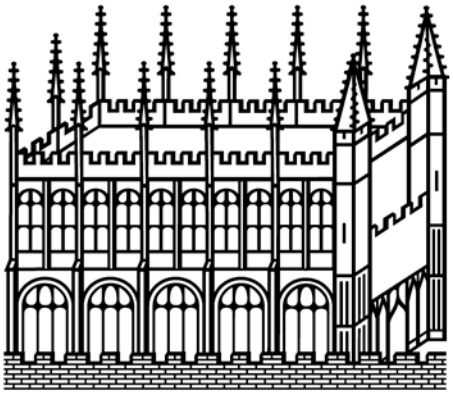

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CRADOCK NOWELL.

A Tale of the New Forest.

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CRADOCK AND AMY IN THE CHURCHYARD. [*p.* 146.

CRADOCK NOWELL.

A Tale of the New Forest.

[DILIGENTLY REVISED AND RESHAPEN.]

BY

RICHARD DODDRIDGE BLACKMORE,
AUTHOR OF "LORNA DOONE," ETC.

"You have said: whether wisely or no, let the forest judge."
AS YOU LIKE IT. Act iii. Scene 2.

London:
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, LOW, & SEARLE,
CROWN BUILDINGS, 188, FLEET STREET.
1873.

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PREFACE TO REVISED EDITION.

THE writer has laid his hand to a task somewhat unusual and unpleasant, as well as very difficult—no less a task than to mend his faults by the light of adverse criticism.

For he found his reviewers, upon the whole, so nearly of one opinion, that only a coxcomb could impugn a verdict so decisive. "Two or three virtues and a score of vices," is that verdict's summary. The descriptive parts were said to be good, the characters distinctly drawn, the style original, and the plot well conceived and striking. But these merits were more than balanced by "obscurity, want of proportion, crudeness, imperfect development, pedantry, involution of diction, prolixity, inner consciousness," and manifold other portentous faults understanded of reviewers.

Confessing the truth of all these findings, save "pedantry"—which he has not even learning enough to simulate—the present writer has done his best to mend the error of his ways. A new book might have been written while this old one was a-mending; but half the value of discipline consists in mortification. If this lesson imparts to the writer more self-control and less self-content, more breadth of view and less petulance, he may, in length of time, attain the reward of much revision—the power of affording pleasure upon reperusal.

R. D. B.

1873.

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CRADOCK NOWELL.

CHAPTER I.

A HOUSE AMONG THE WOODLANDS.

WITHIN the New Forest, and not far from its western boundary, as defined by the second perambulation of the good King Edward the First, stands the old mansion of the Nowells, the Hall of Nowelhurst. Not content with mere exemption from all feudal service, their estate claims privileges, both by grant and custom. The benefit of Morefall trees in six walks of the forest, the right of digging marl, and turbary illimitable, common of pannage, and licence of drawing akermast, pastime even of hawking over some parts of the Crown land,—all these have been preserved by careful stewards at due interval. With many of these privileges the Royal Commissioners will deal in a spirit of scant courtesy, when the Nowell influence is lost in the neighbouring boroughs; but as yet these claims have not been treated like those of some poor commoners.

And if the rights of that ancient family are ever called in question, some there are which will require a special act to abolish them. For Charles the Second, of merry memory (saddened somewhat of late years), espied among the maids of honour an uncommonly pretty girl, whose name was Frances Nowell. He suddenly remembered, what had hitherto quite escaped him, how old Sir Cradock Nowell—beautiful Fanny's father—had saved him from a pike-thrust during Cromwell's "crowning mercy." In gratitude, of course, for this, he began to pay most warm attentions to the Hampshire maiden. He propitiated that ancient knight

with the only boon he craved—craved hitherto all in vain—a plenary grant of easements in the neighbourhood of his home. Soon as the charter had received the royal seal and signature, the old gentleman briskly thrust it away in the folds of his velvet mantle. Then taking the same view of gratitude which his liege and master took, home he went without delay to secure his privileges. When the king heard of his departure, without any kissing of hands, he was in no wise disconcerted; it was the very thing he had intended. But when he heard that lovely Fanny was gone in the same old rickety coach, even ere he began to whisper, and with no leave of the queen, His Majesty swore his utmost for nearly half an hour. Then having spent his fury, he laughed at the "sell," as he would have called it if the slang had been invented, and turned his royal attention to another of his wife's young maidens.

Nowelhurst Hall looks too respectable for any loose doings of any sort. It stands well away from the weeping of trees, like virtue shy of sentiment, and therefore has all the wealth of foliage shed, just where it pleases, around it. From a rising ground the house has sweet view of all the forest changes, and has seen three hundred springs wake in glory, and three hundred autumns waning. Spreading away from it wider, wider, slopes "the Chase," as they call it, with great trees stretching paternal arms in the vain attempt to hold it. For two months of the twelve, when the heather is in blossom, all that chase is a glowing reach of amaranth and purple. Then it fades away to pale orange, dim olive, and a rusty brown when Christmas shudders over it; and so throughout young green and russet, till the July tint comes back again. Oftentimes in the fresh spring morning the blackcocks—"heathpoults" as they call them—lift their necks in the livening heather, swell their ruffing breasts, and crow for their rivals to come and spar with them. Down the slope the thickening trees assemble into a massive wood, tufted here and there with hues of a varying richness; but for the main of it, swelling and waving, crisping, fronding, feathering, coying, and darkening here and there, until it reaches the silver mirror of the spreading sea. And the seaman, looking upwards from the war-ship bound for tropic countries, looking back at his native land, for the last of all times it may be, over brushwood waves, and billows of trees, and the long heave of the gorse-land cries aloud, "I shall see no sight like that, till I come home again."

South-west of the house, half a mile away, and scattered along the warren, the simple village of Nowelhurst digests its own ideas. In and out the houses stand, endwise, crossways, akimbo, anyhow except upside down, and some even tending that way. It looks like a game of dominoes, when the leaves of the table have opened and gaped betwixt the players. Nevertheless, it is all good

English ; for none are bitterly poor there ; in any case of illness, they have the great house to help them, not proudly, but with feeling ; and, more than this, they have a parson who leads instead of driving them. There are two little shops exceedingly anxious to under-sell each other, and one mild alehouse conducted upon the very lowest chemical, but the highest moral principles. Morality under pressure, a cynic perhaps might call it, for the publican knows, and so do his customers, that if poachers were encouraged there, or any uproarious doings permitted (except in the week of the old and new year), down would come his licence-board, like a flag hauled in at sunset.

Pleasant folk, who there do dwell, calling their existence "life," and on the whole enjoying it more than many of us do ; forasmuch as they know their neighbours far better than themselves, and perceive each other's need of trial, and console him when he gets it. What village, hamlet, or even house has not its little bickerings? Good will, however, and sympathy grow warmer after peppering.

Nowelhurst village is not on the main road, but keeps a straggling companionship with a quiet parish highway which requires much encouragement. This little highway does its best to blink the many difficulties, or, if that may not be, to compromise them, and establish a pleasant footing upon its devious wandering course from the Lymington road to Ringwood. Here it retires to escape the frown of a heavy-browed crest of furzery, and then it returns and shrinks into its sides, because a little stream has babbled at it. It even seems to dip, or jump, as the courtesies may demand, for fear of prying into an old oak's storey or dusting a cottage-garden. The hard-hearted traveller who lives express, and is bound for the train at Ringwood, blesses amiss, both up hill and down dale, the quiet lane's inconsistency. What right has any road to do any thing but go straight on end to its purpose? What decent lane stops for a gossip with flowers—flowers overhanging the steep ascent, or eavesdropping on the rabbit-holes? And as for the beauty of ferns—confound them, they shelter the horse-fly—that horrible forest-fly, whose tickling no civilized horse can endure. Even locusts he has heard of as abounding in the New Forest ; and if a swarm of them comes this very hot weather, good-bye to him, horse and trap, newest patterns, sweet plaid, and chaste things.

But we who carry no chronometer, neither puff locomotively—now he is round the corner—let us saunter down this lane beyond the mark-oak and the blacksmith's, even to the sandy rise whence the Hall is seen. The rabbits are peeping forth again, for the dew is spreading quietude : the sun has just finished a good day's work and is off for the western waters. Over the rounded heads and bosses, and then the darker dimples of the many-coloured foliage—many-coloured even now with summer's glory fusing it—

over heads and shoulders, and breasts of heaving green, floods the lucid amber, trembling at its own beauty, and now descends the leniency of the July sun. Now every moment has its difference. Having once acknowledged that he may have been too downright in his ride of triumph, the sun, like every generous nature, scatters broadcast his amends. Over holt, and knoll, and lea, and narrow dingle, scooped with shadow where the brook is wimpling, and through the breaks of grass and gravel, where the heather purples, scarcely yet in prime flush, and down the tall wood overhanging, mossed and lichened, green and grey, as the grove of Druids—over, through, and under all flows pervading sunset. Then the birds begin discoursing of the thoughts within them—thoughts that are all happiness, and thrill and swell in utterance. Through the voice of the thicket-birds—the mavis, the whinchats, and the warblers —comes the tap of the yaffingale, the sharp, short cry of the honey-buzzard above the squirrel's cage, and the plaining of the turtle-dove.

But from birds and flowers, winding roads and woods, and waters where the trout are leaping, come we back to the only thing that interests a man much—the life, the doings, and the endings of his fellow-men. From this piece of yellow lane, where the tree-roots twist and wrestle, we can see the great old house, winking out of countless windows, deep with sloping shadows, mantling back from the clasp of the forest, in a stately, sad reserve. It looks like a house that can endure and not talk about affliction, that could disclose some tales of passion were it not undignified, that remembers many a generation, and is mildly sorry for them. Oh! house of the Nowells, grey with shadow, wrapped in lonely grandeur, cold with the dews of evening and the tone of sylvan nightfall, never through twenty generations have you known a darker fortune than is lowering now around you, growing through the summer months, deepening ere the leaves drop! All men, we know, are born for trial, to work, to bear, to purify; but some there are whom God has marked for sorrow from their cradle. And strange as it appears to us, whose image is inverted, almost always these are they who seem to lack no probation. The gentle and the large of heart, the meek and unpretending, yet gifted with a rank of mind that needs no self-assertion, trebly vexed in this wayfaring, may they not be blest tenfold in the everlasting equipoise?

So there is a grander time for gazing at that same old house, than even the young flush of spring, or warm plenitude of July. It is the nobility of October, when the calm of resignation rests upon the time-worn woods: when the weary trees accept the touch of autumn sweetly, all with divers lines of oval, and the different depths of tint, spreading at a distance one great pomp of rival harmony.

If we stand here, and from great things turn our eyes to little ones, we can see the congregation of that ancient country church, crossing the narrow bridge this lovely Sunday evening, toward the cottage homestead. The church and churchyard are put well away, as respect for religion ordains of us: the power of the parson's words has not departed from the docile, solid, and faithful West-Saxon mind. Yet are these folk talking briskly, when they ought to be meditating.

The question is, when Lady Nowell will give an heir to the name, the house, the village, the estates, worth fifty thousand a year—an heir long time expected, hoped for in vain through six long years, now reasonably looked for. All the matrons have settled that it must be on a Sunday; every body knows that Sunday is the day for birth and battle. Therefore all good women fixed it for that same day fortnight. But while they were all agreeing exactly how it should come to pass—behold, it was over, and two fine fellows were added to the population.

CHAPTER II.

WEIGHED AND FOUND WANTING.

"WHISHTREW, whishtrew, every bit of me! Whativer will I do, God knows. The blue ribbon there forenint me, and the blessed infants one to aich side!"

The good nurse fell against a chest of drawers, as she uttered this loud lament; the colour ebbed from her cherry cheeks, and her sturdy form shook with terror. She had scarcely turned her back, she could swear, upon her precious charges; and now only look at the murder of it! Two little cots stood side by side, not more than four feet asunder; and on each cot fast asleep lay a fine baby, some three or four days old. Upon the floor between them was a small rosette of blue ribbon. The infants were slumbering happily, and breathing as calmly as could be. Each queer little dump of a face was nestled into its pillow; and a small red podge, which was meant for an arm, lay crosswise upon the flannel. Nothing could look more delicious to the eyes of a fine young woman.

Nevertheless, that fine young woman, Mrs. Biddy O'Gaghan, stood gazing from one cot to the other, in hopeless and helpless dismay. Her comely round face was drawn out with horror, her mouth wide open, and large tears stealing into her broad blue Irish eyes.

"And the illigant spots upon them, as like as two Blemishing spannels; nor the blissed saints in heaven, if so be they was tuk to glory, afore they do be made hairyticks, cudn't know one from the ither, no more nor the winds from the brazes. And there go the doctor's bell again! Oh whurrastrew, whurra, whurra!"

Now Biddy O'Gaghan would scarcely have been head-nurse at Nowelhurst Hall, before she was thirty years old, but for her quick self-reliance. She was not the woman therefore to wring her hands long, and look foolish. Her Irish wit soon suggested so many modes of solution, all so easy, and all so delightfully free from reason, that the only question was how to listen to all at once. First she went and bolted carefully both the doors of the nursery. Then, with a look of triumph, she rushed to her yellow workbox, snatched up a roll of narrow tape, some pins, and a pair of scissors, and knelt upon the floor very gingerly, where the blue ribbon lay. Then, having pinned one end of the tape to the centre of the rosette, and the rosette itself to the carpet, she let the roll run with one hand, and drew the tape tight with the other, until it arrived at the nose of the babe ensconced in the right-hand cot. There she cut it off sharply, with a snip that awoke the child, who looked at her contemplatively from a pair of large grey eyes. Leaving him to his meditations, she turned the tape on the pin, and drew it towards the nasal apology of the other infant. The measure would not reach; it was short by an inch and a half. What clearer proof could be given of the title to knot and pendency?

But alas for Biddy's triumph! The infant of the last measurement awoke at that very moment, and lifting his soft fat legs, in order to cry with more comfort, disclosed the awkward fact that his left knee was nearer by three inches to the all-important rosette, than was any part of his brother. Biddy shook anew, as she drew the tape to the dimples. What is the legal centre of a human being? Is it the seat of the mind, heart, or soul, or is it the centre of gravity?

Ere further measurement could be essayed, all the premises were gone utterly; for the baby upon the right contrived to turn in the flannels, as an unsettled silkworm pupa rolls in his cocoon. And he managed to revolve in the wrong direction; it was his fate through life. Instead of coming towards the rosette, as a selfish baby would have done, away he went, with his grey eyes blinking at the handle of the door. Then he put up his lips, like the ring of a limpet, and poked both his little fists into his mouth.

"Well, I never," cried Bridget; "that settles it altogether. Plase the saints an' he were a rogue, it's this way he'd ha' come over on his blessed little empty belly. My darlin' dumplin' dillikins, it's you as it belongs to, and a fool I must be to doubt of it. Don't I know the bend o' your nose, and the way your purty lips dribbles, then? And to think I was near a robbing you!

What with the sitting up o' nights, and the worry of that carroty spalpeen, and the way as they sends my meals up, Paddy O'Gaghan, as is in glory, wud take me for another man's wife."

With great relief and strong conviction, Mrs. O'Gaghan began to stitch the truant rosette upon the cap of the last-mentioned baby, whence (or from that of the other) it had dropped through her own quick carelessness, before they were cuddled away. And with that ribbon she stitched upon him the heritage of the old family, the name of "Cradock Nowell," borne by the eight last baronets, and the largest estates and foremost rank in all the fair county of Hants.

"Sure an' it won't come off again," said Biddy to the baby, as she laid down her needle, for, like all genuine Irishwomen, she despised a thimble; "and it's meself as is to blame, for not taking a nick on your ear, dear. A big fool I must be only to plait it in afore, and only for thinkin' as it wud come cross-ways, when you wint to your blissed mammy, dear. And little more you be likely to get there, I'm afeared, me darlin'. An' skeared any body would be to hoort so much as a hair o' your skull, until such time as you has any, you little jule of jewels, and I kisses every bit on you, and knows what you be thinking on in the dead hoor of the night. Bless your ticksy-wicksies, and the ground as you shall step on, and the childer as you shall have."

Unprepared as yet to contemplate the pleasures of paternity, Master Cradock Nowell elect opened great eyes and great mouth, in the untutored wrath of hunger, while from the other cot arose a lusty yell, as of one unhardened yet to all the injustice of this world. That bitter cry awoke the softness and the faint misgivings of the Irishwoman's heart.

"And the pity of the world it is ye can't both be the eldest. And bedad you should if Biddy O'Gaghan had the making of the laws. There shan't be any one iver can say as ye haven't had justice, me honey."

Leaving both the unconscious claimants snugly wrapped and smiling, she called to her assistant, now calmly at tea in an inner room. "Miss Penny, run down now just, without thinking, and give my compliments, Mrs. O'Gaghan's kind compliments to the housekeeper's room, and would Mrs. Toaster oblige me with her big square scales? No weights you needn't bring, you know. Only the scales, and be quick with them."

"And please, ma'am, what shall I say as you wants them for?"

"Never you mind, Jane Penny. Wait you till your betters asks of you. And mayn't I weigh my grandfather's silver, without ask you, Jane Penny? And likely you'd rather not, and good reason for that same, I dessay, after the way as I leaves it open."

Overlooking this innuendo, as well as the slight difficulty of weighing, without weights, imaginary bullion, Miss Penny hurried

away; for the wrath of the nurse was rising, and it was not a thing to be tampered with. When Jane returned with the beam of justice, and lingered fondly in the doorway to watch its application, the head-nurse sidled her grandly into the little room, and turned the key upon her.

"Go and finish your tea, Miss Penny. No draughts in this room, if you please, miss. Save their little sowls, and divil a hair upon them. Now come here, my two chickabiddies."

Adjusting the scales on the bed, where at night she lay with the infants warm upon her, she took the two red lumps of innocence in her well-rounded arms, and laid one in either scale. As she did so, they both looked up and smiled: it reminded them, perhaps, of being laid in their cradles. Blessing them both, and without any nervousness—for to her it could make no difference—she raised by the handle the balance. It was a very nice question—which baby rose first from the counterpane. So very slight was the difference, that the rosette itself might almost have turned the scale. But there was a perceptible difference, of perhaps about half an ounce, and that in favour of the sweet-tempered babe who now possessed the ribbon; and who, as the other rose slowly before him, lay in the loosest manner smiling, not having learned how to suck his thumb.

No further mistrust was left in the mind of Mrs. O'Gaghan. Henceforth that rosetted infant is like to outweigh and outmeasure his brother, a hundredfold, a thousandfold, in every balance, by every standard, save those of self, and of true love, and the kingdom that has no coinage.

CHAPTER III.

A FALSE CONCORD.

THE reason why Mrs. O'Gaghan, generally so prompt and careful, though never very lucid, had neglected better precautions in a matter so important, was simply and solely this—Lady Nowell, the delicate mother, was dying. It had been known, ever since the birth, that she had scarcely any chance of recovery. And Biddy loved her with all her warm heart, and so did every one in the house who owned a heart that could love In the great anxiety, all things were upside down. None of the servants knew where to go for orders, and few could act without them; the housekeeper was all abroad; house-steward there was none; head-butler Hogstaff cried in his pantry, and wiped his eyes with the leathers; and, as

for the master of them all, Sir Cradock Nowell himself, he rarely left the darkened room, and when he did he could not see well.

A sweet frail creature the young mother was, wedded too early, as happens here more often than we are aware of. Then disappointed, and grieving still more at her husband's disappointment, she had set her whole heart so long and so vainly upon a mother's happiness, that now it was come she had not the strength to do any thing more than smile at it. And her smile was sweet as well as sad, even while she knew she was dying; she felt so proud of those two fine boys, and the life that lay before them.

When her eyes for the last time rested (except from heaven) upon them, instead of showing any doubt or flutter of uneasiness, she simply took her husband's hand, without the strength to lift it, and could not lead, but somehow guided, till it lay where she desired. So it lay on the little ones, quite equally divided; and though she could not speak, he felt that with her dying breath she prayed him to regard the twain alike.

Mrs. O'Gaghan was standing by, and her views of the situation were altogether different. She had brought the babes for the very purpose of "larning which was which of them."

"If I've made it wrong, then, she'll make it right," thought the conscientious Biddy. "I can take my oath on't she knowed the differ from the very first, though nobody else couldn't see it, barring the caps they was put in. Now, if only that gossoon will kape his self out of the way a bit, and it can't hurt the poor darlin'—and the blessing as comes from the death's gaze——"

Mrs. O'Gaghan's scheme was spoiled by the entrance of the doctor, a spare, short man, with a fiery face, red hair, and quick little eyes. He was not more than thirty years old, but knew his duties thoroughly; nevertheless, he would not have been there but for the sudden emergency. He whispered to Biddy to leave the room and take the babies with her. He had ridden hard for a certain new cordial used in desperate cases, and only in perfect darkness.

The nurse pushed him back with her elbow, and held the infants with their heads propped up, that each might do his utmost. But the mother's gaze was not of this world, as poor Biddy hoped—her heart and soul were going farther than rosettes and titles. In one long, yearning look, she lingered on her new-born babes, then turned those hazy eyes in fondness to her kneeling husband, then tried to pray or bless the three, and feebly shivered, and then died.

Sir Cradock Nowell had never dreamed of losing his wife in this way. Violet Incledon seemed too young to think about her dying. She was eighteen years of age, and he was six-and-thirty, when they vowed for all their lives to cleave to one another. And how they had loved one another was now both a pain and a pleasure to dwell upon.

A few days after the funeral, the lonely man was sauntering here and there about his book-room, caring no whit for his once-loved books, for the news of the day, or his business, and listless to look at any thing, even the autumn sunset; when the door was opened quietly, and shyly through the shadows stole his schoolfellow of yore, his old and true friend, John Rosedew.

Never lived on the face of earth a nobler man than John Rosedew: very well born in a quiet way, and thoroughly educated, gifted with a mind of vast and accurate comprehension, yet with such quick ways of humour that all children loved him. Finished gentleman as he was, nothing did so well become him as his own humility. Easily content with others, never satisfied with himself, even now, at the age of forty, he had not overcome the distance of a sensitive nature. And, first-rate scholar as he was, he would have lost his class at Oxford solely through that shyness, unless a kind examiner, who saw his blushing agony, had turned from some commonplace of Sophocles to a glorious passage of Pindar. Then, carried away by the noble poet, John Rosedew forgot the schools, the audience, even the row of examiners, and gave grand thoughts their grand expression, breathing free as the winds of heaven. Nor till his voice began to falter from the high emotion, and his heart beat fast, though not from shame, and the tears of genius touched by genius shone through twenty centuries, not till then knew he, or guessed, that every eye was fixed upon him, that every heart was thrilling, that even the stiff examiners bent forward like eager children, and the young men in the gallery could scarcely keep from cheering. Then suddenly, in the full sweep of magnificence, he stopped, like an eagle shot.

Now this parson, ruddy cheeked, with a lock of light brown hair astray upon his forehead, and his pale, blue eyes looking much as if he had just awoke and rubbed them, came shyly and with deep embarrassment into the darkening room. For days and days he had thought and thought, but could not see his way to it, whether, and when, and how, he ought to visit his ancient friend. His own heart first suggested that he ought to go at once, if only to show the bereaved one that still there were some to love him. To this right impulse—and the impulse of a heart like his could not be wrong—rose counter-checks of worldly knowledge, such very little as he had.

It seemed to many people strange and unaccountable, that if Mr. Rosedew piqued himself upon any thing whatever, it was not on his learning, his candour, or benevolence, it was not on his gentle bearing, or the chivalry of his soul, but on a fine acquirement, whereof in all opinions (except, indeed, his own) he possessed no jot or tittle—a strictly-disciplined and astute experience of the world. Now this supposed experience told him that it might seem coarse and forward to offer the hard grasp of friendship ere the soft clasp

of love was cold ; that he, as the clergyman of the parish, must not presume upon his office ; that no proud man could ever bear to have his anguish pryed into. These and many other doubts overbore his strong desire to be at the side of his dear old friend.

Suddenly and to his great relief—for he knew not how to begin, though he felt how and mistrusted it—the old friend turned upon him from his lonely pacing, and held out both his hands. Not a word was said by either ; what they meant required no telling, or was told by silence. Long time they sat in the western window, John Rosedew keeping his eyes from sunset, which did not suit them then.

At last he said, in a very low voice, which it cost him much to find,—

" What name, dear Cradock, for the younger babe ? Your own, of course, for the elder."

" No name, John, but his sweet mother's ; unless you like to add his uncle's."

John Rosedew was puzzled lamentably. He could not bear to worry his friend any more upon the subject ; and yet it seemed to him sad, false concord, that a boy's name should be " Violet." But he argued that, in botanical fact, a violet is male as well as female, and at such a time he could not think of thwarting a widower's yearnings. In spite of all his worldly knowledge, it never occurred to his simple mind that poor Sir Cradock meant the lady's maiden surname, the good old name of Incledon. And yet he had a case in point even then before him, for Sir Cradock Nowell's brother bore the name of " Clayton ;" which name John Rosedew added now, and found relief in doing so.

So it came to pass, that the babe without rosette was baptized " Violet Clayton," while the owner of that ornament received the name of " Cradock "—Cradock Nowell, now the ninth in lineal succession. The father was still too broken down to care about being present ; godfathers and godmothers made their vows very cleverly by proxy. Mrs. O'Gaghan held the infants, and one of them cried, and the other laughed. The rosette was there in all its glory, and received a tidy sprinkle ; and the wearer of it was, as usual, the one who took things easily. As the common children said, who came to see the great ones " loustering [1]," the whole affair was much more like a " white burying " than a baptism. Nevertheless, the tenants and labourers moistened their semi-regenerate clay with many a fontful of good ale, to ensure the success of the ceremony.

[1] " Loustering " in West Saxon = " blubbering " in school-slang.

CHAPTER IV.

UNCLE JOHN'S BABY.

POOR Lady Nowell had become a mother, as indeed we learned from the village gossip, nearly a fortnight before the expected time. Dr. Jellicorse Buller, a very skilful man, in whom the Hall had long confided, was suddenly called to London the day before that on which we last gazed at the Hall from the Ringwood road. With Sir Cradock's full consent, he obeyed the tempting summons. So in the hurry and flutter of that October Sunday, it seemed a most lucky thing to obtain, in a thinly-peopled district, the prompt attendance of any medical man. And but that a gallant regiment then happened to be on the march from Dorchester to Southampton, there to embark for India, no masculine aid would have been forthcoming till after the event. But the regimental surgeon, whose name was Rufus Hutton, did all that human skill could do, and saved the lives of both the infants, but could not save the young mother. Having earned Sir Cradock's lasting gratitude, and Biddy O'Gaghan's strong contempt, he was compelled to rejoin his regiment, then actually embarking.

The twins grew fast, and throve amain, under Mrs. O'Gaghan's motherly care, and shook the deep-rooted country faith, that children brought up by hand are sure to be puny weaklings. Nor was it long till nature reasserted her authority, and claimed her rights of compensation. The father began to think more and more, first of his duty towards the dead mother, and then of his duty towards his children; and ere long affection set to work, and drove duty away till called for, which happened as we shall see presently. By the time those two pretty babies were "busy about their teeth," Cradock Nowell the elder was so deep in odontology, that Biddy herself could not answer him, and was afraid to ask any questions. He watched each little white cropper, as a girl peers day by day into a starting hyacinth. Then, when they could walk, they followed their father every where, and he never was happy without them.

It was a pretty thing to see them toddling down the long passages, stopping by the walls to prattle, crawling at the slippery parts, where the newly-invented tiles shone, or sitting down in gravest council over some new ball or top, or simply kissing one another, when either had been overtaken by the unutterable anguish of an upset babe's despair. And when the little storm was over, and they put their fat legs forward, sitting side by side, and relapsing into good content with life, while their bright locks flowed together, and their lisping red lips opened with the folly of a sage remark, or the wisdom of a smile—there was no woman in the world could look and not long to kiss them.

As a natural consequence there came a time of spoiling, a time of doing whatever seemed good in their eyes, even after those eyes were opening to the light and shadow of right and wrong. If they smiled, or pouted, or even cried—though in that they were very moderate—in a fashion which descended to them from their darling mother, thereupon on their father's part great right and law, and even the very oldest prejudice, fell prone as a tear before them. So they toddled about most gloriously, with a strong sense of owning the universe.

Next ensued a time of mighty retribution. Astræa, with her feelings hurt, came down for a slashing moment. Fond as he was, and far more weak than he ever had been before, Sir Cradock Nowell was not a fool. He saw it was time to check the licence, ere mischief grew irretrievable. Something flagrant occurred one day; both the children were in for it; they knew as well as possible that they were jolly rogues together, and together in their childish counsel they resolved to stand it out. There could be no doubt that they had stolen into Mrs. Toaster's choicest cupboard, and hardly left enough to smell at in a two-pound pot of greengage jam. Nevertheless, there stood they both, scarlet in face and bright of eye, back to back, with their broad white shoulders, their sturdy legs set wide apart, and their little heels stamping defiantly. Mrs. Toaster had not the heart to do any thing but kiss them, with a number of "O fies!" and they accepted her kisses indignantly, and wiped their lips with their pinafores. They knew that they were in the wrong, but they had not tried to conceal it, and they meant to brazen it out. They looked such a fine pair of lords of the earth, and vindicated their felony with so grand an air, such high contempt of all justice, that Cookey and Hogstaff, empannelled as jury, said, "Drat the little darlings, let 'em have the other pot, mem!" But as their good star would have it, Mrs. O'Gaghan came after them. Upsetting the mere *nisi prius* verdict, she marched them off, one in either hand, to the great judge sitting *in banco*, Sir Cradock himself, in the library. With the sense of heavy wrong upon them, the little hearts began to fail, as they climbed with tugs instead of jumps, and no arithmetic of the steps, the narrow flight of stone stairs that led from regions culinary. But they would not shed a tear, not they, nor even say they were sorry, otherwise Biddy (who herself was crying) would have let them go with the tap of a battledore.

Poor little souls, they got their deserts with very scanty ceremony. When Biddy began to relate their crime, one glance at their father's face was enough; they hung behind, and dropped their eyes, and flushed all under their curling hair. Yet little did they guess the indignity impending. Hogstaff had followed all the way, and so had Mrs. Toaster, to plead for them. Sir Cradock sent them both away, and told Biddy to wait outside. Then he led his children to an inner room, and calmly explained his intentions. These were of

such a nature that the young offenders gazed at each other in dumb amazement and horror, which very soon grew eloquent as the sentence was being executed. But the brave little fellows cried more, even then, at the indignity than the pain of it.

Then the stern father ordered them out of his sight for the day, and forbade every one to speak to them until the following morning; and away the twins went, hand in hand, down the cold cruel passage, their poor smart curls all lumped together, and tossing at every breathless jerk of their contrite sobs and heart-pangs. At the corner, by the steward's room, they turned with one accord, and looked back wistfully at their father. Sir Cradock had been saying to himself, as he rubbed his hands after the exercise—"A capital day's work: what a deal of good it will do them; the self-willed little rascals!" but the look cast back upon him was so like their mother's when he had done any thing to vex her, that he locked all the doors of the library, and forgot to despatch his letters.

But, of course, he held to his stern resolve to see them no more that evening, otherwise the lesson would be utterly thrown away. Holding to it as he did, the effect surpassed all calculation. It was the turning-point in their lives.

"My boy, you know it hurts me a great deal more than you," says the hypocritical usher, who rather enjoys the cane-swing. The boy knows it is hypocrisy, and is morally hurt more than physically. But wholly different is the result when the patient knows and feels the deep love of the agent, and cannot help believing that justice has flogged the judge. And hitherto their flesh had been intemerate and inviolable; the strictest orders had been issued that none should dare to slap them, and all were only too prone to coax and pet the beautiful angels. Little angels: treated so, they would soon have been little devils. As for the warning given last week, they thought it a bit of facetiousness: so now was the time, of all times, to strike temperately, but heavily.

That night they went to bed before dark, without having cared for tea or toast, and Biddy's soft heart ached by the pillow, as they lay in each other's arms, hugged one another, having now none else in the world to love, and sobbed their little troubles off into moaning slumber.

On the following morning, without any concert or debate, and scarcely asking why, the little things went hand in hand, united more than ever by the recent visitation, as far as the door of their father's bedroom. There they hid themselves under a curtain; and when he came out, the rings above fluttered with fear and love and hope. Much as the father's heart was craving, he made believe to walk onward, till Craddy ran out, neck or nothing, and sprang into his arms.

After this great event, their lives flowed on very happily into boyhood, youth, and manhood. They heartily loved and respected

their father; they could never be enough with John Rosedew; and although they quarrelled and tussled sometimes, they languished and drooped immediately when parted from one another. As for Biddy O'Gaghan, now a high woman in the household, her only difficulty was that she never could tell of her two boys which to quote as the more astounding.

"If you plase, ma'am," she always concluded, "there'll not be so much as the lean of a priest for any body iver to choose atwane the bootiful two on them. No more than there was on the day when my blissed self—murder now!—any more, I manes, nor the differ a peg can find 'twane a murphy and a purratie. And a Murphy I must be, to tark, so free as I does, of the things as is above me. Says Patrick O'Geoghegan to meself one day—glory be to his sowl, and a gintleman every bit of him, lave out where he had the small-pux—'Biddy,' he says, 'hould your pratie-trap, or I'll shove these here bellises down it.' And for my good it would have been, as I am thankful to acknowledge that same, though I didn't see it that day, thank the Lord. Ah musha, musha, a true gintleman he were, and lave me out his fellow, ma'am, if iver you comes acrass him."

But, in spite of Biddy's assertion, there were many points of difference, outward and inward too, between Cradock and Clayton Nowell. By this time the "Violet" was obsolete, except with Sir Cradock, who rather liked it, and with young Crad, who had corrupted it into the endearing "Viley." John Rosedew had done his utmost to antiquate the misnomer, being sensitive on the subject, from his horror of false concord, as attributed to himself. Although the twins were so much alike in stature, form, and feature that it required care to discern them after the sun was down, no clear-sighted person would mistake them when they both were present, and the light was good. Clayton Nowell's eyes were brown, Cradock's a dark grey; Cradock's hair was one shade darker, and grew more away from his forehead, and the expression of his gaze came from a longer distance. Clayton always seemed up for bantering; Cradock anxious to inquire, and to joke about it afterwards, if occasion offered. Then Cradock's head inclined, as he walked, a little towards the left shoulder; Clayton's hung, almost imperceptibly, somewhat to the right; and Cradock's hands were hard and dry, Clayton's soft as good French kid.

And, as regards the inward man, they differed far more widely. Every year their modes of thought, fancies, tastes, and habits, were diverging more decidedly. Clayton sought command and power, and to be admired; Cradock's chief ambition was to be loved by every one. And so with intellectual matters; Clayton showed more dash and brilliance, Cradock more true sympathy, and thence more grasp and insight. Clayton loved the thoughts which strike us, Cradock those which move us subtly. But as they lived not long

together, it is waste of time to split straws between them. Whatever they were, they loved one another, and could not bear to be parted.

Meanwhile, their "Uncle John" as they always called Mr. Rosedew—their uncle only in the spirit—was nursing and making much of a little daughter of his own. Long before Lady Nowell's death, indeed for ten long years before he obtained the living of Nowelhurst, with the little adjunct of Rushford, he had been engaged to a lady-love much younger than himself, whose name was Amy Venn. Not positively engaged by word, for he was too shy to pop the question to any one but himself, for more than seven years of the ten. But all that time Amy Venn was loving him, and he was loving her, and each would have felt it a grievous blow, if the other had started sideways. Miss Venn was poor, and had none except her widowed mother to look to, and hence the parson was trebly shy of pressing a poor man's suit. He, a very truthful mortal, had pure faith in his Amy, and she had the like in him. So for several years he shunned the common-room, and laid by all he could from his fellowship, college-appointments, and professorship. But when his old friend Sir Cradock Nowell presented him to the benefice—not a very gorgeous one, but enough for a quiet parson's family—he took a clean white tie at once, vainly strove to knot it grandly, actually got his scout to brush him, and after three glasses of common-room port, strode away to his Amy at Kidlington. There he found her training the apricot on the south wall of her mother's cottage, one of the three great apricot-trees that paid the rent so nicely. What a pity they were not peaches; they would have yielded so fit a simile. But peach-bloom will not thrive at Kidlington, except upon ladies' faces.

Three months afterwards, just when all was arranged, and Mrs. Venn was at last persuaded that Hampshire is not all pigs and rheumatism, forests, and swamps, and charcoal, when John, with his voice rather shaky, and a patch of red where his whiskers should have been, had proclaimed his own banns three times—for he was a very odd fellow in some things, and scorned the "royal road" to wedlock—just at that time, as it happened, poor Lady Nowell's confinement upset all calculation, and her melancholy death flung a pall on wedding-favours. Not only through respect, but from real sympathy with the faithful friend, John Rosedew and Amy held counsel together, and deferred the long-pending bridal. "*Ὅσῳ μακρότερον, τόσῳ μακάρτερον*," said John, who always thought in Greek, except when Latin hindered him; but few young ladies will admit—and now-a-days they all understand it—that the apophthegm is applied well.

However, it did come off at last; John Rosedew, when his banns had been rolling in his mind, in the form of Greek senarii, for six months after the first time of out-asking, set to and read them all

over again in public ; to revive their efficacy, and to surrebut all let and hindrance.

Upon the wedding morn, Sir Cradock, whom they scarcely expected, gathered up his broken courage, sank his own hap in another's, and came down, and tried to enjoy himself. How shy John Rosedew was, how sly to conceal his blushes, how spry when the bride glanced towards him, and nobody else looked that way—all this very few could help observing ; but they loved him too much to talk of it. Enough that the friend of his youth, thoroughly understanding John, was blessed with so keen a perception of those simple little devices, that at last he did enjoy himself, which he deserved to do for trying.

When the twins were nearly three years old, Mrs. Rosedew presented John with the very thing he wished for most, an elegant little girl. And here the word "elegant" is used with forethought, and by prolepsis ; though Mrs. O'Gaghan, lent for a time to the Rectory, employed that epithet at the first glance, even while announcing the gender.

"My musha, then, and she's illigant intirely ; an' it's hopin' I be as there'll only be two on her, one for each of me darlin' boys. And now cudn't you manage it, doctor dear ?"

But alas ! the supply was limited, and no duplicate ever issued. Lucina saw John Rosedew's pride, and was afraid of changing his character. He dwelt on the subject himself so much, that his intellect grew dreamy, and he forgot all about next Sunday's sermon, until he was in the pulpit. And four weeks after that he made another great mistake, which did not please him, when he knew it, but gratified the parish.

It had been settled with Mrs. Rosedew, that if she only felt strong enough, she should come to church in the afternoon, to offer the due thanksgiving.

In the grey old church at Nowelhurst, a certain pew had been set apart, by custom immemorial, for the use of goodwives who felt grateful for their safe deliverance. Here Mrs. Rosedew was to present herself at the proper period, with the aid of Biddy's vigorous arm down the hill from the Rectory. As yet she was too delicate to bear the entire service. The August afternoon was sultry, and the church doors stood wide open, while the bees, among the churchyard blossoms, drowsed a sleepy sermon. As luck would have it, a recruiting sergeant, "toling" for the sons of Ytene, finding the road so dusty, and the alehouse barred against him, came sauntering into the church during the second lesson, for a little mild change of air. Espying around him some likely rustics, he stationed himself in the vacant "churching pew," because the door was open, and the position prominent. "All right," thought the rector, who was very short-sighted, "how good of my darling Amy to come ! But I wonder she wears her scarlet cloak to come to church with, in such

weather! But perhaps Dr. Buller ordered it, for fear of her catching cold." So at the proper moment he drew his surplice round him, looked full at the sergeant standing there by the pillar, and began majestically, though with a trembling voice,—

"Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of His goodness to give you safe deliverance, and hath preserved you in the great danger of childbirth, you shall therefore give hearty thanks unto God and say——"

The sergeant looked on very primly, with his padded arms tightly folded, and his head thrown back, calling war and victory into his gaze, for the credit of the British army. Then he wondered angrily what the —— those chawbacons saw to be grinning at.

"I am well pleased," &c., continued John Rosedew sonorously; for he had a magnificent voice, and still regarding the sergeant with a look of tender interest. Even Sir Cradock Nowell could scarcely keep his countenance; but the parson went through the whole of it handsomely and to the purpose, thinking only, throughout it, of God's great mercies to him. So beloved he was already, and so much respected, that none of the congregation had the heart to tell him of his mistake, as he talked with them in the churchyard; though he thought even then that he must have his bands, as he often had, at the back of his neck.

But on his way home he overtook an old hobbler, who enjoyed a joke more than a scruple.

"How are you, Simon Tapscott? How do you do to-day? Glad to see you at church, Simon," said the parson, holding his hand out, as he always did to his parishioners, unless they had disgraced themselves.

"Purty vair, measter; purty vair I be, vor a woald galley baggar as ave bin in the Low Countries, and dwoant know sin from righteousness." This last was a gross perversion of a passage in the sermon which had ruffled ancient Simon. "Can't goo much, howiver, by rason of the rhymatics. Now cud 'e do it to I, measter? cud 'e do it to I, and I'll thraw down bath my critches? Good vor one sojer, good vor anoother."

"Do what for you, Simon? Fill your old canteen, or send you a pound of baccy?" asked the parson, mildly chaffing.

"Noo, noo; none o' that. There baint noo innard parts grace of the Lord in that. Choorch I handsomely, zame as 'e dwoed that strapping soger now jist."

"What, Simon! Why, Simon, do you know what you are saying——"

But nobody can wish to see John Rosedew humiliated; he was humble enough by nature. And so fearful was the parson of renewing light memories within the sacred walls, that no thanks were offered there for the birth of sweet Amy Rosedew, save by, or on behalf of, that recruiting sergeant.

CHAPTER V.

A DANCE INTERRUPTED.

WHEN Cradock and Clayton were ten years old, they witnessed a scene which puzzled them, and dwelt long in their boyish memories. Job Hogstaff was going to Ringwood, and they followed him down the passage towards the entrance-hall, over and over again renewing all their orders to him. Old Job loved them as if they were his own grandsons, and would do his utmost to please them; but they could not trust his memory, or even his capacity.

"Now, Job," cried little Cradock, pulling at his coat-lappet, "it's no good pretending that you know all, when you won't even stop to listen. I'm sure you'll go and make some great mistake, as you did last Tuesday. Mind you tell Mr. Stride it's for Master Cradock Nowell, and they must be sure to give you a good one, or I shall send it back. Now just tell me what I have told you. I ought to have written it down, but I wasn't sure how to spell 'groove.'"

"Why, Master Crad, I'm to say a long spill, very sharp at the end."

"Sharp at the point, Job, not blunt at the end like a new black-lead pencil."

"And whatever you do, Job, don't forget the catgut for my cross-bow, one size larger than last time."

"Just you wait, Viley, till I've quite finished; or he'll ask for a top made of catgut."

Both the boys laughed at this; their laughter rang all down the long passage. Any small folly makes a good boy laugh.

"Well, Master Crad, you must think me a 'muff,' as you call it. And the groove is to go quite up to the spill; there must be two rings below the crown of it."

"Below the crown, indeed! On the fat part, I said three times. Now, Viley, you know you heard me."

"Well, well," cried Job in despair, "two rings on the fat part, and no knot at all in the wood, and at least six inches round, and, and, well—I think that's all of it, thank the Lord."

"All of it, indeed! Well, you are a nice fellow! Didn't I tell you so, Viley? Why, you've left out altogether the most important point of all, Job! The wood must be a clear bright yellow, or else a very rich gold colour, and I'm to pay for it next Tuesday, because I spent my week's money yesterday, as soon as ever I got it, and—oh, Viley! can't you lend me sixpence?"

"No, not to save my life, Crad. Why, Craddy, you know I wouldn't let you go tick if I could."

Then the boys ran at one another, half in fun and half in love, and, seizing each other by the belt of the light-plaid tunic, away

they went dancing down the hall, while Hogstaff whistled a polka gently, with his old eyes glistening after them. A prettier pair, or better matched, never laid step together. Each put his healthy, clear, bright face on the shoulder of the other, each flung out his short-socked legs, and pointed his dainty feet. Then were the fat young calves jerked up, as they sprang with double action, and the hollow of the back curved in, as they threw asunder recklessly, then clasped one another again, to save each other from reeling over. Sir Cradock Nowell hated trousers, and would not have their hair cropped, because it was like their mother's; else there never could have been so pretty a picture moving.

Before the match was fairly finished—for they were used to this sort of thing, and the object always was to see which would give in first—all was cut short most suddenly. While they were taking a sharp pirouette down at the end of the hall—and as they whirled round even their father could scarce have known one from other—the door of the steward's room opened loudly, and a tall dark woman came out. The twins in full merriment dashed up against her, and must have fallen if she had not collared them with strong and bony arms. Like little gentlemen, as they were, they turned in a moment to beg pardon, and their cheeks were burning red. They saw a gaunt old woman, wide-shouldered, stern, and dark, and forcible.

"Oo, ah! a bonnie pair ye've gat, as I see in all my life lang. But ye'll get no luck o' them. Tak' the word o' threescore year, ye'll never get no luck o' them, you that calls yoursel' Craydock Nowell."

She was speaking to Sir Cradock, who had followed her from the steward's room, and who seemed as much put out as a proud man of fifty ever cares to show himself. He made no answer, and the two poor children fell back against a side-bench.

"I'll no talk o' matters noo. You've a gi'en me my refoosal, and I tak' it once for all. But ye'll be sorry for the day ye did it, Craydock Nowell."

To the great amazement of Hogstaff, who was more taken aback than any one else, Sir Cradock Nowell, without a word, walked to the wide front door with ceremony, as if he were leading a peeress out. He did not offer his arm to the woman, but neither did he shrink from her; she gathered her dark face up again from its softening glance at the children, and without another word or look, but sweeping her skirt around her, away she walked down the broad front road, as stiff and as stern as the oak-trees.

CHAPTER VI.

VERY CAREFUL GROUNDING.

THE lapse of years made little difference with the noble parson, John Rosedew, except to mellow and enfranchise the heart so free and rich by nature, and to pile fresh stores of knowledge in the mind so stored already. Of course even this man had his faults. In many a little matter his friends could come down upon him sharply, if their mind was so to do. But any one so minded would not have been fit to be called the friend of Mr. Rosedew.

His greatest fault was one which sprang from his own high chivalry. If once he detected a person, whether taught or untaught, in the attempt to deceive or truckle, that person was to him thenceforth a thing to be pitied and prayed for. Large and liberal as his heart was, charitable and even lenient to all other frailties, the presence of a lie in the air was to it as ozone to a test-paper. And then he was always sorry afterwards when he had shown his high disdain. For who could disprove that John Rosedew himself might have been a thorough liar, if trained and taught to consider truth a policeman with his staff drawn?

Another fault John Rosedew had—and we do not tell his foibles (as our friends do) to enjoy them—he gave to his books and their bygone ages much of the time which he ought to have spent abroad in his own little parish. But this could not be attributed to any form of self-indulgence. Much as he liked his books, he liked his flock still better, but never could overcome the idea that they would rather not be bothered. If any one were ailing, if any one were needy, he would throw aside his Theophrastus, and be where he was wanted, with a mild sweet voice and gentle eyes that crannied not, like a crane's bill, into the family crocks and dustbin. It was a part, and no unpleasant one, of his natural diffidence, that he required a poor man's invitation quite as much as a rich one's, ere ever he crossed the threshold; unless trouble overflowed the impluvium. In all the parish of Nowelhurst there was scarcely a man or a woman who did not rejoice to see the rector pacing his leisurely rounds, carrying his elbows a little out, as men with large deltoid muscles do, wearing his old hat far back on his head, so that it seemed to slope away from him, and smiling gently upon the children who tugged his coat-tails for an orange or a halfpenny. He never could come out but what the urchins of the village were down upon him as promptly as if he were apple-pie; and many of them had the impudence to call him "Uncle John" before his hair was grey.

Instead of going to school, the boys were apprenticed to him in the classics; and still more pleasantly he taught them to swim, and fish, and row. Of riding he knew but little, except from the

treatise of Xenophon, and a paper on the Pelethronian Lapiths; so they learned it as all other boys do, by dint of crown and hard bumpage. Moreover, Mark Stote, head gamekeeper, took them in hand very early as his pupils in woodcraft and gunnery. To tell the truth, Uncle John objected a little to this accomplishment; he thought that the wholesome excitement and exercise of shooting afforded scarcely a valid reason for the destruction of innocent life. However, he recollected that he had not always thought so—his conversion having been wrought by the shrieks of a wounded hare—neither did he expect to bind all the world with his own girdle. Sir Cradock insisted that the young idea should be taught to shoot, and both the young ideas took to it very kindly.

Perhaps on the whole they were none the worse for the want of public-school training. What they lost thereby in quickness, suspicion, and effrontery, was more than balanced by the gain in purity, simplicity, love of home, and kindliness. For nature had not gifted them with that vulgar arrogance, for which the best prescription is "calcitration nine times a day, and clean the boots for kicking you." Every year their father took them for a month or two to London, to garnish with some courtly frilling the knuckles of his Hampshire hams. But they only hated it; thorough agricoles they were, and well knew their own blessings: and sweet and gladsome was the morning after each return, though it might be blowing a gale of wind, or drizzling through the ash-leaves. And then the headlong rush to see beloved Uncle John. Nature they loved in any form, sylvan, agrarian, human, when that human form was such as they could climb and nestle in. And there was not in the parish, nor in all the forest, any child so rough and dirty, so shock-headed, and such a scamp, that it could not climb into the arms of John Rosedew's fellow-feeling.

But enough already of these calm days, the father's glory, the hopes of the sons, the love of all who came near them, and the blessings of Mrs. O'Gaghan.

They were now to go to Oxford, and astonish the natives there, by showing that a little *hic*, *hæc*, *hoc*, may come even out of Galilee; that a youth never drawn through the wire-gauge of Eton, Harrow, or Rugby, may carry still the electric spark, and be taper and well-rounded. Half their learning accrued *sub dio*, in the manner of the ancients. Uncle John would lead them between the trees and down to some forest dingle, the boy on his right hand construing aloud or parsing very slowly, the little spark at his left all glowing to explode at the first mistake. Δεξιόσειρος made the running, until he tripped and fell mentally, and even then he was set on his legs, unless the other was down upon him; but in the latter case the yoke-mate leaped into the harness. The stroke-oar on the river that evening was awarded to the one who paced the greatest number of stades in the active voice of expounding. The accuracy, the caution, born of

this warm rivalry, became at last so vigilant, that the boy who won the toss for the right-hand place at starting, was almost sure of the stroke-oar.

So they passed the matriculation test with consummate ease, and delighted the college tutor by their clear bold writing. They had not read so much as some men have before entering the University, but all their knowledge was close and firm, and staunch enough for a spring-board. And they wrote most excellent Latin prose, and Greek verse easily flowing. However, Sir Cradock was very nervous on the eve of their departure for the first term of Oxford residence, and led John Rosedew, in whose classical powers he placed the highest confidence, into his private room, and there begged him, as a real friend, tested now for forty years, to tell him bluntly whether the boys were likely to do him credit.

"Don't spare me, John, and don't spare them: only let us have no disappointment about it."

"My dear fellow, my dear fellow!" cried John, tugging at his collar, as he always did when nonplussed, for fear of losing himself; "how on earth can I tell? Most likely the men know a great deal more in the University now than they did when I had lectures. Haven't I begged you fifty times to have down a young first-classman?"

"Yes, I know you have, John. But I am not quite such a fool, nor so shamelessly ungrateful. To upset the pile of your ten years' labour, and rebuild it upon its apex! And talk to me of young first-classmen! Why, you know as well as I do, John, that there is not one of them, however brilliant, with a tenth part of your knowledge. It could never be, any more than a young tree can carry the fruit of an old one. Why, when you took your own first-class, they could only find one man to put with you, and you have never ceased to read, read, read, ever since you left old Oriel, and chiefly in taste and philology. And such a memory as you have! John, I am ashamed of you. You want to impose upon me."

And Sir Cradock fixed the parson's eyes with that keen and point-blank gaze, which was especially odious to the shy John Rosedew.

"I am sure I don't. You cannot mean that," he replied, rather warmly, for, like all imaginative men, when of a diffident cast, he was desperately matter-of-fact the moment his honour was played with. His friend began to smile at him, drawing up his grey moustache, and saying, "Yes, John, you are a donkey."

"I know that I am," said John Rosedew, shutting his eyes, as he loved to do when he got on a favourite topic; "after those gigantic philologists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—the Scaligers, the Casaubons, the Vossii, the Heinsii,—my poor spicilegium is scarcely the thistle-crop of the animal you have mentioned. But as regards our English critics—at least too many of them—I submit that we have been misled by the superiority of their Latin, and their

more slashing style. I doubt whether any of them had a tenth part of the learning, or the sequacity of genius——"

"Come, John, I can't stand this, you know; and the boys will be down here directly, they are so fond of brown sherry."

"Well, to return to the subject—I own that I was surprised and hurt when a former Professor of Greek actually confounded the Æolic form of the *plusquam perfectum* of so common a verb as——"

"Yes, John, I know all about that, and how it spoiled your breakfast. But about the boys, the boys, John?"

"And again, as to the delicate sub-significance, not the well-known tortuousness of *παρά* in composition, but——"

"Confound it, John. They've got all their things packed. They'll be here in a moment, pretending to rollick for our sakes; and you won't tell me what you think of them."

"Well, I think there never were two finer fellows to jump a gate since the days of Castor and Pollux. '*Hunc equis, illum superare pugnis.*' You remember how you took me down for construing '*pugnis*' wrongly, when we were at Sherborne?"

"Yes, and how proud I was, John! You had been at the head of the form for three months, and none of us could stir you; but you came back again next day in the fifth Æneid. But here come the villains—now it's all over."

And so the boys went away, and their father could not for his life ascertain what opinion his ancient friend had formed as to the chances of their doing something good at Oxford. Simple and straightforward as Mr. Rosedew was, no man ever lived from whom it was harder to force an opinion. He saw matters from so many aspects, every thing took so many facets, shifting lights, and playing colours, from the versatility of his mind, that whoso could fix him at such times, and extort his real sentiments, might spin a diamond ring, and shave by it. He had golden hopes about his "nephews," as he often called them, but he would not pronounce those hopes at present, lest the father should be disappointed. And so the boys went up to Oxford, half a moon before the woodcocks came.

CHAPTER VII.

LEADS TO GREAT SUCCESS.

THE twins were entered at Merton, and had the luck to obtain adjoining garrets. Sir Cradock had begun to show a decided preference for Clayton, as he grew year by year more and more like his

mother. Also that mother's last entreaty that he would not allow the younger to feel the difference of his position may have urged him unawares into the opposite extreme. But this was not the only reason why he would not listen to a friend's suggestion, that Cradock, the heir to the property, should be ranked as a "gentleman-commoner." That stupid distinction he left for men who require self-assertion, admiring as he did the sense and spirit of that Master, well known in his day, who, to some golden cad insisting that his son should be entered in that college as a gentleman-commoner, angrily replied, "Sir, all my commoners are gentlemen."

But the brothers were very soon parted. Clayton got sleeved in a scholar's gown, while Cradock still fluttered the leading-strings. "*Et tunicæ manicas*—you effeminate Viley!" said Cradock, admiring hugely, when his twin ran up to show himself off, after winning a Corpus scholarship; "and the governor won't allow me a chance of a parasol for my elbows."

Sir Cradock, a most determined man, and a very odd one to deal with, had forbidden his elder son to stand for any scholarship, except those few which are of the University corporate. "A youth of your expectations," he exclaimed, with a certain bitterness, for he often repined in secret that Clayton was not the heir, "a boy placed as you are, must not compete for a poor young lad's *viaticum*. You may go in for a University scholarship, though of course you will never get one; an examination does good, I have heard, to the unsuccessful candidates. But if Clayton stands against you, it might be wiser to withdraw."

Craddy was deeply hurt by this; he had long perceived his father's partiality for the son more dashing, yet more effeminate, more pretentious, and less persistent. So Cradock set his heart upon winning Craven, Hertford, or Ireland, and never even alluding to it in the presence of his father. Hence it will be evident that the youth was proud and sensitive.

"Amy *amata, peramata a me*," cried the parson to his daughter, now a lovely girl of sixteen, straight, slender, and well-poised; "how glad and proud we ought to be of Clayton's great success!"

"Pa, dear, he would never have got it, I am quite certain of that, if Cradock had been allowed to go in; and I think it most unfair, shamefully unjust, that because he is the eldest son he is never to have any honour." And Amy coloured brilliantly at the warmth of her own championship; but her father could not see it.

"So I am inclined to think"—John Rosedew was never positive, except upon great occasions—"perhaps I should say perpend, if I were fond of hybrid English. I don't mean about the unfairness, Amy; for I think I should do the same if I were in Sir Cradock's place. I mean that our Crad would have got it, instead of Clayton, with health and fortune favouring. But it stands upon a razor's edge. You know the Greek proverb, Amy?"

"Yes, pa, when you tell me the English. How the green is coming out on the fir-trees! So faint and yet so bright. Oh, papa, what Greek triple composite is equal to that composition?"

"Well, my poppet, I am so short-sighted, I would much rather have a——"

"Triple composite than three good kisses from me, daddy? Well, there they are, at any rate, because I know you are disappointed." And the child, herself more bitterly disappointed, as becomes a hot partisan, ran away to sit under a sprawling larch, just getting new nails on its fingers, for the spring was awaking early.

It was not more than a week after this, and not very far from All-Fools'-day, when Clayton, directly after chapel, rushed into Cradock's garret, hot, breathless, and unphilosophical. Cradock, calm and thoughtful, as he usually was, poked his head through the open slide of the dusthole called a scout's room, and brought out three willow-pattern plates, a little too retentive of the human impress, and an extra knife and fork, dark-browed at the tip of the handle. Then he turned up a corner of tablecloth, where it cherished sombre memories of a tearful teapot, and set the mustard-pot to control it. Nor long before he doubled the coffee in the strainer of the biggin, and shouted "Corker!" thrice, far as human voice would gravitate, down the well of the staircase. Meanwhile Master Clayton stood fidgeting, and doffed not his scholarly toga. Corker, the scout, a short fat man, came up the stairs with dignity and indignation contending. He was amazed that any freshman "should have the cheek to holler so." Mr. Nowell was such a quiet young man, that the scout looked for some apology. "Corker, a commons of bread and butter, and a cold fowl and some tongue. Be quick now, before the buttery closes. And, as I see I am putting you out in your morning work, get a quart of ale at your dinner-time." "Yes, sir, to be sure, sir; I wish all the gentlemen was as thoughtful."

"No, Craddy, never mind that," cried his brother, reddening richly, for Clayton was fair as a lady, "I only want to speak to you about—well, perhaps, you know what it is I have come for. Is that fellow gone from the door?"

"I am sure I don't know. Go and look yourself. But, dear Viley, what is the matter?"

"Oh, Cradock, you can so oblige me, and it can't matter much to you. But to me, with nothing to look to, it does make such a difference."

Cradock never could bear to hear this—that his own twin-brother should talk, as he often did, so much in the pauper strain. And all the while Clayton was sure of 50,000*l.* under their mother's settlement. But Crad was full of wild generosity, and had made up his mind to share Nowelhurst, if he could do so, with his brother. He began

to pull Clayton's gown off; he would have blacked his shoes if requested. He always thought himself Viley's prime minister.

"Whatever it is, my boy, Viley, you know I will do it for you, if it is only fair and honourable."

"Oh, it is no great thing. I was sure you would do it for me. To do just a little bit under your best in this hot scrimmage for the Ireland. I am not much afraid of any man, Crad, except you, and Brown, of Balliol."

"Viley, I am very sorry that you have asked me such a thing. Even if it were in other ways straightforward, I could not do it, for the sake of the father, and Uncle John, and little Amy."

"Don't you know that the governor doesn't want you to get it? You are talking nonsense, Cradock, downright nonsense, to cover your own selfishness. And that frizzle-headed Amy, indeed!"

"I would rather talk nonsense than fraud, Clayton. And I can't help telling you that what you say about my father may be true, but is not brotherly; and your proposal does you very little honour; and I never could have thought it of you; and I will do my very utmost. And as for Amy, indeed, she is too good for you to speak of—and—and——" He was highly wroth at the sneer about Amy's hair, which he admired beyond all reason, as indeed he did every bit of her, but without letting any one know it. He leant upon the table, with his thumb well into the mustard-pot. This was the first real quarrel with the brother he loved so much; and it felt like a skewer poked into his heart.

"Well, elder brother by about two seconds," cried Clayton, twitching his plaits up well upon his coat-collar, "I'll do all I can to beat you. And I hope Brown will have it, not you. There's the cash for my commons. I know you can't afford it, until you get a scholarship."

Clayton flung half-a-crown upon the table, and went down the stairs with a heavy tramp, knocking over a dish with the college arms on, wherein Corker was bringing the fowl and the tongue. Corker got all the benefit of the hospitable doings, and made a tidy dinner out of it, for Cradock could eat no breakfast. It was the first time bitter words had passed between the brothers since the little ferments of childhood, which are nothing more than sweetwort the moment they settle down. And he doubted himself; he doubted whether he had not been selfish about it.

It was the third day of the examination, and when he appeared at ten o'clock among the forty competitors, he was vexed anew to see that Clayton had removed to a table at the other end of the room, so as not to be even near him. The piece of Greek prose which he wrote that morning dissatisfied him entirely; and then again he rejoiced at the thought that Viley need not be afraid of him. He had never believed in his chance of success, and went

in for the scholarship to please others and learn the nature of the examination. Next year he might have a fairer prospect; this year—as all the University knew—Brown, of Balliol, was sure of it.

Nevertheless, by the afternoon he was in good spirits again, and found a mixed paper which suited him as if Uncle John had set it. One of the examiners had been, some twenty years ago, a pupil of John Rosedew, and this, of course, was a great advantage to any successor alumnus; though neither of them knew the other. It is pleasant to see how the old ideas germinate and assimilate, as the olive and the baobab do, after the fires of many summers.

Clayton, a placable youth (even when he was quite in the wrong, as in the present instance), came to Craddy's rooms that evening, begged him not to apologize for his expressions of the morning, and compared notes with him upon the doings of the day.

"Bless you, Crad," he cried, after a glass of first-rate brown sherry—not the vile molassied stuff, thick as the sack of Falstaff, but the genuine thing, with the light and shade of brown olives in the sunset, and not to be procured, of course, from any Oxonian wine-dealer;—"oh, Crad, if we could only wallop that Brown, of Balliol, between us, I should not care much which it was. He has booked it for such a certainty, and does look so cocky about it. Did you see the style he walked off, before hall, arm in arm with his cousin the Don, and spouting his own iambics?"

"First-rate ones, I dare say, Viley. Have a pipe, old fellow. After all, it doesn't matter much. Folk who have never been in them think a deal the most of these things. The wine-merchant laughs at beeswing; and so, I suppose, it is with all trades." Cradock was not by any means prone to the discourse sententious; and the present lapse was due, no doubt, to the reaction ensuing upon his later scene with Viley, wherein each had promised heartily to hold fast by the brotherhood.

On the following Saturday morning, John Rosedew's face flushed puce-colour as he opened his letters at breakfast-time. "Hurrah! Amy, darling; hurrah, my child! *Terque quaterque, et novies evoe!* Eat all the breakfast, melimel; I won't tell you till I come back."

"Oh, won't you, indeed?" cried Amy, with her back against the door and her arms in mock grimness folded. "I rather think you will, papa; unless you have made up your mind to choke me. And you are half-way towards it already."

John saw that peculiar swell of her throat which had frightened him so often—her dear mother had died of bronchitis, and he knew nothing of medical subjects—and so he allayed her excitement at once, gave her over to Aunt Eudoxia, who was late in her bedroom as usual, and then set off at his utmost speed to tell

his old friend, Sir Cradock. And a fine turn of speed he still could show, though the whiskers under his college-cap (stuck on anyhow in the hurry) were as white as the breast of a martin quivering under the eaves. Since he lost his wife he had never cared to walk fast, subsiding into three miles an hour, as thoughtful and placid men will do, when they begin to thumb their waistcoats. But now through the waking life of "the Chase," where the brown fern-stalks bent over the Ammon horn of the lifting frond, and the fescue grass was beading rough with dew already, here and among the rabbit-holes, nimbly dodging the undermine, ran as hard as a boy of twelve, the man of threescore, John Rosedew. Without stopping to knock as usual, he burst in upon Sir Cradock, now sitting all alone at his simple, old-fashioned breakfast. Classical and theological training are not locomotive, as all good parsons are well aware; and the rector stood gasping ever so long, with both hands pressed to his side.

"Why, John? quick, quick! You frighten me. Is your house on fire?"

"Old fellow—old fellow; such news! Shake hands—ever since the *charta forestæ;* shake hands again. Oh, I came rather fast. May I have a cup of tea?"

"What is it, John? Do be quick. I must send for Mrs. O'Gaghan and her tansy tea." Biddy was now the licensed doctoress of the household, and did little harm with her simples, if she failed of doing good.

"*Times* there? Open it; look, University news! Crad and Clayton."

Wondering, smiling, placidly anxious, Sir Cradock tore open the paper, and found, after turning a great many corners, the University news. Then he read out with a trembling voice, after glancing over it silently:

"The Ireland scholarship has been awarded to Cradock Nowell, of Merton College. Proxime accessit Clayton Nowell, scholar of Corpus Christi. Unless we are misinformed, these gentlemen are twin-brothers."

"Grintie, grintie, grunt,
Oos be arl tew blunt;
Naw oose Hampshire hogs,
But to zhow the way in bogs."

So John Rosedew quoted in the fulness of his glory from an old New Forest rhyme. John's delight transcended every thing, because he had never expected it. He had taken his own degree ere ever the Ireland was heard of; but three pupils of his had won it while he was still in residence. Of that he had not thought much. But now to win it by proxy in his extreme old age, as he began to

consider it, and from all the crack public schoolmen, and with his own pet alumni, whom no one else had taught any thing—such an Ossa upon Pelion, such an Olympus on Ossa—no wonder that the snow of his whiskers shook and the dew trembled under his eyelids.

Sir Cradock, on the other hand, had never a word to say, but turned his head like one who waits for a storm of dust to go by.

"Why, Cradock, old friend, what on earth is the matter? You don't seem at all delighted."

"Yes, I am, of course, John; as delighted as I ought to be. But I wish it had been Viley; he wants it so much more, and he is so like his mother."

"So is Crad; every bit as much; an enlarged and grander portrait. Can't you see the difference between a large heart and a mere good one? Will no one ever appreciate my noble and simple Craddy?"

John Rosedew spoke warmly, and was sorry before the breath from his lips was cold. Not that he had no right to say it, but because he felt that his rashness had done harm to Cradock.

CHAPTER VIII.

SELF-REFLECTION.

HONOURS flash in the summer sun, as green corn does in the morning; then they gleam mature and mellow at the time of reaping; they are bagged, perhaps by a woman's arm, with a cut "below the knees;" set on their butt for a man to sit under while eating his bread and cheese; then they wither, and are tossed into chaff by a contumelious steam-engine with a leathern strap inflexible.

Cradock's "Ireland" has gone by, and another has succeeded it, and this has fallen, as most things fall, to the sap of perseverance, steel-tipped with hard self-confidence—this Ireland has fallen to the lot of Brown Balliolensis. Clayton would not go in for it; his pride, or rather vanity, would not allow him to do so. Was he going to take Cradock's leavings, and be a year behind him, when he was only a few minutes younger? However, he went in for the Hertford, and, what was a great deal more, he got it; for Cradock would not stand; and, even if he had, perhaps the result would have been the same. Viley had made up his mind to win it, and worked very hard indeed; and so won it very easily. Cradock could usually beat him in Greek, but not so often in Latin. And Clayton wrote

the prettiest, most tripping, coquettish, neat-ankled hendecasyllables that ever whisked roguishly round a corner, wondering where Catullus was.

Ah! light-hearted poet, sensitively sensuous, yet withal deep-hearted, with a vein of golden philosophy, and a pensive tenderness, now-a-days we overlook thee. Horace is more fashionable, more suited to a flippant age, because he has no passion.

Early on a sunripe evening in the month of June, "when the sun was shifting the shadows of the hills, and doffed the jaded oxen's yoke, distributing the lovetime from his waning chariot," a forest dell, soft, clear, and calm, was listening to its thrushes. And more than at the throstle's flute, or flageolet of the blackbird, oaks and chestnuts pricked their ears at the voice of a gliding maiden. Where the young fern was pluming itself, arching, lifting, ruffling in filigree, light perspective, and depth of Gothic tracery, freaked by the nip of fairy fingers, tremulous as a coral grove in a crystal under-current, the shyer fronds still nestling home, uncertain of the world as yet, and coiled like catherine-wheels of green; where the cranesbill pushed like Zedekiah, and the succory reared its sky-blue windmill (open for business till 8 P.M.); where the violet now was rolled up in the seed-pod, like a stylite millipede, and the great bindweed, in its crenate horn, piped and fluted spirally, had forgotten its noonday flaunt: here, and over the nibbled sward, where the crisp dew was not risen yet, here came wandering the lightest foot that ever passed, but shook not, the moss-bed of the glow-worm. Under the rigorous oaks (so corded, seamed, and wenned with humps of grey), the stately, sleek, mouse-coloured beech, the dappled, moss-beridden ash, and the birch-tree peeling silverly, beneath the murmuring congress of the sunproof leaves; and again in the open breaks and alleys, where light and shade went see-saw; by and through and under all, feeling for and with every one, glanced, and gleamed, and glistened, and listened the loveliest being where all was love, the pet in the nest of nature.

Of all the beauty in that sweet dell, where the foot of man came scarcely once in a year; of all the largesse of earth and heaven; of all the grace which is Nature's gratitude to her heavenly Father: there was not one, from the lily-bell to the wild rose and the heather-sprig, fit for a man to put in his bosom, and look at Amy Rosedew.

It is told of a certain good man's child, whose lineage still is cherished, that when she was asked by her father (half bantering, half in earnest) to tell him the reason why every body loved her so, she cast down her eyes with a puzzled air, then opened them wide, as a child does to the sunrise of some great truth—"Father, perhaps it is because I love every body so." Lucan has it in a neater form: "amorem quæris amando." And that was Amy Rosedew's secret, by herself undreamed of—lovely, because she could not help loving all our God has made. And of all the fair

things He has made, and pronounced to be very good, since sunshine first began to gleam, to glow, and to fade away, what home has beauty found so bright, so rich in varied elegance, so playfully receptive of the light shed through creation—the light of the Maker's smile—as a young maiden, pure of heart, natural, true, and trusting?

She came to the brink of a forest pool, and looked at herself in the water. Not that she thought more than she could help of the outward thing called "Amy," but that she wondered how her old favourites, Cradock and Clayton Nowell, would esteem her face and style of dress now she was turned seventeen. Most likely they had seen ever so many girls, both at Oxford and in London, compared with whom poor Amy was but a rustic Phidyle, just fit to pick sticks in the New Forest.

The crystal mirror gave her back even the shade on her own sweet face, which fell from the cloud of that simple thought; for she stood where the westering sunshine failed to touch the water, but flushed with rich relief of gold the purity of her figure. Every sapling, dappled hazel, sloughing birch, or glabrous maple, glistened with the plumes of light, and every leaf was twinkling. The columns of the larger trees stood like metal cylinders, whereon the level gleam rules a streak, and glints away round the rounding. Elbows, arms, and old embracings, backed with a body-ground of green, laced with sunset's golden bodkin, ever shifting every eyelet, —branch, and bough, and trunk, and leaves, ruffling and twisting, or staunch and grand, they seemed but a colonnade and arch, for the sun to peep through at the maiden, and tell of her on the calm waters.

Floating, fleeting, wavering there, in a frame of stately summer flags, vivid upon the crystal shade, and twinkling every now and then to the plash of a distant moorhen, or the dip of a swallow's wing, lay her graceful image, wondering in soft reply to her play of wonder. She took off her light chip hat, and laughed; lo! the courteous picture did the same. She offered, with a mincing air, her little frail of wood-strawberries; and the shadowy Amy put them back with the prettiest grace ever dreamed of. Then she cast the sparkling night of her tresses down the white shoulders and over her breast; and the other Amy was looking at her through a ripple of cloudiness, with the lissom waist retiring. She smoothed her hair like a scarf around her, withdrew her chin on the curving neck, and bowed the shapely forehead, well pleased to see thus the foreshortening undone, and the pure, bright oval shown as in a glass. Then, frightened almost at the lustrous depth of her large grey eyes, deep-fringed with black, she thought of things all beyond herself, and woke, from Nature's innocent joy in her own brief luck of beauty, to the bashful consciousness, the down of a maiden's dreamings. Bridling next at her mirrored face,

with a sudden sense of humour, all the time she watched the red lips, and the glimmer of pearls between them, "Amy," she cried, "now, after this, don't come to me for a character, unless you want one, you pretty dear, for conceit and self-admiration."

So saying, she tossed her light head at herself, and looked round through her flickering cloudlets. What did she see? What made the dark water flame upon the instant with a richer glow than sunset? The delicate cheeks, the fair forehead and neck, even the pearly slope of the shoulders, were flooded with deepest carmine. Her pride fell flat, as the cistus stamen at a touch droops away on the petal. Then she shrank into a flowering broom, and cowered among the spikelets, and dared not move to wipe away the tears she was so mad with. Oh! the wretched abasement earned by a sweet little bit of vanity!

How she hated herself, and the light, and the water, and every thing, her senseless habit of thinking aloud, above all, her despicable fancy that she was growing—what nonsense!—such a pretty girl! Thenceforth and for ever, she felt quite sure, she never could look in a glass again, unless it were just for a moment, to put her hair to rights, if ever she got home.

"To think of my hair all down my neck, and the way I had turned in the gathers!"—the poor little thing had been making experiments how she would look in a low-necked dress—"Oh! that was the worst thing of all. I might have laughed at it but for that. And now I am sure I can never even peep at his face again. Whatever will he think of me, and what would my papa say?"

After crying until she began to laugh, she resolved to go straight home, and confess all her crime to Aunt Eudoxia, John Rosedew's maiden sister, who had come to live with him when he lost his wife, three dreary years agone. So Amy rolled up her long hair anyhow, without a bit of pride in it, shrank away and examined herself, to be sure that all was right, and, after one peep, came bravely forth, trying to look as much as possible like her good Aunt Doxy; then she walked at her stateliest, with the basket of strawberries, picked for papa, in one hand, and the other tightly clasped upon the bounding of her heart. But her eyes were glancing right or left, like a fawn's when a lion has roared; and even the youngest trees saw quite well that, however rigid with Miss Eudoxia the gliding form might be, it was poised for a dart and a hide behind them at every crossing shadow.

But fortune favours the brave. She won her own little sallyport without the rustle of a blackberry-leaf, and thereupon rushed to a hasty and ostrich-like conclusion. She felt quite sure that, after all, none but the waters and winds could tell the tale of her little coquetry. Beyond all doubt, Cradock Nowell was deep in the richest mental metallurgy, tracing the vein of Greek iambics, as he

did before his beard grew; and she never, never would call them "stupid iambics" again.

Cradock, who had espied her, but turned away immediately (as became a gentleman), did not, for the moment, know his little Amy Rosedew. A year and a half had changed her from a stripling, jumping girl to a shy and graceful maiden, dreadfully afraid of sweethearts. She had not been away from Nowelhurst throughout that year and a half, for her father could not get on without her for more than a month at a time, and all that month he fretted. But the twins had spent the last summer in Germany, with a merry reading (or talking) party; and their Christmas and Easter vacations were dragged away in London, through a strange whim of Sir Cradock Nowell; at least, they thought it strange, but there was some reason for it.

Young Cradock Nowell was not such a muff as to be lost in Greek senarii; no trimeter acatalectics of truest balance and purest fall could be half so fair to scan; not "Harmony of the golden hair," and her nine Pierid daughters round the crystal spring, were worth a glance of the mental eye, when fortune granted bodily vision of our unconscious Amy. But he did not stand there watching mutely, as some youths would have done; for a moment, indeed, he forgot himself in the flush of admiration. The next moment he remembered that he was a gentleman; and he did what a gentleman must have done—whether marquis or labourer: he slipped away through the bushes, feeling as if he had done some injury. Then the maiden, glancing round, caught one startled glimpse, as Nyssia did of the stealthy Gyges, or Diana of Actæon. From that one glimpse she knew him, though he was so like his brother; but he had failed to recognize the Amy of his boyhood.

CHAPTER IX.

UPON A SUNDAY MORNING.

MISS EUDOXIA ROSEDEW was now the queen of the rectory; and the sceptre she bore was an iron one to all except her niece. John—that easy, good-natured parson, who coming in from the garden or parish, any summer forenoon, would halt in the long low kitchen, if a nice crabbed question presented itself, take his seat outright upon the corner of the ancient dresser, and then and there discourse upon some moot point in the classics, or tie and untie over again some fluffy knot historical, talking mainly to himself, of course, and

answering himself and balancing all that ever had been said on either side of the question; while his sister, with her store-room apron on, could not help admiring him, yet could not forget propriety, and Amy all the time poked in little pike-points of impudence, and the cook and housemaid theoretically kept themselves well out of the way, but practically were always present,—the worthy rector had now so long been threatened by his sister and child with dishclouts, pepper, and rolling-pins, that the cook began to forget the name of Plato (which had struck her), and the housemaid could not justly tell what Tibullus says of Pales.

"John, you really do not show enough of moral dignity! And the mutton not put down yet, and the kidney-beans getting ropy! If you must sit there, you might as well begin to slice the cucumber. I dare say you'd do that with pleasure."

"To be sure, Doxy; so I will. I sharpened my knife this morning."

"Doxy, John! And with that glass-window! I am sure Johanna must have heard you, though she makes such a strong commotion in there with the rolling-pin, like a doctor's pestle and mortar. She always does when I come out, to impress me with her activity; and I dare say she sat down for half an hour, to listen to her master. Really, my dear brother, you ought to make more allowance for cooking."

"Eudoxia, that is in strong departure from the great Philo's opinion. He says——"

"Now, John, I know all he could say, and cannot stop to hear it. Only will you, or will you not allow me to order the dinner?"

"I have great ideas upon that subject, not only from the Deipnosophists, but from a rare tractate which I lately happened on——"

"John, you really are too bad. Is a dinner a matter of theory? I know it is to you, my dear, when you are over busy. But I do feel that it ought not to be so regarded."

"All antiquity is in your favour," answered Mr. Rosedew, who always had the due soft word; "and lately there seems to be reason to hope that the same mode of thought is returning."

This, among other little strokes and gentle passages of arms, shows how these two softened off the difference nature insists on making between male and female. John always yielded at once whenever Eudoxia tried to argue; and the lady had the pleasure of feeling—until she began to think a little—how much she had the best of it.

Every gentleman is bound to behave so towards the ladies. And his reward is ready for him. They exalt their vanquished.

To forsake these common reflections, and to come to church at last. A good and pleasant sight it was for any man to stand outside the dry wall of the churchyard, and at his leisure watch Mr. Rosedew going to church with his sister.

At no other time except a quarter to eleven o'clock on the forenoon of Sunday did this gentleman spare two thoughts as to what the world might think of him. Neither would he have done so then, except that long stimulation had at length worked him up to the proper pitch; because Miss Rosedew, anticipating a great intellectual movement, really did perceive that we ought to insist a great deal more upon the dignity of the priesthood. Wherefore she made a new cassock for John out of the undertakers' scarves, and gave him no rest until he donned it, laughing at himself and her.

"How can it matter?" John Rosedew asked; "the women attend to our clothes of course. I remember a passage in Naumachius, worthy of more attention than——"

"Than the traditions of the Church, and the true significance of vestments, John!"

"Nay, did I say that, Eudoxia? I only meant to say—than many patterns I have had by post. However, Doxy, if you find it right to brush me down so much, I can stand a good deal longer; and Jem has not begun on the cracked bell yet."

In this manner they issued forth, Sunday after Sunday, poor John Rosedew always lacking the moral support of Amy, and his sister always making the most of her fair field to be at him.

Dear Amy was at the Sunday school from half-past nine till church-time, doing a good bit of work, in her way, and smoothing the quarrels of teachers. For strange though it is, it is equally true that the duty and practice of teaching the young idea how to shoot drive many good and benevolent people to long to shoot one another.

But now here comes Amy to meet her papa, and take the girls in at the chancel door, while the boys enter under the tower. Her favourite scholars, the first-class girls, march in the van; and some have gloves, and some even pocket-handkerchiefs. But these have orders to share their talent, upon strong emergency, with their little sisters.

Behind sweet Amy come little girls, even too young for flirting (or at least supposed to be so), who straggle along with a very loose sense of any responsibility. Three, or four, or five in a line, or out of line altogether, they lag, and they swing, and they jerk their legs, without any sense of the house of God. This is put into them every Sunday, but goes out before they go in.

Amy draws up before her father, just to show him what she can do. All her scholars who have any gloves salute therewith emphatically; all the others, who are too poor, kiss their hands, and Mr. Rosedew loves them all the more for it.

How smooth, and calm, and rich looks Amy; as if she had governed a school for at least a downright generation. To catch the sweetness of her smile and the radiance of her lovely face is as

good as to go to church almost; while the cut of her clothes is enough to show that she feels how much it would be amiss to encourage these girls into any light ways, by the smallest insinuation of her own sweet sinuosities.

All these girls, being ranged in order, pull down their chins, as if they had never seen such a thing as a boy before, and never desired to see him again.

The boys however are pretty nearly fit to be a match for them. In their stomachs they do feel how much they have had the best of it, after ignominious failure—when it came to treacle-tucks—to assert themselves against true feminine self-sacrifice. And at this moment, rolling their tongues, in a manner basely practical, in at the tower porch they go, and the girls look away, most decidedly.

CHAPTER X.

LOVE IN THE FOREST.

THE scenery of the New Forest is of infinite variety; but the wooded parts may be ranged, perhaps, in a free, loose-branching order (as befits the subject), into some three divisions, which cross and interlace each other, as the trees themselves do.

First, and most lovely, the glades and reaches of gentle park and meadow, where the beech-tree invades not seriously, or, at any rate, not with discipline, but straggles about like a tall centurion amused by ancient Britons. Here are the openings winged with fern, and ruffling to the west wind; and the crimped oval leaves of the alder rustle over the backs of the bathing cows. In and out we glance, or gaze, through the groined arcade of trees, where the sun goes wandering softly, as if with his hand before his eyes. Of such kind is the Queen's Bower Wood, beside the Boldre Water.

Of the second type, most grand and solemn, is the tall beech-forest, darkening the brow of some lonely hill, and draping the bosomed valleys. Such is Mark Ash Wood, four miles to the west of Lyndhurst. Overhead, is the vast cool canopy; underfoot, the soft brown carpet, woven by a thousand autumns. No puny underwood foils the gaze, no coppice-whispers circulate; on high there moves one long, unbroken, and mysterious murmur, and all below grey twilight broods in a lake of silent shadow. Through this the ancient columns rising, smooth, dove-coloured, or glimpsed with moss, others fluted, crannied, bulging, hulked at the reevings of some great limb; others twisted spirally and tortuously rooting; a thousand giants receding, clustering, opening elbow-peeps between them, standing forth to stop the view, or glancing some busy slant

of light—in the massive depth of gloom they seem, at times, to be gliding.

The third and most rudely sylvan form is that of the enclosures, where the intolerant beech is absent, and the oak, the spruce, and the Spanish chestnut protect the hazel, the fern and bramble, the dog-rose and the honeysuckle.

In a bowering, gleaming, twinkling valley, such as I have first described, we saw Miss Amy Rosedew admiring her own perfections; and now, some three months afterwards, a certain young lady, not wholly unlike her, is roaming in a deep enclosure, thick with oaks and underwood. It lies about a furlong from the western lodge of Nowelhurst, and stretches away towards the sunset, far from the eye of house or hut. Even the lonely peatman, who camps (or camped, while so allowed) beneath the open sky, wherever the waste yields labour freely, and no prescription bars him—even he finds nothing here to draw his sauntering footstep. The gorse prefers more open places, the nuts are few and hard to reach, the fuel-turf is not worth cutting, and the fuel-wood he dare not hew. So there is nothing there to tempt him. As for shade, and solitude, and the crystal rill, he gets a little too much of that sort of thing already.

By the side of that crystal rill, and where the trees hung thickest, in the early gloom of St. Michael's evening, walked the aforesaid maiden, nor was it difficult to espy a handsome youth beside her. The light through the lapping boughs and leaves—whose summer whisper now was growing hoarse in autumn's rustle—the clouded light fell charily, but showed the figures comely, as either could wish of the other.

The maiden's face was turned away; but one hand lay in her lover's; with the other she was drawing close the loose folds of her mantle; the play of colour on her cheeks outflushed the tints of autumn; and not a doomed leaf of the forest fluttered more than her young heart.

Meanwhile, he was gazing down, as if loth to break the spell of passion woven by the time, the scene, the interchange of look and touch, and most of all, by his own brave words, and fervid eloquence of love. Although his whole life was waiting for a whisper, a murmur, or even a glance, the power of the moment held him calm, and firm, and silent.

Therefore all her pride could scarcely keep her lips from trembling, and she would not say a word, from fear of what her voice might be. Only she gently withdrew her hand, and turned to the brink of the brook, and felt the fleeting of the waters.

What could she have done more simple, and more captivating? Down the water flowed, as if for ever would it flow and flow; and down she gazed at it, as if all the world went on in that way. Over

the ever-changing surface briars hung and willows wept, and the silver-weed at her foot withdrew from the passion of the rivulet.

Then with a sudden change of mood she turned to him sadly and proudly, and thought it no disgrace to show him freely flowing tears.

"Mr. Nowell, you are very eloquent; but it would have been kinder of you not to use your eloquence."

"How could I help it? What can I do? You never would say such a thing, if you cared a single atom for me."

"It is not that—as you know too well. It is the impossibility——"

"Impossibility of parting us, if only you care for me a ten thousandth part of what I do for you. Do you now? Now do you?"

The young lady replied with a glance at once playful, loving, and sorrowful, "Well, perhaps I do. But how can I hope to tell you the accurate fraction?"

"Fractions be hanged!" cried Clayton Nowell; "I want every bit of you."

Hereupon ensued a congress—in the true sense of the word—and a press, from which the Press, though "rigidly excluded," once for a wonder would admit the justice of the exclusion.

At length came the lucid interval, which even lovers cannot manage to defer for ever.

"Come now, Clayton, no more if you please," the young lady said in a resolute voice, at the same time replacing her gardening hat, which seemed somehow to have fallen off: "we have many and many a trouble before us. We must be like people of the world, you know, and not two foolish children. I am frightened to think of my father's anger; and I cannot long keep it from him."

"Plenty of time to discuss our troubles, my gem, my jewel, my precious pearl. Only now pledge me once and for ever, that nothing that possibly can happen shall part us from one another."

"Nothing, dear Clayton; at least if you remain as true as I am. Nothing, I mean, less than death."

On their homeward road they were passing now under the shadow of an old grey oak, whose dead boughs and hoary ivy took up the word, and whispered "death."

The youth, having touches of poetry, had some touch of superstition also; and a cold shudder ran through his healthy young frame at the oracular oak's response. With love's intuition, the girl perceived it, and crept closer to his side.

"I will give you a week, dear, if you wish it," she said, while her right hand stole back into his; "but I could not keep it any longer from my father, who loves me so. And all that time I shall be wretched to think of deceiving him. I would rather meet him in all his anger than feel myself playing false with him."

"Of course you would," poor Clayton answered, being himself of the eager kind; "only give me a week, my darling, so that I may take Sir Cradock at a happy moment, and then he will make it all right with your father. Now for the form that our people have for five hundred years insisted upon, borrowed no doubt from forest usage. You know well what it is, of course."

"Of course I do," she answered with a sigh which Clayton wondered at: "but I have no time to lose. I am very late already."

However, she could not refuse him her hand, as he went through the form of betrothal long traditionary with the Nowells. This old usage well became his gallant aspect and graceful figure, as with one knee on the ground, hat cast off, and fair locks waving, he made a deep obeisance to her, and uttered the accustomed words.

"My fealty is to you," he cried: "I am yours to command and serve. Of you I hold my power, and fortune, fame, and lands, and heart, and home."

She tried to smile, as she ought to have done, while he kissed her hand, and she touched his forehead; but some foreboding or terror seized her, and she could not check a long low sob.

They had stopped at a point where two forest-paths met, and the bushes fell back a little, and the last of the sunset memory glanced through the pales of a moss-grown gate, the mark whereby some royalty, or right of chase, was limited. The youth, surprised as well as grieved at the reception of his homage, was soothing, administering, and persuading, in the natural manner of young lovers, and winning her back to her usual state of mind (which was a merry one), when she drew back with a startled glance, as if at a hidden enemy.

Clayton, following her glance, sprang up to defend her; but there was no antagonist. All he saw was a man on horseback, passing silently over the turf, behind a low bank crowned with fern. Here a narrow track, scarce visible, saved the traveller some few yards, subtending as it did the angle where the two paths met. Clayton could not see the horse, for the thick brake-fern eclipsed him. But he knew by the joggings of a hat that the nag was getting weary. The face of the rider now expressed the most abstract philosophy ever invented, and superlunary absence. Any rabbit acquainted with Lavater would have come out of his hole again for another bout of play.

Because this man was riding along, as if it never occurred to his mind that any thing, or any one, had existed, or could exist, at a lower level than the top of the loftiest oak-trees upwards. He seemed to be a little man with an upward tendency of nose, red hair, and general redness, heightened at the moment by the tint of leaves around him. Then as he passed by a shadowy oak, which

swallowed him up in a moment, that oak (if it had been duly vocal) would have repeated these words—

"Well, if that ain't the parson's daughter, grind me under a curry-stone. What a sly minx!—but devilish pretty. You're a deal too soft, John Rosedew."

The young lady was of the twain the quicker to recover presence of mind. She pressed on her glossy round head the hat which had been so long in her left hand, and, drawing a long breath, looked point-blank at the wondering stare of her sweetheart.

"Well, Clayton, we may make up our minds for it now."

"For what, I should like to know? Who cares for that interloping, beetroot-coloured muff?"

"He is no muff at all, I can tell you, but an exceedingly clever man. Do you mean to say you don't know him?"

"Not I, from Esau or Ishmael. And he looks like a mixture of both."

"He is Doctor Rufus Hutton."

Clayton indulged in a very long whistle, indrawn, and mildly melodious. 'Twas a trick he had learned at Oxford; it has long been discarded elsewhere, but at both Universities still subsists, as the solace of newly-plucked men; the long-drawn sound seems to wind so soothingly down the horns of dilemma. Then the youth jumped up, and gathered a nut, cracked it between his white front teeth, and offered it, husk and all, well split, to his beautiful frightened darling. She took it, without any prudery, and picked out the thin shell, piece by piece, carefully seeking kernel. He all the while with admiration watched the delicate fingers moving, the reflex play of the lissome joints, the spiral thread and varying impress of the convex tips, and the faintly flushing pink beneath the transparency of those nails. Then she laughed and looked slyly at him, as she turned out a fine double nut—two fat kernels close together, shaped by one another. Of course she gave him one, and of course we know what they did about it.

Enough to say that they very soon forgot all about Dr. Rufus Hutton, and could scarcely part where the last branch-path was quite near to the maiden's window. Even there, where the walks divided, and neither could see the other, each stepped aside, and listened long to hear the last of the other's footfall; neither was there peace for either, till that sound was heard again.

CHAPTER XI.

AN ADVANCED CHRISTIAN.

WHATEVER the age, or the intellect of the passing age, may be, even if ever arise again such a cycle of brilliant minds as rose upon this world of ours three hundred years ago, though all those bright minds start upon their glorious career, comprising and enhancing all the light engendered by, before, and since the time of Shakspeare, Bacon, Newton; then, though they multiply that light tenfold by newer genius, till a thousand waking nations gleam, like hill-tops touched with sunrise—to guide men on the human road, to lead them heaven-ward, all shall be no more than a benighted river wandering away from the stars of God. Do what we will, and think as we may, enlarging the mind in each generation, growing contemptuous of contempt, casting caste to the winds of heaven, and antiquating prejudice, nevertheless shall we ever outrun or overtake true Christianity? Science, learning, philosophy, may regard it through a telescope: they touch it no more than astronomy sets foot upon a star. To a thoughtful man, who is scandalized at all the littleness felt and done under the holy name, until he almost begins to doubt if the good outweigh the evil, it is reassurance to remember that we are not Christians yet, and comfort to confess that on earth we never can be. For nothing shows more clearly that our faith is of heaven, than the truth that we cannot rise to it until it raise us thither. And this reflection is akin to the stately writer's sentiment, that our minds conceive so much more than our bodies can perform, to give us token, ay, and earnest, of a future state.

