. Law-studies seemed light in comparison with this tremendous task of changing an old lady from a doll to a human creature. He flung off some claret, perspired freely, and, with a mental tribute to the cleverness of those author-fellows, recommenced: "Oh, nothing! She—a—wore a wig for a long time. She—Richard knows her better than I do—an old lady—somewhere down in Suffolk. I think we had better advise her not

to proceed. The expenses of litigation are enormous! She—I think we had better advise her to stop short, and not make any scandal."

"And not make any scandal!" Algernon took him up. "Come, come! there's something more than a wig, then?"

Ripton was commanded to proceed, whether she did or no. The luckless fictionist looked straight at his pitiless leader, and blurted out dubiously: "She—there 's a daughter."

"Born with effort!" ejaculated Hippias. "Must give her pause after that! and I 'll take the opportunity to stretch my length on the sofa. Heigho! that's true what Austin says: 'The general prayer should be for a full stomach, and the individual for one that works well; for on that basis only are we a match for temporal matters, and able to contemplate eternal.' Sententious, but true. I gave him the idea, though! Take care of your stomachs, boys! and if ever you hear of a monument proposed to a scientific cook, or gastronomic doctor, send in your subscriptions. Or say to him while he lives, Go forth, and be a Knight! Ha! They have a good cook at this house. He suits me better

than ours at Raynham. I almost wish I had brought my manuscript to Town, I feel so much better. Aha! I didn't expect to digest at all without my regular incentive. I think I shall give it up.—What do you say to the theatre tonight, boys?"

Richard shouted: "Bravo, Uncle!"

"Let Mr. Thompson finish first," said Algernon. "I want to hear the conclusion of the story. The old girl has a wig, and a daughter. I 'll swear somebody runs away with one of the two! Fill your glass, Mr. Thompson, and forward!"

"So somebody does," Ripton received his impetus. "And they're found in Town together," he made a fresh jerk. "She—a—that is, the old lady—found them in company."

"She finds him with her wig on in company!" said Algernon. "Capital! Here's matter for the lawyers!"

"And you advise her not to proceed, under such circumstances of aggravation?" Hippias observed, humorously twinkling stomachic content.

"It's the daughter!" Ripton sighed, and surrendering to pressure, hurried on recklessly, "A

runaway match—beautiful girl!—the only son of a Baronet—married by special license. A—the point is," he now brightened and spoke from his own element, "the point is whether the marriage can be annulled, as she's of the Catholic persuasion and he's a Protestant, and they're both married under age. That's the point."

Having come to the point he breathed extreme relief, and saw things more distinctly; not a little amazed at his leader's horrified face.

The two elders were making various absurd inquiries, when Richard sent his chair to the floor, crying: "What a muddle you're in, Rip! You're mixing half-a-dozen stories together. The old lady I told you about was old Dame Bakewell, and the dispute was concerning a neighbour of hers who encroached on her garden, and I said I'd pay the money to see her righted!"

"Ah, to be sure!" said Ripton humbly, "I was thinking of the other. Oh, of course! Yes —She—a—her cabbages"—

"Here, come along," Richard beckoned to him savagely. "I'll be back in five minutes, Uncle," he nodded coolly to either.

The young men left the room, and put on their hats. In the hall-passage they met Berry, dressed to return to Raynham. Richard dropped a helper to the intelligence into his hand, and warned him not to gossip much of London. Berry bowed perfect discreetness.

"What on earth induced you to talk about Protestants and Catholics marrying, Rip!" said Richard, as soon as they were in the street.

"Why," Ripton answered, "I was so hard pushed for it, 'pon my honour, I didn't know what to say. I ain't an author, you know. I can't make a story. I was trying to invent a point, you know, and I couldn't think of any other, and I thought that was just the point likely to make a jolly good dispute. Capital dinners they give at those crack hotels.—Why did you throw it all upon me? I didn't begin on the old lady."

The Hero mused: "It's odd! It's impossible you could have known!—I'll tell you why, Rip! I wanted to try you. You fib well at long range, but you don't do at close quarters and single combat. You're good behind walls, but not worth a shot in the open. I just see what

you're fit for. You're staunch—that I'm certain of. You always were. Lead the way to one of the Parks—down in that direction. You know? —where she is!"

Ripton led the way. His dinner had prepared this young Englishman to defy the whole Artillery of established morals. With the muffled roar of London around them, alone in a dark slope of green, the Hero, leaning on his henchman, and speaking in a harsh clear under-tone, delivered his explanations. Doubtless the true heroic insignia and point of view will be discerned, albeit in common private's uniform.

"They've been plotting against me for a year, Rip! When you see her, you'll know what it was to have such a creature taken away from you. It nearly killed me. Never mind what she is. She's the most perfect and noble creature God ever made! It's not only her beauty —I don't care so much about that!—but when you've once seen her, she seems to draw music from all the nerves of your body—but she's such an Angel. I worship her. And her mind's like her face. She's pure gold. There—you'll see her tonight.

"Well," he pursued, after inflating Ripton with this rapturous prospect, "they got her away, and I recovered. It was Mister Adrian's work.—What's my father's objection to her? Because of her birth? She's educated: her manners are beautiful—full of refinement—quick and soft! Can they show me one of their ladies like her?—she's the daughter of a naval lieutenant!—Because she's a Catholic? What has religion to do with"—he pronounced "Love!" a little modestly—as it were a blush in his voice.

"Well, when I recovered, I thought I did not care for her. It shows how we know ourselves! And I cared for nothing. I felt as if I had no blood. I tried to imitate my dear Austin. I wish to God he were here. I love Austin. He would understand her. He's coming back this year, and then—but it 'll be too late then.—Well, my father 's always scheming to make me perfect—he has never spoken to me a word about her, but I can see her in his eyes—he wanted to give me a change, he said, and asked me to come to Town with my Uncle Hippy, and I consented. It was another plot to get me out of the way!

As I live I had no more idea of meeting her than of flying to Heaven!"

He lifted his face. "Look at those old elm-branches! How they seem to mix among the stars!—glittering fruits of Winter!"

Ripton tipped his comical nose upward and was in duty bound to say, Yes! though he observed no connection between them and the narrative.

"Well," the Hero went on, "I came to Town. There I heard she was coming, too—coming home. It must have been fate, Ripton! Heaven forgive me! I was angry with her, and I thought I should like to see her once—only once—and reproach her for being false—for she never wrote to me. And, oh, the dear Angel! what she must have suffered!—I gave my Uncle the slip, and got to the Railway she was coming by. There was a fellow going to meet her—a farmer's son—and, good God! they were going to try and make her marry him! I remembered it all then. A servant of the farm had told me. That fellow went to the wrong station, I suppose, for we saw nothing of him. There she was—not changed a bit!—looking lovelier than ever! And

when she saw me, I knew in a minute that she must love me till death!—You don't know what it is yet, Rip!—Will you believe it?—Though I was as sure she loved me and had been true as steel, as that I shall see her tonight, I spoke bitterly to her. And she bore it meekly—she looked like a saint. I told her there was but one hope of life for me—she must prove she was true, and as I give up all, so must she. I don't know what I said. The thought of losing her made me mad. She tried to plead with me to wait—it was for my sake, I know. I pretended, like a miserable hypocrite, that she did not love me at all. I think I said shameful things. Oh what noble creatures women are! She hardly had strength to move. I took her to that place where you found us.—Rip! she went down on her knees to me. I never dreamed of anything in life so lovely as she looked then. Her eyes were thrown up, bright with a crowd of tears —her dark brows bent together, like Pain and Beauty meeting in one: and her glorious golden hair swept off her shoulders as she hung forward to my hands.—Could I lose such a prize? —If anything could have persuaded me, would

not that?—I thought of Dante's Madonna—Guido's Magdalen.—Is there sin in it? I see none! And if there is, it's all mine! I swear she's spotless of a thought of sin. I see her very soul! Cease to love her? Who dares ask me? Cease to love her? Why I live on her!—To see her little chin straining up from her throat, as she knelt to me!—there was one curl that fell across her throat . . . . ."

Ripton listened for more. Richard had gone off in a muse at the picture.

" Well?" said Ripton, " and how about that young farmer fellow?"

The Hero's head was again contemplating the starry branches. His lieutenant's question came to him after an interval.

" Young Tom? Why, it's young Tom Blaize —son of our old enemy, Rip! I like the old man now. Oh! I saw nothing of the fellow."

" Lord!" cried Ripton, "are we going to get into a mess with Blazes again? I don't like that!"

His commander quietly passed his likes or dislikes.

" But when he goes to the train, and finds she's not there?" Ripton suggested.

"I've provided for that. The fool went to the South-East, instead of the South-West. All warmth, all sweetness, comes with the South-West!—I've provided for that, friend Rip. My trusty Tom awaits him there, as if by accident. He tells him he has not seen her, and advises him to remain in Town, and go for her there to-morrow, and the day following. Tom has money for the work. Young Tom ought to see London, you know, Rip!—like you. We shall gain some good clear days. And when old Blaize hears of it—what then? I have her! she's mine!—Besides, he won't hear for a week. This Tom beats that Tom in cunning, I'll wager.—Ha! ha!" the Hero burst out at a recollection. "What do you think, Rip? My father has some sort of System with me, it appears, and when I came to Town the time before, he took me to some people—the Grandisons—and what do you think? one of the daughters is a little girl—a nice little thing enough—very funny—and he wants me to wait for her! He hasn't said so, but I know it. I know what he means. Nobody understands him but me. I know he loves me, and is one of the best of men—but just consider!—a *little girl*

who just comes up to my elbow. Isn't it ridiculous? Did you ever hear such nonsense?"

Ripton emphasized his opinion that it certainly was foolish.

"No, no! The die's cast!" said Richard. "They've been plotting for a year up to this day, and this is what comes of it! If my father loves me, he will love her. And if he loves me, he'll forgive my acting against his wishes, and see it was the only thing to be done. Come! step out! what a Time we've been!" and away he went, compelling Ripton to the sort of strides a drummer-boy has to take beside a column of grenadiers.

Ripton began to wish himself in love, seeing that it endowed a man with wind so that he could breathe great sighs, while going at a tremendous pace, and experience no sensation of fatigue. The Hero was communing with the elements, his familiars, and allowed him to pant as he pleased. Some keen-eyed Kensington urchins, noticing the discrepancy between the pedestrian powers of the two, aimed their wit at Mr. Thompson junior's expense. The pace, and nothing but the pace, induced Ripton to pro-

claim that they had gone too far, when they discovered that they had overshot the mark by half a mile. In the street over which stood Love's star, the Hero thundered his presence at a door, and evoked a flying housemaid, who knew not Mrs. Berry. The Hero attached significance to the fact that his instincts should have betrayed him, for he could have sworn to that house. The door being shut he stood in dead silence.

"Haven't you got her card?" Ripton inquired, and heard that it was in the custody of the cabman. Neither of them could positively bring to mind the number of the house.

"You ought to have chalked it, like that fellow in the Forty Thieves," Ripton hazarded a pleasantry which met with no response.

Betrayed by his instincts, the magic slaves of Love! The Hero heavily descended the steps.

Ripton murmured that they were done for. His commander turned on him, and said: "Take all the houses on the opposite side, one after another. I'll take these." With a wry face Ripton crossed the road, altogether subdued by his native superiority to adverse circumstances.

Then were families aroused. Then did mor-

tals dimly guess that something portentous was abroad. Then were labourers all day in the vineyard, harshly wakened from their evening's nap. Hope and Fear stalked the street, as again and again the loud companion summonses resounded. Finally Ripton sang out cheerfully. He had Mrs. Berry before him, profuse of mellow curtsies.

Richard ran to her and caught her hands: "She 's well?—upstairs?"

"Oh, quite well! only a trifle tired with her journey, and fluttering-like," Mrs. Berry replied to Ripton alone. The lover had flown aloft.

The wise woman sagely ushered Ripton into her own private parlour, there to wait till he was wanted.

CHAPTER XII.

CONTAINS AN INTERCESSION FOR THE HEROINE.

'In all cases where two have joined to commit an offence, punish one of the two lightly,' is the dictum of the Pilgrim's Scrip.

It is possible for young heads to conceive proper plans of action, and occasionally, by sheer force of will, to check the wild horses that are ever fretting to gallop off with them. But when they have given the reins and the whip to another, what are they to do? They may go down on their knees, and beg and pray the furious charioteer to stop, or moderate his speed. Alas! each fresh thing they do redoubles his ardour. Lucy submitting, he chooses his pace. Lucy remonstrating, he is fired to madness. There is a power in their troubled beauty women learn the use of, and what wonder? They have seen it

kindle Ilium to flames so often! But ere they grow matronly in the house of Menelaus, they weep, and implore, and do not in truth know how terribly two-edged is their gift of loveliness. They resign themselves to an incomprehensible frenzy; pleasant to them, because they attribute it to excessive love. And so the very sensible things which they can and do say, are vain.

I reckon it absurd to ask them to be quite in earnest. Are not those their own horses in yonder team? Certainly if they were quite in earnest they might soon have my gentleman as sober as a carter. A hundred different ways of disenchanting him exist, and Adrian will point you out one or two that shall be instantly efficacious. For Love, the charioteer, is easily tripped, while honest jog-trot Love keeps his legs to the end. Granted dear women are not quite in earnest, still the mere words they utter should be put to their good account. They do mean them, though their hearts are set the wrong way. 'Tis a despairing, pathetic, homage to the judgment of the majority, in whose faces they are flying. Punish Helen, very young, lightly. After a cer-

tain age you may select her for special chastisement. An innocent with Theseus, with Paris she is an advanced incendiary.

The fair young girl was sitting as her lover had left her; trying to recall her stunned senses. Her bonnet was unremoved; her hands clasped on her knees; dry tears in her eyes. Like a dutiful slave, she rose to him. And first he claimed her mouth. There was a speech, made up of all the pretty wisdom her wild situation and true love could gather, awaiting him there; but his kiss scattered it to fragments. She dropped to her seat weeping, and hiding shamed cheeks.

By his silence she divined his thoughts, and took his hand, and drew it to her lips.

He bent beside her, bidding her look at him.

"Keep your eyes so."

She could not.

"Do you fear me, Lucy?"

A throbbing pressure answered him.

"Do you love me, darling?"

She trembled from head to foot.

"Then why do you turn from me?"

She wept: "Oh, Richard! take me home! take me home!"

"Look at me, Lucy!"

Her head shrank timidly round.

"Keep your eyes on me, darling! Now speak!"

But she could not look, and speak too. The lover knew his mastery when he had her eyes.

"You wish me to take you home?"

She faltered: "Oh, Richard! it is not too late."

"You regret what you have done for me?"

"Dearest! it is ruin."

"You weep because you have consented to be mine?"

"Not for me! Oh, Richard!"

"For me you weep? Look at me! For me?"

"How will it end! Oh, Richard!"

"You weep for me?"

"Dearest! I would die for you!"

"Would you see me indifferent to everything in the world? Would you have me lost? Do you think I will live another day in England without you? I have staked all I have on you, Lucy. You have nearly killed me once. A

second time, and earth will not be troubled by me. You ask me to wait, when they are plotting against us on all sides? Darling Lucy! look on me. Fix your fond eyes on me. You ask me to wait, when here you are given to me—when you have proved my faith—when we know we love as none have loved. Give me your eyes! Let them tell me I have your heart!"