Of all the creeds which have issued as yet from God, or man, or the devil, is there another so far in advance of human civilization? True Christianity, like hope, cheers us to continual effort, exalts us to unbounded prospect, flies in front of our best success. Let us call it a worn-out garb, when we have begun to wear it; as yet the mantle is in the skies, and we have only the skirt with the name on it.

Such thoughts as these were always stirring in the heart of a man of power, a leading character in this story, a leading character every where, whithersoever he went. Bull Garnet, Sir Cradock Nowell's steward, was now forty-five years old, and all who met him were surprised at his humble place in the commonwealth. A sense of power so pervaded even the air he breathed, that strong men rebelled instinctively, though he urged no supremacy; weak men caught some infection from him, and went home and astonished their families. Strong and weak alike confessed that it was a mysterious thing how a man of such motive strength, and self-reliance illimit-

able, could be content with no higher post than that of a common steward. But neighbourly interest in this subject met with no encouragement. Albeit his views of life expanded into universal sympathy, his practice now and then admitted some worldly-wise restrictions. And so, while really glad to advise on the doings of all around him, he never permitted brotherly interference with his own.

Whoever saw Bull Garnet once was sure to know him again. If you met him in a rush to save the train, your eyes would turn and follow him. "There goes a man remarkable, whether for good or evil." Tall though he was, and large of frame, with swinging arms, and a square expression, it was none of this that prolonged the bystander's glance into a gaze. It was the cubic mass of the forehead, the span between the enormous eyes, and the depth of the thick-set jowl, which rolled with the volume of a bulldog's. The rest of the face was in keeping therewith: the nose bold, broad, and patulous, the mouth large and well banked up, the chin big and heavily rounded. No shade of a hair was ever allowed to dim his healthy colouring, his head was cropped close as a Puritan's, and when beard grew fast he shaved twice in a day. High culture was a necessity to him, whether of mind, or body, or of the world external; he would no more endure a moustache on his lip than a frouzy hedgerow upon his farm. That man, if you came to think about him, more and more each time you saw how different he was from other men. Distinctness is a great merit in roses, especially when the French rosarians have so overpiled the catalogue. It is pleasant to walk up to a standard, and say, "You are 'Jules Margottin,' and your neighbour the 'Keepsake of Malmaison;' I cannot mistake you for any other, however hot the weather may be." Distinctness is also a merit in apples, pears, and even peaches; but most of all in man. And so, without knowing the reason, perhaps, we like a man whom we cannot mistake for any other of our million brethren.

However, Mr. Garnet's leading trait was not at first sight amiable. It was, if one may be allowed, upon the strength of the subject, to indulge in strongish language,—a furious, reckless, damnable, and thoroughly devilish temper. All great qualities, loving-kindness, yearnings for Christian ideals, fell like sugar-canes to a hurricane in the outburst and rush of that temper. He was always grieved and deeply humbled, when the havock was done; and, being a man of generous nature, would bow his soul in atonement. But in the towering of his wrath, how grand a sight he afforded! As fine as the rush of the wild Atlantic upon St. David's Head. For a time, perhaps, he would chafe and fret within the straits of reason, his body surging to and fro, and his mind making grasp at boundaries. Then some little aggravation, some trifle which no other man would notice—and out would leap

all the pent-up fury of his soul. His great eyes would gather volume, and spring like a mastiff from a kennel; his mighty forehead would scarp and chine like the headland when the plough turns; and all his aspect grow four-square with more than hydraulic pressure. Whoever then could gaze unmoved at the raging fire of his eyes must be a philosopher or a fool—and sometimes the two are synonymous.

But touch him, even then, with a single turn of softness, the thought of some one dear to him, a large and genial sentiment, or a tender memory—and the lines of his face would relax and quiver, the blazing eyes be suffused and subdued to a tremulous glow; and the man, so far beyond reason's reach, be led back, like a boy, by the feelings.

All who think they can catch and analyze that composite, subtle, volatile gas—neither body nor spirit, yet in fief to the laws of either—which men call "human nature," these, no doubt, will perceive at once, from even this meagre description, that Mr. Bull Garnet's nature was scant of that playful element, humour. If thought be (as German philosophers have it) an electric emanation, then wit is the forked flash, gone in a moment; humour the soft summer lightning that shows us the clouds and the depth, the background and night of ourselves. No man of large humour, can be in a passion, without laughing inwardly at himself. And wrath, which laughs at itself, is not of much avail in business.

Mr. Garnet's wrath, on the contrary, was a fine, free-boiling, British anger, not at all liable to reason, and therefore very precious. By dint of it, he could score at night nearly twice as much work done in the day as a peaceable man could have reckoned. Man or woman, boy or girl, Mr. Garnet could extract from each all the cubic capacity, leaving them just enough of power to crawl home stiff, and admire him. For the truth of it is, as all know to their cost, who have had much to do with spade or plough, hod or hammer, that the British workman admires most the master who makes him sweat most. Perhaps it ought not to be so. Theoretically, we regard it thus, that a man ought to perspire, upon principle, when he is working for another man. But tell us where, and oh! where, to find the gentle British labourer who takes that view of the subject.

Sith it will na better be; let us out and look for him. The sky is bright blue, and the white clouds flock slowly, like sheep cropping after each other. What man but loves the open air, and to walk about and think of it, with fancies flitting lazily, like fluff of dandelion? What man but loves to sit under a tree, and let the winds go wandering, and the shadows come and play with him, to let work be a pleasant memory, and hurry a storm of the morning? Every body except Bull Garnet.

CHAPTER XII.

NEWS FOR MR. GARNET.

ALL the leaves of the New Forest, save those of the holly and mistletoe, some evergreen spines, and the blinder sort, that know not a wink from a nod—all the leaves, I mean, that had sense of their position, and when to blush and when to retire, and how much was due to the roots that taught them—all these leaves were beginning to feel that their time in the world was over. The trees had begun to stand tier upon tier, in an amphitheatrical fashion, and to sympathize more with the sunset; while the sun every evening was kissing his hands, and pretending to think them younger. Some outspoken trees leaned forward, well in front of the forest-galleries, with amber sleeves, and loops of gold, and braids of mellow abandonment, like liberal Brazilian ladies, bowing from the balconies. Others drew away behind them, with their mantles folded, leaning back into unprobed depths of semi-transparent darkness, as the forest of the sky amasses, when the moon is rising. Some had cast off their children in parachutes, swirling as the linden berries do throughout September; some were holding their treasures grimly, and would even when they were naked.

Now the flush of the grand autumnal tide had not risen yet to its glory, but was freaking, and glancing, and morrising round the bays and the juts of the foliage. Or it ruffled, among the ferny knaps, and along the winding alleys. The sycamores truly were reddening fast, and the chestnut palms growing bronzy; the limes were yellowing here and there, and the sere leaves of the woodbine fluttered the cob of clear red berries. But the great beechen hats, which towered and darkened atop of the moorland hollows and across the track of the woodman—these, and the oaks along the rise, where the turtle-dove was cooing, had only shown their sense of the age by an undertint of olive.

It was now the fifth day of October—a day to be remembered long by all the folk of Nowelhurst. Mr. Garnet stood at the end of his garden, where a narrow pinewood gate opened to one of the forest rides. Of course he was doing something, and doing it very forcibly. His life was a fire that burned very fast, having plenty of work to poke it. But the little job which he now had in hand was quite a relaxation: there was nothing Bull Garnet enjoyed so much as cutting down a tree. He never cared what time of year it was, whether the leaves were on or off, whether the sap were up or down, as we incorrectly express it. The sap of a tree is ever moving, like our own life-blood; only it feels the change of season more than we who have no roots. Has a dormouse no circulation, when he coils himself up in his elbowed hole? Is there no evaporation from

the frozen waters? The two illustrations are wide apart, but the principle is the same. Nature admits no absolute stoppage, except as death, in her cradle of life; and then she sets to, and transmutes it. Why Bull Garnet so enjoyed the cutting down of a tree, none but those who themselves enjoy it may pretend to say. Of course, we will not refer it to the reason assigned in the well-known epigram, which contains such a wholesale condemnation of this arboricidal age. In another century, London builders will perhaps discover, when there are no trees left, that a bit of tuck-pointing by the gate, and a dab of mud-plaster beside it, do not content the heart of man like the leaves, and the drooping shadowy rustle, which are the type of himself and his life.

Bull Garnet stood there in the October morning, with the gate wide open, flung back by his strong hand upon its hinges, as if it had no right to them. The round bolt dropped from the quivering force, dropped through the chase of the loop, and bedded deep in the soft, wet ground. With much satisfaction the gate brought up, and felt itself anchored safely; Bull Garnet gave the bolt a kick, which hurled all the rusty screws out. Then he scarcely stopped to curse the blacksmith; he wanted the time for the wood-cutters. At a glint from the side of his vast round eyes—eyes that took in every thing, and made all the workmen swear and believe that he could see round a corner—he descried that the axemen were working the tree askew to the strain of the ropes. The result must be that the comely young oak, just proud of its first big crop of acorns, would swerve on the bias of the wind, stagger heavily, and fall headlong upon the smart new fence. There was no time for words—in a moment he had kicked the men right and left, torn off his coat, and caught up an axe, and dealt three thundering strokes in the laggard twist of the breach. Away went the young oak, swaying wildly, trying once to recover itself, then crashing and creaking through the brushwood, with a swish from its boughs and leaves, and a groan from its snaggy splinters. A branch took one of the men in his face, and laid him flat in a tussock of grass.

"Serve you right, you lubber; I'm devilish glad," cried Bull Garnet; "and I hope you won't move for a week."

The next moment, he went up and raised him, felt that his limbs were sound, and gave him a dram of brandy.

"All right, my fine fellow. Next time you'll know something of the way to fell a tree. Go home now, and I'll send you a bottle of wine."

But the change of his mood, the sudden softening, the glisten that broke through the flash of his eyes, was not caused this time by the inroad of rapid Christian feeling. It was the approach of his son that stroked the down of his heart the right way. Bull Garnet loved nothing else in this world, or in the world to come, with a hundredth part of the love wherewith he loved his

only son. Lo, the word "love" thrice in a sentence—nevertheless, let it stand so. For is there a word in our noble tongue, or in any other language, to be compared for power and beauty with that little word "love"?

Bob came down the path of the kitchen-garden at his utmost speed. He was like his father in one or two things, and most unlike in others. His nature was softer and better by far, though not so grand and striking—Bull Garnet in the young Adam again, ere ever the devil came. All this the father felt, but knew not: it never occurred to him to inquire why he adored his son.

The boy leaped the new X fence very cleverly, through the fork of the fingers, and stood before his father in a flame of indignation. Mr. Garnet, with that queer expression which the face of a middle-aged man wears when he recalls his boyhood, ere yet he begins to admire it, was looking at his own young life with a contemplative terror. He was saying to himself, "What cheek this boy has got!" and he was feeling all the while that he loved him the more for having it.

"Hurrah, Bob, my boy; you're come just in time."

Mr. Garnet tried very hard to look as if he expected approval. Well enough all the time he knew that he had no chance of getting it. For Bob loved nature in any form, especially as expressed in the noble eloquence of a tree. And now he saw why he had been sent to the village on a trifling errand that morning.

"Just in time for what, sir?" Bob's indignation waxed yet more. That his father should dare to chaff him!

"Just in time to tell us all about these wonderful red-combed fungi. What do you call them—some long name, as wonderful as themselves?"

Bob kicked them aside contemptuously. He could have told a long story about them, and things which men of thrice his age, who have neglected their mother, would be glad to listen to. Nature, desiring not revenge, has it in the credulous itch of the sons who have turned their backs on her.

"Oh, father," said Bob, with the tears in his eyes; "father, you can't have known that three purple emperors came to this oak, and sat upon the top of it, every morning for nearly a week, in the middle of July. And it was the most handsomest fifty-year oak till you come right to Brockenhurst bridge."

"Most handsomest, Bob!" cried Mr. Garnet, glad to lay hold of any thing; "come along with me, my son; I must see to your education."

Near them stood a young spruce fir, not more than five feet high. It had thrown up a straight and tapering spire, scaled with tender green. Below were tassels, tufts, and pointlets, all in triple order, pluming over one another in a pile of beauty. The tips of all were touched with softer and more glaucous tone. But all this gentle

tint and form was only as a framework now, a loom to bear the web of heaven. For there had been a white mist that morning—autumn's breath made visible; and the tree with its net of spider's webs had caught the lucid moisture. Now, as the early sunlight opened through the layered vapours, that little spruce came boldly forth a dark bay of the forest, and met all the spears of the orient. Looped and traced with threads of gauze, the lacework of a fairy's thought, scarcely daring to breathe upon its veil of tremulous chastity, it kept the wings of light on the hover, afraid to weigh down the whiteness. A maiden with the love-dream nestling under the bridal faldetta, a child of genius breathing softly at his own fair visions, even an infant's angel whispering to the weeping mother—what image of humanity can be so bright and exquisite as a common tree's apparel?

"Father, can you make that?" Mr. Garnet checked his rapid stride; and for once he admired a tree.

"No, my son; only God can do such glorious work as that."

"But it don't take God to undo it. Smash!"

Bob dashed his fists through the whole of it, and all the draped embroidery, all the pearly filagree, all the festoons of silver, were but as a dream when a yawning man stretches his scraggy arms forth. The little tree looked woe-begone, stale, and draggled with drunken tears.

"Why, Bob, I am ashamed of you."

"Father, so am I of you."

Before the bold speech was well out of his mouth, Bob took heartily to his heels; and, for once in his life, Mr. Garnet found himself in the weaker position. After all, he was not so very angry, for he thought that his son had been rather clever in his mode of enforcing the moral; and a man who loves ability, and loves his boy still more, regards with a liberal shrewdness the proof of the one in the other.

Bull Garnet was a Christian of the most advanced intelligence, so far as our ideas at the present time extend. He felt the beauty and perfection of the type which is set before us. He never sneered, as some of us do, at things which were too large for him, neither did he clip them to the shape of his own œsophagus. Only in practice, like the rest of us, he was sadly centrifugal. He may have regarded the Decalogue as the bond of a bygone covenant; at any rate there was one commandment from which he omitted the negative, and daily honoured it in the breach on the mildest provocation.

Now with his nostrils widely open, and great eyes set on the ground, he was pacing rapidly up and down his sheltered kitchen-garden. Every square was in perfect order, every tree in its proper compass, all the edging curt and keen. The ground was cropped with that trim luxuriance which we never see except under first-rate manage-

ment. All the coleworts for the winter, all the well-earthed celery, all the buttoning Brussels sprouts, salsify just fit to dig, turnips lifting whitely forth (though not enough for fashion), modest savoys just hearting in and saying "no" to the dew-beads, prickly spinach daily widening the chipped arrowhead—they all had room to eat and drink, and no man grudged his neighbour; yet Puck himself could not have skipped through with dry feet during a hoar-frost. As for weeds, Bull Garnet—well, what "flowers of speech" would have followed them!

Suddenly a small, spare man turned the corner upon him, where a hedge of hornbeam, trimmed and dressed as if with a pocket-comb, broke the south-western violence. Most men would have shown their hats above the narrow spine, but Rufus Hutton was very short, and seldom carried a chimney-pot.

"Sir, what can I do for you?" said Mr. Garnet, slightly surprised, but not taken aback.

"Excuse me, sir, but I called at your house, and came this way to find you. You know me well, by name, I believe; as I have the pleasure of knowing you. Rufus Hutton; ahem, sir! Delightful occupation! I, too, am a gardener. 'Dumelow Seedling,' I flatter myself. Know them well by the eye, sir. But what a difference the soil makes! Ah, yes, let them hang till the frost comes. What a plague we have had with earwigs! Get into the seat of the fruit; now just let me show you. Ah, you beggars, there you are. Never take them by the head, sir, or they'd nip my fingers. Take them under the abdomen, and they haven't room to twist upon you. There, now; what can he do?"

"Not even thank you, sir, for killing him. And now what can I do for you?"

"Mr. Garnet, I will come to the point. A man learns that in India. Too hot, sir, for much talking. Bless my heart, I have known the thermometer at 10 o'clock P.M., sir—not in the barracks, mind me, nor in a stifling nullah——"

"Excuse me, I have read of all that. I have an engagement, Dr. Hutton, at eight minutes past eleven."

"Bless my heart, and I have an appointment at 11.9 and five seconds. How singular a coincidence!"

Bull Garnet looked down at the little doctor, and thought him too small to be angry with. Moreover, he was a practical man, and scarcely knew what chaff meant. So he kept his temper wonderfully, while Rufus looked up at him gravely, with his little sharp eyes gleaming through his burnt complexion, like glow-worms among heather.

"I have heard of you, Dr. Hutton, as a very skilful gardener. Perhaps you would like to look round my garden, while I go and despatch my business. If so, I will be with you again in exactly thirty-five minutes."

"Stop, stop, stop! you'll have cause to regret it all your life, if you don't stop to hear my news."

So Rufus Hutton thought. But Mr. Garnet had cause to lament all the rest of his life, that he ever stopped to hear it.

CHAPTER XIII.

GREAT PREPARATIONS.

BULL GARNET forgot his appointment for eight minutes after eleven; indeed it was almost twelve o'clock when he came out of the summer-house (made of scarlet-runners) to which he had led Dr. Hutton, when he saw that his tale was of interest. As he came forth, and the noonday sun fell upon his features, any one who knew him would have been surprised at their expression. A well-known artist, employed upon a fresco not far from Lyndhurst, had once described Mr. Garnet's face in its ordinary aspect as "violence in repose." Epigrammatic descriptions of the infinite human nature are like tweezers to hold a whale with. At any rate, now Bull Garnet's face, as he strode out of his summer-house, may have expressed some violence, but certainly no repose.

Now Rufus Hutton, however garrulous, was a kind and sensible man, and loth to make any mischief. He ran after Mr. Garnet, hotly. Bull Garnet had quite forgotten him, and would take no notice. The doctor made a short cut through a quarter of Brussels sprouts (which almost knocked off his wide-awake hat) and stood in the arch of trimmed yew-tree, opening at the western side upon the forest lane. Here he stretched his arms to either upright, and mightily barred all exit. He knew that the other would not go home, and he meant him to go no further.

Presently Bull Garnet strode up: not with his usual swing, however; not with his wonted self-confidence. He seemed to walk off from a staggering blow, which had dulled his brain for the moment. He stopped politely before Mr. Hutton (who expected to be thrust aside), and asked as if with new interest, and as if he had not heard the tale out,—

"Are you quite sure, Dr. Hutton, that you described the dress correctly?"

"As sure as I am of the pattern of my own pantaloons. Miss Rosedew wore, as I told you, a lavender serge, looped at the sides with purple—a pretty dress for Christmas, but it struck me as warm for Michaelmas. Perhaps it was meant for the Michaelmas daisies; or perhaps she suffers from rheumatism, or flying pains in the patella."

"And the cloak and hat, as you described them—are you sure about them?"

"My dear sir, I could swear to them both if I saw them on a scarecrow. How can I speak of such a thing after that lovely creature? Such an exquisite fall of the shoulders—good wide shoulders too—and such a delicious waist! I assure you, my dear sir, I have seen fine women in India——"

"Dr. Hutton," said Mr. Garnet, sternly, "let me hear no more of that. You are a newly-married man, a man of my time of life. I will have no warm description of—of any young ladies."

Rufus Hutton was a peppery man, and not very easily cowed. Nevertheless, his mind was under the pressure of a stronger one. So he only relieved himself with a little brag.

"Why, Mr. Garnet, you cross-examine me as I did the natives when I acted as judge in Churramuttee, when the two chuprassies came before me, and the water-carrier. I tell you, sir, I see more in a glance than most men do in a long set stare, when they are called in to appraise a thing. I could tell every plait in your shirt-front, and the stuff and cut of your coat, before you could say 'good morning.' It was only last Thursday that Mrs. Hutton, who is a most remarkable woman, made an admirable observation about my rapid perception."

"I have not the smallest doubt of it. And I believe that you fully deserved it. You will therefore perceive at once that this matter must go no further. Did you see my—son at the house here?"

"No. Only the maid-servant, who directed me where to find you."

"Then you did not go in at all, I suppose?"

"No; but I admired greatly your mode of training that beautiful tropæolum over the porch. I must go and look at it again, with your kind permission. I never neglect the chance of a wrinkle such as that."

"Another time, Dr. Hutton, I shall hope to show it to you; though you must have seen it all at a glance, for it is simpler than my shirt-fronts. But my business takes me now to the Hall, and I shall be glad of your company."

"Hospitable fellow, with a vengeance!" thought little Rufus. "And I heard he had some wonderful sherry, and it's past my time for a snack. Serves me right for meddling with other people's business."

But while he stood hesitating, and casting fond glances towards the cottage, Mr. Garnet, without any more ado, passed his powerful long arm through the little wing of Rufus, and hurried him down the dingle.

"Excuse me, sir, but I have never much time to waste. This, as you know is a most busy day, and all the preparations are under

my sole charge. I laugh at the fuss, as a matter of course. But that question is not for me. Cradock Nowell is a noble fellow, and I have the highest respect for him."

"Well, I rather prefer young Clayton. Having brought them both into the world, I ought to understand them. But I hope he won't make a fool of himself in this matter we have been talking of."

Mr. Garnet jerked his companion's arm, and his face went pale as Portland stone.

"Make a d—d rogue more likely. And he won't be the first of his family."

"Yes, as you say," replied the doctor to all he could catch of the muttered words, which flew over the crown of his hat, "beyond all doubt the first family in this part of the kingdom, and so they must have their jubilee. But I trust you will use with the utmost caution what I thought it best to confide to you, under the bond of secrecy. Of course, I could not think of telling papa, either of lady or gentleman; and knowing how you stand with the family, you seemed to me the proper person to meet this little difficulty."

"Beyond a doubt, I am."

"Pooh, sir, a boy and a girl. I wonder you think so much about it. Men never know their own minds in the matter until they arrive at our age. And as for the chits on the other side—whew, they blow right and left, as the feathers on their hats do."

"That is not the case with my family. We make up our minds, and stick to them."

"Then your family is the exception, which only proves my rule; and I am glad that it has nothing to do with the present question."

When they came to that part of the lawn in front of the ancient Hall where the fireworks' stage had been reared on a gently-rising mound, Cradock Nowell met them, with a book in his hand. To-morrow he would be twenty-one; and a more honest, open-hearted fellow, or a better built one, never arrived at man's estate, whether for wealth or poverty. He had not begun to think very deeply; indeed, who could expect it, where trouble had never entered? It is pain that deepens the channel of thought, and sorrow that sweeps the bar away. Cradock as yet was nothing more than a clever, fine young man, an elegant and accurate scholar, following thought more than forming it. Nevertheless, he had the material of a grand unselfish character—of a nature which, when perfected, could feel its imperfections. Sorrow and trial were needed for him; and God knows he soon got enough of them.

He shoved away his Tauchnitz Herodotus in his shooting-coat pocket. Neither of the men he met was a scholar; neither would feel any interest in it. Being driven forth by his father's grumbling at the little pleasure he showed in the fuss that was making about him, he had brought his genial, true cosmopolite to show him a

thing which his heart would have loved. Cradock had doubled down the leaf whereon was described the building of the boat-bridge over the Hellespont. Neither had he forgotten the interment of the Scythian kings. It was not that he purposed to instruct the carpenters thence, or to shed any light on their doings; but that he hoped to learn from them some words to jot down on the margin. He had discovered already, being helped thereto by the tongue of Ytene, that hundreds of forcible Saxon words still lurk in the crafts to which the beaten race betook itself—words which are wanted sadly, and pieced out very unpleasantly by roundabout foreign fanglements.

Even the gratitude now due to the good-will of all the neighbourhood, had failed to reconcile his mind to the turgid part before him. At Oxford he had been dubbed already "Caradoc the Philosopher;" and the more he learned, the less he thought of his own importance. He had never regarded the poor around him as dogs made for him to whistle to; he even knew that he owed them some duties, and wondered how to discharge them. Though bred of high Tory lineage, and corded into it by the twists of habit and education, he never could hang by neck and gullet; he never could show basement only, as a well-roped onion does. Encased as he was by strict surroundings, he never could grow quite straight and even, without a seed inside him, as a prize cucumber does in the cylinder of an old chimney-glass.

Some of this dereliction sprang, no doubt, from his native staple, and some from the free trade of his mind with the great heart called "John Rosedew."

Now he came up, and smiled, like a boy of fourteen, in Mr. Garnet's face; for he liked Bull Garnet's larger qualities, and had no fear of his smaller ones. Mr. Garnet never liked; he always loved or hated. He loved Cradock Nowell heartily, and heartily hated Clayton.

"Behind my time, you see, Cradock. I am glad you are doing my duty.—Ha, there! I see you, my man."

The man was skulking his work, in rigging out with coloured lamps an old oak fifty yards away. That ancient oak, the pride of the chase, was to represent, to-morrow night, a rainbow reflecting "Cradock Nowell." Young Crad, who regarded it all as ill-taste, if it were not positive sin, had lifted his voice especially against that oak's bedizenment. "It will laugh at us from every acorn," he had said to his father. But Sir Cradock was now a man of sixty, and a stickler for ancient ways. He hated fuss and ostentation, but he could not disappoint the tenants and the neighbourhood.

At the sound of the steward's tremendous voice, the man ran recklessly out on the branch, the creaking of which had alarmed him. Snap went the branch at a cankered part, and the poor fellow dropped from a height of nearly forty feet. But the crashing

wood caught in the bough beneath, which was sound and strong, and there hung the man, uninjured as yet, clinging only by one arm, and struggling to throw his feet up. In a moment Cradock caught hold of a ladder, reared, and fixed, and mounted it, and helped the poor fellow to slide off upon it, and stayed him there gasping and quivering. Bull Garnet set foot on the lowest rung, and Rufus Hutton added his weight, which was not very considerable. A dozen workmen came running up, and the man, with the whole of his joints laid loose, was carefully eased to the ground.

"Mr. Garnet," said Cradock, with some contempt, "would you have walked on that branch yourself?"

"To be sure I would, if I had orders."

"But you were the one who gave the order. You frightened him into a thing which might have cost him his life, and cost you nothing."

"Give me your hand, my boy. I was wrong, and you are right. I wish every man to hear me. Jem, come to my house this evening. You owe your life to Mr. Cradock."

Nature itself is better than the knowledge of human nature. Mr. Garnet, by generosity quicker than quickest perception, had turned to his credit an incident which would have disgraced a tyrant. A powerful man's confession of wrong is sure to enhance his power.

While the men were falling to work again, every one under the steward's eyes, Sir Cradock Nowell and Clayton his son came cantering up from the stables. The dry leaves crackled or skirred away crisply from their horses' feet, for the day was fine and breezy; the nags were arching their necks and pricking their bright ears with enjoyment; but neither of the riders seemed to be in high spirits. The workmen touched their hats to them in a manner very different from that with which they received Mr. Garnet or Cradock Nowell. There was more of distant respect in it, and less of real interest.

Sir Cradock now was a perfect specimen of the well-bred Englishman at threescore years of age. Part of his life had been touched by sorrow, but in the main he had prospered. A man of ability and high culture, who has not suffered deeply, is apt, after passing middle age, to substitute tact for feeling, and common sense for sympathy. Mellow and blest is the age of the man who naturally can do otherwise.

Sir Cradock Nowell knew his age, and dressed himself accordingly. Neither stiffness nor laxity, neither sporting air nor austerity, could be perceived in his garb or manner. He respected himself and all whom he met, until he had cause to the contrary. But his heart, instead of expanding, had narrowed in the loneliness of his life; and he really loved only one in the world—the son who rode beside him. He had loved John Rosedew well and truly for many an honest year; of late, admiration was uppermost, and love grown

a thing to be thought about. The cause of the change was his own behaviour, and John's deep hate of injustice.

That old friend of the family could not keep silence always at the preference of Clayton, and the disparagement of Cradock. The father himself could scarcely have told whence arose this preference. Year by year it had been growing, for a long time unsuspected; suspected then and fought with, then smothered at once and justified; allowed at last to spread and thrive on the right of its own existence. And yet any one, to look at Sir Cradock, would have thought him justice personified.

And so he was, as Chairman of the Quarter Sessions. Clear intelligence, quick analysis, keen perception of motive in others, combined with power to dispense (when nature so does) with reason, and used with high sense of honour—all these things made him an oracle to every one but himself. Although he had never been in the army, he looked like a veteran soldier; and his seat on horseback was stiff and firm, rather than easy and graceful. Tall, spare figure, and grey moustache, Roman nose, and clear bright eyes, thin lips, and broad white forehead—the expression of the whole bespoke an active, resolute, upright man, not easily pleased or displeased.

As every one now must keep holiday, the farmers had challenged the Ringwood club to play them a game of cricket, and few having seen a bat ere then, some practice seemed indispensable. Accordingly, while Bull Garnet was busy among the firework people, the farmers, being up for play, were at it in hard earnest, toiling with much applause and joy, threshing or churning, mowing or ploughing, and some making kicks at the ball. Dr. Hutton looked on in a spirited manner, and Cradock was bowling with all his might at the legs of a petty tyrant, when his father and brother rode up between the marquees and the awnings. The tyrannical farmer received a stinging crack on the shin, and thought (though he feared to say) "d—n."

"Hurrah, Crad! more jerk to your elbow!" cried Clayton, who also disliked the man; "Blackers, you mustn't break the ball, it's against the laws of cricket."

Grinning sympathy and bad wit deepened the bruise of the tibia, till Farmer Blackers forgot all prudence in the deep jar of the marrow.

"Boul awai, meester, and be honged to you. I carries one again you, mind."

To the great surprise of all present there, Sir Cradock did not look at the speaker, but turned on his son with anger.

"Sir, you ought to know better. Your sense of justice will lead you, I hope, to apologize to that man."

He did not wait to see the effect of this public reproof, which was heard by a hundred people, but struck his mare hastily on the

shoulder, called Clayton, and rode away. Cradock, who now had the ball in his hands, threw it a hundred feet high.

"Catch it who will," he said; "I shall bowl no more to-day. Farmer Blackers, I beg your pardon; I did not know you were so tender."

Feeling far more tender himself (for all that was the youth's bravado), he went away, doubting right and wrong, to his own little room on the ground floor. There he would smoke his pipe, and think, and condemn himself, if the verdict were true. A young man's sense of justice boils with less of fuel than is needed to make an old man's simmer.

CHAPTER XIV.

TO LOSE EVERY THING.

ALTHOUGH Cradock Nowell was a generous fellow, and deeply attached to his twin-brother Clayton, he was not quite so faultless as to bear with an even mind and perfect self-denial his father's evident preference of the younger brother. Self-love suggested, now and then, that Sir Cradock showed very bad taste in his choice, and that Mr. Rosedew was a better judge: also that these bitter pills (administered, perhaps unwittingly, at almost every meal-time) were only part of a lowering system, meant to reduce him from self-assertion as the elder brother.

But self-love cannot always have the ascendant with young people, unless they are very small; and upon the whole, Master Cradock thought it hard to be the elder son. He little imagined how near at hand the remedy for this evil was; for while he yet pondered these things slowly over the pipe of contemplation, a pair of keen eyes twinkled in at the window, and a shrewd, shrill voice made entry.

"Pray let me in, Mr. Nowell; I want to inquire about the grapes."

"What a wonderful man that is!" said Cradock to himself, as he came from his corner reluctantly to open the French window; "there is nothing he doesn't inquire about. Erotetic philosopher! He has only been here some three or four days, and he knows all our polity better than we do! I wish his wife would come; though I believe he is an honest fellow."

Unconscious of any satirical antithesis, he opened the window, and admitted the polypragmonic doctor; and, knowing that homœopathic treatment is the wisest for garrulous subjects, he began

upon him at once. Nor omitted a spice of domesticity, which he thought would be sovereign.

"Now, Dr. Hutton, it is too bad of you to wander about like a bachelor. How long before we have the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Hutton?"

"My dear boy, you know the reason; I hope you know the reason. Your roads are very rough for ladies, especially when in delicate health, and our four-wheel is being mended. So I rode over alone; and what a lovely ride it is! Ah, Clayton—yes, I saw Clayton somewhere. But your father has promised most kindly to send a carriage to-morrow to Geopharmacy Lodge—the name of our little place, sir."

At the thought of his home, the little doctor pulled up both his shirt-collars, and looked round the room disparagingly.

"Oh, I am very glad to hear it. Meanwhile, you would like to see our grapes. Let me show you the way to the vinery; though I cannot take you without misgivings. Your gardening fame has frightened us. Our old man, Snip, is quite afraid of your new lights and experience."

"Sensible lad," muttered Rufus Hutton, who was pleasantly conceited—"uncommonly sensible lad! I am not at all sure that he isn't a finer fellow than Clayton. But I must take my opportunity now, while he has his stock off. There is something wrong: I am sure of it."

"Excuse me a moment," said Cradock; "I am sorry to keep you waiting, but I must just put on my neckerchief, if I can only find it. How very odd! I could have declared I put it on that table."

"What's that I see on the floor there, by the corner of the bookcase?" Rufus pointed his cane at the tie, which lay where himself had thrown it.

"Oh, thank you; I must be getting blind, for I am sure I looked there just now."

While the young man stooped forward, the little doctor, who had posted himself for the purpose, secured a quick glimpse at the back of his neck, where the curling hair fell sideways. That glance increased his curiosity, and confirmed his strange suspicions. The surprise and suspicion had broken upon him, as he stood by the farmer's wicket, and Cradock sprang up to the bowling crease. And now, in the hurry of discovery, he forgot all scruples. It was strange that he had felt any, for he was not very sensitive; but Cradock, with all his good nature, had a certain unconscious dignity, from which Dr. Hutton retreated.

"The grapes I came to inquire about," said Rufus, with much solemnity, "are not those in the vinery, which I have seen often enough, but those on your neck, Mr. Nowell."

Cradock returned with a look of surprise, but more at the inquirer's manner than at his seeming impertinence.

"I really cannot see how the 'grapes,' as some people call the blue lines on my neck, can interest you, sir, or are important enough to be spoken of."

"Then I do, Cradock Nowell. Do you refuse to let me see them?"

"No, why should I? though I might refuse it to any one, when demanded so. Not that I am sensitive about such a trifle. You, as a medical man, and an old friend of my father, are welcome to your autopsy. Is not that what you call it, sir?"

Nevertheless, from the tone of his voice, Rufus Hutton knew that he liked it not—for it was a familiarity, and seemed to the youth a childish one.

"Sit down, young man, sit down," said the doctor, very pompously, and waiving further discussion. "I am not—I mean to say you are taller than when I first—ah, yes, manipulated you."

As the doctor warmed to his subject, he grew more and more professional, and perhaps less considerate, until his good feelings came into play, for his heart, after all, was right. It is as needless as it would be difficult to report all his technical terms: enough that he exclaimed at last, after a long inspection—

"Sir, this confirms to a nicety my metrostigmatic theory."

"Dr. Hutton, I know not what you mean, neither do I wish to know."

Cradock put on his neckerchief anyhow, and walked to his chair by the mantelpiece, although no fire was burning. The medical man said nothing, but gravely looked out of the window. Presently the young gentleman felt that he was not acting hospitably.

"Excuse me, sir, if I have seemed rude; but you do not know how these things——I mean, when I think of my mother, of whom you have spoken so often. Let me ring for some sherry and sandwiches; you have had no luncheon."

"Ring for some brandy, my boy; and give me a cheroot. What a magnificent property! Look at the sweep and the range of the land—look at the woods, and the hills, and the meadows—and then think of losing the whole at a blow!"

Instead of ringing, Cradock went and fetched the cognac himself, and took down a glass from a cupboard.

"Two glasses, my dear boy, two."

"No, sir; I never take it."

"Then take it now, for the first time. Here, let me feel your pulse."

"Once for all, I beg you to tell me what is all this mystery? Do you think I am a child?"

"Fill your pipe again, while I light a cigar."

Cradock did as he was told, although with trembling hands. Rufus Hutton went for a wine-glass, filled it with brandy, and pushed it across, then gulped down half a tumblerful; but Cradock did not taste his.

"Now, my boy, can you bear some very bad news indeed?"

"Any thing better than this suspense. I have heard some bad news lately, which has seasoned me for any thing."

This was a rumour concerning Amy Rosedew.

"Then listen to this. You are not the heir to this title or these estates. You are only the younger son."

"Is that all?"

"All! Isn't that enough? Good God! What more would you have?—you don't deserve brandy."

"My father will be glad, and so will Clayton, and—perhaps one other. But I don't mean to say that I am."

"I should rather fancy not. But you take it most philosophically!"

Dr. Hutton gazed at the poor young fellow in surprise and admiration, trying vainly to make him out. Then he reached over to Cradock's elbow, took his glass of cognac, and swallowed it.

"This has upset me, my boy, more than you. How miserable I felt about it! But perhaps you place no faith in my opinion about the matter?"

"Indeed, it has quite amazed me; and I have had no time to think of it. My head seems spinning round. Please to say no more just for a minute or two, unless you find it uncomfortable."

He leaned back in his chair, and tried to think, but could not make head or tail of it.

Rufus Hutton said nothing. In spite of all his experience, the scene was very strange to him; and he watched it out with interest, which deepened into strong feeling.

"Now, Dr. Hutton," said the youth, trying to look as he thought he ought, though he could not keep his lips quite steady, "I beg you to think of me no more. Let us have the strictest justice. I have not known you so long—so long as you have known me—but I feel that you would not say what you have said, without the strongest evidence."

"Confound me for a meddlesome fool! My dear boy, no one has heard us. Let us sink the matter entirely. Least said, soonest mended."

"What do you mean? Do you think for a moment that I would be a blackguard?"

"Hush!—don't get so excited. Why, you look as fierce as Bull Garnet. All I mean is—you know the old saying—'Quieta non movere.'"

"The motto of fools and dastards. 'Have it out,' is an Englishman's rule. No sneaking tricks for me, sir. Oh, what a fool I am! I beg your pardon with all my heart; you will make allowances for me. Instead of being rude, I ought to be grateful for kindness which would even compromise your honour."

With these words, the youth stood up, and held out his hand to the doctor.

"Crad, my dear boy," exclaimed Mr. Hutton, with a big tear twinkling in each little eye, "the finest thing I ever did was showing you to the daylight. If I rob you of what has appeared your birthright, curse all memorandum-books, and even my metrostigmatic treatise, which I fully meant to immortalize me."

"And so I hope it may do. I am not so calm as I ought to be. Somehow a fellow can't be, when he is taken off the hooks so. I know you will allow for this; I beg you to allow for nothing else, except a young fellow's delicacy. Give me your reasons, or not, as you like. The matter will be for my father."

Cradock looked proud and beautiful. But the depth of his eyes was troubled. He longed for John Rosedew's counsel, but he dared not now to ask it. Young as he was, he knew that his father was the first man who should hear of this; and that the question must be dealt with legally and formally.

Therefore he did nothing either pitiable or scornful, but held up his head, and looked down at Rufus, waiting for the elder man to suggest the proper course.

"Heigho! Very hot work!" said Dr. Hutton, puffing; "summer quite come back again! I vote that we adjourn, my boy."

For even Rufus Hutton, though of very large experience, could not for the moment see exactly what might come of this.

CHAPTER XV.

A CLASSIC HORSEMAN.

ON the morning of that same day, our Amy at her father's side, in the pretty porch of the Rectory, uttered the following wisdom: "Darling Papples, Papelikidion—is there any other diminutivicle half good enough for you, or stupid enough for me?—my own father (that's best of all), you must not ride Coræbus to-day."

"Amy amata, peramata a me, aim of my life, amicula, in the name of sweet sense, why not?"

"Because, pa, he has had ten great long carrots, and my best hat full of new oats; and I know he will throw you off."

"Scrupulum injecisti. I shouldn't like to come off to-day. And it rained the night before last." So said the rector, proudly contemplating a pair of new kerseymeres, which Channing the clerk had made upon trial. "Nevertheless, I think that I have read enough on the subject to hold on by his mane, if he does not kick out of all dialectics. And if he gives me time to reason—that horse has a real taste for Greek—and, after all, the ground is soft."

"No, dad, I don't think it is prudent. And you won't have me there to advise you."

"My own pet, that is a serious point. And with all your knowledge of riding! Why, my own seems quite theoretical by the side of yours. And yet I have kept my seat under very trying circumstances. You remember the time when Coræbus met the trahea?"

"Yes, pa; but he hadn't had any oats; and I was there to advise you."

"True, my child, quite true. But I threw my equilibrium just as a hunter does. And I think I could do it again. I bore in mind what Xenophon says——"

"Pa, here he is! And he does look so fat, I know he will be restive."

"Prepare your Aunt Doxy's mind, my dear, not to indulge in vain regrets, in case of the very worst—I mean, if the legs of my trousers should want rubbing. How rash of me, to be sure, to have put them on to-day! Prius dementat. I trust sincerely—and old Channing is so proud of them, and he says the cut is so fashionable. Nevertheless, I heard our Clayton, as he went down the gravel-walk, dilating, with what he himself would have called 'colores orationis,' upon Uncle John's new bags; θύλακοι, I suppose he meant, as opposed to ἀναξυρίδες. I was glad that the subject possessed so lively an interest for him; notwithstanding which, I was very glad Mr. Channing did not hear him."

"The impudence! Well, I am astonished. And to see the things he brought back from Oxford—quince-coloured, with a stripe that wide, like one of my fancy gourds. I'll be sure to have it out with him. No, I can't, though; I forgot." And Amy looked down with a rosy smile at the delicacy of the subject. "But I am quite sure of one thing, pa: Mr. Cradock would never have done it. Ræbus, don't kick up the gravel. Do you suppose we can roll every day? Oh, you are so fat, you darling!"

"When the sides are deep," said the rector, quoting from Xenophon, "and somewhat protuberant at the stomach, the horse is generally more easy to ride. What a comfort, Amy! Stronger, moreover, and more capable of enjoying food."

"He has enjoyed a rare lot this morning. At least I hope you have, you sweetest. Why, pa, I declare you are whistling!"

"It also behoves a horseman to know that it is a time-honoured precept to soothe the steed by whistling, and rouse him by a sharp sound made between the tongue and the palate."

"Oh, father, don't do that. Promise me now, dear, won't you?"

"I will promise you, my child, because I don't know how to do it. I tried very hard last Wednesday, and only produced a guttural. But I think I shall understand it, after six or seven visiting days. At least, if the weather is favourable."

"No, pa dear, I hope you won't. It would be so reckless of you; and I know you will get a sore throat."

"Sweet of my world, cor cordium, you have wrapped me with three involucres tighter than any hazel-nut. They will all go into my pocket the moment I am round the corner."

"No, daddy, you won't be so cruel. And after the rime this morning! Ræbus will tell me if you do. Won't you now, my pretty?"

Coræbus was a handsome pony, but not a handsome doer. He could go at a rare pace when he liked, but he did not often like it. His wind was short, and so was his temper, and he looked at the world unpleasantly. Perhaps he had been disappointed in love in the tenderness of his youth. Nevertheless he had many good points, and next to himself loved Amy. He would roll his black eyes, put his nose to her lips, and almost leave oats to look at her. His colour varied sensitively according to the season. In the height of summer, a dappled bay; towards the autumnal equinox, a tendency to nuttiness; then a husky bristle of deepest brown flaked with hairs of ginger; after the clips a fine mouse-colour, with a spirited sense of nakedness, fierce whiskers, and a love of buck jumps. Then, ere the blessed Christmas-tide, nature began to blanket him with a nap the colour of black frost; and so through the grizzle of spring he came round to his proper bay once more. Amy declared she could tell every month by the special hue of Coræbus; but, albeit she was the most truthful of girls, her heart was many degrees too warm for her lips to be always at dew-point.

Both in the stable and out of it, that pony had a bluff way with his heels, which none but himself thought humorous. He never meant any harm, however—it was only his mode of expressing himself; and he liked to make a point when he felt his new shoes tingling. But as for kicking his Amy, he was not quite so low as that. He would not even jump about, when she was on his back, more than was just the proper thing to display her skill and figure. "Oh, you sad Coræby," always brought him to sadness; and he expected a pat from her little gloved hand, and cocked his tail with dignity the moment he received it. Nevertheless, for her father, the rector of the parish, he entertained, when the oats were plentiful, nonconformist sentiments, verging almost upon scepticism. He liked him indeed, as the whole world must; he even admired his learning, and turned up his eyes at the Greek; but he was not impressed, as he should have been, by the sacerdotal office. Fatal defect of all, he knew that the rector could not ride.

John Rosedew was a reasoning man, and uncommonly strong in the legs, but a great deal too philosophical to fit himself over a horse well. He had written a treatise upon the Pelethronian

Lapiths (which he could never be brought to read before a learned society), he knew all about the Olympics and Pythics, and Xenophon gave him a text-book; but, for all that, he never put his feet the right way into the stirrups.

"Look at him now!" said John, as the boy led the pony up and down, while Amy was knotting the mufflers so that they never might come undone again; "how beautifully Xenophon describes that very animal! 'When the horse is excited to assume that artificial air which he adopts when he is proud, he then delights in riding, becomes magnificent, terrific, and attracts attention!' And again, 'persons beholding such a horse pronounce him generous, free in his motions, fit for military exercise, high-mettled, haughty, and both pleasant and terrible to look on.' Pleasant, I suppose, for other people, and terrible for the rider. But why our author insists so much upon the horse being taught to 'rear gracefully,' I am not horseman enough as yet to understand. It has always appeared to me that Corœbus rears too much already. And then the direction—'but if after riding, and copious perspiration, and when he has reared gracefully, he be relieved immediately both of the rider and reins, there is little doubt that he will spontaneously advance to rear when necessary.' What does that mean, among modern horses? I never find it necessary, except, indeed, when the little girls jump up and pull my coat-tails, in their inquisition for apples; and then I am always afraid that they may suffer some detriment. But let us not overtask his patience; here he comes again. James, my boy, lead him up to the chair."

"Any jam in your pocket, father?"

"No, my child, not any. Your excellent Aunt Eudoxia has it all under lock and key. Now I will mount according to Xenophon, though I do not find that he any where prescribes a Windsor chair. 'When he has well prepared himself for the ascent, let him support his body with his left hand, and stretching forth his right hand let him leap on horseback, and when he mounts thus he will not present an uncomely spectacle to those behind.' There, I am up, most accurately; excellent horse, and great writer! And now for the next direction: 'We do not approve of the same bearing a man has in a carriage, but that an upright posture be observed, with the legs apart.'"

"How could they be otherwise, pa, when the horse is there between them?"

"Your criticisms are rash, my child. Jem, how dare you laugh, sir? I will buy a pair of spurs, I declare, the next time I go to Ringwood. Good-bye, darling; Aunt Doxy will take you up to the park, when the sun comes out, to see all the wonderful doings. I shall be home in time to dress for the dinner at the Hall."

Sweet Amy kissed her hand, and curtseyed—as she loved to do to her father; and, after two or three wayward sallies (repressed by

Jem with the gardening broom), Corœbus pricked his little ears, and shook himself into a fair jog-trot. So with his elbows well stuck out, and shaking merrily to and fro, his right hand ready to grasp the pommel in case of consternation, and one leg projected beyond the other, after the manner of a fowl's side-bone, away rode John Rosedew in excellent spirits, to begin his Wednesday parochial tour.

Being duly victualled, and thoroughly found, for a voyage of long duration and considerable hazard, the good ship "John Rosedew" set sail every Wednesday for commerce with the neighbourhood. This expedition was partly social, partly ministerial, in some degree parochial; but from first to last, universal. There was no bombardment of dissenters, no firing of red-hot shot at Papists, no up with the helm and run him down, if any man launched on the mare magnum, or any frail vessel missed stays. And yet there was no compromise, no grand circle sailing, no luffing to a trade-wind; straight was the course, and the chart most clear, and the good ship bound, with favour of God, to a haven for the desolate.

The sun came out and touched the trees with every kind of gilding, as the rector having fulfilled the village, and learned every gammer's alloverishness, and every gaffer's rheumatics, drew the snaffle upon Corœbus longside of Job Smith's pigsty, and plunged southward into the country. Above him every tree was leaning forth its green with yellowness; even proud of the novelty, like a child who has lost his grandmother. And though he could not see very far, he wondered at a little thing which he had never observed before.

It was that while the other trees took their autumn evenly, the elm was brushed with a flaw of gold while the rest of the tree was verdure. A single branch would stand forth from the others, mellow against their freshness, like a harvest-sheaf set up perhaps on the foreground of a grass-plot.

Mr. Rosedew saw not clearly any of these little things, having no such little gift; but for all that they entered into and composed his sauntering mind.

Then soothing his pony with novel sounds, emulous of equestrianism, he struck into a moorland track leading to distant cottages. Thence he would bear to the eastward, arrive at his hostel by one o'clock, visit the woodmen, and home through the forest, with the evening shadows falling.

CHAPTER XVI.

A DELICATE INQUIRY.

BESIDE the embowered stream that forms the eastern verge of the chase, young Cradock Nowell sat and gazed, every now and then, into the water. Through a break in the trees beyond it, he could see one chimney-top and a streak of the thatch of the Rectory. In vain he hoped that Dr. Hutton would leave him to himself; for he did not wish to go into the proofs, but to think out some of the consequences. Some bitterness, no doubt, there was in the corner of his heart, when he thought of all that Clayton now had to offer Amy Rosedew. He had lately been told, as a mighty secret, a thing which grieved and angered him; and the more, that he must not speak of it, as his straightforward nature urged him.

The secret was that innocent Amy met his brother Clayton, more than once, in the dusk of the forest, and met him by appointment. It grieved poor Cradock, because he loved Amy with all his unchangeable heart; it angered him, because he thought it very mean of Clayton to take advantage of one so young and ignorant of the world. But never until the present moment, as he looked at the homely thatch in the distance, and the thin smoke curling over it, had it occurred to his honest mind, that his brother might not be like himself—that Clayton might play with the maiden.

And now for the moment it seemed more likely, as he glanced back at the lordly house, commanding the country for miles around, the country its fief and the people its serfs, and now the whole destined for Clayton. He thought of the meanness about the Ireland, and two or three other little things, proofs of a little nature. Then he gazed at the Rectory thatch again, and the smoke from the kitchen chimney, and seemed to see pure playful Amy making something nice for her father.

"Good God! I would shoot him if he did; or strike him dead into this water."

In the hot haste of youth he had spoken aloud, with his fist gathered up, and his eyes flashing fire. Rufus Hutton saw and heard him, and thought of it many times after that day.

"Oh, you are thinking of Caldo, because he snapped at me. There are no signs of hydrophobia. You must not think of shooting him."

"I was not thinking of Caldo. I hope I did not mean it. God knows, I am very wicked."

"So we are all, my boy. I should like to see a fellow that wasn't. I'd pay fifty pounds for his body, and dissect him into an angel."

Cradock Nowell smiled a little at such a reward for excel-

lence, and then renewed his gaze of dreary bewilderment at the water.

"Now let me show you my tracings, Cradock, for which I have ridden straight home and back. There now! And after all my trouble you won't even deign to glance at them! You have made up your mind to abdicate upon my *ipse dixi.* Now look at the bend sinister, that is yours; the bend dexter is for the elder brother."

"Dr. Hutton, it may be, and is, very likely, quite false shame on my part; but I wish to hear nothing about it. Perhaps, if my mother were living, I might not have been so particular. But giving, as she did, her life for ours, I cannot regard it medically. The question is now for my father. I will not enter into it."

"Oh the subjectiveness of the age!" said Rufus Hutton, rising, then walking to and fro on the bank, as he held discourse with himself; "here is a youth who ought to be proud, although at the cost of his inheritance, of illustrating, in the most remarkable manner, indeed I may say of originating, my metrostigmatic theory. He carries upon the cervical column a clear impression of grapes, and they say that before the show at Romsey Sir Cradock's gardener was very cross about his choice Black Hamburgs. The twin-brother carries the very same impress, but with the direction inverted—dexter in fact, and dexter was the mark of the elder son. That I can prove by this tracing I made, not with any view to this sort of thing, but from the interest I felt, at an early stage of my experience, in a question then under controversy. If I prove this, what happens? Why, that he loses every thing—the importance, the house, the lands, the title; and becomes the laughing-stock of the county as the sham Sir Cradock. What ought he to do at once, then? Why, perhaps to toss me into that hole, where I should never get out again. By Gad, I am rash to trust myself with him, and no other soul in the secret!" Here Dr. Hutton shuddered to think how little water it would take to drown him, and the river so dark and so taciturn! "At any rate, he ought to fall upon me with forceps, and probe, and scalpel, and tear my evidence to atoms. For, after all, what is it, without corroboration? But instead of that, he only says, 'Dr. Hutton, no more of this, if you please, no more of this! The question is now for my father.' And he must know well enough to which side his father will lean in the inquiry. Confound the boy! If he had only coaxed me with those kind eyes, I would have kept all snug till Doomsday. Oh what will my Rosa say to me? She has always loved this boy, and admired him so immensely."

Perhaps it was his pretty young wife's high approval of Cradock which first had made the testy Rufus a partisan of Clayton. The cause of his having settled at "Geopharmacy Lodge" was, that upon his return from India he fell in love with a Hampshire maiden,

whom he met "above bar" at Southampton. How he contrived to get introduced to her, he alone can tell; but he was a most persevering fellow, and little hampered with diffidence. She proved to be the eldest daughter of Sir Cradock's largest tenant, a man of good standing and education, who lived near Fordingbridge. As Rufus had brought home tidy pickings from his appointment in India, the only thing he had to do was to secure the lady's heart. And this he was not long about, for many ladies like high colour even more than hairiness. First she laughed at his dancing ways, incessant mobility, and sharp eyes; but very soon she began to like him, and now she thought him a wonderful man. This opinion (with proper change of gender) was heartily reciprocated, and the result was that a happier couple never yet made fools of themselves, in the judgment of the world; never yet enjoyed themselves, in the sterling wisdom of home. They suited each other admirably in their very differences; they laughed at each other, and themselves, and any one else who laughed at them.

"Well, I shall be off," said Dr. Hutton at last, in feigned disgust; "you will stare at the water all day, Mr. Cradock, and take no notice of me."

"I beg your pardon, I forgot myself; I did not mean to be rude, I assure you."

"I know you did not. I know you could never be rude, if you tried it, to any body. Good-bye, I have business on hand."

"You will be back, Dr. Hutton, when my father returns from his ride? It is very foolish of me, but I cannot bear this suspense."

"Trust me. I will see to it. But he will not be back, they tell me, till nearly four o'clock."

"Oh, what a time to wait! Don't send for me if you can help it. But, if he wants me, I will come."

"Good-bye, my lad. Keep your pecker up. There are hundreds of men in the world with harder lines than yours."

"I should rather think so. I only wish there were not."

Cradock attempted a lively smile, and executed a pleasant one, as Rufus Hutton shook his hand, and set off upon his business. And his business was to ride at once as far as the "Jolly Foresters," that lonely inn on the Beaulieu-road, at the eastern end of the parish, whereat John Rosedew baited Coræbus at the turn of the pastoral tour. The little doctor knew well enough, though he seldom passed that way, how the smart Miss Penny of former days, Mrs. O'Gaghan's assistant, was now the important Mrs. George Cripps, hostess of the "Jolly Foresters," where the four roads met.

Meanwhile, the scaffolds went on merrily under Mr. Garnet's care, and so did the awnings, marquees, &c., and the tiers of seats for the ladies. The lamps in the old oak being fixed, the boughs were manned, like a frigate's yards, with dexterous fellows hoisting flags, devices, and transparencies, all prepared to express in fire the

mighty name of Cradock. All the men must finish that night, lest any one lose his legitimate chance of being ancestrally drunk on the morrow. Cradock Nowell, wandering about, could not bear to go near them. Those two hours seemed longer to him than any year of his previous life. He went and told Caldo all about it; and that helped him on a little.

Caldo was a noble setter, pure of breed, and high of soul, and heavily feathered on legs and tail. His colour was such a lily white, that you grieved for him on a wet fallow; and the bright red spots he was endowed with were like the cheeks of Helen. Delicate carmine, enriched with scarlet, mapped his back with islands; and the pink of his cheeks, where the whiskers grew, made all the young ladies kiss him. His nostrils were black as a double-lined tunnel leading into a pencil-mine; and his gums were starred with violet, and his teeth as white as new mushrooms. In all the county of Hants there was no dog to compare with him; for he came of a glorious strain, made perfect at Kingston, in Berkshire. Lift but a finger, and down he went, in the height of his hottest excitement; wave the finger, and off he dashed, his great eyes looking back for repression. For style of ranging, all dogs were rats to him, any where in the New Forest; so freely he went, so buoyant, so careful, and yet so grandly hilarious. Only one fault he had, and there never was dog without one—he was jealous to the backbone.

Cradock was dreadfully proud of him. Any thing else he had in the world he would have given to Clayton, but he could not quite give Caldo; even if Clayton had begged, instead of backing his Wena against him. Wena was a very nice creature, anxious to please, and conscientious; but of a different order entirely from the high-minded Caldo. Any man who loveth dogs, both great and small, will understand the difference between them.

Cradock now leaned over Caldo, with a brightness in his eyes, and gently feeling the soft puckers and velvet veining of his ears, looked straight into his heart, and begged to tell him something sorrowful. In a single glance the dog perceived that something had gone much amiss, and his great brown eyes were filled with sorrow, rather than mere sympathy. The feathery tail which had been wagging like a screw-propeller, ceased its sprightly to-and-fro, and sank into a level state of quivering disquietude. Then through the gaze of soft inquiry the flash of a fine idea broke; for the dog was saying to himself, "Surely now I may be of use; when men are in their little troubles, the experience of a well-trained setter is not to be sneezed at." With this impulse he just offered the smallest corner of his tongue, not enough to wet a lip, and drawn back ere ever there was the smallest chance of having tasted it. Then receiving no repulse, what did he do but present a paw, diffidently, and drawing back the callousparts for fear of hurting. His master accepted this pretty foot, and stroked it, and put it to his lips.

In the thick of this dialogue Cradock was sent for hastily. Old Hogstaff trotted across the yard (whereon he seldom ventured) to say that Sir Cradock Nowell was waiting to see his son. The young man walking all amort, yet with all his heart in his mouth, wondered at the penny-wort, the wall-rue, and the snap-dragons, which he had never observed before. Hogstaff tottered along before him, picking uneasily over the stones, bobbing his chin, and muttering.

Sir Cradock sat in the long heavy room known as the "justice-hall," where he and his brother magistrates held oyer of many a culprit. The great oak table was dabbed with ink, and the grey walls with mop-shaped blotches, where sullen prisoners had thrown their heads back, and refused to answer. At the lower end was Rufus Hutton, jerky, dogmatical, keenly important; while the baronet sat at the head of the table, with his back to the pointed window, and looked (perhaps from local usage) more like a magistrate than a father.

Straight up the long room Cradock walked, as calmly as if he were following the pitch of his quoit for measurement. Then he saluted his father, according to the custom; for many bygone fashions were retained in the ancient family.

Sir Cradock was proud of his son's self-command and dignified manly carriage, and if Dr. Hutton had not been there, he would have arisen to comfort him. As it was, he only said, with a faint and doubtful smile,—

"Cradock, my boy, I would have gladly spared you this, and might have done so, but for the most unlucky moment at which it has been thrust upon us."

"I thank you, father," said Cradock Nowell; "but if you please just to settle it——"

"It cannot be settled quite so shortly as you naturally wish. You have a right to be represented by a proper man of law. I have sent for Mr. Brockwood, but they could not find him. Would you like us to wait until he comes? Even Clayton cannot be found."

"No, sir, I want no lawyers whatever. I only want your judgment and the whole thing settled speedily."

"What a fool!" said Dr. Hutton to himself unguardedly; and Sir Cradock's stern eyes were upon him ere he could begin again.

"I am glad and proud, my boy, to find—although of course I expected it—that you are so true a gentleman. It was my place to offer you the advantage of legal advice; and it was your place, as a gentleman, to decline the offer."

"Father, I never thought of my place; I thought of you and Clayton."

Sir Cradock looked at Rufus Hutton, with the gentle moisture of a father's pride enriching him; and then he turned to his son to see,

from habit of the bench perhaps, whether all he said was felt, or only meant for acting.

"Do you doubt me, my dear father? Am I guilty of this mistake?"

"My dear boy," cried Rufus Hutton, always apt to be familiar, and now in the agony of long silence; "if you made a mistake, you may plead the glorious plea of infancy."

"Cradock," said his father strongly, "you are taking this great trouble, for your time of life, so well, that I am very proud of you. If your dear mother had been alive—but what has that to do with it?"

"Exactly this—that there never could have been such a stupid error."

So said Rufus Hutton; and Sir Cradock answered haughtily,—

"Unless my memory is at fault, you were present, Dr. Hutton, throughout this stupid error."

"I!" cried the doctor; "nay, good sir, I sailed for India even before it arose."

"We shall see. Now, Cradock, do you really wish to go through this without any legal advice, or even time for consideration?"

"Father, how many times must I say it? You are my lawyer. I leave it to you."

"Then more fool you!" Dr. Hutton muttered, as he took a high chair to see it out.

But Sir Cradock Nowell looked as if his whole experience failed him, after years of justiceship, when the justice was to be dealt home in his own family. True it was that Clayton had for years been growing into favour, while the other was growing out; but the father would have been surprised and vexed to hear of it. And now, though love of Clayton lay the deeper in his heart perhaps, he could not help some pity for the nobler son before him.

"My good sirs, we must look sharp," cried Rufus Hutton merrily; "do you know what o'clock it is? Four, seven, and three-quarters, as that wonderful Garnet would say. There will be no time to change the names. You must have the matter out, Sir Cradock. Will you allow me to take it in hand?"

"I am glad that Clayton is not here," Sir Cradock said, more to himself than them; "I could not have borne to be looking at both. But both shall have fair play, poor lads! It is an irregular proceeding; but there is no adjourning it."

"Oh, father, do let us have it all out."

"Sir Cradock, you must go through with it."

"My boy, so be it. But I rather think—although of course you have a right to be here——"

"I see. To be sure. I forgot about that. I had better be out of the way, of course. Thank you, father, for thinking of me. I leave every thing to you, sir."

With these words he saluted his father and Dr. Hutton stead-

fastly, controlling all emotion, as behoves a young English gentleman. Then he marched down the long room placidly, and whistled his way to the main front-door, passing through which he set off at full speed for some of his brother's especial haunts. Failing to find him, he had a great mind to rush into the Rectory, but denied himself that pleasure, and turned, with a heavy but throbbing heart, into his own little sanctuary.

CHAPTER XVII.

UNREASONABLE ACCURACY.

BIDDY O'GAGHAN was hard at work, boiling down herbs and blessing them, drying and bottling cleverly, scraping, and picking the cloves out. She had turned the still-room of the house into her private laboratory; and she saved all the parish and half of the hundred from "them pisoners, as call theirselves doctors." Now, she was one of those excellent women, kindly provided by nature with power to combine their missions, who work all the better for talking; and, between her sniffs at the saucepan-lids, and elegant tests on the drying-pans, she had learned that something strange was up, and had made fifty guesses about it. Blowing the scum and the pearly beads from a pot of pellitory of the wall (one of her staunch panaceas), she received a command most peremptory to present herself in the justice-room.

"Thin was that the way as they said it, Dick? No sinse nor manners no more nor that! An' every bit of the blessed while they knowed it for my bilin'-day! Muckstraw, thin, is Bridget O'Gaghan no more count than a pisonin' doctor? Hould that handle there, Dick. If iver you stirs it the bridth of one on your carroty whiskers from that smut on the firebar, till such time as you sees me agin, I'll down with it arl in your crooked back bilin', and your chilthers shall disinherit it."

Leaving Dick rooted in abject dread of the spells now well established, she hurried into her little bedroom; for she had the strongest sense of propriety, and would not "make herself common." Then she dashed her apron aside, and softened the fire-glow from her nose, and smoothed the creases of her jet-black hair, which curled in bars like crochet-work. This last she did with some gummy material of her own invention, applying it with the ball of her thumb. "The hairs of me head," as she always called them, were thick of substance and strong of fibre, and went zig-zag on their road to her ears, like a billow struck by a cross-flaw of

wind. After this final polish, she cast a comprehensive glance at her looking-glass, just to know if she were all right; the glass gave her back a fine, warm-hearted face, still young in its rapid expression, Irish in every line of it, glazed with lies for hatred, and beaming with truth for love. So Biddy gave two or three nods thereat, and knew herself match for fifty examiners, if she could only keep her temper.

As she marched up to the table, with her head thrown back, her portly shape made the most of, and the front of her strong arms glistening, then dropped a crisp curtsey to Sir Cradock without deigning to notice his visitor, the little doctor's experience told him that he had caught a thorough Tartar. All his solemn preparations were thrown away upon her, though the biggest Testament in the house lay on the table before him; and a most impressive desk was covered with pens, and paper, and sealing-wax.

Dr. Hutton would not yet open his mouth, because he wished to begin augustly. Meanwhile, Sir Cradock kept waiting for him, till Biddy could wait no longer. Turning her broad back full upon Rufus, who appreciated the compliment, she made another short scrape to her master, and asked, with an ogle suppressed to a mince,—

"And what wud your honour be pleased to want with the poor widow, Bridget O'Gaghan, then?"

"Bridget, that gentleman, Dr. Hutton, has made an extremely important discovery, affecting most nearly my honour and that of the family. And now I rely upon you, Bridget, as a faithful and valued dependent of ours, to answer, without reservation or attempt at equivocation, all the questions he may put to you."

"Quistions, your honour?" and Biddy looked stupid in the cleverest way imaginable.

"Yes, questions, Bridget O'Gaghan," cried Rufus; "inquiries, interrogations—ah! that quite explains what I mean."

"Is it axing any harm, thin, any ondacency of a poor lone widder woman, as yer honour wud allow of, at me taime of life?" She took to her brogue as a tower of refuge. Bilingual races are up to the tactics of rats with a double hole.

"Sir Cradock Nowell," said Rufus, from the bottom of his chest, "you, I believe, are a magistrate for this county of Hants, Vice-Lieutenant, Colonel of Yeomanry, the representative of the sovereign. I call upon you now, in all these capacities, to administer the oath to this prevaricating woman."

The penultimate word rather terrified Bridget, for she never had heard it before; but the last word of all reassured her.

She turned round suddenly on little Rufus, who had jumped from his chair in excitement, and standing by head and shoulders above him, she opened her great eyes down upon him, like the port-holes of a frigate.

"Faix, thin, and I niver seen this young man at all at all. It's between the airms of the cheer he were, and me niver to look so low for him! 'Tis the black measles as he've tuk, and I've seen as bad a case brought through with. The luck o' the blessed saints in glory! I've been bilin' up for the same. If it's narse him I can to the toorn of it, I'm intirely at your sairvice, Sir Craduck. I likes to narse a base little chap, sin' there's no call to fear for his beauty."

This last was uttered gently, and quite as a private reflection; but it told more than all the rest. For ever since Dr. Hutton had married a woman half his age, he had grown exceedingly sensitive as to his personal appearance. By a very great effort he kept silent, but his face was almost black with wrath, as he handed the great book to Sir Cradock. The magistrate presented it very solemnly to Bridget, who took it as patly as if it had been a flat iron. A score of times she had sworn according to what was thought good for her, years ago, in Ireland. At the right moment of dictation, she gave the book a loud smack that proved the solidity of the binding, and then crossed herself very devoutly, to take the taste away. Of a heretic oath she had little fear, though she would not have told a big lie to her priest. Then she dropped her eyes, and chastened her aspect, as if overcome by the sense of solemn responsibility.

"Bridget O'Geoghegan," began the worthy doctor, emphasizing slowly every syllable of her name, and prepared to write down her replies, "you are now upon your solemn oath, to declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. And if you fail in this, remember, you will place your precious soul in the power of the evil one."

"Amin to that same, thin. And more power to yer."

"Bridget, do you remember the night when your master's children were born?"

"Sure an' I do, thin. Unless it wur the mornin', how wud I help remimber it?"

"And do you remember the medical gentleman who was suddenly called in?"

"And if I wur ten times on my oath, I don't remimber no gintleman. A bit of a red-haired gossoon there was, as wor on the way to be transported."

"Do you remember his name?"

"Remimber it? Let me see, thin. It wor hardly worth the throuble of forgittin. Button, or Mutton; no, faix I b'lieve it wor Rubus Rotten."

"Well, never mind his name——"

"My faith, and I niver did, thin, nor the little spalpin ayther. But to my heart I was sorry for the dear, good, beautiful lady—glory be to her sowl—along o' that ignorant, carroty, sprawlin', big-knuckled omadhawn. Small chance for her to git over it."

"Silence, woman, or else be civil," Sir Cradock exclaimed, with all the authority which a widower dare exhibit to his own domestics.

"And I thought it was arl the truth as yer honour said I was to tell." Here Biddy looked hurt and amazed. "Have the little clerk got it all in black and white?" With a sigh for his incapacity, she peered over the desk at his paper.

"Now, Mrs. O'Gaghan, no trifling!" Her master spoke sternly and sharply. But Rufus could not speak at all by reason of choking passion.

"If so be I have said any harm, sir, for the best of us is errowneous, I axes a humble pardon. Iver since I lose my good husband —and a better husband there cudn't be, barrin only the bellises, and I wudn't deny upon my oath but what I desarved the spout now and thin——"

"Mrs. O'Gaghan," said Dr. Hutton, trying very hard to look amiable, "do your best for once, I entreat you, to prove yourself, if there is such a thing, a respectable Irishwoman."

From that moment the tables were turned. Her temper boiled up like a cauldron. It is quite of a piece with a thing that is all pieces—the genuine Irish nature—that, proud as they are of their country, they cannot bear to be told of their citizenship.

"Irish, thin, is it? Irish indade! Well, and I knows I'm Irish. And if I ain't, what do I care who knows I am?"

She flung up her head superbly, and great tears ran from her eyes. Rufus Hutton perceived his advantage, and, though not at all a mean fellow, he was smarting far too sharply from the many attacks on his vanity, to forego his sweet revenge.

"You remember, then, when the doctor gave you the first-born child, that he made some odd remark, and told you to keep it separate?"

"And how can a poor Irishwoman remimber any thing at all?"

"Come, you know very well that you remember that. Now, can you deny it?"

"Is it likely you'll catch me deny any thing as is a lie, then, Irish or not, as you plases?" Her bosom still was heaving with the ground-swell of the bygone storm.

"Well, now, for the honour of old Ireland, tell us the truth for once. What were the words he said?"

"Save me if evir a bit of me can tell. Mayhap I might call to mind, if I heer'd them words agin."

"Were they not these—'Left to right over the shoulder, and a strapping boy he is?'"

"Bedad thin, and they might have been."

"I want to know what they were."

"How can I tell what they were? I only know what they should have been."

"Well, and what was that?"

"Thim very same words as you've said." She turned towards the door with a sullen air, while he looked at Sir Cradock in triumph. Nevertheless, he still wanted her evidence as to her own doings in the matter.

Before he rode home for his own tracings, he had walked, with his usual promptitude, as far as the "Jolly Foresters," and there had discovered the late Miss Penny ; who now, as the mother of nine or ten children, was kindly expansive and garrulous concerning all questions of infancy.

"So then, Mrs. O'Gaghan, with the best intentions in the world, you marked the elder child with a rosette, as I saw on the following day."

"Thrue for you as the Gospel. And what more wud you have me do ?"

"Nothing. Unless it were just to stitch it, instead of crimping it into the cap."

Poor Biddy started from where she stood, and pressed one hand to her heart. "It's the divil himself," she muttered, "as turns me inside out so. And sure that same is the reason he does be so black red." Then aloud, with a final rally,—

"And who say they iver see me take a needle and thread ? And if I did, what odds to them ?"

"No, that was the very thing you omitted to do, until it was too late. But when you sent to Mrs. Toaster for her large butter-scales, what was it you put on each side ?"

"What was it ? No lining at all. Fair play for the both of them, as I hope to have the same in purgatory, plaze the saints and our blessed Lady !"

Sir Cradock was listening, all this while, with some surprise and more interest. He now found it right to say something, for fear of being too much conducted.

"And, pray, what was the reason that you wanted to weigh them at all ? You know it is thought most unlucky, by every orthodox nurse, even to allow a babe to be weighed."

"With the hairyticks, not with us, yer honour. Why else wud I weigh them, except to see which wur the heaviest ?"

"And pray, Bridget, which was the heavier ?" asked Sir Cradock, almost smiling.

"Mr. Cradock, as is now, yer honour. I'd swear it on my dying bed. Did you think, then, I'd iver wrong him, the innocents as they was ?"

"And did you weigh them with rosettes on ?" Rufus Hutton had not finished yet.

"How cud I, and only one got it ?"

"Oh, then, you had fastened it on again ?"

"Did you think they was born with ribbons on ?"

This was poor Biddy's last bit of spirit. She lost heart and opened

it out after this. How she had heard that there was some difference in the marks of the infants, though what it was she knew not justly; having, like most Irishwomen, the clearest perception that right and left are only relative terms, and come wrong in the looking-glass, as they do in heraldry. How, when she found the rosette adrift, she had done the very best she could, according to her lights, to work even-handed justice, and up to this very day believed that the heft of the scales was the true one. Then she fell to a-crying bitterly that her darling Crad should be ousted, and then she laughed as heartily that her dear boy Clayton was in for it.

Now Dr. Hutton, well content with what he had established, turned and gazed at Sir Cradock Nowell, with that fine complacent manner which so often is acquired by successful little men. Then, to make assurance doubly sure, he called in a voice of authority for Mrs. Jane Cripps, of the "Foresters." Mrs. Cripps came sidling and bridling, even now unable to lay aside that awe with which she had been wont, in the days when she was Jane Penny, to regard the great Mrs. O'Gaghan. However, she told all she knew of the matter, saying "please, sir," at every sentence. She had seen at the time Dr. Hutton's sketch, which was made without Biddy's knowledge, because she never would have allowed it, on account of the bad luck to follow. And Mrs. Cripps was very clever now every thing was known. She had felt all along that things went queerly on the third day after the babes were born. She had made up her mind to speak at the time, only Mrs. O'Gaghan was such—excuse her—such a disciplinarian, that—that—and then Lady Nowell died, and every thing was at sixes and sevens, and no one cried more violent, let them say what they like about it, than she, Jane Penny as had been.

"If Sir Cradock thought further evidence needful, there was Mrs. Bowyer, a most respectable woman, who washed thirty shillings a week, Mrs. Cripps' first cousin and comate, who had heard at the time all about the drawing, and had not been easy about the scales, and had dreamed of it many times afterwards, as indeed her Aunt Betsy know; and her husband was no man, or he never would have said to her——"

By this time the shadows came over the room, and the trees outside were rustling, and drawing rough lines on the amber sunset, like a child's scrawling on his horn-book. Volunteers throughout the household longed to give their evidence. Their self-respect for a week would be hostile, if it were not accepted. But Sir Cradock kept the door fastened, till Mrs. O'Gaghan slipped out, and put all the wenches down the steps backwards. Mrs. Toaster alone she durst not touch; but Mrs. Toaster will never forgive her, and never believe the case tried on its merits, because she was not summoned to depose to the loan of the scales.

But now Sir Cradock Nowell saw that quite enough had been

established on this first inquiry to make it needful that the matter should be sifted thoroughly, in proper legal form, and under conduct of the men of law.

"I wish most heartily, Dr. Hutton, that you had made this strange discovery either a week or two earlier, or else but two days later. It is the most awkward time in the world to have such a question thrust upon one."

He spoke with some impatience, feeling strongly his annoying and almost ludicrous position. But as he leaned his head on his hands to consider how to meet the case, his conscience told him that he had often wished for what was come to pass, but without this inconvenience.

Still, a father who has made his children his chief study, and has no other tie or care to wrest away his love from them, this man cannot but be sorry when a sudden grief befalls even the less favoured members of his little flock. A great amount of love is always going from him, and coming home; and some of it lingers wherever wanted to assuage especial wounds. And if there be but two for all the father's love to dwell upon, nature will not often leave him so wrapt up in one as not to feel for the other also. And so the old man thought of both his sons, and felt his heart go yearning, to its own surprise almost, over the one he less had loved, until the call arose for it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

INVASION OF A WOODCOCK.

THE rays of the level sun were nestling in the brown bosom of the beech-clump, and the fugitive light slid undulating through the grey-arched portico, like a reedy river; when Cradock and Clayton Nowell met in the old hall of their childhood. With its deep embrasures and fluted piers, high-corniced mantel of oak relieved with alabaster figures, and the stern array of pike, and steel-cap, battle-axe, and arquebus, which kept the stag-heads over against them nodding in perpetual fear, this old hall was so impressed upon their earliest memories, that they looked upon it, in some sort, as the entrance to their lives.

Clayton had just received the news of Dr. Hutton's discovery, and his first impulse had been to rush, not to his father, or any one else, but in search of his twin-brother. This proves him to have been at heart a really good fellow.

As the twins drew near from opposite doors, each hung back for

a moment: knowing all that had passed that day, how would his brother receive him? But in that moment each perceived how the other's heart was; Cradock cried, "Hurrah, all right!" and Clayton's arms were round his neck. Clayton sobbed hysterically—for he had always been woman-hearted—while Cradock coaxed him with his hand, as though ten years the elder. It was as if the days of childhood had returned once more, the days when the world came not between them, for each was the world to the other.

"Crad, I won't have a bit of it. Did you think I would be such a robber, Crad? And I don't believe one syllable of their humbugging nursery stories. Why, every fellow knows that you must be the eldest brother."

"Viley, my boy, I am so glad that it has turned out so. You know that I have always longed to fight my way in the world, and I am fitter for it than you are. And you are more the fellow for a baronet, and a big house, and all that sort of thing; and in the holidays I shall come every year to shoot with you, and to break your dogs, and all that; for you haven't got the least idea, Viley, of breaking a dog."

"Well, no, I suppose I haven't," said Clayton, very submissively; at any other time he would have said, "Oh, haven't I?" for it was a moot point between them. "But, Craddy, you shall have half, at any rate. I won't touch it, unless you take half."

"Then the estates must go to the Queen, or to Mr. Nowell Corklemore, your especial friend, Viley."

Clayton was famed for his mimicry of the pompous Mr. Corklemore, and he could not resist it now, though the tears were still in his eyes.

"Haw, yes; I estimate so, sir. A mutually agreeable and unobjectionable arrangement, sir. Is that your opinion? Haw!" and Clayton stroked an imaginary beard, and closed one eye at the ceiling. Cradock laughed from habit; and Clayton laughed because Cradock did.

Oh that somebody had come by to see them thus on the very best terms, as loving as when they whipped tops together, or practised Sir Roger de Coverley! They agreed to slip away that evening from the noise of the guests and the wine-bibbing, and have a quiet jug of ale in Cradock's little snuggery. There they would smoke their pipes together, and consider the laws of inheritance. Already they were beginning to laugh and joke about the matter; what odds about the change of position, if they only kept the brotherhood? Unluckily no one came near them. The servants were gathered in their own hall, discussing the great discovery; Sir Cradock was gone to the Rectory to meet John Rosedew upon his return, and counsel how to manage things. Even the ubiquitous Dr. Hutton had his especial *alibi*. He had rushed away to catch Mr. Garnet and the illumination folk, that the necessary changes might be made in the bedizenment of the oak-tree.

These young fellows being of the thorough English breeding, and the high manhood which despises all display of emotion, cut short all their most unusual outbreak of affection. They looked with some shyness at one another, eager to catch the first bit of slang that might relieve the position.

Suddenly Clayton exclaimed, "Oh, what a fool I am, Craddy! I forgot the most important thing, until it is nearly too late for it."

"What?" asked Cradock, red hot for the great news, which he saw was coming.

"When I was out with the governor to-day, what do you think I saw?"

"What, what, my boy? Out with it."

"Can't stop to make you guess. A woodcock, sir; a woodcock."

"A woodcock so early? Nonsense, man; it must have been a hawk or a night-jar."

"Think I don't know a woodcock yet? And I'll tell you who saw it, too. Glorious old Mark Stote; his eyes are as sharp as ever. We marked him down to a T, sir, just beyond the hoar-witheys at the head of Coffin Wood; and I should have been after him two hours ago if it had not been for this rumpus. I meant to have had such a laugh at you, for I would not have told you a word of it; but now you shall go snacks in him. Even the governor does not know it."

"Fancy killing a woodcock in the first week of October!" said Cradock, with equal excitement; "why, they'll put us in the paper, Viley."

"Not unless you look sharp. He's sure to be off at dusk. He's a traveller, as Mark Stote said: sailed on from the Wight, most likely, last night; he'll be off for Dorset, this evening. Run for your gun, Crad, your pet Purday; I'll meet you here with my Lancaster in just two minutes' time. Don't say a word to a soul. Mind, we'll go quite alone."

"Yes; but you bring your little Wena, and I'll take my Caldo, and work him as close as possible. I promised him a run this afternoon."

Away they ran, out of different doors, to get their guns and accoutre themselves; while the poor tired woodcock sitting on one leg, under a holly bush, was drawing up the thin quivering coverlet over his great black eyes.

Cradock came back to the main hall first, with his gun on his arm, and his shot-belt across him, his broad chest shown by the shooting-jacket, and the light of hope and enterprise in his clear strong glance. Before you could have counted ten, Clayton was there to meet him; and none but a very ill-natured man could have helped admiring the pair of them: honest, affectionate, simple fellows, true West Saxons as could be seen, of the same height and figure as nearly as could be, each with the pure bright Nowell complexion, and the straightforward Nowell gaze. The wide forehead,

pointed chin, arched eyebrows, and delicate mouth of each boy resembled the other's exactly, as two slices cut from one fern-root. Nevertheless, the expression—if it may be said without affectation, the mind—of the face was different. Clayton, too, was beginning to nurse a very short moustache, a silky bright brown tasselet; while Cradock exulted rationally in a narrow fringe of young whiskers. And Viley's head was borne slightly on one side, Cradock's almost imperceptibly on the other.

With a race to get to the door first, the twins went out together, and their merry laugh rang round the hall, and leaped along the passages. That hall shall not hear such a laugh, nor the passages repeat it, for many a year of winter nights, unless the dead bear chorus.

The moment they got to the kennel, which they did by a way of their own, avoiding all grooms and young lumbermen, fourteen dogs, of different races and a dozen languages, thundered, yelled, and yelped at the guns, some leaping madly and cracking their staples, some sitting up and begging dearly, with the muscles of their chest all quivering, some drawing along on their stomachs, as if they were thoroughly callous, and yawning for a bit of activity; but each in his several way entreating to be the chosen one, each protesting that he was truly the best dog for the purpose—whatever that might be—and swearing stoutly that he would "down-charge" without a hand being lifted, never run in upon any temptation, never so much as bolt after a hare. All the while Caldo sat grimly apart; having trust in human nature, he knew that merit must make its way, and needed no self-assertion. As his master came to him he stood upon his hind-legs calmly, balanced by the chain-stretch, and bent his fore-arms as a mermaid or a kangaroo does. Then, suddenly, Cradock Nowell dropped the butt of his gun on his boot, and said, with his face quite altered,—

"Viley, I am very sorry; but, after all, I can't go with you."

"Not come with me, Craddy, and a woodcock marked to a nicety! And you with your vamplets on, and all! What the deuce do you mean?"

"I mean just what I say. Don't ask me the reason, my dear fellow; I'll tell you by-and-by, when we smoke our pipes together. Now I beg you, as an especial favour, don't lose a moment in arguing. Go direct to the mark yourself, and straight powder to you! I'll come and meet you in an hour's time in the spire-bed by the covert."

"Crad, it's no good to argue with you; that I have known for ages. Mind, the big-wigs don't dine till seven o'clock, so you have plenty of time to come for me. But I am so sorry I shan't have you there to wipe my eye as usual. Nevertheless, I'll bring home Bill Woodcock; and what will you say to me then, my boy? Ta, ta; come along, Wena, won't we astonish the natives? But I

take it rather unkind of you, Crad, that you won't come with me."

The brothers went out at the little gate, and there Cradock stopped and watched the light figure hurrying westward over the chase, taking a short cut for the coverts. Clayton would just carry down the spinney, where the head of the spring was, because the woodcock might have gone on there; and if ever a snipe was come back to his home yet, that was the place to meet him. Thence he would follow the runnel, for about a third of a mile, down to the spot in the Coffin Wood, where the hollies grew, and the hoar-witheys. When quit of that coppice, the little stream stole away down the valley, and so past Mr. Garnet's cottage to the Nowelhurst water beyond the church bridge. Now whether this were the self-same brook on whose marge we observed Master Clayton last week walking, not wholly in solitude, is a question of which there is little to say—except that it does not matter much. There are so many brooks in the New Forest; and after all, if you come to that, how can the most consistent of brooks be identical with the special brook which we heard talking yesterday? Isn't it running, running on, even as our love does? Join hands and keep your fingers tight; still it will slip through them.

When Clayton was gone but a little way over the heather and hare-runs, his brother made off, with his gun uncharged, for the group still at work in the house-front. Bull Garnet was there, with Rufus Hutton sticking like a leech to him; no man ever was bored more sharply, or more bluntly expressed it. The veins of his temples and close-cropped head stood out like a beech-tree's stay roots; he was steaming all over with indignation, and could not find a vent for it. When Cradock came up, Mr. Garnet knew well that he was expected to say something; in fact, that he ought, as a gentleman, to show his interest, not his surprise. Nevertheless he would not do it, though he loved and admired Cradock; and for many reasons was cut to the heart by the very strange news concerning him. So he left Craddy to begin, and presented no blank in his swearing. His swearing was tremendous, for he hated change of orders.

"Mr. Garnet," said Cradock, at last, "I have heard a great deal of bad language, especially among the bargees at Oxford and the piermen at Southampton; and I don't pretend to split hairs myself, nor am I mealy-mouthed; but I trust you will excuse my observing, that up to the present moment I have never heard such blackguardly language as you are now employing."

Bull Garnet turned round and looked at him. If Cradock had shown any sign of fear, he would have gone to the earth at once, for his unripe strength would have had no chance with Garnet's prime in its fury. But after gazing with much amazement and no little haughtiness at the young man's firm and yet kindly eyes, Mr.

Garnet dashed forth his hand and shook Cradock's mightily, quite at the back of the oak-tree; then he patted him on the shoulders, to resume his superiority; and said,—

"My boy, I thank you."

"Well," thought Cradock, "of all the extraordinary fellows I ever came across, you are the most extraordinary. And yet it is quite impossible to doubt your perfect sincerity; is it so impossible to call in question your sanity?"

These reflections of Master Cradock were not so lucid as usual. At least he made a false antithesis. If it had been possible to doubt Mr. Garnet's sincerity, he would not have been by any means so extraordinary as he was.

"Not much trouble, after all," cried Rufus Hutton, rollicking up like a man of thrice his true cubic capacity; "ah, these things are simple enough for a man with a little *vovs*. I shall explain the whole process to Mrs. Hutton, she is so fond of information. Never saw a firework before, sir—at least, I mean the machinery of them—and now I understand it thoroughly; much better, indeed, than the foreman does. Did not I hear you say so, George?"

"Eh, my mon, I deed so"—the foreman was a shrewd, dry Scotchman—"in your own opeenion mainly. But ye havena peyed us yet, my mon, for the dustin' o' your shoon."

Rufus Hutton began, amid some laughter, to hunt his French purse for the siller, when the foreman leaped up as if he were shot, and dashed behind the oak-tree. "Awa, mon, awa, if ye value your life! Dinna ye see the glue-pot burstin'?"

Rufus dropped the purse, and fled for his life, and threw himself flat, fifty yards away, that the explosion might pass over him. Even then, when the laugh was out, and Mr. Garnet had said to him, "Perhaps, sir, you will explain that process for the benefit of Mrs. Hutton," instead of being disconcerted he was busier than ever, and took Mr. Garnet aside some little way down the chase.

"They want to make a job of it, I can see that well enough. To charge for it, sir; to charge for it."

"Thank you for your advice, Dr. Hutton," replied Bull Garnet crustily; he was very morose that afternoon, and surly betwixt his violence; "but perhaps you had better leave them to me, for fear of the glue-pot bursting."

"Ah, I suppose I shall never hear the last of that most vulgar pleasantry. But I tell you they can't see it, or else it is they won't. They are determined to do it all over again, and they need only change four letters, and the fixings all come in again. For the R they should put an L, for the D a Y——Bless my soul, Mr. Garnet, what is it you see there?"

No wonder Rufus Hutton asked what Mr. Garnet saw, for the steward's eyes were fixed intently, wrathfully, ferociously, upon something not very far from the place where his home lay among

the trees. His forehead rolled in three heavy furrows, deep and red at the bottom, his teeth were set hard, and the muscles of his shoulders swelled as he clenched his hands fast. Dr. Hutton, gazing in the same direction, could see only trees and heather. "What is it you see there, Mr. Garnet?" Rufus Hutton by this time was quivering with curiosity.

"I'd advise you, sir, not to ask me:" then he added, in a different tone, "the most dastardly scoundrel poacher that ever wanted an ounce of lead, sir. Let us go back to the men, for I have little time to waste."

"Cool fellow," thought Rufus; "waste of time to talk to me, is it? But what eyes the man must have!"

And so he had, and ears too. Bull Garnet saw and heard every single thing that passed within the furthest rim of his presence. No matter what he was doing, or to whom he was talking, no matter what was afoot, or what temper he was in, he saw and heard as clearly as if his whole attention were on it, every moving, breathing, speaking, or spoken thing, within the range of human antennæ. So a spider knows if even a midge or a brother spider's gossamer floats in the dewy unwoven air beyond his octagonal subtlety. From this extraordinary gift of Bull Garnet, as well as from his appearance, and the force of his character, the sons of the forest were quite convinced that he was under league to the devil.

In half an hour's time or less, when the dusk came down like wool, Cradock cast loose his favourite Caldo, and set out for the Coffin Wood. From habit more than forethought, and to give his dog some pleasure, there by the kennel he loaded his double-barrelled gun. He had made up his mind to shoot no more upon his father's land, until he had express permission from Sir Cradock Nowell. This was a whim, no doubt, and a piece of pride on his part; but the scene of that afternoon, and the sudden change of position, had left some bitter feeling, and a sense of alienation. This was the reason why he would not go with Clayton, much as he longed to do so.

Now, with some dull uncertainty and vague depression clouding him, he loaded his gun in an absent manner; putting loose shot, No. 6, in one barrel, and a cartridge in the other. "Hie away, boy!" he cried to Caldo, who had crouched at his feet the while; then he struck off hot foot for the westward, with the gun upon his shoulder. But just as he started, one of the lads, who was often employed as a beater, ran up, and said, with his cap in his hand, in a manner most insinuating,—

"'Take I 'long of 'ee, Meestur Craduck. I'll be rare and keerful, sir."

"No, thank you, Charley, not this time. I am not even going shooting, and I mean to go quite alone."

Poor Cradock, unlucky to the last. Almost every thing he had

done that day had been a great mistake; and now there was only one more error, the deadliest error of all, to come.

Whistling a dreamy old tune, he hurried over the brown and tufted land, sometimes leaping a tussock of bed-furze, sometimes following a narrow hare-run, a soft green thread through the heather.

The sun had been down for at least half an hour, and under the trees there was twilight; but here, in the open, a tempered brightness flowed from some yellow clouds still hovering in the west reluctantly. You might still know a rabbit from a hare at fifty or sixty yards away. And in truth both bunnies and hares were about; the former hopping, and stopping, and peeping, and pricking their ears as the fern waved, and some sitting gravely upon a hillock, with their backs like a home-made loaf; the hares, on the other hand, lopping along, with their great ears drooping warily, and the spring of their haunches gathered up for a dash away any whither: but all alike come abroad to look for the great and kind God who feeds them.

Then, from either side of the path, or the sandy brows of the gravel-pit, the diphthong cry of the partridge arose, the call that tells they are feeding. Convivial and good-hearted birds, who cannot eat without much talk, nor without it be duly eaten; no marvel that the Paphlagonians assign you a brace of hearts. The pheasants were flown to the coverts long since, being fearful of losing the way to bed; two or three brown owls were mousing about, and a horned fellow came sailing smoothly from the deep settlements of the thicket, as Cradock Nowell leaped up the hedge, a hedge overleaning, overtwisting, stubby, and crowded with ash, rose, and hazel, the fence of the Coffin Wood.

Though Caldo had stood picturesquely at least a dozen times, and looked back at his master reproachfully, turning the white of his eye, and champing his under-lip, and then dropping as if he himself were shot, when the game sped away with a whirr, Cradock, true to his resolution, had not pulled trigger yet. And though the repression was not entirely based upon motives humane, our Cradock felt a new delight in sparing the lives of those poor things who have no other life to look to, according to our opinions: so merry and harmless to him they seemed, so glad that the dangerous day was done, so thankful for having been fed and saved by the great unknown, but ever felt, Feeder, Father, and Saviour.

CHAPTER XIX.

WAITING IN THE FOREST.

WHILE his sons were thus forgetting, in truly British love of sport, all the heavy fall of facts upon their young and lively pates, Sir Cradock Nowell sought the comfort and the strong support which even proud men have a call for in a life-long friend.

In the presence of Rufus Hutton, which was never very pleasant to him, the father had been striving hard to put a good face upon every thing. Nevertheless he was much disturbed and even vexed at the sudden change, and the necessity of meeting it. All his partiality to Clayton could not relieve him from a painful sympathy with Cradock, nor could the sudden gratification of an old desire atone for all the unpleasantness of the new position. That the ancient family of the Nowells should form the subject of county gossip, and even afford some laughter upon the very point to which they had always attached so much importance—this alone must be a sore matter for a proud and reserved man like Sir Cradock. But he foresaw that other troubles, of a far more serious nature, were too likely to arise and perhaps destroy the union of his quiet household.

Fearing many things, and feeling want of friendly comfort, he plodded forth, to make the best of the hour or so remaining before he must begin to get ready for the few friends asked to dine with him. To-morrow would be the great day, of course, when every body must be received; but the really valued "guests of the hearth" were to gather around him that evening.

Dwelling on these things, and well aware that Wednesday was Mr. Rosedew's day for making the round of the parish, Sir Cradock determined to intercept the ancient friend, if possible, upon his homeward journey. Therefore, as if from a sudden impulse, off he set for the Rectory. And there, in the shrubbery near the gate, he found that factotum Jem Pottles.

James Pottles, groom and gardener, knife-cleaner, and "boots," at the Rectory, who even aspired to the hand, or at any rate, to the lips, of the plump and gaudy Jemima, was not at all a man, or boy, to be discovered at first interview. His wits were slow and mild, and had never yet been hurried, for his parents were unambitious. It took him a long time to consider, and a long time again to express himself, which he did with a roll of his tongue. And perhaps for that very reason, Jem Pottles was quoted all over the village as a sayer of good things. No conclusion was thought quite safe, at least by the orthodox women, until it had been asked with a knowing look—"And what do Jem Pottles say of it?" Feeling thus his responsibility, and the gravity of his opinion, Jem grew slower than

ever, and had lately contracted a habit of shutting one eye as he cogitated. As cause and effect always act and react, this added enormously to his repute, until Mark Stote the gamekeeper, and Reuben Cuff the constable, ached and itched with jealousy of that "cock-eyed, cock-headed boy."

Sir Cradock found Jem quite at his leisure, sweeping up some of the leaves in the shrubbery, and pleasantly cracking the filberts which he discovered among them. These he peeled very carefully, and put them in the pocket of his stable waistcoat, ready for Jemima by-and-by. He swished away very hard with the broom the moment he saw such a visitor, and touched his hat in a way that showed he could scarcely spare time to do it.

"What way, my lad, do you think it likely your master will come home to-day?"

This was just the sort of question upon which Jem might commit himself, and lose a deal of prestige; so he pretended not to hear it, and brushed the very ground up. These tactics, however, availed him not, for Sir Cradock repeated his inquiry in a tone of irritation. Jem leaned his chin on the broom-handle, and closed one eye deliberately.

"Well, he maight perhaps come the haigher road, and again a maight come the lower wai, and I've a knowed him crass the chase, sir, same as might be fram alongside of Meester Garnet's house. There never be no telling the wai, any more than the time of un. But it's never no odds to me."

"And which way do you think the most likely now?"

"Not to say 'now,' but bumbai laike. If so be a cooms arly, a maight come long of the haigher road as goes to the 'Jolly Foresters;' and if a com'th middlin' arly, you maight rackon may be on the town wai; but if he cometh unoosial late, and a heap of folks be sickenin, or hisself hath pulled a book out, a maight goo round by Westacot, and come home by Squire Garnet's wai." Rich in alternatives, Jem Pottles opened the closed eye, and shut the open one.

"What a fool the fellow is!" said Sir Cradock to himself; "I'll try the first way, at any rate. For if John is so late, I could not stop for him, with my guests invited. How I wish we were free from that dinner to night, with this strange thing to consider! But perhaps, if we manage it well, it will carry it off all the better."

Making thus the best of things, he pulled his watch out, and found time to try a little quiet saunter along the higher road, by which Mr. Rosedew might return, if he chanced to take the shortest way. This road, leading eastward from the Rectory into the depths of the forest, is one of the loveliest to be found in the whole of lovely England. Some of the forest roads disappoint us from their width and openness. By showing too much they distract and weaken the enjoyment of the eyes and mind, as well as dissipate that sense of

mystery and grandeur which the mighty works of nature carry in their shadow.

But here we have the forest roof spread amiably over us, without the oppression which the more gigantic domes shed downwards. See how the arches spring overhead, and the brown leaves flutter among them! In and out, and through and through, across and across, with delicacy, veining the very shadows. For miles we may wander beneath them, and see no two alike. How, for fear of wearying us, after infinite twists and turns—but none of them contortions—after playing across the heavens, and sweeping away the sunshine, now in this evening light they hover, and rustle like the skirts of death. Is there one of them with its lichen-mantle copied from its neighbour's? Is there one that has borrowed a line, a character, even a cast of complexion from its own brother rubbing against it? Their arms bend over us as we walk, we are in their odour and influence, we know that, like the Magi of old, they adore only God and His sun; and, when we come out from under them, we feel that our hearts are larger.

CHAPTER XX.

DEATH IN THE FOREST.

THERE is a long, mysterious thrill, a murmur rather felt than heard, a shudder of profundity, which traverses the woodland hollows at the sun's departure. In autumn most especially, when the glory of trees is saddening, and winter storms are in prospect, this dark disquietude moves the wood, this horror at the nightfall, and doubt of the coming hours. Touched as with a subtle stream, the pointlets of the oak-leaves rise, the crimped fans of the beech are fluttered, and lift their glossy ovals, the pendulous chains of the sycamore swing; while the poplar flickers its silver skirts, the tippets and ruffs of the ivy are ruffling, and even the three-lobed bramble-leaf cannot repress a shiver.

Touched with a stream at least as subtle, we, who are wandering among the dark giants, shiver and shrink, we know not why; and our hearts beat faster, to feel how they beat. The cause is the same both for tree and for man. Earthly nature has not learned to trust in immortality. Therefore all her works lie ever in bondage to the dread of death.

Sir Cradock Nowell had passed the age of excessive sensibility, and if he felt chilled in his forest walk, it was less from the influence of the trees than the keen air stealing under them. More-

over, in 'spite of all other cares, he began to want his dinner; and as no John Rosedew came up the hill, it became more and more certain that the parson had taken the longer road. Therefore the baronet, after waiting for nearly an hour to meet him, turned, and with a rapid stride took the shortest cut for home. But just as he crossed a dusky dingle towards the bottom of the chase, he heard the report of a gun far away, and after a little while, two more.

"Well," he exclaimed to himself, "those boys really take things easily. To think of their going out shooting, after all that has happened this afternoon!"

Meanwhile Mr. Rosedew was speeding merrily, according to his ideas of speed (which were not those of this generation), along a narrow bridle-way, some two miles to the westward. It would be a serious insult—so the parson argued—to the understanding of any man who understood a horse, and now John Rosedew had owned Coræbus very nearly nine months, and though he had never owned a horse before, surely by this time he could set papers in the *barbara celarent* of the most recondite horse-logic—or was it dialectics?—an insult it would be to that Hippicus who felt himself fit now to go to a fair and discuss many points with the jockeys, if any body suggested to him that Coræbus ought to trot.

"Trot, sir!" cried the rector, to an imaginary Hippodamas, "hasn't he been trotting for nearly an hour to-day, sir? Quite an *equus tolutarius*. And upon my word, I only hope he is not so sore as I am." Then he threw the reins over the pony's neck, and let him crop some cytisus.

"Coræbus, have no fear, my horse, you shall not be overworked. Or if Epirus or Mycenæ be thy home and birthplace—*incertus ibidem sudor*—thrice I have wiped it off, and no oaten particles in it; *urit avenæ*, so I suppose oats must dry the skin. 'Ad terramque fluit devexo pondere cervix,' a line not to be rendered in English, even by my Cradock. How fine that whole description, but made up from alien sources! Oh how Lucretius would have done it! Most sad that he was not a Christian."

A believer was what Mr. Rosedew meant. But by this time he was beginning to look upon all his classical friends as in some sort Christians, if they only believed in their own gods. Wherein, I fear, he was far astray from the text of one of the Articles.

Cob Coræbus by this time knew his master thoroughly; and exercising his knowledge cleverly, made his shoes last longer. If the weather felt muggy and "trying"—from an equine view of probation—if the road was rough and against the grain, even if the forest-fly came abroad upon business, Coræbus used (in sporting parlance) to "shut up" immediately. This he did, not in a defiant tone, not in a mode to provoke antagonism; he was far too clever a horse for that; but with every appearance of a sad conviction that his master had no regard for him. At this earnest appeal to his

feelings, John Rosedew would dismount in haste, and reflect with admiration upon the weeping steeds of Achilles, or the mourning horse of Mezentius, while he condemned with acrimony the moral conveyed by a song he had heard concerning the "donkey wot wouldn't go." Then he would loosen the girths, and, remonstrating with Coræbus for his want of self-regard, carefully wipe with his yellow silk pocket-handkerchief first all the accessible parts of the cob that looked at all uncomfortable, and then his own capacious forehead. This being done, he would search around for a juicy mouthful of grass, or dive for an apple or slice of carrot—Coræbus at the same time diving nasally—into the depths of his black coat pocket, where he usually discovered his lunch, which he had altogether forgotten. While the horse was discussing this little refreshment, John would put his head on one side, and look at him very knowingly, revolving in his mind a question which very often presented itself, whether Coræbus were descended from Corytha or Hirpinus.

However this may have been—and from his "staying qualities" one would have thought him rather a chip from the old block of Troy—he was the first horse good John Rosedew had ever called his own; and he loved and admired him none the less for certain calumnies spread by the envious about seedy-toes, splints, and spavins. Of these crimes, whatever they might be, the parson found no mention in Xenophon, Pliny, or Virgil, and he was more than half inclined to believe them clumsy modern figments. As for the incontestable fact that Coræbus began to whistle when irrationally stimulated beyond his six miles an hour, why, that John Rosedew looked upon as a classical accomplishment, and quoted a line from Theocritus. Very swift horses were gifted with this peculiar power, for the safety of those who would otherwise be the victims of their velocity, even as the express train always whistled past Brockenhurst station.

After contemplating the animal till admiration was exhausted, and wondering why some horses have hairy, while others have smooth ankles, he would refresh himself with a reverie about the Numidian cavalry; then declaring that Jem Pottles was "impolitiæ notandus," he would pass his arm through the bridle, and calling to mind the Pæon young lady who unduly astonished Darius, pull an old book from some inner pocket, and stroll on, with Coræbus sniffing now and then at his hat-brim.

To any one who bears in mind what a punctual body Time is, this account of the rector's doings will make it not incredible that he was often late for dinner. But he never lost reckoning altogether in his circumnavigation, because his leisure did not begin till he had passed the "Jolly Foresters;" for there he must be by a certain hour, or Coræbus would feel aggrieved, and so would Mrs. Cripps, who always looked for him at or about 1.30 P.M. For some mighty fine company was to be had by a horse who could

behave himself, in the stable of the "Jolly Foresters," about middle-day on a Wednesday. Several high-stepping buggy-mares, one or two satirical Broughamites, even some nags who gave a decided tone to the neighbourhood, silver-hamed Clevelands, and champ-the-bit Clydesdales: even these were not too proud—that they left for vulgarian horses—to snort and blow hard at the "Foresters'" oats, and then eat them up like winking. To this select circle our own Coræbus had been admitted already, and his conversational powers admired, when he had produced an affidavit that his master was in no way connected with trade.

Coræbus now bade fair to be spoiled by all this grand society. Every Wednesday he came home less natural, more coxcombical. He turned up his nose at many good horses, whom he had once respected, fellows who wandered about in the forest, and hung down their chins when the rain came! And then he became so affected and false, with an interesting languor, when Amy jumped out to caress him! Verily, friend Coræbus, thou shalt pay out for this! What call, pray, hast thou to become a humbug, from seeing how men are successful?

John Rosedew awoke quite suddenly to the laws of time and season, as the hazel branches came over his head, and he could see to read no longer. The grey wood closed about him, to the right hand and to the left; the thick shoots of the alder, the dappled ash, and the osier, hustled among the taller trees whose tops had seen the sunset; tufts of grass, and blackberry-tangles, hipped dog-roses leaning over them, stubby clumps of cornel, brake-fern waving six feet high where the ground held moisture—who, but an absent man, would have wandered at dusk into such a labyrinth?

"'Actum est' with my dinner," exclaimed the parson aloud, when he awoke to the situation; "and what, perhaps, is more important to thee, at least, Coræbus, thine also is 'pessum datum.' And there is no room to turn the horse round without scratching his eyes and his tail so. Nevertheless, this seems to be a path, or at one time may have been so; 'semita, callis, trames'—that last word is the one for it, if it be derived from 'traho' (which, however, I do not believe)—for, lo! there has been a log of wood dragged here even during a post-diluvial period: we will follow this track to the uttermost; what says the cheerful philosopher?—'*παντοίην βιότοιο τάμοις ὁδόν.*' Surely a gun, nay, two, or, more accurately, two explosions; now for some one to show us the way. Coræbus, be of good cheer, my steed; there is supper yet awaiting thee; advance then thy best foot. Why not?—seest thou some ghost of Polydorus? Come on, I say, mine horse—Great God!——"

Tired as he was, Coræbus had leaped back from the leading rein, then cast up his head and snorted, and with a glare of terror stood trembling. What John Rosedew saw at that moment was stamped on his heart for ever. Across his narrow homeward path, clear in

the grey light, and seeming to creep, was the corpse of Clayton Nowell, laid upon its left side, with one hand to the heart, the wan face stark and spread on the ground, the body stretched by the final throe. The pale light wandered over it, and showed it only a shadow.

John Rosedew's nerves were stout and strong, as of a man who has injured none; he had buried hundreds of fellow-men, after seeing them die; but, for the moment, he was struck with a mortal horror. Back he fell, and drove back his horse; he could not look at the dead man's eyes fixed intently upon him. One minute he stood shivering, and the ash-leaves shivered over him. He was conscious somehow of another presence which he could not perceive. Then he ran up, like a son of God, to what God had left of his fellow-man. The glaze (as of ground glass) in the eyes, the smile that has swooned for ever, the scarlet of the lips beclouded with a chalky dampness, the falling in of the waistcoat pocket over the broad breast, never again to rise or fall in breathing, and, of all that wondrous nothing, the dumb, helpless eloquence—a child that had never seen death before might know him here in his element—his finest element, man.

But a worse sight than of any dead man—dead, and gone home to his Father—met John Rosedew's quailing eyes, as he turned to look around him. It was the sight of Cradock Nowell, clutching his gun with one hand, and clinging hard with the other, while he hung from the bank (which he had been leaping) as a winding-sheet hangs from a candle. The impulse of his leap had failed him, smitten back by horror; it was not in him to go back, nor to come one inch forward. The parson called him by his name, but he could not answer; only a shiver and a moan showed that he knew his baptism. The living was more startled, and more startling, than the dead.

CHAPTER XXI.

TWO UNLUCKY FELLOWS.

THERE was a little dog that crept and moaned by Clayton's body, a little dog that knew no better, never having learned much. It was a small black Swedish spaniel, skilful only in woodcocks, and pretty well up to a snipe or two, but actually afraid of a pheasant on account of the dreadful noise he made. She knew not any more than the others why her name was "Wena," and she always answered briskly to it, though it must have been a corruption. The men said it ought to be "Winifred;" the maids, more romantic, "Rowena;" but very likely John Rosedew was right, being so strong in philology, when

he maintained that the name was a syncopated form of "Wadstena," and indicated her origin.

However, she knew her master's name better than her own almost. You had only to say "Clayton," any where or any when, and she would lift her tangled ears in a moment, jerk her little whisk of a tail, till you feared for its continuity, and trot about with a sprightly air, seeking all around for him. Now she was cuddled close into his bosom, moaning, shivering, and licking him, staring wistfully at his eyes and the wound where the blood was welling. She would not let John Rosedew touch him, but snapped as he leaned over; and then she began to whimper softly, and nuzzle her head in closer. "Wena," he said, in a very low voice—"pretty Wena, let me." And then she felt that he meant well, and stood up, and watched him.

Uncle John knew in a moment that all was over between this world and Clayton Nowell. He had felt it from the first glance indeed, but could not keep hope from fluttering. Afterwards he had no idea what he did, or how he did it, but the impression left by that moment's gaze was as stern as the death it noted. Full in the throat was the ghastly wound, and the charge had passed out at the back of the neck, through the fatal grape-cluster. Though the bright hair flowed in a pool of blood, and the wreck of life was pitiful, the face looked calm and unwrung by anguish, yet firm and staunch, with the courage summoned to ward death rather than meet it.

Mr. Rosedew, shy and diffident in so many little matters, was not a man to be dismayed when the soul is moving vehemently. Now he leaped straight to the one conclusion, fearful as it was.

"Holy God, have mercy on those we love so much! No accident is this, but a savage murder."

He fell upon his knees one moment, and prayed with a dead hand in his own. He knew, of course, that the soul was gone, a distance thought can never gaze; but prayer flies best in darkness.

Then, with the tears all down his cheeks, he looked round once, as if to mark the things he would have to tell of. In front of the corpse lay the favourite gun, with the muzzle plunged into the bushes, as if the owner had fallen with the piece raised to his shoulder. The hammer of one barrel was cocked, of the other on half-cock only; both the nipples were capped, and, of course, both barrels loaded. The line of its fire was not towards Cradock, but commanded a little by-path leading into the heart of the wood.

Meanwhile, Cradock had fallen forward from the steep brow of the hedge-bank; the branch to which he clung in that staggering way had broken. Slowly he rose from the ground, and still intent and horror-struck, unable to come nearer, looked more like one of the smitten trees which they call in the forest "dead men," than a living and breathing body. John Rosedew, not knowing what he did, ran to the wretched fellow, and tried to take his hand, but the offer was quite unnoticed. With his eyes still fixed on his twin-

brother's corpse, the youth began fumbling clumsily in the pocket of his shooting-coat; he pulled out a powder-flask, and rapidly, never once looking at it, dropped a charge into either barrel. John heard the click of the spring—one, two, as quick as he could have said it. Then the young man drew from his waistcoat-pocket two thick patent wads, and squeezed one into either cylinder. All at once it struck poor "Uncle John" what he was going to do. Preparing to shoot himself!

"Cradock, my boy, is this all the fear of God I have taught you?"

Cradock looked at him curiously, and nodded his head in acknowledgment. It was plain that his wits were wandering. The parson immediately seized the gun, and sowed the powder broadcast, then wrenched the flask away from him with a hand there was no resisting. Then for the first time he observed Caldo in the hedge, "down-charging;" the well-trained dog had never moved from the moment his master fired.

"Come with me at once, come home, Cradock; boy, you shall come home with me!"

But the man of threescore was not quick enough for the young despair. Cradock was out of sight in the thicket, and Caldo galloped after him. Wild with himself for his slowness of wit, John Rosedew ran to poor Clayton's gun, for fear of his brother finding it. Then he took from the dead boy's pocket his new and burnished powder-flask, though it went to his heart to do it, and leaped upon the back of Coræbus, without a thought of Xenophon. Only Wena was left to keep her dead young master company.

How Mr. Rosedew got to the Hall he never could remember; but he must have sat his horse like a Nimrod, and taken a hedge and two ditches. All he knew was that he did get there, with Coræbus as frightened as he was, and returned to the place of disaster and death, with three men, of whom Dr. Hutton was one. Sir Cradock was not yet come back to his home, and the servants received proper orders.

As the four men, walking in awe and sorrow, cast the light of a lamp through the bushes, they heard a quick rustle of underwood, and crackle of the dead twigs, but saw no one moving.

"Some one has been here since I left," exclaimed John Rosedew, trembling; "some one has lain beside the body, and put marks of blood on the forehead."

They all seemed to guess at once what it was—Cradock embracing his brother!

"A good job you took the gun away; wonder you had the sense, though," said Rufus Hutton, sharply, to pretend he wasn't crying; "I only know what I should have done, if I had shot my brother so—blown out the remains of my brains, sir!"

"Hush!" said John Rosedew, solemnly, and his deep voice made

their hearts thrill; "it is not our own life to will or to do with. In the hands of the Lord are our life and our death."

They knelt round the poor corpse tenderly, shading the lamp from the eyes of it; even Rufus could not handle it in a medical manner. One of the men, who always declared that he had saved Clayton's life in his childhood, fell flat on the ground, and sobbed fearfully. Who could think of the young life gone, in all its brightness gone for ever to a world unknown, unthought of, and without a thing to do?

They turned him over and over again, and smoothed his eyes, and felt his pulse, or where it bounded lately, and would not listen to the doctor's sentence,—"Dead as a stone, I tell you."

CHAPTER XXII.

NEEDFUL INQUIRY.

MARK STOTE, the head-gamekeeper on the Nowelhurst estate, was a true and honest specimen of the West Saxon peasant—slow, tenacious, and dogged, faithful and affectionate, with too much deference, perhaps, to all who seemed "his betters." He was now about fifty years old, but sturdy and active as ever, with a weather-beaten face and eyes always in quest of something. His home was a lonely cottage in one of the plantations, and there he had a tidy and very intelligent wife, and a host of little anxieties. His children, the sparrow-hawks, the weasels, the young fellows who "called theirselves under-keepers, and all they kept was theirselves, sir,"—what with these troubles, and (worst, perhaps, of all) that nest of charcoal-burners by the bustle-headed oak, with Black Will at the head of them, sometimes, Mark Stote would assure us, his head was gone "all wivvery[1] like," and he could get no sleep of night-time.

A mizzly, drizzly rain set in before the poor people got home that evening with the body of Clayton Nowell. Long mournful soughs of wind ensued, the boughs of the trees went heavily, and it blew half a gale before morning; but it takes a real storm to penetrate some parts of the forest. Once, however, let the storm get in, and it makes the most of the opportunity, raging with triple fury, as a lion does in a compound—the rage of the imperious blast, when it finds no exit.

[1] "Wivvery," *i.e.* giddy and dizzy. (?) "Weavery," from the clack and thrum of the loom; or, more probably, a softer form of "quivery:" the West Saxon loves to soften words.

In the grey of the morning, two men met, face to face, in the overhanging of the Coffin Wood. Which was the more scared of the two, neither could have said; although each felt a little pleased at the terror of the other. The one of strong nerves was superstitious; the other, though free from much superstition, was nervous under the circumstances. The tall and big man was Mark Stote, the little fellow who frightened him Dr. Rufus Hutton. The latter, of course, was the first to recover presence of mind, for Mark Stote's mental locomotion was of ponderous metal.

"What brings you here, Mr. Stote, at this time of the morning?"

"And what brings you here, Dr. Hutton?" Mark might have asked with equal reason. He wondered afterwards why he did not; the wonder would have been if he had. As it was, he only said,—

"To see the rights o' my young meester, sir."

"The wrongs, you mean," said Rufus; "Mark Stote, there is more in this matter than any man yet has guessed at."

"You be down upon the truth of it, my word for it but you be, sir. I've a shot along o' both of 'em, since 'em wor that haigh, and see'd how they thought of their guns, sir; Meester Clayton wor laike enough to shoot Meester Cradock 'xidentually; but never wicey warse, sir, as the parson sayeth, never wicey warse, sir, for I niver see no one so cartious laike."

"Mark Stote, do you mean to say that Cradock shot his brother on purpose?"

Mark stared at Rufus for several moments, then he thrust forth his broad brown hand and seized him by the collar. Dr. Hutton felt that he was nothing in that big man's grasp, but he would not play the coward.

"Stote, let me go this instant. I'll have you discharged this very day unless you beg my pardon."

"That you moy then, if you can, meester. A leetle chap coom fram Ingy, an' we bin two hunner and feefty year 'long o' the squire and his foregoers!" Nevertheless he let Rufus go, and looked over his hat indignantly.

"You are an honest fellow," cried Hutton, when he got his breath again; "an uncommonly honest fellow, although in great need of enlightenment. It is not in my nature, my man," here he felt like a patron, getting over his shaking, so elastic was his spirit; "I assure you, Luke—ah no, your name is Matthew; upon my word, I beg your pardon, I am almost sure it is Mark—Mr. Mark, I shall do my utmost for your benefit. Now talk no more, but act, Mark."

"I oodn't a talked nothing, but for mating with your honour."

"Then resume your taciturnity, which I see is habitual with you, and perhaps constitutional."

Mark Stote felt sore all over. Dr. Hutton now was the collarer. Mark, in his early childhood, had been to school for a fortnight,

and ran away with a sense of rawness, which any big word renewed.

"Mr. Stote, I will thank you to search in that direction, while I investigate this way."

Mark Stote longed to suggest that possibly Dr. Hutton, being (as you might say) a foreigner, was not so well skilled in examining ground as a woodman of thirty years' standing; and therefore that he, old Mark, should have the new part assigned to him, before it was trampled by Rufus. But the gamekeeper knew not how to express it; sure though he was (as all of us are, when truth hits the heart like a hammer) that something evil would come of slurring the matter so stupidly. Therefore he began to search where Dr. Hutton had ordered him; that is to say, towards the hedge where Cradock had been standing, while Rufus himself took the thicker parts and the tufts towards the heart of the coppice.

With the heavy rain-drops hanging like leeches, or running together, as they do, at every thorn or scale of the bark, seeking provocation to come down the nape of the neck of a man, Rufus Hutton went creeping under, trying not to irritate them, pretending that he was quite at home, and understood them like a jungle. Nevertheless he repented, and did not thoroughly search more than ten square yards. The things would knock him so in the face, and the stumps would stick in his trousers so, and the drops were so bad for his rheumatism; and, as it was quite impossible for any man to make way there, what on earth was there to look for?

In spite of all this, he did find something, and stowed it away in his waistcoat-pocket, to be spoken of, or otherwise, according to the turn of events. And by this he meant no dishonesty, but being a very warm-hearted man, as well as a very hasty one, he pitied young Cradock most deeply, and would do all he could to save him.

At the side of the narrow by-path leading from that woodman's track (by which John Rosedew had approached) into the far depth of the thicket, Dr. Hutton found, under a blackberry-bush, a little empty tube, unlike any tube he had seen before. It was about two inches and a half in length, and three-fourths of an inch in diameter. Sodden as it was with the rain, and opened partway along the seam, it still retained, unmistakably, the smell of exploded powder. It seemed to be made of mill-board, or some other form of paper, with a glaze upon the outside and some metal foil at the butt of it. What puzzled Rufus most of all was a little cylinder passing into and across the bottom, something like a boot-tag.

Dr. Hutton was not at this time skilled in modern gunnery. He knew how to load a fowling-piece, and what the difference was between a flint-gun and a percussion-gun; moreover, he had been out shooting once or twice in India, not from any love of the sport, but to oblige his neighbours. So he thought himself both acute and learned in arriving at the conclusion that this was a cartridge-case.

"Mark, does Mr. Cradock Nowell generally shoot with cartridges?"

"He laiketh mostways to be with a curtreege in his toard barryel, sir."

"Oh, keeps a cartridge in his left barrel, does he; and fires first the right, I suppose?"

Leaving Mark to continue the search, Rufus returned to the Hall, after carefully taking the distances between certain important points. He was bound, as he felt, to lose no time in making the strictest examination of the poor youth's body. For now, in this great calamity, the management of every thing seemed to fall upon Rufus Hutton. Sir Cradock, of course, was overwhelmed; John Rosedew, although so deeply distressed, for the boys were like his own to him, was ready to do his utmost; but, as every one knew, except himself, he was not a man of business. Unluckily, too, Mr. Garnet, always the leading spirit wherever he appeared, had not yet presented himself in this keen emergency. But his son came up, in the course of the day, to ask how Sir Cradock Nowell was, and to say that his father was quite laid up with a violent bilious attack, such as he had every month almost.

Dr. Hutton worked very hard, kept his mind on the stretch continually, ordered every one right and left. He even contrived to repulse all the kindred, to the twentieth collateral, who were flocking in, that day, to rejoice at the manhood of the heir. From old Hogstaff, who knew all the family, kith and kin, and friends and enemies, he learned the names of the guests expected, and met them with laconic missives handed through the closed gates at the lodges. In many cases, it is to be feared, indignation overcame sympathy; "upstart insolence!" was heard through the clatter of carriage-windows, very nearly as often as, "most sad occurrence!"

However, most of them were consoled by the prospect of learning every thing at the inquest on the morrow. What could be clearer than that Cradock must be hanged for Clayton's murder? The disgrace would kill the old baronet. "And then, it would be very painful, but my wife would be bound, sir, for the sake of all our children, to prove her direct descent from that well-known Sir Cradock Nowell, who shot a man in the New Forest. Ah, I fear it runs in the family."

But their wrath was most unphilosophical, unworthy of any moralists, when they found that Rufus had cheated them all as to the time of the inquest. In every direction he spread a report that the coroner could not attend until three o'clock on Friday, while he had arranged very quietly to begin the proceedings at noon. And he had taken good care to secure the presence of all the chief men in the neighbourhood—the magistrates, the old friends of the family, all who were interested in its honour rather than in its possessions.

As none of the baffled cousins could solace themselves with outcry that the matter had been hushed up, they discovered that kind feeling had made the scene too distressing for them.

The coroner sat in the principal room at the "Nowell Arms;" the jury had been to see the body lying at the Hall, and now were to hear the evidence. Six or seven of the county magistrates sat behind the coroner, and their clerk was with them. Of course they did not attend officially, their jurisdiction being entirely several from that of the present court. But there could be little doubt that their action would depend, in a great measure, upon what should now transpire.

The jury was chosen carefully to preclude, so far as might be, the charge of private influence. They were known, for the most part, as men of independence and probity, and two of them as consistent enemies to the influence of the Hall. As for general spectators, only a few of the village-folk allowed their curiosity to conquer their good feeling, or, perhaps, it might be their discretion; for all were tenants under Sir Cradock; and though it was known by this time that Bull Garnet was ill and in bed, laid up with one of his old attacks, every body felt certain that he would find out who dared to be present, and visit them pretty smartly.

It would be waste of time to recount all the evidence given; for we know nearly all that Dr. Hutton and the clergyman would depose. Another medical man, Dr. Gall, had also examined poor Clayton's remains; and the healing profession, who cure us (like bacon) after they have killed us, are remarkable for agreeing in public, and quarrelling sadly in private life. So Dr. Gall deposed exactly as Mr. Hutton had done. He was very emphatic towards Rufus, in the use of the proper prefix; but we who know the skill displayed care not for the game certificate.

One part, however, of the medical evidence ought to be repeated. Poor Clayton had not died from an ordinary small-shot wound or wounds, but from a ghastly hole through his throat, cut as if by a bullet. As Dr. Gall, who knew something of guns, very concisely put it, the hole was like the hole in a door, when boys have fired, as they sometimes do, a tallow-candle through it. And yet it was fluted at the exit, in the fleshy part of the neck, as no bullet could have marked it. That was caused by the shot diverging, beginning to radiate, perhaps from the opposition encountered.

"In two words," said Dr. Gall, when they had badgered him in his evidence, "the deceased was killed either by a balled cartridge, or by a charge of loose shot fired within six feet of him."

"Very good," thought Rufus Hutton, who heard all Dr. Gall said; "I'll keep my cartridge-case to myself. Poor Crad shan't have that against him."

Hereupon, lest any mist (which goddesses abound in, *vide* Homer *passim*) descend upon the eyes or mind of any gentle follower of

that poor Craddy's fortunes, let us endeavour to explain Dr. Gall's obscurities.

Cartridges, as used by sportsmen with guns which load at the muzzle, are packages of shot compact, and rammed down in a body. Some of them have spiral cases of the finest wire, covered round with paper; others, used for shorter distance, have only cylinders of paper to enclose the shot. The interstices between the shots are solidified with sawdust. The only use of these things is—for they save little time in loading—to kill the game, whatever it may be, at a longer distance. The shots are prevented from scattering so widely as they love to do, when freed from the barrel's repression. They fly in a closer body, their expansive instincts being checked, when first they leave the muzzle, by the constraint of the case and the tightness of their brotherhood. But it sometimes happens, mainly with wire-cartridges, that the shot can never burst its cerements, and flies in the compass of a slug, until it meets an obstacle. When this is so, the quarry escapes, unless a bullet so aimed would have hit it. This non-expansion is called, in good English, the "balling" of the cartridge. And those which are used for the longest distance, and for wild-fowl shooting—green cartridges, as they are called, containing larger shot—are especially apt to ball.

Dr. Gall was aware, of course, that no one beating for a woodcock would think of putting a green cartridge into his gun at all; but it seemed very likely indeed that Cradock might have used a blue one, for a longer shot with his left barrel; and the blue ones, having wire round them, sometimes ball, though not so often as the green ones do. It only remains to be said that when a cartridge balls, it flies with the force, as well as in the compass, of a bullet. With three drachms of powder behind it, it will cut a hole at forty yards through a two-inch deal.

Whether it were a balled cartridge or a charge of loose shot at six feet distance, was the momentous issue. In the former case, there would be fair reason to set it down as an accident; for the place where Cradock had first been seen was thirty yards from Clayton; and he might so have shot him thence, in the dusk, and through the thick of the covert. But if that poor boy had died from a common charge of shot, "Murder" was the only verdict true men could return on the evidence set before them. For Cradock must have fired wilfully at the open throat of his brother, then flown to the hedge and acted horror when he saw John Rosedew. Where was Cradock? The jury trembled, and so did Rufus Hutton. The coroner repeated the question, although he had no right to do it at that stage of the evidence.

"Since it occurred he has not been seen," whispered Rufus Hutton at last, knowing how men grow impatient and evil when unanswered.

"Let us proceed with the rest of the evidence," said his honour,

grandly; "if the young man cares for his reputation, he will be here by-and-by. But I have ridden far to-day. Let us have some refreshment, gentlemen. Justice must not be hurried."

CHAPTER XXIII.

NOTHING CAN BE CLEARER.

IT may have been perceived already that the coroner was by no means "the right man in the right place." The legal firm, "Cole, Cole, and Son," had been known in Southampton for many years, as doing a large and very respectable business. The present Mr. Cole, the coroner, who had been the "Son" in the partnership, became sole owner suddenly by the death of his father and uncle. Having brains enough to know that he was far from having too much, he took at once into partnership with him an uncommonly wide-awake, wary fellow, who had been head-clerk to the old firm, ever biding his time for this inevitable result. So now the firm was thriving under the style and title of "Cole, Chope, and Co.," Mr. Chope being known far and wide by the nickname of "Cole's brains." Mr. Cole being appointed coroner, not many months ago, and knowing very little about his duties, took good care for a time not to attempt their discharge without having "Cole's brains" with him. But this had been found to interfere so sadly with private practice, that little by little Cole plucked up courage, as the novelty of the thing wore off, and now was accustomed to play the coroner without the assistance of brains. Nevertheless, upon an occasion so important as this, he would have come with full cerebrum, but that Chope was gone for his holiday. Mr. Cole, however, was an honest man—in the absence of his partner—and meant to do his duty, so far as he could see it. In the present inquiry he had less chance of seeing it than usual, for he stood in great awe of Mr. Brockwood, a man of ability and high standing, who, as Sir Cradock Nowell's solicitor, attended to watch the case, at the suggestion of Rufus Hutton.

Both the guns were produced to the court, in the condition in which they were found, except that Mr. Rosedew, for safety's sake, had lowered the right hammer of Clayton's to the half-cock, before he concealed it from Cradock. Cradock's own unlucky piece had been found, on the following morning, in a rushy pool, where he had cast it, as he fled so wildly. Both the barrels had been discharged, while both of Clayton's were loaded. It went to the heart of every man there who could not think Cradock a murderer, when in reply to a juryman's question, what was the

meaning of certain lines marked with a watch-spring file on the trigger-plate of his gun, it was explained that the twins so registered the number and kind of the season's game.

After this, Mark Stote was called, and came forward very awkwardly with a deal of wet on his velveteen cuffs, which he tried to keep from notice. His eyes were fixed upon the coroner, with a kind of defiance, but even while he was kissing the book, he was forced to sniff behind it.

"Mr. Mark Stote," said the coroner, duly prompted, "you have, I believe, been employed to examine the scene of this lamentable occurrence?"

Mark Stote, with his chest thrown forward, and his arms hanging straight at his sides, took a minute to understand this, and a minute to consider his answer.

"Yees, my lard, I throwed a squoyle at 'un."

The representative of the Crown looked at Mark with amazement equal at least to that with which Mark was regarding him.

"Gentlemen," asked Mr. Cole, addressing the court in general, "what language does this man talk?"

"West Saxon," replied Mr. Brockwood, speaking apart to the coroner; "West Saxon of the forest. He can talk plain English generally, but whenever these people are nervous, they fall back unconsciously upon their native idiom. You will never be able to understand him: shall I act as interpreter?"

"With all my heart; that is to say, with the consent of the jury. But what—I mean to say, how——"

"How am I to be checked, you mean, unless I am put upon oath; and how can you enter it as evidence? Simply thus—let your clerk take down the original answers. All the jury will understand them, and so, perhaps, will he."

The clerk, who was a fine young gentleman, strongly pronounced in attire, nodded a distinct disclaimer. It would be so unaristocratic to understand any peasant-tongue.

"At any rate, most of the magistrates do. There are plenty of checks upon me. But I am not ambitious of the office. Appoint any one you please."

"Gentlemen of the jury," said the coroner, glad to shift from himself the smallest responsibility, "are you content that Mr. Brockwood should do as he has offered?"

"Certain, and most kind of him," replied the jury, all speaking at once, "if his honour was unable to understand old English."

"Very good," said Mr. Brockwood; "don't let us make a fuss about nothing. Mr. Stote says he 'throwed a squoyle;' that is to say, cast a glance at it."

"And in what state did you find the ground?" was the coroner's next question.

"Twearable, twearable. Dwont 'e ax ov me vor gude now,

dwont 'e." And he put up his broad hand before his broad face.

"Terrible, terrible," said the coroner, going by the light of nature in his interpretation; "but I do not mean the exact spot only where the body was found. I mean, how was the ground as regards dry and wet, for the purpose of retaining footmarks?"

"Thar a bin zome rick-rack wather, 'bout a sannit back. But most peart on it ave a droud up agin. 'Twur starky, my lard, moor nor stoachy." Here Mark felt that he had described things lucidly and powerfully, and looked round the room for approval.

"Stiff rather than muddy, he means," explained Mr. Brockwood, smiling at the coroner's dismay.

"Were there any footprints upon it, in the part where the ground could retain them?"

"'Twur dounted and full of stabbles, in the pearts whur the mulloch wur, but the main of 'un tuffets and stramots."

"That is to say," Mr. Brockwood translated, "the ground was full of impressions and footmarks, where there was any dirt to retain them; but most of the ground was hillocky and grassy, and so would take no footprints."

"When you were searching, did you find any thing that seemed to have been overlooked?"

"Yees, my lard, I vound thissom"—producing Crad's stubby meerschaum—"and thissom"—a burnt felt-wad—"and a whaile vurther, ai vound thissom." Here he slowly drew from his pocket a very fine woodcock, though not over fat, with its long bill tucked most carefully under its wing. He stroked the dead bird softly, and set its feathers professionally, but did not hand it about, as the court seemed to anticipate.

"In what part, and from what direction, has that bird been shot?"

"Ramhard of the head, my lard, as clane athert shat, and as vaine a bird as iver I wish to zee. But, ah's me, her be a wosebird, a wosebird, if iver wur wan."

Mark could scarcely control his tears, as he thought of the bird's evil omen, and yet he could not help admiring him. He turned him over and over again, and dropped a tear into his tail coverts. Mr. Brockwood saw it and gave him time; he knew that for many generations the Stotes had lived under the Nowells.

"Oh, the bird was shot, you say, on the right side of the head, and clean through the head."

"Thank you," proceeded the coroner. "Now, do you think that he could have moved after he touched the ground?"

"Nivir a hinch, I allow, my lard. A vell as dead as a stwoun."

"Now inform the court, as nearly as you can, of the precise spot where you found it."

It took a long time to discover this, for Mr. Stote had not been

taught the rudiments of topography. Nevertheless, they made out at last that the woodcock had been found, dead on his back, with his bill up, eight or ten yards beyond the place where Clayton Nowell fell dead, and in a direct line over his body from the gap in the hedge where Cradock stood. Dr. Hutton must have found the bird, if he had searched a little further.

"Now," said the coroner, forcibly, "Mr. Stote, I will ask you a question, which is, perhaps, a little beyond the rules of ordinary evidence, I mean, at least, as permitted in a court of record"—here he glanced at the magistrates, who could not claim the rank of record—"which of these two unfortunate brothers caused, in your opinion, the death of—of that woodcock?"

Mr. Brockwood glanced at the coroner sharply, and so did his own clerk. Even the jury knew, by intuition, that he had no right to tout for opinions.

"Them crink-crank words is beyand me. Moy head be awl wivvery wi' em, zame as if my old ooman was patchy."

"His honour asks you," said Mr. Brockwood, with a glance not lost on the justices—for it meant, You see how we court inquiry, though the question is quite inadmissible—"which of the brothers in your opinion shot the bird which you found?"

"Why, Meester Cradock, o' course. Meester Cleaton 'ud needs a blowed un awl to hame, where a stwooud."

"Mr. Clayton must have blown him to pieces, if he shot him from the place where he stood, at least from the place where Mr. Clayton fell. And poor Mr. Clayton lay directly between his brother and the woodcook?"

Mr. Brockwood in his excitement forgot that he had no right to put this question, nor, indeed, any other, except as formally representing some one formally implicated. But the coroner did not check him.

"By whur the blude wor, a moost have been naigh as cud be atwane the vern-patch and the wosebird."

"Very good. That fern-patch was the place where Mr. Cradock dropped from the gap in the hedge. Mr. Rosedew has proved that. Now let us have all you know, Mark Stote. Did you see any other marks, stabbles you call them, not, I mean, in the path Mr. Rosedew came along, nor yet in the patches of thicket through which Mr. Cradock fled, but in some other direction?"

This was the very question the coroner ought to have put long ago. Thus much he knew when Brockwood put it, and now he was angry accordingly.

"Mr. Brockwood, I will thank you—consider, sir, this is a court of record!"

"Then don't let it record stupid humbug!" Mr. Brockwood was a passionate man, and his blood was up. "I will take the responsibility of any thing I do. All we want to elicit the truth is a little

skill and patience ; and for want of that the finest young fellow I have ever known may be blasted for life, for this world and the other. Excuse me, Mr. Coroner, I have spoken precipitately ; I have much reverence for your court, but far more for truth."

Here Mr. Brockwood sat down again, and all the magistrates looked at him with nods of approbation. Human passions and human warmth are sure to have their way, even in Areopagus. At last the question was put by the coroner himself. Of course it was a proper one.

"Yees, I zeed wan," said Mark Stote, scratching the back of his head (where at least the memory ought to be) ; "but a wadn't of no 'count much."

"Now tell us where that one was."

"Homezide of the rue, avore you coams to them hoar-witheys, naigh whur the bower-stone stanneth. 'Twur zumbawdy yaping about mebbe after nuts as had lanced fro' the rue auver the water-tabble."

Before this could be translated, a great stir was heard in the outer room, a number of people crying, "Don't 'ee-now !" and a hoarse voice uttering "I will." The coroner was just dismissing Mr. Stote with deep relief to both of them, and each the more respecting because he could not understand the other.

"Mark Stote, you have given your evidence in a most lucid manner. There are few people more to be respected than the thorough Saxon gamekeeper."

"Moy un goo, my lard ?" asked the patient Mark, with his neck quite stiff, as he at first had stuck it, and one eye cocked at the coroner, as along the bridge of a fowling-piece.

"Mr. Stote, you may now depart. Your evidence does you the greatest credit, both as the father of a family, and as—as a conservator of game, and I may say—ah, yes—as a faithful family retainer."

"Thank 'ee, my lard, and vor my peart I dwoan't b'leeve now as you manes all the 'arm as most volks says of 'ee."

Mark was louting low, trying to remember the fashion they taught him forty years since in the Sunday-school, when the door flew back, and the cold wind entered, and in walked Cradock Nowell.

As regards the outer man, one may change in fifty ways in half of fifty hours. Villanous ague, writing a book, violent attacks of bile, Gladstone claret, love rejected, scarlet fever, small-pox, any of these may make a man lose memory in the looking-glass ; but all combined could not have wrought such havock, such appalment, such drought in the fountains of the blood, as that young face now told of. There was not one line of it like the face of Cradock Nowell. It struck the people with dismay, as they made room and let him pass ; it would have struck the Roman senate, even with Cato speaking. Times there are when we forget even our sense of humour, absorbed in the power of passion, and the rush of our

souls along with it. No one in that room could have laughed at the best joke that ever was made, with his eyes upon Cradock Nowell.

Utterly unconscious what any fellow thought of him (except perhaps in some under-current of electric sympathy, whose wires never can be cut, up to the drop of the gallows), Cradock crossed the chairs and benches, feeling them no more than the wind feels the hills it crosses. Yet with the inbred courtesy of nature's thorough gentleman, though he forgot all the people there as thinking of himself, he did not yet forget himself as bound to think of them. He touched no man on leg or elbow, be he baronet or cobbler, without apologizing to him. Then he stood in the foremost place, looking at the coroner, saying nothing, but ready to be arraigned of any thing.

Mr. Cole had never yet so acutely felt the loss of his "brains;" and yet it is likely that even Chope would have doubted how to manage it. The time a man of the world might pass in a dozen commonplaces, passed over many shrewd heads there, and none knew what to say. Cradock's deep grey eyes, grown lighter by the change of health, and larger from the misery, seemed to take in every one who could or could not feel for him.

"Here I am, and cannot be hurt more than my own soul has hurt me. Charge me with murder, if you please, I never can disprove it. Reputation is a thing my God thinks needless for me; and so it is, in the despair which He has sent upon me."

Not a word of this he spoke, but his eyes said every word of it, to those who have looked on men in trouble, and heard the labouring heart. As usual, the shallowest man there was the first to speak.

"Mr. Nowell," asked the coroner blandly, as of a wealthy client, "am I to understand, sir, that you come to tender your evidence?"

"Yes," replied Cradock. His throat was tight, and he could not manage to say much.

"Then, sir, I am bound to administer to you the caution usual on these occasions. Excuse me; in fact, I know you will; but your present deposition may be—I mean it is possible——"

"Sir, I care for nothing now. I am here to speak the truth."

"Very laudable. Admirable! Gentlemen of the jury—Mr. Brockwood, perhaps you will oblige the court by examining in chief?"

"No, your honour, I cannot do that; it would be a confusion of duties."

"I will not be examined," said Cradock, with a low hoarse voice; he had been in the woods for a day and two nights, and of course had taken cold,—"I don't think I could stand it. A woman who gave me some bread this morning told me what you were doing, and I came here as fast as I could, to tell you all I know. Let me do it,

if you please, in the best way I can; and then do what you like with me."

The utter despair of these dry words went cold to the heart of every one, and Mark Stote burst out crying so loud that a woman lent him her handkerchief. But Cradock's eyes were hard as flint; and his heart as empty as if hope had never lived there.

The coroner hesitated a little, and whispered to his clerk. Then he said with some relief, and a look of kindness,—

"The court is ready, Mr. Nowell, to receive your statement. Only you must make it upon oath."

Cradock, being duly sworn, told all he knew, as follows:—

"It had been agreed between us, that my—my dear brother should go alone to look for a woodcock, which he had seen that day. I was to follow in about an hour, and meet him in the spire-bed just outside the covert. For reasons of my own, I did not mean to shoot at all, only to meet my brother, hear how he had got on, and come home with him. But I happened to take my gun, because my dog was going with me, and I loaded it from habit. Things had happened that afternoon which—it does not matter—but my thoughts were running upon them. When I got to the spire-bed, there was no one there, although it was quite dusk; but I thought I heard my brother shooting inside the Coffin Wood. So I climbed the hedge, with my gun half-cocked, and called him by his name."

Here Cradock broke down fairly, as the thought came over him that henceforth he might call and call, but none would ever answer.

"By what name did you call him?" Mr. Brockwood looked at the coroner angrily. What difference could it make?

"I called, 'Viley, Viley, my boy!' thr e times, at the top of my voice. I used to call him so in the nursery, and he always liked it. I can't make out why he did not answer, for he must have been close by—though the bushes were very thick, certainly. At that instant, before I had time to jump down into the covert, a woodcock, flushed, perhaps, by the sound of my voice, crossed a little clearing not thirty yards in front of me. I forgot all about my determination not to shoot that day, cocked both barrels in a moment, but missed him clean with the first, because a branch of the hedge flew back and jerked the muzzle sharply. But the bird was flying rather slowly, and I got a second shot at him, as he crossed a little path in the copse, too narrow to be called a ride. I felt quite sure that I shot straight at him, and I thought I saw him fall; but the light was very bad, and the trees were very thick, and he gave one of those flapping jerks at the moment I pulled the trigger, so perhaps I missed him."

"That 'ee doedn't, Meester Craydock. Ai'se larned 'ee a bit too much for thic. What do 'ee call thissom?" Here Mark Stote held

up the woodcock. "Meester Craydock, my lard, be the sprackest shat anywhur round these pearts."

Poor Mark knew not that in his anxiety to vindicate his favourite's skill, he was making the case more black for him.

"Mark Stote, no more interruptions, if you please," exclaimed the coroner; "Mr. Nowell, pray proceed."

"Dwoan't 'ee be haish upon un, my lard, dwoan't 'ee vaind un guilty. A coodn't no how 'ave doed it. A wor that naice and pertiklar, a woodn't shat iven toard a gipsy bwoy. And his oyes be as sprack as a merlin's. A cood zee droo a mokpie's neestie."

Cradock's face, so pale and haggard but a minute before, was now of a burning red. The jury looked at him with astonishment, and each, according to his bias, put his construction upon the change. Two of them thought it was conscious guilt; the rest believed it to be indignation at the idea of being found guilty. It was neither; it was hope—the flash and flush of sudden hope, leaping across the heart, like a rocket over the sea in a tempest. He could not speak, but gasped in vain, then glutched (to use a forest word, which means gulped down a sob), and fell back into John Rosedew's arms, faint, and stark, and rigid.

The process of his mind which led him to the shores of light—but only for a little glimpse, a glimpse and then all dark again—was somewhat on this wise: "Only a bullet, or balled cartridge, at the distance I was from him, could have killed my darling Viley on the spot, as I saw him dead, with the hole cut through him. I am almost sure that my cartridge was in the left barrel of the gun, where I always put it. And now it is clear that the left barrel killed that unlucky bird, and killed him with shot flying separate, so the cartridge must have opened. Viley, too, was ten feet under the height the bird was flying. I don't believe that I hit him at all. I had loose shot in my right barrel; the one that sent so random, on account of the branch that struck it. I am almost sure I had, and I fired quite straight with the left barrel. God is good, the great God is merciful, after all I thought of Him." No wonder that he fainted away, in the sudden reaction.

There is no need to dwell any longer on the misery of that inquest. The principal evidence has been given. The place where Cradock stood in the hedge, and the place where Clayton fell and died; how poor Cradock saw him first, in the very act of jumping, and hung like a nut-shuck, shrivelled up; how he ran back to his dead twin-brother and could not believe in his death, and went through the woods like a madman, with nothing warm about him except his brother's blood,—all this must be now clear enough, as it had long been to the jury, and even to the coroner.

Only Cradock awoke from his hope—what did he care for their verdict? He awoke from his hope not in his moral—that there could be no doubt of—but in his manual innocence; when, to face

all circumstances, he had nothing but weak habit. He could not swear, he could not even feel confident (and we want three times three for swearing, that barbarous institution) that he had rammed the cartridge down the left barrel, and the charge of shot down the right. All he could say was this, that it was a very odd thing if he did not so.

The oddity of a thing is seldom enough to establish its contrary, in the teeth of all evidence. So the jury found that "Violet Clayton Nowell had died from a gunshot wound, inflicted accidentally by his brother Cradock Nowell, whom, after careful consideration, they absolved from all shadow of blame."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A GARDEN PARTY.

RUFUS HUTTON rode home that night to Geopharmacy Lodge. He had worked unusually hard, even for a man of his activity, during the last three days, and he wanted to see his Rosa again, and talk it all over with her. Of course he had cancelled her invitation, as well as that of all others, under the wretched circumstances. But before he went, he saw Cradock Nowell safe in the hands of the rector, the only hands that still could hold any hope for such an outcast.

If we strike the average of mankind, we shall find Rufus Hutton above it. He had his many littlenesses, like the whole of us, his oddities of mind and manner, even his want of charity, and his practical faith in selfishness; none the less for all of that there were many people who loved him. And those of us who are loved of any—save parents, wife, or daughter—loved, I mean, as the word is felt and not interpreted,—with warmth of heart, and moistened eyes (when good or ill befalls us); any such may have no doubt of being loved by the angels.

All this while, Sir Cradock Nowell shut himself up, and, as Homer has it, "fed on his own heart." Ever since that fearful time, when, going home to his happy dinner with a few choice friends, he had overtaken some dark thing, which he would not let them hide from him—ever since that awful moment when he saw what it was, the father had not taken food, nor comfort either of God or man.

All they did—well-meaning people—was of no avail. It might be very well for people, who had never known deep trouble, to talk freely of it. Even to himself he would not try to reason over it. There it was. He took it as it came; and meant to take it so.

Only if he could recollect one single action of his life to give so much as a shadow of justice to this visitation, of course it would be no comfort to him, only some satisfaction.

Dwelling thus on his bitterness, he grew tenfold more bitter. Admitting none to comfort him, he hardened against all comfort. Only sometimes, when the softness of great anguish vanquished him, he longed to meet his one surviving son, and try to comfort him.

And here arose the gross injustice, sure to grow in narrow minds that stickle most for justice, against the broader and larger sense of those who are far above them.

Sir Cradock Nowell felt a little doubt at first, and then mistrust; and after that suspicion even of his friend John Rosedew!

For instance, why should his most unlucky and fatally careless son take refuge from his own father at the Rectory, and be harboured there as if there were no one else to care for him? John Rosedew was an ancient friend, a very dear friend of course, and one most truly to be relied upon: still it seemed, to say the least of it, rather an odd way of proving friendship, to hold aloof in the time of trouble, and leave a comparative stranger to discharge the countless kind offices, and more than all, at such a time, to keep an only child from coming to his afflicted father.

These charges, of course, were untrue in the main, especially that last one; for Mr. Rosedew had done his utmost to persuade poor Cradock to seek and get over that dreadful interview, which sooner or later he must have with his father. But being repeatedly begged to spare him for one day more, just one more day, the kind-hearted parson allowed the blame to rest on his own broad shoulders rather than the poor boy's laden back.

Neither did Mr. Rosedew mean to spare himself, or hold himself aloof at such a time of grief; gladly would he have hurried to help, at any hour of the day or night. Only it happened that when he called, Sir Cradock was down in his deepest depression, and Dr. Hutton, who took on himself the medical and all other duties, believed and honestly said that his patient must not be excited.

So it came to pass that a cloud arose, and thickened, between two worthy men, who thoroughly understood each other, according to their own ideas. And the genuine love felt by each towards the other served only to edge their perceptions.

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Turn we now to luckier people, for a little change of scene, Rufus Hutton in his garden, with his pretty wife admiring, chattering, and criticizing.

"Rufus, why, my darling Rufus, how much more d—g are you going to put on that little piece of ground, no bigger than my work-table?"

Mrs. Hutton had been brought up to "call a spade a spade;" and

she extended this wise nomenclature to the contents of the spade as well.

"Rosa, why, my darling Rosa, that bed contains one hundred and twenty-five square feet. Now, according to the great Justus Liebig, and his mineral theory——"

"One hundred and twenty-five feet, Rue! And I could jump across it! I am sure it is not half so long as my silk measure in the shell, dear!"

"Dearest Rosa, just consider: my pet, get out your tablets, for you are nothing at mental arithmetic."

"Indeed! Well, you never used to tell me things like that, dear Rufus!"

"Well, perhaps I didn't, Roe. I would have forsworn to any extent, when I saw you among the candytuft. But now, my darling, I have got you; and from a lofty feeling, I am bound to tell the truth. Consider the interests, Rosa——"

"Go along with your nonsense, Rue. You talk below your great understanding, because you think it suits me."

"Perhaps I do," said Rufus, "perhaps I do now and then, my dear: you always hit the truth so. But is it not better to do that than to talk Hindustani to my Rosa?"

"I am sure I don't know; and I am sure I don't care. When have I heard you say any thing, Rufus, so wonderful, and so out of the way, that I, poor I, couldn't understand it? Please to tell me that, Rufus."

"My darling, consider. You are exciting yourself so fearfully. You make me shake all over."

"Then you should not say such things to me, Rufus. Why, Rue, you are quite pale!"—What an impossibility! She might have boiled him in soda without bringing him to a shrimp-colour.—"Come into the house this moment, I insist upon it, and have two glasses of sherry. And you do say very wonderful things, much too clever for me, Rufus; and indeed, I believe, too clever for any woman in the world, even the one that wrote Homer, according to the last opinion."

Rosa Hutton ran into the house, and sought for the keys high and low; then got the decanter at last out of the cellaret, and brought out a bumper of wine. Crafty Rufus stopped outside, thoroughly absorbed in an autumn rose; knowing that she liked to do it for him, and glad to have it done for him.

"Not a drop, unless you drink first, dear. Rosa, here under the weeping elm: you are not afraid of the girls who are making the bed, I hope!"

"I should rather hope not, indeed! Rue dear, my best love to you. Do you think I'd keep a girl in the house I was afraid to see through the window?"

To prove her spirit, Mrs. Hutton tossed a glass of wine off,

although she seldom took it, and it was not twelve o'clock yet. Rufus looked on with some dismay, till he saw she had got the decanter.

"Well done, Rosa! What good it does me to see you take the leastest little drop of wine! You are bound now to obey me. Roe, my love, your very best health, and that involves my own. You're not heavy on my shoulder, love."

"No, dear, I know that: you are so very strong. But don't you see the boy coming? And that hole among the branches! And the leaves coming off too! Oh, do let me go in a moment, dear, dear Rue!"

"Confound that boy! I'm blest if he isn't always where he shouldn't be."

The boy, however, or man as he called himself, though his warts were not yet over, was far too important a personage in their domestic economy to be confounded audibly: gardener, groom, page, footman, knife-boy, and coachman, all in one; a long, loose, knock-kneed, big-footed, what they would call in the forest a "yaping, shammocking gally-bagger." His name was Jonah, and he came from Buckinghamshire, and had a fine drawl of his own, quite different from that of Ytene, which he looked upon as a dreadful barbarism.

"Plase, sir, Maister Reevers ave a zent them traases as us hardered." Jonah's eyes, throughout this speech, which occupied him at least a minute, were fixed upon the decanter, with ineffable admiration at the glow of the wine now the sun was upon it.

"Then, Jonah, my boy," cried Rufus Hutton, all animation in a moment, "I have a great mind to give you sixpence. Rosa, give me another glass of sherry. Here's to the health of the king of the fruit, the husband of Pomona—Rivers! Most obliging of him to send my trees so early, even before the leaves are off. Come along, Roe, you love to see trees unpacked, and eat the fruit by anticipation. I believe you'll expect them to blossom and bear by Christmas, as St. Anthony made the vines do."

"Well, darling, and so they ought, with such a gardener as you to manage them.—Jonah, you shall have a glass of wine, to drink the health of the trees. He has never taken his eyes off the decanter, ever since he came up, poor boy."

Rosa was very good-natured, and accustomed to farm-house geniality. Rufus laughed and whispered, "My love, my Indian sherry!"

"Can't help it," said Mrs. Hutton; "less chance of its disagreeing with him. Here, Jonah, you won't mind drinking after your master."

"Here be vaine health to all on us," said Jonah, scraping the gravel and putting up one finger as he had seen the militiamen do in imitation of the regulars); "and may us nayver know no taime warse than the prasent mawment."

"Hear, hear!" cried Rufus Hutton; "now, come along, and cut the cords, boy."

Dr. Hutton set off sharply, with Rosa on his arm, for he did not feel at all sure but that Jonah's exalted sentiment might elicit, at any rate, half a glass more of sherry. They found the trees packed beautifully; a long cone, like a giant lobster-pot, weighing nearly two hundred-weight, thatched with straw, and wattled round, and corded over that.

"Out with your knife and cut the cords, boy."

"Well, Rufus, how extravagant!"—"Rather fine, that," thought Dr. Hutton, "after playing such pranks with my sherry!"—"Jonah, I won't have a bit of the string cut. I want every atom of it. What's the good of your having hands if you can't untie it?"

At last they got the great parcel open, and strewed all the lawn with litter. There were trees of every sort, as tight as sardines in a case, with many leaves still hanging on them, and the roots tied up in moss: half a dozen standard apples; half a hundred pyramid pears, the prettiest things imaginable, furnished all round like a cypress, and thick with blossom-spurs; then young wall-trees, two years' trained, tied to crossed sticks, and drawn up with bast, like the frame of a schoolboy's kite; around the roots and in among them were little roses in pots No. 60, wrapped in moss, and webbed with bast; and the smell of the whole was glorious.

"Hurrah!" cried Rufus, dancing, "no nurseries in the kingdom, nor in the world, except Sawbridgeworth, could send out such a lot of trees, perfect in shape, every one of them, and every one of them true to sort. What a bore that I've got to go again to Nowelhurst to-day, Rosa dear! every one of these trees ought to be planted to-day. The very essence of early planting (which in my opinion saves a twelvemonth) is never to let the roots get dry. These peach-trees in a fortnight will have got hold of the ground, and be thinking of growing again; and the leaves, if properly treated, will ripen, instead of flagging. Oh, I wish you could see to it, Rosa."

"Well, dear Rufus, and so I can. To please you, I don't mind at all throwing aside my banner-screen, and leaving my letter to cousin Magnolia."

"No, no. I don't mean that. I mean, how I wish you understood it."

"Understood it, Rue! Well, I'm sure! As if any body couldn't plant a tree! And I, who had a pair of gardening gloves when I was only that high!"

"Roe, now listen to me. Not one in a hundred even of professional gardeners, who have been at it all their lives, knows how to plant a tree."

"Well, then, Rufus, if that is the case, I think it very absurd of

you to expect that I should know. But Jonah will teach me, I dare say. I'll begin to learn this afternoon."

"No, indeed, you won't. At any rate, you must not practise on my trees; nor in among them, either. But you may plant the mop, dear, as often as you like—you cannot have finer practice—in that empty piece of ground where the cauliflowers were."

"Plant the mop, indeed! Well, Dr. Hutton, you had better ride back to Nowelhurst, where all the grand people are, if you only come home for the purpose of insulting your poor wife. It is there, no doubt, that you learn to despise any one who is not quite so fine as they are. And what are they, I should like to know? What a poor weak thing I am, to be sure: no wonder no one cares for me. I can have no self-respect. I am only fit to plant the mop."

Hereupon the blue founts welled, the carmine of the cheeks grew scarlet, the cherry lips turned bigarreaux, and a very becoming fur-edged jacket lifted, as if with a zephyr stealing it.

Rufus felt immediately that he had been the lowest of all low brutes; and almost made up his mind on the spot that it would be decidedly wrong of him to go to Nowelhurst that evening. We will not enter into the scene of violent repentance, strong self-condemnation, reciprocal collaudation, extraordinary admiration, because all newly-married people are pretty sure to know it; and as for those who are single, let them not get married and learn it. Only in the last act of it, Jonah, from whom they had retreated, came up again, looking rather sheepish—for he had begun to keep a sweetheart—and spake these winged words:—

"Plase, sir, if you be so good, it baint no vault o' maine nohow."

"Get all those trees at once laid in by the heels. What is no fault of yours, pray? Are you always at your dinner?"

"Baint no vault o' mine, sir; but there coom two genelmen chaps, as zays they musten zee you."

"Must see me, indeed, whether I choose it or no! And with all those trees to plant, and the mare to be ready at four o'clock!"

"Zo I told un, sir; but they zays as they must zee you."

"In the name of the devil and all his works, but I'll give them a bitter reception. Let them come this way, my boy."

"Oh, dear, if you are going to be violent! You know what you are sometimes, Rue—enough to frighten any man."

"Never, my darling, never. You never find Rufus Hutton formidable to any one who means rightly."

"No, no, to be sure, dear. But then, perhaps, they may not. And after all that has occurred to-day, I feel so much upset. Very foolish of me, I know. But promise me not to be rash, dear."

"Have no fear, my darling Rosa. I will never injure any man who does not insult you, my dear."

While Rufus was looking ten feet high, and Mrs. Rufus tripping away, after a little word in a whisper, Jonah came pelting down the

walk with his great feet on either side of it, as if he had a barrow between them. At the same time a voice rolled round the corner past the arbutus-tree, now quivering red with strawberries, and the words thereof were these :—

"Perfect Paradise, my good sir! I knew it must be, from what I heard of him. Exactly like my friend the Dook's, but laid out much more tastefully. Bless me, it looks very much as if his Grace had copied it! Won't I give him a poke in the ribs when he dines with me next Toosday! Sly bird, a sly bird, I say, though he is such a capital fellow. Knew where to come, I'm blest if he didn't, for taste, true science, and landscape."

"Haw! Yes; I quite agree with you. But his Grace has nothing so chaste, so perfect as this, in me opeenion, sir. Haw!"

The cockles of the Rufine heart swelled warmly; for of course he heard every word of it, though, of course, not intended to do so. "Now Rosa ought to have heard all that," was passing in his mind, when two gentlemen stood before him, and were wholly amazed to see him. One of them was a short stout man, scarcely taller than Rufus, but of double his cubic contents; the other a tall and portly signor, fitted upon spindle shins, with a slouch in his back, grey eyebrows, long heavy eyes, and large dewlaps.

The short gentleman, evidently chief spokesman and proud of his elocution, waved his hat most gracefully, when he recovered from his surprise, drew back for a yard or so, in his horror at intruding, and spoke with a certain flourish, and the air of a man above humbug.

"Mr. Nowell Corklemore, I have the honour of making you known to the gentleman whose scientific fame has roused such a spirit among us. Dr. Hutton, sir, excuse me, the temptation was too great for us. My excellent friend, Lord Thorley, who has, I believe, the honour of being related to Mrs. Hutton, pressed his services upon us, when he knew what we desired. But, sir, no. 'My lord,' said I, 'we prefer to intrude without the commonplace of society; we prefer to intrude upon the footing of common tastes, my lord, and warm, though far more rudimental and vague pursuit of science.' Bless me, all this time my unworthy self, sir! I am too prone to forget myself, at least all who know me tell me so. Bailey Kettledrum, sir, is my name, of Kettledrum Hall, in Dorset. And I have the enlightenment, sir, to aspire to the honour of your acquaintance."

Rufus Hutton bowed rather queerly to Mr. Nowell Corklemore and Mr. Bailey Kettledrum; for he had seen a good deal of the world, and had tasted sugar-candy. Moreover, the Kettledrum pattern was known to him long ago; and he had never found them half such good fellows as they pretend to think other people.

Being, however, most hospitable, as are all men from India, he invited them to come in at once, and have luncheon after their

journey. They accepted very warmly; and Mrs. Hutton having now appeared and been duly introduced, Bailey Kettledrum set off with her round the curve of the grass-plot, as if he had known her for fifty years, and had not seen her for twenty-five. He engrossed her whole attention by incessancy of chattering, and appeals to her opinion, praising all things, taking notes, red-hot with admiration, impressively confidential about his wife and children, in a word, regardless of expense to make himself agreeable. Notwithstanding all this, he did not get on much, because he made one great mistake. He rattled and flashed along the high road leading to fifty other places, but missed the quiet and pleasant path which leads to a woman's good graces—the path which follows the little brook, whose name to itself is "sympathy," a winding but not a shallow brook, over the meadow of soft listening.

Mr. Nowell Corklemore, walking with Rufus Hutton, was, as he was induced to be by a feeble nature enfeebled, a dry and pompous man.

"Haw! I am given to understand you have made all this yourself, sir. In me 'umble opeenion, it does you the greatest credit, sir; credit, sir, no less to your heart than to your head. Haw!"

Here he pointed with his yellow bamboo at nothing at all in particular.

"Every thing is in its infancy yet. Wait till the trees grow up a little. I have planted nearly all of them. All except that, and that, and the weeping elm over yonder, where I sit with my wife sometimes. Every thing is in its infancy."

"Have you—haw! excuse my asking, for you are a great luminary here—have you as yet made trial of the Spergula pilifera?"

"Yes; and found it the biggest humbug that ever aped God's grass."

Dr. Hutton was always very sorry when he had used strong language; but being a thin-skinned, irritable, cut-the-corner man, he could not be expected to stand Nowell Corklemore's "haws."

"Haw—then!—haw!—I have been given to understand that the Spergula pilifera succeeds most admirably with people who have—haw!—have studied it."

"Very likely it does," said Rufus, though he knew much better, but now he was on his own door-step, and felt ashamed of his rudeness; "but come in, Mr. Corklemore; our ways are rough in these forest outskirts, and we are behind you in civilization. Nevertheless, we are heartily glad to welcome our more intelligent neighbours."

At luncheon he gave them home-brewed ale and pale sherry of no especial character. But afterwards, being a genial soul, and feeling still guilty of rudeness, he went to the cellar himself and fetched a bottle of the richest Indian gold. Mrs. Hutton withdrew very prettily; and the three gentlemen, all good judges of wine,

began to warm over it luminously, more softly indeed than they would have done after a heavy dinner. Surely noble wine deserves not to be the mere operculum to a stupidly-mixed hot meal.

"Have another bottle, gentlemen: now do have another bottle."

"Not one drop more for the world," exclaimed they both, with their hands up. None the less for that, they did; and, what was very unwise of them, another after that, until nobody in straight lines may chronicle their doings. Meanwhile Jonah had prigged three glassfuls out of the decanter now forgotten beneath the elm-tree.

"Now," said Rufus, who alone was almost in a state of sobriety, "suppose we take a turn in the garden and my little orchard-house? I believe I am indebted to that for the pleasure of your very dis—— I mean most agreeable company to-day."

So these three gentlemen went out, in a metaphysical condition, which none but a narrow-minded man would call a "state of intoxication."

"Now I will show you a thing, sir," cried Rufus in his glory, "a thing which has been admired by the leading men of the age. Nowhere else, in this part of the world, can you see a piece of ground, sir, cropped in the manner of that, I believe."

And to tell the plain, unvinous truth, the square to which he pointed was a triumph of high art. The style of it was wholly different from that of Mr. Garnet's beds. Bull Garnet was fond of novelties, but he made them square with his system; the result was more strictly practical, but less nobly theoretical. Dr. Hutton, on the other hand, gloried in great surprises; obstacles of soil and season were as nothing to him, and when the shape of the ground was wrong, he called in the navvies and made it right.

A plot of land four-square, and measured to exactly half an acre, contained 2400 trees, cutting either way as truly as the spindles of machinery; there was no tree more than five feet high, the average height was four feet six inches. They were planted just four feet asunder, and two feet back from the pathway. There was every kind of fruit-tree there which can be made by British gardeners to ripen fruit in Britain, without artificial heat. Pears especially, and plums, cherries, apples, walnuts (juglans præparturiens), figs, and medlars, quinces, filberts, even peaches, nectarines, and apricots—though only one row, in all, of those three; there was scarcely one of those miniature trees which had not done its duty that year, or now was bent upon doing it. Still the sight was beautiful; although far gone with autumn, still Cox's orange-pippin lit the russet leaves with gold, or Beurré Clairgeau and Capiaumont enriched the air with scarlet.

Each little tree looked so bright and comely, each plumed itself so naturally, proud to carry its share of tribute to the beneficent Maker, that the three men who had been abusing His choice gift,

the vine, felt a little ashamed of themselves, or perhaps felt that they ought to be.

"Magnificent, magnificent!" cried Kettledrum theatrically; "I must tell the Dook of this. He will have the same next year."

"Will he, though?" said Rufus, thinking of the many hours he had spent among those trees, and of his careful apprenticeship to the works of their originator; "I can tell you one thing. He won't, unless he has a better gardener than I ever saw in these parts. Now let us go to the orchard-house."

The orchard-house was a span-roofed building, very light and airy; the roof and ends were made of glass, the sides of deal, with broad falling shutters, for the sake of ventilation. It was about fifty feet in length, twenty in width, and fifteen in height. There was no ventilation at the ridge, and all the lights were fixed. The free air of heaven wandered through, among peaches, plums, and apricots, some of which still held their fruit, crimson, purple, and golden. The little trees were all in pots, and about a yard apart. The pots were not even plunged in the ground, but each stood, as a tub should, on its own independent bottom. The air of the house was soft and pleasant, with a peculiar fragrance, the smell of ripening foliage. Bailey Kettledrum saw at once—for he had plenty of observant power, and the fumes of wine were dispersing—that this house must have shown a magnificent sight, a month or two ago. And having once more his own object in view, he tripled his true approval.

"Dr. Hutton, this is fine. Fine is not the word for it; this is grand and gorgeous. What a triumph of mind! What a lot you must pay for wages!"

"Thirteen shillings a week in summer, seven shillings a week in the winter." This was one of his pet astonishments.

"What! I'll never believe it. Sir, you must either be a conjurer, the devil, or—or——"

"Or a liar," said Rufus placidly; "but I am none of the three. Jonah has twelve shillings a week, but half of that goes for housework. That leaves six shillings for gardening; but I never trust him inside this house, for he is only a clumsy dolt, who does the heavy digging. And besides him I have only a very sharp lad, at seven shillings a week, who works under my own eye. I have in some navvies, at times, it is true, when I make any alterations. But that is outlay, not working expense. Now come and see my young trees just arrived from Sawbridgeworth."

"Stop one moment. What is this stuff on the top of the pots here? What queer stuff! Why, it goes quite to pieces in my hands."

"Oh, only a little top-dressing, just to refresh the trees a bit. This way, Mr. Kettledrum."

"Pardon me, Dr. Hutton, if I appear impertinent or inquisitive.

But I have learned so much this afternoon, that I am anxious to learn a little more. My friend, the Dook, will cross-examine me as to every thing I have seen here. He knew our intention of coming over. I must introduce you to his Grace before you are a week older, sir; he has specially requested it."

"Indeed! I am most proud to hear it."

"But I don't believe a word of it, and don't believe you ever spoke to him," Dr. Hutton continued, below his breath, while his guests went towards the stable; "neither of those fellows knows or cares a rap for gardening; I wonder what has brought them here, and made them so amazingly affectionate and blarneysome?"

"Wonderful, perfectly wonderful!" exclaimed Mr. Bailey Kettledrum, as Rufus was showing them out at the gate, before having his own horse saddled. "The triumphs of horticulture in this age are really past belief. You beat all of us, Dr. Hutton, you may depend upon it; you beat all of us. I never would have believed that trees ought to be planted with their heads down, and their roots up in the air. Stupid of me, though, for I have often heard of root-pruning, and of course you could not prune the roots unless they grew in that way."

"Haw!" added Mr. Corklemore; "I do declare it is a most admirable idea!"

Rufus thought they were joking, or suffering from vinous inversion of vision.

"Remember, my good friend Hutton—excuse my familiarity, I feel as if I had known you for years—remember, my dear friend, you have pledged your word for next Wednesday—and Mrs. Hutton, too, mind—Mrs. Hutton with you. We waive formality, you know, in these country quarters. Kettledrum Hall, next Wednesday—honour bright, next Wednesday! You see I know the motto of your family."

"Thank you, all right," said Rufus Hutton. "Good-bye, good-bye, and a pleasant ride to you! But I must know the meaning of all this," he exclaimed to himself as he went up the drive; "I dare say Rosa can tell me. Holloa! I do declare! Well, I'm d—— I am done for at last at any rate!"

No wonder he was done for. He spied that strange phenomenon which his visitors had taken in the purest faith. All those lovely little trees, dwarf pyramids, &c., just received from Sawbridgeworth, were standing on the apex. Jonah, after all the sherry given to and stolen by him, had "laid them in by the heels" with a vengeance. All the pretty heads were a foot under ground, and the roots, like the locks of a mermaid, wooing the buxom air.

CHAPTER XXV.

A RIDE IN THE FOREST.

THAT evening Dr. Hutton started, on his long, swift mare, for the Hall at Nowelhurst, where he had promised to be that night. He kissed his Rosa many times, and begged her pardon half as often, for all the crimes that day committed. Her brother Ralph, from Fordingbridge, who always slept there at short notice, because the house was lonely, would be sure to come (they knew) when the little boy Bob was sent for him. Ralph Mohorn—poor Rosa rejoiced in her rather uncommon patronymic, though perhaps it means Cow-horn—Ralph Mohorn was only too glad to come and sleep at Geopharmacy Lodge. He was a fine, fresh-hearted fellow, only about nineteen years old ; his father held him hard at home, and of course he launched out all the more abroad. So he kicked up, as he expressed it, "the devil's own dust," when he got to the Lodge, ordered everything in the house for supper, with a bottle of whiskey afterwards—which he never touched, only he liked the name of the thing—and then a cardinal, or the biggest meerschaum to be found in any of the cupboards. His pipe, however, was not, like his grog, a phantom of the imagination ; for he really smoked it, and sat on three chairs, while he "baited" Rosa, as he called it, with all the bogeys in Christendom. It was so delicious now to be able to throw her into a tremble, and turn her cheeks every colour, and then recollect that a few years since she had smacked his own cheeks *ad libitum*. However, we have little to do with him, and now he is a jolly farmer.

Rufus Hutton rode through Ringwood over the low bridge where the rushes rustle everlastingly, and the trout and dace for ever wag their pellucid tails up stream. How all that water, spreading loosely, wading over miles of meadows, growing leagues of reed and rush, mistress of a world in winter, how it all is content to creep through a pair of little bridges—matter of such mystery, let the Christchurch salmon solve it. Dr. Hutton went gaily over—at least his mare went gaily—but he was thinking (beyond his wont) of the business he had in hand. He admired the pleasant old town as he passed, and the still more pleasant waters ; but his mare, the favourite Polly, went on at her usual swing, until they came to the long, steep hill towards the Picked Post. As he walked her up the sharp parts of the rise, he began again to ponder the mysterious visit of those convivial strangers. It was very plain that neither of them knew or cared the turn of a trowel about the frank art of gardening ; that, of course, was only a sham ; then what did they really come for ? Rufus, although from childhood upwards he had been hospitable to his own soul, that is to say, regarded him-

self with genial approbation, was not by any means blindly conceited, and could not suppose that his fame, for any thing except gardening, had spread through the regions round about. So he felt that his visitors had come, not for his sake, but their own. And it was not long before he suspected that they wished to obtain through him some insight, perhaps even some influence, into and in the course of events now toward at Nowelhurst Hall. They had altogether avoided the subject; which made him the more suspicious, for at present it was of course the leading topic of the county.

However, as they were related to the family, while he, Rufus Hutton, was not, it was not his place to speak of the matter, but to let his guests do as they liked about it. They had made him promise, moreover, to dine with the Kettledrums on the very earliest day he could fix—viz. the following Wednesday—and there he was to meet Mr. and Mrs. Corklemore. Was it possible that they intended, and perhaps had been instructed, to subject the guest on that occasion to more skilful manipulation than that of their rude male fingers?

"I'll take Rosa with me," said Rufus to himself; "a woman sees a woman's game best; though Rosa, thank Heaven, is not very Machiavellian. How very odd that neither of those men had the decency to carry a bit of crape, out of respect for that poor boy; and I, who am noway connected with him, have been indued by my Roe with a hatband!"

Shrewd as our friend Rufus was, he could not be charged with low cunning, and never guessed that those two men had donned the show of mourning, and made the most of it round their neighbourhood to impress people with their kinship to the great Nowells of Nowelhurst, but that their guardian angels had disarrayed them ere they started, having no desire to set Rufus thinking about their chance of succession. As the sharp little doctor began to revolve all he had heard about Corklemore, his mare came to the Burley-road, where they must leave the turnpike. Good Polly struck into it, best foot foremost, and, as she never would bear the curb well, her rider had quite enough to do, in the gathering darkness, and on that cross-country track, to attend to their common safety.

She broke from the long stride of her trot into a reaching canter, as the moon grew bright between the trees, and the lane was barred with shadow. Pricking nervously her ears at every flaw or rustle, bending her neck to show her beauty, where the light fell clear on the moor-top, then with a snort of challenge plunging into the black of the hollows, yet ready to jump the road and away, if her challenge should be answered; bounding across the water gulley and looking askance at a fern-shadow; then saying to herself, "It is only the moon, child," and up the ascent half ashamed of herself; then shaking her bridle with reassurance to think of that mile of great danger flown by, and the mash and the warm stable nearer,

and the pleasure of telling that great roan horse how brave she had been in the moonlight——

"Goodness me! What's that?"

She leaped over road and roadside bank, and into a heavy gorse-bush, and stood there quivering from muzzle to tail in the intensity of terror. If Rufus had not just foreseen her alarm, and gripped her with all his power, he must have lain senseless upon the road, spite of all his rough-riding in India.

"Who-hoa, who-hoa, then, Polly, you little fool, you are killing me! Can't you see it's only a lady?"

Polly still backed into the bush, and her unlucky rider, with every prickle running into him, could see the whites of her eyes in the moonshine, as the great orbs stood out with horror. Opposite to them, and leaning against a stile which led to a footpath, there stood a maiden dressed in black, with the moonlight sheer upon her face. She took no notice of any thing; she had heard no sort of footfall; she did not know of Polly's capers, or the danger she was causing. Her face, with the hunter's moon upon it, would have been glorious beauty, but for the broad rims under the eyes, and the spectral paleness. One moment longer she stared at the moon, as if questing for some one gone thither, then turned away with a heavy sigh, and went towards the Coffin Wood.

All this time Rufus Hutton was utterly blind to romance, being scarified in the calf and thighs beyond any human endurance. Polly backed further and further away from the awful vision before her—the daughter of the horse-fiend at least—and every fresh swerve sent a new lot of furze-pricks into the peppery legs of Rufus.

"Hang it!" he cried, "here goes; no man with a ha'porth of flesh in him could stand it any longer. Thorn for thorn, Miss Polly." He dashed his spurs deep into her flanks, the spurs he had only worn for show, and never dared to touch her with. For a moment she trembled, and reared upright in wrath worse than any horror; then away she went like a storm of wind, headlong through trees and bushes. It was all pure luck or Providence that Rufus was not killed. He grasped her neck, and lay flat upon it; he clung with his supple legs around her; he called her his Polly, his darling Polly, and begged her to consider herself. She considered neither herself nor him, but dashed through the wild wood, wilder herself, not knowing light from darkness. Any low beech branch, any scrag holly, even a trail of loose ivy, and man and horse were done for. The lights of more than a million stars flashed before Rufus Hutton, and he made up his mind to die, and wondered how Rosa would take it. Perhaps she would marry again, and rear up another family who knew not the name of Hutton; perhaps she would cry her eyes out. Smack, a young branch took him in the face, though he had one hand before it. "Go it again!" he cried, with the pluck of a man despairing, and then he rolled over and

over, and dug for himself a rabbit-hole of sand, and dead leaves, and moss. There he lay on his back, and swooned, after luckily letting go the bridle.

The mare had fallen, and grovelled in the rotten ground where the rabbits lived; then she got up and shook herself, and the stirrups struck fire beneath her, and she spread out all her legs, and neighed for some horse to come and help her. She could not go any further; she had vented her soul, and must come to herself, like a lady after hysterics. Presently she sniffed round a bit, and the grass smelled crisp and dewy, and, after the hot corn and musty hay, it was fresher than ice upon brandy. So she looked through the trees, and saw only a squirrel, which did not frighten her at all, because she was used to rats. Then she brought her forelegs well under her stomach, and stretched her long neck downwards, and skimmed the wet blades with her upper lip, and found them perfectly wholesome. Every horse knows what she did then and there, to a great extent, till she had spoiled her relish for supper.

After that she felt grateful and good, and it repented her of the evil, and she whinnied about for the master who had outraged her feelings so deeply. She found him still insensible, on his back, beneath a beech-tree, with six or seven rabbits, and even a hare, come to see what the matter was. Then Polly, who had got the bit out of her mouth, gave him first a poke with it, and then nuzzled him under the coat-collar, and blew into his whiskers as she did at the chaff in her manger. She was beginning to grieve and get very uneasy, taking care not to step on him, and went round him ever so many times, and whinnied into his ear, when either that or the dollop of grass half chewed which lay on his countenance, revived the great spirit of Rufus Hutton, and he opened his eyes and looked languidly. He saw two immense black eyes full upon him, tenderly touched by the moonlight, and he felt a wet thing like a sponge poking away at his nostrils.

"Polly," he said, "oh, Polly, dear, how could you serve me so? What will your poor mistress say?"

Polly could neither recriminate nor defend herself; so she only looked at him beseechingly, and what she meant was, "Oh, do get up."

So Rufus arose, and dusted himself, and kissed Polly for forgiveness, and she, if she had only learned how, would have stooped like a camel before him. He mounted, with two or three groans for his back, and left the mare to her own devices to find the road again. It was very pretty to see in the moonlight how carefully she went with him, not even leaping the small water-courses, but feeling her footing through them. And so they got into the forest-track, some half-mile from where they had left it; they saw the gleam of Bull Garnet's windows, and knew the straight road to the Hall.

Sir Cradock Nowell did not appear. Of course that was not

expected; but kind John Rosedew came up from the parsonage to keep Rufus Hutton company. So the two had all the great dinner-table to themselves entirely; Uncle John, as the old friend, sat at the head, and the Doctor sat by his right hand.

Although there were few men in the world with the depth of mind, and variety, the many-branching grace of thought, the fruitage infinitely rich of genius and old reading, which made John Rosedew's company a forest for to wander in and lose the way in pleasure, Rufus Hutton, sore and stiff, and aching in the back, thought he had rarely come across so very dry a parson.

Mr. Rosedew was not inclined to talk: he was thinking of his Cradock, and he had a care of still sharper tooth—what had happened to his Amy? He had come up much against his wishes, only as a duty, on that dreary Saturday night, just that Dr. Hutton, who had been so very active, might not think himself neglected. The parson had dined four hours ago, but that made no difference to him, for he scarcely knew when his dinner was over, and when it was impending. Nevertheless he was human, for he loved his bit of supper.

Mr. Rosedew had laboured hard, but vainly, to persuade Sir Cradock Nowell to send some or any message to his luckless son. "No," he had answered; "I will leave him to his sense of duty, as he seems to be outside the influence of affection. If he had come to me at once, I should have—well, I should have felt quite differently towards him. But he shows so little consideration for me, and what he has done to me—such heartless conduct shows how little he was fit to be my dead boy's brother."

Almost any good man other than Mr. Rosedew would have managed to set this crooked matter straight, but the rector's sense of justice was already somewhat outraged; and feeling the delicacy of his position as the host of Cradock Nowell, relying, moreover, as good men do, on the power of natural affection, and perceiving a certain change in the tone of Sir Cradock towards himself, he thought it wiser to let time plead the cause he was only injuring.

And now to-night he was inclined to be silent and pre-occupied, wondering whether he had done his best: but silence was a state of the air at once uncongenial to Dr. Hutton, and repugnant to all his finest theories of digestion. For lo, how all nature around us protests against the Trappists, and the order of St. Benedict! See how the cattle get together when they have dined in the afternoon, and had their drink out of the river. Don't they flip their tails, and snuffle, and grunt at their own fine sentiments, and all the while they are chewing the cud take stock of one another? Don't they discuss the asilus and œstrum, the last news of the rinderpest, and the fly called by some the cow-dab, and don't they abuse the festuca tribe, and the dyspepsia of the sorrel? Is the thrush mute when he has bolted his worm, or the robin over his spider's eggs?

So Rufus looked through his glass of port, which he took merely as a corrective to the sherry of the morning, cocked one eye first, and then the other, and loosed the golden bands of speech.

"Uncommonly pretty girls, Mr. Rosedew, all about this neighbourhood."

"Very likely, Dr. Hutton; I see many pleasant faces; but I am no judge of beauty." He leaned back with an absent air, just as if he knew nothing about it. And all the while he was saying to himself, "Pretty girls indeed! Is there one of them like my Amy?"

"A beautiful girl I saw to-night. But I don't wish to see much more beauty in that way. Nearly cost me my life, I know You are up in the classics so: what is it we used to read at school?—Helene, Helenaus, Helip—something—teterrima belli causa fuit. Upon my word, I haven't talked so much Latin and Greek—have another glass of port, just for company; the dry vintage of '34 can't hurt any body." John Rosedew took another glass, for his spirits were low, and the wine was good, and the parson felt then that he ought to have more confidence in God. Then he brought his mind to bear on the matter, and listened very attentively while the doctor described, with a rush of warm language and plenteous exaggeration, the fright of his mare at that mournful vision, the vision itself, and the consequences.

"Sir, you must have ridden like a Centaur, or like Alexander. What will Mrs. Hutton say? But are you sure that she leaped an oak-tree?"

"Perfectly certain," said Rufus gravely, "clean through the fork of the branches, and the acorns rattled upon my hat like the hail of the Himalaya."

"Remarkable! Most remarkable!"

"But you have not told me yet," continued Dr. Hutton, "although I am sure that you know, who the beautiful young lady is."

"From your description, and the place, though I have not heard that they are in mourning, I think it must have been Miss Garnet."

"Miss Garnet! What Miss Garnet? Not Bull Garnet's daughter! I never heard that he had one."

"Yes, he has, and a very nice girl. My Amy knows a little of her. But he does not allow her to visit much, and is most repressive to her. Unwise, in my opinion: not the way to treat a daughter; one should have confidence in her, as I have in my dear child."

"Oh, you have confidence in Miss Rosedew; and she goes out whenever she likes, I suppose?"

"Of course she does," said the simple rector, wondering at the question; "that is, of course, whenever it is right for her."

"Of which, I suppose, she herself is the judge."

"Why, no, not altogether. Her aunt has a voice in the matter always, and a very potent one."

"And, of course, Miss Rosedew, managed upon such enlightened principles, never attempts to deceive you?"

"Amy! my Amy deceive me!" The rector turned pale at the very idea. "But these questions are surely unusual from a gentleman whom I have known for so very short a time. I am entitled, in turn, to ask what reason you have in putting them." Mr. Rosedew, never suspecting indignities, could look very dignified.

"I'm in for it now," thought Rufus Hutton; "what a fool I am! I fancied the old fellow had no *nous*, except for Latin and Greek."

Strange to say, the old fellow had *nous* enough to notice his hesitation. Mr. Rosedew got up from his chair, and stood looking at Rufus Hutton.

"Sir, I will thank you to tell me exactly what you mean about my daughter."

"Nothing at all, Mr. Rosedew. What do you suppose I should mean?"

"You should mean nothing at all, sir. But I believe that you do mean something. And you will not leave this room until you tell me what you do mean." Rufus Hutton said afterwards that he had two great frights that evening, and he believed the last was the worst. The parson never dreamed that any man could be afraid of him, except it were a liar, and he looked upon Rufus contemptuously. The man of the world was nothing before the man of truth.

"Mr. Rosedew," said Rufus, recovering himself, "your conduct is very extraordinary; and (you will excuse my saying it) more violent than becomes a man of your position and character."

"No violence becomes any man, whatever his position. I am sorry if I have been violent."

"You have indeed," said Rufus, pushing his advantage: a generous man would have said, "No, you haven't," at seeing the parson's distress, and so would Rufus have said, if he had happened to be in the right; "so violent, Mr. Rosedew, that I believe you almost frightened me."