Where was her wise little speech? How could she match such mighty eloquence? She sought to collect a few more of the scattered fragments.

"Dearest! your father may be brought to consent by and by, and then—Oh! if you take me home now—"

The lover stood up: "He who has been artranging that fine scheme to disgrace and martyrize you? True, as I live! that's the reason of their having you back. Your old servant heard him and your Uncle discussing it. He! —Lucy! he's a good man, but he must not step in between you and me. I say God has given you to me."

He was down by her side again, his arms enfolding her.

She had hoped to fight a better battle than in the morning, and she was weaker and softer.

Ah! why should she doubt that his great love was the first law to her? Why should she not believe that she would wreck him by resisting? And if she suffered, O sweet to think it was for his sake! Sweet to shut out Wisdom: accept total blindness, and be led by him!

The hag, Wisdom, annoyed them little further. She rustled her garments ominously, and vanished.

"Oh, my own Richard!" the fair girl just breathed.

He whispered: "Call me that name."

She blushed deeply.

"Call me that name," he repeated. "You said it once today."

"Dearest!"

"Not that."

"Oh, darling!"

"Not that."

"Husband!"

She was won. The rosy gate from which the word had issued was closed with a seal.

Ripton did not enjoy his introduction to the

caged bird of beauty that night. He received a lesson in the art of pumping from the worthy landlady below, up to an hour when she yawned, and he blinked, and their common candle wore with dignity the brigand's hat of midnight, and cocked a drunken eye at them under it.

CHAPTER XIII.

RELATES HOW PREPARATIONS FOR ACTION WERE CONDUCTED UNDER THE APRIL OF LOVERS.

Beauty, of course, is for the Hero. Nevertheless, it is not always he on whom Beauty works its most conquering influence. It is the dull, commonplace, man into whose slow brain she drops like a celestial light, and burns lastingly. The poet, for instance, is a connoisseur of Beauty: to the artist she is a model. These gentlemen by much contemplation of her charms wax critical. The days when they had hearts being gone, they are haply divided between the blonde, and the brunette; the aquiline nose, and the Proserpine; this shaped eye, and that. But go about among simple unprofessional fellows, boors, dunderheads, and here and there you shall find some barbarous intelligence which has had just strength enough to conceive, and has taken

Beauty as its Goddess, and knows but one form to worship, in his poor stupid fashion, and would perish for her. Nay, more: the man would devote all his days to her, though he is dumb as a dog. And indeed, he is Beauty's Dog. Almost every Beauty has her Dog. The Hero possesses her; the poet proclaims her; the painter puts her upon canvass; and the faithful old Dog follows her: and the end of it is that the faithful old Dog is her single attendant. Sir Hero is revelling in the wars, or in Armida's bowers; Mr. Poet has spied a wrinkle; the Brush is for the Rose in its Season. She turns to her old Dog then. She hugs him; and he, who has subsisted on a bone and a pat till there he squats decrepid, he turns his grateful old eyes up to her, and has not a notion that she is hugging sad memories in him: Hero, Poet, Painter, in one scrubby one! Then is she buried, and the village hears languid howls, and there is a paragraph in the newspapers concerning the extraordinary fidelity of an Old Dog. So runs the round.

Excited by suggestive recollections of Nooredeen and the Fair Persian, and the change in

the obscure monotony of his life by his having quarters in a crack hotel, and living familiarly with West-End people—living on the fat of the land (which forms a stout portion of an honest youth's Romance), Ripton Thompson breakfasted next morning with his chief at half-past eight. The meal had been fixed overnight for seven, but Ripton slept a great deal more than the nightingale, and (to chronicle his exact state) even half-past eight rather afflicted his new aristocratic senses, and reminded him too keenly of Law and bondage. He had preferred to breakfast at Algernon's hour, who had left word for eleven. Him, however, it was Richard's object to avoid, so they fell to, and Ripton no longer envied Hippias in bed. Breakfast done, they bequeathed the consoling information for Algernon that they were off to hear a popular preacher, and departed.

"How happy everybody looks!" said Richard, in the quiet Sunday streets.

"Yes—jolly!" said Ripton.

Most young gentlemen speak from one part or other of their interiors.

"When I'm—when this is over, I'll see that

they are, too—as many as I can make happy," said the Hero: adding softly: "Her blind was down at a quarter to six. I think she slept well!"

"You don't mean to say you've been there this morning?" Ripton exclaimed. "Really?" and an idea of what Love was dawned upon his dull brain.

"Will she see me, Ricky?"

"Yes. She'll see you today. She was tired last night."

"Positively?"

Richard assured him that privilege would be his.

"Here," he said, coming under some trees in the park, "here's where I talked to you last night. What a time it seems! How I hate the night!"

"You'll soon—" Ripton darkly winked; but his Chief looked uninstructed, and he branched into the converse of daylight.

On the way, that Richard might have an exalted opinion of him, he hinted decorously at a somewhat intimate and mysterious acquaintance with the sex. Ripton Thompson had seen pretty

girls, and pretty girls had seen Ripton Thompson. Ahem!—Headings of certain Random adventures he gave.

"Well!" said his Chief, "why don't you marry her?"

Then was Ripton shocked, and cried, "Oh, dear!" and had a taste of the feeling of superiority, destined that day to be crushed utterly.

He was again deposited in Mrs. Berry's charge for a term that caused him dismal fears that the Fair Persian still refused to show her face, but Richard called out to him, and up Ripton went, unaware of the transformation he was to undergo. Hero and Beauty stood together to receive him. From the bottom of the stairs he had his vivaciously agreeable smile ready for them, and by the time he entered the room his cheeks were painfully stiff, and his eyes strained beyond their exact meaning. Lucy, with one hand anchored to her lover, welcomed him kindly. He relieved her shyness by looking so extremely silly. They sat down, and tried to commence a conversation, but Ripton was as little master of his tongue as he was of his eyes. After an interval, the Fair Persian, having done duty by showing herself,

was glad to quit the room. Her lord and possessor then turned inquiringly to Ripton.

"You don't wonder now, Rip?" he said.

"No, Richard!" Ripton waited to reply with sufficient solemnity, "indeed I don't!"

He spoke differently; he looked differently. He had the Old Dog's eyes in his head. They watched the door she had passed through; they listened for her, as dogs' eyes do. When she came in, bonneted for a walk, his agitation was dog-like. When she hung on her lover timidly, and went forth, he followed without an idea of envy, or anything save the secret raptures the sight of her gave him, which are the Old Dog's own. For beneficent Nature requites him. His sensations cannot be heroic, but they have a fullness, and a wagging delight, as good in their way. And this capacity for humble unaspiring worship has its peculiar guerdon. When Ripton comes to think of Miss Random now, what will he think of himself? Let no one despise the Old Dog. Through him doth Beauty vindicate her sex.

It did not please Ripton that others should have the bliss of beholding her, and as, to his

perceptions, everybody did, and observed her offensively, and stared, and turned their heads back, and interchanged comments on her, and became in a minute madly in love with her, he had to smother low growls. They strolled about the pleasant Gardens of Kensington all the morning, under the young chestnut buds, and round the windless waters, talking, and soothing the wild excitement of their hearts. If Lucy spoke, Ripton pricked up his ears. She, too, made the remark that everybody seemed to look happy, and he heard it with thrills of joy. "So everybody is, where you are!" he would have wished to say, if he dared, but was restrained by fears that his burning eloquence would commit him. Ripton knew the people he met twice. It would have been difficult to persuade him they were the creatures of accident.

From the Gardens, in contempt of Ripton's frowned protest, Richard boldly struck into the Park, where solitary carriages were beginning to perform the circuit. Here Ripton had some justification for his jealous pangs. The young girl's golden locks of hair; her sweet, now dreamily sad, face; her gentle graceful figure in the black

straight dress she wore; a sort of half-conventual air she had—a mark of something not class, that was partly Beauty's, partly maiden innocence growing conscious, partly remorse at her weakness and dim fear of the Future it was sowing; —did attract the eye-glasses. Ripton had to learn that eyes are bearable, but eye-glasses an abomination. They fixed a spell upon his courage; for somehow the youth had always ranked them as emblems of our nobility, and hearing two exquisite eye-glasses, who had been to front and rear several times, drawl in gibberish generally imputed to lords, that his heroine was a charming little creature, just the size, but had no style, —he was abashed; he did not fly at them and tear them. He became dejected. Beauty's Dog is affected by the eye-glass in a manner not unlike the common animal's terror of the human eye.

Richard appeared to hear nothing, or it was homage that he heard. He repeated to Lucy Diaper Sandoe's verses:

> 'The cockneys nod to each other aside,
> The coxcombs lift their glasses,'

and projected hiring a horse for her to ride every day in the park, and shine among the highest.

They had turned to the West, against the sky glittering through the bare trees across the water, and the bright-edged rack. The lover, his imagination just then occupied clothing earthly glories in celestial, felt where his senses were sharpest the hand of his darling falter, and instinctively looked ahead. His Uncle Algernon was leisurely jolting towards them on his one sound leg. The dismembered Guardsman talked to a friend whose arm supported him, and speculated from time to time on the fair heralds of the crush driving by. The two white faces passed him unobserved. Unfortunately Ripton, coming behind, went plump upon the Captain's live toe—or so he pretended—crying: "Confound it, Mr. Thompson! you might have chosen the other."

The horrible apparition did confound Ripton, who stammered that it was extraordinary.

"Not at all," said Algernon. "Everybody makes up to that fellow. Instinct, I suppose!"

He had not to ask for his nephew. Richard turned to face the matter.

"Sorry I couldn't wait for you this morning, Uncle," he said, with the coolness of relationship. "I thought you never walked so far."

His voice was in perfect tone—the heroic mask admirable.

Algernon examined the downcast visage at his side, and contrived to allude to the popular preacher. He was instantly introduced to Ripton's sister, Miss Thompson.

The Captain bowed, smiling melancholy approval of his nephew's choice of a Minister. After a few stray remarks, and an affable salute to Miss Thompson, he hobbled away, and then the three sealed volcanoes breathed, and Lucy's arm ceased to be squeezed quite so much up to the heroic pitch.

This incident quickened their steps homeward to the sheltering wings of Mrs. Berry. All that passed between them on the subject comprised a stammered excuse from Ripton for his conduct, and a good-humoured rejoinder from Richard, that he had gained a sister by it: at which Ripton ventured to wish aloud Miss Desborough would only think so, and a faint smile twitched poor Lucy's lips to please him. She hardly had strength to reach her cage. She had none to eat of Mrs. Berry's nice little dinner. To be alone, that she might cry and ease her heart of

its accusing weight of tears, was all she prayed for. Kind Mrs. Berry, slipping into her bedroom to take off her things, found the fair body in a fevered shudder, and finished by undressing her completely and putting her to bed.

"Just an hour's sleep, or so," the mellifluous woman explained the case to the two anxious gentlemen. "A quiet sleep and a cup of warm tea goes for more than twenty Doctors, it do —when there 's the flutters," she pursued. "I know it by myself. And a good cry beforehand 's better than the best of medicine."

She nursed them into a make-believe of eating, and retired to her softer charge and sweeter babe, reflecting, "Lord! Lord! the three of 'em don't make fifty! I 'm as old as two and a half of 'em, to say the least." Mrs. Berry used her apron, and by virtue of their years took them all three into her heart.

Left alone, neither of the young men could swallow a morsel.

"Did you see the change come over her?" Richard whispered.

Ripton fiercely accused his prodigious stupidity.

The lover flung down his knife and fork: "What could I do? If I had said nothing, we should have been suspected. I was obliged to speak. And she hates a lie! See! it has struck her down. God forgive me!"

Ripton affected a serene mind: "It was a fright, Richard," he said. "That 's what Mrs. Berry means by flutters. Those old women talk in that way. You heard what she said. And these old women know. I'll tell you what it is. It 's this, Richard!—it 's because you've got a fool for your friend."

"She regrets it," muttered the lover. "Good God! I think she fears me." He dropped his face in his hands.

Ripton went to the window, repeating energetically for his comfort: "It 's because you've got a fool for your friend!"

Sombre grew the street they had last night aroused. The sun was buried alive in cloud. Ripton saw himself no more in the opposite window. He watched the deplorable objects passing on the pavement. His aristocratic visions had gone like his breakfast. Beauty had been struck down by his egregious folly, and there he stood —a Wretch!

Richard came to him: "Don't mumble on like that, Rip!" he said. "Nobody blames you."

"Ah! you're very kind, Richard," interposed the Wretch, moved at the face of misery he beheld.

"Listen to me, Rip! I shall take her home tonight. Yes! If she's happier away from me! —do you think me a brute, Ripton? Rather than have her shed a tear, I'd!—I'll take her home tonight!"

Ripton suggested that it was sudden; adding from his larger experience, people perhaps might talk.

The lover could not understand what they should talk about, but he said: "If I give him who came for her yesterday the clue? If no one sees or hears of me what can they say? Oh, Rip! I'll give her up. I'm wrecked for ever! what of that? Yes—let them take her! The world in arms should never have torn her from me, but when she cries—Yes! all's over. I'll find him at once."

He searched in out-of-the-way corners for the hat of resolve. Ripton looked on, wretcheder than ever.

"Suppose," the idea struck him, "Suppose, Richard, she doesn't want to go?"

The lover sternly continued his hunt. He found the propelling machine at last, and put it on, saying under its shadow: "I'm ready! Now!"

Here was sadness and gloom come upon them! Ripton likewise commenced the search for his doleful casque, and toppled it moodily on the back of his head in sign of glorious enterprise abandoned, and surrender to the enemy.

It was a moment when, perhaps, one who sided with parents and guardians and the old wise world, might have inclined them to pursue their righteous wretched course, and have given small Cupid a smack and sent him home to his naughty Mother. Alas! (it is The PILGRIM'S SCRIP interjecting) women are the born accomplices of mischief! In bustles Mrs. Berry to clear away the refection, and finds the two knights helmed, and sees, though 'tis dusk, that they wear doubtful brows, and guesses bad things for her dear God Hymen in a twinkling.

"Dear! dear!" she exclaimed, "and neither of you eaten a scrap! And there's my dear

young lady off intoe the prettiest sleep you ever see!"

"Ha!" cried the lover, illuminated.

"Soft as a baby!" Mrs. Berry averred. "I went to look at her this very moment, and there's not a bit of trouble in her breath. It come and it go like the sweetest regular instrument ever made. The Black Ox haven't trod on *her* foot yet! Most like it was the air of London. But only fancy, if you had called in a Doctor! Why, I shouldn't have let her take any of his quackery. Now, there!"

Ripton attentively observed his Chief, and saw him doff his hat with a curious caution, and peer into its recess, from which, during Mrs. Berry's speech, he drew forth a little glove—dropped there by some freak of chance.

"Keep me, keep me, now you have me!" sang the little glove, and amused the lover with a thousand concerts.

"When will she wake, do you think, Mrs. Berry?" he asked.