"Dear me!" said John, reflecting, "and he has just leaped an oak-tree! I must have been very bad."

"Don't mention it, my dear sir, I entreat you say no more about it. We all know what a father is." And Rufus Hutton, who did not yet, but expected to know in some three months, grew very large, and felt himself able to patronize the rector. "Mr. Rosedew, I as well am to blame. I am thoughtless, sir, very thoughtless, or rather I should say too thoughtful; I am too fond of seeing round a corner, which I have always been famous for. Sir, a man who possesses this power, this gift, this—I don't know the word for it, but I have no doubt you do—that man is apt to—I mean to——"

"Knock his head against a wall?" suggested the parson, in all good faith.

"No, you mistake me; I don't mean that at all; I mean that a man with this extraordinary foresight, which none can understand except those who are gifted with it, is liable sometimes, is amenable—I mean to—to——"

"See double. Ah, yes, I can quite understand it." Mr. Rosedew shut his eyes, and felt up for a disquisition, yet wanted to hear of his daughter.

"No, my dear sir, no. It is something very far from any thing so common-place as that. What I mean is—only I cannot express it, because you interrupt me so—that a man may have this faculty, this insight, this perception, which saves him from taking offence where none whatever is meant, and yet, as it were by some obliquity of the vision, may seem, in some measure, to see the wrong individual."

"That is an interesting question, and reminds me of the state of ἀῤῥεψία, as described in the life of Pyrrho by Diogenes Laertius; whose errors, if I may venture to say it, have been made too much of by the great Isaac Casaubon, then scarcely mature of judgment. It will give me the greatest pleasure to go into that question with you. But not just now. I am thrown out so sadly, and my memory fails me"—John Rosedew had fancied this, by-the-by, ever since he was thirty years old—"only tell me one thing, Dr. Hutton, and I am very sorry for my violence; you meant no harm about my daughter?" Here the grey-haired man, with the mighty forehead, opened his clear blue eyes, and looked down upon Rufus beseechingly.

"Upon my honour as a gentleman, I mean no harm whatever. I made the greatest mistake, and I see the mistake I made."

"Will you tell me, sir, what it was? Just to ease my mind. I am sure that you will."

"No, I must not tell you now, until I have worked the matter out. You will thank me for not doing so. But I apologize most heartily. I feel extremely uncomfortable. No claret, sir, but the port, if you please, I was famous, in India, for my nerve; but now it seems to be failing me."

Rufus, as we now perceive, had fully discovered his mistake, and was trying to trace the consequences. The beautiful girl whom he saw in the wood, that evening, with Clayton Nowell, was not our Amy, as he had felt sure, but Mr. Garnet's daughter. He knew the face, though changed and white, when it frightened his mare in the moonlight: and, little time as he had to think, it struck him then as very strange that Miss Rosedew should be there. Bull Garnet's cottage, on the other hand, was not far away in the hollow.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FATHER AND THE SON.

AT this melancholy time Mr. Rosedew had quite enough to do without any burden of fresh anxieties about his own pet Amy. Nevertheless that burden was added, not by Dr. Hutton's vague questions, although they helped to impose it, but by the father's own observation of his darling's strange condition. "Can it be," he asked himself, and often longed to ask her, as he saw only lilies where roses had been, and little hands trembling at breakfast-time, "can it be that this child of mine loved the poor boy Clayton, and is wasting away in sorrow for him? Is that the reason why she will not meet Cradock, nor Cradock meet her, and she trembles even at his name? Well, if it truly is so, there is nothing to be done, except to be unusually kind to her, and trust to time for the cure, and give her plenty of black-currant jam."

These ideas he imparted to the good Aunt Doxy, who delivered some apophthegms (which he did not want to listen to), but undertook, whatever should happen, to be down upon Amy sharply. She knew all about her tonsils and her uvula, and all those things, and she did not want John's advice, though she had never had a family; and no doubt it was ordered wisely.

On Monday, when poor Clayton's funeral came winding its way to the churchyard, Mr. Rosedew felt his heart give way, and could not read the service. At the risk of deeply offending Sir Cradock, whose nerves that day were of iron, he passed the surplice to his curate, Mr. Pell, of Rushford; and begged him, with a sad, slow smile, to do the duty for him. Sir Cradock Nowell frowned, and coloured, and then bowed low with an icy look, when he saw the change which had been made, and John Rosedew fall in as a mourner. People said that from that day the old friendship was dissevered.

John, for his part, could not keep his eyes from a nook of the churchyard where among the yew-trees stood, in the bitterness of anguish, he who had not asked nor been asked to attend as mourner. Cradock bowed his head and wept, for now his tears came freely, and prayed the one Almighty Father, who alone has mercy, not to take his misery from him, but to take him from it.

When the mould was thrown upon the coffin, black Wena came between people's legs, gave a cry, and jumped in after it, thinking to retrieve her master, like a stick from the water. She made such a mournful noise in the grave, and whimpered, and put her head down, and wondered why no one said "Wena, dear," that all the school-girls burst out sobbing—having had apples from Clayton lately—and Octavius Pell, the great cricketer, having sporting

sympathies, turned away his face, and could not go on without a jujube.

That evening, when all was over, and the grave heaped snugly up, and it was time to think of this world, and only dream of the other, John Rosedew went to Sir Cradock Nowell, not only as a fellow-mourner and a friend of ancient days, but as a minister of Christ. It had cost him many struggles after his last reception; and what with his sense of worldly favours, schoolday-friendship, delicacy, he could scarce tell what to make of it, till he just went down on his knees and prayed; then the learned man learned his duty.

Sir Cradock turned his head away, as if he did not want him. The parson held out his hand, and said nothing.

"Mr. Rosedew, I am surprised to see you. And yet, John, this is kind of you."

John hoped that he only said "Mr. Rosedew" because the footman was lingering, and he tried not to feel the difference.

"Cradock, you know what I am, as well as I know what you are. Fifty years, my dear fellow, fifty years of friendship."

"Yes, John, I remember when I was twelve years old, and you fought Sam Cockings for me."

"And, Cradock, I thrashed him fairly; you know I thrashed him fairly. They said I got his head under the form; but you know it was all a lie. How I do hate lies! I believe it began that day. If so, the dislike is subjective. Perhaps I ought to reconsider it."

"John, I know nothing in your life which you ought to reconsider, except what you are doing now."

Sir Cradock Nowell began the combat, because he felt that it must be waged; and perhaps he knew in that beginning that he had the weaker cause.

"Cradock, I am doing nothing beyond my simple duty. When I see those I love in the deepest distress, can I help trying to help them?"

"Upon that principle, or want of it, you might espouse, as a duty, the cause almost of a murderer."

The old man shuddered, and his voice shook, as he whispered that last word. As yet he had not worked himself up, nor been worked up by others, to the black belief which made the living lost beyond the dead.

"I am sure I don't know what I might do," said Mr. Rosedew, simply, "but what I am doing now is right; and in your heart you know it. Come, Cradock, as an old man now, and one whom God has visited, forgive your poor, your noble son, who never will forgive himself."

But for one word in that speech, perhaps Mr. Rosedew might have won, and reconciled son and father.

"My 'noble' son indeed, John! A very noble thing he has done. Shall I never hear the last of that great nobility? And who ever called my Clayton noble? You have been unfair throughout, John Rosedew, most unfair and blind to the merits of my more loving, more simple-hearted, more truly noble boy, I tell you."

Mr. Rosedew, at such a time, could not of course contest the point, could not tell the bereaved old man that it was he himself who had been unfair.

"And when," asked Sir Cradock, getting warmer, "when did you know my poor boy Violet stick up for political opinions of his own at the age of twenty, want to drain tenants' cottages, and pretend to be better and wiser than his father?"

"And when have you known Cradock do, at any rate, the latter?"

"Ever since he got that scholarship, that Scotland thing at Oxford"—Sir Cradock knew the name well enough, as every Oxford man does—"he has been perfectly insufferable; such arrogance, such conceit, such airs! And he only got it by a trick. Poor Viley ought to have had it."

Mr. Rosedew tried to control himself, but the gross untruth and injustice of that last accusation were a little too much for him.

"Perhaps, Sir Cradock Nowell, you will allow that I am a competent judge of the relative powers of the two boys, who knew all they did know from me, and from no one else."

"Of course, I know you are a competent judge, only blinded by partiality."

The parson allowed even that to go by.

"Without any question of preference, simply as a lover of literature, I say that Clayton had no chance with him in a Greek examination. In Latin he would have run him close. You know I always said so, even before they went to college. I was surprised, at the time, that they mentioned Clayton even as second to him."

"And grieved, I dare say, deeply grieved, if the truth were told!"

"It is below me to repel mean little accusations."

"Come, John Rosedew," said Sir Cradock, magnanimously and liberally, "I can forgive you for being quarrelsome, even at such a time as this. It always was so, and I suppose it always will be. To-day I am not fit for much, though perhaps you do not know it. Thinking so little of my dead boy, you are surprised that I should grieve for him."

"I should be surprised indeed if you did not. God knows even I have grieved deeply, as for a son of my own."

"Shake hands, John; you are a good fellow—the best fellow in

the world. Forgive me for being petulant. You don't know how my heart aches. I hide it even from you, John Rosedew."

After that it was impossible to return for the moment to Cradock Nowell. But the next day Mr. Rosedew took advantage of some opening, and at length obtained a request from the father that his son should come to him.

By this time Cradock hardly knew when he was doing any thing, and when he was doing nothing. He seemed to have no regard for any one, no concern about any thing, least of all for himself. Even his love for Amy Rosedew had a pall thrown over it, and lay upon the trestles. The only thing he cared at all for was his father's forgiveness: let him get that, and then go away and be seen no more among them. He could not think, or feel surprise, or fear, or hope for any thing; he could only tell himself all day long, that if God were kind He would kill him. A young life wrecked, so utterly wrecked, and through no fault of its own; unless (as some begin to dream) we may not slay for mere luxury; unless we have but a limited right to destroy our Father's property.

Sir Cradock Nowell, as may have been seen, cared a great deal more for his children than he did for his ancestors. His overpowering sorrow left him listless to take into thought what other people said of him. In the first little trouble about the heirship, this had been one chief element; but now such trifles sank out of sight in the gulf of real misery.

So now he sat in his carved oak-chair, expecting his only son, and he tried to sit upright. But the flatness of his back was gone, never to return; and the shoulder-blades showed through his coat, like a spoon left under the tablecloth. Still he appeared a stately man, one not easily bowed by fortune, or at least very slow to acknowledge it.

Young Cradock entered his father's study, with a flush on his cheeks, which had been so pale, and his heart strung up for any thing, but his wits going round like a swirl of leaves. He could not tell what he might say or do. Only it seemed to make little difference what he said or what he did. Trying in vain to master his thoughts, he stood with his quivering hands clasped hard, and his chin upon his breast.

So perhaps Adrastus stood, Adrastus son of Gordias, before the childless Crœsus; and the simple words are these:—

"After this there came the Lydians carrying the corpse. And behind it followed the slayer. And standing there before the corpse, he gave himself over to Crœsus, stretching forth his hands, commanding to slay him upon the corpse, telling both his own former stress, and how upon the top of that he had destroyed his cleanser, nor was his life now liveable. Crœsus, having heard these things, though being in so great a trouble of the home, has compassion on Adrastus.

"But Adrastus, son of Gordias, son of Midas, this man, I say, who had been the slayer of his womb-brother, and slayer of him that cleansed him, when there became around the grave a quietude from men, feeling that he was of all men whom he had ever seen the most over-burdened with disaster, kills himself dead upon the tomb."

But the father now was not like Crœsus, that grand-hearted Lydian, although the youth who stood before him, instead of a runagate from Phrygia, was the son of his own loins.

We all may have felt that chill of the ribs, that icy interception, which crawls between us and our very dearest, now and then perhaps. It is not mere mistrust, misprision, or the fear of being left behind by younger people. Is it one of those caprices of pure contradiction which our nature still insists on, every now and then, to show that she will have absolute though irrational command of us?

Be that as it may, the father, at the first sight of his son, felt (to his own surprise, perhaps) a cold repulsion overcoming all that sympathy and yearning which a father should have felt. A sudden shudder ran through his frame, and his first glance was not at the eyes, but at the hands of the luckless boy.

Cradock saw it, as we see things without looking at them, at times of rigid tension; and a horrible idea made him dread thenceforth his father's eyes. "He is looking for my brother's blood; and he will always look for it."

Having this idea thus, he could not think it even strange or indifferent on his father's part that no hand was held out to him.

"I never must dream of that again," was all the wrong he felt of it. Then he could not wait any longer; but spoke in a hollow and trembling voice,—

"Father, I am here. I came as soon as I got your order."

"That was very good of you. But you might have come without orders."

"Oh, father, I can never tell you, how I have tried, and tried, and dreaded——"

"Dreaded to come near me. Yes, you have always found me harsh to you."

"You would not speak like that to me, sir, if you only knew my misery."

These last words were uttered in such a tone of more than misery, of despair, that the father's heart was touched, even through that cold, repellent barrier which a mother's heart would have scouted. He looked at the lad who once had been the idol of his pride and joy (until the less straightforward child by softer manners ousted him) and there he saw on that young face the stamp of anguish such as at his own age was impossible. The lines beneath the old man's eyes now twitched and quivered slightly, and, like breath on glass, a

dimness flitted on his eyeballs; but his lips were firm as ever, and no tear came forth to help him.

It was the turning-point of young life, hope, and welfare to the one, to the other the hinge of happiness in the old days yet to come, of consolation still abiding, and of re-established pride, and, best of all, a heart to love him.

Sir Cradock threw away the whole. As bravely as a man of thirty tears away some little flirt unworthy of his manhood, this punished man, in his declining years, made choice to cast away his son, and treble his own punishment. He had always been proud of his firmness; and now this pride (which grows as snake-wood does, by knotting outward yearly) was beginning to harden into a crooked, inveterate obstinacy.

There is no need to tell the rest, or dwell on little quick turns of manner, and quicker turns of feeling. It is enough to say that Cradock, having every nerve alive, and every fibre sensitive, saw and heard, and felt, and fancied plenty to convince him that his father slightly hated him.

No great depth of hate, of course, for that would be wasted on a man so hated of God as he was; but only a quiet dislike, which now had been growing perceptibly for years, and was quickened into hatred by his destruction of the true darling.

The youth inherited no little of his father's pride, only of a higher order, and a wider justice. In the full strength of this righteous pride, he rose for the first time like a man, since his great calamity, bowed to his father, and asked to be let go, if he were done with.

From that day forth he walked the earth again with an upward countenance, as one in early prime severely visited of heaven, and humbled; but facing now his fellow-men, and not abashed by affliction.

CHAPTER XXVII.

'TIS A LONG LANE THAT HAS NO TURNING.

WITH an even step, and no frown on his forehead, nor glimpse of a tear in his eyes, young Cradock walked to his own little room, his "nest," as he used to call it; where pipes, and books, and Oxford prints—no ballet-girls, however, and not so very many hunters—and whips, and foils, and boxing-gloves and sundry other of youth's delights, were handled more often than dusted. All these things, except one pet little pipe, which he was now come to look

for, and which Viley had given him a year ago, when they swopped pipes on their birthday (like Diomed and the brave Lycian), all the rest were things of a bygone age, to be thought of no more for ever in the stern life set before him. After a few sad glances round, and one or two sighs which he proudly cut short as soon as he detected them, Cradock proceeded with great equanimity to do a very foolish thing, which augured badly for the success of a young man just preparing to start in the world. He poured the entire contents of his purse into a little cedar tray, then packed all the money in paper rolls with a neatness which rather astonished him, and sealed each roll with his amethyst ring. Then he put them into a little box of some rare and beautiful palm-wood, which had been his mother's, laid his cheque-book beside them (for he had been allowed a banking account long before he was of age), and placed upon that his gold watch and chain, and trinkets, the amethyst ring itself, his diamond studs, and other jewellery, even a locket which had contained two little sheaves of hair, bound together with golden thread, but from which he first removed, and packed in silver paper, the fair hair of his mother. This last, with the pipe which Clayton had given him, and the empty purse made by Amy's fingers, were all he meant to carry away, besides the clothes he wore.

After locking the box and writing a letter with a hand as firm as a copying-press,he rang the bell, and begged the man who answered it to send old Hogstaff to him. That faithful servant, from whom he had learned so many lessons of infancy, came tottering along the passage, with his old eyes dull and heavy. For Job had gloried in those two brothers, and loved them both as the children of his elder days. And now one of them was gone for ever, in the height of his youth and beauty, and a whisper was in the household that the other was likely to leave them. Of him, whom Job had always looked upon as his future master (for he meant to outlive the present Sir Cradock, as he had done the one before him), he had just been scoring upon his fingers all the things he had taught him—to whistle "Spankadillo," while he drummed it with his knuckles; to come to the pantry-door, and respond to the "Who's there?"—"A grenadier!" shouldering a broomstick; to play on the Jew's harp with variations, "An old friend, and a bottle to give him;" and then to uncork the fictitious bottle with the pop of his forefinger out of his mouth, and to decant it carefully with the pat of his gurgling cheeks! After all that, how could he believe Master Crad could ever forsake him?

Now Mr. Hogstaff's legs were getting like the ripe pods of a scarlet-runner (although he did not run much); here they stuck in, and there they stuck out, abnormally in either case; his body began to come forward as if warped at the small of the back; and his honest face (though he drank but his duty) was September'd with

many a vintage. And yet, with the keenness of love and custom, he saw at once what the matter was, as he looked up at the young master.

"Oh, Master Crad, dear Master Crad, whatever are you going to do? Don't, for good now, don't, I beg on you. Hearken now; do'ee hearken to an old man for a minute." And he caught him by both arms to stop him, with his tremulous, wrinkled hands.

"O Hoggy, dear, kind Hoggy! you are almost the only one left to care about me now."

"No, don't you say that, Master Crad; don't you say that, whatever you do. Whoever tell you that, tell a lie, sir. It was only last night, Mrs. Toaster, and cook, and Mrs. O'Gaghan, the Irishwoman, was round the fire boiling, and they cried a deal more than they boiled, I do assure you they did, sir. And Mr. Stote, he come in with some rabbits, and he went on like mad. And the maids, so sorry every one of them, they can't be content with their mourning, sir; I do assure you they can't. Oh, don't 'ee do no harm to yourself, don't 'ee, Mr. Cradock, sir."

"No, Hoggy," said Cradock, taking his hands; "you need not fear that now of me. I have had very wicked thoughts, but God has helped me over them. Henceforth I am resolved to bear my trouble like a man. I will not be like a dog who runs when the hoot begins behind him. Now take this little box, and this key, and letter, and give them yourself to Sir Cradock Nowell; but not till to-morrow morning. It is the last favour I shall ask of you. I am going away, my dear old friend; don't keep me now, for I must go. Only give me your good wishes; and see that they mind poor Caldo: and whatever they say of me behind my back, you won't believe it, Job Hogstaff, will you?"

Job Hogstaff had never been harder put to it in all his seventy years. Then, as he stood at the open door to see the last of his favourite, he thought of the tall, dark woman's words so many years ago: "A bonnie pair ye have gat; but ye'll ha' no luck o' them. Tak' the word of threescore year, ye'll never get no luck o' 'em."

Cradock turned aside from his path, to say good-bye to Caldo. It would only take just a minute, he thought, and of course he should never see him again. So he went to that snuggest and sweetest of kennels, and in front of it sat the king of dogs.

The varieties of canine are quite as manifold and distinct as those of human nature. But the dog, be he saturnine or facetious, sociable or contemplative, mercurial or melancholic, is quite sure to be one thing—true and loyal ever. Can we, who are less than the dogs of the Infinite, say as much of ourselves to Him? Now Caldo, as has been implied, if not expressed before, was a setter of large philosophy and rare reflective power. It was, of course, theoretical more than practical philosophy, as any dog would soon have discovered who tried to snatch a bone from him. Moreover, he had

some originality, and a turn for satire. He would sit sometimes by the hour, nodding his head impressively, and blinking first one eye and then the other, watching and considering the doings of his fellow-dogs. How fashionably they yawned and stretched, in a mode they had learned from a pointer, who was proud of his teeth and vertebræ; how they hooked up their tails for a couple of joints, and then let them fall at a right angle, having noticed that fashion in ladies' bustles, when they came on a Sunday to talk to them; how they crawled on their stomachs to get a pat, as a provincial mayor does for knighthood; how they sniffed at each other's door, with an eye to the rotten bones under the straw, as we all smell about for the wealthy; how their courtesy to one another flowed from their own convenience—these, and a thousand other dog-tricks, Caldo, dwelling apart, observed, but did not condemn, for he felt that every one of them was his own.

Now he hushed his bark of joy, and looked up wistfully at his master, for he knew by the expression of his face that things were not as they ought to be. Why had Wena snapped at him so, and avoided his society, though he had always been so good to her, and even thought of an alliance? Why did his master order him home that dull night in the covert, when he was sure he had done no harm? Above all, what meant that moving blackness he had seen through the trees quite lately, when the other dogs (muffs as they were) expected a regular battue, and came out strong at their kennel doors, and barked for young Clayton to fetch them?

So he looked up now in his master's face, and guessed that it meant a long farewell, perhaps a farewell for ever. He took a fond look into his eyes, and his own pupils told great volumes. Then he sat up, and begged for a minute or two, with a most beseeching glance, to share his master's fortunes, though he might have to steal his livelihood, and never get any shooting. Seeing that this could never be, he planted his fore-paws on Cradock's breast (though he felt that it was a liberty) and nestled his nose right under his cheek, and wanted to keep him thus ever so long. Then he howled with a low, enduring despair, as the footfall he loved grew fainter.

Looking back sadly, now and then, at the tranquil home of his childhood, whose wings, and gables, and depths of stone reposed in the autumn sunset, Cradock Nowell went his way toward the simple Rectory; he would say good-bye there to Uncle John and the kind Aunt Doxy; Miss Rosedew the younger, of course, would avoid him, as she had done ever since that day. But suddenly he could not resist the strange desire to see once more the scene of his ruin and despair—the "bidental' of his destiny. So he struck into a side-path leading to the deep and bosky covert.

The long shadows fell from the pale birch stems, the hollies looked black in the sloping light, and the brown leaves fluttered down here and there as the cold wind set the trees shivering. Only

ten days ago, with the very same shadows falling thus, here had he slain his twin-brother. He crawled up the hedge through the very same gap, for he could not leap it now; his back ached with weakness, his heart with despair, as he stayed himself by the same hazel-branch which had struck his gun at the muzzle. Then he shivered, as the trees did, and his hair, like the brown leaves, rustled, as he knelt and prayed that his brother's spirit might appear there and forgive him. Hoping and dreading to see something, and with every nerve on the tingle, into the deep dark wood he dropped, and forced himself to face it.

All at once his heart stood still, and the fibres of his flesh went creeping. He saw a tall, white figure kneeling where his brother's blood was—kneeling, never moving, the hands together as in prayer, the face as wan as shadow-land, the black hair—if it were hair—falling in a curve away, like a pall, when the bearers lift it. The power of the entire form was not of earth, nor heaven; but as of the intermediate state, when the angels have not come for us.

Cradock did not think nor breathe. Every spring or pulse of life stood still, and could not feel itself. It showed him in the after time, when he came to think about it, the ignorance, the insolence, of dreaming that any man's despair can quit him of man's cowardice.

While he gazed, and would have gazed at least five minutes longer, with the deepest interest in gazing at the world beyond the grave, the tall, white figure threw its arms up to the darkening sky, rose, and vanished instantly.

What do you think Cradock Nowell did? We all know what he ought to have done. He ought to have walked up calmly, with measured yet rapid footsteps, and his eyes and wits well about him, and investigated every thing. Instead of that, he cut and ran as hard as he could go. No tidier pair of heels was ever shown to the glades of the forest. He would never turn back upon living man; but our knowledge of Hades is limited. We pray for angels around our bed; if they came, should we call them nightmares?

Now Cradock, going at a desperate pace, with a handsome pair of legs, which had recovered their activity, kicked up something hard and bright from a little dollop of leaves, caught it in his hand like a tennis-ball, and leaped the hedge slap-dash anyhow. Away he went, without stopping to think, through the splashy sides of the spire-bed, almost as fast, and quite as terrified, as Dr. Hutton's mare herself.

When he got well out into the chase, he turned, and began to laugh at himself almost; but a great white owl flapped over a furze-bush, and away went Cradock as fast as ever. The light had gone out very suddenly, as it often does in October, and the youth (whose wind was uncommonly good) felt it his duty to keep good hours at the Rectory. So, with the bright thing, whatever it was, poked any where into his pocket, he came up the drive at early tea-time, and got a glimpse through the window of Amy.

"It could not have been Amy, at any rate," he said to himself, in extinction of some very vague ideas; "I defy her to come at the pace I have done. No, no; it must have been in answer to my desperate prayer."

Amy was gone, though her cup was there, when Cradock entered the drawing-room. "Well," he thought, "how hard-hearted she is! But it cannot matter now much. Though I never believed she would be so."

Being allowed by his kind entertainers to do exactly as he pleased, poor Cradock had led the life of a hermit more than that of a guest among them. He had taken what little food he wanted in the garret he had begged for, or carried it with him into the woods, where most of his time was spent. Of course all this was very distressing to the hospitable heart of Miss Doxy; but her brother John would have it so, for so he had promised Cradock. And though he would never encourage the lad to nurse his trouble, and hide away, as if a ban were over him, he knew that time and change of scene alone could shift the heavy burden—the overpowering sense that all who met him thought of what he had done.

So it came to pass that Miss Rosedew, who now sat alone in the drawing-room, was surprised as well as pleased at the entrance of their refugee. As he hesitated a moment, in doubt of his reception, she ran up at once, took both his hands, and kissed him on the forehead.

"Oh, Cradock, my dear boy, this is kind of you; most kind, indeed, to come and tell me at once of your success. I need not ask —I know by your face; the first bit of colour I have seen in your poor cheeks this many a day."

"That's because I have been running, Miss Rosedew."

"Miss Rosedew, indeed; and now, Cradock! Aunt Eudoxia, if you please, or Aunt Doxy, with all my heart, now."

He used to call her so, to tease her, in the happy days gone by; and she loved to be teased by him, her hero, her pet, and idol.

"Dear Aunt Eudoxia, my father never again will be able to endure the sight of me."

"I cannot believe it, I will not believe it; obstinate as Sir Cradock is, he cannot be so cruel as that. You must place your trust in the goodness of God, my poor dear boy."

"I have not had much of that to trust in. Even time and absence I have but little faith in."

After all he had undergone, Miss Rosedew could not reproach him yet for his want of faith in Providence; "Wait till your Uncle John comes in," was all she could say in that way.

"And I can tell you another thing, good and kind Miss Rosedew," he went on, with a sternness in his eyes which almost frightened her; "my father is by no means sure that I did not shoot my brother on purpose."

"How can you say such a frightful thing?"

"It is true. I saw it in his eyes. He thinks so much of these cursed lands—forgive me, dear Miss Rosedew,—the position, and the title, &c., &c., that he cannot believe I could love my brother—oh, Viley, Viley, Viley!"

Here he broke down, and turned away; but in his indignation would not let a sob escape him.

Miss Rosedew scarcely knew what to say. She felt that argument was likely to do more harm than good while his mind was thus; until, having long suspected where the poor fellow's heart was dwelling, she cleverly contrived some little comfort for his misery.

"Come, you must listen to words of good omen; and I have words of excellent omen, from a source a young gentleman cannot slight. Our dearest Amy is, as you know, a very odd girl indeed. Sometimes, when something happens very puzzling and perplexing, some great visitation of Providence, Amy becomes so dreadfully obstinate, I mean she has such delightful faith, that we are obliged to listen to her. And she is quite sure to be right in the end, though at the moment, perhaps, we laugh at her. And yet she is so shy, you can never get at her heart, except by forgetting what you are about. Well, we got at it somehow this afternoon; and you should have heard what she said. Her beautiful great eyes flashed upon us, like the rock that was struck, and gushed like it, before she ended. 'Can we dare to think,' she cried, 'that our God is asleep like Baal—that He knows not when He has chastened His children beyond what they can bear? I know that he, who is now so trampled and crushed of Heaven, is not tried thus for nothing. He shall rise again more pure and large, and fresh from the hand of God, and do what lucky men rarely think of—the will of his Creator.' And when her papa and I looked at her, she fell away and cried terribly."

Cradock listened with very deep interest, but still deeper astonishment: it seemed so unlike the shy young Amy to be carried away in that style. And now for a week it had been to him a sad and bitter thing to see how the maiden was avoiding him; whence, and from what he heard about her dejection and love of solitude, he concluded that she was grieving inconsolably for Clayton.

"How wonderfully good," he cried, "how loving you all are to me! But I can't talk about it, though I shall think of it as long as I live. I am going away to-night, Aunt Doxy, but I must first see Uncle John."

Of course Miss Rosedew was very angry, and proved it to be quite impossible that Cradock should leave them so; but, before very long, her good sense prevailed, and she saw that it was for the best. While he stayed there, he must either persist to shut himself up in solitude, or wander about in desert places, and never look with any comfort on the face of man. So, having heard

Mr. Rosedew come in, she took Cradock down to the door of the book-room, and left him with none but her brother.

John Rosedew sat in his little room, with only one candle to light him, and the fire gone out as usual: his books lay all around him, even his best-loved treasures, but his heart was not among them. The grief of the old, though not wild and passionate as a young man's anguish, is perhaps more pitiable, because more slow and hopeless. The young tree rings to the keen pruning-hook, the old tree groans to the grating saw; but one will blossom and bear again, while the other gapes with canker. None of his people had heard the rector quote any Greek or Latin for a length of time unprecedented. When a sweet and playful mind, like his, has taken to mope and be earnest, the effect is far more sad and touching than a stern man's melancholy. A ruined castle-wall is dreary; but a family hearth moss-grown is woeful.

Uncle John leaped up very lightly from his brooding (rather than reading), and shook Cradock Nowell by the hand, as if he never would let him go, all the time looking into his face by the light of a composite candle. It was only to know how he had fared, and John read his face too truly. Then, as Cradock turned away, not wanting to make much of it, his friend came before him with sadness and love, and his blue eyes glistened softly.

"My boy, my boy!" was all he could say, or think, for a very long time. Then Cradock told him, without a tear, a sigh, or even a comment, but with his face as pale as could be, and his breath coming heavily, how his father had received his visit, and what he meant to do through it.

"And so, Uncle John," he concluded, rising to start immediately, "here I go to seek my fortune, such as it will and must be. Goodbye, my best and only friend. I am ten times the man I was yesterday, and shall be grander still to-morrow." He tried to pop off like a lively cork, but the rector would not have it.

"Young man, don't be in a hurry. It strikes me that I want a pipe; and it also strikes me that you will smoke one with me."

Cradock was taken aback by the novelty of the situation. He had never dreamed that Uncle John could, under any possible circumstances, ask him to smoke a pipe. He knew well enough that the rector smoked a sacrificial pipe to Morpheus, in a room of his own up-stairs; only one, while chewing the cud of all he had read that day. But Mr. Rosedew had always discouraged, as elderly smokers do, any young aspirants to the mystic hierophancy. It is not a vow to be taken rashly, for the vow is irrevocable, except with men of no principle.

And now he was to smoke there—he, a mere bubble-blowing boy, to smoke in the middle of deepest books, to fumigate a manuscript containing a lifeful of learning, which the parson had now no heart for; and—oh, Aunt Eudoxia!—to make the hall smell and the

drawing-room! The oxymoron overcame him, and he took his pipe. His host had filled it for him judiciously, and quite as a matter of course; then Mr. Rosedew filled for himself in the self-same manner, with a digital skill like an ancient fox trying on a foxglove. All the time John was shyly wondering at his own great force of character.

"Now," said the rector, still keeping it up, "I have a drop of very old Schiedam—Schnapps I think, or something—of which I want your opinion; Crad, my boy, I want your opinion, before we import any more. I am no judge of that sort of thing; it is so long since I was at Oxford."

Without more ado, he went somewhither, after lighting Cradock's yard of clay—which the young man burnt his fingers about, for he wouldn't let the old man do it—and came back like a Bacchanal, with a square black-jack beneath his arm, and Jenny after him, wondering whether they had not prayed that morning enough against the devil. It was a good job Miss Amy was out of the way; old Doxy was bewitched, that was certain, as well as her dear good master. Miss Rosedew was happy in knowing not that she was called in the kitchen, "old Doxy."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A LITTLE CONSOLATION.

"NOW, Craddy, my dear, dear boy," said Uncle John, when things had been done with lemon and cold water, and all that wherein discussion so utterly beats description, "you know me too well to suppose that I wish to pass things over lightly. I know well enough that you will look the hard world full in the face. And so should I do, in your case. All I wish is, that you should do it, not with spite, or bile, or narrowness, but broadly as a Christian."

"It is hard to talk about that now," said Cradock, inhaling charity, and puffing away some acrimony; "Uncle John, I hope I may come to it as my better spirit returns to me."

"I hope it indeed, and believe it, Crad; I don't see how it can be otherwise, with a young man of your breadth of mind, and solid faith to help you. An empty lad, who snaps up stuff because he thinks it fine, and garbles it into garbage, would become an utter infidel under what you have suffered. With you, I believe, it will be otherwise; I believe you will be enlarged and purified by sorrow—the night which makes the guiding-star so much the clearer to us." John Rosedew was drinking no Schiedam—allow

me to explain—though pretending rare enjoyment of it, and making Cradock drink a little, because his heart was down so.

After they had talked a pipeful longer, not great weighty sentiments, but a deal of kindly stuff, the young fellow got up quietly, and said, "Now, Uncle John, I must leave you all."

"My boy, I can trust you any where, after what you have been telling me. Of human nature I know nothing, except"—for John thought he did know something—"from my own little experience. I find great thoughts in the Greek philosophers; but somehow they are too general, and too little genial. One thing I know, we far more often mistrust than trust unwisely. And now I can trust you, Cradock; in the main, you will stand upright. Stop, my boy; you must have a scrip; I was saving it for your birthday."

"You don't despise me, I hope?" said Cradock; "you don't think me a coward for running away so? After what has happened to-day, I should go mad, if I stopped here. Not that that would matter much; only that, if it were so, I should be sure to do it.

Mr. Rosedew had no need to ask what was meant by the last two words, for the hollow voice told him plainly. But for him, it is sure enough that it would have been done ere this; at any rate, in the first horror, his hand alone had prevented it. The parson trembled at the idea, but thought best not to dwell upon it.

"'Reformidare mortem est animi pusillanimi,' but 'reformidare vitam' is ten times worse, because impious. Therefore, in your case, my boy, it is utterly impossible, as well as ignoble towards us who love you so. Remember that you will break at least two old hearts you owe some duty to, if you allow your own to be broken. And now for your viaticum; see how you have relieved me! While you lived beneath Hymettian beams in the goods of Tyre and Cyprus, I even I your godfather, knew not what to give you. The thought has been vexing me for months, and now what a simple solution! You shall have it in the original dross, to pay the toll on the Appian road, at least the South-Western Railway. Figs to Athens, I thought it would be, or even as eels to Copaïs; and now 'serves iturum Cæsarem.' I believe it is at the twenty-first page of my manuscript, such as it is, upon the Sabellian elements."

After searching in three or four drawers—for he was rather astray at the moment, though generally he could put his hand, even in the dark, upon any particular one of his ten thousand books—he came upon the Sabellian treatise, written on backs of letters, on posters, on puffing circulars, even on visiting cards, and cast-away tradesmen's tickets, and there, at the twenty-first page or deltis, lay a 50*l.* Bank of England note, with some very tough roots arranged diamond-wise on the back, and arrows, and hyphens, and asterisks, flying about thickly between them. These he copied off, in a moment, on a piece of old hat-lining, and then triumphantly waved the

bank-note in the air. It was not often poor Uncle John got hold of so much money; too bitterly knew Aunt Doxy how large was the mesh of his purse.

While Cradock gazed with great admiration, Mr. Rosedew, with his fingers upon his lips, and looking half ashamed of himself, went to a cupboard, whose doors, half open, gave a glimpse of countless sermons. From among them he drew a wide-mouthed bottle of leeches, and set it upon the table. Then he pulled out the stopper, unplugged it, and lo! from a hole in the cork fell out two sovereigns and a half one. As this money rolled on the table, John could not help chuckling a little.

"Ha, good sister Eudoxia, have I overreached thee again? Double precaution there, you see, Crad. She has a just horror of my sermons, and she runs at the sight of a leech. 'Non missura cutem'—be sure, not a word about it, Crad. That asylum is inviolable, and sempitern, I hope. I shall put more there next week."

Cradock took the money at once, with the deepest gratitude, but no fuss about it; for he saw how bitterly that good man would feel it, if he were small enough to refuse.

No need to dwell upon their good-bye, after so much valediction; only Cradock promised to write from London, so soon as he could give an address there; then, leaving sadness behind him, carried enough of it with him. Only he found some little comfort before he quite left Nowelhurst. And this is the first act of it.

While he was in his garret, packing a little bag of necessaries, forced upon him by Miss Doxy from her brother's wardrobe and her own almost indiscriminately, and while she was pulling and struggling up-stairs with the rector, Jemima, and Jenny—for she would have made Cradock, if she could, carry the entire house with him—he, stowing some fine food in his pocket, felt what he had caught up so cleverly in his headlong flight from the coppice. He examined it by the candlelight, and became at once intent upon it. It had lain beneath a drift of dead leaves backed by a scraggy branch, whence any thing short of a grand "skedaddle" would never have dislodged it.

And yet it was a great deal too pretty to be treated in that way. Cradock could not help admiring it, though he shuddered and felt some wild hopes vanish as he made out the meaning It was a beautiful gold bracelet, light, and of first-rate workmanship, harmonious too with its purpose, and of elegant design. The lower half was a strong soft chain of the fabric of Trichinopoli, which bends like the skin of a snake; the front and face showed a strong right arm, gauntleted, yet entirely dependent upon the hand of a lady. No bezilling, no jewel whatever, except that a glorious rose-shaped pearl hung, as in contest, between them.

Cradock wondered for some little time what could be the meaning of it. Then he knew that it was Clayton's offering to the beloved Amy. No doubt could remain any longer, when he saw in the hollow of the back the proposed inscription pencilled, "Rosa debita," for the dead gold of the lady's palm, "Rosa dedita" for the burnished gold of the cavalier's high pressure. With ingenious jealousy to help him, he made it out in a moment. "A rose due, now a rose true." That was what it came to, if you took it in punster fashion. Just one of poor Viley's conceits.

Cradock had no time to follow it out, for Miss Rosedew then came in with a parcel as large as a feather-bed, of comforters, wrappers, and eatables, which were to be sent by the morning train, to be called for at Waterloo station.

But after he had left the house, he began to think about it, in the little path across the green toward the village churchyard. He concluded that Amy had been in the wood at some time of that fatal evening. She must have come to meet Clayton there; and yet it was not like her. Facts, however, are facts, as sure as eggs are eggs; though our knowledge makes no great advance through either of those aphorisms. But a growing sense of injury—though he had no right to feel injured, however it might be—this sense had kept him from asking for Amy, or leaving the little coquette a good-bye.

He entered the quiet churchyard, with the moon rising over the tombstones, a mass of shadow cast by the great tower, and some epitaphs pushing well into the light, like the names that press forth into history. The wavering glance of the diffident moon, uncertain yet what the clouds meant, slipped along the buttressed walls, and lit up well-accustomed friends, grown pale with age—odd angles. Many a retiring corner would have nought to do with light, now the imperious sun was gone, and sleep and death were wandering. A perfect stillness, and a river of gray oblivion swayed the night; and a thousand sacred memories, grown weary and rheumatic, had stopped their ears with lichen.

Cradock came in at the rickety swing-stile, and, caring no shadow for ghost or ghostess, although he had run away so, took the straight course to the old black doorway, and on to the heart of the churchyard; because it was on his road, and because he must say good-bye to Clayton. All Nowelhurst still admired that path; but those who had paved and admired it first were sleeping on either side of it.

It is to be hoped that these worthy fellows were sounder in their ways of life than in their style of paving. For now, in the dark, no mortal there with any respect for his grandfather, nor even a ghost with unbevilled soles, could go many steps without tripping.

Is it, then, a wonder that the lightest and loveliest foot that ever tripped in the New Forest not only tripped but stumbled there?

At the very corner where the side walks come in, and the shade of the tower is deepest, smack from behind a hideous sarcophagus fell into Cradock's arms the most beautiful thing ever seen perhaps. If he had not caught her, she must have cut the very sweetest face in the world into great holes like the pavement.

Stunned for a moment, and then so abroad that she could not think, nor even speak—"speak nor think," one ought to have said, if Amy had been masculine—she lay in Cradock's trembling arms, and never wondered where she was. The youth forgot his despair for a moment, and applied himself to his duty. It was the sweetest piece of comfort sent to him yet from heaven. Afterwards he always thought that his luck turned from that moment. Perhaps it did; although most people would laugh who knew him afterwards.

Presently Amy recovered, and was wroth with herself and every body. Ruddier than a Boursalt rose, she fell back against a tombstone.

"Oh, Amy," said Cradock, retiring; "I have known it long. Even you are turned against me."

"I turned against you, Mr. Nowell! What right have you to say that of me?"

"No right to say any thing, Amy; and scarcely a right to think any thing. Only I have a right to feel."

"Then I wouldn't give much for your feelings. I mean—I beg your pardon—you know I can never express myself."

"Of course, I know that," said Cradock.

"It may be so, indeed," said Amy; "and, of course, you think so, Mr. Nowell. You have always thought so meanly of me. But, if I can't express my meaning, is it any wonder, when I am not fit to have any?"

"Amy," said Cradock, for all this was so very unlike herself, that, loving that self more than his own, he was lost in trying to follow it—"Amy Rosedew, I shall never see you in this world again, will you make one bitter effort to forgive me before I go?"

"To forgive you for what, Mr. Nowell? I did not know that you had injured me."

"Not injured you, Miss Rosedew! Then what is the meaning of this, if you please?"

The moon, being now on her way towards the south, looked over the counter-like gravestone, and Cradock placed on the cold, level surface the beautiful bracelet he found in the wood. Amy knew it in a moment; and she burst out crying,—

"Oh, poor Clayton! How proud, how very proud he was of it! Mr. Nowell, I never could have thought this of you; never, never, never!"

"Thought what of me, Amy? Darling Amy, what can I have done to offend you so?"

"Oh, nothing. I suppose it is nothing to remind me how cruel I

have been to him. Oh no, nothing at all. And all this to come from you!"

In a storm of sobs she fell upon Jeremy Wattle's tombstone, and Cradock put one arm around her, to prevent her being hurt.

"Amy, you drive me wild. I have brought it to you only because it is yours, and because I am going away."

"Cradock, it never was mine. I refused it months ago; and I believe he gave it—you know what he was, poor dear—I believe he transferred it, and something else—oh no, I can't express myself—to—just to somebody else."

"Oh, you darling! Who was that other? What a fool he must have been! Confound it, I never meant that."

"I don't know, Cradock. Oh, please keep away. But I think it was Pearl Garnet. Oh, Cradock, poor dear Cradock, what would you have me say or do? No, I could never think of it. Yes, I will, Crad; poor Crad, I will, when I think of all your misery."

She put up her pure lips in the moonlight—for Cradock had got her in both arms now, and was listening to no reason—her sweet lips, pledged once pledged for ever, she put them up in her love and pity, and let him for ever own them. And the moon, that monthly witness of at least a million seals, never witnessed one more holy.

After all, young Cradock Nowell, so tried of Heaven, so scourged with the bitterest rods of despair, your black web of life is inwoven now with one bright thread of gold. The purest, the sweetest, the loveliest girl that ever spun happiness out of sorrow, or smiled through the veil of affliction, the truest and dearest of all God's children, loving all things, hating none, pours into your heart for ever all that heavenly fount of love.

Freed henceforth from doubt and wonder (except at her own happiness), enfranchised of another world, enriched beyond the power of earth, ennobled beyond self, she cast her blameless life and love into the fortunes of another, with joy and hope and faith tenfold, because he was so unfortunate. A woman's generous warmth arose through maiden sensibility, and taught her how to comfort best, and whence to replume the wings of peace.

Cradock, drawn forth from himself, absorbed in her sweet love of him, tasting, feeling, thinking nothing, except of her deliciousness, brought his darling's face to light, and led her soft hair down it. It was his first, and his last chance perhaps, of ever so caressing her.

Amy stood up in the moonlight, and was not ashamed to show herself. She felt that Cradock was poring upon her, to store every glance of her soft bright eyes, and every smile of her coying lips, for many a weary day and many a restless night to look back upon. And so she let him form his picture, quite as if she never dreamed that he was doing any thing.

Her thick hair had fallen most grievously forward, because she had been crying so; her delicate form, still so light and girlish, leaned forward in trust of the future, and the long dark lashes she raised for her lover glistened with the deep light under them. Shame was nestling in her cheeks, the shame of growing womanhood, the down on the ripening fruit of love. She gave him time enough, and then she crept in closer to him; even the most unhappy lover must be held to reason.

"Darling Cradock, my own dear Cradock, don't you know me well enough? You see, I only love you so because you are so unlucky, and I am so dreadfully obstinate."

"Of course, I know all that, my pet; my beauty inexpressible. And remember that I only love you so, because you are such a darling."

Then Amy told him how sorry she was for having been so pettish lately; and she would never be so again, only it was all his fault, because she wanted to comfort him, and he would not come and let her—here the softest gleam fluttered through her tears, like the Mazarine Blue among dewdrops—and that only for the veriest chance, and the saucer she had broken—but what of that, she would like to know; it was the surest sign of good luck to them, although it was the best service—only for that, her Crad would have gone—gone away for ever, and never known how she loved him; yes, with all her heart, every single atom of it, every delicious one, if he must have it. And she would keep it for him for ever, for ever; and be thinking of him always. Let him remember that, poor darling, and worry himself with his troubles no more!

Then he told her how Uncle John had behaved—how nobly, how magnanimously; and had given every bit of money he could lay hold of in the world for Cradock to start in life with. John Rosedew's only child began to cry again at hearing it, and put her little hand into her pocket in the simplest way imaginable. "Yes, you will, dear;" "No, I won't;" went on for several minutes, till Amy nestled quite into his bosom, and put her sweet lips to his ear.

"If you don't, I will never believe that you love me truly. I am your little wife, you know; and all that I have is of course your own."

The marriage-portion in debate was no more than five and sixpence, for Amy could never keep money long; so Cradock accepted the sweet little purse, and he must have a bit of her hair in it. She pulled out her little sewing-case, which she always took to the day-school, and the small bright scissors flashed in the moonlight, and they made a great play of this serious job. Two great snips were heard at last; and exchange, after all, is no robbery.

Then hand in hand they went together to see poor Clayton's grave, and Cradock started as they approached, for something black was moving there.

"Little dear," said Amy, as the doggie look mournfully up at them, "she would starve if it were not for me. And I could not coax her to eat a morsel until I said, 'Clayton, poor Clayton!' And then she licked my hand and whined, and took a bit to please me. If I had not come to feed her, you would have gone away without a word to your own best sweetheart. She has had such a beautiful tea to-night! I told you I broke the saucer, but that was all my own clumsiness."

"And what has she got there? Oh, Amy! Amy, it is horrible!"

Black Wena, when it was dark that evening, and Clayton must have done dinner, had stolen away to his dressing-room, and fetched, as she had been taught to do, his smoking-jacket and slippers. It took her a long time to carry the jacket, for fear it should be wet for him. Then she came with a most important air, and put them down upon his grave, and wagged her tail for approval. She was lying there now, and wondering how long till he would get up, and pat her.

Cradock sobbed hysterically, and Amy led him softly away to the place where his travelling-bag was.

"Now wait here a moment, my poor dear, and I will bring you your future companion."

Presently Amy came back, with Wena following the coat and the slippers. "Darling Cradock, take her with you. She is so true and faithful. She will die if she is left here. And she will be such a comfort to you. Take her, Cradock, for my sake."

That last entreaty settled it. Cradock took the coat and slippers, and carried Wena a little way, while she looked back wistfully at the churchyard, and Amy coaxed and patted her. They arranged, ere they parted, that Amy Rosedew should call upon Miss Garnet, should restore the bracelet, and should mark in what manner she received it; for Amy had now a strong suspicion (especially after what Cradock had seen, and now described quite calmly) that Pearl knew more of poor Clayton's death than had been confessed to any one.

"My own Cradock, only think," said Amy; "I have felt the strongest conviction, throughout, that you had nothing to do with it."

"Sweetest one," he replied, with a desperate longing to clasp her, but for Wena and the carpet-bag, "that is only because you love me so. Never say it again, dear; suspense, or even doubt about it, would kill me like slow poison."

Amy shuddered at his tone, and thought how different men were: for a woman would live on the hope of it. But she remembered those words when the question arose, and rejoiced that he knew not a word of it.

And now with the great drops in her eyes, she stood at her father's gate, to say good-bye to her first and her only love for

ever. She would not let him know that she cried; but Wena was welcome to know it, and Wena licked some nice tears off, and then quite felt for Amy.

"Good-bye, my own, my only," said Cradock, for the twentieth time; while the latch of the gate was trembling; "God loves us, after all, Amy. Or, at any rate, He loves you."

"And you, and you. Oh, Cradock! if He loves one, He must love both of us."

"I believe He may begin again; if you love me, I shall have hopes of it; especially as there is nothing now to take from me—but you."

"Dearest darling, life of my life, promise me not to fret so. I cannot bear to hear it."

"Fret, indeed, with you to love me! Give me only one more assurance."

Cradock, with a braver heart than he ever thought to own again (yet with a hole and a cord in it, because it was no more his own), being begged away at last by one who then went down on her knees, only to beg him back again,—that hapless yet most happy fellow strode away as hard as he could, for fear of running back again; and the dusky trees closed round him, opening only one little star, embowered in a long arcade. So the latch of the gate for the last time clicked, when he was out of hearing, and the laurustinus by the pier, beginning to bud for the winter, glistened in the moonlight with a silent storm of tears.

CHAPTER XXIX.

SIMPLE-MINDED GEORGIE.

DR. and Mrs. Hutton had been, as some of us may remember, invited in the very kindest manner to dine the next Wednesday at Kettledrum Hall; and the distance being considerable, and the roads so shockingly bad—"even dangerous, I am told, to gentlemen who have dined with me, sir," said Kettledrum, in his proudest manner—they had accepted his offer, and that of Mrs. Kettledrum, which she herself had come over to make, that they should not think of returning until after breakfast on Thursday. In consequence of her husband's hints, Rosa felt the keenest interest in "that Mrs. Kettledrum." "Leave her to me, dear Rufus. You need not be afraid, indeed. Trust me to get to the bottom of it." And so she exerted her probing skill upon her to the uttermost, more even than ladies usually do, when they first meet one another. Of

course, there was no appearance of it, nothing so ill-bred as that; it was all the sweetest refinement, and the kindest neighbourly interest. They even became affectionate in the course of half an hour, and mutual confidence proved how strangely their tastes and their hearts beat in unison. Nevertheless each said good-bye with a private effusion of gratitude at having befooled the other. "Poor thing, she was so stupid. What a bungler, to be sure! And to think I could not see through her!"

But the return-match between these ladies, which was to have come off at Kettledrum Hall—where, by-the-bye, there appeared a far greater performer than either of them—this interesting display of skill was deferred for the present; inasmuch as Rosa was taken ill during the mysteries of her toilet. It was nothing more serious, however, than the "flying spasms," as she always called them, to which she had long been subject, and which (as she often told her husband) induced her to marry a doctor.

Rufus administered essence of peppermint, and then a dose of magnesia; but he said that it was a most strong exhibition, and he wanted to stop at home with her, and see that she sat by the fire. She in turn would have her way, and insisted that Rue should go, "for he had made himself such a very smart boy, that she was really quite proud of him, and they would all be so disappointed, and he was taller than Mr. Kettledrum, she felt quite sure he was." The bearing of that last argument may not to a masculine neutral mind be altogether duly cogent. However, the lady insisted upon it, till to Rue it was quite conclusive. So Ralph Mohorn was sent for, the pony-carriage countermanded, and Rufus set forth upon Polly, whose oats were now restricted.

Kettledrum Hall stood forth on a rise, and made the very most of itself. Expansive, and free, and obtrusively honest, it seemed to strike itself on the breast (as its master did) with both gables. A parochial assessment committee, or a surveyor for the property-tax, would have stuck on something considerable, if they had only seen the outside of it. Look at the balustrade that went (for it was too heavy to run) all along the front of it, over the basement windows. No stucco, either; but stone, genuine stone, that bellied out like a row of Roman amphoræ, or the calves of a first-rate footman. After that, to see the portico, "decempedis metata," which "excipiebat Eurum"—not Arcton in this climate. No wonder—although it was rotten inside, and the whole of it mortgaged ten fathom deep—that Bailey Kettledrum hit his breast, and said, "Our little home, sir!"

"Your great home, you mean," said Rufus; "what a noble situation! You can see all over the county."

They had come to meet him down the hill, in the kindest country fashion, Mr. and Mrs. Kettledrum, like Jack and Jill going for water.

"Not quite that," replied Kettledrum; "but we saw you with my

binocular, between two and three miles off, and became so anxious about Mrs. Hutton, that I said to my wife, 'Put your bonnet on;' and she only said, 'Bailey, put your hat on;' nothing more, sir, I assure you; nothing more, sir, upon my honour."

Rufus could not see exactly why there should have been any thing more, but he could not help thanking them for their kindness, and saying to himself, "What nice people! Quite an agricultural life, I see, in spite of that grand mansion."

"Now," said Mr. Kettledrum, when Polly had been committed to one of the stable-boys—but Rufus still wanted to look at her, for he never grew tired of admiring any thing that belonged to him, and he knew they wouldn't do her legs right—"now, Dr. Hutton, you have come most kindly, according to your promise, so as to give us an hour or two to spare before the dinner-time. Shall we take a turn with the guns? I can put my hand on a covey; or shall we walk round the garden, and have the benefit of your advice?"

Rufus looked in dismay at his "choice black kerseymeres;" he had taken his patent gaiters off, and was proud to find not a flake inside. But to think of going out shooting! He ought not to have dressed before he left home, but he hated many skinnings. So he voted very decidedly for a walk in the kitchen-garden.

Into this he was solemnly instituted, and the beauties all pointed out to him. What a scene of weeds and rubbish! How different from Bull Garnet's dainty and trim quarters, or from his own new style of work at Geopharmacy Lodge! Rotten beansticks crackling about, the scum of last summer's cabbages, toad-stools cropping up like warts or arums rubbed with caustic, a fine smell of potato-disease, and a general sense of mildew; the wall-trees curled and frizzled up with aphis, coccus, and honeydew; and the standards scraggy, and full of stubs, canker, and American blight, sprawling, slouching, hump-backed, and stag-headed, like the sick ward of a workhouse fighting with tattered umbrellas.

"Ah," said Rufus, at his wits' end for any thing to praise, "what a perfect paradise—for the songsters of the grove."

"Oh," replied Mr. Kettledrum, "you should hear the Dook admire it. 'Kettledrum, my boy,' he said, when he dined with me last Friday, 'there is one thing I do envy you—no, sir, neither your most lady-like wife, nor yet your clever children, although I admit that neither of them can be paralleled in England—but, Kettledrum, it is—forgive me—it is your kitchen-garden.' 'My kitchen-garden, your grace,' I replied, for I hate to brag of any thing, 'it is a poor thing, my lord Dook, compared to your own at Lionshill.' 'May I be d—d,' his grace replied, for I never shall break him of swearing, 'if I ever saw any thing like it, dear Kettledrum, and so I told the Duchess.' And after all, you know, Dr. Hutton, a man may think too little of what it has pleased God to give him."

"Well," said Rufus to himself, "I'm blessed if I think you can.

But I don't like you any the worse for a bit of brag. I have met great brags in India, and most of them honest fellows. But I must peg him down a bit. I must, I fear; it is my duty as an enlightened gardener."

"But you see, now," said Bailey Kettledrum, smacking his lips, and gazing into profundity, "you see, my dear sir, there is nothing 'ab omni parte beatum;' perhaps you remember the passage in the heroic epistles of—ah, Cicero it was, I believe, who wrote all those epistles to somebody."

"No doubt of it," said Rufus Hutton, who had forgotten all his classics in bad Hindustani; "and yet St. Paul wrote some."

"Not in Latin, my dear sir; all St. Paul's were Greek. 'Nihil est,' I now remember, 'ab omni parte beatum.' I don't know how it scans, which I suppose it ought to do, but that isn't my look-out. Perhaps, however, you can tell me?"

"I'm blowed if I can," said Rufus Hutton, in the honesty of his mind; "and I am not quite sure that it has any right to scan."

"Well, I can't say; but I think it ought,"—he was in the mists of memory, where most of the trees have sensitive roots, though the branches are not distinguishable. "However, that can't matter at all; I see you are a classical scholar. And, Hutton, I like a classical scholar, because he can understand me. But you see that these trees are rather—ah, what is the expression for it——?"

"Cankered, and scabby, and scrubs."

"That is to say—yes, I suppose, they would crop the better, if that be possible, for a little root-pruning."

"You have gathered the fruit for this year, I presume?"

"Well, no, not quite that. The children have had some, of course. But we are very particular not to store too early."

"I really don't think you need be."

"Why, many people say, 'let well alone;' but my gardener talks of making——"

"A jolly good bonfire of them, if he knows any thing of his business. Then drain the ground, trench, and plant new ones."

Mr. Kettledrum looked quite thunderstruck; he caught hold of a tree to help him, and a great cake of rotten bark, bearded with moss, came away like the mask of a mummer. It was slimy on the under side, and two of his fingers went through it.

"Nice state of things," said Rufus, laughing. "I suppose the Dook likes lepers?"

"Why, my dear sir, you don't mean to say——"

"That I would leave only one of them, and I would hang the head-gardener upon it."

That worthy was just coming round the corner, to obtain the applause of a gentleman well known to the *Gardener's Chronicle;* but now he turned round abruptly, and scratched his head, and thought of his family.

When Rufus came down and entered the drawing-room he was perfectly gorgeous; for although he had been in black dress for the main, he knew better than to ride with his Alumbaggah waistcoat on. There was nothing in all the three presidencies to come up to that waistcoat. It would hold Dr. Hutton and Rosa too, for they had stood back to back and tried it. And Rufus vainly sighed for the day when his front should come out and exhaust it. He stole it, they say, from a petty rajah, who came to a great durbar with it, worn like an Oxford hood. At any rate, stolen or bought, there it was, and who may attempt to describe it?

But truly it required some strength of mind to present it to modern society, although it was a work of considerable art, and no little value.

The material was soft Indian silk of the very richest quality. It had no buttons, but golden eyelets and tags of golden cowries. The background of the whole was yellow, the foreground of a brilliant green, portraying the plants of the jungle. On the left bosom leaped and roared an enormous royal tiger, with two splendid jewels, called "cat's-eyes," flashing, and a pearl for every fang. Upon the right side a hulking elephant was turning tail ignominiously; while two officers in the howdah poked their guns at the eyes of the tiger. The eyes of the officers in their terror had turned to brilliant emeralds, and the blood of the tramping elephant was represented by seed rubies. The mahout was cutting away in the distance, looking back with eyes of diamonds.

Beyond a doubt, it required uncommonly fine breeding, especially in a lady, to meet that waistcoat at a dinner-party, and be entirely unconscious of it. And perhaps there are but few women in England who would not contrive to lead up to the subject, quite accidentally, of course, before the evening was over.

The ladies, however, looked as grave as judges; and somehow it was managed (as if by the merest oversight) that Dr. Hutton should lead to dinner, not the lady of the house, whom, of course, he ought to have taken, but her sister, Mrs. Nowell Corklemore. He felt, as he crossed the hall with her, that the beauty of his waistcoat had raised some artistic emotion in a bosom as beautiful as its own.

Georgiana Corklemore was an uncommonly clever woman, and a thoroughgoing flirt, as well by nature as by practice. She loved her child, and liked her husband, the man of the many "haws," and had all the respect for her own self which may abide with vanity. Nevertheless she could not help doing something to amuse her, and her beauty being beyond dispute, all married women hated her.

On the present occasion "Georgie Corklemore," as she called herself, set about flirting with Rufus Hutton, not from her usual love of power, nor even for the sake of his waistcoast, but because she had an especial purpose, and a very important one. The Kettledrum-cum-Corklemore conspiracy was this—to creep in once

more at Nowelhurst Hall through the interest of Dr. Hutton. They all felt perfectly certain that Cradock Nowell had murdered his brother, and that the crime had been hushed up through the influence of the family. They believed that the head of that family, in his passionate sorrow and anger, might be brought to their view of the subject, if he could only be handled properly; and who could manage that more adroitly than his first cousin once removed, the beautiful Mrs. Corklemore? Only let her get once invited, once inducted there, and the main difficulty after that would be to apportion the prey between them. They knew well enough that the old entail expired with the present baronet; and that he (before his marriage) held in fee pure and simple all that noble propery. His marriage-settlement, and its effects, they could only inkle of; but their heart was inditing of a good matter, and Mr. Chope, their solicitor, was just the sort of man to worm out every thing about it. Of course these "members of the family" combined for the present in detestation and scorn of Dr. Hutton. An upstart Indian apothecary, without a drop of the Nowell blood in him, to play lord paramount at the Hall, and bang the gates on true relatives! However, there he was; and dear Sir Cradock was so obstinate—not to say demented—that the only channel of access to him was kept by this "apothecary."

Only two things need be added: one that Sir Cradock had always disliked, and invited them but for appearance' sake; the other, that they fairly believed in the righteousness of their cause, and that Rufus Hutton could prove the murder, and would if he had not been tampered with.

Mrs. Corklemore was now, perhaps, twenty-five years old, possibly turning thirty; for that lustrum of a lady's life is a hard one to beat the bounds of; at any rate, she had never looked better than she did at the present moment. To delicate features, and soft large eyes, and cheeks of a glistening curvature, was added a power of lighting up with irrepressible sympathy every lovely lineament. At such moments all her shapely, beautifully jacketed form quivered with intense desire for the good and pure and right. And now she was just at the age to spread open, with the memory of shyness upon them (like the dew when the sun is up), the curving petals of beauty. Who understands the magnetic current? Who can analyze ozone? Is there one of us able to formularize the polarity of light? Will there ever be an age when chemists metaphysical will estimate, not by troy weight, and carat, cast up in decimals, but by subtle spirit-force, the sovereignty of women?

That soft Georgiana Corklemore, so lively, lovely, and gushing, focussed all her fascinations upon Rufus Hutton. She knew that she had to deal with a man of much inborn acuteness, and who must have seen a hundred ladies quite as fair as Georgie. But had he seen one with her—well, she knew not what to call it, though

she thoroughly knew how to use it? So she magnetized him with all her skill; and Rufus, shrewdly suspecting her object, and confiding in a certain triarian charge, a certain thrust Jarnacian, which he would deliver at the proper moment, allowed her to smile, and to show her white teeth and dimples of volatile velvet (so natural, so inevitable, at his playful, delightful humour), and to loose whole quiverfuls of light shafts from the arch flash under her eyelids. What sweet simplicity she was, what innocent desire to learn, what universal charity!

"How dreadful, Dr. Hutton! Oh, please not to tell me of it! How could any ladies do it? I should have fainted at once, and died within an hour afterwards." She turned up her large mild eyes, deeply beaming with centralized light, in a way that said, "If I died, is there any one who would think it a very, very great pity?"

Rufus had been describing historically, not dramatically, the trials of the ladies, when following their regiment during a sudden movement in the perils of the mutiny. With a man's far stiffer identity, he did not expect or even imagine that his delicate listener would be there, and go through every hour of it. But so it was, and without any sham; although she was misusing her strange sympathetic power. Georgiana Corklemore would have made a very great actress; she had so much self-abandonment, such warm introjection, and hot indignant sympathy; and yet enough of self-reservation to keep them all to their proper work.

Meanwhile Mrs. Kettledrum, a lady of ordinary sharpness, like a good pudding-apple—Georgie being a peach of the very finest quality—she from the top of the table was watching all her sister's lovely tricks—delighted, amused, indignant; glad that none of her children were there to store up Auntie's doings. As for Mr. Corklemore, he was quite accustomed to it; and looking down complacently upon the little doctor, thought to himself, "How beautifully my Georgie will cold-shoulder him, when we have got all we want out of this conceited, chattering, gardening apothecary!"

When the ladies were gone, Mr. Bailey Kettledrum, who had no idea of playing dummy even to Mrs. Corklemore, made a trick or two from his own hand.

"Corklemore, my dear fellow, you think we are all tee-totallers. On with the port, if you please, 'cessantem Bibuli Consulis amphoram;' never shall forget that line. The bibulous consul, eh! Capital idea. Corklemore, you can construe that?"

"Haw! Perhaps I can't. Really don't know; they beat a heap of stuff into me when I was at Eton; but they found it no more good than whipping—ha, haw, something like whipping——"

"Eggs," said Rufus Hutton, "all came to bubbles, you mean, sir?"

"Not at all, sir; not at all; you entirely misunderstand me. I

mean that it was similar to—to the result produced by the whipping of a top."

"The other extreme appears more apt," said Mr. Kettledrum, winking at Rufus; and thenceforth had established a community of interest in the baiting of "long Corklemore." "Well," at any rate," he continued, "Hutton is a scholar—excuse my freedom, my dear sir; we are such rustics here, that I seldom come across a man who appreciates my quotations. You are a great acquisition, sir, the very greatest, to this neighbourhood. How can we have let you remain so long without unearthing you?"

"Because," said Rufus to himself, "you did not happen to want me; when are you going to carry out my introduction to 'the Dook'?"

The gentlemen passed the decanter briskly, and talked about all the best vintages, and smacked their lips, and looked most wise, and declared that the wine must be '34. Rufus knew better, but held his peace. Kettledrum and Corklemore had shared a pipe of '51, a noble vintage, not half ripe yet, and had helped each other to bottle it.

Now if these hospitable men had any hope of making Dr. Hutton spring his anchors even, much more get "half-seas over," it showed their ignorance of a sound East Indian constitution. The worthy Rufus drank glass for glass, as the pluck of his nature prompted him; yet he alone put no foot over the vaguest verge of tipsiness.

"Come, Dr. Hutton, another olive; and another glass on the strength of it."

"Certainly. I say yes to both. But your olives are not of the proper kind. You scarcely ever see the right olive in this country, Corklemore," said Rufus, turning his waistcoat upon that sleepy individual; "the Italian olive is like sea pop-weed. The Portuguese olive is the one for port."

"Haw, to be sure!" answered Mr. Corklemore; "of course, if you come to think of it."

"Sad, sad, sad affair!" cried Mr. Kettledrum, clumsily plunging, through the power of wine, into the black sea of diplomacy.

"You mean, I suppose, about those poor Nowells," Dr. Hutton answered quietly. "You are right; it was a most sad thing. Let us, at this pleasant period, talk of lighter subjects. Your apple-trees, for instance."

Bailey Kettledrum, though a little fond of brag, had the instincts of a gentleman, whereof the first is hospitality; and he felt that he could not, at his own table, press any subject declined by a guest. And as for Mr. Corklemore, by this time he was snoring.

So they departed to brighter scenes and the dominion of the ladies; where they found five pretty little samples of the genus Kettledrum, tidy, very good, quite female, and of pink-ribbon pattern. After some little fuss, of course, melting melodies began

to flow from Georgie's sweet fingers and sweeter lips; until Mrs. Kettledrum exclaimed,—

"Oh, Dr. Hutton, do you ever play chess? We are such players here; all except my poor self; I am a great deal too stupid."

"I used to play a little when I was in India. We are obliged to play all sorts of games in India." Dr. Hutton piqued himself not a little on his skill in the one true game.

At a sign from their mother, the five small Kettledrums rushed for the board most zealously, and knocked their soft heads together.

Mrs. Corklemore was declared by all to be the only antagonist worthy of an Indian player, and she sat down most gracefully, protesting against her presumption. "Just to take a lesson, you know; only to take a lesson, dear. Oh, please, don't let any one look at me."

Rufus, however, soon perceived that he had found his match, if not his superior, in the sweet, impulsive, artless creature, who threw away the game so neatly when she was quite sure of it.

"Oh, poor me! Now, I do declare—Isn't it most heartbreaking? I am such a foolish thing. Oh, can you be so cruel?"

Thrilling eyes of the richest grey trembled with dewy radiance as Rufus coolly marched off the queen, and planted his knight instead of her.

"Mrs Corklemore, can I relent? You are far too good a player." The loveliest eyes, the most enchanting sigh of the fairest bosom, could not make that dry Dr. Hutton, well content with his Rosa, give away so much as the right to capture a pawn in passing.

Now observe the contrariety, the want of pure reason, the confusion of *ἀρχή*—sorry and ashamed one is to go out of the native tongue (but English, though rich in emotion, is a pauper in philosophy)—the distress upon the premises of the cleverest woman's mind. The lady had purposely thrown her queen at the mercy of her antagonist; but she never forgave him for taking it.

A glance shot from those soft bright eyes, when Rufus turned away from them, of which a dear sister or husband alone could believe such an angel capable.

Mrs. Corklemore was not bound to throw away the second game, but became most sweet and humble about her wonderful luck in winning it. And then, alas! it was too late to try the decisive contest.

"Early hours. Liberty Hall, Liberty Hall at Kettledrum! Gentlemen stay up, and smoke if they like. But early hours, sir, for the ladies."

Mr. Kettledrum had his orders, no doubt, as in his noble, dramatic manner, so playful and yet so commanding, he advanced, struck an attitude, and with decisive elegance parted the combatants.

"Oh, how cruel!" cried Georgie, pouting, and making a tele-

graphic face behind his back at Rufus ; "just when it was so very exciting ! Just when you saw that I might have a chance to win another game almost !"

" Discipline, discipline !" answered their host. "My dear Georgie, could you beat Dr. Hutton if your forces were not under discipline ?"

" Mrs. Corklemore has not beaten me," began Dr. Hutton, with all the self-assertion of an old chess-player : "I assure you, I assure you——"

But they laughed him down in a pretty little way, as if they knew all about it, and expected him to argue.

When all the rest were at breakfast, next morning, in came Mrs. Corklemore, looking as fresh as daybreak.

" Oh, I am so ashamed of myself. What a sluggard you will think me ! What is it in the divine song of that great divine, Dr. Watts ? Nowell, dear, you must not scold me. I cannot bear being scolded, because I never have tit for tat. Good morning, dearest Anna ; how is your headache, darling ? Oh, Dr. Hutton, I forgot ! No wonder I overlooked you. I shall never think much of you again, because I beat you at chess so."

" Game and game," said Rufus, solemnly; "and I ought to have won that last one, Mrs. Corklemore ; you know I ought."

" To be sure, to be sure. Oh, of course I do. But—a little thing perwented him—his antagonist was too good, sir. Ah, we'll play the conqueror some day ; and then the tug of war comes. Oh, Anna, I am so conceited ! To think of my beating Dr. Hutton, the best player in all India."

" Well, darling, we know all that. And we must not blame you therefore for lying in bed till ten o'clock."

" Oh," said Rufus, with a groan, "do look at ladies' logic ! Mrs. Corklemore gained one game out of two—only because I was—ah-hem, I mean by her very fine play—and now she claims absolute victory ; and Mrs. Kettledrum accepts it as a premise for a negative conclusion, which has nothing on earth to do with it."

But Rufus got the worst of that protest. He tilted too hard at the quintain. All came down upon him at once, till he longed for a cigar. Then Mrs. Corklemore sympathized with him, arose, their breakfast being over, and made him a pretty curtsy. She was very proud of her curtsies ; she contrived to show her figure so.

" Confound that woman," thought Rufus, " I can never tell when she is acting. I never met her like in India. And thank God for that same."

She saw that her most bewitching curtsy was entirely thrown away upon him ; for he was thinking of his Rosa, and looking out for the good mare, Polly.

" Dr. Hutton, I thank you for your condescension in giving me that lesson. You let me win that last game out of pure good-nature. I shall always, always be grateful. Meanwhile I shall say

to every one, 'Oh, do you know, Dr. Hutton and I play even?' taking very good care meanwhile never to play again with you. Shocking morality! Yes, very shocking. But, then, I know no better, do I, Nowell dear?"

"Haw? Well, Georgie, I am not so sure of that. My wife is absolute nature, sir, simple, absolute—haw—unartificial nature. But unartificial nature is, in mee opeenion—haw—yes, the very best nature, sometimes."

"Haw!" said his wife, to the very echo, so that nobody could help laughing. Then she stood upon tiptoe and blew him a kiss, as a sort of apology. She was so very simple, she never could think of what people might think of her. All the pretty airs and graces of a fair Parisian, combined with all the domestic duty of an English wife! Mr. Corklemore was appeased, and uttered a "haw!" which she could not imitate.

"Dear me! I forgot," the lady cried. "Nowell, we must say 'good-bye,' I fear, to Dr. Hutton. We are on the wing, as he is. Good-bye, Dr. Hutton. I fear you will hardly ever forgive me for tarnishing your laurels so."

"Now or never," thought Rufus Hutton; "she has beaten me at chess, she thinks. Now I'll have the change out of her. Only let her lead up to it."

"Mrs. Corklemore, we will fight it out upon some future occasion. I never played with a lady so very hard to beat."

"Ah, you mean at Nowelhurst. But we never go there now. There is—I ought to say, very likely, there are mistakes on both sides—still there seems to exist some dreadful prejudice against us. —Anna, dear, you put a lump of sugar too much in my tea. I am already too saccharine."

"Well, dear, I put exactly what you always tell me. And you sent your cup for more afterwards."

"Matter-of-fact animal—how can she be my sister?" Georgie only muttered this. Rufus Hutton did not catch it. Mr. Garnet would have done so.

"Now is the time," thought Rufus again, as she came up to shake hands with him, not a bit afraid of the morning sun upon her smooth rich cheeks, where the colour was not laid on in spots, but seemed to breathe up from below, like a lamp under water. Outside he saw the good mare Polly scraping holes in the gravel, and the groom throwing all his weight on the curb to prevent her from bolting homewards.

"Hang it, she won't stand that," he cried; "her mouth is like a sea-anemone. Take her by the snaffle-rein. Can't you see, you fool, that she hasn't seven coats to her mouth, like you? Excuse my opening the window," he apologized to Mrs. Kettledrum, "and excuse my speaking harshly; for if I had not stopped him, he would have thrown my horse down, and I value my Polly enormously."

"Especially after her behaviour the other night in the forest. It is the same with all you gentlemen ; the worse you are treated, the more grateful you are. Oh yes, we heard of it ; but we won't tell Mrs. Hutton."

" No, indeed, I hope you won't. I should be very sorry for her to get even a hint of it "

"To be sure," said Mrs. Corklemore, coming back with a special smile ; "to be sure we will keep the secret, for ever so many reasons ; one of them being that Dr. Hutton would be obliged to part with Miss Polly, if her mistress knew of her conduct. But I must not be so rude. I see you want to be off quite as much as fair Polly does. Ah, what a thing it is to have a happy home !"

Here Mrs. Corklemore sighed very deeply. If a woman who always has her own way, and a woman who is always scheming, can be happy, she ought to be so ; but she did so love compassion.

" Come," she said, after turning away, for she had such a jacket on—the most bewitching thing ; it was drawn in tight at her round little waist, and seemed made like a horse's body-clothes, for a trot on a wintry morning—" come, Dr. Hutton, say good-bye, and forgive me for beating you." Simple creature, of course she knew not the " sacra fames " of chess-players.

"We must have our return-match. I won't say 'good-bye' until you have promised me that. Shall it be at my own house ?"

" No. There is only one place in the world where I would dare to attack you again, and that is Nowelhurst Hall."

" And why there, more than any where else ?"

" Because there is a set of men there with which I can beat any body. I believe I could beat Morphy with those men at Nowelhurst. Ah ! you think me, I see, grossly and stupidly superstitious. Well, perhaps I am. I do sympathize so with every thing."

" I hope we may meet at Nowelhurst," replied Rufus, preparing his blow of Jarnac, " when they have recovered a little from their sad distress."

" Ah, poor Sir Cradock !" exclaimed the lady, with her expressive eyes tear-laden, " how I have longed to comfort him ! It does seem so hard that he should renounce the sympathy of his relatives at such a time as this. And all through some little wretched dissensions in the days when he misunderstood us ! Of course we know that you cannot do it ; that you, a comparative stranger, cannot have sufficient influence where the dearest friends have failed. My husband, too, in his honest pride, is very, very obstinate, and my sister quite as bad. They fear, I suppose—well, it does seem ridiculous, but you know what vulgar people say in a case of that sort—they actually fear the imputation of being fortune-hunters !"

Georgie looked so arrogant in her stern consciousness of right, that Rufus said, and for the moment meant it, " How absurd, to be sure !"

" Yes," said Georgie confidentially, and in the sweetest of all

sweet voices; "between you and me, Dr. Hutton, for I speak to you quite as to an old friend of the family, whom you have known so long"—("Holloa," thought Rufus, "in the last breath I was a 'comparative stranger'!")—"I think it below our dignity to care for such an absurdity; and that now, as good Christians, we are bound to sink all petty enmities, and comfort the poor bereaved one. If you can contribute in any way to this act of Christian charity, may I rely upon your good word? But for the world don't tell my husband; he would be so angry at the mere idea."

"I will do my best, Mrs. Corklemore; you may rely upon that."

"Oh, thank you, thank you. I felt quite sure that you had a generous heart. I should have been so disappointed. Perhaps, after all, we shall play our next game of chess at Christmas with the men I am so lucky with. And then look to yourself, Dr. Hutton."

"I trust you will find a player there who can give me a pawn and two moves. If you beat him, you may boast indeed."

"What player do you mean?" she asked, with a shadow of misgiving. "Any Indian friend of yours?"

"Yes, one for whom I have the very greatest regard. For whose sake, indeed, I first renewed my acquaintance with Sir Cradock, because I bore a message to him; for the Colonel is a bad correspondent."

"The Colonel! What Colonel, Dr. Hutton?"

As she said these words, how those eyes of hers, those expressive eyes, were changing! And her lovely jacket, so smart and well cut, began to "draw" across the chest.

"Did you not know," asked Rufus, watching her in a way that made her hate him worse than when he took her queen; "is it possible that you have not heard that Colonel Nowell, Clayton Nowell, Sir Cradock's only brother, is coming home this month and brings his darling child home with him?"

She was equal to the emergency. She commanded her eyes, and her lips, and bosom, after that one expansion, even her nerves, to the utmost fibre—every thing but her colour. The greatest actor ever seen, when called on to act in real life, can never command colour if the skin has proper spiracles. The springs of our heart will come up and go down, according to the human weather. But she turned away, with that lily-whiteness, because she knew she had it, and rushed up enthusiastically to her sister at the end of the room.

"Dear Anna, darling Anna, oh, I am so delighted! We have been so wretched about poor Sir Cradock. And now his brother is coming to mind him, with such delightful children! We thought he was dead, oh, so many years! What a gracious Providence!"

Haw!" said Nowell Corklemore.

"The devil!" said Bailey Kettledrum, and Rufus caught the re-echo, but hoped it might be a mistake.

Then they all came forward, gushing, rushing, rapturous to embrace him.

"Oh, Dr. Hutton, surely this is too good news to be true!"

"I think not," said Rufus Hutton, mystical and oracular; "I really trust it is not. But I thought you must have heard it, belonging as you do to the family; otherwise I should have told you the moment I came in; but now I hope this new arrival will heal over all—make good, I mean, all family misunderstandings."

"Colonel Clayton Nowell," said Mr. Nowell Corklemore, conclusively, and with emphasis, "Colonel Clayton Nowell was shot dead outside the barracks at Mhow, on the 25th day of June, sir, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty-six. Correct me, sir, if I am wrong."

"Then," said Rufus, "I venture to correct you on the spot sir."

"Shot, sir," continued Corklemore, "as I am, I may say—haw,—in a position to prove, by a man called Abdoollah Manjee, believed to be a Mussulman. Colonel Clayton Nowell, sir, commanding officer in command of Her Majesty's Company's native regiment, No. One hundred and sixty-three, who was called,—excuse me, sir, designated, the 'father of his regiment," because he had so many illegit—haw, I beg your pardon, ladies—because of his—ha, yes,—pleasing patriarchal manners and kindly disposition,—he—haw, where was I?"

"I am sure I can't say," said Rufus.

"No, sir, my memory is more tenacious than that of any man I meet with. He, Colonel Clayton Nowell, sir, upon that fatal morning, was remonstrated with by the two—ah, yes, the two executors of his will—upon his rashness in riding forth to face those carnal, I mean to say, those incarnate devils, sir. 'Are you fools enough,' he replied, 'to think that my fellows would hurt me? Give me a riding-whip, and be ready with plasters, for I shall thrash them before I let them come back.' Now, isn't every word of that true?"

"Yes, almost every word of it," cried Rufus, now growing excited.

"Well, sir, he took his favourite half-bred—for he understood cross-breeding thoroughly—and he rode out at the side-gate, where the heap of sand was; 'Coming back,' he cried to the English sentry, 'coming back in half an hour, with all my scamps along of me. Keep the coppers ready.' And with that he spurred his brown and black mare; and no man saw him alive thereafter, except the fellows who shot him. Haw!"

"Yes," said Rufus Hutton, "one man saw him alive, after they shot him in the throat, and one man saved his life; and now he stands before you."

"What you, Dr. Hutton! What you! Oh, how grateful we ought to be to you."

"Thank you. Well, I don't quite see that," Rufus replied, most dryly. Then he corrected himself: "You know I only did my duty."

"And his son?" inquired Georgie timidly, and with sympathy, but the greatest presence of mind. She had stood with her hands clasped, and every emotion (except the impossible one of selfishness) quivering on her sweet countenance; and now she was so glad, oh, so glad, she could never tell you. "His poor illegitimate son, Dr. Hutton? Will he bring the poor child home with him? How we shall feel for him, to be sure!"

"The child he brings with him is Eöa, dear natural odd Eöa, his legitimate daughter."

"Then you know her, Dr. Hutton; you could depose to her identity?"

A very odd question; but some women have almost the gift of prophecy.

"Oh, yes! I should rather think so. I have known her since she was ten years old."

"And now they are coming home. How exceedingly delightful! What a sweet surprise to receive them, quite from another world almost! By the overland route, I suppose, and with a lac of rupees?"

"No," said the badgered Rufus, 'you are wrong in both conjectures. They come round the Cape, by the clipper-ship *Aliwal;* and with very few rupees. Colonel Nowell has always been extravagant, a wonderfully fine-hearted man, but a hand that could never hold any thing—except the hand of a true old friend."

By the moisture in Dr. Hutton's eyes Mrs. Corklemore saw that her interests would fare ill with him, if brought into competition with those of Colonel Nowell.

Meanwhile Polly was raving wild, and it took two grooms to hold her, and the white froth dribbling down her curb was to Rufus Hutton as the foam of the sea to a sailor. He did love a tearing gallop, only not through the thick of the forest.

"Good-bye, good-bye! I shall see you soon. Thank you, I will take a cheroot. But I only smoke my own. Good-bye! I am so much obliged to you. You have been so very kind. Mrs. Hutton will be miserable until you come over to us. Good-bye; once more, good-bye!"

Rufus Hutton was a man of the world, and could be false "on occasion." John Rosedew could never have made that speech with a smile at detected falsehood.

Away went Polly, like a gale of wind; and Rufus (who was no rogue by nature, only by the force of circumstances, and then could never keep to it), he going along twenty miles an hour, set his teeth to the breeze, which came down the funnel of his cigar as down a

steamer's chimney, stuck his calves well into Polly's sides, and felt himself a happy man, going at a rocket's speed, to a home of happiness.

Rosa was waiting at the gate; why do his mare's shoes linger? Rosa ran in, and ran out again, and was sure that she heard something pelting down the hill much too fast, for her sake! but who could blame him when he knew he was coming home at last? Then Rosa snapped poor Jonah's head off, for being too thick to hear it.

Meanwhile a mighty senate was held at Kettledrum Hall, Mrs. Corklemore herself taking the curule chair. After a glimpse of natural life, and the love of man and woman, we want no love of money; so we lift our laps (like the Roman envoy) and shake out war with the whole of them.

Fools who think that life needs gilding—life, whose flowing blood contains every metal but gold and silver,—which but clog and poison it! Blessed is he who earns his money, and turns it over to his wife, to be husbanded, on Saturday. He counts it into her hand, and he need not count any thing, except his children, for another week of work.

For it would show injustice to him, and ignorance of the human stomach, to charge him with counting one o'clock. There is no arithmetic about that. He knows by instinct one o'clock. He stands upright, and in his eyes (if photographed and magnified), is an image forty cubits high, to which all nations bow them down, and its name in every language written, just means "dinner."

CHAPTER XXX.

A BUTTERFLY BOY.

MR. GARNET'S house, well away to the west, was embraced more closely and lovingly by the gnarled arms of the Forest than the Hall, or even the Rectory. Just in the scoop of a sunny valley, high enough to despise the water, and low enough to defy the wind, there was nothing to affect it much, but the sighing of the branches.

Over the brown thatch hung two oak-trees, whispering leaves of history, offering the acorn cup upon the parlour hearth, chafing their rheumatic knuckles against the stone of the chimneys, wondering when the great storm should come that would give them an inside view of it.

For though the cottage lay so snugly, scarcely lifting its thatched eyebrows at the draught which stole up the valley, nevertheless those guardian oaks had wrestled a bout or two with the wind. In the

cyclone on the morning of November 29th, 1836, and again on the 7th of January, 1842, they had gripped the ground, and set hard their knees, and groaned at the thought of salt water. Since then the wind had been less of a lunatic (although there had been some ruffianly work in 1854), and they hoped there was a good time coming, and spread their branches further and further, and thought less of the price of timber. There was only one wind that frightened them much, and that was two points north of west, the very direction whence, if they fell, crash they must come on the cottage. For they stood above it, the root-head some ten feet above the back-floor of the basement, and the branches towering high enough for a wood-pigeon not to be nervous there.

Now we only get heavy pressure of squalls from the west-north-west after a thorough-going tempest which has begun in the southward, and means to box half the compass. So the two great oaks were regarded by their brethren up the hill as jolly fellows, happy dogs, born with a silver spoon in their mouths, good for another thousand years, although they might be five hundred old ; unless, indeed—and here all the trees shuddered—there came such another hurricane as in 1703. But which of us knows his own brother's condition? Those two oaks stood, and each knew it, upon a steep bank, where no room was for casting out stay-roots to east-south-east.

Bull Garnet hated those two trees, with terror added to hatred. Even if they never crushed him, which depended much on the weather, they would steal in at his bedroom window when the moon was high. Wandering shapes of wavering shadow, with the flickering light between them, walking slowly as a ghost does, and then very likely a rustle and tap, a shivering, a shuddering, it made the ground-floor of his heart shake in the nightmare hours.

Never before had he feared them so much, one quarter so much, as this October ; and, during the full and the waning moon after Clayton Nowell's death, he got very little sleep for them. By day he worked harder than ever, did more than three men ought to do, was every where on the estates, but never swore at any one—though the men scratched their ears for the want of it—laboured hard, and early, and late, if so he might come home ere nightfall, thoroughly worn and weary.

If his energy had been surprising before, it was now become amazing. No man any where felling wood—Mr. Garnet's especial luxury—no man hedging and ditching, or frithing, or stubbing up fern and brambles, but had better look out what he had in his bag, or "the governor would be there, and no mistake." A workman could scarcely stand and look round, and wonder how his sick wife was, or why he had got to work so hard, could scarcely slap himself on the breast, or wet his hard hands for a better grip, but there was Bull Garnet before him, with sad, fierce, dogged eyes, worse than his strongest oaths had been.

Every body said it was (and every body believed it ; for the gossip had spread from the household in spite of the maidens' fear of him), the cause of it was, beyond all doubt, the illness of his daughter. Pearl Garnet, that very eccentric girl, as Rufus Hutton pronounced her, who had startled poor Polly so dreadfully, was prostrate now with a nervous fever, and would not see even the doctor. Our Amy, who pleaded hard to see her, because she was sure she could do her good, received a stern, sharp negative, and would have gone away offended, only she was so sorry for her. Not that any fervid friendship, such as young ladies exult in for almost a fortnight incessant, not that any rapturous love exclusive and exhaustive had ever arisen between them, for they had nothing whatever in common, save beauty and tenacity, which girls do not love in each other : only that Amy was always sorry for any one deep in trouble. And believing that Pearl had loved Clayton Nowell, and was grieving for him bitterly, how could she help contrasting that misery with her own happiness ?

For Amy was nice and happy now, in spite of Cradock's departure, and the trouble he had departed in. He loved her almost half as much, she believed, as she loved him ; and was not that enough for any body ? His troubles would flow by in time : who on earth could doubt it, having faith in their great Father ? He was gone to make his way in the world, and her only fear was lest he should make it too grand for Amy to share in. She liked the school-children so, and the pony, and to run out now and then to the kitchen, and dip a bit of crust in the dripping-pan ; and she liked to fill her dear father's pipe, and spread a thin handkerchief over his head. Would all these pleasures be out of her sphere when Cradock came back, with all London crowning him the greatest and best man of the age ? Innocent Amy, never fear. "Nemo, nisi per homicidium, repente fuit clarissimus."

Mr. Garnet would have felled those oaks, in spite of Sir Cradock's most positive orders, if there had not been another who could not command, but could plead for them. Every morning as the steward came out, frowned and shook his fist at them, the being whom he loved most on earth—far beyond himself, his daughter, and the memory of their mother, all multiplied into each other,—that boy Bob came up to him, and said, "Father, don't, for my sake."

We have not heard much of Bob Garnet yet ; we have scarcely shaped him feebly ; by no means was he a negative character, yet described most briefly by negatives. In every main point, except two, he was his father's cardinal opposite. Those two were generosity (which combines the love of truth with a certain warmth of impulse) and persevering energy. Even those two were displayed in ways entirely different, but the staple was very similar.

Bob Garnet was a naturalist. Gentle almost as any girl, and more so than his sister, he took small pleasure in the ways of men, intense delight in those of every other creature. Bob loved all

things God had made, even as fair Amy did. All his day, and all his life, he would have spent, if he had the chance, among the ferns and mosses, the desmidia of the forest pools, the sun-dew and the fungi, the buff-tips and red underwings, privet-hawks, and emperors. He knew all the children of the spring and handmaids of the summer, all of autumn's laden train and the comforters of winter. The happiest of mankind is he whose stores of life are endless, whose pure delights can never cloy, who sees and feels in every birth, in every growth or motion, his own Almighty Father; and loving Him is loved again, as a child in the lap of his parent.

Mr. Garnett's affection for this boy surpassed the love of women. He petted, and patted, and coaxed him, and talked nonsense to him by the hour; he was jealous even of Bob's attachment to his sister Pearl; in short, all the energy of his goodness, which, like the rest of his energies, transcended the force of other men's, centred and spent itself mainly there. But of late Bob had passed all his time with his mother—we mean, of course, with Nature; for his mother in the flesh was dead many a year ago. He had now concluded, with perfect contentment, that his education was finished; and to have the run of the forest at this unwonted season more than consoled him for the disgrace of his recent expulsion from school.

Scarcely any one would believe that Bob Garnet, the best and gentlest boy that ever cried over Euripides—not from the pathos of the poet, but the smart of private tragedy—Bob Garnet, who sang to snails to come out, and they felt that he could not beat them, should have been expelled disgracefully from a private school, whose master must needs expel his own guineas with every banished pupil. However, so it was, and the crime was characteristic. No punishment would keep him from sitting at night in the lime-trees.

Those lime-trees overhung the grey stone wall of the playground near Southampton; and some wanton boys had been caught up there, holding amoibæans with little nursemaids and girls of all work, come out to get lung-and-tongue food. Thereupon a stern ukase was issued that the next boy caught up there would be expelled without trial, as the corrupter of that pure flock. The other boys laughed, most sad to say, when "Bob the natural," as they called him, meaning thereby the naturalist, was the first to be discovered there, crawling upon a branch as cleverly as a looper caterpillar. Even then the capital sentence was commuted that time, for every master knew, as well as every boy, that Bob could never "say bo" to a gosling of the feminine gender. So Bob had to learn the fourth Georgic by heart, and did most of it (with some consolation) up in that very same tree. For he kept all his caterpillars there, his beetle-traps, his moth-nets, even some glorious pupæ, which were due at the end of August; and he nursed a snug little fernery, and had sown some mistletoe seeds, and a dozen other delicious things, and the lime-hawks wanted to burrow soon;

in a word, it was Bob's hearth and heart-place, for no other boy could scale it. But just when Bob had got to the beginning of Aristæus, and the late bees were buzzing around him, although the linden had berried, an officious usher spied the boy, and his little eyes twinkled with the joy of detection.

"Boy in the tree there! I see you! Your name this moment, you rascal!"

"Garnet, sir, Bob Garnet. And if you please, sir, I am not a rascal."

"Come down, sir, this very instant; or else I'll come up after you."

"I don't think you can, sir," replied Bob, looking down complacently; for, as we shall see by and by, he was no coward in an emergency. "If you please, sir, no boy in the school can climb this tree except me, sir, since Brown senior left."

"I can tell you one thing, Garnet: it's the last time you'll ever climb it."

"Oh, then, I must collect my things; I am sorry to keep you waiting, sir. But they are such beauties, and I can't see well to pack them."

Bob packed up his treasures deliberately in his red pocket-handkerchief, and descended very cleverly, holding it with his teeth. The next morning he had to pack his box, and became in the school a mere legend.

His father flew into a violent passion, not with the son, but the schoolmaster: however, he was so transported with joy at getting his own Bob home again, that he soon forgave the cause of it. So the boy got the run of the potato-fields, pollard-trees, and rushy pools, and hunted and grubbed and dabbled, and came home sometimes with three handkerchiefs, not to mention his hat, full.

One lovely day this October, soon after Cradock left Nowelhurst, and before the frost set in—a frost of a length and severity most rare at that time of year—Bob Garnet took his basket and trowel, nets, lens, &c., and set out for a sandy patch, not far from the stream by the Rectory, where in his July holidays he had found some Gladiolus Illyricus, a bloom of which he had carried home, and now he wanted some roots of it. He could not think why his father left him so very much to himself now, and had ceased from those little caresses and fondlings which used to make Bob look quite ashamed sometimes in the presence of strangers. He felt that his father loved him quite as much as ever, and he had found those strong eyes set upon him with an expression, as it appeared to him, of sorrow and compassion. He had a great mind to ask what the matter was; but his love for his father was a strange feeling, mixed with some dread and uncertainty. He would make Pearl tell him all about it, that would be the best way; for she as well had been carrying on very oddly of late. She sat in her own room all day long, and would never come down to dinner, and

would never come out for a stroll with him, but slipped out by herself sometimes in the evening; that, at least, he was sure of. And to tell him indeed, him going on now for seventeen years of age, that he was too young to ask questions! He would let her know, he was quite resolved, that because she happened to be two years older—a pretty reason that was for treating him like a baby! She who didn't know a wire-worm from a ring-worm, nor an elater from a tipula, and thought that the tippet-moth was a moth that fed upon tippets! Recalling fifty other instances of poor Pearl's deep ignorance, Bob grew more and more indignant, as he thought of the way she treated him. He would stand it no longer. If she was in trouble, that was only the greater reason——Holloa!

Helter-skelter, off dashed Bob after a Queen of Spain fritillary, the first he had ever seen on the wing, and a grand prize for any collector, even of ten times his standing. It was one of the second brood, invited by the sun to sport awhile. And rare sport it afforded Bob, who knew it at once from the other fritillaries, for the shape of the wings is quite different, and he had seen it in grand collections. An active little chap it was, greatly preferring life to death, and thoroughly aware that man is the latter's prime minister. Once Bob made quite sure of it, for it had settled on a blackberry-spray, and smack the net came down upon it, but a smack too hard, for the thorns came grinning out at the bottom, and away went the butterfly laughing. Bob made good the net in a moment with some very fine pins that he carried, and off again in still hotter pursuit, having kept his eyes on dear Lathonia. But the prey was now grown wondrous skeary since that narrow shave, and the huntsman saw that his only chance was a clever swoop in mid air. So he raised his net high, and zig-zagged recklessly round the trees, through the bushes, up the banks and down them. At last he got quite close to her, but she flipped round a great beech-trunk; Bob made a cast at hazard, and caught, not the Queen, but Amy.

Amy was not frightened much, neither was she hurt, though her pretty round head came out through the net—for she had taken her hat off—and the ring lay upon her shoulders, which the rich hair had shielded from bruises. She would have been startled, no doubt, a good deal, only she knew what was going on, and had stepped behind the tree to avoid the appearance of interfering. For she did not wish—she knew not why—but, by some instinct, she did not wish to have much to do with the Garnets. She regarded poor Bob as a school-boy, who was very fond of insects, and showed his love by killing them.

But if Amy was not frightened much, Bob, the captor, was. He dropped the handle of his net, and fell back against the beech-tree. Then Amy laughed, and took off the net, or the relics of the gauze at least, and kindly held out her hand to him, and said,—

"Oh, how you are grown!"

"And so are you. Oh dear me, have you seen her? Have you seen her?"

"Seen whom?" asked Amy, "my aunt, Miss Rosedew? There she is, by the ash-tree."

"The Queen of Spain, Miss Rosedew, the Queen of Spain fritillary! Oh, tell me which way she went! If I lose her, I am done for!"

"Then, I fear, Master Garnet"—["Confound it," thought Bob, "how all the girls do patronize me!"]—"I am very much afraid you must make up your mind to annihilation, if by the 'Queen of Spain' you mean that common brown little butterfly you wanted just now to kill so much."

"Is she gone across the river, then? That is nothing, I assure you. I would go through fire after her. Oh, tell me, only tell me."

Amy could not help laughing; poor Bob looked so ridiculous, fitting a new net all the time upon the ring of the old one, the crown of his hat beaten down on his forehead, his trousers kicked well up over his boots, and his coat an undoubted ventilator.

"I really don't know," said Amy; "how could you expect me to see through your shrimp-net, Master Garnet?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon—how stupid I am, to be sure—I beg your pardon a thousand times; really I might have hurt you. I would not do that for——"

"Even the Queen of Spain. To tell you the truth, Master Garnet, if I knew where she was gone I would not tell you, because I can't bear to have things killed. In my opinion, it is so cruel."

"Oh!" cried Bob, a very long "oh," of amazement at such an idea; and he looked at Amy all the time he was saying it, which was a wonderful thing for him to do. Then it occurred to his mind, for the first time possibly, what a beautiful creature she was, more softly shaded than a Chalk-hill blue, and richer than a cream-spotted tiger-moth! The moment he felt this Bob was done for; Amy had caught her captor.

Flushed as he was with the long, hot chase, his cheeks grew hotter and redder as he got a dim consciousness of a few of the things which he was feeling. He was like a chrysalis, touched in the winter, when it goes on one side from the crust of the thorax, and sometimes can never get right again. After having said "oh," with emphasis and so much diæresis, Bob did not feel called upon for any further utterance till Amy was gone to her Aunt Eudoxia; and then he contrived to say, "Ah!" He was more put out than he had been even when his pet poplar-hawk caterpillar was devoured alive by ichneumon grubs. He went round the tree ever so many times, and wondered what was the matter with him, how he came there, and what he was doing.

Alas, poor Bob! Nature, who overlooks nothing, was well aware of the difficulties when she cried, "Jump up on my lap, Bob, and never be weaned from me." She knew that things of all sorts would come between herself and her child, some of them drawn from her own mother-milk, but most of them from man's muzzling. Of the latter she had not much fear with Bob; but the former, she knew, were beyond her, and she had none but herself to thank for them. She knew that the lad, so strongly imbued with her own pleasant affluences, was almost sure to be touched with that one which comes from her breast the warmest. And then what would become of zoology, phytology, entomology, and all the other yard-long names which her children spin out of her apron-strings?

While Bob was still fiddling with his fingers, and forgetting all about butterflies, Miss Eudoxia, called by Amy, came to hold discourse with him.

"Why, Master Robert, I do declare, Robert, my butterfly boy! I have not seen you for such a time, Robert." And she held out her hand, which Bob took with very little sense of gratitude. To be called a "butterfly boy" before Amy, and Amy to acquiesce in it!

"Ah, you think I have nothing for you, Robert. You school-boys live upon suction. But just wait a moment, my dear."

She drew forth an old horn comfit-box, which had belonged to her grandmother, and was polished up like amber from the chafing of many a lining. This she opened with much ado, poured three crinkled sugar-plums on her gloved palm, and a smooth one as large as a hazel-nut, and offered them all to Robert, with a smile of the finest patronage.

"No, thank you, Miss Rosedew; no, thank you. I am very much obliged to you."

Miss Eudoxia had been wondering at her own generosity, and thought that he was overcome with it. So her smile became one of encouragement and assurance against self-sacrifice.

"Oh, you need not be afraid, Robert. And you can put some under your pillow, and wake up in the night and suck them. How nice that will be, to be sure! You see I know what boys are. And I have plenty left for the infant-school. And they don't deserve them as you do, Robin."

"Miss Rosedew," said Bob, in his loftiest manner, though he was longing for them, only that Amy was there; "you will believe me when I assure you that I never touch sweets of any sort; not even at a late dinner-party."

Miss Eudoxia turned her eyes up, and almost dropped the sugar-plums. But Amy, instead of being impressed, merrily laughed, and said,—

"Give them to me, then, auntie, please. Some of the men at the night-school eat sweets after early suppers."

Bob said "good-bye" disconsolately, for he knew that he had

affronted Miss Rosedew, without rising in Amy's opinion. He forgot all about the gladiolus, and let many great prizes escape him; for the day was the last of the soft and sunny, which tempt forth the forest denizens ere the frosty seal is set on them. In the glimpses of every brown arcade, in the jumbled gleam of the underwood, in the alleys between the upstanding trees, even in the strong light where the gold patches shone, and the wood fell back to look at them, in all of these he seemed to see and then to lose his angel. Her face he could not see clearly yet, hard as he strove to do it; affection is, but love is not, a photographic power. Still he could see her shadowly; her attitude, the fall of her hair, the manner of her gestures; even the ring of her voice would seem to dwell about the image. But he never got them altogether; one each time was the leading thing; vague; and yet it went through him.

He made one attempt—for he feared from the first, although he never could feel it so, that his love was a thorough wild-goose chase—the poor boy made one last attempt to catch at some other pursuit.

"Father," he said that very same night, after sitting for hours of wandering, "will you give me a gun and let me take to shooting?"

"A gun!" cried Bull Garnet, starting; "a gun, Bob? What do you mean by that?"

"I meant nothing at all, father. Only I know the way to stuff birds, and there are some rare ones here sometimes, and I want to make a collection."

"Bob Garnet, as long as I am alive, you never shall have a gun."

"Then, will you lend me yours, father? I know very well how to use it. I mean your patent——"

"Never, Bob. My son, if you love me, never speak of it again."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE RISING OF THE STORM.

THAT very same day, when Miss Rosedew and her niece came in to get ready for dinner, Amy cried out suddenly, "Oh, only look at the roses, aunt; how they have opened to-day! What delicious Louise Odier, and just look at General Jacqueminot! and I do declare Jules Margottin is finer than he was at Midsummer. I must cut a few, for I know quite well there will come a great frost if I don't, and then where will all my loves be?"

Amy's prediction about the weather was as random a guess as we may find in great authorities, who are never right, although they give the winds sixteen points of the thirty-two to shuffle in. But it

so turned out that the girl was right—a point of the compass never hit till a day too late by our weather-clerks.

That very same night such a frost set in as had not been known in October for very nearly a century. It lasted nine nights and eight days; twice the mercury fell more than half way from the freezing point to zero, and the grass was crisp in the shade all day, though the high sun wiped off the whiteness at noon wherever he found the way to it. Boys rejoiced, and went mitching, to slide on the pools of the furzery: no boys since their great-grandfathers had done the heel-tap in October.

But the birds did not see the fun of it. What in the world did it mean? Why, there were the hips not ripe yet, and the holly-berries come to no colour, and half the blackberries still too sour, and lo! it was freezing hard enough to make a worm cold for the stomach, even if one could get him! Surely there was some stupid mistake of two months in the piper's almanac.

The trees of the forest as well were amazed, and stood in the cold air shivering, having lost all the comfort of their leaves before the sap was out of them. When the evening settled down to freeze, and the chilly stars looked through them, and the late forester hasted home with the fagot to keep his children warm, and the crisp sleuth step of frost began to make things shrink and crackle, what could ancient trees do more than enter stubborn protest?

However, in this unaccountable mood of the weather they had no choice, except to make the best of it. So each, according to his sort, offered to the ungenial weather deference or defiance; some hung sadly limp with numbness and distressed with frozen leaves; others lifted rigid antlers more keenly outlined by the cold, more rugged and of veteran aspect, where their moss was barbed with ice.

In the hearts of these nobler trees, and among ancestral harbourage, the small birds flocked with their rustle and flutter, even before the bright sun went down. Bed is the warmest place after all; and in such weather what better thing could a hungry warbler find to do? Why, a bird might dig, and tap, and jump, and add emphasis with his tail, and cock his peartest eye down splendidly, or even flick round a great tuft of grass, and wait there ever so patient, yet never so much as a new-born worm came up for the latest intelligence. Therefore, with their feathers ruffled to an alarming bulk almost, and a mighty fuss of chirrups sinking into sleepy twitters, in they nestled, side by side, tucking their little heads under their wings quite placidly and cosily, nor heeded how the cold rime settled on gray twig and on good brown leaf.

John Rosedew met the prettiest bird that ever had nest in the New Forest, his own little duck of an Amy, in the passage by the parlour-door, at eight o'clock in the morning of that 25th of October. He kissed her white forehead lovingly, according to early usage; then

he glanced at the weather-glass, and went nearer, as if his short sight had cheated him.

"Why, Amy dear, you must have forgotten to set the glass last night."

"No, indeed, papa. I set it very carefully. You know I can do it as well as you can, since you showed me the way. It was just a little hollow last night, and I moved the Vernier scale just a hundredth part of an inch downwards, and then it was ten o'clock."

"Then I fear there is some great danger hanging over all seafaring men, especially our poor boatmen, and the dredging people of Rushford!"

Mr. Rosedew, as has been said before, was parson of Rushford as well as of Nowelhurst. At the former place he kept a curate, but looked after the poor people none the less, for the distance was only six miles; and now, as his legs were getting stiff, he had bought Coræbus to help him. Rushford lies towards the eastern end of the great Hurst shingle bank, the most dangerous part of Christchurch Bay, being fully exposed to the south-west gales, and just in the run of the double tide: in the eddy of the Needles.

"Why, what is the matter, papa? Even if it rains, it won't hurt them much. And as lovely a morning as ever was seen, and the white frost sparkling beautifully. What a magnificent sunrise! Or, at least, a very grand one."

"'Sibi temperat unda carinis.' All is smooth for the present. But I heard the lash of the ground-sea last night quite early, and quite late again. Fetch my telescope, darling, and come with me to the green room. We can see thence to St. Alban's Head; but the danger is for those beyond it. All the ships on this side of it will have time to work up the Solent. Never before have I known the mercury fall as it has done now. An inch and a tenth in only ten hours!"

When they went to bed on the previous night, the quicksilver stood at 30° 10′. Now it was at 29°, and cupped like the bottom of a champagne bottle, which showed that it still fell rapidly. But as yet the silver of the frost was sparkling on the lawn, and the morning sun looked up the heavens, as if he felt all right. Nevertheless, it was but show: he is bound to make the best of it, and, like all other warm-hearted beings, sometimes has sorry work there.

When they saw that no large craft had rounded St. Alban's Head, only that the poor cement-dredgers were working away at septaria, John and his daughter went to breakfast, hoping that no harm would be, while Aunt Eudoxia lay in bed, and reflected on her own good qualities.

Amy came out after breakfast, without any bonnet or hat on, to make her own observations. That girl so loved the open air, the ever-glorious concave, the frank palm of the hand of God, that she felt as if she had not bowed before her Friend and Maker, the all-giving, the all-loving One, until she had paid her orisons and sung

her morning hymn with His own ceiling over her. So now she walked beneath the branches laden with His jewellery, and over the ground hard-trodden by ministers doing His will, and beside the spear and the flat-grass, chilled with the awe of His breath, and among the wailing flowers, wailing and black and shrivelled up, because His face was cold to them.

For these poor Amy grieved sadly, for she was just beginning to care again for the things whose roots were outside of her. Lo, the bright chrysanthemums, plumed, reflex, and fimbriate; lo, the gorgeous dahlias, bosses quilled and plaited tight, and wrought with depth of colour; and then the elegant asters cushioned, cochleate, praying only to have their eyes looked into; most of all, her own sweet roses, chosen flowers of the chosen land—they hung their heads, and stuck together, as brown as a quartered apple. Who could look at them, who could think of them, and not feel as if some of herself were dead?

Now, walking there, this youthful maiden, fairest of Nature's works and purest, began to employ her eyes and mind upon the strange and varying aspect of the world around her. Not that she could enter into all these subtle delicacies any more than a writer may hope to trace them; for observation is the child as well as the nurse of experience; and the girlish mind (and the boyish too, at any rate for the most part) troubles itself very little about the appearances of nature. How seldom do we meet a lady who knows what way the wind is! All women believe that it must freeze harder when the sky is cloudy; not one in fifty but trembles more at the thunder than at the lightning.

Yet Amy, with true woman's instinct, being alarmed for the lives of others, after her father's prediction, looked around her carefully. And first her eyes went upwards, and they were right in doing so. Of the sky she knew less than nothing—although herself well known there; but the trees—come now, she was perfectly sure she knew something about the trees. So she did, as a child of the forest; and yet a very wee little; though more than half the ladies do. She knew an elm from a wych-elm, and a hornbeam from a beech; and what more could be expected?

The rime upon the dark tree-boles and the forward push of the branches, the rime of white fur, newly breathen but an hour ago, when a flaw from the east came cat-like, and went through without stirring any thing; this delicate down from the lips of morning, this silk-work upon night-fleece, was, as all most beautiful is, the first to fleet and vanish. Changing into a doubtful glister, which you must touch to be sure of it, then trickling away into beaded drops, like a tear that takes no denial, it came down the older and harder rime, and perhaps would bring that into its humour, and perhaps would get colder and freeze again into little lumps, like the leak from a tap. Then the white face of the rough pillared trunks,

pearled with glistening purity, showed half-round scollops of black or brown, where the bark was re-appearing, like a growing eclipse of the moon, or the sweep of a scythe in the morning. Even the bars of gates and palings, deeply mantled with ruffled ermine, and each at sunrise flashing like a tray of splintered diamonds, even these, however, serried with a million sparkling barbs, showed an ominous streak of wet, and from fur passed into wool, and from wool to yarn, and then collapsed into mere shoddy.

But the notable sight of all, at least to a loitering mind and body, the one of brightest interest, was to see the hoar-frost slowly lifting its sensitive wing from the grass. There the broad spread of the frost-dew, beading on each lance of green, crossing spears wherever space of wider leaf was given it, and crocketed and shed with spangles where the depth of occasion lay, and in and out and every where scattering candid lavishment—already this crispness and its crackling were beginning to run to wet.

But throughout the sparkling scene and among the hovering changes on the boles of the trees, and the bars of the gate, the ridge of the ruts, and the dapples of lawn,—one thing Amy observed which puzzled her, for even she knew that it was quite contrary to all usage. The thaw was not on the south side or the south-east side of any thing, though the sickly sun was gazing there ; but the melting came from the north, and took the frost aback. She wondered vainly about it, but the matter was simple enough, like most of the things which we wonder at, instead of at our own ignorance. A flaw of warm air from the north had set in ; a lower warp which shot through and threaded the cold south-eastern woof. So subtle was this sure precursor of the conflict in the air, that even the dead leaves scarcely lifted their brown edges to it, and shivered without rustling. More often we see a frost break up with a shift of the wind to the south-east and south, a gradual relaxing, a fusion of warmer air, and a great effusion of damp, a blanket of clouds for the earth, and a doubt in the sky how to use them. Then the doubt ends—as many other doubts end—in precipitation. The wind chops round to the west of south ; the moisture condenses outside our windows, instead of starring the inside ; and then come a few spits of rain. But the rain is not often heavy at first, although it is stinging and biting,—a rain which is half ashamed of itself, as if it ought to be hail.

But, after all, these things depend on things we cannot depend upon,—moods of the air to be multiplied into humours of the earth and sea, and the product traversed, indorsed, divided, touched, and sliced at every angle by solar, lunar, and astral influences.

> "Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas."
> "Blest is the man who knows when to carry his umbrella."

While yet the maiden watched and wondered, the sky began to be

slurred across with white clouds breathing out from it, as a child breathes on the blade of a knife, or on a carriage window. These blots of cloud threw feelers out, and strung themselves together, until a broad serried and serrate bar went boldly across the heavens, from south-east to north-west. It marked the point whence the gale would begin, and the quarter where it would end. From this great bar, on either side, dappled and mottled, like the wash of sepia on a drawing, little offsets straggled away, and began to wisp with a spiral motion, slow and yet perceptible.

This went on for an hour or two, darkening and deepening continually, amassing more and more of the sky, gathering vapours to it, and embodying as it gathered them. But still there was some white wan sunshine through the mustering cloud-blots and the spattering mud of the heavens; and still the good folk who had suffered from chilblains, and found it so much milder, exclaimed, "What a beautiful day!"

Then about noon a mock sun appeared, feeble, wild, and haggard, whose mates on the crown and the east of the arc could scarcely keep him in countenance. Over all this, and over the true sun and the cirrhous outrunners, heavily drove at one o'clock the laden and leaden cumulus, blurred on the outskirts with cumulostrate, and daubed with lumps of vapour which mariners call "Noah's arks."

[1]Then came the first sough of the wind, and thrilled throughout the forest—a long, prolonged, deep-drawn, dry sob, a hollow and mysterious sound, that shivered through the shadowy leaves, and moaned among the tree-boles. Away went every beast and bird that knew the fearful signal: the deer lanced away to the holm-frith; the cattle in huffs came belloking to the lew of the boughy trees; the hogs ran together, and tossed their snouts, and skittered home from the ovest; the squirrel hied to his hollow dray, the weasel slunk to his tuffet lair, and every rabbit skipped home from grass. The crows and the magpies were all in a churm; the heavy-winged heron flapped off from the brook-side; the jar-bird flicked out from the ivy-drum; the yaffingale darted across the ride with his strange discordant laugh; even the creepers that ply the trees crept into lichened fastnesses, lay flat to the bark, and listened.

Nor less the solid, heavy powers that have to stay and break the storm, no less did they, the beechen clump, the funnelled glens, the heathery bre: ;twork, even the depths of forest night—whence common winds shrink back affrighted—even the bastions of Norman oak, scarred by many a tempest-siege, and buckled by the mighty gale of 1703,—one and all they trembled at the stress of heaven impending.

[1] The writer has been blamed for using words of the forest, in attempting to describe a forest-storm; but he hopes that common sense as well as local feeling will be with him, when the stormy winds do blow.

First came fitful scuds of rain, "flisky" rain they call it, loose outriders of the storm, spurning the soft ice, as they dashed by, and lashing the woodman's windows. Then a short dark pause ensued, in which the sky swirled up with clouds, and the earth lay mute with terror. Only now and then a murmur went along the uplands.

Suddenly, ere a man might say, "Good God!" or, "Where are my children?" every tree was taken aback, every peat-stack reeled and staggered, every cot was stripped of its thatch, on the opposite side to that on which the blow was expected.

The first squall of that great tempest broke from the dark south-east. It burst through the sleet, and dashed it upwards like an army of archers shooting; ere a man could stay himself one way, it had caught him up from another. The leaves from the ground flew up again through the branches which had dropped them; and then a cloud of all manner of foliage, whirling, flustering, capering, flitting, soared high over the highest tree-tops, and drove through the sky, like dead shooting-stars.

Faster and faster flew the mad squalls after one another, screaming onward and bellowing back, dashing in and swooping out, lashing themselves and every thing. Then there came a lull. So sudden that the silence was more stunning than the turmoil. A pause for sunset; for brave men countless to see their last of sunlight. That evening, the sundown gun from Calshot was heard over all the forest.

Many of us expected fully that the next rush of air would come, like a heavy sigh, from the south-west. The expectation showed how much we underrated the magnitude of that broad storm's area. If the wind had chopped then, it would have been only a hard gale, not a hurricane.

Like a wave of the sea, it came again solidly, and from the old direction; no squall, no gust, no blast, any more; but one bodily rush of phalanxed air through a chasm in the firmament. Gaily tossing tree and tower as a girl jerks up her hat-plume, it swept the breadth of land and sea, as bisons horded sweep the snow-drifts, as Niagara breaks a cobweb.

Where the full force of that tempest broke, any man must have been mad or drunk who attempted to go to bed. Houses unroofed, great trees snapped off and flung into another tree, men caught like chaff from the winnowing and dropped somewhere in pond or gravel-pit, the carrier's van overthrown on the road, and three oaks come down to lie upon it,—some blown-away people brought news of these things, and fetched their breath up to tell them.

Our own staunch hearths rocked under us, and we looked for the walls to fall in upon us, as every mad rush came plunging.

Miss Rosedew was trying to sit with Amy, near the kitchen fire; at least where the fire should have been, but the wind had quenched

it long ago. Near them cowered Jemima and Jenny, begging not to be sent to bed. They had crawled up-stairs to see about it, and the floor rose at them—as they declared—like the shifting plate of the oven. The parlour chimney-stack had fallen ; but the sweep of the wind had borne it clear and harmless from the roof; and the thatch was welcome to take fire. That wind would have blown out the fire of London.

Now as they sat, or crouched and sidled, watching the cracks of the ceiling above, starting every now and then, as big lumps of mortar fell down the chimney, and shrinking into themselves, every time the kitchen stack groaned and laboured so, Miss Rosedew, with a wholesome spirit, was reading aloud—to little purpose, for she scarcely could hear her own voice—the prayers which are meant to be used at sea, and the 107th Psalm. And who shall say that she was wrong, especially as the devil is ever so busy in a gale of wind ?

Jemima and Amy were doing their best to catch her voice at intervals. As for Jenny, she did not care much what became of her now, not she. She knew at the last full moon that her sweetheart was thoroughly up for jilting her ; and now when she had ventured out—purely of her own self-will—the wind had taken her up any how, and whisked her like a snow-flake against the wash-house door. She was sure to have a black eye in the morning, and then it would be all up with her ; and Jemima might go sweethearting, and she could not keep her company.

The roar through the wood, the yells at the corners, the bellowing round the chimneys, the thunder of the implacable hurricane ; any mortal voice was less than a whisper into a steam-whistle. Who could tell what trees were falling ? A monster might be hurled on the roof, and not one of them would know it until it came sheer through the ceiling. Amy was pale as the cinders before her, but firm as the bars of iron, and even trying to smile sometimes at the shrieks and queer turns of the tempest. No candle could be kept alight, and the flame of the parlour lamp shook like a mitten dancing on the washing-line. But Amy was thinking dearly of the father of the household, the father of the parish, out in the blinding wind and rain, and where the wild waves were lashing. And now and then Amy wondered whether it blew so hard in London, and hoped they had no big chimneys there.

John Rosedew had taken his little bundle, in a waterproof case, and set out on foot for Rushford, when the storm became unmistakeable. He would not ride Corœbus ; first because he would have found it impossible to wipe him dry, secondly because the wind has such purchase upon a man when he is up there on the pommel. So the rector strode off in his stoutest manner, an hour or so before nightfall, and the rain went into him, neck and shoes, before he got to the peat-rick. To a resolute man, who feels sometimes that the

human hide wants tanning, there are few greater pleasures than getting basted and cracklin'd by the wet wind; only it must not come too often, neither last too long.

So John was in excellent spirits, quelching along and going pop like a ball of India-rubber, when he came on a weaker fellow-mortal, stuck fast in a chair of beech-roots.

"Why, Robert!" said Mr. Rosedew, and nine-tenths of his voice went to leeward; "Robert, my boy;—oh dear!"

That last exclamation followed in vain John's favourite old hat, which every one in the parish loved, especially the children. The hat went over the crest of the hill, and leaped into an oak-tree, and was seen no more but of turtle-doves, who built therein next summer, and for three or four generations; and all the doves were blessed, for the sake of the man who sought peace and ensued it.

"Let me go after it," cried Bob, with his knees and teeth knocking together.

"To be sure I will," replied John Rosedew—the nearest approach to irony that the worst wind ever took him; "now, Robert, come with me."

He hooked the light stripling, hard and firm, to his own staunch, powerful frame, and, like a steamer lashed alongside, forced him across the wind-brunt. And so, by keeping the covered ways, by running the grooves of the hurricane, they both got safe to Rushford; to which achievement Bob's loving knowledge of every inch of the forest contributed at least as much as the stern strength of the parson.

Pretty Bob had no right, of course, to be out there at that time; but he had heard of a glorious company of the death's-head caterpillar, in a snug potato-field, scooped from out the woodlands. He knew that they must have burrowed now, and so he set out to dig for them with his little hand-fork, directly the thaw allowed him. Any thing to divert his mind, or rather revert it into the natural channel. He had dreamed about sugar-plums, and Amy, and butterfly-nets, and Queens of Spain, and his father scowling over all, until his brain, at that sensitive time, was like a sirex, trying to get out, but stuck fast by the antennæ.

Now Bob, though awake to the little tricks and pleasant ways of Nature, as observed in cricks and crannies, knew nothing as yet of her broader moods, her purging sweeps, her clearances,—in a word, he was a stranger to the law of storms. Therefore he got a bitter lesson, and one which set him a-thinking. John Rosedew, with his grand bare head bent forward to the wind-blow, and the grey locks sweeping backward—how Amy would have cried!—towed Bob Garnet down the combe which spreads out to the sea at Rushford. The fall of the waves was short and hard—no long ocean rollers yet, only an angry beating surf, sputtering under the gravel-cliff.

They found some shelter in the hollow, which opens to the south-

south-west; for though it was blowing as hard as ever, the wind had not canted round yet; and the little village of Rushford, upon which the sea is gaining so, was happy enough in its "bunny," and could keep its candles burning.

"I'll go home with the boy at sundown, when the gale breaks, as I hope it will. His father will be in a sad state of mind; and I know what that man is. But I could not leave the boy there, neither could I go back again."

So said John Rosedew, lulled by the shelter, feeling as if he had frightened himself and all his household for nothing; almost ashamed to show himself at Octavius Pell's sea-cottage, the very last dwelling of the village. But Octave Pell knew better. He had not lived upon that coast, fagging out as a cricketer of the Church of England, with his feet and his hands ready always, and his spiked shoes holding the ground,—he had not been on the outside of all things, hoping for innings some day, without looking up at the skies sometimes, and guessing about promotion. So he knew that his rector, whom he revered beyond all the fathers of men or women—for he too was soft upon Amy—he saw that his rector was right in coming, except for his own dear sake.

Mr. Rosedew came in, with his shapely legs stuck all tight in the shrunk kerseymere (shrunk, and varnished, and puckered like plaiting, from the pelt of the rain), and by one hand still he drew the quenched and welty Bob. The wind was sucking round the cliff, and the door flew open hard enough for a weak man's legs to go with it. But "Octave" Pell—as he was called, because he must sing, though he could not—the Reverend Octavius was of a sturdy order, well-balanced and steady-going. He drew in his reeking visitors, and dried, and fed, and warmed them; Bob being lodged in a suit of clothes which he could only inhabit sparsely. Then Pell laid aside his rose-root pipe out of deference to his rector, and made Bob drink hot brandy-and-water till he chattered more than his teeth had done.

That curate was a fine young fellow, a B.A. of John Rosedew's college, to whom John had given a title for orders—not sold it, as some rectors do, for a twelvemonth's stipend. A tall, strong, gentlemanly parson, stuck up in no wise, nor stuck down; neither of the High nor Low Church rut, although an improvement on the old type which cared for none of these things. He did his duty by his parish; and, as follows almost of necessity, his parish loved and admired him. He never lifted a poor man's pot-lid to know what he had for dinner; he never made much of sectarian squabbles, nor tried to exorcise dissent. In a word, he kept his place, because he felt and loved it.

Only two rooms had Pell to boast of, but he was wonderfully happy in them. He could find all his property in the dark, and had only one silver spoon. And the man who can be happy with one,

was born with it in his mouth. Those two rooms he rented from old Jacob Thwarthawse, or rather from Mrs. Jacob, for the old man was a pilot on the Southampton Water, and scarcely home twice in a twelvemonth. The little cot looked like a boat-house at the bottom of the bunny; so close it was to the high-water mark, that the froth of the waves and the drifting skates' eggs came almost up to the threshold when the tide ran big, and the wind blew fresh.

And in the gentle summer night—pray what is it in Theocritus? John Rosedew could tell, but not I—at least, I mean without looking,—

> "Along the pinch'd caboose, on every side,
> With mincing murmur swam the ocean tide."
>
> ID. xxi. 17.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE FURY OF THE STORM.

BY the time Octavius Pell had clothed, and fed, and warmed his drenched and buffeted guests, the sun was slipping out of sight, and glad to be quit of the mischief. For a minute or two the cloud-curtain lifted over St. Alban's Head, and a narrow bar of lively green striped the lurid heavens. This was the critical period, and Mr. Rosedew was aware of it, as well as Octave Pell. Either the wind would shift to south-west quicker than vanes could keep time with it, and then there would be a lively storm, with no very wide area; or else it would come on again with one impetuous leap and roar, and no change of direction, and work to the south-west gradually, blowing harder until it got there.

The sea was not very heavy yet, when they went out to look at it; the rain had ceased altogether; there was not air enough to ruffle the fur on the back of a rabbit; but, out in the far and foamy offing, great brown trenches of jagged water cast up combing ridges.

"Your eyes are young, Mr. Pell," said the rector; "is there any ship in sight?"

"No," replied Pell, "and I'm heartily glad that there is no ship in sight; for, unless I'm much mistaken—run, sir, run like lightning. I've got no more dry clothes."

They ran for it, and were just in time before the fury came down again. Bob Garnet was ready to slip away, for he knew that his father would be wild about him; he had taken his drenched hat

from the firetongs, and was tugging at the latch of the door. But now there was no help for it.

"Now we shall have it," said Mr. Rosedew; "I have not come down for nothing. It is, what I feared this morning, the heaviest storm that has broken upon us for at least a generation. And we are not yet come to the worst of it. God grant there be no unfortunate ship making for the Needles. All our boats, as you told me, Pell, are in the Solent long ago. Robert, my boy, you must not expect to see your father until to-morrow. Of course he will guess what has happened."

The beach, or pebble bank of Hurst, is a long and narrow spit of land, growing narrower every year, which forms a natural breakwater to the racing frith of the Solent. It curves away to the south of east from the straighter and more lofty coast of Barton, Hordle, and Rushford. Hurst Castle, in which it terminates, is the eastern horn of Christchurch Bay, as Hengistbury Head is the western. The Isle of Wight and the Needle Rocks protect this bay from the east wind's power, but a due south wind brings in the sea, and a south-west the Atlantic.

Off this coast are seen at times those strange floating or rising islands called by the pilots the "Shingles;" which sometimes stay above water so long, that their surface is clad with the tender green of bladderwort and samphire; but more often they disappear after taking the air for a few short hours. For several years now they have taken no air; and a boatman, who knows every shift of the coast, says that he thinks that the "Shingles" now can never top the waves again.

Up and down the Solent channel the tide pours at a furious speed; and the rush of the strong ebb down the narrows, flushed with the cross-tide from St. Helen's, combs and pants out into Christchurch Bay, above the floodmark of two hours since. This great eddy, or reflux, is called the "double-tide;" and an awkward power it has for any poor vessel to fall into.

All that night it blew and blew, harder and harder yet; the fishermen's boats on the beach were caught up, and flung against the gravel-cliff; the stout men, if they ventured out, were snatched up as a mother snatches a child from the wheels of a carriage; the oaks of the wood, after wailing and howling, as they had done to a thousand tempests, found that outcry go for nothing, and with it went themselves.

Seven hundred towers of Nature's building showed their roots to the morning. The old moon expired at 0·32; and many a gap the new moon found, where its mother threw playful shadows. The sons of Ytene are not swift-witted, nor deeply read in the calendar; yet they are apt to mark and heed the great convulsions of nature. The old men used to date their weddings from the terrible winter of 1787; the landmark of the young men's annals is the storm of 1859.

All that night young Robert Garnet was strung by some strange tension. Of course he could not sleep amid that fearful uproar, although he was plunged and lost from sight in Octavius Pell's great chair. The only luxury Pell possessed—and that somehow by accident—was a deep, and soft, and mighty chair, big enough for three people. After one of the windows came in, which it did, with a crash, about ten o'clock, scattering Pell's tobacco-jars, and after they had made it good with books and boxes and a rug, so that the wind was filtered through it, Mr. Rosedew and his curate sat on a couple of hard old Windsors, watching the castle of Hurst. Thence would come the signal flash, if any hapless bark should be seen driving over the waters.

There they sat, John Rosedew talking, as he could to a younger man, when his great heart was moved to its depth, and the multitude of his mind in march, and his soul anticipating it: talking so that Octave Pell, following his silver tones, even through that turmoil, very nearly forgot the tempest, and the lapse of hours, and let fall on his lap the pipe which Mr. Rosedew had made him smoke.

The thunder of the billows waxing, for the wind was now south-west, began to drown the roar of the gale, and a storm of foam was flying, when the faint gleam of a gun at sea was answered by artillery's flash from the walls of old Henry the Eighth. Both men saw the landward light leap up and stream to leeward; but only the younger one descried the weak appeal from the offing.

"Where is she, Pell? Have you any idea?"

"She is away, sir, here to the right: dead in the eye of the wind."

"Then may our God and Father pity our brothers and our sisters!"

Out ran both those strong good men, leaving poor Bob (as they thought) asleep in the depth of the easy-chair. The little cottage was partly sheltered by an elbow of the cliff; otherwise it would have been flying up the bunny[1] long ago. The moment the men came out of the shelter, they were driven one against the other, and both against the cliff.

"My castle will go at high-water," said Pell, though none could hear him; "but I shall be back in time enough to get the old woman out."

Then, as far as Pell could make out in the fierce noise and the darkness, Mr. Rosedew begged him to go back, while himself went on alone. For this was the rector's especial business; he had procured the lifeboat, chosen the crew, and kept the accounts; and he thought himself responsible for any wreck that happened. But what good on earth could Pell do, and all his chattels in danger?

[1] The chink or narrow rift in the cliff-line, called in the Isle of Wight a "chine," is known in the New Forest as a "bunny."

"No good, very likely," Pell shouted, "and a good deal perhaps in-doors! Keep the sea out with a besom, sir."

Octave had a dry way with him, not only when he sang, but when he thought he saw the right, and did not mean to argue it. So rector and curate, old man and young man, trudged along together, each bending low, and throwing his weight, like a quoit, against the wind; each stopping and crouching at every tenth yard, as the blast irresistible broke on them. Crusted with hunks of froth and foam-drift, drenched by pelting sheets of spray, deafened by the thundering surf, and often obliged to fly with the wind from a wave that rushed and hissed at them, they battled for that scoop of the bay where the ship must be flung by the indraught.

At the place whence they set out, Christchurch Point, and St. Alban's Head, broke (as the wind was westering) some little of the wildest sea-brunt. But now they stood, or rather crouched, over against the wild white moil, the bourne and doom of all the driven madness of an ocean.

Here the mountain surges swept, superbly rolling; swallowing up the petty wrath of windy waves, scarcely deigning to lift their crests to even such a hurricane. After a hundred leagues of rolling, with the weight of heaven behind them, and the trumpery world in front, and their bulk as firmly built and massive as a mountain—in their arrogance, where on earth should they ever find a barrier? Each in stately grandeur left the tumbling valley of white waters to subside behind it, and with plume of snowy spray towered up and onward. Then, above the shattered ebb, and hoarse convulsive rattle of the pebbles from a dead wave, the hesitating monster hung, and flung its arching chine on high—hung with awful volume curling like the scroll of God on high; then thundered down in one vast roar through sea and land resounding.

And now, scarce half a mile from shore, as the breaking daylight showed it, heaved and pitched, and wallowed hog-like in the trough of waters, a large ship, swept and naked. Swept of her masts, of her canvas naked; but clad, alas! with men and women, clustering, clinging, cowering from the great white grave beneath them. As she laboured, reeled, and staggered up to the storm-rent heavens, and then plunged down the yawning chasm, every attitude, every gesture of terror, love, despair, and madness, could be descried on the object-glass of the over-faithful telescope. As a wan gleam from the east lit up all that quivering horror, all that plight of anguish, John Rosedew turned away in tears, and fell upon his knees, and prayed.

But Pell caught up the clear Munich glass, blocked every now and then with foam; he wiped it with his cuff, and levelled it on a stony ledge. There he lay behind the pebbles, himself not out of danger, unable to move, or look away, spell-bound by the awe of death in numbered moments coming. Round him many a sturdy boatman, gazing, listening, rubbing his eyes, wondering about the

wives and children of the brave men there. The great disaster imminent was known all over the village, and all who dared to cross the gale had crept, under shelter, hitherwards. None was fool enough to talk of boat, or tug, or lifeboat ; a child who had then first seen the sea must have known better than that. The best ship in the British navy could not have come out of the Needles in the teeth of such a hurricane.

Some of the tars had brought their old Dollonds, preventive glasses long cashiered, and smugglers' night-rakers cheek by jowl, and every sort of "perspective," fifty years old and upward, with the lenses cracked and rattling, and fungoid tufts in the object-glass. Nevertheless each man would swear that his own glass was the best of the lot, and his neighbour's "not of much count." To their minds, telescopes like spectacles suit the proprietor only.

" By Jove, I believe she'll do it !" cried Pell, the chief interpreter, his glass being the only clear one.

" Do what, sir ? what ?" asked a dozen voices hurriedly.

" Get her head round to windward, and swing into smoother water. They're in the undertow already. Oh, if they only knew it !"

They knew it, he saw, in a moment. They ran up a spare sail, ere he could speak, to the stump of the mizen-mast, and a score of brave men strained on the sheets until they had braced them home. They knew that it could not stand long ; it would fly away to leeward most likely when once they mounted the wave-crest ; but two or three minutes might save them. With eight hands jamming the helm up, and the tough canvas tugging and bellying, the ship, with the aid of the undertow, plunged heavily to windward. All knew that the ship herself was doomed, that she never could fetch off shore ; but, if she could only hold her course for some half-mile to the westward, she would turn the flank of those fearful rollers, and a good stout boat might live. For there a south-western headland broke the long fury of the sea.

Every eye was intent, every bosom drew a deep breath, as the next great billow rose under the ship, and tossed her up to the tempest. They had brought her as near to the wind as they dared, so as still to have steerage way on her, and she took the whole force of the surge on her port bow, not on her beam, as the folk ashore had feared. The sea broke bodily over her, and she staggered back from the blow, and shook through every timber, then leaped and lurched down the terrible valley, but still with the good sail holding. She was under noble seamanship, that was clear to every one, and herself a noble fabric. If she could ride but two billows more, without falling off from the wind (within three points of which her head lay), some of the crew at least might be rescued. Already a stout galley, manned with ten oars, was coming out of Christchurch Harbour, dancing like a cork on the waves, though sheltered by the headland.

The poor ship rode the next billow bravely; it was a wave that had some moderation, and the lungs of the gale for the moment were panting, just as she topped the comb of it. "Hurrah!" shouted the men ashore; "By God, she'll do it yet!"

By God alone could she do it. But the Father saw not fit. The third billow was the largest of all that had yet rolled up from the ocean. Beam-end on she clomb the mountain, heeling over heavily, showing to the shore her deck-seams,—even the companion-finial, and the poor things clinging there; a wail broke from them as the great sea struck her, and swept away half a score of them.

"Now's your chance, men. D—n your eyes! She won't hang there two minutes. Out with the boats you —— lubbers. Look sharp, and be d—d to you."

The ancient pilot, Thwarthawse, dancing and stamping, his blue jacket flapping in the wind, and his face of the deepest plum colour, roared to windward his whirlwind of oaths up an old split trumpet, down which the wind came bellowing harder than his voice went up it.

"Stow that, Jacob!" cried an ancient Scotchman, survivor of many a wreck; "can ye nae see his reverence, mon? It's an unco thing for an auld mon like you to swear at your mates in their shrouds, chap. I ken the skipper of that there ship, and he's no lubber, no more than I be."

Sandy Macbride was known to fear God, and to have fifty pounds in the savings' bank. Therefore no one flouted him.

"You're right, Mac; you're right, by George!" cried Pell. "What a glorious fellow! I can see him there holding on by the stanchion, giving his orders as coolly as if for the cabin dinner. I could die with that man."

The tear in Octavius Pell's right eye compelled him to shift the glass a bit. He was just the man who would have done even as that captain did.

"Hurrah, hurrah! they've got the launch out; only she and the gig are left. Troops on the deck, drawn up in a line, and the women hoisted in first, of course. Give them three cheers, men, although they cannot hear you! Three cheers, if you are Englishmen! Glorious, glorious! There they go; never saw such a fine thing in all my life. Oh, I wish I had been a sailor!"

The tears ran down the young parson's cheeks, and were blown into the eyes of old Macbride; or else he had some of his own.

"Shove off, shove off; now's your time, for the under-current is failing her. Both of them off, as I'm alive; and yet a third boat I could not see. What magnificent management! That man ought to command a fleet. Two of them off for Christchurch Harbour; away, away, while the wind lulls; but what is the third boat doing?"

Every one was looking: no one answered. Old Mac knew what it was, though his eyes were too old to see much.

"Captain Roberts, I'll go bail, at his old tricks again. And there's none with the sense to mutiny on him, and lash his legs, as we did in the *Samphire*."

"As the ship rolls, there is some dispute. The boat is laden to the water's edge, and the ship paying off to leeward, for there is no man at the wheel; there goes the sail from the bolt-ropes. If they don't push off, ere an oar's length, they will all be sucked into the rollers! Kind Lord of our lives, how fearful! There is but room for one life more; and not one of the three will take it. Two white-haired men and a girl. Life against honour with the old men; and what is life compared with it! Both resolved not to stir a peg; now they join to make the girl go. Her father has got her in his arms to pitch her into the boat; she clings around his neck so that both must go, or neither. He could not throw her; she falls on her knees, and clings to his legs to die with him. Smack—there, the rope is parted, and it is too late for further argument. The troops in the boat salute the officer, and he returns it as on parade."

"Name of that ship?" said Jacob curtly, to old Sandy Macbride.

"*Aliwal*, East India trader, Captain Roberts. Calcutta to Southampton."

"Then it's all up now with the *Aliwal*, and every soul on board of her."

"Don't want a pilot to tell us that," answered old Mac testily. "You've seed a many good craft, pilot, but never one as could last five minutes on the Shingle Bank, with this sea running."

"Ropes, ropes!" cried Octave Pell; "in five minutes she'll be ashore here."

"No, she 'ont, nor yet in ten," answered his landlord gruffly; "she'll fetch away to the eastward first, now she is in the tide again, specially with this gale on; and she'll take the ground over yonner, and go to pieces with the next breaker."

She took her course exactly as old Jacob mapped it out for her. He knew every run and flaw of the tide, and how it gets piled in the narrows by a very heavy storm, and runs back in the eddy which had saved so many lives there. This has nothing to do with the "double tide;" that comes after high-water.

As the good ship traced the track of death, doing as the waves willed (like a little boy's boat in the Serpentine), the people on shore could see those three, who had contested the right of precedence to another world.

They were all upon the quarter-deck; and three finer figures never yet came to take the air there, in the weariness of an Indian voyage. Captain Roberts, a tall, stout man, with ruddy cheeks and a broad white beard, stood with his hands in his pockets, and his feet asunder, and a sense of discipline in his face, as of a man who has done his duty, and has no fear of his Maker. No sign of

flinching or dismay in his weather-beaten eyes, as he watched his death roll towards him; though the gazers said that he brushed a tear off; perhaps at the thought of his family just coming downstairs at Lymington.

The land-officer beside him faced his death quite differently; perhaps with even less of fear, but with more defiance, broken, every now and then, by anguish for his daughter. He had not learned to fear the Lord, as those men do who go down into the great deep. He looked as if he felt some anger at the turbulence of the sea.

The ship, running now before wind and wave, laid her course as truly as a row-boat in a river; she did not lurch any more, or labour, but rose and fell, just showing her fore-foot or stern-post, as the billows passed under her. And so that young maiden could stand and gaze, with her father's arm thrown round her.

She was worthy to be his daughter; tall, and light of form, and calm, with eyes of wondrous brightness, she was looking at her father's face to say the last good-bye. Then she flung both arms around his neck, and fondly, sadly, kissed him. Meanwhile the ship-captain turned away, and thought of Susan Roberts. Suddenly he espied a life-belt washed into the scuppers. He ran for it in a moment, came behind the maid, and, without asking her consent, threw it over her, and fastened it. There was little chance of it helping her, but that little chance she should have.

"She'll take the ground next biller," cried the oracular Jacob; "stand by there with the ropes, boys."

On the back of a huge wave rose for the last time that unfortunate *Aliwal*. Stem on, as if with strong men steering, she rushed through the foam and the white whirl, like a hearse run away with in snowdrifts. Then she crashed on the stones, and the raging sea swept her from taffrail to bowsprit, rolled her over, pitched her across, and broke her back in two moments. The shock rang through the roar of billows, as if a nerve of the earth were thrilling.

Another mountain-wave came marching to the roll of the tempest-drum. It curled disdainfully over the side, like a fog sweeping over a hedge-row; swoop—it cast the wreck on high, as a giant tosses a fir-cone.

"I can't look any longer," cried Pell; "give me something to feel, men. Quick, there! I see something!"

He seized the bight of a rope, and rushed any how into the waters. But John Rosedew and the life-boatmen held hard upon the coil of it, and drew him with all their might back again. They hauled Octavius Pell up as a line-fisher hauls a cod-fish, and he was so bruised and stupefied, that he could not tell what he had gone for. They only saw floating timber and gear, and wreck of every sort drifting, till just for one sight-flash a hoary head, whiter than driven waters, leaped out of the comb of the billow. A naval man, or a military—who knows, and how could it matter?

Brave men ashore, all waiting ready, dashed down the steep of death to save him, if the great wave should toss up its plaything. All Rushford strained at the cables that held them from the savage recoil. Worse than useless; the only chance of it was to make more widows. The sea leaped at those gallant strong men; there were five on either cable; it leaped at them as the fiery furnace leaped on the plain of Dura. It struck the two ropes into one with a buffet, as a lion's paw shatters a cobweb; it dashed the men's heads together, and flung them all in a pile on a ballast-heap. Lucky for them that it fought with itself, and clashed there, and made no recoil. The white-haired corpse was seen no more; and all Rushford shrunk back in terror.

The storm was now at its height; and of more than a hundred people gathered on the crown of the shore, and above the reach of the billows, not one durst stand upright. Nearer the water the wind had less power, for the rampart of waves broke the brunt of it. But there no man, unless he were most quick of eye and foot, might stand without great peril. For scarcely a single billow broke, but what, in the first rebound and toss, two churning hummocks of serf met, and flashed up the strand like a mad white horse, in front of all expectation. Then a hissing ensued, and a roll of shingle, and the water poured huddling and lappeting back from the chine itself had crannied.

As brave men fled from a rush of this sort, and cowards on the bank were laughing at them, something white was seen in the curl of the wave which was breaking behind it. The ebb of that inrush met the wave and partly took the crash of it, then the white thing was shot on the shore like a pellet, and lay one instant motionless. There was no rope there, and the men hung back; John Rosedew cried "Shame!" and ran for it; but they joined hands across and stopped him. Before they could look round again, some one had raised the body. 'Twas young Bob Garnet, and in his arms lay a young maiden senseless. She had looked at him once, and then swooned away from the whirl, and the blows, and the terror. No rope round his body, no cork, no pad; he had rushed full into the raging waves, as he woke from his sleep of heaviness. He lifted the girl, and a bending giant hung thirty feet above them.

Then a shriek, like a woman's, rang out on the wind, and two great arms were tossed to heaven. Bull Garnet stood there, and strove to rush on, strove with every muscle, but every nerve strove against it. He was balanced and hung on the wind for a moment, as the wave hung over his heart's love.

Crash came the wave—what shriek should stop it, after three hundred miles of rolling?—a crash that rang in the souls of all whom youth could move or nobleness. Nothing was seen in the depth of water, the swirling, hurling whiteness, until the billow had spent its onset, and the curdle of the change was. Then Bob,

swept many a fathom in-shore, but griping still that senseless thing, that should either live or die with him—Bob, who could swim as well or better than he could climb a tree, but felt that he and his load were only dolls for the wave to dandle—down he went, after showing his heels, and fought the deadly outrush. None but Nature's pet would have thought of, none but the favoured of God could have done, it. He felt the back-wave tugging at him, he felt that he was going; if another billow broke on him, it was all up with his work upon wire-worm. Holding his breath, he flung his right leg over the waist of the maiden, dug his two hands deep into the gravel, and clapped his feet together. Scarcely knowing what was up, he held on like grim death for life, and felt a barrowload of pebbles rolling down the small of his back. Presently he saw light again, and sputtered out salt water, and heard a hundred people screaming out "Hurrah!" and felt a strong arm thrown round him—not his father's, but John Rosedew's. Three senseless bodies were borne to the village—Bull Garnet's, and Bob's and the maiden's.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

EÖA.

MEANWHILE that keen engineering firm, wind, wave, tide, and Co., had established another little business on the coast hard by. This was the general wreck and crack-up of the stout Pell-castle, a proceeding unnoticed by any one except good mother Jacob, whose attention was drawn to it forcibly, as the head of the bed fell in upon her. Thereupon the stout dame made a rush for it, taking only her cat and spectacles, and the little teapot of money. As she started at a furious pace, and presented to the elements a large superficial area, the wind could not resist the temptation, but wafted her to the top of the bunny, without her feet so much as once a-touching the blessed earth—she goes mad if any one doubts it—and planted her in a white-thorn tree, and brought an "elam" of thatch to shelter her from her own beloved roof. There, when the wind subsided, she was happily discovered by some enterprising children; the cat was sitting at her side; in one blue hand she held her specs, and in the other a teapot.

Poor Pell's easy-chair was thrown up, three miles to the westward, in the course of the next spring-tides, and, being well known all over the neighbourhood (from his lending it to sick people), was brought to him, with a round of cheers, by half a dozen fishermen. They refused the half-crown he offered them, and displayed the

greatest anxiety lest his honour should believe it was them as had taken the shine off. The workmanship not being modern, the chair was little the worse for its voyage; only it took six months to dry, and had a fine smell of brine ever afterwards. Then, having been lent to an old salt's widow, it won such a reputation, all across the New Forest, as a specific for "rheumatics in the small of the back," that old women, long quit of all small to their backs, walked the whole way from Lyndhurst, "just to sot themselves down in it, and how much was to pay, please, for a quarter of an hour?" "A shilling," said Octave Pell, "a shilling for the new life-boat that lives under Christchurch Head." Then they pulled out mighty silver watches, and paid the shilling at the fifteen minutes. The walk, and the thought of the miracle, and the fear of making fools of themselves, did such a deal of good, that a man got up a 'bus for it; but Pell said, "No; none who come by 'bus shall sit in my chair of ease."

The greedy sea returned brave Pell no other part of his property. His red tobacco-jar, indeed, was found by some of the dredgemen three or four years afterwards, but they did not know it was his, and sold it—crusted as it was with testacea, and ribboned with sea-weed—to the zealous secretary of—no matter what museum. "Roman, or perhaps Samian, or possibly Phœnician ware," cried the secretary, lit with fine—though, it may be, loose—ideas; and he catalogued it: "Phœnician in the opinion of an F.A.S. There is every reason to believe it a vase for Thuricremation." "Hollo!" cried Pell, when he went there to lecture upon cricket as played by Ulysses, "why, I'm blessed if you haven't got——" "The most undoubted Phœnician relic contained in any museum!" So he laughed with other people's cheeks, like a man of sense.

All the folk of Rushford, and many too of Nowelhurst, contributed to a secret fund for refurnishing Octavius Pell. So great were the mystery and speed, and so clever the management of the dissenting parson, that two great vans were down upon Pell before he had heard a word of it. He stood at the door of the cobbler's shop, and tried to make a speech; but the hurrahs were too many for him, and he turned away and cried. Tell us that any parson in England can be the poison of his parish, if he has but a heart of his own, and is not ashamed of having it!

At the "Crown," where the three sick people were now, a very fine trade was doing; but a finer one still upon the beach, as the sea went down and the choice contents of the *Aliwal* came up. For that terrible storm began to abate about noon on the 26th. It had blown as hard for twenty-four hours as it ever does blow in any land, except in the gaps of the Andes and during cyclones of the tropics.

Now the core of the storm had no more cells in it; and the puffs that came from the west and north-west, and so on till it got to the

pole-star, were violent indeed, but desultory, and seemed not to know where they were going. Finally, at its second midnight, the wind owned that its turn was over, and sunk (well satisfied with its work) into the arms of slumber—"placitâque ibi demum morte quievit."

And its work had been done right well. No English storm since the vast typhoon of 1703 had wrought such glorious havock upon that swearing beaver, man. It had routed his villages at the Land's End, and lifted like footstools his breakwater blocks; it had scared of their lives his Eddystone watchmen, and put out half his lighthouses; it had broken upon his royalty, and swept down the oaks of the New Forest; it had streaked with wrecks the Goodwin Sands, and washed ships out of harbours of refuge; it had leaped upon London as on a drain-trap, and jarred it as a man whistles upon his fingers; it had huddled pell-mell all the coal-trade;—saddest vaunt (though not the last), it had strewn with gashed and mangled bodies (like its own waves, countless) the coast of Anglesea and Caernarvon.

On the morning now of the 27th, with the long sullen swell gold-beater-skinned by the recovering sun, the shingle-bank was full of interest to an active trader. They had picked up several bodies with a good bit of money upon them, and the beach was strewn with oranges none the worse for a little tossing. For the stout East Indiaman *Aliwal* had touched at the Western Islands, and taken on board a thousand boxes of the early orange harvest. And not only oranges were rolling among the wrack, the starfish, the shark's teeth, and the cuttle-eggs, but also many a pretty thing, once prized and petted by women. There were little boxes with gilt and paint, sucked heartily by the salt water, and porcupine-quills rasping up from panels of polished ebony, cracked mirrors inside them, and mother-of-pearl, and manifold carving of scented wood; all the taste and the labour of man yawning like dead cockles, crimped backward, sodden and shredded, as hopeless a wreck as a drunkard.

Then there were barrels, and heavy chests, planking already like hemp in the prison-yard, bulkheads, and bulwarks, and cordage, and reeve-blocks, and ten thousand other things, well appreciated by the wreckers, who were hauling them up the bunnies; while the Admiralty droitsmen made an accurate inventory of the bungs and the blacking bottles. Some of the sailors, and most of the passengers, who had escaped in the boats to Christchurch, came over to look for any thing that might turn up of their property. Hereupon several fights ensued; and many poor fellows obtained occasion for a closer inspection of the Rushford stratum than the most geological members of any society could desire; until the police came down in force, and quenched all other rights of salvage in strict justice to their own.

Nevertheless there was yet one field upon which the police could

not interfere ; although Jack wished for nothing better than to catch the lubbers there. This was Jack's own domain, the sea, where was now beginning a lively search for the body of Colonel Nowell. His servant had hurried from Christchurch to Nowelhurst to report the almost certain death of Sir Cradock's only brother. He did not go first to ascertain it : for the road along the cliffs was impassable during the height of the storm.

Sir Cradock received the announcement with very few signs of emotion. He had loved that Clayton in early youth, but now had almost forgotten him ; and Clayton had never kept his brother at all apprised of his doings. Sir Cradock had gone into mourning for him, some three years ago ; and Colonel Nowell never took the trouble to vindicate his vitality until Dr. Hutton's return. And, even though they had really known and loved one another as brothers, the loss would have been but a tap on the back to a man already stabbed through the heart. Therefore Sir Cradock's sorrow exploded (as we love to make our griefs do, and as we so often express them) in the moneyed form : "I will give 500*l.* to the man who finds my poor brother's body."

That little speech launched fourteen boats. What wrecker could hope for any thing of a tenth part of the value? Men who had sworn that they never would pull in the same boat again together—might the Great Being, the Giver of life, strike them dead if they did !—forgot the solemn perjuration, and cried, "Give us your flipper, Ben ; after all, there are worse fellows going than you, my lad :" and Ben responded, "Jump into the starn-sheets ; you are just the hand as we want, Harry. Many's the time I've thought on you." Even the dredging-smacks hauled in-shore from their proper business, and began to dredge for the Colonel ; till the small boats, unable to stand such trespass, resolved on united action, tossed oars, and held solemn council. Several speeches were made, none of them very long, but all embodying that fine sentiment, "fiat justitia, ruat cœlum," in the form of "fair play, and be d—d to you." Then Sandy Mac, of the practical mind, made a suggestion which was received with three wild rounds of cheers.

"Give 'em a little ballast, boys, as they be come in-shore to dredge for it."

With one consent the fourteen boats made for the shore, like the fleet of canoes described by the great Defoe. Nor long before each shallop's nose "grated on the golden sands." The men in the dredging-smacks looked at the sky to see if a squall was coming. And soon they got it, thick as hail, and as hot as pepper. The fourteen boats in battle array advanced upon them slowly, only two men rowing in each, all the rest standing up, and every man charged heavily. When they were at a nice wicket distance, old Mac gave the signal, and a flight of stones began, which, in the words of the ancient chroniclers, "well-nigh darkened the noonday sun." The

bravest dredger durst not show his head above the gunwale ; for the Rushford stones are close of grain, and it is sweeter to start than to stop them. As for south-westers and dreadnoughts, they were no more use than vine-leaves in a storm of electric hail.

> "Ah, little then those mellow grapes their vine-leaf shall avail,
> So thickly rattles on *the tiles* the pelting of the hail."
>
> GEORG. i. 448.

The dredgers gave in, and hoisted a shirt as a signal for a parley. The Rushford men refused to hear a syllable about "snacks." What they demanded was "unconditional surrender ;" and the dredgers, having no cement-stones on board, were compelled to accept it. So they took up their bags, and walked the smacks off three miles away to their station, with very faint hopes indeed that the obliging body might follow them. The boatmen celebrated their victory with three loud cheers for Sandy Mac, and a glass of grog all round. Then they returned to the likeliest spot, and dragged hard all the afternoon.

"Tarnation 'cute body," cried Ben, "as ever I come across. Who'd a thought as any perfessing Christian would have stuck to Davy Jones's locker, and refooged the parson and clerk so? Spit on your grapples, my lads of wax, and better luck the cast after."

"The Lord kens the best," replied Sandy Mac, with a long-drawn sigh, "us poor vessels canna do more than is the will of the Lord, boys. Howsomever, I brought a bit of bait, a few lug-worms, and a soft crab or two ; and please the Lord I'll rig my line out, and see if the bass be moving. And likely there may be a tumbling cod on the run speering after the puir bodies. Ah, yes, the will of the Lord ; we ates them, and they ates us."

The canny old Scotchman, without foregoing his share in the general venture—for he helped to throw the grapnels, or took a spell at the rudder—rigged out a hook on his own account, and fastened the line to the rowlocks.

"Fair play, my son," cried Ben, winking at his comrades ; "us go snacks in what you catch, mind. And the will of the Lord be done."

"Dinna ye wish ye may get it ?"—the old man glowered at him indignantly—"I'll na fish at all on that onderstanding."

"Fish away, old boy, and be blessed, then. I see he ain't been in the perwentive sarvice for nothing. But I'm blowed if he'll get much supper, Harry, if it's all to come off that darned old hook." They all laughed at old Mac, who said nothing, but regarded his line attentively.

With many a joke and many an oath, they toiled away till the evening fog came down upon the waters. Then, as they turned to

go home, old Mac felt a run upon his fishing-gear. Hand over hand he began to haul in, coiling the line in the stern-sheets.

"It's a wapping big fish, as ever I feel, mates; na, na, ye'll no touch it, or ye'll be claiming to come and sup wi' me. And deil a bit—the Lord forgive me—will ye ha', for grinning at an auld mon the likes of that, I tell ye. Lord ha' mercy on me, a wake and sinful crater!"

They all fell back, except Macbride, as before them in the twilight rose the ashy grey face and the long white hair of Colonel Clayton Nowell.

Mac stuck to his haul like a Scotchman; to him the main chance was no ghost. Many a time has he told that story, and turned his quid upon it, cleverly raining between his teeth with fine art to prolong the crisis.

The line being his, and the hook being his, and the haul of his hands only, Sandy Mac could never see why he should not have all the money. The question came close to litigation; but for that, except as a word of menace, Mac was a deal too wide awake. He compounded at last for 300*l.*, and let the other four share the residue.

So poor Colonel Nowell's countenance, still looking grand and dignified, was saved from the congers and lobsters; and he sleeps close by his nephew and namesake in Nowelhurst churchyard. The body of Captain Roberts was found a long way up the Solent. He had always carried a weather helm, and shaped a good course for harbour. May they rest in peace!

We may trust that Captain Roberts so rests, and hope we may, in the mercy of God, the same of the brave old Colonel. At least, which of us shall condemn him to that eternal punishment, whose existence our divines contend for in a manner so purely disinterested? He had been a harumscarum man; and now that he is drowned and buried, we may enter upon his history with the charity due to both quick and dead, but paid to the latter only.

A soldier is, in many things, by virtue of his calling, a generous, careless man. We have always credited the sailor with these popular qualities; hornpipes, national drama, and naval novels imbuing us. Yet is the sailor, upon the whole, a more careless man than the soldier? Jack is obliged, by force of circumstance, to bottle up his money, his rollicksomeness and sentimentality, and therefore has more to get rid of when he comes ashore once in a twelvemonth. But spread the outburst over the year, strike the average of it, and the rainfall at Aldershot will equal that at Portsmouth.

And so to watch the Army List—which at length he grew tired of doing—was the only way left to the English brother to know in what land might the Indian be. Even the most careful of us begin to feel that care is too much for the nine lives of a cat, when

Fahrenheit scores 110° in the very coolest corner, and the punkah is too hot to move. So, after one or two Griffin letters, full of marvels which the writer pretended not to marvel at, a silence, as of the jungle, ensued, and Sir Cradock thought of tigers. Then the slides of his own life began to move upon him; and less and less every year he thought of the boy who had laughed and cried with him.

Lieutenant Nowell was ordered suddenly to the borders of the Punjaub, and for twenty years his brother Cradock drank his health at Christmas, and wondered how about the Article against praying for the dead. The next thing he heard, though it proved his own orthodoxy, disproved it by making him swear hard. Clayton Nowell had married; married an Affghan woman, to the great disgust of his brother officers, and the furious disdain of her kinsmen. A very fine family of Affghan chiefs immediately loaded their fusils, and swore to shoot both that English dog and their own Bright Eyes of the Morning.

"To think," cried Sir Cradock Nowell, "that a brother of mine should disgrace himself, and (what matters far more) his family, by marrying a wretched low Affghan woman!"

"To think," cried Mohammed Khans, "that a sister of ours should disgrace herself, and (what matters far more) her family, by marrying a cursed low English dog!"

Which party was in the right, judge ye who understand the matter. The officers' wives got over their prejudice against Bright Eyes of the Morning, and matronized, and petted, and tried to make a Christian of her. Captain Nowell adored her; she was so elegant in every motion, so loving, and so simple. She quite reformed him for the time from his too benevolent anthropology, from the love of dice, and the vinous doings which the Prophet does not encourage.

But the poor thing died in her first confinement, while following her husband's regiment at the foot of the Himalayah, leaving her new-born babe to the care of a faithful Affghan nurse, who had kept at her dear lady's side, even among the infidels. This good nurse, being great of soul, and therefore strong of faith, could not bear that the child of her mistress, the highest blood of the Affghans, should become a low Frank idolater. So she set off with it, in the dark night, crouching past the sentinels, thieves, and other camp followers, and trusted herself to the boundless jungle, with only the stars to guide her. She put the wailing child to her breast, for her own dear babe was dead, and hushed it from the vigilant ears of the man-eating tiger. Then off again for Affghanistan, six hundred miles in the distance.

How this wonderful woman, soothing and coaxing the little stranger (obtrusively remarkable for the power of her squalls), how she got on through the thorns, the fire, the famine, the jaws of the

tiger, and, worse than all, the pestilent fever, bred from the rich stagnation of that alluvial soil, is more than any man unversed in woman's tenacity may tell. Enough that with her eyes upon the grand religious heights—heathen high places we should call them —she struggled along through nearly three-quarters of her pilgrimage, and then she fell among robbers. A villanous hill-tribe, of mixed origin, always shifting, never working, never even fighting when they could run away, hated and despised by the nobler mountain races, the pariahs of the Himalayah, ignorant of any good, debased as any Africans—in a single word, Rakshas, or worshippers of the devil. A nice school of education for a young lady of tender years—or rather months—to commence in.

The nurse was allotted to one of their chiefs, and the babe was about to be knocked on the head, when it struck an enlightened priest that in two years' time she would make a savoury oblation to the devil; so the Affghan woman was allowed to keep her, until she began to crawl about among the dogs and babes of the station. Here she so distinguished herself by precocious skill in thieving, that her delighted owner conferred upon her the title of "Never-spot-the-dust," and even instructed her how to steal the high priest's knife of sacrifice. That last exploit saved her life. Such a genius had never appeared in any tribe of the Rakshas until this great manifestation.

So "Never-spot-the-dust" was well treated, and made much of by her owner, to whom she was quite a fortune; and soon all the band looked up to her as the future priestess of the devil. For ten years she wandered about with them, becoming every year more important, proud that none could approach her skill in stealing, lying, and dancing, utterly void of all religion, except the few snatches of Moslemism which her nurse had contrived to impart, and the vague terror of the evil spirit to whom the wild men paid their vows. But when she was ten years old, a tall and wonderfully active child, and just about to be consecrated by the blood of inferior children, a British force drew suddenly all around the nest of robbers. Of late the scoundrels had done things that made John Bull's hair stand on end; and, when his hair is in that condition, sparks are apt to come out of it.

Seeing no chance of escape, and having very faint hopes of quarter, the robbers fought with a bravery which quite astonished themselves; but the evil spirit was against them—a rare inconsistence on his part. Their rascally camp was burnt, which they who had burned some hundreds of villages looked upon as the grossest cruelty, and more than half of their number were sent home to their patron and guardian. Then the Affghan nurse, so faithful and so unfortunate, fled from the burning camp with her charge, fell before the British colonel, and poured forth all her troubles. The Englishman knew Major Nowell, and had heard some

parts of his history; so he took "Never-spot-the-dust" to her father, who was amazed at once and amused with her.

She could run up the punkah, and stand on the top, and twirl around on one foot; she could cross the compound in three bounds; she could jump upon her father's shoulder, and stay there with the spring of her sole; she could glide along over the floor like a serpent, and hold on with one hand to any thing. And then her most wonderful lightness of touch; she had fully earned her name, she could brush the dust without marking it. She could come behind her father's back, crawling over the table, and fasten his sword-hilt to his whiskers, without his knowing a thing of it. She could pick all his pockets, of course; but that was too rude an operation for her to take any delight in it. What she delighted to do, and what even she found difficult, was to take off his shoes and stockings without his being aware of it. It was a beautiful thing to see her: consummate skill is beautiful, in whatever way exhibited. The shoe she could get off easily enough, but the difficulty was with the stocking; and there the chief difficulty was through the sensitiveness of the skin, unaccustomed to exposure. Though she had never heard of temperature, evaporation, or any thing long, her genius told her the very first time where the tug was and how to meet it. Keeping her little cornelian lips—lips which you could see through—just at the proper distance, she would breathe so softly upon the skin that the breath could not be felt, as inch by inch she lowered down the thin elastic covering. Then she would jump up out of the ground, and shout into his ears, with a voice of argute silver,—

"Faddery, will 'oo have 'oor shoe? Fear to go wiyout him?"

She began to talk English, after a bit; and the weatherbeaten Colonel—for now he had got that far—who had never looked upon any child, except as one rupee per month—thinking of his beloved Bright Eyes of the Morning, who might, with the will of God, have made a first-rate man of him, only she was too good for him,—thinking of her, and seeing the gleam of her glorious eyes in her child, he loved that child beyond all reason, and christened her "Eöa."

He never took to bad things again. He had something now in pledge with God; a part of himself that still would live, and love him when he was skeleton. And this, his better part, should learn how lying and stealing do not lead to the right half of the other world.

His ideas about that other world were as dormant as Eöa's; but now he began to think about it, because he wanted to see her there. So, after a little weeping, the whole of which was not feminine, Eöa Nowell was sent to the best school in Calcutta, where she taught the other young ladies some very odd things indeed.

Wherever she went, she must be foremost; "second to none"

was her motto. Therefore she learned with amazing quickness; but it was not so easy to unlearn.

Then arose that awful mutiny, and the Colonel at Mhow was shot through the neck, and let lie, by his own soldiers. His daughter heard of it, and screamed, and no walls ever built would hold her. All the way from Calcutta, up the dreary Ganges, she forced her passage, sometimes by boat, sometimes on her weariless feet.

She had never cared much for civilization, and loved every blade of the jungle. The old life revived within her, as she looked upon the broad waters, and the boundless yellow tangle, wherein glided no swifter thing, nothing so elegant as herself.

She found her darling father in some rude cantonment, prostrate, helpless, clinging faintly to the verge of death. Dead long ago he must have been but for Rufus Hutton; and dead even now he would have been but for his daughter's presence. His dreamy eyes went round the hut to follow her graceful movements; she alone could tend the wounds as if with the fall of gossamer, she alone could soothe and fan the intolerable aching. They looked into each other's eyes, and cried without thinking about it.

Then, as he gradually got better. and the surge of trouble passed them, Eöa showed for his amusement all her strange accomplishments. She had not forgotten one of them in the grand school at Calcutta. They had even grown with her growth, and strengthened with her strength.

She would leap over Rufus Hutton's head like a flash of light, and stand facing him, without a muscle moving, and on his back would be a land-crab; she would put his up-country hat on the floor, and walk on one foot round the crown of it; she would steal his case of instruments, and toss them in the air all open, and catch them all at once.

By her nursing and her loving, her stealing and her mockery, she won Dr. Hutton's heart so well that he pledged himself to be her father, if the worthy Colonel failed to gird his old sword on again.

Then at barely three hours' notice all had to fly for their very lives; for the ebb of the rebellion swept through that district mightily. Eöa went to school again, and her father came to see her daily, until he was appointed to a regiment having something more than name and shadow.

Now Eöa, having learned every thing that they can teach in Calcutta, the Himalayah, or the jungle, was coming to England to receive the down and crown of accomplishments. Who could tell but what they might even teach her affectation? Youth is plastic and imitative; and she was sure to find plenty of models.

Not that the honest Colonel wished to make her a fashionable doll. His own views were wide and grand, only too philoprogenitive. Still, like most men of that class, who, upon sudden reformation, love Truth so much that they roll upon her, having no

firm rules of his own, and being ashamed to profess any thing, with the bad life fresh in memory, he took the opinion of old fogeys who had been every bit as unblest as himself, but had sown with a drill their wild oats. The verdict of all was one—"Miss Nowell must go to England."

Finding his wound still troublesome, he resolved to retire from service; he had not saved half a lac of rupees, and his pension would not be a mighty one; but, between the two, there would be enough for an old man to live upon decently and go wherever he was told that his daughter ought to go.

He had seen enough of life, and found that it only meant repentance; all that remained of it should be for the pleasure and love of his daughter. And he knew that there was a sum in England, which must have been long accumulating—a sum left on trust for him and his children, under a very old settlement. He would never touch a farthing of it; every farthing should go to Eöa. Bless her dear eyes; they had the true light of his own "Bright Eyes of the Morning."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

INTRUDERS ARE EXTRUDED.

EöA was now sixteen years old, tall, and slim, and graceful as the creepers of tropic woodlands. Her face was of the clearest oval, a quick concise terse oval, such as we find in the eggs of wild birds rather than of tame ones. Her eyes were of bewildering brightness, always flashing, always moving, rarely allowing the gazer time to dwell upon their colour. Indeed they seemed sometimes to be of no decided colour, but of a pure dark lustre, such as a clear swift river has, when overhung by palm-trees. Her complexion, beautifully soft and even, was toned with a delicate eastern tinge, like that fawn-coloured light which sometimes flushes the sky at summer sunrise. And her warm oriental blood suffused it, at the slightest emotion, as the leaping sun pervades the heaven with a flood of limpid rubies.

She had never been flattened by education: all her qualities and feelings, like her beauty, were in excess. She showed it in the quick rise and fall of her lovely throat and neck, in the sudden grace of her movements, in the infinite variety of attitudes and aspects.

Whatever she thought, she said at once; yet none could take it for "boldness." Her modes of thought were as widely different from those of an English maiden as a wild honeysuckle differs in

form, habit, and scent, from a rose. She cared for no one's opinion of her, any more than the wind cares how a tree swings; unless indeed it were one whom she loved, and then she would crawl to please him. For she loved with all her heart and soul, and hated with no less; and she always took care in either case to apprise the object of it. And yet, with all her depth of passion, Eöa was pure of heart and mind,—as pure as Amy Rosedew.

She soon recovered from her bruises, being perfectly healthy, and elastic as india-rubber. Nevertheless she would not have been saved from that terrible sea but for the generosity of poor Captain Roberts and the gallantry of Bob Garnet.

Now Bob was hurt rather seriously, and being (as we are well aware) an uncommonly shy young fellow, he was greatly astonished, and shocked a little, when on the Friday morning a beautiful girl, very strangely dressed, ran to the side of his sofa, threw her arms round him, and kissed him till he was out of breath, and his face was wet with the dew of her tears.

"Oh, please don't," said Bob; "I am sure I don't deserve it."

"Yes, you do; and I will marry you when I am old enough. I don't know what you are like, and I don't care two straws, directly they told me what you had done. Only I must have papa's leave. Kiss me again, if you think it is good. Now where is my darling father?"

"What, don't you know? Haven't they told you? Oh, poor thing!"

At the tone of his voice she leaped back, like a diving bird at the flash of a gun, and stood with her little hands clasped on her head, her eyes with their deep light quivering, and the whole of her form swinging to and fro with the gasp of sudden terror. Then she spoke with a hollow depth, which frightened Bob more than the kissing,—

"They told me that he was well, gone to his brother somewhere, and I thought it wasn't like him to leave me so, and—tell me the truth, or I'll shake you to pieces."

"No, don't," said Bob, as she leaped at him; "I have had shaking enough."

"Yes, you poor boy, and for my sake. I am a brute, I know. Tell me the truth, if you love me."

"Your dear father is dead. But they have found his body."

"Do you mean to say that God has been so wicked as to kill my father?"

"God knows best," said Bob; he could think of nothing else to say.

"No, He doesn't. No, He doesn't. No, He never knows any thing. He couldn't have known who he was, and how terribly I loved him, or He wouldn't have the heart to do it. Oh, you wicked boy; oh, you wicked boy! I will never forgive you for saving me. Hya, hya, hya!"

Bob never saw such a thing before, and never will again. And he won't be much the loser; although the sight was magnificent. The screams and shrieks of the clearest voice that ever puzzled echo brought up the landlord and landlady, and our good friend Rufus Hutton, who had set forth full speed from home on hearing about the *Aliwal*. He caught Eöa in his arms, carried her back to her room, and dosed her. He gave her some Indian specific, some powder of a narcotic fungus, brought through his old experience.

It stupefied her for nearly three days, and even then she awoke into the dreamy state of Nirwana, that bliss of semi-consciousness, like mild annihilation, into which the Buddha is absorbed, and to which all pious Buddhists look as their eternal happiness. Then she opened her delicate tapering arms, where you could see the grand muscles moving, but never once protruding, and she called for her darling father to come. Finding that he did not come, she was satisfied with some trifling answer, and then wanted to have Bob instead; but neither was Bob forthcoming.

On the very day when Dr. Hutton came to look for Eöa, Mr. Garnet found himself getting better from that wretched low nervous fever into which his fright had thrown him. Then he asked Dr. Hutton whether there would be any danger in moving Robert, and, finding that there would be none whatever, if it were carefully managed, he ordered a carriage immediately, and with some of his ancient spirit. The Crown, which had the cross-bar of its N set up the wrong way (as is done, by-the-bye, on the roof of Hampton Court chapel, and in many other places), made public claim to be regarded as a "commercial hotel and posting-house." No Rushford folk having yet been known to post any thing, except a letter at rare intervals, and a bill at rarer, this claim of the Crown had never been challenged, and strangers entertained a languid theoretical faith in it. But Mr. Brown looked very blue when Bull Garnet in reviving accents ordered "a chaise and pair at the door in half an hour's time; a roomy chaise, if you please, because my son must keep his feet up."

"Yes, sir; yes, to be sure, sir; I quite understand, sir. It shall be attended to, sir."

"Then why don't you go and order it?"

"To be sure, sir; I forgot. I will speak to Mrs. Brown, sir."

Mrs. Brown being a woman of resource, mounted the boy on her donkey, the only quadruped she possessed, but a "wonner to go," as the boy said, "when you knows the right place to prog him in," and sent him post-haste to Lymington, whence the required conveyance arrived in about an hour and a half.

Rufus Hutton, having promised to be at home that evening, left Eöa to sleep off her heavy soporific, and followed the carriage on horseback; neither did he leave its track where the Ringwood Road turns off, for he had undertaken to tell Sir Cradock how his niece

was getting on. He started nearly half an hour after the Lymington chaise, for Polly would never demean herself by trotting behind the "posters." During that half-hour he drank hot brown brandy-and-water, although he could not bear it, to ingratiate him with Mrs. Brown for the sake of the poor Eöa. For Mrs. Brown had no other hot method of crowning the flowing bowl.

And now while we think of it, let us warn all gentle and simple people who deign on this tale of the New Forest, never to ask for pale brandy within the perambulations. How do you think they make it? By mixing brown brandy with villanous gin. Rufus was up to this, of course; and, as he must take something for the good of the house, and to get at the kindly kernel of the heavy-browed hostess, he took that which he thought would be least for his own evil. Then, leaving Mrs. Brown (who, of course, had taken her own glass at his sole charge and largesse, after fifty times "Oh no, sir, never! Oh Lord, how my Brown would be shocked!"), having imbued that good Mrs. Brown, who really was not a bad woman—which means that she was a good one, for women have no medium—with a strong aromatic impression that he was a pleasant gentleman, and no pride, not a bit of it, in him, no more than you nor me might,—off he trotted at a furious pace, smoking two cheroots at once.

Really there was and is—for he still inhales the breeze of life down a fine cigar, and looks browner and redder than ever—in spite of all his troubles in connexion with this story, which took a good deal out of him, there was and is no happier man in our merry England than the worthy Rufus Hutton. And, as all happiness is negative, and goes without our knowing it, and only becomes a positive past for us to look back upon, so his went before it came, and goes or e'er it comes. And yet he enjoys it none the less; he multiplies it by three for the past and by nine for the future, and he never finds it necessary to deduct for the present moment.

Happy man who never thinks beyond salutary average, who can accept, in perfect faith, the traditions of his forbears, and yet is shrewd enough to hope that his grandsons will discard at least a part of his acceptance,—who looks upon the passing life as a thing he need not move in, a world which must improve itself, and every day is doing so. And all the while he sympathizes with his fellow-men, enjoys a bit of human nature, laughs at the cross-purposes of native truth and training, loves whatever he finds to be true, and does his best to foster it, is pleased with his after-dinner story, and feels universally charitable; then smiles at his wife, and kisses his children; and goes to bed with the firm conviction that they are worth all the rest put together.

Yet this man's happiness is not sound, because it is built upon selfishness.

In Nowelhurst village Dr. Hutton met Mark Stote, the game-

keeper, who begged him to stop for a moment, just to hear a word or two. Rufus, after hearing his news, resolved to take the upper road to the Hall, past Mr. Garnet's house; it was not so very far out of his way, and perhaps he might be of service there, and—ah, yes, Dr. Hutton, this last was the real motive, though you may not have thought so—what a fine opportunity to discover something which was plaguing him! Perhaps the proper thing to say is, the want of which was plaguing him.

For Rufus took so kind an interest in his neighbours' affairs, that any thing not thoroughly transparent in their dealings, mode of life or speech, or management of their households, was to him the subject-matter of continual mental scratchings. Ah, how genteel a periphrase, worthy of Bailey Kettledrum; how happily we have shown our horror of that English monosyllable, beginning with the third vowel, which must be (according to Dr. Aldrich) the correlative of scratch! Score two, and go on after Dr. Hutton.

He overtook the Garnets twain just at their front gate, whence the house could not be seen, on account of a bank of evergreens. The maid came out with her cap flying off, and all her mind distracted. Then Dr. Hutton, checking his mare, for the road was very narrow, heard the entire dialogue.

"Oh, sir! oh, master! have you heard of it? Such a thing, to be sure!"

"Heard of what, Sarah? Of course I have heard of the great disaster at Rushford."

"No, no. Here, sir, here! The two big trees is down on the house. It's a mussy as Nanny and me wasn't killed. And poor Miss Pearl have been in hysterics ever since, and not eat a mossel. There, you can hear her screeching now, worse than the mangle, ever so much."

Mr. Garnet did not say a word, but set off for the house full speed, even forgetting that Bob wanted help to get from the gate to the doorway.

Then Dr. Hutton jumped down from his mare, and called to the driver to come and hold her, just for a minute or two; no fear of the post-horses bolting. Finding good excuse in Bob, who really wanted some support, he led him through the shrubbery. When they came within full view of the house, they were quite amazed at the mischief. The two oaks interlocked had fallen upon it, and, crashing as they did from the height above, the breaches they made were hideous. They had cloven the house into three ragged pieces, from the roof-ridge down to the first floor, where the solid joists had stopped them. It had happened in the afternoon of the second day of the tempest; when the heart of the storm was broken, but tremendous squalls came now and then from the bright north-west. Mr. Garnet's own bed was occupied by the tree which he detested. Pearl had screamed "Judgment, judgment!" and danced among

the ruins ; so the maid was telling Mr. Garnet, as he feared to enter his own door.

"Judgment for what?" asked Rufus Hutton, and Mr. Garnet seemed not to hear him.

"I am sure I don't know, sir," answered the maid, "for none of us done any harm, sir ; unless it was the bottle of pickled onions, when master were away, and there was very few of them left, sir, very few, I do declare to you, and we thought they was on the turn, sir, and it seemed such a pity to waste them. And please, sir, we've all been working like horses, though frightened out of our lives 'most ; and we fetched down all the things from your room, where the cupboards was broken open, for 'fraid it should come on to rain, sir ; and we've taken all our meals standing, sir ; and made up a bed on the parlour sofy, and another upon the dresser ; and Miss Pearl, what turns she have given us——Here she comes, I do declare."

"Dr. Hutton," said Bull Garnet hastily, "good-bye ; I am much obliged to you. I shall see you, I hope, next week. Good-bye, good-bye. Excuse me."

But before he could get him out of the way—for Rufus lingered strangely—Pearl Garnet came into the little hall, with her hair all down her back, and her eyes distended fearfully.

"There, there it is," she cried, "there it is, I tell you ! No wonder the tree came down upon it. No wonder the house was crushed for it." And she pointed to a shattered box, tilted up endwise, among a heap of account-books, clothes, and furniture.

"Oh yes, you may look at it. To be sure you may look at it. God would not have it hidden longer. I have done my best, God knows, and my heart knows, and my—I mean that man there knows. Is there any thing more I can do for you, any thing more, you very dearest darling of a father ? You have done so much for me, you know. And I will only ask you one little thing—put me in his coffin."

"The girl is raving," cried Mr. Garnet. "Poor thing, it comes from her mother."

"No, it comes from her father," said Pearl, going boldly up to him, and fixing her large bright eyes upon his. "Do as you like with me ; I don't care ; but don't put it on any one else. Oh, father, father, father !"

Moaning, she turned away from him ; and then sprang into his arms with shrieks. He lifted her tenderly, and forgot all about his own safety. His great tears fell on her wan, sick face ; and his heavy heart throbbed for his daughter only, as he felt hers bounding perilously. He carried her off to an inner room, and left them to their own devices.

"I should like uncommonly," said Rufus Hutton, rubbing his chin, "to know what is in that box. Indeed, I feel it my duty at once to ascertain."

"No, you shan't," cried Bob, limping across in front of it; "I know no more than you do, sir. But I won't have father's things pryed into."

"You are very polite," replied the Doctor; "a chip of the old block, I perceive. But, perhaps, you will believe me, my boy, when I tell you that, if ever there was a gentleman totally devoid of improper curiosity, it is Dr. Rufus Hutton, sir."

"Oh, I am so glad," said Bob; "because you won't be disappointed, then."

Rufus grinned, in spite of his wrath; but he was not to be baffled so easily. He could not push poor Bob aside, in his present disabled state, without being guilty of cowardice. So he called in an auxiliary.

"Betsy, my dear, your young mistress wished me just to examine that box. Be kind enough to bring it to the light here, unless it is too heavy for your little hands."

Oh, if he had only said "Miss Sarah," what a difference it might have made!

"Betsy, indeed!" cried Sarah, who had followed her mistress, but, being locked out, had come back to see the end of it; "my name, sir, is nothing so low as that. My name is Sarah Mackarness, sir, very much at your service; and my mother keeps a potato-shop, the largest business in Lyndhurst, sir. Betsy, indeed! and from a stranger, not to say a strange gentleman, for fear of making a mistake. And as for my hands"—she thought he had been ironical, for her hands were above regulation size—"my hands are such as pleased God to make them, and honest hands, any how, and doesn't want to interfere with other people's business. Oh, what will poor Nanny say, to think of me, Sarah Mackarness, be permiscuous called Betsy?"

At this moment, when Sarah Mackarness, having recovered breath, was starting into another native discourse on prænomina, and Rufus was calling upon his resources for some constitutional measure, Bull Garnet came back, treading heavily, defiant of all that the world could do. His quick eyes, never glimpsing that way, but taking in all the room at once, espied the box unmeddled with, and Bob upon guard in front of it. He was his own man now again. What did he care for any body so long as he had his children?

"Dr. Hutton, I thought that you were gone."

"You see I am not," said Rufus, squaring his elbows, and looking big, for he was a plucky little fellow; "and, what's more, I don't mean to go until I know what there is in that box of yours."

"Box, box!" cried Bull Garnet, striking his mighty forehead, as if to recall some memory; "have we a box of yours, Dr. Hutton?"

"No, no; that box of your own. Your daughter told us to examine it. And, from her manner, I believe that I am bound to do so."

"Bound to examine one of my boxes!" Bull Garnet never looked once that way, and Rufus took note of the strange avoidance; "my boxes are full of confidential papers; surely, sir, you have caught my daughter's—I mean to say, you are labouring under some hallucination."

"There are no papers in that box. The contents of it are metal. I have seen one article already through the broken cover, and shall not forget its shape. Beware; there have been strange things done in this neighbourhood. If you refuse to allay my suspicions, you confirm them."

The only answer he received was a powerful hand at the back of his neck, a sensation of being lifted with no increase of facilities for placid respiration; finally, a parabolic curve of great rapidity through the air, and a loud sound as of a bang. Recovering reason's prerogative, he found himself in a dahlia, whose blossoms, turned into heel-balls by the recent frost, were flapping round his countenance, and whose stake had gone through his waistcoat back, and grazed his coxendix, or something; he knows best what it was, as a medical man deeply interested.

He had also a very unpleasant reminiscence of some such words as these, to which he had no responsive power, "You won't take a hint like a gentleman; so take a hit like a blackguard."

Dr. Rufus Hutton was not the man to sit down quietly under an insult of any sort. At the moment he felt that brute force was irresistibly in the ascendant, and he was wonderfully calm about it. He shook himself, and smoothed his waistcoat, and tried the stretch of his braces; then never once looked towards the house, never shook his fist, nor so much as frowned. He walked off to his darling Polly as if nothing at all had happened; gave the man a shilling for holding her, after looking long for a sixpence; then mounted, and rode towards Nowelhurst Hall, showing no emotion whatever. Only Polly knew that burning tears of a gallant man's bitter sense of outrage fell upon her glossy shoulder, and were fiercely wiped away.

At the Hall he said nothing about it; never even mentioned that he had called at Garnet's cottage; but told Sir Cradock, like a true man, of poor Eöa's troubles, of her now forlorn condition, and power of heart to feel it. He even contrived to interest the bereaved man, now so listless, in the young life thrown upon his care, as if by the breath of heaven. We are never so eloquent for another as when our own hearts are moved deeply by the feeling of wrong to ourselves; unless, indeed, we are very small, and that subject excludes all others.