"Oh! we musn't go for disturbing her," said the guileful good creature. "Bless ye! let her sleep it out. And if you young gentlemen was

to take my advice, and go and take a walk for to get a appetite—everybody should eat! it 's their sacred dooty, no so matter what their feelings be! and I say it who 'm no chicken!—I'll frick-ashee this—which is a chicken—against your return. I'm a Cook, I can assure ye!"

The lover seized her two hands. "You're the best old soul in the world!" he cried. Mrs. Berry appeared willing to kiss him. "We won't disturb her. Let her sleep. Keep her in bed, Mrs. Berry. Will you? And we'll call to inquire after her this evening, and come and see her tomorrow. I'm sure you'll be kind to her There! there!" Mrs. Berry was preparing to whimper. "I trust her to you, you see. Good bye, you dear old soul."

He smuggled a handful of gold into her keeping, and went to dine with his Uncles, happy and hungry.

Before they reached the hotel, they had agreed to draw Mrs. Berry into their confidence, telling her (with embellishments) all save their names, so that they might enjoy the counsel and assistance of that trump of a woman, and yet have nothing to fear from her. Lucy was to receive the name of Letitia, Ripton's youngest and best-

looking sister. The heartless fellow proposed it in cruel mockery of an old weakness of hers.

"Letitia!" mused Richard. "I like the name. Both begin with L. There's something soft—womanlike—in the L's."

Material Ripton remarked that they looked like pounds on paper. The lover roamed through his golden groves. "Lucy Feverel! that sounds better! I wonder where Ralph is. I should like to help him. He's in love with my cousin Clare. He'll never do anything till he marries. No man can. I'm going to do a hundred things when it's over. We shall travel first. I want to see the Alps. One doesn't know what the Earth is till one has seen the Alps. What a delight it will be to her! I fancy I see her eyes gazing up at them.

"'And O your dear blue eyes, that heavenward glance
With kindred beauty! banished humbleness!
Past weeping for mortality's distress—
Yet from your soul a tear hangs there in trance.
And fills, but does not fall:
Softly I hear it call
At Heaven's gate, till Sister Seraphs press
To look on you their old love from the skies:
Those are the eyes of Seraphs so bright on your blue eyes!"

Beautiful! Those lines, Rip, were written by a man who was once a friend of my father's. I intend to find him and make them friends again. You don't care for poetry. It's no use your trying to swallow it, Rip!"

"It sounds very nice," said Ripton, modestly shutting his mouth.

"The Alps! Italy! Rome! and then I shall go to the East," the Hero continued. "She 's ready to go anywhere with me, the dear brave heart! Oh, the glorious golden East! I dream of the Desert. I dream I 'm Chief of an Arab tribe, and we fly all white in the moonlight on our mares, and hurry to the rescue of my darling! And we push the spears, and we scatter them, and I come to the tent where she crouches, and catch her to my saddle, and away!—Rip! what a life!"

Ripton strove to imagine he could enjoy it. "And then we shall come home, and I shall lead Austin's life, with her to help me. First be virtuous, Rip! and then serve your country heart and soul. A wise man told me that. I think I shall do something."

Sunshine and cloud, cloud and sunshine passed

over the lover. Now life was a narrow ring: now the distances extended. An hour ago and food was hateful. Now he manfully refreshed his nature, and joined in Algernon's encomiums on Miss Letitia Thompson.

Meantime Beauty slept, watched by the veteran volunteer of the Hero's band. Lucy awoke from dreams which seemed reality, to the reality which was a dream. She awoke calling for some friend, "Margaret!" and heard one say: "My name is Bessy Berry, my love! not Margaret." Then she asked piteously where she was, and where was Margaret, her dear friend, and Mrs. Berry whispered: "Sure you've got a dearer!"

"Ah!" sighed Lucy, sinking on her pillow, overwhelmed by the strangeness of her state.

Mrs. Berry closed the frill of her nightgown and adjusted the bedclothes quietly.

Her name was breathed.

"Yes, my love?" she said.

"Is he here?"

"He's gone, my dear."

"Gone?—Oh, where?" The young girl started up in disorder.

"Gone, to be back, my love! Ah! that

young gentleman!" Mrs. Berry chanted: "Not a morsel have he eat: not a drop have he drunk!"

"O Mrs. Berry! why did you not make him?" Lucy wept for the famine-struck hero who was just then feeding mightily.

Mrs. Berry explained that to make one eat who thought the darling of his heart like to die, was a sheer impossibility for the cleverest of women; and on this deep truth Lucy reflected, with her eyes wide at the candle. She wanted one to pour her feelings out to. She slid her hand from under the bedclothes, and took Mrs. Berry's, and kissed it. The good creature required no further avowal of her secret, but forthwith leaned her consummate bosom to the pillow, and petitioned Heaven to bless them both! —Then the little bride was alarmed, and wondered how Mrs. Berry could have guessed it.

"Why," said Mrs. Berry, "your love is out of your eyes, and out of everything ye do." And the little bride wondered more. She thought she had been so very cautious not to betray it. The common woman in them made cheer together after their own April fashion. Following

which Mrs. Berry probed for the sweet particulars of this beautiful love-match: but the little bride's lips were locked. She only said her lover was above her in station.

"And you're a Catholic, my dear!"

"Yes, Mrs. Berry!"

"And him a Protestant."

"Yes, Mrs. Berry!"

"Dear, dear!—And why shouldn't ye be?" she ejaculated, seeing sadness return to the bridal babe. "So as you was born, so shall ye be! But you'll have to make your arrangements about the children. The girls to worship with you: the boys with him. It's the same God, my dear! You musn't blush at it, though you do look so pretty. If my young gentlemen could see you now!"

"Please, Mrs. Berry!" Lucy murmured.

"Why, he will, you know, my dear!"

"Oh, please, Mrs. Berry!"

"And you that can't bear the thoughts of it! Well, I do wish there was fathers and mothers on both sides, and dockments signed, and bridesmaids, and a breakfast! but love is love, and ever will be, in spite of them."

She made other and deeper dives into the little heart, but though she drew up pearls, they were not of the kind she searched for. The one fact that hung as a fruit upon her tree of Love, Lucy had given her: she would not, in fealty to her lover, reveal its growth and history, however sadly she yearned to pour out all to this dear old Mother Confessor.

Her conduct drove Mrs. Berry from the rosy to the Autumnal view of matrimony, generally heralded by the announcement that it is a Lottery.

"And when you see your ticket," said Mrs. Berry, "you shan't know whether it's a prize or a blank. And, Lord knows! some go on thinking it's a prize when it turns on 'em and tears 'em. I'm one of the blanks, my dear! I drew a blank in Berry. He was a black Berry to me, my dear! Smile away! he truly was, and I a prizin' him as proud as you can conceive! My dear!" Mrs. Berry pressed her hands flat on her apron, "we hadn't been a three months man and wife, when that man—it wasn't the Honeymoon, which some can't say—that man—Yes! he kicked me. His wedded wife he kicked!

Ah!" she sighed to Lucy's large eyes, "I could have borne that. A blow don't touch the heart," the poor creature tapped her sensitive side. "I went on loving of him, for I'm a soft one. Tall as a Grenadier he is, and when out of service grows his moustache. I used to call him my body Guardsman—like a Queen! I flattered him like the fools we women are. For take my word for it, my dear, there's nothing here below so vain as a man! That I know. But I didn't deserve it . . . . I'm a superior Cook . . . . I did not deserve that noways." Mrs. Berry thumped her knee, and accentuated towards her climax: "I mended his linen. I saw to his adornments—he called his clothes, the bad man! I was a servant to him, my dear! and there—it was nine months—nine months from the day he swear to protect and cherish and that—nine calendar months, and my gentleman is off with another woman! Bone of his bone!—pish!" exclaimed Mrs. Berry, reckoning her wrongs over vividly. "Here's my Ring. A pretty ornament! What do it mean? I'm for tearin' it off my finger a dozen times in the day. It's a symbol? I call it a tomfoolery for the dead-

alive to wear it, that's a widow and not a widow, and haven't got a name for what she is in any Dixonary. I've looked, my dear, and"—she spread out her arms—"Johnson haven't got a name for me!"

At this impressive woe Mrs. Berry's voice quavered into sobs. Lucy spoke gentle words to the poor outcast from Johnson. The sorrows of Autumn have no warning for April. The little bride, for all her tender pity, felt happier when she had heard her landlady's moving tale of the wickedness of man, which cast in bright relief the glory of that one Hero who was hers. Then from a short flight of inconceivable bliss, she fell, shot by one of her hundred Argus-eyed fears.

"Oh, Mrs. Berry! I'm so young! Think of me—only just seventeen!"

Mrs. Berry immediately dried her eyes to radiance. "Young, my dear! Nonsense! There's no so much harm in being young, here and there. I knew an Irish lady was married at fourteen. Her daughter married close on fourteen. She was a grandmother by thirty! When any strange man began, she used to ask him what pattern

caps grandmothers wore. They'd stare! Bless you! the grandmother could have married over and over again. It was her daughter's fault, not hers, you know."

"She was three years younger," mused Lucy.

"She married beneath her, my dear. Ran off with her father's bailiff's son. 'Ah, Berry!' she'd say, 'if I hadn't been foolish, I should be my lady now—not Granny!' Her father never forgave her—left all his estates out of the family."

"Did her husband always love her?" Lucy preferred to know.

"In his way, my dear, he did," said Mrs. Berry, coming upon her matrimonial wisdom. "He couldn't help himself. If he left off, he began again. She was so clever, and did make him so comfortable. Cook! there wasn't such another cook out of a Alderman's ketchen; no, indeed! And she a born lady! That tells ye it's the dooty of all women! She had her saying—'When the parlour fire gets low, put coals on the ketchen fire!' and a good saying it is to treasure. Such is man! no use in havin' their hearts, if ye don't have their stomachs."

Perceiving that she grew abstruse, Mrs. Berry

added briskly: "You know nothing about that yet, my dear. Only mind me and mark me: Don't neglect your Cookery. Kissing don't last: Cookery do!"

Here, with an Aphorism worthy a place in the PILGRIM'S SCRIP, she broke off to go posseting for her dear invalid. Lucy was quite well; very eager to be allowed to rise and be ready when the knock should come. Mrs. Berry, in her loving considerateness for the little bride, positively commanded her to lie down, and be quiet, and submit to be nursed and cherished. For Mrs. Berry well knew that ten minutes alone with the Hero could only be had while the little bride was in that unattainable position.

Thanks to her strategy, as she thought, her object was gained. The night did not pass before she learnt, from the Hero's own mouth, that Mr. Richards, the father of the Hero, and a stern lawyer, was adverse to his union with this young lady he loved, because of a ward of his, heiress to an immense property, whom he desired his son to espouse: and because his darling Letitia was a Catholic: Letitia, the sole daughter of a brave naval officer, deceased, and in the hands of

a savage Uncle, who wanted to sacrifice this Beauty to a brute of a son. Mrs. Berry listened credulously to the emphatic narrative, and spoke to the effect that the wickedness of old people formed the excuse for the wildness of young ones. The ceremonious administration of oaths of secrecy and devotion over, she was enrolled in the Hero's band, which now numbered three, and entered upon the duties with feminine energy, for there are no conspirators like women. Ripton's lieutenancy became a sinecure, his rank merely titular. He had never been married—he knew nothing about licenses, except that they must be obtained, and were not difficult—he had not an idea that so many days' warning must be given to the Clergyman of the Parish where one of the parties was resident. How should he? All his forethought was comprised in the Ring, and whenever the discussion of arrangements for the great event grew particularly hot and important, he would say, with a shrewd nod: "We musn't forget the Ring, you know, Mrs. Berry!" and the new member was only prevented by natural complaisance from shouting: "Oh, drat ye! and your Ring, too." Mrs. Berry

had acted conspicuously in fifteen marriages, by banns, and by Licenses, and to have such an obvious requisite dinned in her ears was exasperating. They could not have contracted alliance with an auxiliar more invaluable, an authority so profound, as they acknowledged to themselves. The Hero marched like an automaton at her bidding: Lieutenant Thompson was rejoiced to perform services as errand-boy in the enterprise.

"It's in hopes you'll be happier than me, I do it," said the devout and charitable Berry. "Marriages is made in Heaven, they say; and if that's the case, I say they don't take much account of us below!"

Her own woeful experiences had been given to the Hero in exchange for his story of cruel parents.

Richard vowed to her that he would henceforth hold it a duty to hunt out the Wanderer from wedded bonds, and bring him back, bound and suppliant.

"Oh, he'll come!" said Mrs. Berry, pursing prophetic wrinkles: "He'll come of his own accord. Never anywheres will he meet such a

cook as Bessy Berry! And he know her value in his heart of hearts. And I do believe, when he do come, I shall be opening these arms to him again, and not slapping his impidence in the face—I'm that soft! I always was—in matrimony, Mr. Richards!"

As when nations are secretly preparing for War, the Docks and Arsenals hammer night and day, and busy contractors measure Time by inches, and the air hums around for leagues as it were myriads of bees, so the house and neighbourhood of the matrimonial soft one resounded in the heroic style, and knew little of the changes of light decreed by Creation. Mrs. Berry was the general of the hour. Down to Doctors' Commons she expedited the Hero, instructing him how boldly to face the Law, and fib: for that the Law never could resist a fib and a bold face. Down the Hero went, and proclaimed his presence. And lo! the Law danced to him its sedatest lovely bear's-dance. Think ye the Law less susceptible to him than flesh and blood? With a beautiful confidence it put the few familiar questions to him, and nodded to his replies: then stamped the bond, and took the fee.

It must be an old vagabond at heart that can permit the irrevocable to go so cheap even to a Hero. For only mark him when he is petitioned by heroes and heroines to undo what he does so easily! That small archway of Doctor's Commons seems the eye of a needle, through which the lean purse has a way, somehow, of slipping more readily than the portly: but once through, all are camels alike, the lean purse an especially big camel. Dispensing tremendous Marriage as it does, the Law can have no conscience.

"I hadn't the slightest difficulty," says the exulting Hero.

"Of course not!" returns Mrs. Berry. "It's as easy, if ye're in earnest, as buying a plum bun."

Likewise the Ambassador of the Hero went to claim the promise of the Church to be attendance on a certain spot, on a certain day, and there swear eternal fealty, and gird him about with all its forces; which the Church, receiving a wink from the Law, obsequiously engaged to do, for less than the price of a plum-cake.

Meantime, while craftsmen and skilled women, directed by Mrs. Berry, were toiling to deck the

day at hand, Raynham and Belthorpe slept,—the former soundly; and one day was as another to them. Regularly every morning a letter arrived from Richard to his father, containing observations on the phenomena of London; remarks (mainly cynical) on the speeches and acts of Parliament; and reasons for not having yet been able to call on the Grandisons. They were certainly rather monotonous, and spiritless. The Baronet did not complain. That cold dutiful tone assured him there was no internal trouble or distraction. "The letters of a healthful physique!" he said to Lady Blandish with sure insight. Complacently he sat and smiled, little witting that his son's Ordeal was imminent, and that his son's Ordeal was to be his own. Hippias wrote that his Nephew was killing him by making appointments which he never kept, and altogether neglecting him in the most shameless way, so that his ganglionic centre was in a ten times worse state than when he left Raynham. He wrote very bitterly, but it was hard to feel compassion for his offended stomach.