So it came to pass that the best new carriage was ordered to the door, and Sir Cradock would himself have gone—only Rufus Hutton had left him, and the eloquence was oozing. The old man, therefore, turned back on the threshold, saying to himself that it would be hardly decent to appear in public yet; and Mrs. O'Gaghan was

sent instead, sitting inside, and half afraid to breathe for fear of the crystal. As for her clothes, they were good enough, she knew, for the Lord Mayor's coach. "Five-and-sixpence a yard, ma'am, lave alone trimming and binding." But, knowing what she did of herbs, she could not answer for the smell of peppermint in the britchska.

It was not however found safe to bring that young Eöa home yet; but Biddy had orders to stay there until the poor child should be movable. Biddy took to her at once, in her heavy, long-drawn sleep, with the soft black lashes now and then lifting from the rich brown cheek.

"An' if she isn't illigant, then," said Biddy to Mrs. Brown, "ate me wi'out a purratie. Arl coom ov' the blude, missus. Sazins, then, if me and Pat had oonly got a child this day! Belikes, ma'am, for the matter o' that, a drap o' whisky disagrays with you."

Biddy, feeling strongly moved, and burning to drink her new child's health, showed a small flask of brown potheen.

"To tell you the truth, mem," said Mrs. Brown, "I know nothing about them subjects. Spirituous liquors is a thing as has always been beyond me."

"Thin I'll clap it away again," said Biddy, "and the divvil only the wiser. I never takes it alone, marm."

"It would ill become me, mem," replied Mrs. Brown, "to be churlish in my own house, mem. I have heard of you very often, mem. Yes, I assure you I have, from the people as comes to bathe here, as a lady of great experience in diseases of the chest. If you recommend any cordial, mem, on the strength of your experience, for a female of weak witality, I should take it as a dooty, mem, strictly as a dooty to my husband and two darters."

"Arrah, then, weak's the wise femmale. Me witality goes cross-ways, like, till I has a drap o' the crather." And so they made a night of it, and Mr. Brown had some.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A HARD FLINT TO CRACK.

LEAVE we now, with story pending, Biddy and Eöa, Pearl, and even Amy; thee, too, rare Bull, and thee, O Rufus, overcast with anger. It is time to track the steps of him whom Fortune, blithe at her cruel trade, shall track as far as Gades, Cantaber, and wild Syrtes, where the Moorish billow is for ever heaving. Will he exclaim with the poet, who certainly was a jolly mortal,—"I praise her while she is my guest. If she flap her nimble wings, I renounce her charities;

and wrap me in my manhood robe, and woo the upright poverty, the bride without a dower." A very fine sentiment, Master Horace; but were you not a little too fond even of Sabine and Lesbian—when the Massic juice was beyond your credit—to do any thing more than write it?

As Cradock Nowell trudged that night towards the Brockenhurst Station, before he got very far from Amy, and while her tears were still on his cheek, he felt a little timid lick, a weak offering of sympathy.

Hereby black Wena made known to him that she was melted by his misfortunes, and saw that the right and most feeling course, and the one most pleasing to her dead master, was the transfer of her allegiance, and the swearing of fealty to the brother. To which conclusion the tender mode in which she was being carried conduced, perhaps, considerably; for she was wrapped in Clayton's woolly jacket, enthroned on Cradock's broad right arm, and with only her black nose exposed to the moon. So she jogged along very comfortably, until she had made up her mind, and given Cradock the kiss of seisin.

"Dear little thing," he cried, for he looked on her now as Amy's keepsake, "you shall go with me wherever I go. You are faithful enough to starve with me; but you shall not starve until after me."

Then he put her down, for he thought that a little run would do her good, and, in spite of all her misery, Amy had kept her pretty plump, as plump as she herself was; and it became no joke to carry her, with a travelling-bag, &c., after the first half-mile.

Then Wena capered about, and barked, and came and licked his shoe, and offered to carry the coat for him. As he would not let her do this, she occupied her mind with the rabbits, which were out upon the feed largely, and were the last she would see for a long while, except the fat Ostenders.

Thus went Cradock to London, and after a day or two found himself in small lodgings at a Mrs. Ducksacre's, "greengrocer and general fruiterer, Mortimer-street, Cavendish-square."

Now, what made him rush to London; and what need had London, at this time, of any such young fellow? The latter question at once is answered, by the one word—"None." Cradock had no money. London thinks of nothing else but money. He was not worth swallowing.

Why he went to London is a broadly different question, and beyond the answer of a man who has not done it. Even perhaps beyond the answer of a man who has done the like, whether in hope or in despair; and found it turn out just the same as things turn out in his own village. To talk of "the centre of the world," and "merit acknowledged," is rubbish. The number of the people only drives them more to walk in track. However, Cradock being here,

it was not long before he made two important discoveries more valuable than flattering.

The first of these discoveries was, that our university portals are a mere side-postern, and not the *janua mundi*. He found his classical scholarship, his early fame at Oxford, his love of elegant literature, rather a disadvantage than a recommendation for business.

"Prigs, sir, prigs," said a member of an eminent City firm to whom Cradock bore a letter; "of course, I don't mean to be personal; but I have always found your Oxford men prigs, unfit for desk-work. You fancy you know so much; you are always discovering mare's-nests, and you won't bear to be spoken to, even if you stick to your work; which, I assure you, is quite the exception. Then you hold yourself aloof, with your stupid etiquette, from the other young men, who are quite as good as you are. I assure you, the place was too hot to hold us with the last Oxford man we tried with us; he gave himself such airs and graces! I vowed never to do it again: and I never will, sir. Good morning, sir; Gregson, show this gentleman the way out."

Gregson did so with a grin, for Cradock's proud face showed that the banker had not been altogether wrong.

Is this prejudice (or, rather, perhaps, one should say, this aversion) disappearing now-a-days, or is it upon the increase? At any rate, one cause of it is being removed most rapidly; for the buckram etiquette of Oxford will soon be a mere tradition. Old Oxford men are much afraid that "Alma Mater" may run too far into the "free and easy."

Cradock's other discovery was that 50*l.* is no large capital to commence in life with, especially when the owner does not find his start prepared for him; fails to prepare it for himself; and has never been used to economy. He would not apply to any of his father's friends, or of the people whom he had known in London, to help him in this emergency. He would rather starve than do that; for he had dropped all name and claim of Nowell, and cut his life in twain at manhood; and the parts should never join again. Only one feeling should be common to the two existences, to the happy and the wretched life; that one feeling was the love of Amy, and, what now seemed part of it, his gratitude to her father.

Mr. Rosedew had commended him to a clergyman in London, a man of high standing and large influence, an intimate friend of the rector at college, now past out of ken, as all such friends are apt to do, yet borne in kindly remembrance. But the youth had not undertaken to deliver that credential, and he never did so. It would have kept him to his identity, which (so far as the world was concerned) he wished to change entirely, immediately, and irrevocably.

Herein if he showed some want of greatness, allowance must be made for him. No man is large-minded at twenty-one. He cannot yet have that tolerant spirit, that sense of community with mankind and of personal insignificance, which are so far removed from all the enthusiasm, exclusiveness, and strong identity of youth. Therefore young Cradock did nothing more than was natural at his age when he fancied that every one even in London would shrink at the sound of his name, as from a man who had slain his brother. So he called himself "Nowell" no longer—although the name is common enough in one form or another: the Nowells of Nowelhurst, however, are proud of the double *l*, and think a good deal of the *w*—and Cradock Nowell became "Charles Newman," without licence of Her Majesty.

Even before his vain attempts to enter the stronghold of commerce, and before he had learned that Oxford men are not thought "*prima virorum*," he had lifted the latch of literature, but the door would not swing back for him. The *mare magnum*—to mix metaphors, although bars are added to the Lucrine—the *mare magnum* of letters was more like his native element; and, if he once could have only gotten—bare-footed as all must go—over the jagged rocks which hedge that most capricious sea, no doubt he might have swum there.

In one respect he was fortunate. The publishers upon whom he called were gentlemen, and told him the truth.

"Oh, poetry!" exclaimed one and all, as their eyes fell upon his manuscript, "we cannot take it on our own account; and, if we published it at your expense, we should only be robbing you."

"Indeed!" replied Cradock, in the first surprise; "is there no chance, then, of a sale for it?"

"None whatever. Poetry, unless it be some one's whose name is well known, is a perfect drug in the market. In the course of ten or a dozen years, by advertising continually, by influence among the reviewers, by hitting some popular vein, or being taken up by some authority, you might attain an audience. Are you ready to encounter all this? Even if you are, we must decline, we are sorry to say, to have any thing to do with it."

"Verse, eh? Better have cut your throat!" more tersely replied an elderly gentleman, proud of growing currants, and of insulting ambitious authors.

However, even that last was a friend, when compared with some whom his evil star might have led him to consult.

These advertise their patent methods of putting a work before the public, without any risk to the author, &c., &c. Disinterested gentlemen! They are to have no profit whatever, except from the sale of the work, and they know they won't sell five copies.

However, there are not many of this sort in an honourable and most important profession; and Cradock Nowell was lucky enough

not to fall in with any of them. So he accepted the verdict so unanimously returned, and stored away with a heavy heart his laborious little manuscript. It was only a translation in verse of the Halieutics, and a few short original pieces—the former at any rate valuable, because revised by John Rosedew.

A proud and perilous thing it is, for any young man knowing nothing of the broad and narrow ways of human nature—now called "life"—suddenly to plunge unaided into the world of London.

Not that any thing, in London, any man, or even woman, is distinct in any way from what the same three genders show in any country village; neither is there any wonder (with the business we are doing) that we have a city nearly half as large as Rome was in the second century; and by downright noise disturbing any body's judgment.

From all the gay temptations ready for a youth of good estate, bright vigour, and fine inexperience, Cradock was saved, of course, by his bitter, and ever-abiding misery. Even if his want of money, and his native manliness, and modesty, had not been there, to help him against enemies, there was all the power of trouble to deepen and to strengthen him. Dark, uncertain, and unaccustomed as his own state and prospects were, perhaps he was all the more inclined to look abroad for change, relief, and deliverance from brooding. Neither was he any longer hardened, as at first seemed likely, by his own affliction. The sense of a bitter wrong from heaven, the resentment and defiance of a blow so fatal and mysterious, even the pain and indignation caused inevitably by his father's cold estrangement, these and other elements of sternness and misanthropy, although still present, were checked and weakened by larger and better influence. The warmth of kindness and delicate pity shown to him at the rectory, and even by the simple-hearted people about Nowelhurst, the calm bright faith and gentle suasion of an intellect far riper and much larger than his own, most of all the pure affection and sweet maiden confidence of Amy, his own Amy—Cradock had no idea how all these things had wrought upon him.

But the effect was there; and now he could not look upon great trouble (such as it is hard to help discovering in London) without being able and compelled to enter into it.

When a man is man enough to let his heart begin to move at the miseries of other men, it is by nature's order made a terrible mishap for him. He cannot even feel his comfort all his own, and undisturbed; he has not in his property the pride which should possess him; vague ideas flit about him; and he is afraid to seem a fool to all his neighbours.

Yet at moments (far apart, and nothing upon average) this man has the purest and the highest pleasure known to man. He feels

that he has raised and greatened, towards and in the eternity, a fellow particle of mankind.

So it came to pass that Cradock, yielding daily bit by bit of misery and fatalism, and with more and more of interest in the world around him, did begin, and then went on, from looking round him on the level at the people kindly, after a little earthly practice, to look up to heaven again.

There is a flint of peculiar character, and which has some local name, found sometimes on the great Chissel Bank, and away towards Lyme Regis. As hard, and sullen, and dull a flint (with even the gleam of its fusion lost from the chafing of the waves) a stone as grey and foggy-looking as ever Deucalion grew weary of casting over his left shoulder into an empty world. Yet this flint has, through the heart of it, traversing from pole to pole (for the shape is always conical) a thread, a spindle, a siphuncle, of the richest golden hue. None but those who are used to it can see the head of the golden column, can even guess its existence. The stone is not hollow; it is quite distinct from all pudding-stones and conglomerates.

Many such flints poor Crad came across, among his nearest neighbours, the dwellers in a court hard by, into which he was led one morning by a cry of sore distress. One, especially, one great fellow, was harder and rougher than any flint, like the matrix of the concentric jasper. No good had come nigh him for such a time that he scarce knew good from evil now, and getting so much more of the latter, showed the spirit of a Briton by contentment with it. The only right of a true Briton (except of course that of being drunk) which his self-respect would not allow him to surrender, was, as scarcely need be said, the right of leathering his own wife.

This is a part of our constitution; as all magistrates allow, and with proper reverence for long-established privilege, really defer a little to the modern tone of thought, when they fine a noble fellow five shillings, if he did not kick much; and if he overdid this latter pleasant pastime,—fifteen shillings!

No man ever ought to pay for having shown his manhood. It cannot always be proved at first, how thoroughly, upon reflection, the good wife enjoyed it. But in nine causes out of ten, she swears, on remand, the opposite to all she swore in the first sting of it.

The excellent woman whose cries drew Cradock from his proper course that morning was a certain Rachell Jupp. Every body in the court was well accustomed to her noise, and no more dreamed of interfering than of stealing her Sunday dinner. It was only "Zakey" at his little game, and no harm ever came of it.

Moreover, there was another good reason to restrict curiosity. It was well proven that Issachar Jupp could lick any two men in the court. A bargee, Mr. Jupp was, of good intentions—at least, when

he took to the cuddy; but his horses had pulled crosswise ever since; and the devil knew, better than the angels now, what his nature was come to.

"None of your d—d Scripture-reading for me!" he cried, when Cradock came near him; mistaking him, in the heat of his exercise, for another fine young fellow who had been there now and then.

"You blackguard!" said Cradock, and nothing more. But the stern deep sorrow of his eyes stirred or soothed some rugged sorrow in the heart of Issachar. His lifted fist relaxed and opened, as with love of pluck he saw how calmly Cradock gazed at it; neither would his rude heart back him up to strike a weaker man, and one of such an aspect. As for beating a woman, of course, he never meant to hurt her much.

Cradock went on his way without the smallest idea of having done a thing of any bravery, or even of any good at all. But having once entered that "Paradise Court," so near his own poor lodgings, he seemed in some way forced to go again and seek the people.

Mr. Jupp, having drunk out his wages, went upon river or canal again; and the youth, being far too free of hand for one in his condition, let some of his worry float away in the gay tide of being cheated.

Now, to do justice (late perhaps, but better late than never) to two of those conventionally vulgarly and universally abused folk who let lodgings, Mrs. and Miss Ducksacre, Cradock Nowell's landladies, were very good-hearted women, but, like many other women of that fibre, whose education has been neglected, of a hot and hasty order. Not that we need suppose the pepper to be neutralized by the refinement, only to be absorbed more equably, and transfused more delicately.

One dark and foggy November evening, a little thing came feeling the way into the narrow, dingy shop of the good Ducksacre firm, gradually groping along by the sacks of potatoes (all of them "seconds," for the firm did not deal much in "Ware Regents,") feeling its way along the sacks which towered above its head, like bulky snow-giants embrowned with thaw; and then by the legs of the "tatie-bin," with the great scales hanging above it, and then by the heap of lighting-wood, piled in halfpenny bundles, with the ends against the wall: and so the little thing emerged between two mighty hills of coleworts, and under the frugal gas-burner, and congratulated itself, with a hug of the infant heart, upon safety.

"Take care, my dear," cried Mrs. Ducksacre, looking large behind the counter, "or you'll tumble down the coal-trap, where the black bogeys lives. Bless my heart, if it ain't little Loo! Why, Loo, I hardly knew you. You ain't looking like yourself a bit, child.

And who sent you out at this time of night? What a shame, to be sure!"

Loo, the pride of Issachar Jupp, was rather a pretty little body, about three and a half years old, "going on for four," as she loved to say, if any body asked her; and her pale but clean face would have been very pretty, if her mother would have let her hair alone. But all her hair was combed well back, and tied on the crown very tightly, like the tail of a horse at a fair, or like a brown Cos lettuce bursting.

Now this small creature raised her eyes to that great Mrs. Ducksacre, while her fingers played with the coleworts, for her hands were hot, and the dew of the country cooled them; and then, with the instinct of nature, she stuck up for her father and mother.

"Pease, ma'am, Loo not fray much,"—though her trembling frock belied her, all over the throat and the heart of it—"and father don from home, ma'am, on the Wasinstote" [Basingstoke canal], "and mother dot nobody, on'y Loo, to do thins. And she send this, 'cause Loo's poor troat be bad, ma'am."

The little child, whose throat was tied up with worn flannel as if from a char-bucket, with the grey edge still upon it, wriggled in and out of her shape and self, in the way only children can do; and at length drew, from some innermost shrine, a halfpenny and a farthing.

"And what am I to give you for it, Loo? Oh, you poor little thing, how very hoarse you are!"

Loo, with a confidence in human nature purely non-Londinian, had placed her cash upon the altar, upon the inside of which so many worship, while on the outside so many are sacrificed! without circumlocution, the counter. Her eyes were below the rim of it, till she stood upon tiptoe with one foot, while the other was up in the colewort roots, and then she could see the money, and she poked out her little lips at it, as if she would fain suck it back again.

"Pease, ma'am, Loo's troat so bad, mother are going to make a 'tew, tree ha'porth of tipe and a ha'porth of 'egents and a fardy of inons!"

"What a splendid stew, Loo!" said Mrs. Ducksacre, seeming to smell it; "and so you want a ha'porth of taties, and a farthing's worth of onions. And you shall have them, my dear, and as good a three farthings' worth as ever was put up in London. Where are you going to put them all?"

Loo opened her sore throat, and pointed down it. She had not yet lost her appetite; and that child did love tripe so.

"No, no, I don't mean that, Loo. I know you have a nice room inside; though some will be for mother, won't it now? I mean, how are you going to carry it home?"

"In Loo's pinney," replied the child, delighted with her success; for ever so many people had told her, that the Ducksacres now

were getting so high, they would soon leave off making farthings-worths ; and any tradesman who comes to that rises beyond the poor street-child.

"My dear, your pinney won't hold them, potatoes are so cheap now"—she had just declared they were awfully dear to a lady whom she disliked—"I am sure you can't carry a ha'porth. Oh, Mr. Newman, you are so good-natured"—Cradock was just coming in, rather glum from another failure of obtaining some employment—"I really don't believe you would think you were bemeaning yourself by going home with this poor little atom."

"I should rather hope I would not," replied Cradock, looking grand.

"Oh, I did not know. I beg your pardon, I'm sure. I would go myself, only Sally is out, and the boy gone home ever so long ago. I beg your pardon, I'm sure, Mr. Newman—I thought you were so good-natured."

"Mrs. Ducksacre," said Cradock, "you utterly misunderstand me. I spoke to the form of your sentence, perhaps, rather than to its meaning. What I meant was, that I should rather hope I would not think it below me to go home with this little dear. Why, I know this little creature well ; and her name is Louisa Jupp."

"Tiss Loo," said the little child, standing up on tiptoe, and spreading out her arms to Cradock. All the children loved him, as the little ones at Nowelhurst would run after Mr. Rosedew. Children are even better judges of character than dogs.

"Why, you poor little soul," said Crad, as he seated her on his strong right arm with her little cheek to his, and she drew a thousand straws of light through her lashes from the gas-jet, which she had never yet been so close to, "how hot and dry your lips are ! I hope you are not taking the—sickness"—he was going to say "fever," but feared to frighten Loo.

"Mother fray," cried the small girl, proud of the importance accruing to her, "Loo dot wever, Irishers dot bad wever on the foor below mother. Loo det nice thins, and lay abed, if me dot the wever."

"Put the poor child's things, whatever they are, in a basket, Mrs. Ducksacre. How odd her little legs feel ! And a shilling's worth of grapes, if you please, in a bag by themselves. Here's the money for them. You know I'll bring back the basket. But the bags don't come back, do they ?"

"No, sir, of course not. Half-a-crown a gross for the small ones, with the name and the cross-handle basket, and the cabbage and carrots, sir. Sixpence more for cornopean-pattern with a pine-apple, and grapes and oranges. But lor, sir, the cornopean" [cornucopiæ] "would frighten half our customers. The basket-pattern pays better for an advertisement than to get them back again, even if parties would bring them, which I knows well they never would, sir."

Then Cradock set forth with the child on his arm, his coat thrown over his shoulders, and the best shilling's worth of foreign grapes—Mrs. Ducksacre never bought English ones—and the best three farthings' worth of potatoes and onions that was made that day by any tradesman in any part of London, not excluding "them low costers," as the Ducksacre firm expressed it.

Little Loo Jupp's sore throat proved to be, as Cradock feared it would, the first symptom of scarlet fever; and the young man had the pleasure—one of the highest and purest pleasures which any man can have—of saving a human life. He watched that trembling flame of life, and fostered it, and sheltered it, as if "the hopes of a nation hung"—as our great journals love to say of some babe not a whit more valuable—upon its feeble flicker. He hired another room for her, where the air was purer; he made the doctor attend to the case, which at first that doctor cared little to do; he brought her many a trifling comfort; in a word, he waited upon her so that the old women of the court called him thenceforth, "Nurse Newman."

"What, you here again, you white-livered young sneak!" cried Issachar Jupp, reeling in at the door, just as Cradock was coming out one day; "take that, then——" and he lifted a great oak bludgeon, newly cut from the towing-path of the Basingstoke Canal. If Cradock had not been as quick as lightning, and caught the stick over the bargeman's shoulder, there would have been weeping and wailing and a lifelong woe for Amy.

"Hush," he said; "don't make such a noise, man. Your child is at the point of death, in the room overhead."

Poor Crad, naturally of a bright complexion, but pale from long adversity, might now have retorted the compliment as to the whiteness of liver; the bargee turned so pale, that he looked like a collier's tablecloth. Then he planted his heavy stick on the ground, to save him from lying flat on his threshold.

"My Loo, my Loo! My little bright Loo! What a damned lie to tell me!"

"I wish it was, Mr. Jupp," said Cradock. "But don't be over-frightened. We hope with all our hearts to save her, and to-night we shall know. Already the doctor says that there is some little change in her breathing, though her tongue is like a furnace."

He spoke with a tone and in a voice which no man ever has described, nor shall; but which every born man feels to be genuine, long ere he can think.

The only answer Jupp could make was a little gasp, and half a sob, and then two great tears guttering down the coal-dust of his countenance. The rugged, coarse, defiant nature of the man was cloven, for the moment, through and through; the power of evil was gone from him, and the power of good not come.

Cradock having no experience of any trouble, except his own, felt

ashamed to seem to notice how this man was taking it. And while he turned away, the bargeman managed to let some shaggy locks fall over his "damned" eyes.

"Now come up with me, Mr. Jupp," said Crad, taking care not to look at him, "out at this door, in at the other. Poor little soul! she has been so good. You can't think how good she has been. And she has taken her medicine so nicely."

"Pray God Almighty not to damn me, for not damning myself enough," said Issachar Jupp, below his breath, as up the rickety stairs he tottered, with the help of Cradock's arm.

It was his first attempt to pray. The form was not—to put it mildly—altogether orthodox. Elegant writers, sweetly dallying with the quill of the turtle-dove, whose highest ambition is to repose on the surface of human polish, as a gilded cloth lies on a drawing-room table—"shocked" is their favourite word of the few in their native tongue fine enough for them.

Shocked they would be to hear such a speech, and far more shocked to repeat it, but what is shocking to mannikins may not earn the spite but pity of men, and of the powers that guard them.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

COALS ARE UP.

LITTLE LOO'S fever "took the turn" that night. Cradock went away, of course, committing the child to her father; and the savage bargee would have gone on his knees, and crawled in that fashion —wherein all fashion crawls—down the rough stairs, every one of them, if the young man would have been pleased by it.

We are just beginning to scorn the serfdom of one mind to another. We begin to desire that no man should, without fair argument, accept our dicta as equal to his own in wisdom. And even if time could reproduce for us Shakespeare, Bacon, and Newton, we should now be inclined to refer to committee any propositions they might offer.

And yet the servience, not of the mind, but of the heart to a larger one, is a fealty most honourable to the giver and the receiver. In a bold independent man, such as Issachar Jupp was, this fealty was not to be won by any of those pretty sentiments about birth, clanship, wealth, position, appearance, &c., which reconcile us to our habit of circumcising the New Testament—it was only to be won by proof that the other heart was bigger than his, and the owner of it

grander. Jupp never asked how or why; he was not a man of reasoning power, but well content to feel things.

Now small Loo Jupp being out of danger, and her father, grinning like a gridiron with the fire-light behind it, every day at her bedside, the force of circumstances—which, in good English, means the want of money—sent Cradock Nowell once more cat's-cradling throughout London, to answer vile advertisements. His heart rose within him every day as he set out in the morning, and in the same relative position fell, as he came home every evening.

"Do, sir, do," cried Issachar Jupp, who never swore now, before Cradock, except under strongest pressure; "do come aboard our barge. I've a'most a-got the appointment of skipper to the *Industrious Maiden*, homeside of Nine Elms, as tight a barge as ever was built, and the name done in gold letters. Fact, I may say, and not tell no secrets; I be safe to be aboord of her, if my Loo allow me to go, and I don't swear hard at the check-house. And, perhaps, I shall be able to help it, after Loo so ill, and you such a hangel."

"Well, I don't know," replied Cradock, who could not bear to simulate intense determination; "I should like a trip into the country, if I could earn my wages as traveller, or whatever it is. But suppose the canal is frozen up before our voyage begins, Jupp?"

"Oh, damn that!" cried Issachar, for the idea was too much for him, even in Cradock's presence; "I never yet knew a long winter, sir, after a wonderful stormy autumn."

And in that conclusion he was right, to the best of all present experience. Perhaps because the stormy autumn shows the set of the Gulf Stream.

By this time more than a month had passed since Cradock and Wena arrived in London; half his money was spent, and he had found no employment. He had advertised, and answered advertisements, till he was tired. He had worn out his last pair of boots with walking, for he had thought it better to walk, as it might be of service to him to know London thoroughly; and that knowledge can only be acquired by perpetual walking.

No man can be said to know London thoroughly, who does not know the suburbs also—who, if suddenly put down at the Elephant and Castle, or at Shoreditch Church, cannot tell exactly whither each of the six fingers points. Such knowledge very few men possess; it requires the genius loci—to apply the expression barbarously—as well as peculiar calls upon it. Cradock, of course, could not attain such knowledge in a month. Indeed, he was obliged to ask his way to so well-known a part as Hammersmith, when he had seen an advertisement for a clerk, to help in some coal-office there.

With the water quelching in his boots (which were worn away to

the welting)—for the sky was like the pulp of an orange, and the pavement wanted draining—he turned in at a little gate near the temporary terminus of the West London line.

In a wooden box, with a kitchen behind it, he found Mr. Clinkers, the advertiser; who thought, when he saw Crad's face, that he was come to give a large order; and when he saw his boots, that he was come to ask to be errand-boy. Clinkers was a familiar, jocular, red-faced fellow, whom his friends were fond of calling "not at all a bad sort."

"Take a glass, mister," said he, when Cradock had stated his purpose; "won't do you no harm such a day as this, and I don't fancy 'twould me either. Jenny! Jenny! Why, bless that gal; ever since my poor wife died, she's along of them small-coals fellows. I'll bet a tanner she is. What do you say to it, sir? Will you bet?"

"Well," replied Cradock, smiling, "it wouldn't be at all a fair bet. In the first place, I know nothing of Miss Jenny's propensities; and, in the second, I have no idea what the small-coals fellows are."

The small-coals men are the truck-drivers and the greengrocers in the by-streets, who buy the crushings and riddlings by the sack, at the wharf or terminus, and sell them by the quarter hundredweight, at a profit of two hundred per cent. Cradock might have known this, for the Ducksacre firm did a little in coal, but kept it away from the counter.

Mr. Clinkers could not stop to explain; only he said to himself, "Pretty fellow to apply for a clerkship in the coal-line, and not know that!"

Jenny appeared at last, looking perfectly self-possessed.

"Jenny, you baggage, two tumblers and silver teaspoons in no time. And the little kettle; mind now, I tell you the little kettle. Can't you understand, gal, that I may want to shave with the water, but ain't going to have the foot-tub?"

Jenny's broad face, mapped with coal-dust, grinned from ear to ear, as she looked at her master saucily—a proof almost infallible of a very genial government. She heard that shaving joke every day, and, the more she heard it, the more she enjoyed it. So the British public, at a theatre, or an election, appreciates a joke according to the square of the number of the times the joke has been poked at it. There is nothing so good as the British perception, and the blunt knife that opens the oyster.

"Queer gal, that," said Clinkers, producing his raw material; "uncommon queer gal, sir, as any you may have met with."

"No doubt of it," replied Cradock; "and now for the cause of my visit——"

"Hang me, sir, you don't understand that gal. I say she is the queerest gal that ever lived out of a barge. You should see her

when she gets along of some of them small-coals fellows. Blow me if she can't twist a dozen of them round her finger, sir."

"And her master, too," thought Cradock; "unless I am much mistaken, she will be the new Mrs. Clinkers."

Jenny heard most of her master's commentary, as she was going to and fro, and she kept up a constant grin without speech, in the manner of an empty coal-scuttle.

"Ah, sir, grief is a dry thing, a sad dry thing!" and Clinkers banged down his tumbler till the spoon reeled round the brandy; "no business, if you please now, not a word of business till we both be below the fiddle; and, if it isn't to your liking, speak out like a man, sir."

"Below the fiddle, Mr. Clinkers! What fiddle? I don't at all understand you."

"Very few people does, young man; very few people indeed. Scarcely any, I may say, except Jenny and the cookshop woman; and the latter have got encumbrances as quite outweighs the business. Ain't you ever heard of the fiddle of a teaspoon, sir?"

"Oh, very well," said Cradock, tossing off his brandy-and-water to bring things to a point. It was a good thing for him that he got it, poor fellow, for he was sadly wet and weary.

"Lor, now, to see that!" cried Clinkers, opening his eyes; "I'm blowed if you musn't be a Hoxford gent."

"To be sure. so I am," replied Cradock, laughing; "but I should not have thought that you would have known—I mean, I am surprised that you, at this distance, should know any thing of Oxford men."

"Tell you about that presently. Come over again the fire, sir. Up with your heel-tap, and have another."

"No, thank you, Mr. Clinkers. You are very kind; but I shall not take one drop more."

"Then you ain't been there very long, that's certain. Now you have come about this place, I know; though it's a queer one for a Hoxford gent. 'Gent under a cloud,' thinks I, the moment I claps eyes on you. Ah, I knows the aristocraxy, sir. Now, what might be your qualifications?"

"None whatever; except that, of course, I have had a good education."

"Whew!" whistled Mr. Clinkers, and that sound was worth fifty sentences.

"Then you think," said Cradock, not so greatly downcast, for he had got this little speech now by heart, "that I am not likely to be of any service to you?"

"Knows what they Hoxford gents is," continued Clinkers, reflectively; "come across a lot of them once, when I was gay and rattling. They ran into my tax-cart, coming home from Ascot, about a mile this side of Brentford. Famous good company over a

glass, when they drops their aristocraxy; they runs up a tick all over town, and leaves a Skye dog to pay for it; comes home about four in the morning, and don't know the latch from the scraper. Always pays in the end, though; nearly always pays in the end—so a Hoxford tradesman told me—and interest ten per cent. Different there from the medicals; the fast medicals never do pay, sir."

"Very well," the young man answered, with the soft sad smile which now might be expected from him; "I thank you, Mr. Clinkers, for your kindness and hospitality, to which I am not much accustomed. I have taken up your time for nothing. But if you had said, when you advertised, that experience was needful, I would not have troubled you. Good evening, Mr. Clinkers."

"Stop, stop. Just understand me. I don't care that for experience. Jenny could show you that. But the fact is that you Hoxford gents ain't got the grease for business."

Sorely down at heart and heel, Cradock plodded away from the yard of the hospitable Clinkers, who came to the door and looked after him, fearing to indulge his liking for that queer young fellow. But he had taken Crad's address; for who knew but something might turn up?

"He ain't a gent, he's a gentleman!" Clinkers softly uttered, with his hands far down his pockets: "very likes, a baronet; but down on his luck most dreadful. I wish I could do something for him. But it ain't to be thought of."

"That man," said Cradock to himself, stepping out from the black to the brown mud, "has a kindly heart, and would have helped me if he could. He wanted to pay my fare back to town, but of course I would not let him. It was well worth while to come all this distance, and get wet through twice over, to come across a kind-hearted man, when a fellow is down so. I began with applying for grand places; what a fool I was! Places worth 150*l.* or 200*l.* a year. No wonder I did not get them: and what a lot of leather wasted! Now I am come down to 50*l.* per annum, and 75*l.* would be a fortune. If I had only begun at that mark, I might have got something by this time. 'Vaulting ambition doth o'erleap itself.' And I might have emigrated—good Heavens! I might have emigrated upon the bounty of Uncle John, to some land where a man is worth more than the cattle of the field. Only Amy stopped me, only the thought of my Amy. Darling love, the sweetest angel—stop, I am so unlucky; if I begin to bless her, very likely she'll get typhus fever. After all, what does it matter what sort of life I take to? Or whether, indeed, I take the trouble to take to any at all? Only for her sake, her sake. A man who has done what I have lives no more, but drags his life. Now I'll go in for common labour, work of the hands and muscles; many a better man has done it; and it will be far wiser for me while my brain is so loose and wandering. I wonder I never thought of that. Isn't it raining,

though ! What we used, in the happy days, to call 'Wood Fidley rain.'"

The future chironax trudged more cheerfully after this decision. But he was sorry to get so soaked, for, in spite of Miss Rosedew's providence, he was getting as scant of raiment now as were the sons of the prophets. He had brought but one suit of his own ; and all he had bought with the rector's money was six shirts at 3*s.* 6*d.*, and four pairs of cotton hose. So he could not afford to get wet too often.

There could be no doubt that he was shabbily dressed, no rich game to an hotel-tout, no tempting fare to a cabman : but neither could there be any doubt that he was a pure and noble gentleman. That was as clear as in the heyday of finest Oxford dandyism. Only he carried his head quite differently, and the tint of his cheeks was gone. He used to walk with his broad and well-set head thrown back, and slightly inclined to one side ; now it began to flag and droop, as if the spring of the neck were gone.

But still the brave clear eyes met frankly all who cared to meet them ; the face and gait were of a man unhappy but not unmanly. He looked perhaps ten years older now than he had looked two months ago : and most of the gay friends of his youth would have been scared at the sight of him. But for that, and all that, and twice so much as all that, any loving girl would think him worth tenfold of what he had been.

Soaked and tired out at last, he reached his little lodgings—quite large enough for him, though—and found Black Wena warming the chair, the only chair he had to sit on. Unluckily, he did not do what a man who cared for himself would have done. Having no change of raiment—in plain English, but one pair of trousers—he should have gone to bed at once, or at any rate have pulled his wet clothes off. Instead of doing so, he sat and sat, with the wet things clinging closer to him, and the shivers crawling deeper, until his last inch of candle was gone, and the room was cold as an ice-house, for the rain had turned to snow at nightfall, and the fire had not been lit.

Wena sat waiting and nodding upwards, on the yard and a half of brown drugget, which now was her special allotment, and once or twice she nudged her master, and whined about supper and bed-time. But Cradock only patted her, and improved the turn of his sentence. He was making one last effort to save from waste and ridicule his birth, and tastes, and education.

A craftsman, if he have self-respect, is worthy, valuable, admirable, nearer to the perception of simple truth than some men of high refinement. Nevertheless, it is too certain—as those who know them well, and not unkindly, can testify—that there is scarcely one in a dozen labourers, even around the metropolis, who respects himself and his calling. Whose fault is this ? That question each

of us answers according to predilection. Probably, the guilt is "much of a muchness," as in all mismanaged matters.

It is as lowering to us as themselves, that the "enlightened working-men of England" cannot go out for their holiday, cannot come home from their work, cannot even speak among their own young children, and in the goodwife's presence, without words, not of manly strength, but of hoggish coarseness. In time this must be otherwise; but the evil is not cured easily. The boy believes it manly to talk as he hears his father talk; he rejoices in it the more, perhaps, because the school forbids it. He does not know what the foul words mean; and all things strange have the grandest range. Those words tell powerfully in a story, with smaller boys round him upon the green, or at the street-corner. And so he grows up engrimed with them, and his own boys follow suit.

Cradock was young and chivalrous, and knew not much of these things, which his position had kept from him; nor in his self-abandonment cared he much about them. Nevertheless, he shrank unconsciously from the lowering of his existence. And now he sat up, writing, writing, till his wet clothes made little pools on the floor, while he answered twenty advertisements, commercial, literary, promiscuous. Then he looked at his little roll of postage-stamps, and with shivering fingers affixed them. There were only fifteen; and it was too late to get any more that night; and he felt that he could not afford to use them now so rashly. So he ran out into the slushy streets, gamboged by this time with London snow, and posted those fifteen of his letters which were the least ambitious. By this time he knew that the best chance was of something not over-gorgeous. Wena did not go with him, but howled until he came back. Then he gave the poor little thing, with some self-reproach at his tardiness, all the rest of his cottage-loaf, and his ha'porth of milk, which she took with some protestations, looking up at him wistfully now and then, to see whether he was eating.

"No, Wena, I can't eat to-night; bilious from over-feeding, perhaps. But I've done a good evening's work, and we'll be very plucky for breakfast, girl, and have sixpenceworth of cold ham. No fear there of making a cannibal of you, you innocent little soul."

He was desperately afraid, as most young fellows from the country are, of having unclean animals spicily served up by the London victuallers. This terror is the result for the most part of rustic sham knowingness, and the British love of stale jokes. However, beyond all controversy, dark are the rites of sepulture of the crampy pigs around London.

He crept, at last, beneath his scanty bedding—clean, although so patched and threadbare—and the iron cross-straps shook and rattled with the shudders that went through him.

Wena, who slept beneath the bed in a nest which she made of the

drugget-scrap, jumped upon the blanket at midnight, to know pray what was the matter. Then she licked his face, and tried to warm him, in his broken slumbers. That day he had taken a virulent cold, which struck into his system, and harboured there for a fortnight, till it broke out in a raging fever.

The next day, Cradock received a letter, of questionable orthography, and bearing the Hammersmith post-mark.

"RESPECTED SIR,—Was sorry after you streaked off yesterday that had not kept you longer. You was scarce gone out of the gate as one might say, when in comes a gent, no end of a nob, beats you as one might say in some respects, and a head of hair as good. Known by the name of Hearty,—Hearty Wibraham, Esquire, but friends prefers callin' him Hearty, such bein' his character. And hearty he were with my brandy, I do assure you, and no mistake. This gent say as he want to establish a hagency for the sale of first-class Hettons to the members of the *bone tons:* was I agreeable to supply him? So I say, 'Certainly, by all means, if I see my way to my money.' And then he breaks out, in a manner as would frighten some hands, about the artlessness of the age, the suspiciousness of commercial gents, and confidence between man and man. 'Waste of time,' says I; 'coals is coals now, and none of them leaves this yard for nothing. Better keep that sort of stuff,' says I, 'for the green young gent from Hoxford as was here just now.' 'What,' says he, 'Hoxford man after a situation?' 'Yes,' I says, 'nice young gent, only under a cloud.' Says he, 'I loves a Hoxford man; hope he has got some money.' 'For what?' I says; 'have you got any thing good for him to invest it in?' 'Haven't I?' he says; 'take a little more brandy, old chap'—my own brandy, mind you, blow me if he ain't a hearty one. Well, I can't tell you half he said, not being a talkative man myself, since the time as I lost Mrs. Clinkers. Only the upshot of it is, I think you couldn't do no harm by callin', if he write you as he said he would.

"Yours to command, and hope you didn't get wet,

"ROBERT CLINKERS, Jun., for POKER, CLINKERS, and Co., Coal Merchants, West London Terminuss, Hammersmith.

"N.B.—Coke supplied in your own sacks, on the most moderate terms. Cash upon delivery."

By the next post Cradock got another letter, far more elegantly written, but not half so honest.

"Mr. Hearty Wibraham, having heard of Mr. Charles Newman from a mutual friend, Mr. Clinkers, of Hammersmith, presents his compliments to the former gentleman, and thinks it might be worth Mr. Newman's while to call upon him, Mr. H. W., at six o'clock this evening, supposing the post to do its duty, which it rarely does. Hearty Wibraham, No. 66, Aurea Themis Buildings, Notting Hill

district. N.B.—The above is *bonâ fide.* References will be required. Strictest confidence guaranteed. "H. W."

"Well," said Cradock to Wena, shivering as he said it, for the cold was striking into him, "you see we are in request, my dear. Not that I have any high opinion of Mr. Hearty Wibraham—as a gentleman, I mean. But for all that he may be an honest man. And beggars—as you know, Wena, dear, when you sit up so prettily—beggars must not be choosers. Do you think you could walk so far, Wena? If you could, it would do you good, my beauty; and I'll see that you are not run over."

Wena agreed, rather rashly, to go; for the London stones, to a country dog, are as bad as a mussel-bank to a bather; but she thought she might find some woodcocks—and so she did, at the game shops, and some curlews which they sold for them—but her real object in going was that she had made some nice acquaintances in the neighbourhood, whom she wanted to see again. She wouldn't speak to any low dog, for she meant to keep up the importance and grandeur of the Nowell family, but there were some London dogs, heigho! they had such ways with them, and they were brushed so nicely, what could a poor little country dog do but fall in love with them?

Therefore Wena came after her master, and made believe not to notice them, but she lingered now and then at a scraper, and, when she snapped, her teeth had gloves on.

When Cradock and his little dog, after many a twist and turn, found Aurea Themis Buildings, the master rang at the sprightly door, newly grained and varnished. Being inducted by a young woman with a most coquettish cap on, he told black Wena to wait outside, and she lay down upon the door-step.

Then he was shown into the "first floor drawing-room," according to arrangement, and requested to "take a seat, sir." The smart maid, who carried a candle, lit the gas in a twinkling, but Cradock wondered why the coal-merchant had no coals in his fire-place.

Just when he had concluded, after a fit of shivering, that this defect was due perhaps to that extreme familiarity which breeds in a grocer contempt for figs, Mr. Wibraham came in, quite by accident, and was evidently amazed to see him.

"What! Ah, no, my good sir, not Mr. Charles Newman, a member of the University of Oxford!"

Cradock bowed, without any answer, feeling rather uncomfortable at the prominent use of his "alias."

"Then, allow me, sir, to shake hands with you. I am strongly prepossessed in your favour, young gentleman, from the description I received of you from our mutual friend, Mr. Clinkers. Ah, I like that Clinkers. No nonsense about Clinkers, sir."

"So I believe," said Cradock; "but, as I have only seen him once, it would perhaps be premature of me——"

"Not a bit, my dear sir, not a bit. That is one of the mistakes we make. I always rely upon first impressions, and they never deceive me. Now, I see exactly what you are, an upright, honourable man, full of conscientiousness, but not overburdened here perhaps."

He gave a jocular tap to his forehead, which was about half the width of Cradock's.

"Well," thought Cradock, "you are straightforward, even to the verge of rudeness. But no doubt you mean well, and perhaps you are nearer the truth than the people who have told me otherwise. Anyhow, it does not matter much." But, in spite of this conclusion, his manner was rather stiff, as he answered,—

"If that be the case, Mr. Wibraham, I fear it will hardly suit your purpose to take me into your employment."

"Ah, I have hurt your feelings, I see. I am so blunt and hasty. Hearty Wibraham is my name; and hearty enough I am, God knows; and perhaps a little too hearty. 'Hasty Wibraham you ought to be called, by Jove, you ought,' said one of my friends last night, and by Gad I think he was right, sir."

"I am sure I don't know," said Cradock; "how can I pretend to say, without myself being hasty?"

"I suppose, Mr. Newman, you can command a little capital? It is not at all essential, you know, in a *bonâ fide* case like yours."

"I am glad to hear it," said Cradock; "for my capital, like the new one of Canada, is below contempt."

"To a man imbued, Mr. Newman, with the genuine spirit of commerce, no sum, however small, but may be the key of fortune."

"My key of fortune, then, is about twenty pounds ten shillings."

"A very, very small sum, my dear sir; but I dare say some of your friends would assist you to make it, say fifty guineas. You Oxford men are so generous; always ready to help each other. That is why I can't help liking you so. Thoroughly fine fellows," he added, in a loud aside, "thoroughly noble fellows, when a messmate is in trouble. Can't apply to his family, I see; but it would be mean in him not to let his friends help him. I do believe the highest privilege of human life is to assist a friend in difficulties."

Cradock, of course, could not reply to all this, because he was not meant to hear it; but he gazed with some admiration at the utterer of such exalted sentiments. Mr. Hearty Wibraham, now about forty-five years old, was rather tall and portly, with an aquiline face, a dark complexion, and a quick, decisive manner. His clothes were well made, and of good quality, unpretentious, neat, substantial. His only piece of adornment was a magnificent gold watch-chain, which rather shunned than courted observation.

"No," said Cradock, at last, "I have not a single friend in the world to whom I would think of applying for the loan of a sixpence."

"Well, we are independent!" Mr. Wibraham still held discourse

with himself; "but Hearty Wibraham likes and respects him the more for that. He'll get over his troubles, whatever they are. My good sir," he continued, aloud, "I will not utter any opinion, lest you should think me inclined to flatter—the last thing in the world I ever would do. Nevertheless, in all manly candour, I am bound to tell you that my prepossession in your favour induces me to make you a most advantageous offer."

"I am much obliged to you. Pray, what is it?

"A clerkship in my counting-house, which I am just about to open, having formed a very snug little connexion to begin with."

"Oh!" cried Cradock, for, 'green' as he was, he would rather have had to do with a business already well established.

"I see you are surprised. No wonder, sir; no wonder! But you must know that I shall have at least my *quid pro quo*. My connexion is of a very peculiar character. In fact, it lies entirely in the very highest circles. To meet such customers as mine, not only a man of gentlemanly manners is required, but a man of birth and education. How could I offer such a man less than 150*l*. per annum?"

"Your terms are very liberal, very liberal, I am sure," replied Cradock, reddening warmly at the appraisement of his qualities. "I should not be comfortable without telling you frankly that I am worth about half that yearly sum; until, I mean, until I get a little up to business. I shall be quite content to begin upon 100*l*. a year."

"No! will you, though?" exclaimed Hearty Wibraham, flushed with a good heart's enthusiasm. "You are the finest young fellow I have seen since I was your age myself. Suppose, now, we split the difference. Say 125*l*.; and I shall work you pretty hard, I can tell you. For we do not confine our attention exclusively to the members of the Ministry and the House of Lords; we also deal with the City magnates, and take a contract for Somerset House. And remember one thing; you will be in exclusive charge whenever I am away negotiating. A man deserves to be paid, you know, for high responsibility."

"And where will the"—he hardly knew what to call it—"the office, the counting-house, the head-quarters be?"

"Not in any common thoroughfare," replied Mr. Wibraham, proudly; "that would never do for a business of such a character. What do you think, sir, of Howard Crescent, Park Lane? Not so bad, sir, is it, for the sale of the grimy?"

"I really do not know," said Cradock; "but it sounds very well. When do we open—I mean, when do we begin?"

"Monday morning, sir, at ten o'clock precisely. Let me see: to-day is Friday. Perhaps it would be an accommodation to you to have your salary paid weekly, until you draw by the quarter. Now, remember, I rely upon you to promote my interest in every way consistent with honour."

"That you may do, most fully. I shall never forget your kind confidence and your liberality."

"You will have two young gentlemen, if not three, wholly under your orders. Also a middle-aged gentleman, a sort of sleeping-partner, will kindly attend *pro tem.*, and show you the work expected of you. I myself shall be engaged, perhaps, during the forenoon, in promoting the interests of the business in a most important quarter. Now, be true to me, Newman—I take liberties, you see—keep your subordinates in their place, and make them stick to work, sir. And remember that one ounce of example is worth a pound of precept. If you act truly and honestly by me, as I know you will, you may look forward to a partnership at no distant date. But don't be over-sanguine, my dear boy; there is hard work before you."

"And you will not find me shrink from it," said Cradock, throwing his shoulders back; "but we have not settled yet as to the amount of the premium, or deposit, whichever it may be."

"Thank you. To be sure. I quite forgot that incident. Thirty guineas, I think you said, was all that would be convenient to you."

"No, Mr. Wibraham; I said twenty pounds ten shillings."

"Ah, yes, my mistake. I knew that there was an odd ten shillings. Say twenty-five guineas. A mere matter of form, you know; but one which we dare not neglect. It is not a premium; simply a deposit; to be returned at the expiration of the first twelve months. Will you send it to me by cheque? That, perhaps, would be the more convenient form. It will save you from coming again."

"I am sorry to say I cannot; for now I have no banker. Neither can I by any means make it twenty-five guineas. I have stated to you the utmost figure of my present census."

"Ah, quite immaterial. I am only sorry for your sake. The sum will be invested. I shall hold it as your trustee. But. for the sake of the books, merely to look well on the books, we must say twenty guineas. How could I invest twenty pounds ten shillings?"

This appeared reasonable to Cradock, who knew nothing about investment; and, after reflecting a minute or two, he replied as follows:—

"I believe, Mr. Wibraham, that I might manage to make it twenty guineas. You said, I think, that my salary would be payable weekly."

"To be sure, my dear boy, to be sure. At any rate, until further arrangements."

"Then I will undertake to pay you the twenty guineas. Next Monday, I suppose, will do for it?"

"Oh yes, Monday will do. But stop, I shall not be there on that morning; and, for form's sake, it must be paid first. Let us say Saturday evening. I shall be ready with a stamped receipt. Will you meet me here at six o'clock, as you did this evening?"

Cradock agreed to this, and Mr. Hearty Wibraham shook hands

with him most cordially, begging that mutual trust and amity might in no way be lessened by his own unfortunate obligation to observe certain rules and precedents.

In the highest spirits possible under such troubles as his were, Crad strod away from Aurea Themis Buildings, and whistled to black Wena, whom two of the most accomplished dog-stealers in London had been doing their best to inveigle. Failing of skill—for Wena was a deal too knowing—they at last attempted violence, putting away their chopped liver and hoof-meat, and other baits still more savoury, but not to be described too accurately. But, just as Black George, having lifted her bodily by the nape of the neck, was popping her into the sack tail foremost, though her short tail was under her stomach, what did she do but twist round upon him, in a way quite unknown to the faculty, and make her upper and lower canines meet through the palm of his hand? Black George's remark upon this occasion was too unparliamentary to be even loosely reported; enough that he let her drop, in the manner of a red-hot potato; and Blue Bill, who made a dash at her, took no more than a scar on the wrist. Then she retreated to her step, and fired a royal salute of howls, never ending, ever beginning, until her master came out.

"Wena, dear," he said, for he always looked on the little thing as an inferior piece of Amy, "you are very tired, my darling; the pavement has been too much for you. Sit upon my arm, pretty. We are both going to make our fortunes. And then you 'shall walk in silk attire, and siller hae to spare.'"

Wena nuzzled her nose into its usual place under Cradock's shoulder, and growled if any other dog took the liberty of looking at him. And so they got home, singing snug little songs to each other upon the way; and they both made noble suppers on the strength of their rising fortunes.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

COALS COME DOWN.

THE following day was Saturday, and the young fellow spent great part of it in learning the rules, the tables, and statistics of the coal trade, so far as they could be ascertained from a sixpenny work which he bought. Not satisfied with this, he went to the Geological Museum, in Jermyn-street, and pored over the specimens, and laid in a stock of carbonic knowledge that would have astonished Clinkers and Jenny. When the building was closed at four o'clock he hurried back to Mortimer-street, paid Mrs. Ducksacre for his

week's lodgings, and ran off to a pawnbroker's to raise a little money. Without doing this, he would not be able to deposit the twenty guineas; so fast had his fifty guineas made themselves angelic wings and flown to help the wretched.

Mr. Gill's shopman knew Cradock well, from his having been there frequently to redeem some trifling articles for the poor folk of Paradise Court, and felt some good-will towards him for his kindness to the little customers. It increased the activity of his trade, for most of the pledges were repledged or ever the week was out. And of course he got the money for issuing another duplicate.

"Hope there's nothing amiss, Mr. Newman," said the pawnbroker's assistant; "sorry to see you come here, sir, on your own account."

"Oh, you ought to congratulate me," returned Cradock, with a knowing smile; "I am going to pay a premium, and enter into a good position upon advantageous terms; very advantageous, I may say, seeing how little I know of the coal trade."

"Take care, sir, take care, I beg of you. People run down our line of business, and call it coining tears, &c.; but you may take my word for it, there is a deal more roguery in the coal trade, or rather in the sham of it, than ever there is in the broking way."

"There can be none in the present case, for the simple reason that I am not in any way committed to a partnership, neither am I to be at all dependent upon the profits." And Cradock looked thankful for advice, but a deal too wise to want it.

"Well, sir, I hope it may be all right; for I am sure you deserve it. But there is a man, not far from here, I think you took some things out for him, by the name of Zakey Jupp; a shrewdish sort of fellow, though a deal too fond of fighting. He'll be up to some of the coal tricks, I expect, he's about in the yards so much; and the whippers and heavers are good uns to talk, and he knows all the genuine dealers. Don't you think it beneath you, sir, to consult with Zachy Jupp, if you have the pleasure of his acquaintance."

"I am proud to say that I have at last," replied Cradock, smiling grimly; "but he went on board the *Industrious Maiden*, at Nine Elms, yesterday morning, and may not be back for a month. He wanted me to go with him; but I did not see how to be useful, and had not given my landlady notice. Now, if you please, I have not a moment to spare."

The shopman saw that he could not, without being really impertinent, press his advice any further; and, although Cradock was so communicative, as young men are apt to be, especially about their successes, he never afforded much temptation to any one for impertinence.

"And how much upon them little articles?" was the next question put to Cradock; and he did not ask any very high figure, for fear of not getting them out again.

As he set off at full speed for Aurea Themis Buildings, without inviting Wena, it struck him that it would be but common prudence just to look at the place of business; so he dashed aside out of Oxford-street, at the rate of ten miles an hour—for he was very light of foot—and made his way to Howard-crescent, whose position he had learned from the map. Sure enough there it was, when he got to the number indicated. And what a noble plate! So large, indeed, that it was absolutely necessary to have it in two parts. What refulgent brass! What fine engraving, especially on the lower part! You might call it chalco-illumination, chromography, chromometallurgy; indeed there can be no word half grand enough to describe it. And the legend itself so simple, how could they have made so much of it? The upper plate, though beautifully bright, was comparatively plain, and only carried the words, "Wibraham, Fookes, and Co.;" the lower and far more elaborate part enabled the public to congratulate itself upon having the above as "Coal Merchants and Colliery Agents to her Most Gracious Majesty and the Duchy of Lancaster. Hours of Business, from Ten till Four."

Cradock just took time to read this, by the light of the gas-lamp close to it; then glanced at the house (which looked clean and smart, though smaller than what he expected), and, feeling ashamed of his mean suspiciousness, darted away towards Notting Hill. When he came to Aurea Themis Buildings, he was kept waiting at the door so long that it made him quite uneasy, lest Hearty Wibraham should have forgotten all about his little deposit. The sum was so paltry to these rich people; and he should not have insulted them by being so over-punctual.

At last the smart girl opened the door, and a short young man, whose dress more than whispered that he was not given to compromise his æsthetic views, came out with a bounce, and clapped a shilling in the hand of the smiling damsel. "There Polly, get a peach-coloured cap-ribbon, and wear it in a true knot for my sake. I fancy I've done your governor. He's a trifle green; isn't he?" But, in spite of his conversational powers, the handmaid dismissed him summarily, when she saw Cradock waiting there.

The gas in the drawing-room was lit this time, and a good fire burning; and Mr. Wibraham, in spirits absolutely jocular, sprang forward to meet Cradock, and cried, "Hail! oh future partner!" Then he offered him a glass of "rare old Madeira;" and, producing a blank receipt form, exclaimed, "Whatever you do, my young friend, never let it be known in the counting-house that I accepted you with so ridiculous a deposit as the sum of thirty guineas."

"Twenty, Mr. Wibraham, twenty was what you agreed to accept." Poor Cradock trembled from head to foot, lest even now, at the last moment, he should be rejected. But, to his delight, his new principal replied,—

"Then, sir, twenty be it: if in a weak moment I agreed. Hearty

Wibraham would rather throw up all his connexion than allow any man to say of him, sir, that he had departed from his word."

His voice trembled slightly, and there was a twinkle as of tears in his eyes. Crad began to apologize, though he could not quite see what harm he had done.

"Dash it, my boy, not another word. We understand each other. There is your receipt."

In his confidence, Hearty Wibraham passed the receipt form, now filled up, to the aspiring coal-merchant, without having seen so much as the colour of his money. Then Cradock pulled out Amy's purse, in which he had put the cash, for good luck, and paid his footing bravely.

"Sir, I will not thank you," said Mr. Wibraham, as he took the money, "because the act would not be genuine. And I am proudly able to declare that I have never yet done any thing, even for the sake of the common courtesies of life, which has not been thoroughly genuine. My boy, this paltry twenty guineas is the opening of your mercantile life. May that life be prosperous; as I am sure you deserve."

Cradock took another glass of Madeira, as genuine as its owner, and, after a hearty farewell, felt so rapidly on the rise, so touched, for the first time of many weeks, by the dexter wand of fortune, that he bought a quarter of an ounce of bird's-eye with an infusion of "Latakia" (grown in the footpath field at Mitcham), and actually warmed his dear brother's pipe, which had not once been on the glow, ever since the sacred fire of the Prytaneum quenched itself.

Wena was overjoyed to see him, and she loved the smell of tobacco, and had often come sniffing about on the hearth-rug (or the bit of felt that served for it) to know whether it was true that a big man—a mastiff of a man, they told her—had succeeded in abolishing it. Now, seeing the blue curls quivering nicely, she jumped upon his lap; and, although she was rather heavy, he thought it would be practice towards the nursing of Amy, and possibly Amy's children. Then, when he thought of that, he grew more happy than fifty emperors.

Fortune may jump on a young fellow's heart, with both heels set together; but, the moment she takes one off, up comes the heart, like a bladder too big to go into the football.

On Monday morning, at ten o'clock, our Crad, in a state of large excitement, appeared before the gorgeous plate, and rang the bell thereover. It was answered by an office-boy, with a grin so intensely humorous that it was worth all the guineas that could have been thrust into the great mouth he exhibited.

"Mr. Newman?" asked the boy, with a patronizing air, which a little mind would have found offensive.

"Yes, my boy," replied Cradock; "I suppose I am expected."

"That you are," said the humorous boy, grinning harder than

ever; "the other three gents is waiting, sir. Get you a penny paper for three halfpence."

"Thank you," answered Cradock, hoping to depress that boy, "I am not come here, my boy, to read the penny papers."

"Oh no! oh lor no," cried the boy as he led the way in; "tip-top business this is, and all of us wears out our marrow-bones. His Ro-oyal Highness will be here bumbye. 'Spect they'll appoint you to receive him, 'cos you would look such a swell with our governor's best boots on. Don't you refoose now, mind me, don't refoose, mate, if you loves me."

"You want a little whipcord," said Cradock; "and you shall have it too, young man, if you come too near me."

"There now; there now!" sighed the boy—who would have been worth something on the stage—"I have never been appreciated, and suppose I never shall. What's the odds to a jinker? Cockalocks, there go in, and let me mind your beaver."

Cradock was shown into a room furnished as philosophically as the wash-house of Cincinnatus; still, it looked like business. There was no temptation to sit down, even though one had rowing-trousers on. There were four tall desks of deal uncovered; each had four legs, and resembled a naked Punch-and-Judy box. Hales, the Norfolk giant, could not have written at either of them, while sitting on any of the stools there.

Three of these desks were appropriated by three very nice young gentlemen, all burning to begin their labours. Two of the men were unknown to Cradock; but the third, the very short one, who had taken a stool to stand upon, and was mending a pen most earnestly—him Cradock recognized at once as the disburser of the shilling, the sanguine youth, of broad views in apparel, who had cheated Mr. Wibraham so.

"Mr. Fookes, I presume," he exclaimed, with a leap from the stool, and a little run towards Cradock; "you see we are all ready, sir, to receive the junior partner. Hardly know what to be up to."

"I am sure I cannot tell you," answered Crad, with a smile; "I do not belong to the firm as yet, although I am promised a partnership at a date not very distant."

"So am I," said the little man, staring; "indeed, I came up from Cambridge principally upon the strength of it."

"The deevil you did!" cried a tall, strapping fellow, crossing suddenly from his desk; "if ye'll hearken me, my time comes first. The agrahment was signed for Candlemas, when the gloot of business allows it. And a Durham man knows what coals are."

"Agrayment, thin, is it?" exclaimed the fourth, a flourishing, red-haired Irishman; "do you think I'd a left me Oonivarsity, Thrinity College, Dooblin, wi'out having it down all black and white? By the same token, it's meself as is foremost. Christmas is the time, me boys; and the farst dividend on St. Pathrick's Day, wakely

sthipend in the intherim. Divil take me sowl, but none o' ye shall git before Manus O'Toole."

"Gentlemen," said Cradock, "don't let us be in a hurry. No doubt Mr. Fookes will be here presently, and then we can settle precedence. I see there is work set out for us; and I suppose we are not all strangers here."

"Can't answer for the other gentlemen," returned the little Cambridge man, "but I was never here before, except to see the place on Saturday."

"And that's joost my own predeecament," cried the tall man from Hatfield Hall.

"Chop me up smarl," said the Irishman, when they turned to him as their senior, "but the gintleman has the advantage o' me. I never was here at all, at all; and I hope I niver shall be."

The four young men gathered round a desk, and gazed sadly at one another. At this moment the office-boy, seeing the distance safe, for he had been watching through the keyhole, pushed his head in at the door, and shouted, "Hi! there, juvenile coal-merchants, don't yer sell too much now! Telegram from the Exchange, gents; grimy is on the rise. But excoose me half an hour, gents; her Majesty have commanded my presence, to put the ro-oyal harms on me. Ho-hoop! I'm after you, Molly. Don't be afraid of my splashing your legs, dear."

"Well," said Cradock, as the rising young coal-merchants seemed to look to him for counsel, and stood in silent bewilderment—"this looks rather queer. However we can do nothing better than stop, and see the matter out. I trust that none of you gentlemen have paid a premium, as I have."

"I am sure I don't know," said the Cantab, "what the others have done; but I was allowed to enter the firm for the sum of eighty guineas, a great deal too little, considering all the advantages offered—the proper sum being a hundred; but an abatement was made in my favour."

"Ahty guineas!" cried the Durham man; "why I was admeeted for saxty, because I had no more."

"It's me blessed self, then, as bates you all," shouted the son of Dublin; "shure and I've made a clear sixty by it, for I had no more than forty."

"And I," replied Cradock, with a melancholy air, "was received for the trifling sum of twenty, on account of my being an Oxford man."

"Why, gentlemen," said the little Cantab, "let us shake hands all round. We represent the four chief universities, only Scotland and London omitted."

"Catch a Scotchman with salt, me frinds!" cried the red Hibernian, as they went through the ceremony. "By Jasers, but that infernal old Jew would have had to pay the porridge-man, for the pleasure of his company."

"Now let us see what we have here," said Cradock, with his gentle smile; "we must not be in too much of a hurry, although I'm afraid we are horribly choused. Gentlemen, look at your desks, if you please. I was told to act for our principal, during the absence of the sleeping partner; to keep you all in your places, and make you stick to your work; and especially to remember that one ounce of practice is worth a pound of precept."

"I should be most happy to obey your orders," said the little Cambridge man, bowing; "only I hold the identical commission, ounce of practice and all, for your benefit, my good sir, and that of all the other juniors."

"Now that shows a want of vareaty," cried the tall Dunelmian, "for the sole charge of all of ye is commeeted to my poor self."

"It's me blessed self that got it last, and that manes to kape it. What time wur you there, gintlemen, at Ory Thamis Buildings?"

It was settled that the Irishman had received his commission last, for, some whisky having been produced, he and Hearty Wibraham had kept it up until twelve o'clock on the Saturday night. So, to his intense delight, he was now appointed captain.

"An' if I don't drag him from his hole, to pay him the sixty guineas I owe him, out of your money, gintlemen, say my name isn't Manus O'Toole. Now the fust arder I give, is to have in the bhoy, and wallop him."

Easier said than done, Mr. Toole. There was no boy to be found any where; and the only result of a strong demonstration in the passage was a curt note from the landlord.

"GENTLEMEN,—I understood as I had lett my rooms to a respectable party, rent payable weakly, and weak is up this day. Will take it a favior to reseeve two pound ten per bearer.

"JOHN CODGER."

The four university men looked wondrously blank at this—"gelidusque per ima cucurrit ossa tremor."

"Well, I am blowed!" cried the little Cantab, getting smaller, and with the sky-blue stripes on his trousers quivering.

"There's a cousin of mine, a soleecitor," said the young north countryman, "would take up this case for us, if we made a joint deposeet."

"Have down the landlord and fight him," proposed the Emerald Islander.

"I don't care a fig for the landlord," said Cradock, who now recalled some shavings of law from the Quarter Sessions spoke-shave; "he can do nothing at all to us, until twelve o'clock, and then he can send us about our business, and no more harm done. We were not parties to the original contract, and have nothing to do with the rent. Now, gentlemen, there is only one thing I would ask you, in return for my lucid legal opinion."

"What is that?" cried all the rest; "whatever it is, you shall have it."

"That you make over to me, *in toto*, your three-fourths of that brass-plate. I have taken a strange fancy to it; the engraving is so fine."

"You are perfectly welcome to it," exclaimed the other three; "but won't it belong to the landlord?"

"Not if it is merely screwed on, as probably is the case. And I have a screw-driver in my knife, which very few screws can resist."

"Then go and take it, by all means, before twelve o'clock; after that we shall only be trespassers."

Crad put his hat on and went out, but returned with the wonderful screw-driver snapped up into his knife-handle, and the first flush of real British anger yet seen upon his countenance. What marvellous beings we are! He had lost nearly all his substance, and he was vexed most about the brass-plate.

"Done at every point," he said; "that glorious under-plate is gone, and only the narrow bar left with the name of the thief upon it, which of course would not suit him again."

"Oysters all round!" cried the Cambridge man; for the natives had not yet been "cultivated" into non-existence. "An oyster is a legal esculent; I see they teach law at Oxford; let us at least die jolly. And I claim the privilege of standing oysters, because I have paid the highest premium, and am the most promising partner—at any rate, the softest fellow. Gentlemen, if you refuse me, I claim our captain's decision. Captain O'Toole, how is it?"

"Arrah, thin, and I order eysters at this gintleman's expinse, London stout for the waker stomiks, and a drop o' poteen for digestion, to them as are wakest of all."

"Done," said the little Cantab, "if only to rile the landlord, and he may distrain the shells. Call four university men, by implication, unrespectable parties! We must have our action against him. Gentlemen, I am off for the grub, and see that I get in again."

"Faix, then, my honey," cried the Irishman, forgetting all university language, "and, if ye don't, 'twill be a quare job for the bones on the knuckles of Manus O'Toole."

While all four were enjoying their oysters—for Cradock, being a good-natured fellow, did not withhold his assistance—a sharp rap-rap announced the postman, and Mr. O'Toole returned from the door with a large square letter, sealed with the coat of arms of the company. "Ship-letther, and eightpence to pay, begorra. Gintlemen, will we take it?"

"How is it addressed?" asked two or three.

"Most gintaal. 'To the sanior clerk or junior partner of the firm of Wibraham, Fookes, and Co., Coal Merchants;' and that's meself, if it's nobody."

"Then it's you to pey the eightpence," cried the Durham man.

"Do yer think, then, it's me who can't do it?" answered Mr. O'Toole, angrily. And then he broke open the letter and read:

"P. & O. steamer *Will o' the Wisp*, off the Start Point.—*Sunday.*

"RESPECTED AND BELOVED PARTNERS,—His Royal Highness the Pasha of Egypt, having resolved to light with gas the interior of the Pyramids, also to provide hot-water bottles for the comfort of his household-brigade, principally female, and to erect extensive gas-cooking premises, where hot crocodile may always be had, has entrusted me with the whole arrangements, and the entire supply of coal, with no restriction except that the Nile shall not be set on fire.

"Interested as you are in the success of our noble firm, you will thank, instead of blaming me, for an apparently unceremonious departure. By an extraordinary coincidence, Mr. Fookes has also been summoned peremptorily to Constantinople, to contract with the Sultan for warming the sacks of the ladies who are, from time to time, deposited in the Bosporus.

"Therefore, gentlemen, the entire interest of the London branch is left in your experienced hands. Be steady, I entreat you; be diligent, be methodical. Above all things, remember that rigid probity, and the strictest punctuality in meeting payments, are the very soul of business, and that an ounce of practice is worth a pound of precept. But I have the purest confidence in you. I need not appeal to the honour of four university men. From my childhood upward, I have admired those admirable institutions, and the knowledge of life imparted by them. 'Quid leges sine moribus?' Excuse me; it is all the Latin I know.

"There is a raw Irishman among you, rather of the physical order; if he is violent, expel him. Every gentleman will be entitled to his own deal desk, upon discharge of the bill, which he will find made out in his name, in the drawer thereof. And now farewell. I have been prolix in the endeavour to be precise.

"There are no funds in hand for the London branch, but our credit is unbounded. Push our united interests, for I trust you to the last farthing. I hope to find you with coffers full, and commercial honour untainted, on the 31st of February prox.

"Believe me, Gentlemen, ever your affectionate partner,

"HEARTY WIBRAHAM, D.C.L.

"P.S.—If none of my partners know the way to enter an order, the office-boy will instruct the manager of the firm.—H. W."

"Consummate scoundrel!" exclaimed the little Cantab, with the beard of an oyster in his throat.

"Detasteable heepocrite!" cried the representative of Durham.

"Raw Irishman! Oh then the powers! And the punch of the head I never giv' him, a week ago next Saturday." Mr. O'Toole danced round the room, caught up the desks like dolls, and dashed all their noses together. Then he summoned the landlord, and pelted him out of the room and up the stairs with oyster-shells, the books, and the whisky-bottle, and two pewter-pots after his legs, as he luckily got round the landing-place. The terrified man, and his wife worse frightened, locked themselves in, and then threw up a window and bawled out for the police.

Cradock, feeling ashamed of the uproar, seized O'Toole by the collar; and the Durham man, being sedate and steady, grasped him on the other side. So they lifted him off the ground, and bore him even into Hyde Park, and there they left him upon a bench, and each went his several way. Thus did our great universities vindicate their intelligence; and the police, according to precedent, were in time to be too late.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

DOWN AMONG THE DEAD MEN.

CRADOCK NOWELL shivered hard, partly from his cold, and partly at the thought of the poverty before him. He had Amy's five and sixpence left, an immutable peculium. In currency his means were limited to exactly four and ninepence. With the accuracy of an upright man (even in smallest matters), he had forced upon Mr. O'Toole his twopence, the quaternary of that letter. Also he had insisted upon standing stout, when thirst increased with oysters. Now he took the shillings four, having lost all faith in his destiny, and put one in each of his waistcoat pockets; for he had little horse-shoes upwards, as well as the straight chinks below. This being done, he disposed of his ninepence with as tight a view to security.

All that day he wandered about, and regretted Issachar Jupp. Towards nightfall he passed a railway terminus, miserably lighted, a disgrace to any style of architecture, teeming with insolence, pretence, dirt, discomfort, fuss, and confusion. Let us call it the "Grand Junction Wasting and Screwing Line;" for no line then can appropriate a name universally applicable.

In a window, never cleaned since the prorogation of Parliament, the following "Notice" tried to appear; and, if you rubbed the glass, you might read it.

"Wanted immediately, a smart active young man, of good education. His duties will not be onerous. Wages one pound per week.

Uniform allowed. Apply to Rotten Sleeper, Esquire, next door to the booking-office."

Cradock read this three times over, for his wits were growing dull; and then he turned round, and felt whether all his money was safe. Yes, every blessed halfpenny, for he had eaten nothing since the oysters.

"Surely I am an active young man, of good education," said Crad to himself, "although not very smart, perhaps, especially as to my boots; but a suit, all uniform, allowed, will cure my chief deficiency. I could live and keep Wena comfortably upon a pound a week. I hope, however, that they cash up. Railway companies do not care, of course, for reputation. But I suppose they pay in cases where they cannot help it."

Having meditated with himself thus much, he went, growing excited on the way—for who can be a philosopher upon four and ninepence?—to the indicated whereabouts of that line's factotum, Mr. Sleeper. Here he had to wait very nearly an hour, Mr. Sleeper being engaged, as usual, in the company's most active department, arranging very effectually for a collision down the line. "Successfully," I would have said; but, though the accident came off quite according to the most sanguine, or sanguinary expectation, the result was a slur on that company's fame; only three people being killed, and five-and-twenty wounded.

"Now, young man," asked Mr. Sleeper, when all his instructions were on the wires, "what is your business with me?"

Cradock, having stated his purpose, name, and qualifications, the traffic-manager looked at him with interest and reflection. Then he said impressively, "You can jump well, I should think?"

"I have never yet been beaten," Crad answered; "but of course there are many who could do it."

"And run, no doubt? And your sight is accurate, and your nerves very good?"

"My nerves are not what they were, sir; but I can run fast and see well."

"Why do you shiver so? That will never do. And the muscles of his calf are too prominent. We lost No. 6 through that."

"It is only a little cold I have caught. It will go off in a moment with regular work."

"You have no relation, I suppose, in any way connected with the law? No friend, I mean, of litigious tendencies?"

"Oh no. I have no friends whatever; none, I mean, in London, only one family, far in the country, to care at all about me."

"No father or mother of any importance? No wife to prevent your attending to business?"

"No, sir, nothing of the sort. I am quite alone in the world; and my life is of no importance."

"Wonderful luck," muttered Mr. Sleeper; "exactly the very thing

for us! And I have been so put out about that place, it has got such a reputation. Poor Morshead cannot get through the work any longer by himself. And the coroner made such nasty remarks. If we kill another man there before Easter, the *Times* will be sure to get hold of it.

"Young man," he continued in a louder tone, "you are in luck this time, I believe. It is a very snug situation; only you must look sharp after your legs, and be sure you never touch spirits. Not given to blue ruin, I hope?"

"Oh no. I never touch it."

"That's right. I was afraid you did, you look so down in the mouth. You can give us a reference, I suppose?"

"Yes, to my landlady, Mrs. Ducksacre, a most respectable person, in trade in Mortimer-street."

"Good," replied Mr. Sleeper; "you mustn't be alarmed, by the way, by any foolish rumours you may hear as to dangers purely imaginary. Your predecessor lost his life through the very grossest carelessness. You are as safe there as in your bed, unless your nerves happen to fail you. And, when that is the case, I should like to know," asked the traffic-manager indignantly, "which of us is not in danger, even in coming down-stairs?"

"What will my duties be, then?" asked Cradock, with some surprise.

"Why, you are not afraid, are you?" Mr. Sleeper looked at him contemptuously.

"No, I should rather hope not," replied Cradock, meeting him eye to eye, so that the wholesale smasher quailed at him; "there is no duty, even in a powder-mill, which I would shrink from now."

"Ah, terrible things, those powder-mills! A perfect disgrace to this age and country, their wanton waste of human life. How the Legislature lets them go on so, is more than I can conceive. Why, they think no more of murdering and maiming a dozen people——"

"Please, sir," cried one of the clerks, coming down from the telegraph office, "no end of a collision on the Slayham and Bury Branch. Three passengers killed, and twenty-five wounded, some of them exceedingly fatally."

"Bless my heart if I didn't expect it. Told Sykes it would be so. How's the engine, Jemmy?"

"She's all right, sir; jumped over three carriages, and went a header into a sand-hill. Driver cased in glass, from vitrifaction of the sand. Stoker took the hot water—a thing he ain't much accustomed to."

"No! What a capital joke. Hell-fire-Jack (I can swear it was him), preserved in a glass case, from the results of his own imprudence! I shall be up with you in five minutes, James. Be steady and ready to begin."

"Now," said Mr. Rotten Sleeper, drawing out his cigar-case, "I have little more to say to you, young man, except that you can begin at eight o'clock to-morrow morning. We will dispense with the references, for I have the utmost confidence in you, and you will be searched very carefully every time you come out of the gate—which you never will be allowed to do, except when your spell is over, and your mate is in. You will go at once to our outfitters, and, upon presenting this ticket, they will fit you up, as tightly as possible, with your regimentals. And see that you don't take boots, but the very best shoes for jumping in. What they call 'Oxford shoes' are best, when tied tight over the instep, and not too thick in the sole. No nails, mind, for fear of slipping upon the flange. Good-bye, my boy; be very careful. By-the-by, you say you don't value your life?"

"Very little indeed," said Cradock; "except just for one reason."

"Then now you must add another reason; you must value it for our sake. The Company can't have another inquest for at least six months. I mean, of course, by that fool of a coroner. Confound that fellow; he will not take a right view of things. At eight o'clock to-morrow morning, you will be at the gate of the Cramjam goods station. The clerk there will have his orders about you. He will supply you with a book, and map out for you your duties. Also Morshead, your mate, an invaluable man, will show you the practical part of it. Now good-bye, my lad. Remember, you never wear any except your official dress. We allow you two suits in the twelvemonth. Your duties will be of a refined character, and the exercise exhilarating. I trust to receive a good report of you; and I hope, my boy, that you are at peace, both with God and man."

Even Mr. Sleeper had been touched a little by Cradock's air of uncomplaining sorrow, and the stamp of high mind and good breeding.

"Very foolish of me," he muttered, as he lit his cigar, and went up to telegraph to the Slayham station-master—'Commit yourself to nothing; observe the strictest economy; look first to the engine; allow no bonfires of splinter-wood, such as you had last week'—"very foolish of me," he said on the stairs, "but it goes to my heart to kill that young fellow. How I should like to know his history! That face does not mean nothing."

Cradock, caring very little what his duties might be, and feeling the night-wind go through his heart, hastened to the outfitters', and there he was received with a grin by an experienced shopman, on the production of his note.

"Capital customers, sir," he said; "famous customers of ours, that Grand Junction Wasting and Screwing Line, and the best of all for the gentlemen in your way of business, sir. Must have new clothes every new hand, and they changes pretty often, sir. Pervides

all the comforts of a home for you, and a gentlemanly competence, before you've been half a year with them."

The man grinned still more at his own grim wit, while Cradock stared at him in wonderment.

"Don't you see, sir, they can't pass the clothes on, after the man has been killed, even if there's a bit of them left; for they must fit you like your skin, sir. The leastest little wrinkle, sir, or the ruffle of a hinch, or so much as the fray of a 'em, and there you are, sir; and they have to look for another hactive young man, sir. And hactive young men are getting shy, sir, uncommon shy of it now, except they come from the country. Hope you insured your life, sir, before taking the situation. There's no company will accept your life now, sir. What a nice young man the last were,—what a nice young man, to be sure! outrageous fond of filberts; till they cracked him, and found a shell for him."

"Well," said Cradock, whom the busy tailor had been measuring all this while, "from all that you tell me, I had better go and order my coffin than to-morrow's dinner. What is there so very dangerous in it?"

"Well, you'll see, sir, you'll see, if you lives. Hitch your pants a wee bit up, sir. I would not frighten you for the world, because it's all up in a moment, if you lose your presence of mind. Thank you, sir; all right now, except the calves of the tights, and that's the most particular part of it all. May I trouble you to turn your trousers up? It will never do to measure over them. We shall put six hands on at once at the job. The whole will be ready at eleven this evening. You must kindly call and try every thing. We are ordered to insist upon that. It always tells so with the jury."

The next morning, Crad, in a suit of peculiar, tough, and yet most elastic cord, which fitted him as if he had been dipped in it, walked in at the open gates of the front yard, leading to the Cramjam general goods terminus. This was the only way in or out (except along "the metals"), and, so haughtily frowned it with gingerbread stucco, that all the porters were proud of it, and called it a "slap-up harch-way."

"Stop, stop," cried a sharp little fellow, gurgling up, like a fountain, from among the sham pilasters; "what's your business here, my man, on the premises of the Grand Junction Wasting and Screwing Company? Ah, I see by your togs. Just come this way, if you please, my man."

Here, having only a train to start, which goes at its own convenience, there is time for a prolix explanation, that the more fashionable of the railway companies have lately agreed that a station-yard is a sort of royal park, which cannot be kept too private. which no doors may rashly open upon, a pleasant rural solitude and weed-nursery for the neighbourhood, and wherein the senior porter

has his private mushroom-bed. They are wise in this seclusion, and wholesome in their privacy, so long as they have their own absolute way, so long as they are allowed to swindle us, and jabber about "public interests." Perhaps, ere very long, we shall have a modern Dædalus; and then the boards of directors, so ready to do collectively things which, done individually, would compel a gentleman to cut his throat, may awake from some snores of complacency, and rout up their thieves of lawyers, and learn that a gentleman's honour cannot exist with a limited liability.

Cradock, in no wise overwhelmed by the "compo" arch (about half the size of the stone one at Nowelhurst Hall's chief entrance), went straight up to the sharp little fellow, and told him what he was come for.

"Glad to hear it," said the gateman, "uncommonly glad to hear it. Morshead is a wonderful fellow; there is not another man in England could have stuck to that work as he has done. He ought to have five pounds a week, that he ought, instead of a single sovereign. Screwing Co." (this was their common name) "will be sorry when they have lost him. Now your duty is to enter, in this here book, the number of every truck, jerry, trod, or blinkem, tarpaulin, or covering of any sort; also the destination chalked on it, and the nature of the goods in the truck, so far as you can ascertain them; coals, iron, chalk, packing-cases, boxes, crates, what not, so fast as they comes into the higher end, or so fast as they goes out of it. You return this book to the check office every time you come off duty. You begin work at eight in the morning, and you leave at eight in the evening. You don't pass here meanwhile, and you can't pass up the line. Hope you have brought some grub. You'll have five minutes in the afternoon, long enough to get a snack in, after the up goods for Millstone is off. Oh, you ought to have brought some grub; if you faint, you will never come to again. But perhaps Morshead can spare you a bit. He'll be glad to see you, that's certain, for he ain't slept a wink for a week. And such a considerate chap. I enter you in and out. 'Number-taker 26.' That's all right from your cap, my lad. No room for it on your sleeve. Might stick out, you know, and you must pack tighter than any of the goods is. 'Undertakers,' we call you always. Good-bye, sir; Morshead will tell you the rest, and I hope to see you all right at eight P.M. The first day is always the worst. Go in at that door by the Pickford, and ask the first porter you see for Morshead, and take care how you get at him."

Morshead was resting for a moment upon a narrow piece of planking, amid a regular Seventy Dials of sidings, points, and turntables. Cradock could scarcely see him, for trucks and vans and boxes on wheels were gliding past in every direction, thick as the carts on London Bridge, creaking, groaning, ricketing, lurching; thumping up against one another, and then recoiling with a heavy

kick, straining upon coupling-chains, butting against bulkheads, staggering and jerking into grooves and out of them, crushing flints into a shower of sparks, doing any thing and every thing except standing still for a moment. And among them rushed about, like dragons—ramping, and routing, and swearing fearfully, gargling their throats with a boiling riot, and then goring the ground with tusks of steam, whisking and flicking their tails, and themselves, in and out at the countless crosswebs, screaming, and leaping, and rattling, and booming—the great ponderous giant goods-engines. Every man was out-swearing his neighbour, every truck browbeating its fellow, every engine out-yelling its rival. There is nothing on earth to compare with this scene, unless it be the jostling and churning of ice-packs in Davis's Straits, when the tide runs hard, and a gale of wind is blowing, and the floes have broken up suddenly. And even that comparison fails, because, though the monsters grind and crash, and labour and leap with agony, they do not roar, and vomit steam, and swear at one another.

At the risk of his life, for as yet he knew nothing of the laws that governed their movements—a very imperfect code, by-the-by—Cradock made his way to the narrow staging where Morshead was taking a breathing-time. His fellow "number-taker" of course descried him coming; for he had acquired the art of seeing all round, as a spider is falsely supposed to do. He knew in a moment, by Cradock's dress, what business he was meant for; and he said to himself, "Thank God!" in one breath, for the sake of his wife and family; and "Oh, poor fellow!" in the next, as he saw how green the youth was. Then he held up his hands for Cradock to stop, and waved them for him to run; and so piloted him to the narrow knife-board, "where a man's life was his own a'most."

The highest and noblest of physical courage is that which, fully perceiving the danger, looking into the black pit of death, and seeing the night of horrors there, without either fatalism or deep religion to strengthen it, encounters them all, treads the narrow cord daily, not for the sake of honour or fortune; not because of the dash in it, and the excitement to a brave soul; not even to win the heart's maiden, that pearl of romance and mystery: but simply to supply the home, to keep in flow the springs of affection—whence the geyser heat is gone—to support and comfort (without any comfort from them) the wife, whose beauty has passed away, and who now is an unattractive scold, as well as the children, whose sole idea of daddy is—a halfpenny.

This glorious inglorious courage, grander than any that ever won medal or cross for slaughtering, had a little home—though he knew it not, and never thought about it—in the broad, but sinewy bosom of simple Stephen Morshead. None but himself knew his narrow escapes; an inch the wrong way and he was a dead man, fifty times a day. And worst of all in the night, in the foggy time of night, and

yet more in the first gleam of morning, when the body was worn out, and dreams came over the eyes, but were death if they passed to the brain, and the trucks went by, like nightmares—that very morning he had felt, after taking duty night and day for more than a week, since they killed his partner, he had felt that his Sally must be a widow, and his seven children orphans, if another night went over him without some relief of sleep.

That every word of this is true, many a poor man would avouch (if he only had time and the money to read it, and were not afraid); but few rich men can really find the time to think about it.

Stephen Morshead was astonished at seeing that his mate was come. None of the men in the goods' station would have any thing to do with it. It was very well to be up in the trucks, or upon the engines, or even to act as switchman, for you had a corner inviolable, and could only do mischief to others. But to run in and out, and through and through, in that perpetual motion, to be bound to jot down every truck, the cover, and contents of it, entering or departing from that crammed and crowded terminus, to have nobody to help you therein, and nobody to cry "dead man" if you died, and the certainty that if you stood a hair's-breadth out of the perpendicular, or a single wheel had a bunion, you with the note-book in your hand must flood the narrow 'tween ways, and find your way out underneath to heaven; all this, and the risk of the fearful jumps from one sliding train to another, sliding oppositely, and jerking, perhaps, as you jumped; and yet if you funked the jump you must be crushed, like a frog beneath a turf-beater: these considerations, after many pipes were smoked over them, had induced all the porters and stokers to dwell on the virtues of the many men killed, and to yield to their wives' entreaties, acquiesce in their sixteen shillings, nor aspire to the four shillings Charon-fare.

"Now," said Morshead, "shake hands with me," as Cradock, breathless with running wonder, leapt upon the nine-inch gangway. "I see you belongs to a different horder of society; obliged to keep my eyes open, mate; but, as long as you and I works together, I ask it as a favour of you, to shake hands night and morning."

"With the greatest pleasure," said Cradock, "if you think there's room for our funny-bones."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Morshead, "you are the right sort for it. Not a bit afeard, I see. Now I mustn't stop to talk; just follow me, and do as I do. I can put you up to it in six hours; and then if you can spare me for the other six, 'twill be the saving of the little ones. But tell the truth if you're tired. I should scorn myself if harm came to you."

"You are the bravest man I ever met," said Cradock, with his heart rising; "you cannot expect me to be like you. But you shall not find me a coward."

"I can see it by your eyes, lad. No sparkle, but a glowing like.

I can always tell by the eyes of a man how long he will last at this work. Now come along o' me, and I'll show you the nine worst crushing places."

Cradock followed him through the threads—threads of Clotho and Atropos—feeling the way with his legs, like a gnat who "overs the posts" of a spider's web. In and out, with a jump here and there, when two side-boards threatened to shear them, they got to the gorge at the entrance, where the main turmoil of all was. The Symplegades were a joke to it. And all because the Screwing Company would not buy land enough to get elbow-room. There are several lines of railway which do a much larger business; there is no other which attempts to do so much upon less than four times the acreage.

"I've tottled all them as are going out," Mr. Morshead informed Cradock; "now you'll see how we enters them as they enters."

Laughing at his own very miserable joke, he leaped on the chains of the passing waggons, and held up his hand for Cradock not to attempt to do the same.

"Takes a deal of practice that," he cried, after he had crossed the train; "it ain't like a passenger train, you know; and you must larn when they are standing. I need not to have done it now, but sometimes I be forced. Bide where you are; no danger unless they comes with the flaps down."

Then he jotted down, with surprising quickness, all the necessary particulars of the train that was coming in. It happened to be an easy one; for there were no tarpaulins at all, and it was not travelling faster than about four miles an hour.

"Some drivers there is," said Morshead, as he rejoined Cradock round the tail of the train, "who really seem to want to kill a fellow, they come by at such a pace, without having any call for it. I believe they think, the low fools, that we are put as spies upon them, and they would rather kill us than not.—Hold your tongue," to a man in a truck, who was interrupting his lecture; "don't you know better than to offer me that stuff? Never touch what they offers you, sir. They means no harm, but you had safer take poison when you be on duty. There is not much real danger just here, if a fellow is careful, because the rails run parallo; there is nothing round the curve now, I see, and only two coming out, and both of they be scored; it's a rare chance to show you the figures of eight, and slide-points where the chief danger is. Show you where poor Charley was killed last week, and how he did it."

"Poor fellow! Did he leave any family?"

"Twelve in all. No man comes here, unless he be tired of his life, or he be druv to it by the little ones."

"And what did the Company do for them?"

"Oh, behaved most 'andsome for them. Allowed 'em two bob a week for a twelvemonth to come—twopence apiece all round. But

they only did it to encourage me, for fear I should funk off. I have seen out three mates now. Please God, I shan't see you out too, my lad."

"If you do, it shan't be from funk, Morshead. I rather like the danger."

"That's the worst thing of all," replied Stephen; "I beg of you not to say that, sir."

A thoroughly brave man almost always has respect for order. The bold man—which means a coward with jumps in him—generally has none. It was strange to see how Stephen Morshead, in all that crush, and crash, and rattle, that swinging and creaking as of the Hellespontic boat-bridge, mixed deference with his pity for Cradock. He saw, from his face, and air, and manner, that he was bred a gentleman. Shall we ever come—or rather the twentieth generation come—to the time when every man of England (but for his own fault) shall be bred and trained a gentleman in the true and glorious sense of it?

Cradock saw the fatal places, where the sleepers still were purple, where danger ran in converging lines, where a man must stand sideways, like a duellist, and with his arms in like a drill-sergeant's, and not shrink an inch from the driving-wheels; where his size was measured as for his coffin, and if he stirred he would want nothing more. Then, if a single truck-flap were down, if an engine rollicked upon the rail, if a broad north-country truck, overreaching, happened to be in either train, when you were caught between the two, your only chance was to call on the Lord, and lie upon your side, and straighten all your toes out.

And yet these were the very places where, most of all, the "number-taker" was bound to have his stand—where alone he could contrive to check two trains at once. "Could they help starting two trains at once?" poor Crad asked himself—for he had found no time to ask it before—when, weary to the last fibre with the work of the day, he fell upon his little bed, and could hardly notice Wena. Perhaps they could not; it was more than he knew; only he knew that, if they could, they were but wanton man-slaughterers.

After a deep sleep, all in his clothes, he awoke the next morning quite up for his work, and Morshead, who had been on duty all night, and whose eyes seemed made of adamant, only stayed for an hour with him, and then, feeling that Crad was quite up to the day-work, ran home and snored for ten hours, as loud as Phlegethon or Enceladus.

The most fearful thing, for a new hand, was, of course, the night-work; and Stephen Morshead, delighted to have such a mate at last, had begged to leave Cradock the day-spell, at least for the first three weeks; for to Stephen the moon was as good as the sun, and sweet sleep fell like wool when plucked at, and hushed the tramping steeds of the day-god. Only, for the sake of Stephen's eyes, on

whose accuracy hung the life-poise, it was absolutely necessary not to dilate the pupils by incessant night-work.