On the other hand, young Tom Blaize was not forthcoming, and had despatched no tidings

whatever. Farmer Blaize smoked his pipe evening after evening, vastly disturbed. London was a large place—young Tom might be lost in it, he thought: and young Tom had his weaknesses. A wolf at Belthorpe, he was likely to be a sheep in London, as yokels have proved. But what had become of Lucy? This consideration almost sent Farmer Blaize off to London direct, and he would have gone had not his pipe enlightened him. A young fellow might play truant and get into a scrape, but a young man and a young woman were sure to be heard of, *unless* they were acting in complicity:—Why, of course, young Tom had behaved like a man, the rascal! and married her outright there, while he had the chance. It was a long guess. Still it was the only reasonable way of accounting for his extraordinary silence, and therefore the farmer held to it that he had done the deed. He argued as modern men do who think the Hero, the upsetter of ordinary calculations, is gone from us. So, after despatching a letter to a friend in Town to be on the look-out for son Tom, he continued awhile to smoke his pipe, rather elated than not, and mused on the shrewd manner he

should adopt when Master Honeymoon did appear.

Towards the middle of the second week of Richard's absence, Tom Bakewell came to Raynham for Cassandra, and privately handed a letter to the Eighteenth Century, containing a request for money, and a round sum. The Eighteenth Century was as good as her word, and gave Tom a letter in return, enclosing a cheque on her bankers, amply providing to keep the heroic engine in motion at a moderate pace. Tom went back, and Raynham and Lobourne slept and dreamed not of the morrow. The System, wedded to Time, slept, and knew not how he had been outraged—anticipated by seven pregnant seasons. For Time had heard the Hero swear to that legalizing instrument, and had also registered an oath. Ah me! venerable Hebrew Time! he is unforgiving. Half the confusion and fever of the world comes of this Vendetta he declares against the hapless Innocents who have once done him a wrong. They cannot escape him. They will never outlive it. The Father of jokes, he is himself no joke: which it seems the business of men to discover.

The days roll round. He is their servant now. Mrs. Berry has a new satin gown, a beautiful bonnet, a gold brooch, and sweet gloves, presented to her by the Hero, wherein to stand by his bride at the altar tomorrow; and, instead of being an old wary hen, she is as much a chicken as any of the party, such has been the magic of these articles. Fathers she sees accepting the facts produced for them by their children: a world content to be carved out as it pleases the Hero.

At last Time brings the bridal eve, and is blest as a benefactor. The final arrangements are made; the bridegroom does depart; and Mrs. Berry lights the little bride to her bed. Lucy stops on the landing where there is an old clock eccentrically correct that night. 'Tis the palpitating pause before the gates of her transfiguration. Mrs. Berry sees her put her rosy finger on the ONE about to strike, and touch all the hours successively till she comes to the TWELVE that shall sound 'Wife' in her ears on the morrow, moving her lips the while, and looking round archly solemn when she has done: and that sight so catches at Mrs. Berry's heart that,

not guessing Time to be the poor child's enemy, she endangers her candle by folding Lucy warmly in her arms, whimpering: "Bless you for a darling! you innocent lamb! You shall be happy! You shall!"

Old Time gazes grimly ahead.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH THE LAST ACT OF A COMEDY TAKES THE PLACE OF THE FIRST.

ALTHOUGH it blew hard when Cæsar crossed the Rubicon, the passage of that River is commonly calm; calm as Acheron. So long as he gets his fare, the ferryman does not need to be told whom he carries: he pulls with a will, and Heroes may be over in half an hour. Some, by taking an oar themselves, have done it in five minutes: some in two. Only when they stand on the opposite banks, do they see what a leap they have taken. The shores they have relinquished shrink to an infinite remoteness. There they have dreamed: here they must act. There lie youth and irresolution: here manhood and purpose. They are veritably in another land: a moral Acheron divides their life. Their memories scarce seem their own! The PHILOSOPHI-

CAL GEOGRAPHY (about to be published) observes that each man has, one time or other, a little Rubicon—a clear, or a foul, water to cross. It is asked him: 'Wilt thou wed this Fate, and give up all behind thee?' And 'I will,' firmly pronounced, speeds him over. The above-named Manuscript authority informs us that by far the greater number of carcases rolled by this heroic flood to its sister stream below, are those of fellows who have repented their pledge, and have tried to swim back to the banks they have blotted out. For though every man of us may be a Hero for one fatal minute, very few remain so after a day's march even: and who wonders that Madam Fate is indignant, and wears the features of the terrible Universal Fate to him? Fail before her, either in heart, or in act, and lo, how the alluring loves in her visage wither and sicken to what it is modelled on! Be your Rubicon big or small, clear or foul, it is the same: you shall not return. On—or to Acheron!—I subscribe to that saying of the PILGRIM'S SCRIP:

'The danger of a little knowledge of things is disputable: but beware the little knowledge of one's self!

Richard Feverel was now crossing the River of his Ordeal. Already the mists were stealing over the land he had left: his life was cut in two, and he breathed but the air that met his nostrils. His father, his father's love, his boyhood and ambition, were shadowy. His poetic dreams had taken a living attainable shape. He had a distincter impression of the Autumnal Berry and her household, than of anything at Raynham. And yet the young man loved his father, loved his home: and I dare say Cæsar loved Rome: but whether he did or no, Cæsar when he killed the Republic was quite bald, and the Hero we are dealing with is scarce beginning to feel his despotic moustache. Did he know what he was made of? Doubtless, nothing at all. But honest passion has an instinct that can be safer than conscious wisdom. He was an arrow drawn to the head, flying from the bow. His audacious mendacities and subterfuges did not strike him as anyway criminal; for he was perfectly sure that the winning and securing of Lucy would in the end be boisterously approved of, and in that case were not the means justified? Not that he took trouble to

argue thus, as older Heroes and self-convicting villains are in the habit of doing, to deduce a clear conscience. Conscience and Lucy went together.

It was a soft fair day. The Rubicon sparkled in the morning sun. One of those days when London embraces the prospect of Summer, and troops forth all its babies. The pavement, the squares, the parks, were early alive with the cries of young Britain. Violet and primrose girls, and organ boys with military monkeys, and systematic bands very determined in tone if not in tune, filled the atmosphere, and crowned the blazing procession of omnibuses, freighted with business men, Cityward, where a column of reddish brown smoke,—blown aloft by the South-West, marked the scene of conflict to which these persistent warriors repaired. Richard had seen much of early London that morning. His plans were laid. He had taken care to ensure his personal liberty against accidents, by leaving his hotel and his injured Uncle Hippias at sunrise. Today or tomorrow his father was to arrive. Farmer Blaize, Tom Bakewell reported to him, was raging in Town. Another day and she

might be torn from him: but today this miracle of creation would be his, and then from those glittering banks yonder, let them summons him to surrender her who dared! The position of things looked so propitious he naturally thought the powers that wait on Love conspiring in his behalf. And she, too—since she must cross this River, she had sworn to him to be brave, and do him honour, and wear the true gladness of her heart in her face. So, without a suspicion of folly in his acts, or fear of results, Richard strolled into Kensington Gardens, breakfasting on the foreshadow of his great joy, now with a vision of his bride, now of the new life opening to him. Mountain masses of cloud, rounded in sunlight, swung up the blue. The flowering chestnut pavilions overhead rustled and hummed. A sound in his ears as of a banner unfolding in the joyful distance lulled him.

He was to meet his bride at the Church at a quarter past eleven. His watch said a quarter to ten. He strolled on beneath the long-stemmed trees towards the Well dedicated to a Saint obscure. Some people were drinking at the Well. A florid lady stood by a younger one, who had

a little silver mug half-way to her mouth, and evinced undisguised dislike to the liquor of the salutary Saint.

"Drink, child!" said the maturer lady. "That is only your second mug. I insist upon your drinking three full ones every morning we're in Town. Your constitution positively requires iron!"

"But, Mama," the other expostulated, "it's so nasty. I shall be sick."

"Drink!" was the harsh injunction. "Nothing to the German waters, my dear. Here, let me taste." She took the mug and gave it a flying kiss. "I declare I think it almost nice—not at all objectionable. Pray taste it," she said to a gentleman standing below them to act as cupbearer.

An unmistakable cis-Rubicon voice replied: "Certainly, if it's good fellowship; though I confess I don't think mutual sickness a very engaging ceremony."

"Can one never escape from one's relations?" Richard ejaculated inwardly.

Without a doubt those people were Mrs. Doria, Clare, and Adrian. He had them under his eyes.

Clare peeping up from her constitutional dose to make sure no man was near to see the possible consequence of it, was the first to perceive him. Her hand dropped.

"Now pray drink, and do not fuss!" said Mrs. Doria.

"Mama!" Clare gasped.

Richard came forward, and capitulated honourably, since retreat was out of the question. Mrs. Doria swam to meet him: "My own boy! My dear Richard!" profuse of exclamations. Clare shyly greeted him. Adrian kept in the background.

"Why, we were coming for you today, Richard," said Mrs. Doria, smiling effusion; and rattled on, "We want another cavalier. This is delightful! My dear nephew! You have grown from a boy to a man. And there's down on his lip! And what brings you down here at such an hour in the morning? Poetry, I suppose! Here, take my arm, child.—Clare! finish that mug and thank your Cousin for sparing you the third.—I always bring her, when we are by a chalybeate, to take the waters before breakfast. We have to get up at unearthly hours. Think,

my dear boy! Mothers are sacrifices! And so you've been alone a fortnight with your agreeable Uncle! A charming time of it you must have had! Poor Hippy! what may be his last nostrum?"

"Nephew!" Adrian stretched his head round to the couple. "Doses of Nephew taken morning and night fourteen days! And he guarantees that it shall destroy an iron constitution in a month."

Richard mechanically shook Adrian's hand as he spoke.

"Quite well, Ricky?"

"Yes: well enough," Richard answered.

"Well?" resumed his vigorous Aunt, walking on with him, while Clare and Adrian followed. "I really never saw you looking so handsome. There 's something about your face—look at me—you needn't blush. You've grown to an Apollo. That blue buttoned-up frock coat becomes you admirably—and those gloves—and that easy neck-tie. Your style is irreproachable—quite a style of your own! And nothing eccentric. You have the instinct of dress. Dress shows blood, my dear boy, as much as anything

else. Boy!—you see, I can't forget old habits. You were a boy when I left, and now!—Do you see any change in him, Clare?" she turned half round to her daughter.

"Richard is looking very well, Mama," said Clare, glancing at him under her eyelids.

"I wish I could say the same of you, my dear. —Take my arm, Richard. Are you afraid of your Aunt? I want to get used to you. Won't it be pleasant, our being all in Town together in the Season? How fresh the Opera will be to you! Austin, I hear, takes Stalls. You can come to the Foreys' box when you like. We are staying with the Foreys close by here. I think it's a little too far out, you know; but they like the neighbourhood. This is what I have always said: Give him more liberty! Austin has seen it at last. How do you think Clare looking?"

The question had to be repeated. Richard surveyed his cousin hastily, and praised her looks.

"Pale!" Mrs. Doria sighed.

"Rather pale, Aunt."

"Grown very much—don't you think, Richard?"

"Very tall girl indeed, Aunt."

"If she had but a little more colour, my dear Richard! I'm sure I give her all the iron she can swallow, but that pallor still continues. I think she does not prosper away from her old companion. She was accustomed to look up to you, Richard—"

"Did you get Ralph's letter, Aunt?" Richard interrupted her.

"Absurd!" Mrs. Doria pressed his arm. "The nonsense of a boy! Why did you undertake to forward such stuff?"

"I'm certain he loves her," said Richard, in a serious way.

The maternal eyes narrowed on him. "Life, my dear Richard, is a game of cross-purposes," she observed, dropping her fluency, and was rather angered to hear him laugh. He excused himself by saying that she spoke so like his father.

"You breakfast with us," she freshened off again. "The Foreys wish to see you—the girls are dying to know you. Do you know, you have a reputation on account of that"—she crushed an intruding adjective—"System you were brought up on. You must n't mind it. For my part I

think you look a credit to it. Don't be bashful with young women, mind! As much as you please with the old ones. You know how to behave among men. There you have your Drawing-room Guide! I'm sure I shall be proud of you. Am I not?"

Mrs. Doria addressed his eyes coaxingly.

A benevolent idea struck Richard, that he might employ the minutes to spare, in pleading the case of poor Ralph; and, as he was drawn along, he pulled out his watch to note the precise number of minutes he could dedicate to this charitable office.

"Pardon me," said Mrs. Doria. "You want manners, my dear boy. I think it never happened to me before that a man consulted his watch in my presence."

Richard mildly replied that he had an engagement at a particular hour, up to which he was her servant.

"Fiddledeedee!" the vivacious lady sang. "Now I've got you, I mean to keep you. Oh! I've heard all about you. This ridiculous indifference that your father makes so much of! Why, of course, you wanted to see the world! A strong

healthy young man shut up all his life in a lonely house—no friends, no society, no amusements but those of rustics! Of course you were indifferent! Your intelligence and superior mind alone saved you from becoming a dissipated country boor.—Where are the others?"

Clare and Adrian came up at a quick pace.

"My damosel dropped something," Adrian explained.

Her mother asked what it was.

"Nothing, Mama," said Clara, demurely, and they proceeded as before.

Overborne by his Aunt's fluency of tongue, and occupied in acute calculation of the flying minutes, Richard let many pass before he edged in a word for Ralph. When he did, Mrs. Doria stopped him immediately.

"I must tell you, child, that I refuse to listen to such rank idiotcy."

"It's nothing of the kind, Aunt."

"The fancy of a boy."

"He's not a boy, Aunt. He's half a year older than I am!"

"You silly child! The moment you fall in love, you all think yourselves men."

"On my honour, Aunt! I believe he loves her thoroughly."

"Did he tell you so, child?"

"Men don't speak openly of those things," said Richard.

"Boys do," said Mrs. Doria.

"But listen to me in earnest, Aunt. I want you to be kind to Ralph. Don't drive him to—You may be sorry for it. Let him—do let him write to her, and see her. I believe women are as cruel as men in these things."

"I never encourage absurdity, Richard."

"What objection have you to Ralph, Aunt!"

"Oh, they're both good families. It's not that absurdity, Richard. It will be to his credit to remember that his first fancy wasn't a dairymaid."

Mrs. Doria pitched her accent tellingly. It did not touch her nephew.

"Don't you want Clare ever to marry?" he put the last point of reason to her.

Mrs. Doria laughed. "I hope so, child. We must find some comfortable old gentleman for her."

"What infamy!" mutters Richard.

"And I engage Ralph shall be ready to dance

at her wedding, or eat a hearty breakfast—We don't dance at weddings now, and very proper. It's a horrid sad business, not to be treated with levity.—Is that his regiment?" she said, as they passed out of the hussar-sentinelled gardens. "Tush, tush, child! Master Ralph will recover, as—hem! others have done. A little head-ache —you call it heart-ache—and up you rise again, looking better than ever. No doubt, to have a grain of sense forced into your brains, you poor dear children! must be painful. Girls suffer as much as boys, I assure you. More, for their heads are weaker, and their appetites less constant. Do I talk like your father now? Whatever makes the boy fidget at his watch so?"

Richard stopped short. Time spoke urgently.

"I must go," he said.

His face did not seem good for trifling. Mrs. Doria would trifle in spite.

"Listen, Clare! Richard is going. He says he has an engagement. What possible engagement can a young man have at eleven o'clock in the morning?—unless he's going to be married? Eh? Then of course!" Mrs. Doria laughed at the ingenuity of her suggestion.

"Is the Church handy, Ricky?" said Adrian. "You can still give us half an hour if it is. The celibate hours strike at Twelve." And he also laughed in his fashion.

"Won't you stay with us, Richard?" Clare asked. She blushed timidly, and her voice shook.

Something indefinite—a sharp-edged thrill in the tones made the burning bridegroom speak gently to her.

"Indeed, I would, Clare—I should like to please you—but I have a most imperative appointment—that is, I promised—I must go. I shall see you again . . . . "

Mrs. Doria took forcible possession of him. "Now do come, and don't waste words. I insist upon your having some breakfast first, and then, if you really must go, you shall. Look! there's the house. At least you will accompany your Aunt to the door."

Richard conceded this. She little imagined what she required of him. Two of his golden minutes melted into nothingness. They were growing to be jewels of price, one by one more and more precious as they ran, and now so

costly-rare—rich as his blood! not to kindest relations, dearest friends, could he give another. The die is cast! Ferryman! push off!

"Good bye!" he cried, nodding bluffly at the three as one, and fled.

They watched his abrupt muscular stride through the grounds of the house. He looked like Resolution on the march. Mrs. Doria, as usual with her out of her brother's hearing, began rating the System.

"See what comes of that nonsensical education! The boy really does not know how to behave like a common mortal. He has some paltry appointment, or is mad after some ridiculous idea of his own, and everything must be sacrificed to it! That's what Austin calls, Concentration of the faculties. I think it's more likely to lead to downright insanity than to Greatness of any kind. And so I shall tell Austin. It's time he should be spoken to seriously about him."

"He's an Engine, my dear Aunt," said Adrian. "He isn't a boy, or a man, but an Engine. And he appears to have been at high pressure since he came to Town—out all day and half the night."

"He's mad!" Mrs. Doria interjected.

"Not at all. Extremely shrewd is Master Ricky, and carries as open an eye ahead of him as the ships before Troy. He's more than a match for any of us. He is for me, I confess."

"Then," said Mrs. Doria, "he does astonish me!"

Adrian begged her to retain her astonishment till the right season, which would not be long arriving.

Their common wisdom counselled them not to tell the Foreys of their hopeful relation's ungracious behaviour. Clare had left them. When Mrs. Doria went to her room, her daughter was there, gazing down at something in her hand, which she guiltily closed.

In answer to an inquiry why she had not gone to take off her things, Clare said she was not hungry. Mrs. Doria lamented the obstinacy of a constitution that no quantity of iron could affect, and eclipsed the looking-glass, saying: "Take them off here, child, and learn to assist yourself."

She disentangled her bonnet from the array of her spreading hair, talking of Richard, and his handsome appearance, and extraordinary con-

duct. Clare kept opening and shutting her hand, in an attitude half pensive, half listless. She did not stir to undress. A joyless dimple hung in one pale cheek, and she drew long even breaths.

Mrs. Doria, assured by the glass that she was ready to show, came to her daughter.

"Now really," she said, "you are too helpless, my dear. You cannot do a thing without a dozen women at your elbow. What will become of you? You will have to marry a millionaire.—What's the matter with you, child?"

Clare undid her tight-shut fingers, as if to some attraction of her eyes, and displayed a small gold hoop on the palm of a green glove.

"A Wedding-Ring!" exclaimed Mrs. Doria, inspecting the curiosity most daintily.

There on Clare's green glove lay a Wedding-Ring!

Rapid questions as to where, when, how, it was found, beset Clare, who replied: "In the Gardens, Mama. This morning. When I was walking behind Richard."

"Are you sure he did not give it you, Clare?"

"Oh no, Mama! he did not give it me."

"Of course not! only he does such absurd

things! I thought, perhaps—these boys are so exceedingly ridiculous!" Mrs. Doria had an idea that it might have been concerted between the two young gentlemen, Richard and Ralph, that the former should present this token of hymeneal devotion from the latter to the young lady of his love; but a moment's reflection exonerated boys even from such preposterous behaviour.

"Now, I wonder," she speculated on Clare's cold face, "I do wonder whether it's lucky to find a Wedding-Ring? What very quick eyes you have, my darling!" Mrs. Doria kissed her. She thought it must be lucky, and the circumstance made her feel tender to her child. Her child did not move to the kiss.

"Let's see whether it fits," said Mrs. Doria almost infantine with surprise and pleasure.

Clare suffered her glove to be drawn off. The Ring slid down her long thin finger, and settled comfortably.

"It does!" Mrs. Doria whispered. To find a Wedding-Ring is open to any woman; but to find a Wedding-Ring that fits may well cause superstitious emotions. Moreover, that it should be found while walking in the neighbourhood of

the identical youth whom a mother has destined for her daughter, gives significance to the gentle perturbation of ideas consequent on such a hint from Fortune.

"It really fits!" she pursued. "Now I never pay any attention to the nonsense of omens and that kind of thing" (had the Ring been a horse-shoe Mrs. Doria would have picked it up and dragged it obediently home), "but this, I must say, is odd—to find a Ring that fits!—singular! It never happened to me. Sixpence is the most I ever discovered, and I have it now. Mind you keep it, Clare—this Ring. And," she laughed, "offer it to Richard when he comes; say, you think he must have dropped it."

The dimple in Clare's cheek quivered.

Mother and daughter had never spoken explicitly of Richard. Mrs. Doria, by exquisite management, had contrived to be sure that on one side there would be no obstacle to her project of general happiness, without, as she thought, compromising her daughter's feelings unnecessarily. It could do no harm to an obedient young girl to hear that there was no youth in the world like a certain youth. He the Prince of his generation,

she might softly consent, when requested, to be his Princess; and, if never requested (for Mrs. Doria envisaged failure), she might easily transfer her softness to squires of lower degree. Clare had always been blindly obedient to her mother (Adrian called them, Mrs. Doria Battledoria and the fair Shuttlecockiana), and her mother accepted in this blind obedience the text of her entire character. It is difficult for those who think very earnestly for their children to know when their children are thinking on their own account. The exercise of their volition we construe as revolt. Our love does not like to be invalided and deposed from its command, and here I think yonder old thrush on the lawn who has just kicked the last of her lank offspring out of the nest to go shift for itself, much the kindest of the two, though sentimental people do shrug their shoulders at these unsentimental acts of the creatures who never wander from Nature. Now excess of obedience is, to one who manages most exquisitely, as bad as insurrection. Happily Mrs. Doria saw nothing in her daughter's manner save a want of iron. Her pallor, her lassitude, the tremulous nerves in her face, exhibited an imperious requirement of the mineral.

'The reason why men and women are mysterious to us, and prove disappointing,' we learn from the PILGRIM'S SCRIP, 'is, that we will read them from our own book: just as we are perplexed by reading ourselves from theirs.'

Mrs. Doria read her daughter from her own book, and she was gay; she laughed with Adrian at the breakfast-table, and mock-seriously joined in his jocose assertion that Clare was positively and by all hymeneal auspices betrothed to the owner of that Ring, be he who he may, and must, whenever he should choose to come and claim her, give her hand to him (for everybody agreed the owner must be masculine, as no *woman* would drop a Wedding-Ring), and follow him whither he listed all the world over. Amiable giggling Forey girls called Clare, The Betrothed. Dark man, or Fair? was mooted. Adrian threw off the first strophe of Clare's fortune in burlesque rhymes, with an insinuating gypsy twang. Her Aunt Forey warned her to have her dresses in readiness. Her Grandpapa Forey pretended to grumble at bridal presents being expected from grandpapas. This one smelt orange-flower, another spoke solemnly of an old

shoe. The Finding of a Wedding-Ring was celebrated through all the palpitating accessories and rosy ceremonies involved by that famous instrument. In the midst of the general hilarity, Clare showed her deplorable want of iron by bursting into tears.

Did the poor mocked-at heart divine what might be then enacting? Perhaps, dimly, as we say: that is, without eyes.

At an altar stand two fair young creatures, ready with their Oaths. They are asked to fix all time to the moment, and they do so. If there is hesitation at the immense undertaking, it is but maidenly. She conceives as little mental doubt of the sanity of the act as he. Over them hangs a cool young Curate in his raiment of office. Behind are two apparently lucid people, distinguished from each other by sex, and age: the foremost a bunch of simmering black satin, under her shadow a cock-robin in the dress of a gentleman, big joy swelling out his chest, and pert satisfaction cocking his head. These be they who stand here in place of parents to the young couple. All is well. The Service proceeds.

Firmly the bridegroom tells forth his words. This hour of the complacent Giant at least is his, and that he means to hold him bound through the Eternities, men may hear. Clearly, and with brave modesty, speaks she: no less firmly, though her body trembles: her voice just vibrating while the tone travels on, like a smitten vase.

Time hears sentence pronounced on him: the frail hands bind his huge limbs and lock the chains. He is used to it: he lets them do as they will.

Then comes that period when they are to give their troth to each other. The Man with his right hand takes the Woman by her right hand: the Woman with her right hand takes the Man by his right hand.—Devils dare not laugh at whom Angels crowd to contemplate.

Their hands are joined: their blood flows as one stream. Adam and Fair Eve front the generations. Are they not lovely? Purer fountains of Life were never in two bosoms.

And then they loose their hands, and the cool Curate doth bid the Man to put a Ring on the Woman's fourth finger. And the Man thrusts his hand into one pocket, and into another, for-

ward and back many times: into all his pockets. And his hand comes forth empty. And the Man is ghastly to look at!

Yet, though Angels smile, shall not Devils laugh! The Curate deliberates. The black-satin bunch ceases to simmer. He in her shadow changes from a beaming cock-robin to an inquisitive sparrow. Eyes multiply questions: lips have no reply. Time ominously shakes his chain, and in the pause a sound of mockery stings their ears.

Think ye a Hero one to be defeated in his first battle? Look at the clock! there are but seven minutes to the stroke of the celibate hours: the Veteran is surely lifting his two hands to deliver fire, and his shot will sunder them in twain so nearly united. All the Jewellers of London speeding down with sacks full of the Nuptial Circlet cannot save them!

The battle must be won on the field, and what does the Hero now? It is an inspiration! For who else would dream of such a reserve in the rear? None see what he does: only that the black-satin bunch is remonstratingly agitated, stormily shaken, and subdued: and as though

the menacing Cloud had opened, and dropped the dear token from the skies at his demand, he produces the Symbol of their consent, and the Service proceeds: 'With this Ring I thee wed.'

They are prayed over, and blest. For good, or for ill, this deed is done. The names are registered: fees fly right and left: they thank, and salute, the Curate, whose official coolness melts into a smile of monastic gallantry: the Beadle on the steps waves off a gaping world as they issue forth: bridegroom and bridesman recklessly scatter gold on him: carriage-doors are banged to: the coachmen drive off, and the scene closes, everybody happy.

CHAPTER XV.

CELEBRATES THE BREAKFAST.

And the next moment the Bride is weeping as if she would dissolve to one of Dian's Virgin Fountains from the clasp of the Sun-God. She has nobly preserved the mask imposed by Comedies, till the curtain has fallen, and now she weeps, streams with tears. Have patience, O impetuous young man! It is your profession to be a Hero. This poor heart is new to it, and her duties involve such wild acts, such brigandage, such terrors and tasks, she is quite unnerved. She did you honour till now. Bear with her now. She does not cry the cry of ordinary maidens in like cases. While the struggle went on her tender face was brave; but alas! Omens are against her: she holds an ever-present dreadful one on that fatal fourth finger of hers, that has coiled itself round her dream of delight, and takes her

in its clutch like a horrid Serpent. And yet she must love it. She dares not part from it. She must love and hug it, and feed on its strange honey, and all the bliss it gives her casts all the deeper shadow on what is to come.

Say. Is it not enough to cause feminine apprehension for a woman to be married in another woman's Ring?

You are amazons, ladies, at Saragossa, and a thousand citadels—wherever there is strife, and Time is to be taken by the throat. Then shall few men match your sublime fury. But what if you see a Vulture, visible only to yourselves, hovering over the house you are gaily led by the Torch to inhabit? Will you not crouch and be cowards?

As for the Hero, in the hour of Victory he pays no heed to Omens. He does his best to win his darling to confidence by caresses. Is she not his? Is he not hers? And why, when the battle is won, does she weep? Does she regret what she has done?

Oh, never! never! her soft blue eyes assure him, steadfast Love seen swimming on clear depths of Faith in them, through the shower.

He is silenced by her exceeding beauty, and sits perplexed, waiting for the shower to pass.

Alone with Mrs. Berry, in her bedroom, Lucy gave tongue to her distress, and a second character in the Comedy changed her face.

"Oh, Mrs. Berry! Mrs. Berry! what has happened! what has happened!"

"My darlin' child!" The bridal Berry gazed at the finger of doleful joy. "I'd forgot all about it! And that's what 've made me feel so queer ever since, then! I 've been seemin' as if I wasn't myself somehow, without my Ring. Dear! dear! what a wilful young gentleman! We ain't a match for men in that state—Lord help us!"

Mrs. Berry sat on the edge of a chair: Lucy on the edge of the bed.

"What do you think of it, Mrs. Berry? Is it not terrible?"

"I can't say I should 'a liked it myself, my dear," Mrs. Berry candidly responded.

"Oh! why, why, why did it happen!" the young bride bent to a flood of fresh tears, murmuring that she felt already old—forsaken.

"Haven't you got a comfort in your Religion for all accidents?" Mrs. Berry inquired.

"None for this. I know it's wrong to cry when I am so happy. I hope he will forgive me."

Mrs. Berry vowed her bride was the sweetest, softest, beautifulest thing in life.

"I'll cry no more," said Lucy. "Leave me, Mrs. Berry, and come back when I ring."

She drew forth a little silver cross, and fell upon her knees to the bed. Mrs. Berry left the room tiptoe.

When she was called to return, Lucy was calm and tearless, and smiled kindly to her.

"It's over now," she said.

Mrs. Berry sedately looked for her Ring to follow.

"He does not wish me to go in to the breakfast you have prepared, Mrs. Berry. I begged to be excused. I cannot eat."

Mrs. Berry very much deplored it, as she had laid out a superior nuptial breakfast, but with her mind on her Ring she nodded assentingly.

"We shall not have much packing to do, Mrs. Berry."

"No, my dear. It's pretty well all done."

"We are going to the Isle of Wight, Mrs. Berry."

"And a very suitable spot ye've chose, my dear!"

"He loves the sea. He wishes to be near it."

"Don't ye cross tonight, if it's anyways rough, my dear. It isn't advisable," Mrs. Berry sank her voice to say, "Don't ye be soft and give way to him there, or you'll both be repenting it."

Lucy had only been staving off the unpleasantness she had to speak. She saw Mrs. Berry's eyes pursuing her Ring, and screwed up her courage at last.