But Cradock never took night-work there; and the change came about on this wise. Wena felt that she was wronged by his going away from her every day so early in the morning, and not coming home to her again till ever so late at night, and then too tired to say a word, or perhaps he didn't care to do it. Like all females of any value—unless they are really grand ones, and, if such there be, please to keep them away—Wena grew jealous desperately. She might as well be any body else's dog; and the baker's dog was with his master all day; and the butcher's lady dog, a nasty ill-bred thing—the idea of calling her a lady!—why, even she was allowed, though the selfish thing didn't care for it, unless there was suet on his apron, to jump up at him and taste him, all the time he was going for orders. And then look even at the Ducksacre dog, a despicable creature—his father might have been a bull-terrier, or he might have been a Pomeranian, or a quarter-bred Skye, or the Lord knows who, very likely a turnspit, and his mother, oh! the less we say of her the better;—why, that wretched, lop-eared, split-tailed thing, without an eye fit to look out of, had airs of his own; and what did it mean, she would like to know, and she who had formed some nice acquaintances, dogs that had been presented at Court, and got Eau-de-Cologne every morning, and not a blessed flea upon them? Why, it meant simply this: that Spot, filthy plague-spot, was allowed to go out with the baskets, and made a deal of by his owners, and might cock his tail with the best of them, while she, black Wena, who had been brought up so differently——

Here her feelings were too much for her, and she put down her soft flossy ear upon the drugget-scrap, and looked at the door despairingly, and howled until Mrs. Ducksacre was obliged to come up and comfort her. Even then she wouldn't eat the dripping.

From that day she made her mind up. She would watch her opportunity. What was the good of being endowed with such a nose as she had, unless she could smell her master out, even through the streets of London? What did he wear such outlandish clothes for? Very likely on purpose to cheat her. Very likely he was even keeping some other dog. At any rate, she would know that, if it cost her her life to do it. What good was her life to her now, or to any body else? Heigho!

On the following Saturday, when Cradock was gone to his fifth day's work, what did Wena do, when Mrs. Ducksacre came up on purpose to coax and make much of her, but most ungratefully give her the slip, with a skill worthy of a better purpose, then scuttle down the stairs, all four legs at once, in that clever style of bone-slide which domestic dogs acquire. Miss Ducksacre ran out of the shop at the noise—for this process is not a silent one; but she

could only cry, "Oh, Lord!" as Wena, with the full impact of her weight multiplied into her velocity; or, if that is wrong, with the cube of her impetus multiplied into the forty-two stairs—bang she came anyhow, back-foremost, against the young lady's—nay, you there, I said, "lower limbs"—and deposited her in a bushel of carrots, just come from Covent Garden.

"Stop her, Joe, for God's sake, stop her!" Miss Ducksacre cried to the shop-boy, as well as she could for the tail of a carrot which had gotten between her teeth.

"Blowed if I can, miss," the boy responded, as Wena nipped his fingers for him; the next moment she was free as the wind, and round the corner in no time.

"Oh dear, oh dear," cried Polly Ducksacre, a buxom young lady, with fine black eyes, "whatever will Mr. Newman think of us? It will seem so unkind and careless; and he does love that dog so unreasonably!"

Polly was beginning to entertain a tender regard for Cradock; especially since he had shown his proportions in "them beautiful buff pantaloons." What a greengrocer he would make, to be sure, so hupright and so lordly like; and she'd like to see the man in the "Garden" who would tell her she had eaten sparrow-pie, if she only had Mr. Newman to hold the basket for her.

By this time, Mrs. Ducksacre was come down the stairs, screaming "Wena!" at the top of her voice the whole way; and out they ran, boy and all, to search for her, while three or four urchins came in, without medium of exchange, and filled cap, mouth, and pocket. One brat was caught upon their return, and tied up for the day in an empty potato-sack, and exposed, behind the counter, to universal execration; in which position he took such note of manner and custom, time and place, that it was never safe for the Ducksacre firm to dine together afterwards.

Meanwhile, that little black Wena, responsive and responsible to none except her master, pursued the even tenor of her way, nosing the ground, and asking many a question of the lamp-posts, as far as the Cramjam Terminus, at least three miles from Mortimer-street. The sharp little gate-clerk, animated with railway love of privacy, ran out, and clapped his hands, and shouted "hoo" at Wena; but she only buttoned her tail down, and cut across the compound. As for the stone he threw at her, she caught it up in her mouth as it rolled, and carried it on to her master.

There was Cradock, in the thick of it, standing on a narrow pile of pig-iron, one of his chief fortalices; his book was in his hand, and he was entering, as fast as he could, all the needful particulars of a goods train sliding past him.

Creak, and squeak, and puff, and shriek,—Oh, what a scene, thought Wena,—and the rattle of the ghostly chains, and the rushing about, and the roaring. She lost her presence of mind in a

moment,—she always had been such a nervous dog—she tightened her tail convulsively, and dropped her ears, while her eyes came forth; and, glancing at the horrors on every side, she fled for dear life from the evil to come.

The faster she fled, the more they closed round her. She had not espied her master yet; she could not find the way back again; she was terrified out of all memory; and a host of frightful genii, more sooty than Cocytus, and riding hideous monsters, were yelling at her on every side, clapping black hands, and hooting. The dog on the Derby course, when the race rushes round the corner, was in a position of glory and safety compared to poor Wena's now. Already the tip of her tail was crushed, already one pretty paw was broken; for she had bolted in and out through the trains, truck-bottoms, wheels, and driving-wheels. Oh, you cowards, to yell at her! with black death grating and grinding upon her soft silky back!

At last, she gave in altogether. They had hunted her to her grave. Who may contend with destiny? She lay down under a moving coal-train, and resigned herself to die. But first she must ask for sympathy, although so unlikely to get it. She looked once more at her wounded foot, and shivered and sobbed with the agony; and then gave vent to one long low cry, to ask if no one loved a poor dog there.

Cradock heard it, and started so that it was nearly all up with him too. Thoroughly he knew the cry, wherein she had wailed for Clayton. He flung down his book, and dashed to the place, and there he saw Wena, and she saw him. She began to try to limp to him, but he held up his hand to stop her; disabled as she was, she was sure to be caught by the wheel. Could she stay there, and let the train pass her? No. At its tail was an empty horse-box, almost scraping the ground, perfectly certain to crush her. Crying, "Down, down, my poor darling!" he ran down the train, which was travelling seven or eight miles an hour, seized the side of a truck, and leaped, at the risk of his life, upon the fender in front of the horse-box. Then he got astride of the coupling-chain, and kept his right hand low to the ground, to snatch her up ere the crusher came. Knowing where she was, he caught her by the neck the instant the truck disclosed her, and, with a strong swing, heaved her up into it. But he lost his balance in doing it, and fell sideways, with his head on the other coupling-chain. Stunned by the blow, he lay there, only clinging by his right calf to the chain he had sat astride upon. The first jerk of either chain, the first swing of either carriage, and he must be ground to powder.

Luckily for him and for Amy, Morshead was not gone home yet, seeing more to do than usual. Missing his mate from the proper place, he had run up in terror to look for him, when a man in a truck, who had vainly been shouting to stop the coal-train's engine,

pointed and screamed to him where and what was doing. Morshead jumped on the heap of pig-iron, and sideways thence on the board of the truck just passing, as dangerous a leap as well could be, but luckily that truck was empty. He jumped into the truck, a shallow one, where poor Wena lay quite paralyzed, and, stooping over the back with both arms, he got hold of Cradock's collar. Then, with a mighty effort, he jerked him upon the tail-board, and lugged him in, and bent over him.

Wounded Wena crawled up, and begged to have her poor foot looked at; then, obtaining no notice at all, she felt that Cradock must be killed and dead, just as Clayton had been. Upon this conclusion, she fetched such a howl, though it shook her sore tail to do it, that the engine-driver actually looked round, and the train was stopped.

When at last one of the heavy good-porters came home in the cab with Cradock and Wena at the expense of the Company (which was boasted of the next board-day)—when one of these came home with Crad—for Morshead had double work again—Polly Ducksacre went into strong hysterics, and it required two married men and a boy to get her out of the potato-bin.

It was all up with poor Crad that night. The overwork of brain and muscle, the presence of mind required all the time when his mind was especially absent, the impossibility of thinking out any of his trains of ideas when a train of trucks was upon him, the native indignation of a man at knowing that his blood is meant to ebb down a railway sewer, and a new broom will sweep him clean—all these worries and wraths together, cogging into the mill-wheel of cares already grinding, had made such a mill-clack in his head near the left temple, where the thump was, that he could only roll on his narrow bed at imminent risk of a floor-bump.

Then the cold, long harbouring, struck into his heart and reins; and he knew not that Dr. Tink came, and was learned and diagnostic upon him; nor even that Polly Ducksacre took his feet out of bed, and rubbed them until her wrists gave way; and then, half ashamed of her womanhood, slunk away, and cried over Wena.

Wena's foot was put into splinters, Wena's tail was stypticized; but no skill could save her master from a long impending fever.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

TWO TRYING VISITORS.

LEAVING the son on his narrow hard pallet, to toss and toss, and turn and turn, with nobody to nurse him, let us see how the father and folk at home were flourishing.

Sir Cradock Nowell sat all alone in his little breakfast-room, soon after the funeral of his brother, and before Eöa came to him. For the simple, hot-hearted girl fell so ill after she heard of her loss, and recovered from the narcotic, that Biddy O'Gaghan, who got on famously with the people at the "Crown," would not hear of her being moved yet, and drove Dr. Hutton all down the stairs, "with a word of sinse on the top of him," when he claimed his right of attending upon the child he had known in India.

That little breakfast-room adjoined Sir Cradock's favourite study, and was as pretty a little room as he could have wished to sit in. He had made pretence of breakfasting, but perhaps he looked forward to luncheon, for not more than an ounce of food had he swallowed altogether.

There he sat nervously, trying vainly to bring his mind to bear on the newspaper. Fine gush of irony, serried antithesis, placid assumption of the point at issue, then logic as terse and tight as the turns of a three-inch screw-jack, withering indignation at those who won't think exactly as we do, the sunrise glow of metaphor, the moonlight gleam of simile, the sparkling stars of wit, and the playful Aurora of humour—alas, all these are like water on a duck's back when the heart won't let the brain work. If we cannot appreciate their beauty, because our opinions are different, how can we hope to do so when we don't care what any opinions are?

It is all very well, and very easy, to talk about objectivity; but a really objective man the Creator has never shown us, save once; and even He withered up the fig-tree, and destroyed a herd of swine, to show sympathy with our impatience.

And who knows but that it may be lest we deify the grand incarnations of intellect—the Platos and the Aristotles, the Bacons and the Shakspeares—that it has pleased the Maker of great and small to leave us small tales of the great ones, mean anecdotes, low traditions; lest at any time we should be dazzled, and forget that they were but sparkles from the dross of eternal heaven's anvil. Oh vast and soaring intellects, was it that your minds flew higher because they had shaken the soul off; or was it that your souls grew sullen at the mind's preponderance?

Fash we not ourselves about it, though we pay the consequence. If we have no grand nuggets of intellect (as when the primitive channel was delved) yet we gain, at any rate, a heavier average

of washed-out stuff, from the cradle we were born in, the great gold-hunter's cradle.

This is the only thing any good Briton ever thinks of nowadays. All over the world we are scorned and kicked; what care we, so long as our seat of honour is not too sore to go down on its board, and be to the world the ninth part of a man—the cosmopolitan tailor?

Nevertheless, Sir Cradock Nowell (being no Briton of the present day, to abandon all rights joyfully) lay deep in the pot of despondency; and, even worse than that, hung, jerked thereout every now and then, by the flesh-hook of terror and nervousness. How could he go kindly with his writer, when his breakfast would not so with him?

He was expecting Bull Garnet. Let alone all his other wearing troubles, he never could be comfortable when he expected Bull Garnet. At every step in the passage, every bang of a door, the proud old gentleman trembled and flushed, and was wroth with himself for doing so.

Then Hogstaff came in, and fussed about, and Sir Cradock was fain to find fault with him.

"How careless you are getting about the letters, Hogstaff. Later and later every morning! What is the reason that you never now bring me the bag at the proper time?"

It was very strange, no doubt, of Job Hogstaff, but he could not bear to be found fault with; and now he saw his way to a little triumph, and resolved to make the most of it.

"Yes, Sir Cradock; to be sure, Sir Cradock; how my old head is failing me! Very neglectful of me never to have brought the bag to-day." Then he turned round suddenly at the door, to which he had been hobbling. "Perhaps you'd look at the date, Sir Cradock, of the paper in your hand, sir."

"Yesterday's paper, of course, Hogstaff. What has that to do with it?"

"Oh, nothing, sir, nothing, of course. Only I thought it might have comed in the letter-bag. Perhaps it never does, Sir Cradock; you knows best, as you takes it out." Here old Job gave a quiet chuckle, and added, as if to himself, "No, of course, it couldn't have come in the letter-bag this morning, or master would never have blowed me up for not bringing him the bag, as nobody else got a key to it!"

"How stupid of me, to be sure, how excessively stupid!" exclaimed Sir Cradock, with a sigh; "of course I had the bag, a full hour ago; and there was nothing in it but this paper. Job, I beg your pardon."

"And I hope it's good news you've got there, Sir Cradock, and no cases of starvation; no baronet's heir found dead in the streets, or drownded in the Serpentine. Anyhow, there's a many births, I

see, and a deal too many. Children be now such a plenty nobody care about them."

"Job, you quite forget yourself," said his master, very grandly; but there came a long sigh after it, and Job was not daunted easily.

"And if I do, Sir Cradock Nowell, I'd sooner forget myself than my children."

Sir Cradock was very angry, or was trying to feel that he ought to be so, when a heavy tread, quite unmistakable, and yet not so firm as it used to be, shook the glazed tiles of the passage. That step used to cry to the echoes, "Make way; a man of vigour and force is coming." Now all it said was, "Here I go; and am not in a mood to be meddled with."

"Come in," said Sir Cradock, fidgeting, and pretending to be up for an egg, as Mr. Garnet gave two great thumps on the panel of the door. Small as the room was, Job Hogstaff managed to be too late to let him in.

Bull Garnet first flung his great eyes on the butler; he had no idea of any fellows daring to skulk their duty. Old Hogstaff, who looked upon Garnet as no more than an upper out-door servant, gazed back with a long-practised obtuseness, and waved his napkin cleverly.

"Please to put that mat straight again, Mr. Garnet. You kicked it askew as you came in. And our master can't abide things set crooked."

To Job's disappointment and wonder, Bull Garnet stepped back very quietly, stooped down, and replaced the sheep's-skin.

"Hogstaff, leave the room this moment!" shouted Sir Cradock, wrathfully; and Job hobbled away to brag how he had "pulled Muster Garnet down a peg."

"Now, Garnet, take my easy-chair. Will you have a cup of coffee after your early walk?"

"No, thank you. I have breakfasted three hours and a half ago. In our position of life, we must be up early, Sir Cradock Nowell."

There was something in the tone of that last remark, commonplace as it was, without the key to it, which the hearer disliked particularly.

"I have requested the favour of your attendance here, Mr. Garnet, that I might have the benefit of your opinion upon a subject which causes me very deep anxiety—at least, I mean, which interests me deeply."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Garnet: he could say "ah!" in such a manner that it held three volumes uncut.

"Yes. I wish to ask your opinion about my poor son, Cradock."

Bull Garnet said not a word, but conveyed to the ceiling his astonishment that the housemaid had left such cobwebs there.

"I fear, Garnet, you cannot sympathize with me. You are so especially fortunate in your own domestic circumstances."

"Oh, indeed!" said Mr. Garnet, still contemplating the cornice.

"Yes, your son Robert is a very nice boy indeed. So gentle, so amiable, and so courageous! I had no idea he was so brave. I wish to see him to thank him for saving the life of my niece."

"He is a fine fellow, a noble fellow; Sir Cradock, I need not tell you, the dearest and the best boy in the whole wide world, to me at least."

The old man long had known that the flaw in Bull Garnet's armour was the thought of his dear boy, Bob.

"And can you not fancy, Garnet, that my son, whatever he is, may also be dear to me!"

"I should have said so, I must have thought so, but for the way you have treated him."

Bull Garnet knew well enough that he was a hot and hasty man. But he seldom had felt that truth more sharply than now, when he saw the result of his words. Nevertheless, he faltered not. He had made up his mind to deliver its thoughts, and he was not the man to care for faces.

"Garnet," began Sir Cradock, suddenly, hoping perhaps to escape this trial by another outlet; "will you kindly tell me what you would have done if you had been cast off like this?"

The steward took, without a word, the letter handed to him. On the cover was written, in a small clear hand, "Cradock's Defiance:' which defiance was as follows:—

"MY DEAR FATHER,—Although you have not said so much as one unkind word to me, I cannot help perceiving that you would rather now be quit of me. It is only what I expected, of course, and what I deserve to have done to me. Every one must feel the same thing about me now, and you most of all. At such a time, no one of my age, or of any age perhaps, can say a word to defend himself, or even desire to do it. I wish I could give my life up, if that would be any good to you. I did not even presume to hope that you ever could forgive me; and now I know that you never can. Therefore, father, I can do no more than say farewell to you.

"C. N."

Bull Garnet read this letter at a glance, as he did every thing, and if he had not read it so, the great tears would have blinded him. Then he returned it, and spoke up.

"Sir Cradock Nowell, I am a violent, hot, and passionate man. I have done many things in my fury which I would give my life to undo; but I would rather have them all on my soul than such cold-blooded, calm, unnatural cruelty as you are showing to your only —I mean to your own—son. I suppose you never cared for him; suppose! I mean of course you did not."

Speaking thus, the steward gazed at his employer, not only with-

out respect, but with undisguised contempt. The old man could not glance it back; neither did he seem to be as indignant as he should have been.

"Then—then—I suppose you don't think—you don't imagine, as some people do,—that he did it on purpose?"

Mr. Garnet turned pale as a winding-sheet, and could not speak for a moment. Then he looked away from Sir Cradock's eyes, and said, as if to himself:

"Can his father have ever thought so?"

"I have tried, I have tried," said the luckless father. "God knows that I have done my best. Garnet, have pity upon me. If you have any of our blood in you, tell me the truth—what do you think?"

"I not only think, but know, that the devil only could have suggested such an idea to you. Man, for the sake of the God that made you, and made me as well as your brother, and every one of us brethren, rather put a pistol to your heart than that damned idea. In cold blood! in cold blood! And for the sake of gain! A brother to, to—make away with a brother so! Oh, what things we come to think of! Where is my God, and where is yours?"

"I am sure I don't know," replied the old man, gazing round in wonderment, as if he expected to see Him—for the scene had quite unnerved him—"I suppose He is—is somewhere in the usual place, my good Garnet."

"Then that's not in this neighbourhood," muttered Bull Garnet, heavily; "He is gone from me, from all of us. And His curse is on my children. Poor innocents, poor helpless lambs! The curse of God is on them."

He took his great strides to the window; and, through his tears, and among the trees, tried to find his cottage-roof.

Sir Cradock Nowell was lost to thought, and heard not one of those woeful words, although from the depth of a stormy heart they came like the distant sea-roar.

Bull Garnet returned with his fierce eyes softened to a woman's fondness, and saw, with pity as well as joy, that his last words had not been heeded. "Ever hot and ever hasty, until it comes to my own death," he muttered, still in recklessness; "perhaps then I shall be tardy. For my son's sake, for my Bob and Pearl, I must not make such an ass of myself. Like Cradock, I must write and run."

"Garnet," said Sir Cradock Nowell, slowly recovering from his stupor (a slight pressure on the brain perhaps), "say nothing of what has passed between us—nothing, I entreat you; and not another word just now. I only understand that you assert emphatically my boy Cradock's innocence."

"With every fibre of my heart. With every atom of my brain."

"Then you deserve my love for it."

"Don't say that. Never say it again. I can't bear it now, Sir Cradock."

"Very well then, let it pass. I think now of so many things; but never want to be thanked for them"

"I am very thankful to you. Gratitude, Sir Cradock Nowell, is a very admirable and old-fashioned institution—quite out of date, as I now will show. I am come to give you notice—as well as to answer your summons—notice of my intention to quit your service shortly."

"Nonsense!" cried Sir Cradock, carried out of his usual manner; "nonsense, Garnet! You never mean that you, even you would desert me!"

The steward turned away from the look of proud and stern disappointment; and then he said,—

"Yes, I know. I ought to be more grateful—at such a time especially. But, I cannot help it."

"Very well," Sir Cradock answered; "let it be so, if it must. I have done my best to right an ancient wrong. And this is all that comes of it."

"No wrong ever can be righted," answered Garnet sternly; "until it is repented of, and spread before both God and man."

"Enough, enough!" replied Sir Cradock; "I am not accustomed to that sort of thing. If you choose to leave me, you must do so. I have nothing more to say."

* * * * * *

That same forenoon there came from Rushford Mrs. Brown's boy and donkey, with a very long message from a lady who had tucked the boy on the head because he could not make out her meaning. He believed her name was Mrs. Jogging, and he was to say that Miss Oh Ah was fit to come home to-day, please, if they'd please to send the shay for her. And they must please to get ready Satan's room, where the daffodil curtains was, because the young woman loved to look at the yeast, and to have a good fire burning. And please they must send the eel-skin cloak, and the foot-tub in the shay, because the young woman was silly.

"Chilly, you stupid," replied Mrs. Toaster. "She shall have the foot-warmer and the seal-skin cloak; but what Satan's room with the daffodil curtains is, only the Lord in heaven knows; and how she is to see any yeast there! Are you certain that was the message?"

"Sartin, ma'am. I said it to myself ever so many times; every time that I whacked the Neddy."

Sir Cradock Nowell, upon appeal, speedily decided that the satin room was meant—the room with the rose-coloured curtains, and the windows facing the east; but the boy stuck out for the daffodil; leastways he was certain it was some sort of flower.

It was nearly dark when the carriage returned; and Sir Cradock

came down to the entrance-hall to meet his brother's child. Too proud though he was to make any outward sign of any difference, yet inside himself he felt that his nerves were not as they used to be. Do what he would, he could not keep a little flutter from his lips, and temples, and gray eyelids, or from his thin straight-fingered hands a sort of shaking stiffness.

Because, from Dr. Hutton's description, as well as from his own ideas of things done in India, he feared to see in his probable heiress (for now he seemed to have no heir) something outlandish and barbarous.

Great therefore were his surprise and delight, when a graceful and beautiful girl, with high birth and elegance in every movement, flung off her cloak, and skipped up to him with the lightness of a gazelle, and threw her arms round his neck, and kissed him.

"Oh, uncle, I shall love you so! You are so like my darling—you have got his nose exactly, and just the same shaped legs. Oh, to think he should ever have left me!" And she burst into tears then and there before half a dozen servants. "Oh, Uncle Cradock, you have got a fine house; but I never shall care about it."

"Hush, my dear; come with me, my child!" Sir Cradock was always wide awake upon the subject of proprieties.

"I am not your child; and I won't be your child, if you try to stop me like that. I must cry when I want to cry, and it is so stupid to stop me."

"What a pretty dear you are!" said Sir Cradock, scarce knowing what to say, but confiding in feminine vanity.

"Am I indeed? That shows how much you know about it. I was very pretty, of course I was, until I began to cry so. But now I am gone like a bundle of reed mashed up for making paper. But when you come to think of my father never, never to take me on his lap again! Hya! Hya! Hya!"

"Faix, thin, me darlin'," cried Mrs. O'Gaghan, stroking her down in a shampooing manner, "it's meself as knows how to dale with you. Lave her to me, Sir Crayduck; she's pure and parfict, every bit on her. I knows how to bring her out, and she'll come to your room like a lamb, now jist.—Git out of the way, the lot on you"—to several officious maidens—"me honey, put your hand in my neck, your blissed leetle dove of a hand, and fale how me heart goes pat for you. Sir Crayduck, me duty to you, but you might 'ave knowed how to git out of the way, and lave the ladies to the ladies."

Sir Cradock Nowell marched away, thinking what a blessing it was that he had not had much to do with women. Then he reproached himself for the thought, as he remembered his darling Violet, the mother of his children.

But, before he had brooded very long in the only room he liked to use now, his study just off from the library, a gentle knock came *to* the door—as Biddy always expressed it—and Eöa, dressed in

deepest mourning (made at Lymington, from her own frock, while she lay ill at the "Crown"), came up to him steadily, and kissed him, and sat on a stool at his feet.

"Oh, uncle, I am so sorry," she said, with the weight of her hair falling over his knees, and her deep eyes looking up at him, "I am so sorry, Uncle Cradock, that I vexed you so, just now."

"You did not vex me, my pretty. I was only vexed for you. Now, remember one thing, my darling—for I shall love you as my own daughter—I have been very harsh and stern where, perhaps, I had no right to be so: if I am ever unkind to you, my dear, if I ever say any thing hard, only say 'Clayton Nowell' to me, and I will forgive you directly."

"You mean I must forgive you, uncle. I suppose that's what you mean. If you are unkind to me, what will you want to forgive me for? But I couldn't do it. I couldn't say it, even if I had done any harm. Please to remember that I either love, or else I hate people dreadfully. I know that I shall love you. But you must not contradict me. I never could endure it yet; and I never intend to try."

"Well," said Sir Cradock, laughing; "I will try to remember that, my dear. Though, in that respect, you differ but little from our own young ladies."

"If you please, Uncle Cradock, I must go to-night to see where you have put my father. There, I won't cry any more, because he told me never to vex you, and I see that my crying vexes you. Did you cry, yourself, Uncle Cradock, when you heard of it first?"

She looked at him, as she asked this question, with such wild intensity, as if her entire opinion of him would hang upon his reply, that the old man felt himself almost compelled to tell "a corker."

"Well, my dear, I am not ashamed to confess——"

"Ashamed to confess, indeed! I should rather hope not. But you ought to be ashamed, I know, if you did not cry, Uncle Cradock. But now I shall love you very much, now I know how much you cried. And how much have you got a year, Uncle Crad?"

"How much what, my dear? What beautiful eyes you have, Eöa; finer than any of the Nowells!"

"Yes, I know. But that won't do, Uncle Crad; you don't want to answer my question. What I want to know is a very simple thing. How much money have you got a year? You must have got a good deal, I know, because every body says so, and because this is such a great place, as big as the palaces in Calcutta."

"Really, Eöa, it is not usual for young people, especially young ladies, to ask such very point-blank questions.

"Oh, how should I know such things as that; and what harm can there be in it? I know the English girls at Calcutta used to think of nothing else. But I am not a bit like them; it isn't that I

care for the money a quarter so much as tamarinds; but I have a particular reason; and I'll find out in spite of you. Uncle Cradock, you'll see how I'll manage it."

"A very particular reason, Eöa, for inquiring into my income! Why, what reason can you have?"

"Really, Uncle Cradock, is it usual for old people, especially old gentlemen, to ask such very point-blank questions?"

Sir Cradock would have been very angry with any other person in the world for such a piece of impertinence; but Eöa gave such a smile of triumph at having caught him in his own net (as she thought), and looked so exquisite in her beauty, as she rose, and the firelight flashed on her; then she tossed her black hair over her shoulders, and gave him such a kiss (with all the spices of India in it) that the old man was at her mercy quite, and she need have no mercy upon him.

Oh, Mrs. Nowell Corklemore—so proud of having obtained at last an invitation to Nowelhurst, so confident that, once let in, you can wedge out all before you, like Alexander's phalanx—call a halt, and shape your wiles, and look to belt and buckler, have every lance fresh set and burnished, every sword a razor; for verily the fight is hard, which art must wage with nature.

CHAPTER XL.

AGAINST THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE.

PREVIOUS to the matters chronicled in the preceding chapter, Mr. Garnet had received a note, of which the following is a copy:—

"SIR,—My friend, Major Blazeater, late of the Hon. East India Company's 59th Regiment of Native Infantry, has kindly consented to see you, on my behalf, to request a reference to any gentleman whom you may be pleased to name, for the purpose of concerting measures for affording me that satisfaction which, as a man and a gentleman, I am entitled to expect for your cowardly and most ruffianly violence on the 28th ultimo.

"I beg you to accept my sincere apologies for the delay which has occurred, and my assurance that it has been the result of circumstances entirely beyond my own control.

"I have the honour to be, Sir,

"Your most obedient Servant,

"RUFUS HUTTON.

"Geopharmacy Lodge, Nov. 1st, 1859."

The circumstances beyond the fiery little doctor's control were that he could not find any one who would undertake to carry his message.

When Bull Garnet read this letter—handed to him, with three great bows of the Chinese pattern, by the pompous Major Blazeater—his face flushed to a deep amethyst tinge, which subsided to the colour of cork. Then he rolled his great eyes, and placed one strong finger across the deep channels of his forehead, and said, "Let me think, sir!"

"Hurrah," said the Major to himself, "now we shall have something to redeem the honour of the age. It is a disgrace for a fellow to live in a country where he can never get satisfaction, although he gets plenty of insult."

"Major Blazeater, you will make allowances for me," resumed Mr. Garnet; "but I have never had much opportunity of becoming acquainted with the laws—the code, perhaps I should say—which govern the honourable practice of duelling at the present day."

"No matter, my dear sir; no matter at all, I assure you. Your second, when I have the honour of meeting him, will settle all those little points, which are beside the general issue; we shall settle them together, sir, with the strictest regard to punctilio, and to your entire satisfaction."

"Capital fellow!" pursued the Major, in his own reflection-room; "knew he couldn't be a coward: just look at his forehead. No doubt he was perfectly justified in kicking out Rue Hutton; Rue is such an impudent beggar. Ah!" referring to his pocket-book to find his military friend's address; "now we shall do it in style. Glorious fellow this Garnet—shall have the very best powder. Wish I was on his side." And the Major rubbed his long brown hands upon his lanky knees.

"Will it be according to rule," asked Mr. Garnet, looking steadily ("What an eye for a pistol!" said the Major to himself), "quite according to rule and order, if I write down for you, Major Blazeater, the name of the friend to whom I refer; also the time and place at which he will be ready to discuss this little matter with you?"

"To be sure, to be sure, my dear sir; nothing could be better. Your conduct, Mr. Garnet, does you the very highest honour."

"Nothing, you think, can be objected to my course in this?—nothing against the high chivalric code of modern duelling?"

"No, my dear sir, nothing at all. Please to hand me the assignation; ha, ha, it is so pleasant—I mean the rendezvous."

Mr. Garnet handed to him a card, whereon was written: "Town Hall, Lymington, Wednesday, November 2nd. Before Admiral Reale, Col. Fale, and C. Durant, Esq. Application will be made at 12 o'clock for a warrant against Rufus Hutton and Major Blazeater—Christian name unknown—for conspiring together to procure one

Bull Garnet to fight a duel, against the peace of her Majesty and the spirit of the age."

Major Blazeater fell back in his chair; and all his blood ran to his head. As he told his daughter afterwards, he had never had such a turn in his life. The fairest prospect blasted, the sunrise of murder quenched; what good was it to live in a world where people won't shoot one another? Bull Garnet bent his large eyes upon him, and the Major could not answer them.

"Now, Major Blazeater," said Mr. Garnet, "I shall bind you over to keep the peace, and your principal as well, and expose you to the ridicule of every sensible man in England, unless I receive by to-morrow morning's post at 10.15 a.m. an apology for this piece of infantile bravado. What a man does in hot passion, God knows, and God will forgive him for, if he truly strive to amend it—at least—at least, I hope so."

Here Mr. Garnet turned away, and looked out of the window, and perhaps it was the view of Bob that made his eyes so glistening.

"But, sir," he resumed—while the Major was wondering where on earth he should find any sureties for keeping her Majesty's peace, which he could not keep with his wife—"sir, I look at things of this sort from a point of view diametrically opposed to yours. Perhaps you have the breadth to admit that my view may be right, and yours may be wrong."

"Nothing, nothing at all, sir, will I admit to a man who actually appoints the magistrates the custodians of his honour."

"Honour, sir, as we now regard it, is nothing more than fool's varnish. Justice, sir, and truth are things we can feel and decide about. Honour is the feminine of them, and, therefore, apt to confuse a man. Major Blazeater, the only honour I have is to wish you good morning."

"Hang it all," said the Major to himself, as he was shown out honourably, "I have put my foot in it this time; and won't Mrs. Blazeater give it to me! That woman finds out every thing. This is now the third time I've tried to get up a snug little meeting, and the fates are all against me. Dash it, now, if I've got to pay costs, O Boadicea Blazeater, you won't mend my gloves for a fortnight."

Major Blazeater wore very tight doeskin gloves, and was always wearing them out. Hence, his appeal to the female Penates took this constricted form. The household god of the Phœnicians, and the one whose image they affixed to the bows of their galleys, hoping to steer homewards, was (as we know from many sources) nothing but a lamb; a very rude figure, certainly,—square, thick-set, inelegant; but perhaps they felt that some grand home-truth clung to their Agna Dea. Major Blazeater was a lamb, whose wits only went to the shearing the moment you got him upon his own hearth, and Boadicea bleated at him. He would crumple his neck up, and draw back his head, and look pleadingly at any one, as a house-

lamb might do on Good Friday, and feel that his father had done it before him, and he, too, must suffer for sheepishness.

Meditating sadly thus, he heard a great voice coming after him down the gravel-walk, and, turning round, was once more under Mr. Garnet's eyes. "One more word with you, if you please, sir. It will be necessary that you two warlike gentlemen should appoint a legal second. Mine will be Mr. Brockwood, who will be prepared to show that your principal was grossly inquisitive and impertinent, before I removed him from my premises."

"Oh!" cried the Major, delighted to find any loophole for escape, "that puts a new aspect upon the matter, if he gave you provocation, sir."

"He gave me as strong provocation as one man can well give another, by prying into my—domestic affairs, in the presence of my son and daughter, and even tampering with my servants. He left me no other course, except to remove him from my house."

"Which you did rather summarily. My dear sir, I should have done the same. Had I been aware of these facts, I would have declined to bear his cartel. You shall receive my apology by to-morrow morning's post. I trust this unwise proceeding—may—may not proceed any further. Your behaviour, sir, does you credit, and requires no vindication at law."

Thus spoke Major Blazeater, bowing and smiling elaborately under a combination of terrors—the law, public ridicule, expenses; worst of all, Mrs. Blazeater. The next morning, Mr. Garnet received from him a letter, not only apologetic, but highly eulogistic, at which Bull Garnet smiled grimly, as he tossed it into the fire. By the same post came a letter from Rufus, to the following effect:—

"SIR,—I regret to find that your courage consists in mere brute force and power. I regard you as no longer worthy of the notice of a gentleman. The cowardly advantage you took of your superior animal strength, and your still more cowardly refusal to redress the brutal outrage, as is the manner of gentlemen, stamp you as no more than a navvy, of low corporeal brutishness. Do not think that, because I cannot meet you physically, and you will not meet me fairly, you are beyond my reach. I will have you yet, Bull Garnet; and I know how to do it. Your last ferocious outrage has set me thinking, and I see things which I must have been blind not to see before. I shall see you, some day, in the felon's dock, an object of scorn to the lowest of the low, so sure as my name is

"RUFUS HUTTON.

"P.S.—I shall be at Lymington to-morrow, ready to meet you, if you dare initiate the inquiry."

Mr. Garnet did not burn this letter, but twice read it through very carefully, and then stowed it away securely. Who could tell but it might be useful as a proof of animus? During these several operations his eyes had not much of triumph in them.

Rufus Hutton rode to Lymington, carrying a life-preserver: he appeared in the Town Hall, at the petty sessions; but there was no charge made against him. Being a pugnacious little fellow, and no lover of a peaceful issue, he had a great mind then to apply for a warrant against Garnet for assaulting him. But he felt that he had given some provocation, and could not at present justify it; and he had in the background larger measures, which might be foiled by precipitancy. So that lively broil, being unfought out and unforgiven—at least on one side—passed into as rank a feud as ever the sun went down upon. Not that Mr. Garnet felt much bitterness about it; only he knew that he must guard against a powerful enemy.

Meanwhile Amy had told her father what Cradock had said to her in the churchyard, and how she had replied to him. In fact, she could not keep it to herself until she went to bed that night; but mingled her bright, flowing hair with his beautiful silver locks, while her heart was still pit-a-patting, and leaned on his shoulder for comfort, and was not long in finding it.

"My own dearest, life of my life," cried her father, forgetting both Greek and Latin, but remembering how he loved her mother, "my own and only child—now you do look so like your mother, darling—may the God who has made you my blessing bless your dear warm heart in this!"

The very next day Mr. Rosedew fell into a pit of meditation. He forgot all about Pelethronian Lapiths, the trimming of Gruter's lamp (which had long engaged him; for he knew the flame of learning there unsnuffed by any Smelfungus): even the Sabellian elements were but as *sabellicus sus* to him. It was one of his peculiarities, that he never became so deeply abstracted as when he had to take in hand any practical question. He could take in hand any glorious thesis, such as the traces still existing of a middle voice in Latin, or the indications of very early civilization in Eubœa, and the question whether the Ionians came not mainly westward—any of these things he could think of, dwell upon, and eat his dinner without knowing salt from mustard. But he could not make a treatise of Amy, nor could he get at her etymology. He began to think that his education had been neglected in some points. And then he thought about Socrates, and his symposiastic drolleries, and most philosophic reply when impeached of Xanthippic weakness.

Nevertheless, he could not make up his mind upon one point—whether or not it was his duty to go and inform Sir Cradock Nowell of his son's attachment. If the ancient friend had been as of old, or had only changed towards John Rosedew, continuing true all the while to the son, the parson would have felt no doubt as to how his duty lay. And the more straightforward and honest course was ever the first to open upon him. But, when he remembered how sadly estranged the father already was from the son, how he had even

dared in his grief to suspect him of wilful fratricide, how he had wandered far and wide from the sanity of affection, and was, indeed, no longer worthy to be called a father, John Rosedew felt himself absolved from all parental communion.

Then how was it as to expediency? Why, just at present, this knowledge would be the very thing to set Sir Cradock yet more against the outcast. For, in the days of old confidence and friendly interfusion, he had often expressed to John his hope that Clayton might love Amy; and now he would at once conclude that Cradock had been throughout the rival of his darling, and perhaps an unsuccessful one, till the other was got rid of. Therefore the rector resolved, at last, to hold his peace in the matter; to which conclusion Aunt Doxy's advice and Amy's entreaties contributed. But these two ladies, although unanimous in their rapid conclusion, based it upon premises as different as could be.

"Appease him, indeed!" cried Aunt Eudoxia, drawing up her stately figure, and twitching her shawl on the slope of her shoulders, of which, by-the-by, she was very proud—she had heard it showed high breeding—"appease him, brother John; as if his son had disgraced him by meditating an alliance with the great-granddaughter of the Earl of Driddledrum and Dromore! Upon such occasions, as I have always understood, though perhaps I know nothing about it, and you understand it better, John, it is the gentleman's place to secure the acquiescence of his family. Acquiescence, indeed! What has our family ever thought of a baronetcy? There is better blood in Amy Rosedew, Brian O'Lynn, and Cadwallader, than any Cradock Nowell ever had, or ever will have, unless it is her son. Inform him, indeed! as if our Amy was nobody!"

"Pa, don't speak of it," said Amy, "until dear Cradock wishes it. We have no right to add to his dreadfully bad luck; and he is the proper judge. He is sure to do what is right. And after all that he has been through, oh, don't treat him like a baby, father."

CHAPTER XLI.

A QUESTION OF PRECEDENCE.

IN spite of many obstacles, Mrs. Nowell Corklemore was now well established at the Hall, and did not mean in her kind rich heart to quit the place prematurely. Almost every day, however, she made some feint of departure, which rendered every one more alive to the value of her presence.

"How could her dear Nowell exist without her? She felt quite

sure he would come that day—yes, that very day—to fetch her, in their little simple carriage, that did shake her poor back so dreadfully"—back thrown into prominence here, being an uncommonly pretty one—"but oh, how thankful she ought to be for having a carriage at all, and so many poor things—quite as good, quite as refined, and delicate—could scarcely afford a perambulator for their dear little ducks of babies! But she hoped for dear Sir Cradock's sake, and that sweet simple-minded Eöa—who really did require some little cultivation—that, now she understood them both, and could do her little of ministering, Mr. Corklemore would let her stay, if it were only two days longer. And then her Flore, her sweet little Flore! An angel of refinement to them."

Georgie had been married twice; and she was just the sort of woman who would have been married a dozen times, if a dozen, save one, of husbands were so unfortunate as to leave her. Her first lord, or rather vassal, had been the Count de Vance—"a beggarly upstart Frenchman," in the language of his successor, who, by-the-by, had never seen, but heard of him too often; but, according to better authority, "a man one could truly look up to; so warm-hearted, so agreeable; and never for a moment tired, dear, of his poor little simple wife."

Perhaps it is needless to state that Mr. Corklemore long had been so scientifically henpecked that he loved the operation. He now was almost afraid to say "Haw," when there was even a possibility that his wife should reply with "Pshaw."

Sir Cradock Nowell, of course, had seen a good deal of what is called the world; but his knowledge of women was only enough to teach him the extent of that subject. He never was surprised much at any thing they did; but he could not pretend to tell the reason of their doing it, even when they had any, of which he did not often suspect them. He believed that they would have their way, whenever they could, wherever, and by whatever means; that very few of them meant what they said, and none of them knew what they meant; that the primal elements, in the entire body feminine, were jealousy, impulsiveness, vanity, and contrariety.

Georgie Corklemore soon found out that he had adopted this, the popular male opinion; and she did not once attempt to remove it, knowing, as she did, that nothing could be more favourable to her purposes. So she took up the part—which suited her as well as any, and enabled her to say many things which else would have given offence—the part of the soft, impulsive, warm-hearted, foolish woman, who is apt among men to become a great pet, if she happens to be good-looking.

Eöa would gladly have yielded her prerogatives to Georgie, but Mrs. Corklemore was too wide awake to accept any one of them. "No, darling," she replied, "for your own sake I will not. It is true that Uncle Cradock wishes it, and so, no doubt, do you; but you are

bound to acquire all this social knowledge of which you have now so little; and how can you do so except by instruction and practice?"

"Oh," cried Eöa, firing up, "if Uncle Cradock wishes it, I'm sure I'll leave it to you, and not be laughed at any longer. I'll go to him at once, and tell him so. And as for being bound, I won't be bound to learn any nonsense I don't like. My papa was as wise as any of you, and a great deal better; and he never made such a fuss about rubbish as you do here."

"Stop, sweet child, stop a moment——"

"I am not a sweet child, and I won't stop. And another thing I'll tell you. I had made up my mind to it before this, mind—before you tried to turn me out of my place—and it's this. You may call me what you like, but I don't mean to call you 'Cousin Georgie' any longer. In the first place, I don't like you, and never shall as long as I live; for I never half believe you: and, in the next place, you are no cousin of mine; and social usage (or whatever it is you are always bothering me about) may require me to tell some stories, but not that one, at any rate. Or, at any rate, I won't do it."

"Very well," replied Mrs. Corklemore, looking up from the softest of fancy-work, with the very sweetest of smiles; "then I shall be obliged, in self-defence, to address you as 'Miss Nowell.'"

"To be sure. Why shouldn't you?"

"Well, it can be shown, perhaps, that you are entitled to the name. Only at first it will seem absurd when applied to a baby like you."

"A baby like me, indeed!" This was Eöa's sore point; and Georgie, who delighted in making her outrageous, was always harping upon it. "Mrs. Corklemore, how dare you call me, at my age, a baby?"

Eöa looked down at Georgie, with great eyes flashing fire, and her clear, bright forehead wrinkling, and her light form poised like an antelope's on the edge of a cliff. Mrs. Corklemore, not thinking it worth while to look up at her, carelessly threw back a curl, and went on with her rug-work.

"Because you are a baby, and nothing more, Eöa."

In a moment she was tossed through the air, and sitting on Eöa's head, low satin chair and all. She had not time to shriek, so rapid was her elation. Little Flore, running in at the moment, clapped her hands and shouted, "Oh, ma, have a yide, a nice yide, same as me have yesterday. Me next, me next. Oh, ah!"

Eöa, with the greatest ease, her figure as straight as a poplar-tree, bore the curule chair and its occupant to the end of the room, and there deposited them carefully on a semi-grand piano.

"That's how we nurse the babies in India," she cried, with a smile of sweet temper, "but it takes a big baby to do it, and some practice, I can tell you. Now, I'll not let you down, Mrs. Corkle-

more,—and, if visitors come in, what will they think of our social usages? Down you don't come, till you have promised solemnly never to call me a baby again."

"My dear," began Georgie, trying hard not to look ridiculous—though the position was so unfavourable—"my dear child——"

"No, not my dear child, even! 'Miss Nowell,' if you please, and nothing else."

"Miss Nowell, if you will only lift me down—oh, it is polished so nastily, I am slipping off already—I will promise solemnly to call you only what you like, all the rest of my life."

Eöa lifted her off in an instant. "But mind, I will be even with you," cried Georgie, through her terror, when safe on the floor once more.

"I don't care that for you," answered Eöa, snapping her fingers like a copper-cap; "only I will have proper respect shown to me by people I particularly dislike. People I love may call me what, or do with me what, they please. My father was just the same; and I don't want to be any better than he was; and I don't believe God wants it."

"He must be easily contented, then."

Georgie, with all her deliciousness, could never pass a chance of sarcasm.

"Now I'll go and have it out with Uncle Cradock, about having you for my ayah."

Mrs. Corklemore trembled far more at those words than at finding herself on the piano. This strange girl—whom she had so despised—was baffling all her tactics, and with no other sword and shield but those of truth and candour.

"I've been a fool," said Georgie to herself, for about the first time in her life; "I have strangely underrated this girl, and shall have hard work now to get round her. But it must be done. Come, though I have been so rash, I have two to one in my favour, now I see the way to handle it. But she must not tell the old noodle; that will never do."

"I thought, Miss Nowell," she continued aloud, "that it would not be considered honourable, even among East Indians, to repeat to a third person what was said familiarly and in confidence."

"Of course not. What makes you speak of it? Do you mean to say I would do such a thing?"

"No, I am sure you would not, knowingly. But if you think for a moment, you will see that what I said just now, especially as to Sir Cradock's opinions, was told to you in pure confidence, and meant to go no further."

"Oh," answered Eöa, "then please not to tell me any thing in pure confidence again, because I can't keep secrets, and you have no right to load me with them, without ever asking my leave even. But I'll try not to let it out, unless you provoke me before him."

With this half promise Georgie was obliged to be content. She knew well enough that, if Eöa brought the question before her uncle, the truth would come out that Sir Cradock had never dreamed for a moment of substituting Georgie, the daughter of his cousin, for Eöa, the only daughter of his only brother Clayton. He knew, of course, that the Eastern maiden had no artificial polish; but he saw that she had an inborn truth, a delicacy of feeling, and a native sympathy, which wanted only experience to be better than any polish.

From that day forth Mrs. Corklemore (aided perhaps by physical terror) formed a higher estimate of Eöa's powers. So she changed her tactics altogether, and employed her daughter, that sharp little Flore, to cover the next advance. Flore was a little beauty; so far as any thing artificial can be really beautiful. Dressed, as she was, in the height of French fashion, and herself nine-tenths of a Frenchwoman—for there is no such thing as a French girl, as we Englishmen understand girlhood—she always looked like a butterfly, just born in and just about to pop out of a bower; for little Flore was "divinely beautiful."

This angel was now nearly four years old, and would look at you with the loveliest eyes that ever appealed from the cradle to heaven, and throw her exaggerated little figure back, and tell you the biggest lie that an angel ever wiped her mouth over. Oh, you lovely child! Far better to be that little Loo Jupp, who knows a number of bad words, which you would faint to hear of. But Loo won't tell a lie. Her father beat her out of it the very first time she tried.

CHAPTER XLII.

SEVERAL DISCOVERIES.

"DEAR Uncle Cradock," said Georgie next day, for she had obtained permission long ago to address her father's cousin so, "what a very sweet girl our Eöa is!"

"I am very glad that you think so, Georgie; she reminds me very often of what my brother was at her age."

"Oh, I do love her so! She has so much variety, and she does seem so straightforward."

"Not only seems but is so, Georgie; at times, indeed, a little too much of it."

"Well, I doubt if there can be too much of it," cried Georgie, in the rapture of her own heart's truth and simplicity, "especially among relations, uncle. Just see now how all the misunderstandings which arose between ourselves, for instance, might have been saved by a

little straightforward explanation. In my opinion, our Eöa would be absolutely perfect, if we could only put a little polish, a little finish, upon her. I suppose that was what her poor father intended, in bringing her to England."

"Ah, perhaps it was. I never thought of that. But I have thought, often enough, my dear Georgie, of my own duty towards her; and I wish to consult you about it; you are so discreet and sensible."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Corklemore, with a facetious curtsy, "to be sure I am, a perfect Queen of Sheba."

As this implied, by the manner of it, that Sir Cradock was a perfect Solomon, he accepted the chaff very graciously, and said to himself, "What magnificent eyes my niece Georgie has, and what a sweet complexion, and a most exquisite figure! I wonder what Corklemore is about, in leaving her here so long! But then he has such confidence in her. Women of sense and liveliness, who have an answer for every body, are so much more trustworthy than the sly things who drop their eyes, and think all sorts of evil."

Meanwhile Georgie saw all this passing through his mind—more clearly, perhaps, than she would have seen it, if it had been passing through her own.

"To be sure. How thoughtful of you! You mean your duty, Uncle Cradock, as to making her your heiress, now?"

Mrs. Corklemore knew well enough that he meant nothing of the sort; but the opportunity for the suggestion was too fine to be lost.

"Oh," said Sir Cradock, with a grim smile, "you consider that my duty, do you? No, it was not on that subject I was anxious for your opinion, but as to sending the child to school, or taking some other means to finish her education."

"She won't go," replied Mrs. Corklemore, seeing some chance of a quarrel here: "of course it would be the best thing for her; but I am quite certain the sweet creature never will go."

"The sweet creature must, if I make her."

"To be sure, Uncle Cradock; but I don't believe you can. Has she not favoured you with her intentions as to settling in life, rather—well, perhaps rather prematurely?"

"Yes," replied the old man, laughing, "she has informed me, with all due ceremony, of her intention to marry Bob Garnet, the moment she is out of mourning for her dearest father."

"Master Garnet has not asked her yet. And I have reason to believe"——here Georgie softly hesitated.

"What?" asked Sir Cradock, anxiously, for he was very fond of Eöa; she was such a novelty to him.

"That Master Bob Garnet, just come from school, loves Amy Rosedew above Eöa, toffee, rock, or peppermint."

"Amy Rosedew is a minx," answered the old man hotly. "I offered to shake hands with her, when I met her on Wednesday, and

was even going to kiss her, because she is my god-daughter, and—and—an uncommonly pretty girl, you know, and what do you think she said?"

"Oh don't tell me, Uncle Cradock, if it was any thing impudent. You know I could not stand it, thinking what I do of those Rosedews."

"She threw herself back with her great eyes flashing, and the colour in her cheeks dark crimson, and she said, 'No, thank you. No contact for me with unnatural injustice!' And she drew her frock around her, and swept away as if the road was not wide enough for both of us. Nice behaviour, was not it? And I fear her father endorses it."

"I know he does," answered Georgie, whose face during that description had been a perfect study of horror contending with humour; "I know that Mr. Rosedew, one of the best men in the world, if, indeed, he is sincere—which others may doubt, but not I—he, poor man, having little perception, except of his own interest, has taken a most unfavourable view of every thing we do here. Oh, I am so sorry. It almost makes one feel as if we must be in the wrong." Beautiful Georgie sighed heavily, like a fair woman at a confessional.

"His own interest, Georgie! Ourselves in the wrong! I don't quite understand you."

"As if we were harsh, you know, Uncle Cradock; when, Heaven be thanked, we have not concluded, as too, too many——But, not to talk of that absurdity, and not to pain you, darling uncle, you must know what I meant about Mr. Rosedew's interest."

"No, indeed I don't, Georgie. I don't see how John—I mean Mr. Rosedew's interest is at all involved in the matter."

"He had a daughter passing fair," sang Mrs. Corklemore, without thinking. "Oh, uncle, I forgot; I am so light-headed and foolish, I forget every thing now. It is Nowell's fault for worrying me, as he does every week, about income."

She passed her hand across her forehead, and swept the soft dark hair back, as if worldly matters were too many for her poor childish brain. Who could look at her without wishing that she really cared for herself, just a little?

"I insist upon knowing what you mean, Georgie," said Sir Cradock, frowning heavily, for he was not at all sentimental; "John Rosedew's daughter is Amy; and Amy, I know, is perfectly honest, though as obstinate as the dev'—hem, I beg your pardon; I mean that Amy is very obstinate, as well as exceedingly bigoted, and I might almost say insolent."

"Oh no; I can never believe that, Uncle Cradock, even upon your authority." In the heat of truth, Mrs. Corklemore stood up and faced Sir Cradock.

"But I tell you she is, Georgie. Don't try to defend her. No

young woman of eighteen ought to have spoken as she did to me when I met her last Wednesday. 'Outrageous' is the mildest word I can use to describe her manner."

"Very likely you thought so, dearest Uncle Cradock; and so very likely I might have thought, or any of the old-school people. But we must make allowances—you know we are bound to do so—for young people brought up to look at things from a different point of view."

"No—by—George I won't. I have heard that stuff too often. Spirit of the age, and all that balderdash. Because a set of young jackanapes are blessed with impudence enough to throw to the dogs all the teachings of ages, just when it doesn't suit them, is it likely that we, who are old enough to see the beauty of what they despise, are to venerate and bow down to infantile inspiration, which itself bows down to nothing? Georgie, you are too soft, too mild. Your forbearance quite provokes me. Leave me, if you please, to form my own opinions, especially about people whom I know so much better than you do."

"I am sure, Uncle Cradock," answered Georgie, pouting, "I never presume in any way to interfere with your opinions. Your judgment is proverbial; whereas I have none whatever. Only it was natural that I should wish you to think well of one who is likely to be so nearly related to you. What! why you look surprised, uncle? Ah, you think me wrong in alluding to it. What a simple silly I am, to be sure! But please not to be angry, uncle. I never dreamed that you wished it kept secret, dear, when all the parish is talking of it."

"Georgie Corklemore, have the goodness to tell me what you mean."

"Oh, don't look at me so, uncle. I never could bear a cross look. I mean no mystery whatever, only Amy Rosedew's engagement to your unlucky—I mean your unhappy son. Of course it has your sanction."

"Amy engaged to my—to—that sullen Cradock! I cannot believe it. I will not believe it; and at a time like this!"

"Well, I thought the time ill-chosen. But I am no judge of propriety. And they say that the poor—poor darling who is gone, was himself attached—let us hope that it was not so; however, I cannot believe, Uncle Cradock, that you have not even been told of it."

"But I tell you, Georgie, that it is so. Perhaps you disbelieve me in your anxiety to screen them?"

"You know better than that, dear uncle. I believe you, you of course, before all the rest of the world. And I will screen them no longer, for I think it bad and ungrateful of them. And after all you have done for them! Why, surely, you gave them the living! It makes me feel quite ill. Ingratitude always does." Georgie pressed her hand to her heart and was obliged to get up and walk about.

Presently she came back again, with great tears in her eyes, and her face full of anger and pity.

"Oh, uncle dear, I cannot tell you how grieved I am for your sake. It does seem so hard-hearted of them. How I feel my own helplessness that I cannot comfort you! What a passion my Nowell will be in, when I tell him this! His nature is so warm and generous, so upright and confiding, and he looks up to you with such devotion, and such deep respect. I must not tell him at night, poor fellow, or he would not sleep a wink. And the most contumelious thing of all: that pompous old maid, Miss Eudoxia Rosedew, to be going about and boasting of it—the title and the property—before any one had the manners even to inform so kind a friend, and so affectionate a father! The title and the property! How I hate such worldliness. I never could understand how people could scheme and plot for such things. And to make so little of you, uncle, because they relied upon the entail!"

This was quite a shot in the dark, for she knew not whether any entail subsisted; and, as it was a most essential point to discover this, Georgie fixed her swimming eyes—swimming with love and sympathy—full upon poor Sir Cradock's. He stared a little, but she scarcely knew what to augur thence. She must have another shot at it; but not on the present occasion.

It is scarcely needful, perhaps, to say, knowing Mrs. Corklemore and Miss Rosedew as we do, that there was not a syllable of truth in what the former said of the latter. Sir Cradock himself would have doubted it, if he had been any judge of women; for Miss Eudoxia Rosedew thought very little of baronets. How could she help it, she of the illustrious grandfather? Oh her indignation, if she only could have dreamed of being charged with making vaunt over a baronet's title! Neither was it like her, even if she had thought great things of any pledged alliance, to go about and share her sentiments with the "common people." The truth of the matter was this: Georgie, with her natural craft—no, no! skill we mean; how a clumsy pen will stumble—and ten more years of life to drill it, had elicited Amy's sentiments; as one who, having stropped a razor, carves his lady's pincushion, or tapster who blowing on bright gimlet tempts the spigot of bonded wine, or varlet who with a knowing worm giveth taste of Stilton. Or even,

"As when a man, a sluice-captain, adown from a blackwater head-spring,
All through his plants and garden a waterflow is pioneering,
Holding a shovel in hand, from the carrier casting the sods out;
Then as it goes flowing forward, the pebbles below in a bevy
Swirl about, and it rapidly wimples downhill with a tinkling,
In a spot where a jump of the ground is, and overgets even the guideman."

IL. xxi. 257.

So sweet Amy, being under-drawn of her native crystal by many

a sly innuendo and many an Artesian auger, gushed out, like liquid diamonds, upon the skilful Georgie, and piled upon her a flood of truth, a Scamander upon Achilles. Oh water upon a duck's back, because Georgie always swam in truth; please not to say that Castalia, *rore puro*, wets not the kerchief of a lady three times dipped in Styx.

And so it came to pass that young Amy let out every thing, having a natural love of candour and a natural hatred of Georgie, and expecting to overwhelm her with the rolling seventh billow of truth. Mrs. Corklemore, softly smiling, reared her honest head out of the waters, sleeked her soft luxuriant locks, and the only thing likely to overwhelm her was sympathy unfathomable. Amy did not wish for that, and begged her, very dryly, by no means to exhaust herself; for Amy had moral scent of a liar, even as her father had.

About this time that father—the finest fellow, take him for all in all, whom one need wish to look upon—was (according to a good man's luck) in fearful tribulation. Fearful, at least, to any man except John Rosedew himself; but John, though fully alive to the jeopardy of his position, allowed his epidermis to quill toward the operator, and abstracted all his too sensitive parts into a Sophistic apory.

The rector, sitting in his book-room, had got an apron tucked well under his rosy chin—an apron with two pockets in it, and the strings in a bow at the back of his neck; and he trembled for his ear-lobes, whenever he forgot his subject. Around him, with perpetual clatter, snip and snap and stir-about, hovered, like a Jewish maiden fingering the mill-stone, who but his Eudoxia?

In her strong right hand was a pair of shears, keen as those of Atropos, padded at the handles, lest to hurt the thumb, but the blades, the trenchant edges—oh what should keep their bright love asunder? No human ear, for a moment; nay, nor the nose of a mortal. Neither was this risk and tug, and frequent fullers'-teaseling, the whole or even the half of the agony Mr. Rosedew was undergoing. For though he sat with a pile of books heaped in fair disorder around him—though three were pushing about on his lap, dusting themselves on his well-worn kersey, like sparrows on a genial highway—though one was even perched on his right hand and another on his left, yet he had no more fruition of them (save in the cud of memory) than had Prometheus of his fire-glow in the frost of Strobilus, or than the son of Jove and Pluto, whom Ulysses saw, had of his dessert.

" Nay, then I looked at Tantalus having a rough tribulation,
Standing fast in a lake, and it came quite home to his chin-beard;
Nevertheless he stood thirsting, and had not to seize and to quaff it;
For every time when the old man would stoop in his longing to quaff it,
Then every time the water died, swallowed back, and at his ancles
Earth shone black in a moment, because a divinity parched it.

Trees as well, leafing loftily, over his head poured fruitage,
Pear-trees, and pomegranates, and apple-trees glittering-fruited,
Fig-trees of the luscious, and olive-trees of the luxuriant;
Whereat whenever the old man shot out his hands to grasp them,
Away the wind would toss them into the shadowy cloudland."

OD. xi. 581.

"Now, John, you are worse than ever, I do declare you are; why, you won't even hold your neck straight. I try to make you look decent: I try so very hard, John; and you haven't even the gratitude to keep your chin up from the apron. You had much better go to a barber, and get half your hair pulled out by the roots, and the other half poisoned with a leaden comb, and then you'll appreciate me, perhaps."

"We read," said John Rosedew, complacently gazing at his white locks as they tumbled and took little jumps on the apron, "that when the Argives lost Thyrea, they pledged themselves to a law and a solemn imprecation, that none of the men should encourage his hair, and none of the ladies wear gold."

"And pray what gold do I wear? Brother John, you are so personal; you never can let me alone. I do believe you have never forgiven me my poor dear grandmother's ring, and watch, and Aunt Diana's brooch and locket; no, nor even my own dear mother's diamond ring with the sapphires round it. And perhaps you don't hate even my bracelet, a mere twist of gold with cat's eyes! Oh, John, John, how can you be my brother, and show such a little mind, John?"

"Whence we may infer," continued John, quite unruffled; for he knew that it would be worse than useless to assure Miss Doxy that he was not even aware of the existence of the things he was impeached with; "or at least we have some grounds for supposing that the Greeks, a very sensitive and highly perceptive race, did not like to have their hair cut. Compare with this another statement——"

"No, indeed I won't, John. I should rather hope I would not. You can't hold your tongue for a moment, however solemn the occasion is. There, that's the third cut you've got, and I won't take another snip at you. But you have quoted less Greek than usual; that's one comfort, at any rate, and I will put you on some gold-beater's skin, for being so very good, John. Only don't tell Amy; she does make such a fuss about it. But there, I need not tell you, for you won't know how you got them in half an hour's time. Now, don't make a fuss, John; one would think you were killed"—the poor rector had dared to put his hand up—"as if you cared indeed even if you had three great stripes of red all down your collar, or even upon your white neckerchief. You wouldn't be at all ashamed of yourself. Have you the face to say that you would, now?"

"Well, dear Doxy, I am not convinced that you are reasonable in

expecting me to be ashamed of bleeding when you have been cutting me."

"Oh, of course not. I never am reasonable, according to your ideas. But one thing you may be convinced of, and that is, that I never will toil and degrade myself by cutting your hair again, John, after this outrageous conduct."

Mr. Rosedew had been visited so often with this tremendous menace, that he received it with no satisfaction. Well he knew that on that day four weeks he must don the blue apron again, unless something happened worse even than Aunt Doxy's tonsorial flourishes.

"Now, you are not done yet, John. You are in a great hurry, are you not, to get the apron off and scatter the hair all about? What's the good of my taking the trouble to spread Jemima's shawl down? Can you imagine you are done, when I haven't rubbed you up with the rosemary even?"

"'Coronari marino rore!' No wonder good Flaccus puts it after 'multâ cæde bidentium.' Oh, Doxy, you are inexorable. O averse Penates! By the way, that ştanza is to my mind the most obscure (with one exception) in all the Odes. Either Horace had too much of the 'lene tormentum' applied just then 'ingenio non sæpe duro,' or else——"

"Please, miss"—all the girls called her miss—"Dr. Hutton, miss!"

Bang went Miss Doxy, quicker than thought, left an exclamation, semi-profane, far behind on the light air, slammed the door on the poor girl's chilblains, bolted and locked it, and pulled out the key, and put the scutcheon over the key-hole.

"Well, why, *διὰ τί*; *πόθεν*; unde terrarum? Women are not allowed to say 'mehercle,' neither men 'mecastor;' 'ædepol' is common to both, but only 'inscitiâ antiquitatis;' for the most ancient men abstained from that even, and I dare say were none the worse for it——"

"I have no patience with you, John," cried Miss Doxy, snatching up brush, comb, scissors, extract of the sea-dew, the blue apron, Jemima's shawl of white hair, and we know not how many other things, and huddling all into a cupboard, and longing to lock herself in with them.

"Great truths come out," answered John, quite placidly, "at periods of mental commotion. But why, oh Doxy, and whence this inopine hurry-scurry? There is no classic expression—except perhaps in Aristophanes or that very strange work the "Atys"—of prosody quick enough; and, doubtless, for very good reason, because the people were too wise to hurry so. 'Rumpe moras,' for instance, is——"

"Oh, John! oh, John! even at such a moment, John! I believe you'll die in Latin or Greek—and I don't know which Amen is,

only I don't believe it's English—there, I am as bad as you are to discuss such a question now. And I am quite sure Jenny can't tell a good story soundly. And he has got such ferret eyes! Thank Heaven, the key was inside, John."

Poor Miss Doxy was panting so, that her brother was quite frightened for her; and the more so because he had no idea what there was to be frightened at.

"Why, Doxy," he said, "my darling, he need never see that you have cut me."

"As if I cared for that! Oh, John, my dearest brother, he'll see that I've cut your hair!"

The idea struck Mr. Rosedew as so gloriously novel—that man who knew the world so!—to him it appeared such a mountain of wonder that a sister should want to sink through the floor, for having saved her brother from barberism, that he laughed as hard as any man of real humour ever laughs. Miss Doxy stole on the opportunity, when he sat down to have his laugh out, to dust a little white hair with her handkerchief from his coat-collar.

Suddenly the rector arose, and his laugh went away in gravity. He walked to the door more heavily than was natural to him (lest he should seem to go falsely), unlocked and unbolted it, and in his most stately manner marched into the hall. Jenny was telling a "jolly lie"—jollity down below, perhaps—to Mr. Rufus Hutton; she was doing it very clumsily, not "oculo irretorto."

"Please sir, yes, my master is gone round the parish, sir; and the rest, they be at the school, sir. How sorry they will be, to be sure, to hear that you have called, sir, and all of them out of the way so!"

"No, they won't," said Mr. Rosedew, looking over her head; "the only thing I am sorry for, Jenny, is that you can tell a falsehood so. But the fault is not yours only. I will talk to you by and by. Dr. Hutton, come in, if you please. I was having my hair cut by my sister, Miss Rosedew. You have met her before. Eudoxia, Dr. Hutton is kind enough to come and see us. I have told him how good and how sisterly you have been to me, and I am sure that he must wish to have a sister so capable—that is to say if he has not," added John, who was very particular about his modal and temporal prefix.

Miss Rosedew came forward, with a few white hairs still on her dark "reps" bell-sleeve, and, being put upon her mettle, was worthy of her brother. Rufus Hutton, of course, not being quite a fool, respected, and trusted, and loved them both, more than he would have done after fifty formal dinners. And he knew quite well that there was on his own part something akin to intrusion; for he had called in the forenoon, when visits from none but an intimate friend are expected; and he had pushed his advance rather vigorously, not towards the drawing-room, but to the parson's favourite book-room, where the lady Licinus plied her calling. But

for this he had good reason, as he wished to see Mr. Rosedew alone, and the cause of his visit was urgent.

It was not long before the lady withdrew in a very noble manner, earning gratitude of Rufus. Then the doctor drew his chair close home to the parson's, looked all round the room, and coughed to try how big the echo was. Finding no response returned by that prolific goddess, who loves not calf or sheep-skin, and seeing that no other lady was dangerously acoustic, Rufus inclined his little red head towards Mr. Rosedew's great and black and slightly dog-eared waistcoat, and spake these winged words :—

"Ever see a thing like that, sir?"

"No, I don't think I ever did. Dear me, how odd it smells! Why, how grave you are, Dr. Hutton!"

"So will you be, when I have told you what I have to tell. My discovery is for your ears only; I have been to London about it, and there found out its meaning. Now I will act upon your advice. Nothing in all my experience—though I have seen a great deal of the world—nothing has ever surprised me more than what I have told you."

"But you forget, Dr. Hutton," cried John, imbibing excitement, "that as yet you have told me nothing at all, only shown me something which I cannot in the least make out. A cylinder, hollow, and blocked at one end; of a substance resembling book-binding, and of a most unsavoury odour!"

"Ha!" replied Rue Hutton, "ha, my dear sir, you little guess the importance of that thing no bigger than a good cigar. Ah, indeed! ah, yes!"

"Do you mean to tell me, or not, Dr. Hutton? Your behaviour is most unusual. I am greatly surprised by your manner."

"Ah, no doubt; no doubt of that. Very odd if you were not. I also am astonished at your apparent indifference."

Hereupon Rufus looked so intensely knowing, so loaded with marvel and mystery, too big to be discharged even, that John Rosedew himself, so calm and large, and worthy to be called a philosopher, very nearly grew wroth with longing to know what all the matter was.

Then Dr. Hutton, having bound him by an urgent entreaty that he would not for the present even hint of that matter to any one, poured out the hissing contents of his mind under the white curls which still overhung the elder man's porch of memory. And what he told him was indeed a thing not to be forgotten.

The spectator is said to see more of the game than any of the players see, and the reader of a story knows a great deal more than the actors do, or the writer either, for that matter; marry, therefore, we will not insult any candid intelligence, neither betray Rue Hutton's faith, for he is an awkward enemy.

The very next day there came a letter, with coal enough on it to

make some gas, and directed in a wandering manner to "Rev. Mr. Rosedew, Nowel-house, somewhere in England." Much as we abuse the Post-office people, they generally manage to find us out more cleverly than we do them; and so this letter had not been to more than six wrong places. As our good journalists love to say, "it was couched in the following terms:"—

"HONOURED AND REVEREND SIR,—Takes the liberty of stating price of inland coals, as per margin, delivered free within six miles of Charing Cross. N.B. Weighed as the Act directs, whether required or otherwise, which mostly is not, and the dust come back if required. Excuse me the liberty of adding that a nice young gent and uncommon respectable, only not a good business address—no blame to him, being an Oxford gent—lie here very ill, and not much expect to get over to-morrow night. Our junior, Mr. Clinkers, with full commission to take all orders and sign receipts for the firm, have been up with him all night, and hear him talk quite agreeable about some place or business called Amery, supposed in the hardware line by mistake for emery. This young gent were called Mr. Newman, by the name of Charles Newman, but Mrs. Ducksacre half believe clandastical and temporal only, and no doubt good reason for it, because he always pay his lodging. Rev. sir, found your direction as per endorsement plain as could be in the inside pocket of the young gent's coat, and he only have one to look in. But for fear to be misunderstood this firm think none the less of him by the same reason, having been both of us in trouble as soon as we was married. Also as per left-hand cover a foreign-looking play-book, something queer and then 'Opera,' which the undersigned understand at once, having been to that same theayter when our gracious Queen was married, and not yet gone into the coal-trade. Requests to excuse the liberty, but if endorsed correctly and agreeable to see the young gent's funeral performed most reasonably, at sole expense of this firm, and no claim made on any survivors because Robert Clinkers like him, must come by express day after to-morrow at latest.

"Signed for the firm of Poker and Clinkers, West London Depot, Hammersmith. Weighed as the Act directs. Per ROBERT CLINKERS, jun.

"At Mrs. and Miss Ducksacre's, green-grocer and general fruiterer, Mortimer-street, Cavendish-square."

CHAPTER XLIII.

KIND FRIENDS, BUT NO ANGEL.

CRADOCK NOWELL had written from London to the Parsonage once, and once only. He told them how he had changed his name, because his father had cast him off; and (as he bitterly added), according to filial duty, he felt himself bound to be Nowell no longer. But he did not say what name he had taken, neither did he give any address; only he would write again when he had found some good situation. Of course he longed to hear from Amy—his own loving Amy, who begged that poor letter and bore it in her own pure bosom long after the Queen's head came off—but his young pride still lay hot upon him, and for Amy's sake he nursed it.

A young man is never so proud of his honour, so prompt to deny himself any thing, so strong in another's lifehold, and careless about his own living, as when he has won a true love's worth, and sees it abiding for ever. Few are the good who have such luck—for the success is not of merit, any more than it is in other things; more often indeed some fish-tailed coxcomb is a woman's Dagon, doubly worshipped for crushing her—but when that luck does fall to the lot of a simple and honest young fellow, he piles his triple mountains up to the everlasting heaven, but makes no Babel of them. A man who chatters about his love does not deserve to have any.

The rector, upon the receipt of that letter, shut every book on his table, chairs, and desk, and chimney-piece. He must think what to do, and how: and he never could think hard on the flints of daily life, while the green pastures of the dead were tempting his wayward steps away.

Of course he would go to London at once, by the very next train; but whether or no should he tell his people the reason of his going? He felt so strongly inclined to tell, even at risk of domestic hysterics and parochial convulsions, that he resolved at last not to tell; for he thought of the great philosopher's maxim (not perhaps irrefragable), that when the right hangs dubious, we may safely conclude that it rides in the scale swinging opposite to our own wishes. To most of us (not having a quarter of John Rosedew's ability, and therefore likely to be a hundred times less hesitant) it seems that the maxim holds good with ourselves, or any other common mortal, but makes Truth actually cut her own throat when applied to a mind like his—a mind already too timorously and humorously self-conscious.

Let 99,000 angels get on the top of John Rosedew's pen—which generally had a great hair in it—and dance a *faux pas* over that question, if it was laid the wrong way; for we, whose consciences must work in corduroys and highlows, roughly conclude that right

and wrong are but as button and button-hole when it comes to a question of hair-splitting. Blest are they whose conscience-edge, like the sword of Thor, can halve every wisp of wool that floateth down the rapid stream of life.

After breakfast Mr. Rosedew mounted his Coræbus, leaving a short farewell, and set off hastily with the old-fashioned valise behind the saddle, wherein he was wont to bear wine and confections upon his parochial tours. The high-mettled steed was again amazed at the pace that could be pumped out of him; neither did he long continue ingloriously mute, but woke the echoes of Ytene with many a noble roar and shriek, so that consternation shook the heart of deer and pig and cow. But the parson did not exult as usual in these proofs of velocity, because his soul within him was sad; nevertheless he preserved cohesion, or at least coincidence, in an admirable manner, with his feet thrust strenuously into the stirrups, his bridle-hand thrown in great emergencies upon the peak of the saddle, and whip-hand reposing on the leathern outwork, which guarded and burnished his rear. Anchored thus by both strong arms—for the sake of his mission and family—he felt capable of jumping a gate if Coræbus had equal confidence.

That evening he entered the Ducksacre shop, and found no one there but the mistress.

"Pray excuse me, but I have been told, ma'am," said Mr. Rosedew, lifting his hat—as he always did to a matron—and, bowing his silvery head, "that you have a lodger here who is very ill."

"Yes, sir," replied Mrs. Ducksacre, fetching her breath very quickly, "and dead, too, for all I know. Oh Lord, I am so put upon!"

The soft-hearted parson was shocked at this apparent apathy; and thought her no true woman. Who is not wrong sometimes? It was a very rare thing for John Rosedew to judge man or woman harshly. But only half an hour ago that poor woman had been up-stairs, neglecting till, present and future, estranging some excellent customers, leaving a wanton shop-boy to play marbles with Spanish chestnuts, while she did her most misguided best to administer to sick Cradock soup wildly beyond her own economy, and furiously beyond his powers of deglutition.

Mr. Rosedew, with his stout legs shaking, and his stockings expressing excitement, went up three pairs (ill-assorted) of stairs into Cradock's sick-room. Then he started back from the Aristophanic climax—even the rags of Telephus; though, after all, Polly Ducksacre had done her best to make the room comely. Why, there were three potato-sacks on the bed, with the names of Fulham growers done in red letters upon them, and giving the room quite a bright appearance, as if newly-marked sheep were in it. Nay, and a gardening man might swear there were two bast mats from Covent Garden, gloriously fixed as bed-curtains, mats from

that open market where a rat prays heaven vainly to grant him the coat of a water-rat.

There, by Cradock Nowell's bed, sat the faithful untiring nurse, the woman who had absorbed such a quantity of strap, and had so kindly assimilated it. Meek-spirited Rachael Jupp waited and watched by the bed of him through whom she had been enfranchised. Since Issachar Jupp obtained conversion, she had not tasted the buckle-end once, and scarcely twice the tongue-end.

Mrs. Jupp had been employed years ago as a nurse in the Middlesex Hospital; so she knew her duties thoroughly. But here she had exceeding small chance of practising that knowledge; because scarcely any thing which she wanted, and would have rung for, if there had been any bell, was ever to be found in the house. Even hot water, which the doctor had ordered, was cold again ere it came to her, and had taken an hour before it started; for there was no fireplace in the little room, nor even on the floor below it.

Uncle John could scarcely keep from tears, as he looked at poor Craddy propped up in the bed there, with his lips so pale and bloodless, cheeks sunken in and shining like dry oyster-shells, but with a round red spot in the centre, large eyes glaringly bright and starting, and red-hot temples and shorn head swathed with dripping bandages; while now and then he raised his weak hands towards the surging tumult, and dropped them helpless on the sun-blind, tucked round him as part of his counterpane.

"Ah, that's the way, sir," said Rachel, after she had risen and curtsied, "that's the way he go on now, all the day and all the night; and he have left off talking now for two days only to moan and to wamble. He used to jump up in the bed at first, and shut his left eye, and put his arms like this, as if he was shooting at something; and it pleased him so when I give him Mrs. Ducksacre's hair-broom. He would put the flat of it to his shoulder, and smile as if he see some game, and shoot at the door fifty times a day; and then scream and fall back and cover his eyes up. But he haven't done that these three days now; too weak, I'm afeard, too weak for it."

John Rosedew sighed heavily for the bright young mind, so tried above what it was able to bear; then, as he kissed the flaming forehead—sometimes flaming and sometimes icy—he thought that it might be the Father's mercy to obliterate sense of the evil. For the mind of the insane, or at least its precious part, is with Him, who showers afar both pain and pleasure, but keeps at home the happiness.

"Can you send for the doctor at once, ma'am, or tell me where to find him?" The parson still kept to the ancient fashion, and addressed every woman past thirty as "ma'am," whatever her rank or condition.

As he spoke, a heavy man entered on tiptoe, and quietly moved

them aside. A raw-boned, hulking fellow he was, with a slouch and a squint, made more impressive by a black eye in the third and most picturesque stage, when mauve, and lilac, and orange intone and soften sweetly off from the purple nucleus outward ; as a boy's taw is, or used to be, shaded, with keen artistic feeling, in many a ring concentric, from the equator to the poles. Mr. Jupp's face was a villanous one ; as even the softest philanthropist would have been forced to acknowledge. The enormous jaws, the narrow forehead, the grisly, porkish eyebrows, the high cheek-bones, and the cunning skance gleam from the black, deep-ambushed squinters—all these were enough to warn any man who wished to get good out of Zakey Jupp that he must try to put it there first, and give it time to go to the devil and come back ; as they say that parsley-seed does.

Mr. Jupp was a man of remarkable strength,—not active elastic Achillean vigour, nor even stalwart Ajacian bulk, but the sort of strength which sometimes vanquishes both of those, by outlasting, —a slouching, slow-to-come, long-to-go power, that had scarcely found its proper wind when better-built men were exhausted.

Men of this stamp are usually long-armed, big in the lungs and shoulders, small in the loins, knock-kneed, and splay-footed ; in a word, shaped like a John Dory, or a miller's thumb, or a banjo. They are not very "strong on their pins," nor active ; they generally get thrown in the first bout of wrestling before ever their muscles get warm ; they cannot even run fast, and in jumping they spring from the heel ; nevertheless, unless they are stricken quite senseless at the outset—and their heads for the most part are a deal too thick for that—the chances are that they make an example of the antagonist ere he is done with.

And so, in Mr. Jupp's recent duello with an Irish bully, who scoffed at Cradock, and said something low of his illness, the Englishman got the worst of it in the first round, the second, the third, and the fourth ; but, just as Dan Sullivan's pals and backers were wild with delight and screeching, the brave bargee settled down on his marrow, and the real business began. After twenty-five rounds, the Tipperary Slasher had three men to carry him home, and looked fit for an inquest to sit upon, without making him any flatter.

Now, Issachar being a very slow man, there was no chance that he would hurry over his present inspection of Cradock. For a very long time he looked at him from various points of view ; then, at last, he shook his head, and poked his long black chin out.

"Now this here wunna do, ye know. I'll fetch the doctor to ye, master, as ye seem to care for the pore young charp."

And Zakey Jupp, requiring no answer, went slowly down the stairs, with a great hand on either wall to save noise ; then at a long trot, rolling over all who came in his way, and rounding the corners, like a ship whose rudder-bands are broken, he followed the doctor from street to street, keeping up the same pace till he found

him. Dr. Tink was coming out of a court not far from Marylebone-lane, where the small-pox always lay festering.

"Ye'll just corm street 'long wi' me to the poor charp as saved our Looey," said Mr. Jupp, coolly getting into the brougham, and sitting in the place of honour, while he dragged Dr. Tink in by the collar, and set him upon the front seat. "Fire awa' now for Martimer-straat," he yelled to the wondering coachman, "and if ye dunna laither the narg, mind, I'll laither ye when we gits there."

The nag was leathered to Mr. Jupp's satisfaction, and far beyond his own, and they arrived at the coal and cabbage shop before John Rosedew had finished reading a paper which Mrs. Jupp had shown him, thinking that it was a prescription.

"He wrote it in his sleep, sir, without knowing a thing about it; in his sleep, or in his brain-wandering; I came in and found him at it, in the middle of the night; and my, how cold his fingers was, and his head so hot! We took it to three great chemists' shops, but they could not make it up. They hadn't got all the drugs, they said, and they couldn't make out the quantities."

"Neither can I," said John; "but it rings well, considering that the poor boy wrote it when his brain was weak with fever. The dialects are somewhat muddled, moreover; but we must not be hypercritical."

"No, sir, to be sure not. I am sure I meant no hypocrisy. Only you see it ain't Christian writing; and Mr. Clinkers shake his head at it, and say it come straight from the devil, and his hoof in every line of it."

"Mrs. Jupp, the Greek characters are beautiful, though some of the lines are not up to the mark. But, for my part, I wonder how any man can write mixed Greek in London. Nevertheless, I shall have great pleasure in talking it over with him, please God that he ever gets well. To think that his poor weary brain should still be hankering after his classics!"

It was the dirge in Cymbeline put into Greek choral metre, and John Rosedew's tears flowed over the words, as Polydore's had done, and Cadwal's.

Unhappy Cradock! His misty brain had vapoured off in that sweet wild dirge, which hovers above, as if the freed soul lingered, for the clogged one to shake its wings to it.

The parson was pondering and closing his wet eyes to recover his faith in God—whom best we see with the eyes shut, except while His stars are shining—when Issachar Jupp came up the stairs, poking Dr. Tink before him, because he still thought it likely that the son of medicine would evaporate. The doctor, who knew his tricks and put up with them, lest any thing worse might come of it, solaced his sense of dignity, when he got to the top, by a grand bow to Mr. Rosedew. John gave him the change in a kind one; then offered his hand, as he always did, being a man of the ancient fashion.

While they were both looking sadly at Cradock, he sat up suddenly in the bed, and stretching forth his naked arms (wherein was little nourishment), laughed as an aged man does, and then nodded at them solemnly. His glazed eyes were so prominent, that their whites reflected the tint of the rings around them.

"Ladies and gentlemen, stop him if you please, and give him a pen and ink, and let him have my hat to write on. Oh, don't let him go by."

"Stop whom, my dear sir?" asked the doctor, putting out his arms as if to do it. "Now I've stopped him. What's his name?"

"The golden lad. Oh, don't you know? You can't have got him, if you don't. The golden lad that came from heaven to tell me I did not do it, that I didn't do it, do it, sir—all a mistake altogether. It makes me laugh, I declare it does; it makes me laugh for an hour, every time he comes, because they were all so wise. All but my Amy, my Amy; she was such a foolish little thing, she never would hear a word of it. And now I call you all to witness, obtestor, antestor, one, two, three, four, five; let him put it down on a sheet of foolscap, with room enough for the names below it; all the ladies and gentlemen put their names in double column, and get Mr. Clinkers, if you can, and Jenny, to go at the bottom; only be particular about the double column, ladies one side, gentlemen the other, like a country dance, you know, or the 'carmen sæculare,' and at the bottom, right across, Miss Amy Rosedew's name."

The contemplation of that last beatitude was too much for the poor fellow; he fell back, faint on the pillow, and the shop-blind, untucked by his blissful emotions, rattled its rings on the boards of the floor.

"Blow me if I can stand it," cried Issachar Jupp, going down three stairs at a step; and when he came back his face looked clearer, and he said something about a noggin. Mrs. Ducksacre bolted after him, for business must be attended to.

"Will he ever be right again, poor fellow? Dr. Tink, I implore you to tell me your opinion sincerely."

"Then I cannot say that I think he will. Still, I have some hopes of it. Much will depend upon the original strength of the cerebellum, and the regularity of his previous habits. If he has led a wild, loose life, he has no chance whatever of sanity."

"No, he has led a most healthy life—temperate, gentle, and equable. His brain has always been clear and vigorous, without being too creative. He was one of the soundest scholars for his age I have ever met with."

"But he had some terrible blow, eh?"

"The most terrible blow any man can have."

Mr. Rosedew thought what a terrible blow it would be to himself, and his own life's life, if the issue went against them.

It was not a thing to be talked about with a stranger, or even

with any man. It was one of those cases where nothing is left, except to wait, and watch, and trust, as men who have faith are enabled to do.

CHAPTER XLIV.

LOST IN THE FOREST.

THE good people gathered in Nowelhurst church were agreeably surprised, on the following Sunday, by the announcement from Mr. Pell—in that loud sonorous voice of his, which had frightened spinsters out of their wits, lest he were forbidding, instead of asking their banns of matrimony—that there would be no sermon that morning, inasmuch as he, the Rev. Octavius, was forced to hurry away, at full speed, to assuage the rampant desire of Rushford for the performance of divine service.

Mrs. Nowell Corklemore, who had the great curtained pew of the Hall entirely to herself and child—for Eöa never would go to church, because they defy the devil there—Georgie, who appeased her active mind by counting the brass-headed nails in the baize, and then multiplying them into each other, and subtracting the ones that were broken, lifted her indescribable eyes, and said, "Thank God," almost audibly.

Octavius Pell, hurrying out of the porch, ascended Coræbus, as had been arranged; but he did it so rapidly, and with such an air of decision, that Amy, standing at the churchyard gate, full of beautiful misgivings, could not help exclaiming,—

"Oh please, Mr. Pell, whatever you do, leave your stick here till Monday. We will take such care of it."

"Indeed, I fear I must not, Miss Rosedew," Octavius answered, gravely, looking first at his stick, and then at the flanks of Ræby, who was full of interesting tricks; "I have so far to go, you know, and I must try to keep time with them.—Whoa, you little villain!"

"Oh, dear, I am so sorry. At any rate please not to strike him, only stroke him with it. He is so very high-spirited. And he has never had a weal upon him, at least since James Pottes was stopped from riding. And I could not bear to see it. And I know you won't, Mr. Pell."

Octavius looked at the soft-hearted girl, blushing so in her new drawn bonnet—mauve with black, for the sake of poor Clayton. He looked at her out of his knowing dry eyes in that sort of response-to-the-Litany style which a curate adopts to his rector's daughter.

"Can you suppose, Miss Rosedew, that I would have the heart to beat him now?—Ah, you will, will you then?" Ræbus thought better of it.

"No, I hope you would not," said Amy, in pure good faith, with a glance, however, at the thick bamboo, "because it would be so cruel. It is hollow, I hope; but it has such knots, and it looks so very hard!

"Hollow, and thin as a piece of pie-crust; and you know how this wood splits."

"Oh, I am so glad, because you can't hurt him so very much. Please not to go, if you can hold him, more than three miles and a half an hour. Papa says that is the pace that always keeps him in his best condition. And please to take the saddle off, and keep it at your house, that the Rushford boy may not ride him back. And please to choose a steady boy from the head-class in your Sunday school, and, if possible, a communicant. But I'm sadly afraid there's no trusting the boys."

"Indeed, I fear not," said Octavius, gravely; and adding to himself, "at any rate when you are concerned, you darling. What a love you are! But there's no chance for me, I know; and it's a good job for me that I knew it. Oh you little angel, I wonder who the lucky fellow is!" Aunt Eudoxia had dropped him a hint, quite in a casual way, when she saw that the stout young bachelor was going in, over head and ears.

Sweet Amy watched Mr. Pell, or rather his steed, with fond interest, until they turned the corner; and certainly the pace, so far, was very sedate indeed. Octavius was an upright man—you could see that by his seat in the saddle—as well as a kind and good-natured one; and on no account would he have vexed that gentle and beautiful girl. Nevertheless he grew impatient, as Corœbus pricked his ears pretentiously, and snorted so as to defy the winds, and was fain to travel sidewise, as if the distance was not enough for him; and all the time he was swallowing the earth at the rate of no more than four miles an hour. Then the young parson pulled out his watch, and saw that it wanted but half an hour of the time himself had fixed for the morning service at Rushford. And he could not bear the thought of keeping the poor folk waiting about the cross, as they always did and would wait, till the parson appeared among them. As Mr. Wise has well observed, "the peasant of the New Forest is too full of veneration."

And here let the present writer acknowledge, as behoveth a man to do, not in a scambling preface, which nobody ever would read, but in the body of this work, great and loving obligation to the labours of Mr. John R. Wise. His book is perfectly beautiful, written in admirable English, full of observation, taste, and gentle learning; and the descriptions of scenery are such that they make the heart yearn to verify them. Knowing the forest well, one could not love

it so truly and clearly, without the aid of that agreeable and adroit interpreter.

"The Rev. Mr. Pell," as some people write when addressing a parson,—hoping still to keep faith with Amy, because her eyes were so lovely,—pulled the snaffle, and turned Coræbus into a short cut, through beeches and hazels. Then compromise came to a short, sharp end, and the big bamboo was compelled to fall upon the fat flank of Coræbus, because he would not go without it. He showed sense of that first attention only by a little buck-jump, and a sprightly wag of his tail; then, hoping that the situation need not be looked in the face, shambled along at five miles an hour, with a mild responsibility.

"Five miles more," said Octave Pell, "and only twenty minutes to do it in! It's an unlucky thing for you, Coræbus, that your mistress is engaged." Whack, came the yellow bamboo again, and this time in solid earnest; Ræbus went off as if he meant to go mad. He had never known such a blow since the age wherein he belonged to the innkeeper. How could a horse with four feeds a day be expected to put up with tyranny?

But, to the naggy's great amazement, Octave Pell did not tumble off; more than that, he seemed to stick closer, with a most unpleasant embrace, and a pressure that told upon the wind—not of heaven but of horse—till the following symptoms appeared:—First a wheeze, and creak internal, a slow creak, like leather chafing, or a pair of bellows out of order; then a louder remonstrance, like the ironwork of a roller, or the gudgeons of a wheelbarrow; then, faster and faster, a sucking noise, like the bucket of an old pump, when the gardener works by the job; finally, puff, and roar, and shriek, with notes of passing sadness, like the neap-tide wailing up a cavern, or the lament of the Berkshire Blowing Stone.

In forest glades, where hollow hoofs fell on the sod quite mutely, that roar was enough to try masculine courage, though never unnerved by a heart-shock. How then could poor Pearl Garnet, sitting all alone, in a lonely spot, wherein she had pledged herself to her dead love, sitting there to indulge her tears, the only luxury left her—how could she help being frightened to death as the unearthly sound approached her?

The terror was mutual. Coræbus, turning the corner sharply, stopped short, in a mode that must have sent his true master over his withers, to explore the nature of the evil. Then he shook all through, and would have bolted, if the bamboo had not fallen heavily.

In the niche of a hollow oak was crouching, falling backward with terror, and clutching at the brave old bark, yet trying to hide behind it—only the snowy arms would come outwards—a beautiful girl, clad in summer white on that foggy day of December. The brown cloak, which had protected her from sylvan curiosity, lay on the ground, a few yards away, on the spot so sad and sacred.

Pearl Garnet's grief, if we knew the whole of it, or perhaps because we cannot, was greater than any girl could bear. A lovely, young, and loving maid, with stores of imagination, yet a practical power of stowing it; of building castles, yet keeping them all within compass of the kitchen-range; quite different from our Amy, yet a better wife for some men—according to what the trumps are, and Amy must have hearts, or she dies;—that very nice girl, we have let her go weep, and never once cared to follow her. There is never any justice in this world; therefore who cares to apologize? It would take up all our business-time, if we did it properly.

Now, as she stretched her white arms forth, and her delicate form shrunk back into the black embrace of the oak-tree; while her rich hair was streaming all down her breast, and her dark eyes still full of tear-drops; the rider no less than the horse was amazed, and seemed to behold a vision. Then as she shrunk away into the tree-bole, with a shriek of deadly terror—for what love casteth out fear? —and she saw not through the ivy-screen, and Coræbus groaned sepulchrally, Pell came down with a dash on one foot, and went, quick jump, to help her.