"Mrs. Berry."

"Yes, my dear."

"Mrs. Berry, you shall have another Ring."

"Another, my dear?" Berry did not comprehend. "One's quite enough for the objeck," she remarked.

"I mean," Lucy touched her fourth finger, "I cannot part with this." She looked straight at Mrs. Berry.

That bewildered creature gazed at her, and at the Ring, till she had thoroughly exhausted the meaning of the words, and then exclaimed, horror-struck: "Deary me, now? you don't say that?"

The young wife repeated: "I never can part with it."

"But, my dear!" the wretched Berry wrung her hands, divided between compassion and a sense of injury. "My dear!" she kept expostulating like a mute.

"I know all that you would say, Mrs. Berry. I am very grieved to pain you. It is mine now, and must be mine. I cannot give it back."

There she sat, suddenly developed to the most inflexible little Heroine in the Three Kingdoms.

From her first perception of the meaning of the young bride's words, Mrs. Berry, a shrewd physiognomist, knew that her case was hopeless, unless she treated her as she herself had been treated, and seized the Ring by force of arms; and that she had not heart for.

"What!" she gasped faintly, "one's own lawful Wedding-Ring you wouldn't give back to a body?"

"Because it is mine, Mrs. Berry. It was yours, but it is mine now. You shall have whatever you ask for but that. Pray forgive me! It must be so."

Mrs. Berry rocked on her chair, and sounded

her hands together. It amazed her that this soft little creature could be thus firm. She tried argument.

"Don't ye know, my dear, it's the fatalest thing you're inflictin' upon me, reelly! Don't ye know that bein' bereft of one's own lawful Wedding-Ring's the fatalest thing in life, and there's no prosperity after it! For what stands in place o' that, when that's gone, my dear? And what *could* ye give me to compensate a body for the loss o' that? Don't ye know—Oh, deary me!" The little bride's face was so set that poor Berry wailed off in despair.

"I know it," said Lucy. "I know it all. I know what I do to you. Dear, dear Mrs. Berry! forgive me! If I parted with my Ring I know it would be fatal."

So this fair young freebooter took possession of her argument as well as her Ring.

Berry racked her distracted wits for a further appeal.

"But, my child," she counterargued, "you don't understand. It ain't as you think it. It ain't a hurt to you now. Not a bit, it ain't. It makes no difference now! Any Ring does while

the wearer's a Maid. And your Mr. Richard 'll find the very Ring he intended for ye. And, of course, that's the one you'll wear as his wife. It's all the same now, my dear. It's no shame to a Maid. Now do—now do—there's a darlin'!"

Wheedling availed as little as argument.

"Mrs. Berry," said Lucy, "you know what my —he spoke: 'With this Ring I thee wed.' It was with *this* Ring. Then how could it be with another?"

Berry was constrained despondently to acknowledge that was logic.

She hit upon an artful conjecture:

"Won't it be unlucky you're wearin' of that Ring which served me so? Think o' that!"

"It may! it may! it may!" cried Lucy.

"And arn't you rushin' into it, my dear?"

"Mrs. Berry," Lucy said again, "it was this Ring. It cannot—it never can be another. It was this. What it brings me I must bear. I shall wear it till I die!"

"Then what am *I* to do?" the ill-used woman groaned. "What shall I tell my husband when he come back to me, and see I've got a new

Ring waitin' for him? Won't that be a welcome?"

Quoth Lucy: "How can he know it is not the same, in a plain gold Ring?"

"You never see so keen a eyed man in joolry as my Berry!" returned his solitary spouse. "Not know, my dear? Why, any one would know that 've got eyes in his head. There's as much difference in Wedding-Rings as there's in Wedding People! Now, do pray be reasonable, my own sweet!"

"Pray do not ask me," pleads Lucy.

"Pray do think better of it," urges Berry.

"Pray, pray, Mrs. Berry!" pleads Lucy.

"—And not leave your old Berry all forlorn just when you're so happy!"

"Indeed I would not, you dear kind old creature!" Lucy faltered.

Mrs. Berry thought she had her.

"Just when you're going to be the happiest wife on earth—all you want yours!" she pursued the tender strain. "A handsome young gentleman! Love and Fortune smilin' on ye!" . . .

Lucy rose up.

"Mrs. Berry," she said, "I think we must not

lose time in getting ready, or he will be impatient."

Poor Berry surveyed her in abject wonder from the edge of her chair. Dignity and resolve were in the ductile form she had hitherto folded under her wing. In an hour the Heroine had risen to the measure of the Hero. Without being exactly aware what creature she was dealing with, Berry acknowledged to herself it was not one of the common run, and sighed, and submitted.

"It's like a Divorce, that it is!" she sobbed.

After putting the corners of her apron to her eyes, Berry bustled humbly about the packing. Then Lucy, whose heart was full to her, came and kissed her, and Berry bumped down and regularly cried. This over, she had recourse to fatalism.

"I suppose it was to be, my dear! It's my punishment for meddlin' with such matters. No, I'm not sorry. Bless ye both! Who 'd 'a thought you was so wilful?—you that any one might have taken for one of the silly-softs! You're a pair, my dear! indeed you are! You was made to meet! But we musn't show him we've been crying.—Men don't like it when

they're happy. Let's wash our faces and try to bear our lot."

So saying the black-satin bunch careened to a renewed deluge. She deserved some sympathy, for if it is sad to be married in another person's Ring, how much sadder to have one's own old accustomed lawful Ring violently torn off one's finger and eternally severed from one! But where you have Heroes and Heroines, these terrible complications ensue.

They had now both fought their Battle of the Ring, and with equal honour and success.

In the Chamber of Banquet Richard was giving Ripton his last directions. Though it was a private wedding Mrs. Berry had prepared a sumptuous breakfast. Chickens offered their breasts: Pies hinted savoury secrets: things mystic, in a mash, with Gallic appellatives, jellies, creams, fruits, strewed the table: as a tower in the midst, the Cake colossal: the priestly vesture of its nuptial white relieved by hymeneal splendours.

Many hours, much labour and anxiety of mind, Mrs. Berry had expended upon this breakfast, and why? There is one who comes to all

feasts that have their basis in Folly, whom criminals of trained instinct are careful to provide against: who will speak, and whose hateful voice must somehow be silenced while the feast is going on. This personage is THE PHILOSOPHER. Mrs. Berry knew him. She knew that he would come. She provided against him in the manner she thought most efficacious: that is, by cheating her eyes and intoxicating her conscience with the due and proper glories incident to Weddings where fathers dilate, mothers collapse, and marriage settlements are flourished on high by the family lawyer: and had there been no show of the kind to greet her on her return from the Church, she would, and she foresaw she would, have stared at squalor and emptiness, and repented her work. The Philosopher would have laid hold of her by the ear, and called her bad names. Entrenched behind a breakfast-table so legitimately adorned, Mrs. Berry defied him. In the presence of that Cake he dared not speak above a whisper. And there were wines to drown him in, should he still think of protesting; fiery wines, and cool: claret sent purposely by the bridegroom for the delectation of his friend.

For one good hour, therefore, the labour of many hours kept him dumb. Ripton was fortifying himself so as to forget him altogether, and the world as well, till the next morning. Ripton was excited, overdone with delight. He had already finished one bottle, and listened, pleasantly flushed, to his emphatic, and more abstemious, Chief. He had nothing to do but to listen, and to drink. The Hero would not allow him to shout Victory! or hear a word of toasts; and as, from the quantity of oil poured on it, his eloquence was becoming a natural force in his bosom, the poor fellow was afflicted with a sort of elephantiasis of suppressed emotion. At times he half rose from his chair and fell vacuously into it again; or he chuckled in the face of weighty, severely-worded, instructions; tapped his chest, stretched his arms, yawned, and in short behaved so singularly that Richard observed it, and said: "On my soul, I don't think you know a word I'm saying."

"Every word, Ricky!" Ripton spirted through the opening. "I'm going down to your Governor, and tell him: Sir Austin! Here's your only chance of being a happy father—no, no!—

Oh! don't you fear me, Ricky! I shall talk the old gentleman over. I feel tremendous! I feel, upon my honour, Ricky, I feel as if nobody *coul'* resis' me!" Ripton stamped his might on the table. I shall tell him the whole affair point-blank. I can tell you that if it comes to argument tween us, I can lay on the man who 'll have the best of it. I shall tell him I was a witness. And I hope, Sir Austin, in a year's time you 'll have best witness of all, Sir!—jolly 'ittle grandson!" Ripton's head went roguishly to right and left, and he emptied his glass at a draught.

Richard arrested his resumption of speech, and he continued slowly to fizz like an ill-corked effervescence, while his Chief said:

"Look here. You had better not go down tonight. Go down the first thing tomorrow—by the six o'clock train. Give him my letter. Listen to me—give him my letter, and don't speak a word till he speaks. His eyebrows will go up and down; he won't say much. I know him. If he asks you about her, don't be a fool, but say what you think of her sensibly—"

No cork could hold in Ripton when she was alluded to. He shouted: "She 's an Angel!"

Richard checked him: "Speak sensibly, I say —quietly. You can say how gentle and good she is—my fleur-de-luce! And say, this was not her doing. If any one's to blame, it's I. I made her marry me.—Then go to Lady Blandish, if you don't find her at the house. You may say whatever you please to her. Give her my letter, and tell her I want to hear from her immediately. She has seen Lucy, and I know what she thinks of her. You will then go to farmer Blaize. I told you Lucy happens to be his niece—she has not lived long there. She lived with her Aunt Desborough in France while she was a child, and can hardly be called a relation to the farmer—there's not a point of likeness between them. Poor darling! she never knew her mother. Go to Mr. Blaize, and tell him. You will treat him just as you would treat any other gentleman. If you are civil, he is sure to be. And if he abuses me, for my sake and hers you will still treat him with respect. You hear? And then write me a full account of all that has been said and done. You will have my address the day after tomorrow. By the way, Tom will be here this afternoon. Write out for

him where to call on you the day after tomorrow, in case you have heard anything in the morning you think I ought to know at once, as Tom will join me that night. Don't mention to anybody about my losing the Ring, Ripton. I wouldn't have Adrian get hold of that for a thousand pounds. How on earth I came to lose it!—How well she bore it, Rip! How beautifully she behaved!"

Ripton again shouted: "She's an Angel!" He endeavoured to get a leap beyond the Angels, but being of tame imagination those commonplace hosts had to stand for what he felt. Throwing up the heels of his second bottle, he said:

"You may trust your friend, Richard. Your oldest friend, Ricky!—Eh? A cool head and a heart in the right place! A man who'd want to drink better wine than this—he'd bet' not drink any 't all. I think I was hem!—marking that we know what wine is. Talking of old Blaize, ain't it odd we should be drinking cleret 'gether, just married? I mean, when you come to think of it, Ricky? It strikes me 's odd. But as for your thinking there 'll be much fuss, you know, there you 're wrong. Let's have s' more cleret."

Richard hospitably opened another bottle for him, and sat knocking his finger-nails on his teeth, impatient for the bride, while Ripton freely flowed forth. In spite of the innocuousness of claret, his words were displaying an oily tendency to run into one another, and his eyes were growing vivaciously stupid.

"Strikes me, Richard, every fresh bottle's better than one before. Well, I was saying, you know, I shall make all right with your father. Oh! *he* won't stand out after a little talking. And mind you, Mr. Ricky, I *can* talk! I ought to have gone the Bar, you know. Fancy me in off'ces! Aha! Why, they haven't got so many good fellows at the Bar that they should keep me in off'ces.—cleret! cleret I keep saying: —claret, Sir! 'Minds me of Gravelkind. I'm always making 'stakes of that sort. Best of it is, it never 'fects you. You may drink as much as ever you like, and it never 'fects you. Gentleman's wine! When I'm in practice, you know, I—I never drink anything else! I—I never drink anything else! Though if you ask me point-blank which I p'fer, why, I'd rather go the Bar. I'm an only son, you know, and a

mother and four sisters, and I must do as I'm tole. Ha! ha! that Letty! whar a face she'll make when she hears of it! sil' ittle thing!—ha! ha!—I do think this has been the jollies' day I ever knew! Behave, Sir? She did behave most beauriful! I hear her voice now—like that glass. Oh! I ain't going to get married. I can't see the girl to suit me. Tell you the truth, girls don't quite take to me—not in that way, you know. I don't know how to talk to them unless they begin, and look all right. It went as smooth, Ricky!—but lor! you're such a chap. You're sure to do it if you say you will. Aha! when you pulled at old Mrs. Berry, I didn't know what was up. I do wish you'd let me drink her health?"

"Here's to Penelope!" said Richard, just wetting his mouth. The carriage was at the door: a couple of dire organs, each grinding the same tune, and a vulture-scented itinerant band (from which not the secretest veiled Wedding can ever escape) worked harmoniously without in the production of discord, and the noise acting on his nervous state made him begin to fume and send in messages for his bride by the maid.

Ripton drank Penelope, and afterwards had an idea that Penelope did not mean Lucy. He tried to tell Richard that the health proposed was that of his lovely wife, but Richard had no ear for him, and let him mumble on. By and by the lovely wife presented herself dressed for her journey, and smiling from stained eyes.

Mrs. Berry was requested to drink some wine, which Ripton poured out for her, enabling Mrs. Berry thereby to measure his condition. Ripton's expressive bibulous invitation was: "Aha! Mrs. Berry!"

Penelope bowed and bumped her duty to them all. Richard and Lucy talked apart. Ripton balanced his body against the back of his chair. A notion possessed his nodding head that it devolved upon him to make a formal speech, and that now was the time. If ever the Old Dog was to enunciate in human language his devoted appreciation of Beauty, the occasion was present. But how was he to fashion his phrases? Notwithstanding the state he was in, his sincere homage caused him to be critical of his capabilities: and then his brain whirled: innumerable phantom forms of sentences with a promise of glow-

ing periods, offered their heads to him, and immediately cut themselves off from all consequence, so that he was afraid to commence. Speaking, moreover, he found to affect his balance. It became a problem whether he should talk, or retain his perpendicular. His latent sense of propriety counselled him not to risk it, and he stood mute, looking like a Mask of ancient Comedy, beneath which general embracing took place. The bride kissed Mrs. Berry, Mrs. Berry kissed the bridegroom, on the plea of her softness. Ripton's long tight smile elaborated as the mad idea, engendered by these proceedings, of claiming certain privileges due to him in his character of bridesman, flashed across him. Some one noticed that the Cake had not been cut, and his attention was drawn to the cake, and he fell upon it, literally, rising sufficiently ashamed not to dare to look in the fair bride's face, much more to claim a privilege. Lucy, however, gave him her hand, with a musical: "Good bye, Mr. Ripton," and her extreme graciousness made him just sensible enough to sit down before he murmured his fervent hopes for her happiness.

"I shall take good care of him," said Mrs.

Berry, focussing her eyes to the comprehension of the company.

"Farewell, Penelope!" cries Richard. "I shall tell the Police everywhere to look out for him."

"Oh! no fear, my dears! he'll return. Good bye! and Heaven bless ye both!"

Berry quavers, touched with compunction at the thoughts of approaching loneliness. Ripton, his mouth drawn like a bow to his ears, brought up the rear to the carriage, receiving a fair slap on the cheek from an old shoe precipitated by Mrs. Berry's enthusiastic female domestic.

White handkerchiefs were waved: the adieux had fallen to signs: they were off. Then did a thought of such urgency illumine Mrs. Berry, that she telegraphed, hands in air, awakening Ripton's lungs, for the coachman to stop, and ran back to the house. Richard chafed to be gone, but at his bride's intercession he consented to wait. Presently they beheld the old black-satin bunch stream through the street-door, down the bit of garden, and up the astonished street, halting, panting, capless at the carriage-door, a book in her hand,—a much-used, dog-leaved, steamy, greasy, book, which, at the same time

calling out in breathless jerks, "There! never ye mind looks! I ain't got a new one. Read it, and don't ye forget it!" she discharged into Lucy's lap, and retreated to the railings, a signal for the Coachman to drive away for good.

How Richard laughed at the Berry's bridal gift! Lucy, too, lost the Omen at her heart as she glanced at the title of the volume. It was Dr. Kitchener on Domestic Cookery! Mrs. Berry's beloved private copy, with the wisdom contained in which she trusted to allure back to home and its duties the wandering Ulysses of Footmen.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PHILOSOPHER APPEARS IN PERSON.

General withdrawing of heads from street-windows, emigration of organs and bands, and a relaxed atmosphere in the circle of Mrs. Berry's abode, proved that Dan Cupid had veritably flown to suck the life of fresh regions. With a pensive mind she grasped Ripton's arm to regulate his steps, and returned to the room where her Creditor awaited her. In the interval he had stormed her undefended fortress, the Cake, from which altitude he shook a dolorous head at the guilty woman. She smoothed her excited apron, sighing. Let no one imagine that she regretted her complicity. She was ready to cry torrents, but there must be absolute castigation before this criminal shall conceive the sense of regret; and probably then she will cling to her wickedness the more,—such is the Born Pagan's tena-

city! Mrs. Berry sighed, and gave him back his shake of the head. O you wanton improvident creature! said he. O you very wise old gentleman! said she. He asked her the thing she had been doing. She enlightened him with the fatalist's reply. He sounded a Bogey's Alarum of contingent grave results. She retreated to the entrenched camp of the Fact she had helped to make. "It 's done!" she exclaimed. How could she regret what she felt comfort to know was done? Convinced that events alone could stamp a mark on such stubborn flesh, he determined to wait for them, and crouched silent on the Cake, with one finger downward at Ripton's incision there, showing a crumbling chasm and gloomy rich recess.

The eloquent indication was understood. "Dear! dear!" cried Mrs. Berry, "what a heap o' Cake, and no one to send it to!"

Ripton had resumed his seat by the table and his embrace of the claret. Clear ideas of satisfaction had left him and resolved to a boiling geyser of indistinguishable transports. He bubbled, and waggled, and nodded amicably to nothing, and successfully, though not without effort,

preserved his uppermost member from the seductions of the nymph, Gravitation, who was on the look-out for his whole length shortly.

"Ha! ha!" he shouted, about a minute after Mrs. Berry had spoken, and almost abandoned himself to the nymph on the spot. Mrs. Berry's words had just reached his wits.

"Why do you laugh, young man?" she inquired, familiar and motherly on account of his condition.

"Ha! hah!" Ripton laughed louder, and caught his chest on the edge of the table and his nose on a chicken. "That 's goo' !" he said, recovering, and rocking under Mrs. Berry's eyes. "No frien' send to? I like that!"

Mrs. Berry searched him with a glance. Perhaps the inebriate youth might let her into a few sweet particulars of this interesting business, denied to her by the wary bridegroom and his obedient bride, she thought. She wanted to have the stern father and cruel Uncle described to her; their stature, complexion, and annual net incomes; also their places of residence.

"I did not say, no friend," she remarked. "I said, no one: meanin,' I know not where for to send it to."

Ripton's response to this was: "You cut fair, Mizz Berry. There won't be much for 'em, I sh...'sure you. Take glass wine. Claret 's my my wine, Sh...herry 's yours. Why 'n't you put Richard's crez' on that Cake?—Mr. Richards hah! ha!—best fun the world!—Why 'n't you put a Griffin on that Cake, Mizz Berry? Wheat-sheaves each si'. Plenty 't means and Plenty te-te-'tis! I'm very fond of Heraldry," he added with a reflective visage, and fell half asleep upon the attachment.

"His Crest?" Mrs. Berry winningly waked him.

"Oldest Bar'netcy in England!" waved Ripton.

"Yes?" Mrs. Berry encouraged him on.

"Oldest Bar'netcy 'n England! If 'tisn't my name 's not Rip'm Thomps'—Es...quire. Gentleman, Ma'm, though he is arricled the Law. Take glass wine, M... Mizz Berry. Claret 's my wine, Sh...herry 's yours. This bom my third bod'l. What 's three to a gentleman, though he isn't a Bar'net's son with fifty th—housand a-year."

"Fifty thousand! My goodness gracious me!" ejaculated Mrs. Berry in flattering accents.

"Na a penny less, Ma'm! And I'm his oldts friend. Very near transp...orted once, drinking claret 'gether. Nev' 'fects you! Do take glass wine. Ha! ha! you think he's Richards. Nor a bir of it! No Bar'net Richards's I know. We're 'bliged be secret, Mizz Berry." Ripton looked profoundly secret. "Anything if 't's your own dedriment. That's Law, Mizz Berry. And 't's not his own dedri-ment. It's his delaight—ha! hah!"

Here Gravitation gave Ripton a strong pull. He just saved himself, and went on, with a hideous mimicry of the God of Secrecy: "We're oblige' be very close. And she's the most lovely!—If I hear man say thing 'gainst her, I... I knock 'm down! I.. I... I knock 'm down! She is such a poory creature!" he sang in falsetto.

"You needn't for to cry over her, young man," said Mrs. Berry, who was resolved to stop his claret the moment she had the secret, and indulged him for that sole object.

Ripton attempted the God of Secrecy again, but his lips would not protrude enough, and his eyebrows were disaffected. He laughed outright.

"Wha' 's it matter now? They're married, Sir. Wha' 've you be 'shamed of?—eh? I can talk! Here, I say, Mizz Berry! come—bumper! La'ies and gen'l'men! I rise 'pose toas' d—hay!"

Filling Mrs. Berry's glass, and his own, to overflowing, and again splitting the solitary female who formed his audience into two sexes, Ripton commanded Silence, and pendulously swayed over Mrs. Berry's lap in total forgetfulness of what he had ventured on his legs to celebrate. Aware that they did duty for some purpose, he shut his eyes to meditate, but at this congenial action densest oblivion enwrapped his senses, and he was in danger of coming into Mrs. Berry's lap head foremost; a calamity she averted by rising likewise, and shaking him roughly, which brought him back to visionary consciousness, when he sank into his chair, and mildly asked: "Wha'm I 'bout? That you, Mizz Berry?"

A little asperity was in her voice as she replied. "You were going to propose a toast. And then, young man, you'd better lie down a bit, and cool yourself. Do it sitting," she gesticulated peremptorily, "I'll open the bottle and fill your

glass for you. I declare you 're drinking it out of tumblers. It 's shocking! You 're never going to have another full tumbler?"

Ripton chivalrously insisted on a bumper. She filled it for him, under mental protest, for conscience pricked her. Ripton drained his bumper in emphatic silence.

"Young man, said Mrs. Berry severely, "I wanted for to drink their right healths by their right names, and then go about my day's work, and I do hope you won't keep me."

As if by miracle, Ripton stood bolt upright at her words. "You do?" he said, and filling another bumper he with cheerfully vinous articulation and glibness of tongue proposed the healths of Richard and Lucy Feverel, of Raynham Abbey! and that mankind should not require an expeditious example of the way to accept the inspiriting toast, he drained his bumper at a gulp. It finished him. The farthing-rushlight of his reason leapt and expired. He staggered to the sofa, and there stretched. Ripton was far from being in practice.

Some minutes subsequent to Ripton's signalization of his devotion to the bridal pair, Mrs.

Berry's maid entered the room to say that a gentleman was inquiring below after the young gentleman who had departed, and found her mistress with a tottering wineglass in her hand, exhibiting every symptom of unconsoled hysterics. Her mouth gaped, as if the fell Creditor had her by the swallow. She ejaculated with horrible exultation that she had been and done it, as her disastrous aspect seemed to testify, and her evident, but inexplicable, access of misery induced the sympathetic maid to tender those caressing words that were all Mrs. Berry wanted to go off into the self-caressing fit without delay; and she had already given the preluding demoniac ironic outburst, when the maid called Heaven to witness that the gentleman would hear her: upon which Mrs. Berry violently controlled her bosom, and ordered that he should be shown upstairs instantly to see her the wretch she was. She repeated the injunction.

"I'll be seen as I am!" screamed Mrs. Berry.

The maid did as she was told, and Mrs. Berry, wishing first to see herself as she was, mutely accosted the looking-glass, and tried to look a very little better. She dropped a shawl on

Ripton and was settled, smoothing her agitation when her visitor was announced.

The gentleman was Adrian Harley. An interview with Tom Bakewell had put him on the track, and now a momentary survey of the table, and its white-vestured Cake, made him whistle.

Mrs. Berry plaintively begged him to do her the favour to be seated.

"A fine morning, Ma'am," said Adrian.

"It have been!" Mrs. Berry answered, glancing over her shoulder at the window, and gulping as if to get her heart down from her mouth.

"A very fine Spring," pursued Adrian, calmly anatomizing her countenance.

Mrs. Berry smothered an adjective to "weather" on a deep sigh. Her wretchedness was palpable. In proportion to it Adrian waxed cheerful and brisk. He divined enough of the business to see that there was some strange intelligence to be fished out of the culprit who sat compressing hysterics before him; and as he was never more in his element than when he had a sinner, and a repentant prostrate abject sinner, in hand, his affable countenance might well deceive poor Berry.

"I presume these are Mr. Thompson's lodgings?" he remarked, with a look at the table.

Mrs. Berry's head and the whites of her eyes informed him that they were not Mr. Thompson's lodgings.

"No?" said Adrian, and threw a carelessly inquisitive eye about him. "Mr. Feverel is out, I suppose?"

A convulsive start at the name, and two corroborating hands dropped on her knees, formed Mrs. Berry's reply.

"Mr. Feverel's man," continued Adrian, "told me I should be certain to find him here. I thought he would be with his friend, Mr. Thompson. I'm too late, I perceive. Their entertainment is over. I fancy you have been having a party of them here, Ma'am?—bachelors' breakfast!"

In the presence of that Cake this observation seemed to mask an irony so shrewd that Mrs. Berry could barely contain herself. She felt she must speak. Making her face as deplorably propitiating as she could, she began:

"Sir, may I beg for to know your name?"

Mr. Harley accorded her request.

Groaning in the clutch of a pitiless truth, she continued:

"And you are Mr. Harley, that was—oh! and you've come for Mr. —?"

Mr. Richard Feverel was the gentleman Mr. Harley had come for.

"Oh! and it's no mistake, and he's of Raynham Abbey?" Mrs. Berry inquired.

Adrian, very much amused, assured her that he was born and bred there.

"His father's Sir Austin?" wailed the black-satin bunch from behind her handkerchief.

Adrian verified Richard's descent.

"Oh, then what have I been and done!" she cried, and stared blankly at her visitor. "I been and married my baby! I been and married the bread out of my own mouth! Oh, Mr. Harley! Mr. Harley! I knew you when you was a boy that big, and wore jackets; and all of you. And it's my softness that's my ruin, for I never can resist a man's asking. Look at that Cake, Mr. Harley!"

Adrian followed her directions quite coolly. "Wedding-Cake, Ma'am!" he said.

"Bride-Cake it is, Mr. Harley!"

"Did you make it yourself, Ma'am?"

The quiet ease of the question overwhelmed Mrs. Berry, and upset that train of symbolic representations by which she was seeking to make him guess the catastrophe and spare her the furnace of confession.

"I did not make it myself, Mr. Harley," she replied. "It's a bought Cake, and I'm a lost woman. Little I dreamed when I had him in my arms a baby that I should some day be marrying him out of my own house! I little dreamed that! Oh, why did he come to me! Don't you remember his old nurse, when he was a baby in arms, that went away se sudden, and no fault of her's, Mr. Harley! The very mornin' after the night you got into Mr. Benson's cellar, and got so tipsy on his Madeary—I remember it as clear as yesterday!—and Mr. Benson was that angry he threated to use the whip to you, and I helped put you to bed. I'm that very woman."

Adrian smiled placidly at these reminiscences of his guileless youthful life.

"Well, Ma'am! well?" he said. He would bring her to the furnace.

"Won't you see it all, kind Sir?" Mrs. Berry appealed to him in pathetic dumb show.

Doubtless by this time Adrian did see it all, and was mentally cursing at Folly, and reckoning the immediate consequences, but he looked uninstructed, his peculiar dimpled smile was undisturbed, his comfortable full-bodied posture was the same. "Well, Ma'am?" he spurred her on.

Mrs. Berry burst forth: "It were done this mornin', Mr. Harley, in the Church, at half-past e -leven of the clock, or twenty to, by license;" adding from the bottom of her voice, "and I've never a ring to show for it!"

Adrian was now obliged to comprehend a case of Matrimony. "Oh!" he said, like one who is as hard as facts, and as little to be moved: "Somebody was married this morning; was it Mr. Thompson, or Mr. Feverel?"

Mrs. Berry shuffled up to Ripton, and removed the shawl from him, saying: "Do he look like a new married bridegroom, Mr. Harley?"

Adrian inspected the oblivious Ripton with philosophic gravity.

"This young gentleman was at Church this morning?" he asked.

"Oh! he were quite reasonable and proper, then," Mrs. Berry begged him to understand.

"Of course, Ma'am." Adrian lifted and let fall the stupid inanimate limbs of the gone wretch, puckering his mouth queerly. "You were all reasonable and proper, Ma'am. The principal male performer, then, is my cousin, Mr. Feverel? He was married by you this morning by license, at your parish Church, and came here, and ate a hearty breakfast, and left intoxicated."

Mrs. Berry flew out. "He never drink a drop, Sir. A more moderate young gentleman you never see. Oh! don't ye think that now, Mr. Harley. He was as upright and master of his mind as you be."

"Ay!" the Wise Youth nodded thanks to her for the comparison, "I mean the other form of intoxication."

Mrs. Berry sighed. She could say nothing on that score.

Adrian desired her to sit down, and compose herself, and tell him circumstantially what had been done.

She obeyed, in utter perplexity at his perfectly composed demeanour.

Mrs. Berry, as her recital declared, was no other than that identical woman who once in old

days had dared to behold the Baronet behind his mask, and had ever since lived in exile from the Raynham world on a little pension, regularly paid to her as an indemnity. She was that woman, and the thought of it made her almost accuse Providence for the betraying excess of softness it had endowed her with. How was she to recognize her baby grown a man? He came in a feigned name: not a word of the family was mentioned. He came like an ordinary mortal, though she felt something more than ordinary towards him, she knew she did. He came bringing a beautiful young lady, and on what grounds could she turn her back on them? Why, seeing that all was chaste and legal, why *should* she interfere to make them unhappy? so few the chances of happiness in this world! Mrs. Berry related the seizure of her Ring.

"One wrench," said the sobbing culprit, "one wrench, and my Ring went off like my Berry!"

She had no suspicions, and she had therefore never thought of looking at the signatures in the Vestry-book.

"And it's fort'nate I didn't!" she exclaimed, "for out I should 'a shrieked there and then,

never mind where's the spot, to think I been and married my own baby unbeknown. Not till this Mr. Thompson proposed their healths tipsy by their right names, did I think—Feverel! Raynham Abbey! Oh! then I had been and married my baby! and so you found me, Mr. Harley, and I dare say I looked it."

"You looked as if you were suffering from a premature indigestion of Bride-Cake, Ma'am," said Adrian. "I dare say you were exceedingly sorry for what you had done."

"Indeed, Sir," dolorously moaned Berry, "I were, and am."

"And would do your best to rectify the mischief—eh, Ma'am?"

"Indeed, and indeed, Sir, I would!" she protested solemnly.

"—As, of course, you should—knowing the family. Where may these lunatics have gone to spend the Moon?"

Mrs. Berry swimmingly replied: "To the Isle o' ——I don't know, indeed, Sir!" she snapped the indication short, and jumped out of the pit she had fallen into. Repentant as she might be, those dears should not be pursued and cruelly

baulked of their young bliss! Tomorrow, if you please, Mr. Harley: not today!

"A pleasant spot," Adrian observed, smiling at his easy prey.

By a measurement of dates he discovered that the bridegroom had brought his bride to the house on the day he had quitted Raynham, and and this was enough to satisfy Adrian's mind that there had been concoction and chicanery. Chance, probably, had brought him to the old woman: Chance certainly had not brought him to the young one.

"Very well, Ma'am," he said, in answer to her petitions for his favourable offices with Sir Austin in behalf of her little pension, and the bridal pair, "I will tell him you were only a blind agent in the affair, being naturally soft, and that you trust he will bless the consummation. He will be in Town tomorrow morning; but one of you two must see him tonight. An emetic kindly administered will set our friend here on his legs. A bath, and a clean shirt, and he might go. I don't see why your name should appear at all. Brush him up, and send him to Bellingham by the seven o'clock train. He will find his way to

Raynham; he knows the neighbourhood in the dark. Let him go and state the case. Remember, one of you must go."

With this fair prospect of leaving a choice of perdition between the couple of unfortunates, for them to fight and lose all their virtues over, Adrian said, "Good morning."

Mrs. Berry touchingly arrested him. "You won't refuse a piece of his Cake, Mr. Harley?"

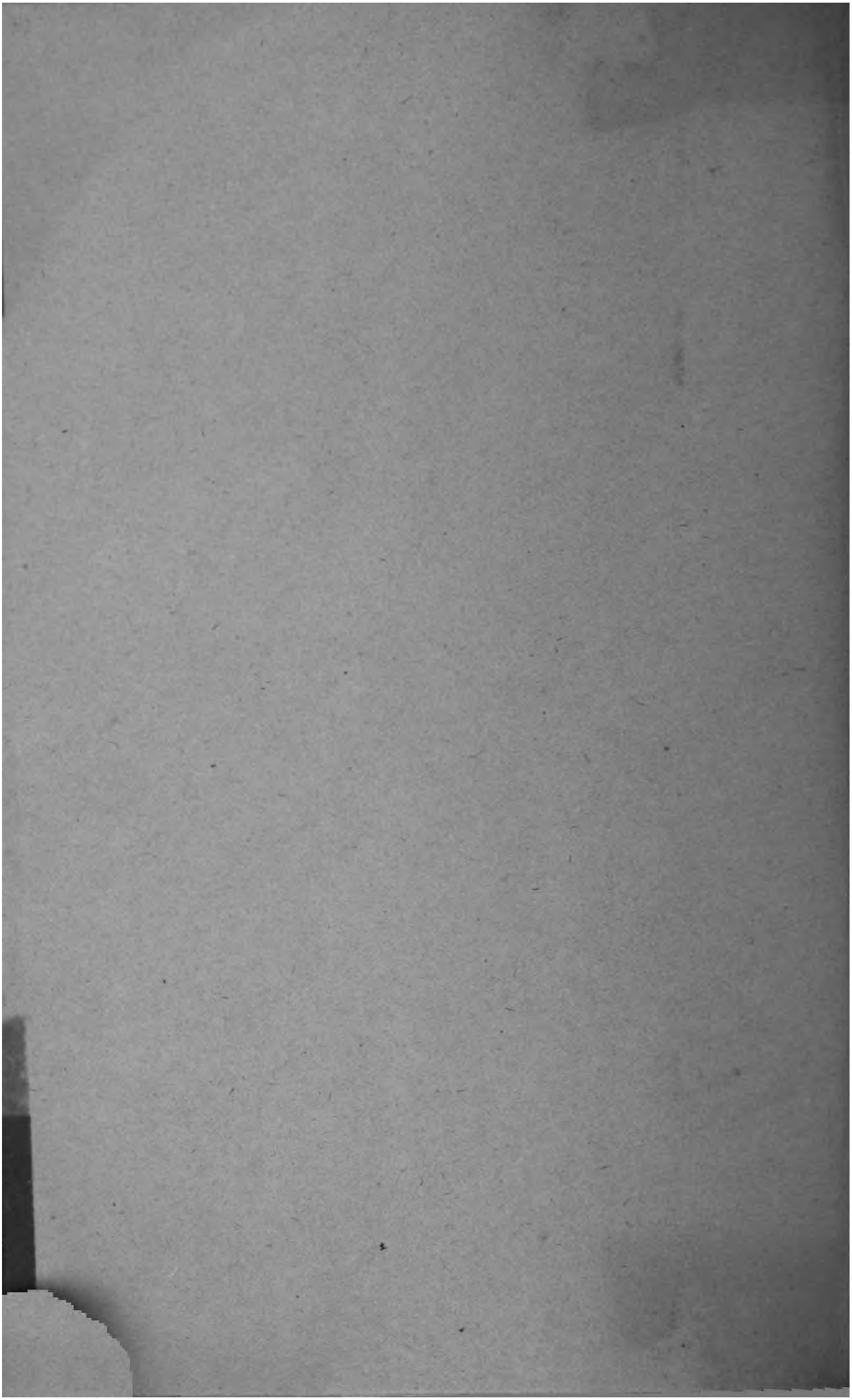
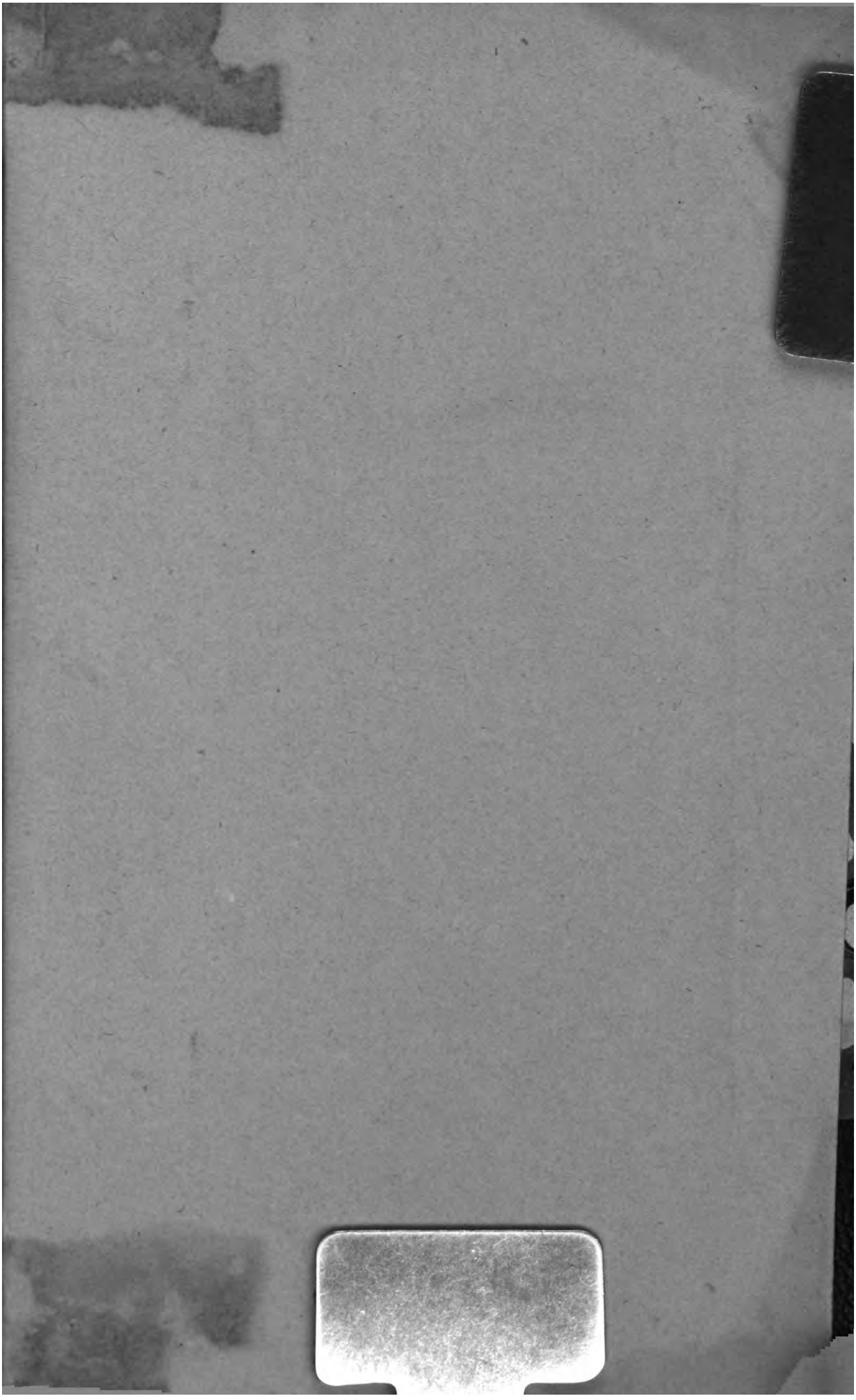
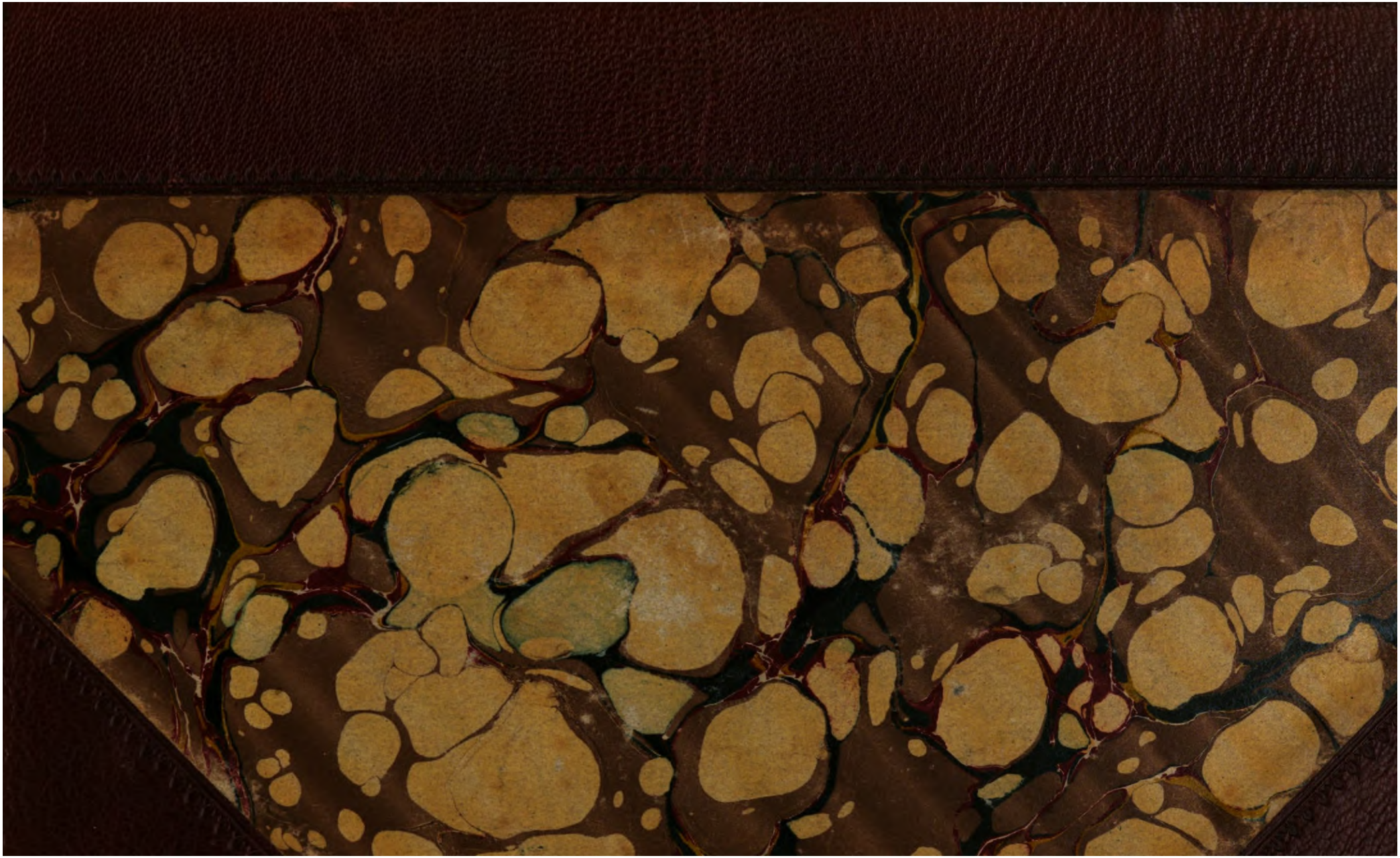
"Oh, dear no, Ma'am." Adrian turned to the Cake with alacrity. "I shall claim a very large piece. Richard has a great many friends who will rejoice to eat his Wedding-Cake. Cut me a fair quarter, Mrs. Berry. Put it in paper, if you please. I shall be delighted to carry it to them, and apportion it equitably according to their several degrees of relationship.

Mrs. Berry cut the Cake. Somehow, as she sliced through it, the sweetness and hapless innocence of the bride was presented to her, and she launched into eulogies of Lucy, and clearly showed how little she regretted her conduct. She vowed that they seemed made for each other: that both were beautiful: both had spirit: both were innocent: and to part them, or make them

unhappy, would be, Mrs. Berry wrought herself to cry aloud, Oh, such a pity!

Adrian listened to it as the expression of a matter-of-fact opinion. He took the huge quarter of Cake, nodded multitudinous promises, and left Mrs. Berry to bless his good heart.

"So dies the System!" was Adrian's comment in the street. "And now let prophets roar! He dies respectably in a marriage-bed, which is more than I should have foretold of the Monster. Meantime," he gave the Cake a dramatic tap, "I'll go sow nightmares."

END OF VOLUME II.

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