In a fainting fit—for the heart so firm and defiant in days of happiness was fluxed now and frail with misery—she was cowering away in the dark tree-nook, like the pearls of mistletoe fallen, with her head thrown back (such an elegant head, a woman's greatest beauty), and the round arms hanging helpless.

Hereupon Mr. Pell was abroad. He had never experienced any sisters, nor much mother consciously—being the eighth son, as of course we know, of a jolly Yorkshire baronet; at any rate he had lost his mother at the birth of Nonus Pell; and it is a loss to the age that there were not ninety of them, if of equal merit.

So Octavius stood like a fish out of water, with both hands in his pocket, as it is so generally the habit of fishes to stand.

Then, meaning no especial harm, nor perhaps great good, for that matter, he said to himself,—

"Confound it all. What the deuce am I to do?"

His sermon upon the Third Commandment, about to be preached at Rushford, where the fishermen swore like St. Peter,—that sermon went crack in his pocket at such a shocking ejaculation. Never heeding that, he went on to do what a stout fellow and a gentleman must have done in this emergency. He lifted the drooping figure forth into the open air, touching it only with his hands, timidly and reverently, as if every fair curve were sacred. Then he fetched water in his best Sunday hat—the only chimney-pot he possessed —from the stream trickling through the spire-bed; and he sprinkled it on the broad, white forehead, as if he were christening a baby.

The moment he saw that her life was returning, and her deep grey eyes, quiet havens of sorrow, opened and asked where their owner was, and her breast rose like a billow in a place where two

tides meet, that moment Octave laid her back against the rugged trunk, in the thick brown cloak which he had fetched when he went for the water; and wrapped it around her, delicately, as if she were taking a nap there.

Oh, man of short pipes and hard, bachelor fare, for this thou deservest as good a wife as ever basted a leg of mutton!

At last the young lady looked up at him with a deep-drawn sigh, and said,—

"I am afraid I have been very silly."

"No, indeed, you have not. But I am very sorry for you, because I am dreadfully clumsy."

She glanced at his snowy choker—which he seldom wore save on Sundays—and, being a very quick-witted young woman, she guessed at once who he was.

"Oh, please to tell me—I hope the service is not over at Nowelhurst church."

"The service has been over for a quarter of an hour; because there was no sermon."

"Oh, what shall I do, then? What can I do? I had better never go home again."

This was said to herself in anguish, and Pell saw that he was not meant to hear it.

"Can I go, please, to the Rectory? Mr. Rosedew is from home; but I'm sure they will give me shelter until my—until I am sent for. I have lost my way in the wood here."

This was a very strange thing to be done by a clever young lady so near to her home; and Mr. Pell began to think that she must have come from Southampton; whence come many people, and contrive to get lost in the forest.

"To be sure," said the hasty parson, forgetting about the Rushford bells, the rheumatic clerk, and the quid-chewing pilots—let them turn their quids a bit longer—"to be sure, I will take you at once to the Rectory. Allow me to introduce myself. How very stupid of me! Octavius Pell, Mr. Rosedew's curate at Rushford."

Hereupon "Pello, pepuli, pulsum" (as his friends loved to call him from his driving powers at cricket, and to show that they knew some Latin) executed a noble salaam—quite of the modern school, however, and without the old reduplication (like the load on the back of Christian) till the duckweed came out of his hat in a body, and fell into the flounce tucket of the beautiful Pearl's white skirt.

She never looked, though she knew it was there—that girl understood her business—but curtseyed to him prettily, having recovered strength by this time; and there was something in his dry, manly tone, curt modesty, and breeding, without any flourish about it, which led the young maid to trust him, as if she had known him since tops and bottoms.

"I am Pearl Garnet," said she, imitating his style unconsciously, "the daughter—I mean I live at Nowelhurst Dell Cottage."

Corœbus had cut off for stable long ago, with three long weals from bamboo upon him, which he vowed he would show to Amy.

"Please to take my arm, Miss Garnet. You are not very strong yet. I know your brother well; and a braver or more straightforward young fellow never thought small things of himself after doing great ones."

Pearl was delighted to hear Bob's praises; and Mr. Pell treated that subject so cleverly, from every possible point of view, that she was quite astonished when she saw the Rectory side-gate, and Octavius, in the most light-hearted manner, made a sudden and warm farewell, and darted away for Rushford. How good it is for a sad, heavy heart to exchange with a gay and light one!

"Hang it! after that let me have a burster!" was his clerical ejaculation, "or else it is all up with me. I hope we haven't spilt the sermon, though, or got any duckweed down it. Duckweed, indeed; what a duck she is! And oh, what splendid eyes!"

He ran all the way to Rushford, at a pace unknown to Corœbus; and his "governor-coat" flew away behind him, with the sermon banging about, and the text peeping out under the pocket-lap. "Swear not at all," were the words, I believe; and a rare good sermon it must have been, if it stuck to the text under the circumstances.

The jolly old tars, after waiting an hour, orally refreshing their grandmothers' epitaphs, and close-hauling on many a tight yarn, were just setting up stun'sails to take grog on board at the "Lugger's Locker," hard by, as the banyan time was over. Let them ship their grog, and their old women might keep gravy hot, and be blessed to them. They had come there for sarvice, and shiver their timbers if they'd make sail till the chaplain came. Good faith, and they got their service at last, but an uncommonly short-winded one, a sermon, moreover, which each man felt coming admirably home—to his shipmate.

Meanwhile, Mr. Pell had left behind him no small excitement at Nowelhurst. For a rumour took wing after morning service—when the wings of fame are briskest in all country parishes—that parson John was gone to London to complain to the Queen that Sir Cradock Nowell never came to church now, nor even sent his agent thither, to manage matters for him. For Mr. Garnet still retained his stewardship among them, though longing to be quit of it, and discharging his duties silently, and not with his old pronouncement, because his health was weaker. The vivid power of vital force seemed to be failing the man who had stamped his character on all the folk around him; because he never said a thing which he did not think, and scarcely ever thought a thing with any ear of saying it.

Hitherto we have had of Bull Garnet by far the worst side uppermost. Let us offer no excuses now for his too ready indulgence of his far too savage temper. In sooth, we meet with scarce any case in which excuses are undiscoverable. God and the angels find them always; our best earthly friends can see them, when properly pointed out; our enemies, when they want to make accusation of them.

All we can say for Bull Garnet is (to invert the historian's sentence) "Hæc tanta viri vitia ingentes virtutes exæquabant"—"These blemishes, however dark, had grand qualities to redress them." Strong affection, great scorn of falsehood, tenderness almost too womanly, liberality both of mind and heart, a real depth of sympathy—would all these co-exist with, or be lost in, one great vice?

Possibly we are so indentured, spliced and mortised, dovetailed, double-budded, and inarched, both of good and evil, that the wrong, instead of poisoning the right, often serves as rich food to it. Nevertheless we had better be perfect—when we have found the way out.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE MURDERER'S TREE.

IT must not be forgotten that Rufus Hutton all this time was very hard at work, and so was Mrs. Corklemore. Between that lady and Eöa pleasant little passes gave a zest to daily intercourse, Georgie's boundless sympathies being circumscribed only by terror. Nevertheless, although Sir Cradock laughed (when his spirits were good, and his mind was clear) at their fundamental difference, Georgie began to gain upon him, and Eöa to lose ground. How could it be otherwise, even if their skill had been equal—and Eöa not only had no skill, but scorned sweet Georgie for having any—how could Mrs. Corklemore fail of doing her blessed duty, when she was in the house all day, and Eöa out, jumping the river, or looking about for Bob Garnet?

Whatever the weather was, out went Eöa, speering around for the tracks of Bob, which, like those of a mole, were self-evident; and then hiding behind a great tree when she found him; and hoping, with flutter of heart about it, that Bob had not happened to see her. Yet, if he happened not to see, she would go up and be cross with him, and ask whether Amy Rosedew had turned to the right or left there, or had stopped in a hollow tree. And did Bob think she looked well that morning? Then he had no right to think so. And perhaps her own new hat, with black ostrich, was a hideously ugly thing. Oh, she only wished there were tigers!

Leave the little dear to do exactly as she likes—for nothing else she will do ; and now, in looking through the forest, grey and white with winter, scorn we not the grand old trunk, in our gay love of the mistletoe.

There is a very ancient tree, an oak well known and good of fame, even at the first perambulation of our legislator king. It stands upon the bend and brow under which two valleys meet, where a horse-shoe of the wood has chanced, and water takes advantage. In the scoop below the tree, two covered brooks fetch round high places into one another, prattle satisfaction, and steal away for their honeymoon, without a breeze upon them. This "mark-oak," last of seven stout brothers, dwells upon a surge of upland, and commands three valleys, two of which unite below it, and the other leads them off, welcoming their waters. The grand tree lifts its proven column, channelled, ramped, and crocketed, flaked with brown on lines of grey, and bulked with cloud-like ganglions. Then from the maintop, where is room for fifty archers to draw the bow, limbs of rugged might arise, spread flat, or straggle downwards. But the two great limbs of all, the power and main glory, the arms that reared their pride to heaven, are stricken, riven, and blasted. Gaping with great holes and rotten, heavily twisted in and out, and ending in four long scraggy horns, ghastly white in the winter sun ; where the squirrel durst not build, nor the honey-buzzard watch for prey ; this shattered hope of a noble life records the wrath of Heaven.

The legend is that a turf-cutter having murdered a waylost pedlar, for the sake of his pack, buried the corpse in this hollow tree, and sat down on the grave to count his booty. Here, while he was bending over the gewgaws and the trinkets, which he had taken for gold upon the poor huckster's word, and which gleamed and flashed in the August twilight, the vengeance of God fell upon him. In bodily form God's lightning crashed through the dome of oak above him, leaped on the murderer's head, and drove him through the cloven earth, breast to breast on his victim's corpse. You may be sure that the sons of Ytene, a timid and superstitious race, find small attractions in that tree, when the shades of night are around it.

John Rosedew did not return on the Monday, nor yet on the Tuesday, &c. Not even until the last down-train roared through the Forest on Saturday. Then, as it rushed through the dark night of winter, throwing its white breath (more strong than our own, and very little more fleeting) in bracelets on the brown-armed trees, and in chains on the shoulders of heather, the parson leaned back on the filthy panels of a second-class carriage, and thought of the scene he had left.

He had written from London to Miss Rosedew, insisting, so far as he ever cared to insist on a little matter, that none at home should stay up for him, that no one should come to the station to

meet him, and that Pell should be begged to hold himself ready for the Sunday's duty, because Mr. Rosedew would not go home, if any change should that day befall unlucky Cradock Nowell. Lucky Cradock, one ought to say, inasmuch as for a fortnight now he had lost all sense of trouble.

Finding from Dr. Tink that no rapid change was impending, John Rosedew determined to see his home, and allay his child's anxiety. Moreover, he felt that his "cure of souls" must need their Sunday salting. Now walking away from the wooded station that cloudy Christmas Eve—for Christmas that year fell on Sunday—how grand he found the difference from the dirty coop of London.

The new moon was set, but the clouds began to lift above the tree-tops, and a faint Aurora flushed and flickered in the far north-west. Then out came several stars rejoicing, singing in twinkles their Maker's praise; and some of the sounds that breathe through a forest, even in the hush of a winter's night, began to whisper peace and death.

The parson, who feared not his Master's works, and was happiest often in solitude, trudged along with the leathern valise, and three paper parcels strapped comfortably upon his ample back. Presently he began to think of home and his parish cares, and the breadth of God spread around him; and then from thinking rose unawares into higher communion, inasmuch as it is a grander thing to feel than to think of greatness.

And in this humour quietly he plodded his proper course for the first four miles or so, until he had passed the Dame Slough, near the Blackwater stream, and was over against Vinney Ridge. But here he must needs try a short cut, through the Government Woods, to Nowelhurst, though even in the broad daylight he could scarcely have found his way there. He thought that, in spite of his orders, Amy would be sure to stay up for him, and so he must hurry homeward.

At a fine brisk pace, for a man of his years, he plunged into the deep wood, and in five minutes' time he had very little hope of getting out before daylight.

Have you ever been lost in a great wood at night, alone, and laden, and weary, where the frithings have not been cut for ten years, when there is no moon or wind to guide a man, and the stars glimpse so deceitfully? How the stubs, even if you are so quick-footed as not to be doubled back by them, or thrown down with nostrils patulous—how they catch you at the knee with three prongs apiece, and make you think of white swelling! Then the slip, where the wet has dribbled from some officious branch, or sow, or cow, summer-pasturing, has kept her volutabre. Down you plump, and your heels alone have chance of going to heaven, because (unless you are a wonder) you employ such powerful language.

Rising with some difficulty, after doubting if it be worth the while,

and rubbing spitefully ever so long at "the case of the part affected," you have nothing for it but to start again, and fall into worse disasters. Going very carefully then you jump from the goading repulse of a holly into the heart of a hazel-bush—one which has numberless clefts and tongs, and is hospitable to a bramble. Tumbling out of it, full of thorns, recalling your Farnaby epigram, and wishing they had pelted the hazel harder, away you go, quite desperate now, knowing well that the wood is full of swamps, some of which will petrify you, under sun-dew and blue campanula, when the summer comes again.

Through all these pleasing incidents and animating encounters John Rosedew went ahead, and, too often, a "header," until he was desperately tired, and sat down to think about it. Then he heard two tawny owls hooting to one another, across at least a mile of trees; and every forest sound grew clearer in the stillness of the night; the sharp, sad cry of the marten-cat, the bark of the fox so impatient, the rustle of the dry leaves as a weasel or rat skirred over them, the wing-flap of some sliding bird roused from his roost by danger, the scratching of claws upon trunks now and then, and the rubbing of horns against underwood: these and other stranger noises, stirring the "down of darkness," moving the sense of lonesome mystery and of fear indefinite, were abroad on the air (in spite of Shakespeare) on that Christmas Eve.

John Rosedew laid his burden by, and began to think, or wonder, what was best to do. Long as he had lived amid the woods, he knew much more of classic sylvulæ and poetical arundines, than of the natural greenwood, and the tasselling of morasses.

Bob Garnet would have found his way there, or in any other English forest, with little hesitation. From his knowledge of all the epiphytes and their different aspects, the bent of the winter grasses, the sense which even a bramble has of sun and wind and rain, he would soon have established his compass, with allowance for slope and exposure.

The parson sat upon an ants' nest, which had done its work, and feeling discharged, collapsed with him—a big nest of the largest British ant, which is mostly found near fir-trees. That nest alone would have told poor Bob something of his whereabouts; for there are not many firs in that part of the forest, and only one clump, high up on a hill, in the wood where John Rosedew had lost himself.

But the man of great learning was none the wiser, only he felt that his smallclothes were spoiled, and Mr. Channing's fashionable cut gone almost as prematurely as the critic who had condemned it.

"Let me now consider," said Mr. Rosedew to himself, for about the fiftieth time; "it strikes me at the first sight—though I declare I can't see any thing—would that I could not feel! for I confess that these legs are grievous; but putting aside that view or purview of the question, it strikes me that, having no Antigone to lead

me from this, which certainly is the grove of the Eumenides—there is another ant gone up my leg—'ingentis formica laboris.' I wish he wouldn't work so hard, though, and I always have had the impression that they stayed in-doors in the winter. Mem. To consult Theophrastus, and compare him, as usual, with Pliny. Also look at the Geoponika, full of valuable hints—why there he is again, biting very hard or stinging. What says Aristophanes about the music of the gnats? Indelicate, I fear, as he too often is. Nay, nay, good ant, if indeed thou art an ant——Why, what is that over yonder?"

It was a dim light in the great hollow oak, "the Murderer's Tree," as they called it, not a hundred yards from John Rosedew.

The parson approached it cautiously, for he knew that desperate men, fierce smugglers, and criminals under a ban, still harboured sometimes in the Forest. As he drew nearer, the feeble light, glimmering through the entrance, showed him at once what tree it was, because the rays glanced through two dark holes under the bulging and beetling brow, called by woodmen "the eyes of God."

John Rosedew was as brave a man as ever wept for another's grief, or with kind words assuaged it. No man could have less superstition, unless (as some would have us believe) all religion is superstition. Upon this point we will be persuaded, when we have seen them live the better, and die the more calmly for holding it. Yet John Rosedew, so firmly set, so full of faith in his Maker, so far above childish fears (which spring from the absence of our Father),—he, who having injured none had no dread of any, yet drew back and trembled greatly at the sight before him.

A small reflector-lamp, with the wick overhung with fungus, stood upon a knotted niche in the hollow of the tree. By it, and with his face and eyes set towards the earth, a tall and powerful man, stripped to the waist, was leaning, with one great arm beneath his forehead, and bloody stripes across his back. The drooping of his figure, the woe in every vein of it, the deep and everlasting despair in every bone—it was an extremity of our nature, which neither chisel nor pen may approach, nor even the mind of man conceive, until it has been through it.

Presently the man upraised his massive head, and scorned himself for being so effeminate. He had nearly fainted with the pain; what right had he to feel it? Why should his paltry body quail at a flea-bite lash or so, when body and soul were damned for ever?

But if his form had told of sorrow, great God, what did his face tell? He never sighed, nor groaned, nor moaned; his woe was beyond such trumpery; he simply took the heavy scourge from the murderer's grave, upon which it had dropped when the swoon came over him, and, standing well forth in the black hollow's centre, to gain full swing for his scorpion thongs, he lashed himself over back and round breast, with the utmost strength of his mighty arms,

with every corded muscle leaping, but not a sign of pain on his face, nor a nerve of his body flinching. Then, at last, he fell away, and allowed himself to moan a little.

Mr. Rosedew would have leaped forward at once, in his horror at such self-cruelty, but that he saw who it was, and knew how his remonstrance would be taken. He knew that Bull Garnet's religious views were very strange and peculiar, and never must be meddled with, except at his own request, and at seasonable moments. Yet he had never dreamed that self-chastisement was part of them.

"Garnet a wild flagellant!" said the parson to himself; "well, I knew that he was an enthusiast, but not that he was such a fanatic. And how shockingly hard he hits himself! Strong as Dr. Mastix at Sherborne; but the doctor took good care never to hit himself. Upon my word, I must run away. It is too sad to laugh at. What resolution that man must have! He scarcely feels those tremendous blows in the agony of his mind. I must reason with him about it, if I ever find good occasion. With such violation of His image, God cannot be well pleased."

Meditating deeply upon this strange affair, the parson plodded homewards, for now he knew his way, with the Murderer's Oak for his landmark. At last he saw his quiet home, and gave a very gentle knock, because it was so late at night.

The door was opened by Amy herself, pale, excited, and jumping.

"Oh, daddy, daddy!" Chock—chock—chock—such a lot of kisses, and both arms round his neck.

"Corculum, voluptas, glycymelon, anima mea——"

"Oh, papa, say 'Amy dear,' and then I shall know it is you at last.

Then she laughed, and then she cried, and presently fell to at kissing again. It was a most unfashionable proceeding altogether. But allowance must be made for her; because she had never tried before to get on without her father.

"Oh, you beautiful love of a daddy! I was quite sure you would come, you know; that you could not leave me any longer; so I would not listen to a single word any one of the lot of them said. And I kept the kitchen fire up, and a good fire in your pet room, dear; and I have got such a supper for you! Now, off with your coat in a minute, darling. Oh, how poorly you look, my own father! But we will soon put you to rights again. Aunt Doxy is gone to bed, hurrah! and so are Jemima and Jenny. And she won't have the impudence to come down, with all her hair in the jelly-bags. So I shall have you all to myself, dada; and if any one can deserve you, I do."

"My own pet child, my warm-hearted dear," said John, with great tears in his eyes; "I had not the least idea that your mind was so thoroughly ill-disciplined. We must have a course of choriambics

together, or the heavy trimacrine dimeter, as I have ventured to name it, about which——"

"About which not another short syllable, till you have had a light tri-mackerel supper, and not even a quasi-cæsura left."

"Why, Amy, you are getting quite witty!" And John, with one arm still in his overcoat, looked at her bright eyes wonderingly.

"Papa, can I be otherwise, when my own dad comes home to me? My learning sparkles at sight of you. Come, quick now, for fear of my eating you up before you begin your supper, dada. You'll have it in the kitchen, you know, dear, because it will be so much nicer; and then a pipe by the book-room fire, and a chat with your good little daughter. O father, father, mind you never go away from your own Amy, such a long, long time again."

John thought to himself that, ere many years, he must go away from his Amy for much more than a fortnight; but of course he would not damp her young joy with any such troubles now.

"If you please, my meritorious father, you will come to the door, and just smell them; and then you will have five minutes allowed you to put on your dear old dressing-gown, and the slippers worked by the Vestal virgins; five minutes by the kitchen clock, and not a book to be touched, mind. Now, don't they just smell lovely? I put them on when I knew your knock. The first mackerel of the season, only caught this afternoon. I sent word to Mr. Pell for them. He can do what he likes with the fishermen. And you know as well as I do, papa, you can never resist a mackerel."

When the parson came down, half the table was covered with some of his favourite authors—not that she meant to let him read, but only because he would miss his books a great deal more than the salt-cellar—and the other half she was bleaching, and smoothing, and stroking with a snowy cloth, soft and sleek as her own bare arms, setting all things in lovely order, and looking at her father every moment, with the skirt of her frock pinned up, and her glossy hair dancing jigs on the velvet slope of her shoulders. And she made him hungrier every moment by savoury word and choice innuendo.

"Worcester sauce, pa darling, and a little of the very best butter, not mixed up with flour, you know, but melting on them, like their native element. Just see how they are browning, and not a bit of the skin come off. What is it about the rhombus, pa, and when am I to read Juvenal?"

"Never, my child."

"Very well, pa dear, you know best, of course; but I thought it was very nice about weighing Hannibal, in the Excerpta. Father, put that book down; I can't allow any reading. And after supper I shall expect you to spin me such a yarn, dear, to wind up the thread of your great adventures."

"Τολυπεύειν," said John, calmly, although he was so hungry;

"the very word poor Cradock used in his rendering of that dirge—Oh, I forgot; ah yes, to be sure. A word, I mean, which expresses in a figurative and yet homely manner——"

"Cradock, papa! Oh, father, have you been with him in London? Oh, how Aunt Doxy has cheated me! You know very well, my own father, that you cannot tell me a story. Did you go to London because poor Cradock was very, very ill?"

"Yes," said her father, those soft bright eyes beamed into his so appealingly; "my own child, your Cradock is very ill indeed."

"Not dead, father? Oh, not dead?"

"No, my child; nor in any great danger, I sincerely believe, just at present."

"Then eat your supper, pa, while it is hot. I am so glad you have seen him. I am quite content with that."

She believed, or she would not have said it. And yet how far from the truth it was!

"You shall tell me all after supper, my father. Thank God for His mercies to me. Let none of us be in a hurry, dear."

Yet Amy, in dishing up the mackerel, had the greatest difficulty (for her breath came short, and her breast heaved fast) in locking the sluice-gate of sobs, which would have spoiled her father's supper.

"My amulet, I cannot eat a morsel while I see your hand shake. Darling, I must tell you all; I cannot bear your anxiety."

The second mackerel, a fish of no manners, instead of curling his tail at the frying, had glued it to the pan, until a tear of Amy's fried, and then he let go in a moment. John Rosedew caught his darling child, and drew her to his knees, with the frying-pan in her hand; and then he made her look at him, and she tried to show her eyes dry. Do what she might she could not speak, only to let her neck rise, and her drooping eyelids tremble.

"My own life's love, I have told you the worst. God is very good to us. Cradock has been at the point of death, but now he is better a little. Only his mind is in danger. And it must come home very slowly, if it comes at all. Now, darling, you know every thing.

She took his magnificent silvery head between her little white hands, and kissed him twice on either brow, but not a single word she said.

"My own sweet child," cried her father, slowly passing one arm around her, and swindling his heart of a smile; "I am apt to make the worst of things. Let us try to be braver, or at least to have more faith."

She leaped up at that very word, with the dawn of a glorious smile in her eyes, and she took the frying-pan once again, and eased out, with a white-handled knife, mackerel No. 3. But, upon second thoughts, she let him slide into the frizzle again, to keep him

warm and comfortable. Her heart was down very deep just now; but nevertheless, her father must have and well enjoy his supper.

"Father, I am all right now. Only eat your supper, dear. What a selfish thing I am!"

"Have a bit, my darling heart."

"Yes, I will have a bit of tail, pa, just to test my cookery. Now that's what I call frying! Look at the blue upon him, and the crisp brown shooting over it! Come, daddy, no nonsense, if you please. I could have eaten all three of them, if I had only been out on the warren. And you to come starving from London so! Now No. 3, papa, if you please." But she kept her eyes away from his, and made clever use of her clustering hair.

"How beautifully fresh this ale is! Oh, the stuff they sell in London! I am almost inclined to consider the result of taking another half-glass."

Her quick feet went pat on the cellar-steps, while her father considered the subject: and back she came not a whit out of breath, but sweetly fresh and excited.

"Such a race, pa; because I know of one family of cockroaches, and half suspect another. They are so very imprudent. Robert Garnet says that they stay at home, and keep their Christmas domestically, and I need not run for fear of them, at least till the end of April. And perhaps he is right, because he knows and studies every thing nasty. Only I can't believe what he says about ants, because it contradicts Solomon, who was so very much older. Now, you paternal darling, let me froth it up for you."

"Thank the Lord for as good a meal as ever one of His children was blessed with."

The parson stood up as he said these words, and put his thick but not large hands together, among the crumbs on the tablecloth.

"Now, if you please, the leastest—double superlative, pa, you know, like *πρώτιστος*, and something else—oh, they will pluck me at Oxford!—the very leastest little drop of the old French cognac we bought for parochial rheumatism, with one thin slice of lemon, an ebullition of water, and half a knob of sugar."

Before John could remonstrate, there it was, all winking at him, and begging to be sniffed before sipping.

"My pet, you are so premature. How can I trust your future? You never give me time to consider a subject, even in the first of its bearings."

"To be sure not, father. You know quite well you would take at least eight different views of the matter, and multiply them into eight others of people I never heard of. Now the pipe, dear. You shall have it here, because it is so much warmer. You know you can't fill it properly."

So the parson, happy in having a child who could fill a pipe better than he could, leaned back in his favourite chair, which Amy

had wheeled in for him, and held his long clay in his left hand, while his right played with her hair, as she sat at his feet, and coaxed him.

"Sermon all ready, dear?"

"Well, you know best about that, Amy; I always trust you to arrange them."

"Never fear, papa; leave it to me. What would you do without me? I have put you out such a beauty, because it is Christmas Day: one that always makes me cry, because I have heard it so often. But you must have confidence in me."

"Implicit confidence, my pet. Still I like to run my eyes over them, for I cannot see as I did. My eyes are getting so old."

"I'll kiss them till you can't see one bit, if you dare to say that again, papa. Old, indeed! They are better than mine. And I can see the pattern of a lady-bird, all across the room. There was a lady-bird going up the pane of my bedroom window to-day. At this time of year, only think! That was good luck, wasn't it? And a dear little robin flew in, and perched upon your own hat-peg; and then I felt sure that you must come home, if you tried to stay away ever so."

"Oh, you superstitious pet! I must reason with you to-morrow."

CHAPTER XLVI.

BOXING DAY.

UPON the Christmas morning, the parish flocked to church; and the church was dressed so beautifully that the parish was amazed. Amy and Eöa had made the wreaths, the garlands, and rosettes; there was only one cross to be discovered—a badly-bred Maltese one. Eöa had been walking over the barbarous pew-screens (like the travisses in a stable), springing from one to another, with a cable of flowers and evergreens, as easily and calmly as she would step from the scraper to the door-mat. Of course she had never heard of that sort of thing before, but she took to it at once, as she did to any thing pretty; and soon she was Amy's mistress, as indeed she must be every one's, unless she could not bear them.

The sons of the Forest looked up with amazement as they shambled in one after another, and an old woodcutter went home for his axe, lest the ivy should throttle the pillars. Many of the old parishioners attributed this great outburst of foliage to the indignation of the pixies at Parson John's going to London, and staying there so long.

The prayers were read by Mr. Pell, for the rector was weary, and

troubled in mind. But he would not forego his pleasant words to the well-known flock upon Christmas Day.

While the choir was making a stupendous din out of something they called an "anthem," Octave slipped off to his Rushford duty, through the chancel-door.

Then, with his silken gown on—given him years ago by subscription, and far too grand for him to wear, except at Christmas and Easter—John Rosedew mounted the pulpit-stairs, and showed (as in a holy bower of good-will and of gratitude) the loving-kindness of his face and the grandeur of his forehead. As he glanced from one to the other with a general welcome, a genial interest in the welfare both of soul and body, a stir and thrill ran through the church, and many eyes were tearful. For already a rumour was abroad that "Uncle John" must leave them, that another Christmas Day would see a stranger in his pulpit.

After dwelling briefly on his favourite subject, Christian love, and showing (by quotations from the noblest of heathen philosophers) how low and false their standard was, how poor a keystone is earthly citizenship, the patriotism of a pugnacious village, or a little presumptuous Attica, to crown and bind together the great arch of humanity; after showing, too, with a depth of learning lost upon his audience, how utterly false it is to say that the doctrines, or rather the principles, nay, the one great principle of our New Testament, had ever been anticipated on the banks of the Yellow River—kindly and heartily he turned to the application of his subject.

With some unconscious yearning perhaps, or perhaps some sense of home-truth, he gazed towards the curtained pew where sat his ancient friend, brought thither (as he knew too well) by tidings of his absence. As the eyes of the old men met, for the first time after long estrangement—those eyes that had met so frankly and kindly for more than fifty years, during all which time each to the other had been a "necessarius"—and as each observed how pale and grey his veteran comrade looked, neither heart could be acquit of self-reproach and sorrow.

John Rosedew's mild eyes glistened so, and his voice so shook and faltered, that all the parish noticed it, and wondered what harm it had done last week. For none of them had ever known the parson's voice to tremble, unless some old parishioner had done the unbecoming; and then the village mourned it, because it vexed the parson so.

The next day, as soon as Uncle John had found that all parochial matters were in proper trim, and that he might leave home again without neglect of duty, what did he do but order a fly, no less than a one-horse fly, from the "Jolly Foresters;" which fly should rush to the parsonage-door, as nearly as might be, at one o'clock? Now why would not Coræbus suffice to carry the rector and valise,

according to the laws of the Medes and Persians, a distance of two parasangs?

Simply because our Amy was going. Amy had won leave to go. Beautiful Amy was going to London, great fountain-head of all visions and marvels, even from white long-clothes up to the era of striped crinoline. And who shall object, except on the ground that Amy was too good to go.

If Amy were put down now in Hyde Park, Piccadilly, or Regent-street, at the height and cream of the season, when fop, and screw, and fogey, Frivolus and Frivola, Diana Venatrix, Copa Syrisca, Aphrodite Misthoté, yea, and even some natural honest girls moderately ticketed, are doing their caravaning—if Amy were put on the pathway there, in her simple grey hat and feather, and that round-about chenille thing which she herself had made, and which followed the lines of her figure so, fifty fellows, themselves of the most satisfactory figure (at Drummond's, or at Coutts's), fifty fellows who had slipped the hook fifty times apiece (spite of motherly bend O'Shaugnessey) must have received their stroke of grace, and hated Cradock Nowell.

Although the South-Western Railway had been open so many years, our forest-child had never been further from green leaf and yellow gorse than Winchester in the eastern hemisphere, and Salisbury in the western. And now after all to think that she was going to London, not for joy, but sorrow. Desperate coaxing it had cost; every known or new device—transparent every one of them, as the pleading eyes that urged it—every bit of cozening learned from three years old and upward, every girlish argument that never can hold water, unless it be a tear-drop; and, better than a million pleas, every soft caress and kiss, all loving, all imploring—there was not one of these but came to batter Amy's father, or ever he surrendered. For John's ideas were very old-fashioned as to maidenly decorum, and Aunt Eudoxia's view of the matter was even more prim and grim than his. Yet (as Amy well remarked) if she herself could see no harm in it, there certainly could be none; and how could they insist so much on the *καλόν* and the *πρέπον*, as if they over-rode *τὸ δέον*!

It is likely enough that this last stroke won the palm of victory; for, though dear Amy knew little of Greek, and her father knew a great deal, she often contrived, with true feminine skill, to take his wicket neatly, before he had found his block-hole. And then her father would smile and chuckle, and ask to have his bat again; which never was allowed him. To think that any man should be the father of such *εὐστοχία*!

Therefore, that father was compelled to throw himself, flat as a flounder, on Eudoxia's generosity; for the leech-bottle now had no leeches.

"Darling Doxy, you know quite well you are such a wonderful manager; you have got a little cash somewhere?"

He put it with a twist of interrogation, a quivering lever of doubt, and yet a grand fulcrum of confidence, which were quite irresistible.

Whereupon Aunt Doxy smiled, with the perception of superior mind, and the power of causing astonishment. Never a word she said, but went to some unknown recesses in holy up-stair adyta: she fussed about with many keys, over sounding boards and creaking ones, to signify her caution; and at last came back with a leathern bag, wash-leather tied with bobbin. Putting up her hands to keep Amy at a distance, she pursed her lips, as if to say, "Now don't be disappointed; there is really nothing in it. Nothing, at least, I mean for people of your extravagant ideas."

Then, one by one, before John's eyes, which enlarged with a geometric progression of amazement, she laid a gorgeous train of gold, as if it were but dominoes, beginning with half-sovereigns first, then breaking into the broader gauge, until there must have been twenty pounds, and the parson thought of all his poor people. Verily then she stopped awhile, to enhance her climax; or perhaps she hesitated, as was only natural. But now the pleasure of the thing was too much for her prudence. Looking at her brother, and then at Amy, and wanting to look at both at once, she drew from a little niche in the bag, with a jerk (as if it were nothing) a dainty marrow-fat ten-pound note of the Bank of England, with the name of a butcher upon the back, and an authenticity of grease grander than any water-mark. She tried very hard to make light of it, and not wave it in the air even; but the tide of her heart was too strong for her, and she turned away, and cried as hard as if she had no money.

Who may pretend to taste and tell every herb in the soup of nature? There is no sovereign moly, no paramount amellus; even basil (the herb of kings) may be drowned in garlic. Blest are they who seek not ever for the forced-meat balls, but find some good in every brewis, homely, burnt, or overstrained.

Mr. Rosedew, putting on his boots for the road to London, felt himself, at every tug, quite as rich as Megacles—that man of foremost Athenian blood, but none the more a gentleman, who walked capaciously into, and rapaciously walked out of, the gold-granaries of Crœsus. A delightful sense of having gotten great money out of Eudoxia—a triumph without historic parallel—inspired him, away with that overdone word!—aërated him with glory. Thirty pounds, and some odd shillings, wholly at John Rosedew's mercy (who never gave quarter to money, but hewed it as small as Agag, when any body asked him),—thirty pounds, with no duty upon it, no stamp of responsibility, and a peculiar and peppery piquancy in the spending of every halfpenny, to wonder what sister Doxy would think if she could only know it!

He gave careful Amy the note to keep, and 15*l.* to go inside it, because he had promised to do so; for Eudoxia knew his nature.

In that noble fly from the "Foresters," which had only two

springs broken, John and his daughter went away to catch the train at Brockenhurst. Out of the windows dangerously they pushed their beautiful heads—the beauty of youth on one side, the beauty of age on the other—although the coachman had specially warned them that neither door would fasten. But what could they do, when Aunt Doxy was there looking through the great rhododendron, with a kettle-holder over her mouth because it was so cold; fat Jemima too, and Jenny, and Jem Pottles leading Coræbus to shake off his dust at the shay-horse, and learn what he might come to?

Some worthy people had journeyed up from the further end of the village, to bid an eternal farewell to Amy, and to take home the washing. They knew she would never come back again; she would never be let go again; folks in London were so wicked, and parson was so innocent. Evil though the omens were, as timidly blushing she went away, tearfully leaving her father's hearth, though a daw on the left hand forbade her to go, and a wandering chough was overhead, and a croaking raven whirled away into the wilds of the woodland—for whom shall I fear, I the cannie seer, while Amy smiles dexter out of the cab, and wraps her faith around her?

Make we not half our life here, according as we receive it? Is it not as the rain that falls, softly when softly taken, as of leaves and grass and water; but rattling and flying in mud and foul splashes, when met at wrong angles repulsively?

My little daughter, if you cannot see your way in that simile—a very common-place one,—take a still more timeworn and venerable illustration. Our life is but a thread, my child, at any moment snappable, though never snapped unwisely; and true as it is that we cannot spin and shape it (as does the spider) out of our own emotions, yet we have this gift of God, that we can make some beauty and delight of simple elements; even as the outer nature makes delicious beauty of a little web of crosses, gemmed with the weeping of the sky.

Knowing, then, in whose Hand we are, and feeling how large that Hand is, let us know and feel therewith that He will never crush us; because He loves us to rejoice, and tamely to regard Him; with confidence in adoration, and a smile in every bow.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE VISION OF AN ANGEL.

POLLY DUCKSACRE was sitting in state behind the little counter, and opposite the gas-jet, upon her throne—a bushel basket set upside down on another. It was the evening of Boxing Day, and

Polly was arrayed with a splendour that challenged the strictest appraisement; so gorgeous were her gilt earrings, cornelian necklace, sham cameo brooch—Cupid stealing the sword of Mars—and German-silver bracelets. The children who came in for "ha'porths of specked" forgot their errand and hopes of prigging, and, sucking their lips with wild admiration, cried "Lor now! Ain't she stunnin?" "Spexs her sweetheart in a coach and four," exclaimed one little girl of great penetration; "oh give us a ride, miss, when he comes."

That little girl was right, to a limited extent. Polly did expect her sweetheart; not in a coach and four, however, but in a smallish tax-cart, chestnut-coloured, picked out with white; on the panel whereof was painted, as the Act directs, "Robert Clinkers, Junior, Coal-merchant, Hammersmith." Mr. Clinkers, whose first visit had been paid simply from pity for Cradock, and to acquit himself of all complicity in Hearty Wibraham's swindle, had called again to make kind inquiries, after finding how ill the poor fellow was, and that his landlady sold coals. Nor was it long before he ventured to propose an arrangement, mutually beneficial, under which the Ducksacre firm should receive their supply from him. Two or three councils were held, but the ladies were obliged to surrender at last, because he was so complimentary, and had such nice white teeth, and spoke in such a feeling manner of his dear departed angel. On the other hand, their old wharfinger would come blustering about his sacks, loud enough to make the potatoes jump, and he kept such impudent men, and bit his nails without any manners, and called them both "Mrs. Acreducks."

During this Clinkerian diplomacy, Polly showed such shrewdness, and such a nice foot and ancle, and had such a manner of rolling her eyes—blacker and brighter than best Wallsend—that the coals of love were laid, the match struck, the fire kindled, and drawing well up the hearth-place, before Robert Clinkers knew what he was doing. And now he came every evening, bringing two sacks of coal with him, and sat on a bag of Barcelonas, and cracked, and gazed at Polly.

"Miss Ducksacre, you should sell lemonade," he had said only Saturday last, which was Christmas Eve, "it is such a genteel drink, you know, when a chap is consumed with immortal fires, as the great poet says—him as wrote the operas, or the copperas, bless me, I never know which it is; likely you can tell, miss?"

"Lor, Mr. Clinkers, why, the proper name is hopperas; we shows the boards, and we gets a ticket, when nobody else won't go."

"Oh now! Do you, though? Ah, I was there, afore ever I knew what life was. A tricksome thing is life, Miss Polly, especially for a 'andsome female, and no young fellow to be trusted with it. Valuable cargo on green wood. Sure to come to shipwreck."

"Lor, Mr. Clinkers, what can you mean? I am sure I am not at all handsome."

"Then there isn't one in London, miss. Coals is coals, and fire is fire—oh, I should like some lemonade, with a drop of rum in it. Would you join me in it now, if I just pop round the corner? It would make you feel so nice now."

"Do I ever feel any thing else but nice?" Oh, Polly, what a leading question!

"I wishes it was in my province now, with the deepest respect, to try!" Here Polly flashed away, though nobody was pursuing her, got behind some Penzance broccoli, and seized a half-pottle to defend herself. Mr. Clinkers, knowing what he was about, appealed to a bunch of mistletoe, under which, in distracting distraction, the young lady had taken refuge.

"Now nobody else in all this London," said the coal-merchant to the ivory berries, "in all this mighty Belial, as the poet beautifully expresses it, epecially if a young man, not over five-and-thirty, not so very bad-looking but experienced in life, and with great veneration for the sex, and a business, you may say, of three hundred a year clear of income-tax, and increasing hannually, and a contract with the company, without no encumbrances, would ever go to think of letting that beautiful young lady enjoy the sweets of retirement in that most inwiting position, without plucking some of the pearls off, and no harm done or taking. And nothing at all pervents me, no consideration of the brockolo—could pay for it to-morrow morning—but my deepest respects, not having my best togs on, through a cruel haxident. Please pigs they'll come home to-morrow morning, and I'll do it on Monday, and lock up yard at four o'clock, if tailor has made a job of it. Look nice indeed, and feel nice? I should like to know how she could help it!"

This explains why, when the wheels at the door, early on Monday evening, proved to be not of the sprightly tax-cart, but a lumbering cab, Polly was disappointed. Neither was her displeasure removed when she saw a very pretty girl get out, and glide into the shop, with the loveliest damask spreading over the softest and clearest oval. Though Polly had made up her mind about Cradock as now a bad speculation, it was not likely that she should love yet any other who meant to have him.

Amy shrunk back as her nice clean skirt swept the grimy threshold. She was not by any means fidgety, but had a nervous dislike of dirt, as most upright natures have. Then she felt ashamed of herself, and coloured yet more deeply to think that a place good enough for Cradock should seem too sordid for her, indeed! And then her tears glanced in the gas-light, that Cradock should ever have come to this, and partly, no doubt, for her sake, though she never could tell how.

The little shop was afforested with Christmas-trees of all sorts

and of every pattern, as large as ever could be squeezed, with a knuckle of root to keep them steady, into pots No. 32. The costermongers won't have larger pots, because they take too much room on a truck, and force them to hire a big boy to push.

Aucuba, Irish yew, Portugal laurel, arbor vitæ, and bay-tree, but most of all—and for the purpose by far most convenient, because of the hat-peg order—the stiff, self-confident, argumentative spruce. All these, when they have done their spiriting, and yielded long-remembered fun, will be fondly tended by gentle-hearted girls on some suburban balcony ; they will be watered enough to kill lignum vitæ ; patent compost will be bought at about the price of sugar ; learned consultations will be held between Sylvia and Lucilla ; and then, as the leaves grow daily more yellow, and papa is so provoking that he will only shake his head (too sagaciously to commit himself), an earnest appeal will be addressed to some of the gardening papers. Or perhaps the tree will be planted, with no little ceremony, in the centre of some grass-plot nearly as large as a counterpane ; while the elder members of the family, though bland enough to drink its health, regard the measure as very unwise, because the house will be darkened so in a few short years.

Meanwhile the editor's reply arrives—" Possibly Sylvia's tree has no roots." He is laughed to scorn for his ignorance, until little Charley falls to work with his Ramsgate spade unbidden. *Factura nepotibus umbram !* It has been chopped all round the bole with a hatchet, and is as likely to grow as a lucifer-match.

Through that Christmas Tabraca Mr. Rosedew led his daughter, begging her at every step to be careful of the trees, whose claims upon her attention she postponed to those of her frock.

" Lor bless me, sir, is that you now, and your good lady along of you ! How glad I am, to be sure !"

" Miss Ducksacre, this is my daughter, Miss Amy Rosedew, of whom you have heard me speak ;" here John executed a flourish of great complacency with his hat ; " my only child, but as good to me as any dozen could be. Will you allow her to stop here a minute, while I go up-stairs ?"

Amy was trembling now, more and more every moment, for her father would not ask how Cradock was, lest the answer should be unfavourable.

" To be sure she can stay here," said Polly, not over graciously ; for if Mr. Clinkers should come in just then, it might alter his ideal.

" Ah, so very sad ; so very sad, miss, ain't it now ?"

" Yes," said Amy, having no desire to pursue the subject with Polly. But Polly's tongue could no more keep still than a frond of maiden-hair fern in the draught of a river archway.

" Ah, so very sad ! To think of him go, quite young as he is, to

one of them moon-struck smilems, where they makes rope-mats and tiger rugs! As 'andsome a young man, miss, as ever I see off a hengine; and of course he must be such, 'appening to be your brother."

Before the young lady could answer, Mrs. Ducksacre came to fetch her, and frowned very hard at Polly, who began to feel somewhat ashamed of herself. For, in spite of all her faith and hope, poor Amy could scarcely get up the stairs, till her father came to meet her.

"There is no one with him now, dear; Mrs. Jupp is in the sitting-room, so very kindly lent us by the good landlady. Only two more pairs of stairs, and there our Cradock lies, not a bit worse than he was; if any thing, a little better; and his faithful little Wena with him: she won't leave him, night or day, dear. Give me your hand, Amy. Why, I declare, it is rather dark, when you get too far from the windows! Madam, come in with us."

Mrs. Ducksacre however, having a woman's quick perception, knew when her presence had better be absence, as well as a sleeping partner does at the association's bankruptcy. So, after showing them up to the door, she slipped away into the side-cupboard which Mr. Rosedew had called a "sitting-room."

Then John took Amy's bonnet off (after ruining the strings), and stroked her pretty hair down, and took her pale face in his hands, and begged her not to tremble so, because she would quite upset him. Only she might cry a little, if she thought it would do her good. But when she put her hand up, and gave a dry sob only, the father led her very tenderly into the little chamber.

It was a wretched little room, low, and cold, and dark, and void of all attempt at decoration, or even common comfort. Amy took all of it in at a glance, for in matters of that sort a woman's perception flies on the wings of the pratincole, the swiftest of all embodied speed.

She even knew why the bed was awry; which her father could sooner have written ten scolia than discover. The bed was placed so, because poor Cradock, jumping up all of a sudden in an early stage of illness, and before his head grew soft, had knocked a great piece of plaster down from the projecting hip-beam.

Now Craddy was looking away from them, sitting up in the sack-cloth bed, and trying with the sage gravity of fixed hallucination to read some lines which his fancy had written on the glazed dirt that served for a window. That window perhaps pronounced itself more by candlelight than by daylight, and the landlord had forbidden any attempt at cleaning it, because he knew that the frame was inclined to drop out. Two candles, the residue of two pounds which Mr. Rosedew had paid for, only helped to interpret the squalid room more forcibly.

While poor Amy was standing waiting, full of fear and misery, and her father was thinking what to say, the weak sick fellow turned

towards them, and his eyes met hers. She saw that the tint of her lover's eyes was gone from a beautiful deep grey to the tone of a withered oak-leaf, the pupils forthstanding haggardly, with livid circles around them, and the face itself a type of trouble and long suffering, so gaunt, and wan, and weary.

Amy could not weep, but gazed (feeling, but not thinking much) with all the love and pity, devotion and eternal faith, which are sure to shine in a true girl's eyes, when trouble strikes its light there.

Nothing could have been more touching than to see her gaze fixed on him, fixed yet ever flitting with a crowd of rapid memories, that made her now adore him. Who beside in all the world could look at him with eyes so full of sorrow, pride, humility, glory, hope, and pity, comfort—and in one word, love?

But from him no answer came, until her tears began to flow; his wan and wandering and wild gaze slowly went around, and weakly, without finding any place to be at home, and settle in. Now as soon as those eyes lit on certain eyes so deep with tears, and dark with craving after them, something of a soft and piteous wish came through their wildness.

They looked, and wandered on again, and seemed to lose all thought of it, and then with some shade of remembrance, happened to come back again, and felt inclined to linger. Not to stay too long, but linger, with a longing to know something, which they must have known somewhen.

The maiden dried her eyes and fixed them with a cheerful glance on his. A tear had caught his notice first, and now a smile should rivet it.

From that moment all was right. The sick youth even smiled in answer to the bright waft of her smile, as his softening gaze began to feel its way and come again, to flutter with a pulse of joy and sense of resting somewhere; then to quicken, flush, and deepen—from some fount that flows in heaven—then to waver and suffuse (with side-long memories of grief), and at last, with a leap of rapture (as a bird springs into nest), to return for ever into the beloved home, thrilling, beaming, glowing with the light, the life, the love.

So with a faint but joyful cry, like a shipwrecked man at his hearth again, he stretched out both his wasted arms, and there ran Amy into them. She laid his white cheek on her shoulder, and let her hair flow over it; she held him up with her own pure breast, till his worn heart beat on her warm one. Then she sobbed, and laughed, and sobbed, and called him her world, and heart, and heaven, and kissed his wondering brow, and looked, and asked, now was he sure of her? All she begged for was one word, just one little word (or whisper would do quite as well) to show if he now could begin to guess who it was that was come to comfort him.

"Oh, he must know her—of course he must—wouldn't she know him, that was all, though she hadn't a breath of life left? His own,

his faith, his truth, his love—his own—let him say his own what—if she lived a hundred years, never would she cry again. Only say it once, his own, little, foolish—"

"Amy!"

"Yes, your Amy, Amy, Amy. Say it again, say one more 'Amy,' my darling everlasting love!"

Suddenly the barriers of his frozen grief were loosened. With one weak arm still hanging round her, though it could not cling to her, he burst into a flood of tears, from the fountain of great waters, source and home whereof is God.

Then John, who had stood at the door all the time, with his white head bowed on his coat-sleeve, came forward and took a hand of each, knelt by the bed, and poured forth thanks. They wanted not to talk of it, nor any doctor to tell them. Because they had an angel's voice, that heaven at length was watching them.

"Darlings, didn't I tell you," said Amy, taking a hand of each, with her rich curls tear-bespangled, like a young grape-leaf in the vinery; "don't you know that I was sure our Father would never forsake us; and that even a simple thing, like me, might fetch back my own blessing? Oh, we could not have loved one another so; only God knew it was good for us."

While she spoke, Cradock looked at her with a faint far-off intelligence of her love, but not of her arguments. He only cared to hear her voice; to see her more with heart than eyes; and touch her to make sure of her; then to dream that it was an angel; then to wake and be very glad that she was only Amy.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

LOW AND LOFTY CONVERSE.

SLOWLY from that night, but surely, Cradock's mind came home again, as a child comes back to its mother, who is stretching forth her arms to it; timid at first and wondering, and apt for a long time to reel and stagger upon very small occasion.

Then as the water flows over the ice, in a gradual gentle thaw, beginning to gleam at the margin first, where the reeds are and the willow-trees, then gliding slowly and brightly on, following every skate-mark or line where a rope or stick has been, till it meets in one broad limpid sheet; so crystal reason dawned and wavered, felt its way and went on again, tracing many a childish channel, many a dormant memory, across that dull lethargic mind, until the clear surface was restored, and the mirror could reflect again.

Mr. Rosedew quartered himself and his Amy at the Portland

Hotel hard by, and reckless of all expense moved Cradock into Mrs. Ducksacre's very best room. He would have done this long ago, only the doctor would not allow it.

Then Amy, who did not like London at all, because there were so few trees in it, hired some of the Christmas-grove from the fair greengrocers, and decked out the little sitting-room, so that Cradock enjoyed sweet visions of the Queen's bower mead. As for herself, she would stay in the shop, perhaps half an hour together, and rejoice in the ways of the children. All her pocket-money went into the till, as if you had taken a shovel to it. Barcelonas, Brazils, and cob-nuts she was giving all day, to the fracture of teeth; and golden oranges rolled before her, as from Atalanta.

It is a most wonderful fact, and far beyond medical knowledge, that instead of losing her roses in London, as a country girl ought to have done, Amy bloomed with more Jacqueminot upon very bright occasions—more Louise Odier constantly, with Goubalt in the dimples, then toning off at any new fright to Malmaison, or Devoniensis—more of these roses now carmined or mantled in the delicate bend of her cheeks, than ever had nestled and flourished there in the free air of the Forest.

Good Aunt Doxy was quite amazed on the Saturday afternoon, when meeting her brother and niece at the station—for it made no difference in the outlay, and the drive would do her good—she found, not a pale and withered child, worn out with London racket, and freckled with dust and smoke-spots, but the loveliest Amy she had ever yet seen—which was something indeed to say,—with a brilliance of bloom which the good aunt at once, suspecting London practices, proceeded to test with her handkerchief.

But before the young lady left town—to wit, upon the Friday evening—she had a little talk with Rachel Jupp, or rather with strapping Issachar, which nearly concerns our story.

"Oh, Miss Amy," said Rachel that morning—for, in the course of her duty as nurse, she had made such acquaintance that "Miss Amy" sounded more natural than "Miss Rosedew"—"so you're going away, miss, after all, and never see my Looey; and a pretty child she is, and a good one, and a quiet one, and father never lift hand to her now; and the poor young gentleman saved her life, and he like her so much, and she like him."

"I will come and see her this evening, as you have so kindly asked me. That is, with my papa's leave; and if you don't mind coming for me to the inn at six o'clock. I am afraid of walking by myself after dark in London. My papa has found some books at the bookstalls, and he is so delighted with them, he never wants me after dinner."

"Dear Miss Amy, would you mind, then—would you mind taking a drop of tea with us?"

"To be sure I will. I mean, if it is quite convenient, and if you

can be spared here, and if—oh nothing else, Mrs. Jupp, only I shall be most happy." She was going to say, "and if you won't make any great preparations;" but she had managed her parish too long, not to know how sensitive poor people are at any restraint on their hospitality.

Therefore grand preparations were made; and grander still they would have been, and more formal and uncomfortable, if Amy had finished her sentence. Rachel at once rushed off to her lord, whose barge-shaped frame was moored alongside of his wharf, dreaming as stolidly as none except a bargee can dream. He immediately shelled out seven and sixpence from the cuddy of his inexpressibles, and left his wife to her own devices, except in the matter of tea itself. The tea he was resolved to fetch from a little shop in the barge-walk, where, as Mother Hamp declared, who kept the tobacco-shop by the gate, they sold tea as strong as brandy.

"If you please to excuse our Zakey, miss, taking no more tea," said Mrs. Jupp, after Issachar had laboured very hard at it, the host being bound, in his opinion, to feast even as the guest did; "because he belong to the anti-teatotallers, as takes nothing no stronger than gin, miss."

"Darrn't take more nor one noggin of tay, miss," cried Mr. Jupp, touching his short front curl with a hand scrubbed in quick-lime and copperas; "likes it, but it don't like me, miss. Makes me feel quite intemperant like,—so narvous, and queer, and staggery. Looey, dear, dad's mild mixture, for to speak the young lady's health in. Leastways, by your lave, miss."

Dad's mild mixture soon made its appearance in a battered half-gallon can, and Mr. Jupp was amazed and grieved that none but himself would quaff any. The strongest and headiest stuff it was, which even the publicans of London, alchymists of villainy, can quassify, and cocculize, and nux-vomicize up to proof. Then, the wrath of hunger and thirst being mollified, Issachar begged leave to smoke, if altogether agreeable, and it would all go up the chimney; which, however, it refrained from doing.

Now, while he is smoking, we may admit that the contents of Mr. Jupp's census-paper (if, indeed, he ever made legal entries, after punching the collector's head) have not been transcribed to the satisfaction of the Registrar-General, or Home-Office, or whoever or whatever he, or she, or it is, who or which insists upon knowing nine times as much about us as we know about ourselves. Mr. Jupp was a bargee of Catholic views; "it warn't no odds to he" whether he worked upon wharf or water, sea or river or canal, at coal, or hay, or lime, breeze, or hop-poles, or any thing else. Now and then he went down to Gravesend, or up the river to Kingston or Staines; but his more legitimate area was navigable by three canals, where a chap might find time to eat his dinner, and give his wife, and nag, and child, their'n.

Issachar's love of nature always culminated at one o'clock ; and then how he loved to halt his team under a row of alders, and see the painted meadows gay, and have grub and pipe accordin'. His three canals, affording these choice delights unequally, were the Surrey, the Regent's, and the Basingstoke.

That last was, indeed, to his rural mind, the nearest approach to Paradise ; but as there is in all things a system of weights and measures, Mr. Jupp got better wages upon the other two, and so could not very often afford to indulge his love of the beautiful. Hence he kept his household gods within reach of the yellow Tibers, and took them only once a year for a treat upon the Anio. Then would Rachel Jupp and Looey spend a summer month afloat, enjoying the rural glimpses and the sliding quietude of inland navigation, and keeping the pot a-boiling in the state cabin of the *Enterprise* or the *Industrious Maiden.*

Now Amy, having formed Loo's acquaintance, and said what was right and pretty in gratitude for their entertainment and faithful kindness to Cradock, was just about to leave them, when Issachar Jupp delivered this speech, very slowly, as a man who has got to the marrow and pope's-eye of his pipe :—

" Now 'scuse me for axing of you, miss, and if any ways wrong in so doing, be onscrupulous for to say so, and no harm done or taken. But I has my raisons for axing, from things as I've a 'ear'd him say, and oncommon good raisons too. If you please, what be the arkerate name and dwellin'-place of the young gent as saved our Loo ? Mr. Clinkers couldn't find out, miss, though he knowed as it warn't ' Charles Newman.' "

" Don't you know his story, then ?" asked Amy, in some astonishment. " I thought you knew all about it, and were so kind to him partly through that, and at the same time kind enough not to talk to me about it."

" We guesses a piece here and there, miss, since he talk so wild in his illness. And that's what made me be axing of you ; for I knowed one name right well as he out with once or twice ; not at all a common name nother. But we knows for sartin no more nor this, that he be an onlucky young gent, and the best as ever come into these parts."

" There can be no harm in my telling you, such faithful friends as you are. And the sad tale is known to every one, far and wide, in our part of Hampshire."

" Hampshire, ah ! " said Mr. Jupp, with a very mysterious look ; " we knowed Mr. Rosedew come from Hampshire, and that set us the more a-thinkin' of it. Loo, child, run for dad's bacco-box, as were left to Mother Richardson's, and if it ain't there, try at Blinkin' Davy's, and if he ain't got it, try Mother Hamp."

The child, sadly disappointed, for her eyes were large with hopes of a secret about her " dear gentleman," as she called Cradock,

departed upon her long errand. Then Amy told, as briefly as possible, all she knew of the great mishap, and the misery which followed it. From time to time her soft voice shook, and her tears would not be disciplined; while Rachel Jupp's strayed anyhow. But Issachar listened dryly and sternly, with one great brown hand on his forehead. Not once did he interrupt the young lady, by gesture, look, or question. But when she had finished, he said very quietly,—

"One name, miss, as have summat to do with it, I've not 'ear'd you sinnify; and it were the sound o' that very name as fust raised my coorosity. 'Scuse me, miss, but I wouldn't ax, only for good raison."

"I hardly know what right I have to mention any other names," replied Amy, blushing and hesitating, for she did not wish to speak of Pearl Garnet; "there is only one other name connected at all with the matter, and that one of no importance."

"Ah," returned Jupp, with a glance as intense as a cat's through a dairy keyhole, "maybe the tow-rope ain't nothin' to do with the goin' of the barge, miss. That name didn't happen permiskious now to be the name of Garnet, ma'am?"

"Yes, indeed it did. But how could you know that, Mr. Jupp?"

"Pearl Garnet were the name I 'ear'd on, and that ain't a very common name, leastways to my experience. Now, could it 'ave 'appened by a haxident that her good father's name were Bull Garnet?"

Amy drew back, for Mr. Jupp, in his triumph and excitement, had laid down his pipe, and was stretching out his unpeeled crate of a hand, as if to take her by the shoulder, and shake the whole truth out of her. It was his fashion with Rachel, and he quite forgot the difference. Mrs. Jupp cried, "Zakey, Zakey!" in a tone of strong remonstrance. But he was not abashed very seriously.

"It couldn't be now, could it, miss; it worn't in any way possible that Pearl Garnet's father was ever known by the name of Bull Garnet?"

"But indeed that is his name, Mr. Jupp. Why should you be so incredulous?"

"Oncredulous it be, miss; oncredulous, as I be a sinner! Rachy, who'd ha' thought it? How things does come about, to be sure! Now plase to tell me, miss—very careful, and not passin' lightly of any thing; never you mind how small it seem—every word you knows about Pearl Garnet and that there—job there; and all you knows on her father too."

"You must prove to me first, Mr. Jupp, that I have any right to do so."

Issachar now was strongly excited, a condition most unusual with him, except when his wife rebelled, and that she had, years ago, ceased to do. He put his long black face, which was working so

that the high cheek-bones almost shut the little eyes, quite close to Amy's pearly white ear, and whispered,—

"If ye dunna tell me, ye'll cry for it arl the life long, ye'll never right the innocent, and ye'll let the guilty ride over ye. I canna tell no more just now, but every word is gospel. I be no liar, miss, though I be rough enough, God knows. And He knoweth He made me so."

Then Amy, trembling at his words, and thinking that she had hurt his feelings, put her soft little hand, for amends, into Zakey's great black piece of hold, which looked like the bilge of a barge; and he wondered what to do with it, such a sort of chap as he was. He had never heard of kissing a hand, and even if he had it would scarcely be a timely offering, for he was having a chaw to compose himself—yet he knew that he ought not, in good manners, to let go her hand in a hurry; so what did he do but slip off a ring (one of those so-called "galvanic rings," in which sailors and bargemen have wonderful faith as an antidote to rheumatics, tick dolorous, and the Caroline Morgan), and this ring he passed down two of her fingers, for all females do love trinkets so. Amy kept it carefully, and will put it on her chatelaine, if ever she sets up one.

Then being convinced by his words and manner, she told him every thing she knew about the Garnet family—their behaviour in and after the great misfortune; the strange seclusion of Pearl, and Mr. Garnet's illness. And then she recurred to some vague rumours which had preceded their settlement on the property of Sir Cradock Nowell.

To all this Issachar listened, without a word or a nod, but with his narrow forehead radiant with concentrated labour, his lips screwed up in a serrate ring, after the manner of a medlar, and a number of winks so intensely sage that his barge might have turned a corner with a team of eight blind horses, and no nod wanted for one of them.

"Ain't there no more nor that, miss?" he asked, with some disappointment, when the little tale was ended; "can't you racollack no more?"

"No, indeed I cannot. And if you had not some important object, I should be quite ashamed of telling you so much gossip. If I may ask you a question now, what more did you expect me to tell you?"

"That they had know'd, miss, as Bull Garnet were Sir Cradock Nowell's brother."

"Mr. Garnet Sir Cradock's brother! You must be mistaken, Mr. Jupp. My father has known Sir Cradock Nowell ever since he was ten years old; and he could not have failed to know it, if it had been so.

"Most like he do know it, miss. But dunna you tell him now, nor any other charp. It be true as gospel for all that, though."

"Then Robert and Pearl are Cradock's first cousins, and Mr. Garnet is his uncle!"

"Not ezackly as you counts things," answered the bargeman, looking at the fire; "but in the way as we does."

Amy felt that she must ask no more, at least upon that subject; and that she was not likely to speak of it even to her father.

"Let him go, miss," continued Issachar, referring now to Cradock; "let him go for a long sea-vohoyage, same as doctor horders un. He be better out of the way for a spell or two. The Basingstoke ain't fur enoo, whur I meant to 'ave took him. 'A mun be quite out 'o the kintry till this job be over like. And niver a word as to what I thinks to coom anigh his ear, miss, if so be you vallies his raison."

"But you forget, Mr. Jupp, that you have not told me, as yet, at all what it is you do think. You said some things which frightened me, and you told me one which astonished me. Beyond that I know nothing."

"And better so, my dear young leddy, a vast deal better so. Only you have the very best hopes, and keep your spirits roaring. Zakey Jupp never take a thing in hand but what he go well through with it. Ask Rachey about that. Now this were a casooal haxident, mind you, only a casooal haxident——"

"Of course we all know that, Mr. Jupp. No one would dare to think any thing else."

"Yes, yes; all right, miss. And we'll find out who did the casooal haxident—that's all, miss, that's all. Only you hold your tongue."

She was obliged to be content with this, and on the whole it greatly encouraged her. Then she returned to the Portland Hotel, under convoy of all the Jupp family, and Issachar got into two or three rows by hustling every one out of her way. Although poor Amy was frightened at this, no doubt it increased her faith in him through some feminine process of dialectics unknown to the author of the Organon.

Though Amy could not bear to keep any thing secret from her father, having given her word she of course observed it, and John was greatly surprised at the spirits in which his daughter took leave of Cradock. But there were many points in Amy's character, as has been observed before, which her father never understood; and he concluded that this was a specimen of them, and was delighted to see her so cheerful.

Now, being returned to Nowelhurst, he held council with sister Eudoxia, who thoroughly deserved to have a vote after contributing so to the revenue. And the result of their Lateran—for they both were bricks—council was as follows:—That John was bound, howsoever much it went against his proud stomach after his previous

treatment, to make one last appeal by the father according to the spirit to the father according to the flesh, in favour of the unlucky son who was now condemned to exile, so as at least to send him away in a manner suitable to his birth. That, if this appeal were rejected, and the appellant treated unpleasantly—which was almost sure to follow—he could not, consistently with his honour and his clerical dignity, hold any longer the benefices (paltry as they were), the gifts of a giver now proved unkind. That thereupon Mr. Rosedew should first provide for Cradock's voyage so far as his humble means and small influence permitted; and after that should settle at Oxford, where he might get parochial duty, and where his old tutorial fame and repute (now growing European from a life of learning) would earn him plenty of pupils——

"And a professorship at least!" exclaimed the elder Miss Rosedew; for, much as she loved to be down on her brother, she was proud as could be of his learning.

"Marry, ay, and a bishopric," John answered, smiling pleasantly; "you have often menaced me, Doxy dear, with Jemima's apron."

So, on a bright day in January, John Rosedew said to Jem Pottles, "Saddle me the horse, James." And they saddled him the "horse" —not so called by his master through any false aggrandizement (such as maketh us talk of "the servants," when we have only got a maid-of-all-work), but because the parson, in pure faith, regarded him as a horse of full equine stature and super-equine powers.

After tightening up the girths, then—for that noble cob, at the saddling period, blew himself out with a large sense of humour unappreciated by the biped who bestraddled him unwarily—therefore, having buckled him up, till the clever nag creaked like a tight-laced maid, away rode the parson towards the Hall. Much liefer would he have walked by the well-known and pleasant footpath, but he felt himself bound, as one may say, to go in real style, sir.

The more he reflected upon the nature of his errand, the fainter grew his hopes of success; he even feared that his ancient friendship would not procure him a hearing, so absorbed were all the echoes of memory in the pique of parental jealousy, and the cajoleries of a woman. And the consequences of failure—how bitter they must be to him and his little household! Moreover, he dearly loved his two little quiet parishes; and, though he reaped more tithe from them in kindness than in kind or by commutation, to his contented mind they were far sweeter than the incumbency of Libya-cum-Gadibus, and either Pœnus for churchwarden.

He thought of Amy with a bitter pang, and of his sister with heaviness, as he laid his hand—for he never used whip—on the fat flank of the pony to urge him almost to a good round trot, that suspense might sooner be done with. And when the Hall was at last

before him, he rode up, not to the little postern hard by the housekeeper's snuggery (which had seemed of old to be made for him), but to the grand front entrance, where the orange-trees in tubs were, and the myrtles, and the marble steps.

Most of the trees had been removed, with the aid of little go-carts, before the frosts began; but they impressed John Rosedew none the less, so far as his placid and simple mind was open to small impressions.

Dismounting from Corœbus, whose rusty snaffle and mildewed reins would have been a disgrace to any horse, as Amy told him every day, he rang the main entrance bell, and wondered whether any body would let him in.

That journey had cost him a very sharp battle, to bear himself humbly before the wrong, and to do it in the cause of the injured. In the true and noble sense of pride, there could not be a prouder man than this gentle parson. But he ruled that natural human pride with its grander element, left in it by his Lord and master, one great bequest of His presence here—the pride which never apes, but is itself humility.

At last the door was opened, not by the spruce young footman (who used to look so much at Amy, and speer about as to her expectations, because she was only a parson's daughter), but by that ancient and most respectable Job Hogstaff, patriarch of butlers. Dull and dim as his eyes were growing, Job, who now spent most of his time in looking for those who never came, had made out Mr. Rosedew's approach, by virtue of the pony's most unmistakable shamble. Therefore he pulled down his best coat from a jug-crook, twitched his white hair to due stiffness, pushed the ostiary footman back with a scorn which rankled for many a day under a zebra waistcoat, and hobbled off at his utmost pace to admit the visitor now so strange, though once it was strange without him.

Mr. Rosedew walked in very slowly and stiffly, then turned aside to a tufted mat, and began to wipe his shoes in the most elaborate manner, though there was not a speck of dirt upon them. Old Job's eyes blinked vaguely at him: he felt there was something wrong in this.

"Don't ye do that, sir, now; for God's sake don't do that. I can't abear it; and that's the truth."

Full well the old man remembered how different, in the happy days, had been John Rosedew's entrance; and now every scrub on the mat was a rub on his shaky hard-worn heart.

Mr. Rosedew looked mildly surprised, for his apprehension (as we know) was swifter on paper than pavement. But he held forth his firm strong hand, and the old man bowed tearfully over it.

"Any news of our boy, sir? Any news of my boy, as was?"

"Yes, Job; very bad news. He has been terribly ill in London, and nobody there to care for him."

"Then I'll throw up my situation, sir. Many's the time I have threatened them, but didn't like to be too hard like. And pretty goings on there'd be, without old Job in the pantry. But I bain't bound to stand every thing for the saving of them as goes on so. And that Hismallitish woman, as find fault with my buckles, and nice things she herself wear—I'd a given notice a week next Monday, but that I likes Miss Oa so, and feel myself bound, as you may say, to see out this Sir Cradock; folk would say I were shabby to leave him now he be gettin' elderly. Man and boy for sixty year, and began no more than boot-cleaning; man and boy for sixty-three year, come next Lammas-tide. I should like it upon my tombstone, sir, with what God pleases added, if I not make too bold, and you the master of the churchyard, if so be you should live long enough, when my turn come, God willing."

"It may not be in my power, Job. But if ever it is, you may trust me."

"And I wants that in I was tellin' my niece about, 'Put Thy hand in the hollow of my thigh.' Holy Bible, you know, sir, and none can't object to that."

"Come Job, my good friend, you must not talk so sepulchrally. Leave His own good time to God."

"To be sure, sir; I bain't in no hurry yet. I've a sight of things to see to, and my master must go first, he be so very particular. I'll live to see the young master yet, as my duty is for to do. He 'ont carry on with a Hismallitish woman; he 'ont say, 'What, Hogstaff, are your wits gone wool-gatherin'?' and his own wits all the time, sir, fleeced, fleeced, fleeced——"

Here Mr. Rosedew cut short the contrast between the present and the future master (which would soon have assumed a golden tinge as of the Fourth Eclogue), for the parson was too much a gentleman to foster millennial views to the disadvantage of the master.

"Job, take my card to your master; and tell him, with my compliments, that I wish to see him alone, if he will so far oblige me. By-the-by, I ought to have written first, to request an interview; but truly that never occurred to me."

He could scarcely help sighing as he thought of formality re-established on the ruins of familiarity.

"He'll be in the little coved room, no doubt, long o' that Hismallitish woman. But step in here a moment, sir."

Instead of passing the doorway, which the butler had thrown open for him, Mr. Rosedew stood scrupulously on the mat, as if it marked his territory, until the old man came back and showed him into the black oak parlour.

The little coved room was calmly and sweetly equal to the emergency. The moment Job's heels were out of sight, Mrs. Corklemore, who had been indulging in a nice little chat with Sir Cradock, "when she ought to have been at work all the while, plain-sewing

for her little household, for who was to keep the wolf from the door, if she shrank from a woman's mission—though irksome to her, she must confess, for it did hurt her poor fingers so "—here she held up a dish-cloth rather rougher than a coal-sack, which she had stolen cleverly from her host's own lower regions, and did not know from a glass-cloth ; but it suited her because it was brown, and set off her lily hands so ;—"oh, Uncle Cradock, in all this there is something sweetly sacred, because it speaks to the heart of home."

She was darning it all the while with white silk, and took good care to push it away when any servant came in. It had lasted her now for a week, and had earned her a hundred guineas, having made the most profound impression upon its legitimate owner. She would earn another hundred before the week was out by knitting a pair of rough worsted socks for her little Flore, " though it made her heart bleed to think how that poor child hated the feel of them."

Now she rose in haste from her chair, and pushed the fortunate dish-cloth, with a very expressive air, into her pretty work-basket, and drew the strings loudly over it.

" What are you going for, Georgie ? You need not leave the room, I am sure."

" Yes, uncle dear, I must. You are so clear and so honest, I know ; and perhaps I inherit that feeling. But I could not have any thing to do with any secret dealings, uncle, even though you wished it, which I am sure you never could. I never could keep a secret, uncle, because I am so shallow. Whenever secrecy is requested, I feel as if there was something dishonest, either done or contemplated. It is most childish of me, I know, but my nature is so childishly open. At least every body says so ; while all the time I seem to myself—that is the oddest thing of all—to be comparatively clever. But that must be my mistake of course, and of course Mr. Rosedew has a perfect right, and shows the result of his great learning in concealing his little scheme about his ill-manner'd daughter."

" Georgie, stay in this room, if you please ; he is not coming here."

" But that poor simple Amy will, if he has brought her with him. Well, I will stay here and lecture her, uncle, about her very strange manner to you."

After all this the old man set forth, in some little irritation, to receive his once-loved friend. He entered the black oak parlour in a cold and stately manner, and bowed without a word to the friend who had crossed the room to meet him. The parson held out his hand, as a lover and preacher of peace should do ; but the offer, ay, and the honour too, not being at all appreciated, he withdrew it with a crimson blush all over his bright clear cheeks, as deep as his daughter's would have been.

Then Sir Cradock Nowell, trying to seem quite calm and collected, addressed his visitor thus :—

"Mr. Rosedew, I thank you for the honour of this visit. I beg your pardon, that you were shown into a room without a fire. Pray take a chair. I have no doubt that your intentions are kind towards me."

"I thank you," replied the parson, speaking rather faster than usual, and with the frill of his shirt-front rising ; "I thank you, Sir Cradock Nowell ; but I will not sit down in the house of a gentleman who declines to take my hand. I am here much against my own wishes, and only because I supposed that it was my duty to come. I am here on behalf of your son, a dear, and good, and most hapless fellow, and now in great trouble of mind."

If he had only said "in great bodily danger," it might have made a difference.

"Your interest in him is very kind ; and I trust that he will be grateful, which he never was to me. He has left his home in defiance of me. I can do nothing for him until he comes back, and is penitent. But surely the question concerns me rather than you, Mr. Rosedew."

"I am sorry to find," said the parson quite calmly, "that you think me guilty of impertinence and meddling. But even that I would bear, as becomes my age and my profession,"—here he gave Sir Cradock a glance, which was thoroughly understood, because they had been at school together,—"and more than that I would do, Cradock Nowell, for a man I have loved like you, sir."

That "sir" came out very oddly. Mr. Rosedew put it in by way of proud apology for having called him "Cradock Nowell," and as a salve to self-respect, lest he might have been too appealing. And to follow up this view of the subject, he made a bow such as no man makes to one from whom he begs any thing.

But Sir Cradock Nowell lost altogether the excellence of the bow. The parson had put up his knee in a way which took the old man back to Sherborne. His mind was there playing cob-nut, as fifty years since, with John Rosedew. Once more he saw the ruddy, and then pugnacious, John bringing his calf up, and priming his knee, for the cob-nut to lie upon it. This he always used to do, and not care a flip for the whack upon him, instead of using his blue cloth cap, as all the other boys did ; because his father and mother were poor, and could only afford him one cap per annum.

And so the grand bow was wasted, as most formalities are ; but if John had only known when to stop, it might have been all right after all, in spite of Georgie Corklemore.

But urged by the last and most vexatious infirmity of noble minds, our parsons never do know the proper time to stop. Excellent men, and admirable, they make us shrink from eternity, by proving themselves the type of it.

Mr. Rosedew spoke well and eloquently, as he was sure to do; but it would have been better for his cause if he had simply described the son's distress, and left the rest to the father's heart. At one time, indeed, poor old Sir Cradock, who was obstinate and misguided, rather than cold and unloving, began to relent, and a fatherly yearning fluttered in his grey-lashed eyes.

But at this critical moment, three little kicks at the door were heard, and the handle rattled briskly; then a shrill little voice came through the key-hole,—

"Oh pease let Fore tum in. Pease do, pease do, pease do. Me 'ost me ummy top. Oh you naughty bad door!"

Then another kick was administered by small but passionate toe-toes. Of course your mother did not send you, innocent bright-haired popples, and with a lie so pat and glib in that pouting pearl-set mouth. Foolish mother, if she did, though it seal Attalic bargain!

Sir Cradock went to the door, and gently ordered the child away. But the interruption had been enough—*ibi omnis effusus labor.* When he returned and faced John Rosedew, the manner of his visage was altered. The child had reminded him of her mother, and that graceful, gushing, loving nature, which tried so hard not to doubt the minister. So he did what a man in the wrong generally does instinctively; he swept back the tide of war into his adversary's country.

"You take a very strong interest, John, in one whose nearest relations have been compelled to abandon him."

"I thought that your greatest grievance with him was that he had abandoned you."

"Excuse me; I cannot split hairs. All I mean is that something has come to my knowledge—not through the proper channel, not from those who ought to have told me—something which makes your advocacy seem a little less disinterested than I might have supposed it to be."

"Have the kindness to tell me what something it is."

"Oh, perhaps a mere nothing. But it seems a significant rumour."

"What rumour, if you please?"

"That my—that Cradock Nowell is attached to your daughter, who behaved so ill to me. Of course, it is not true?"

"Perfectly true, every word of it."

Speaking thus, Mr. Rosedew looked at Sir Cradock Nowell as proudly as ever a father looked. Amy, in his opinion, was peeress for any mortal. And perhaps he was not presumptuous.

Sir Cradock Nowell said never a word; but his face was not discouraging only, but to a proud man mortifying.

"Why," continued Mr. Rosedew, with unfeigned surprise, "I would have told you long ago, the moment that I knew it, but for your great trouble, and your bitterness towards him. You have

often wished that a son of yours should marry my daughter Amy. Surely you will not blame him for desiring to do as you wished?"

"No, because he is young and foolish; but I may blame you for encouraging it, now that he is the only one."

"Do you dare to think that I am in any way moved by interested motives?"

"I dare to think what I please. No bullying here, John, if you please. We all know how combative you are. And now you have forced me to it, I will tell you what will be the conviction, ay, and the expression of every one in this county, except those who are afraid of you. 'Mr. Rosedew has entrapped the future Sir Cradock Nowell, hushed up his trouble, and made all snug for his daughter at Nowelhurst Hall.'"

Sir Cradock did not mean half his words, any more than the rest of us do, when hurt; and he was bitterly sorry for them the moment they were past his lips.

Those words put a barrier, as of iron, between him and John Rosedew, between him and his own conscience, for many a day and night to come.

Have you ever seen a pure good man, a man of large intellect and heart (a lover of truth, and justice, of honour, and of dignity), confront, without warning, some black charge, some despicable calumny, in a word (for we all do love strong English, and nothing else will tell it), some damned lie? If not, hope that you never may, for it makes a man's heart burn so.

John Rosedew was not of the violent order. Indeed, as his sister Eudoxia said, and to her own great comfort knew, his cistern of wrathfulness was so small, and the supply-pipe so unready—as must be where the lower passions filter through the intellect—that most people thought it impossible "to put the parson out." And very few of those who knew him could have borne to make the trial.

Even now, hurt as he was to the very depth of his heart, he was indignant more than angry.

"It would have been more manly of you, Sir Cradock Nowell, to have said this very mean thing yourself, than to have put it into the mouths of others. I grieve for you, and for myself, that so mean a man was ever my friend. Perhaps you have still some relics of gentlemanly feeling which will lead you to perform a host's duty towards his visitor. Have the kindness to order my horse."

Then John Rosedew, so punctilious, so polite to the poorest cottager, turned his broad back upon the baronet, and as he slowly walked to the door, these words came over his shoulder:—

"To-day you will receive my resignation of your two benefices. If I live a few years more, I will repay you all they have brought me above a curate's stipend. My daughter is no fortune-hunter. She never shall see your son again, unless he renounce you and

yours for ever, or you come and implore us humbly as now you have spoken arrogantly, contemptibly, and meanly."

Then, fearing lest he had been too grand about a little matter—not his daughter's conduct, but the aspersion upon himself—he closed the door very carefully, so as not to make any noise, and walked away towards his home, forgetting Corœbus utterly. And, before his fine solid face began to recover its healthy and bashful pink, he was visited by sore misgivings as to his own behaviour. To wit, what claim had any man, however elate with the pride of right and the scorn of wrong, to talk about any fellow-man becoming humble to him? Nevertheless, he could not manage to retract the wrong expression in his letter of resignation; not from any false pride—oh no!—but for fear of being misunderstood. But that very night he craved pardon of Him before whom alone we need humbly bow; who alone can grant us any thing really worth having.

CHAPTER XLIX.

BEAUTY AMID SCENES OF BEAUTY.

WHAT is lovelier, just when Autumn throws her lace around us, and begs us not to begin to think of any spiteful winter, because she has not yet unfolded half the wealth of her bosom, and will not look over her shoulder—when we take that rich one gaily for her gifts of beauty; what among her clustered hair, freshened with the hoar-frost in imitation of the Spring (all fashions do recur so), tell us what can be more pretty, pearly, light, and elegant, more memoried of maidenhood, than a jolly spider's web?

See how the diamonds quiver and sparkle in the September morning! What jeweller could have set them so? All of graduated light and metrical proportion, every third pre-eminent, strung on soft aerial tension, as of woven hoar-frost, and every carrying thread encrusted with the breath of fairies, then crossed and latticed at just angles, with narrowing interstices, to a radiated octagon—the more we look, the more we wonder at the perfect tracery. Then, if we gently breathe upon it, or a leaf of the bramble shivers, how from the open centre a whiff of waving motion flows down every vibrant radius, every weft accepts the waft slowly and lulling vibration, every stay-rope jerks and quivers, and all the fleeting subtilty expands, contracts, and undulates.

Yet if an elegant spider glide out, exquisite, many-dappled, pellucid like a Scotch pebble or a calceolaria, with a dozen dimples

upon his back, and eight fierce eyes all up for business, the moment he slips from the blackberry-leaf, all sense of beauty is lost to the gazer, because he thinks of rapacity.

And so, perhaps, Mr. Rosedew's hat described in the air a flourish of more courtesy than cordiality, when he saw Mrs. Corklemore gliding forth from the bend of the road in front of him. Although she had left the house after him, by the help of a short cut through the gardens, where the rector would no longer take the liberty of trespassing, she contrived to meet him as if herself returning from the village.

"Oh, Mr. Rosedew, I am so glad to see you," cried Georgie, as he tried to escape with his bow; "what a fortunate accident!"

"Indeed!" said John, not meaning to be rude, but unwittingly suggesting a modified view of the bliss.

"Ah, I am so sorry; but you are prejudiced against me, I fear, because my simple convictions incline me to the Low Church view."

That hit was a very clever one. No other bolt she could have shot would have brought the parson to bay so, upon his homeward road, with the important news he bore.

"I assure you, Mrs. Corklemore, I beg to assure you most distinctly, that you are quite wrong in thinking that. Most truly I hope that I have allowed no prejudice, upon such grounds, to dwell for a moment with me."

"Then you are not a ritualist? And you think, so far as I understand you, that the Low Church people are quite as good as the High Church?"

"I hope they are as good; still I doubt their being as right. But charity is greater even than faith and hope. And, for the sake of charity, I would wash all rubrics white. If the living are rebuked for lagging to bury their dead, how shall they be praised for battling over the Burial Service?"

Mrs. Corklemore, quick as she was, did not understand the allusion. Mr. Rosedew referred to a paltry dissension over a corpse in Oxfordshire, which had created strong disgust, far and near, among believers; while infidels gloried in it. Such a thing cannot be too soon forgotten and forgiven.

"Oh, Mr. Rosedew, I am so glad that your sentiments are so liberal. I had always feared that liberal sentiments proceeded from, or at least were associated with, weak faith."

"I hope not, madam. The most liberal One I have ever read of was God as well as man. But I cannot speak of such matters casually, as I would talk of the weather. If your mind is uneasy, and I can in any way help you, it is my duty to do so."

"Oh, thank you. No; I don't think I could do that. We are such Protestants at Coo Nest. Forgive me, I see I have hurt you."

"You misunderstand me purposely," said John Rosedew, with that crack of perception which comes (like a chapped lip) suddenly to folk who are too charitable, "or else you take a strangely intensified view of the simplest matters. All I intended was——"

"Oh yes, oh yes, I am always misunderstanding every body. I am so dreadfully stupid and simple. But will you try to relieve my mind, if you think you can, Mr. Rosedew?"

Here Georgie held out the most beautiful hand that ever darned a dish-cloth, so white, and warm, and dainty, from her glove and pink muff-lining. Mr. Rosedew, of course, was compelled to take it, and she left it a long time with him.

"To be sure I will, if it is in my power, and you will only tell me how."

"It is simply this," she answered meekly, dropping her eyes, and sighing; "I do so long to do good works, and never can tell how to set about it. Unhappily, I am brought so much more into contact with the worldly-minded, than with those who would improve me; and I feel a need of something, something sadly deficient in my spiritual state. Could you assign me a district any where? I am sadly ignorant, but I might do some little ministering, feeling as I do for every one. If it were only ten cottages, with an interesting sheep-stealer! Oh, that would be so charming. Can I have a sheep-stealer?"

"I fear I cannot accommodate you"—the parson was smiling in spite of himself, she looked so beautifully earnest; "we have no felons here, and scarcely even a hen-stealer. Though I must not take any credit for that. Every house in the village is Sir Cradock Nowell's, and Mr. Garnet is not long in ousting the evil-doers."

"Oh, Sir Cradock; poor Sir Cradock!" Here she came to the real object of her expedition. "Oh, Mr. Rosedew, tell me kindly, as a Christian minister; I am in so difficult a position,—have you noticed in poor Sir Cradock any thing strange of late, any thing odd and lamentable?"

Mr. Rosedew hated to be called a "minister,"—the Dissenters love the word so, and even the great John had his weaknesses.

"I trust I should tell you the truth, Mrs. Corklemore, whether invoked as a minister, or asked simply as a man."

"No doubt you would—of course you would. I am always making such mistakes. I am so unused to clever people. But do tell me, in any capacity which may suit you best"—it was foolish of her not to forego that little repartee—"whether you have observed of late any thing odd and deplorable, any thing we who love him so——" Here she hesitated, and wiped her eyes.

"Though Sir Cradock Nowell," replied Mr. Rosedew, slowly, and buttoning up his coat at the risk of spoiling his cock's-comb frill, "is no longer my dearest friend, as he was for nearly fifty years, it does not become me to speak about him confidentially and dispa-

ragingly to a lady whom I have not had the honour of seeing more than four times, including therein the celebration of Divine service, at which a district-visitor should attend with some regularity, if only for the sake of example. Mrs. Corklemore, I have the honour of wishing you good morning."

Although the parson had neither desire nor power to pierce the lady's schemes, he felt, by that peculiar instinct which truly honest men have (though they do not always use it), that the lady was dishonest, and dishonestly seeking something. Else had he never uttered a speech so unlike his usual courtesy. As for poor simple Georgie, she was rolled over too completely to do any thing but gasp. Then she went to the gorse to recover herself; and presently she laughed, not spitefully, but with real amusement at her own discomfiture.

Being quite a young woman still, and therefore not *spe longa*, and feeling a want of sympathy in waiting for dead men's shoes, Mrs. Corklemore, who had some genius, and therefore much fine ardour, that sweet mother of a sweeter child (if so much of the saccharine be admitted by Chancellors of the Exchequer, themselves men of more alcohol), what did she do but devise a scheme to wear the shoes, *ipso vivo*, and put the old gentleman into the slippers.

How very desirable it was that Nowelhurst Hall, and those vast estates, should be in the possession of some one who knew how to enjoy them, and make a proper use of them! Poor Sir Cradock never could do so; it was painfully evident that he never more could discharge his duties to society, that he was listless, passive, somnolent,—somnambulant perhaps she ought to say, a man walking in a dream. She had heard of cases,—more than that, she had actually known them,—sad cases in which that pressure on the brain, which so frequently accompanies the slow reaction from sudden and terrible trials, had crushed the reason altogether, especially after a "certain age." What a pity! And it might be twenty years yet before it pleased God to remove him. He had a tough and wiry look about him. In common kindness and humanity, something surely ought to be done to relieve him, to make him happier.

Nothing rough, of course; nothing harsh or coercive. No personal restraint whatever, for the poor old dear was not dangerous; only to make him what she believed was called a "Committee in Chancery"—there she was wrong, for the guardian is the Committee—and then Mr. Corklemore, of course, and Mr. Kettledrum would act for him. At least she should think so, unless there was some obnoxious trustee, under his marriage-settlement. That settlement must be got at; so much depended upon it. Probably young Cradock would succeed thereunder to all the settled estate upon his father's death. If so, there was nothing for it, except to make him incapable, by convicting him of felony. Poor fellow!

She had no wish to hang him. She would not have done it for the world; and she had heard he was so good-looking. But there was no fear of his being hanged, like the son of a tradesman or peasant.

Well, when he was transported for life, with every facility for repentance, who would be the next to come bothering? Why, that odious Eöa. As for her, she would hang her to-morrow, if she could only get the chance. Though she believed it would never hurt her; for the child could stand upon nothing. Impudent wretch! Only yesterday she had frightened Georgie out of her life again. And there was no possibility of obtaining a proper influence over her. There was hardly any crime which that girl would hesitate at, when excited. What a lamentable state of morality! Could she be made to choke Amy Rosedew, her rival in Bob's affection? But no, that would never do. Too much crime in one family. How would society look upon them? And it would make the house unpleasant to live in. There was a simpler way of quenching Eöa—deny at once her legitimacy. The chances were ten to one against her having been born in wedlock—such a loose, wild man as her father was. And even if she had been, why, the chances were ten to one against her being able to prove it. Whereas it would be very easy to get a few Hindoos, or Coolies, or whatever they were, to deliver their opinion about her mother.

Well, supposing all this nicely managed, what next? Why, let poor Sir Cradock live out his time, as he would be in her hands entirely, and would grow more and more incapable; and when it pleased God to release him, why then, "thou and Ziba divide the land," and for the sake of her dear little Flore, she would take good care that the Kettledrums did not get too much of it.

This programme was a far bolder one than that with which Mrs. Corklemore had first arrived at the Hall. But she was getting on so well, that of course her views and desires expanded. All she meant at first was to gain influence over her host, and irrevocably estrange him from his surviving son, by delicate insinuations upon the subject of fratricide; at the same time to make Eöa do something beyond forgiveness, and then to confide the reward of virtue to obituary gratitude.

Could any thing be more innocent, perhaps we should say more laudable? What man of us has not the privilege of knowing a dozen Christian mothers, who would do things of nobler enterprise for the sake of their little darlings?

But now, upon the broader gauge which the lady had selected, there were two things to be done, ere ever the train got to the switches. One was, to scatter right and left, behind and before, and up and down, wonder, hesitancy, expectation, interrogation, commiseration, and every other sort of whisper, confidential, suggestive, cumulative, as to poor Sir Cradock's condition. The other

thing was to find out the effect in the main of his marriage-settlement. And this was by far the more difficult.

Already Mrs. Corklemore had done a little business, without leaving a tongue-print behind her, in the distributory process; and if Mr. Rosedew could just have been brought, after that rude dismissal, to say that he had indeed observed sad eccentricity, growing strangeness, on the part of his ancient friend, why then he would be committed to a line of most telling evidence, and the parish half bound to approval.

But the parson's high sense of honour, and low dislike of Georgie, had saved him from the neat, and neatly-baited, trap.

That morning Mr. Rosedew's path was beset with beauty, though his daughter failed to meet him; inasmuch as she was looking for him on the parish road, by which he would have returned of course, if he had not forgotten his pony.

When he had left the chase, and was fetching a compass by the river, along a quiet footway, elbowed like an old oak-branch, overlapped with scraggy hawthorns, paved on either side with good intention of primroses, there, just in a nested bend where the bank overhangs the stream, and you would like to lie flat and flip in a trout-fly about the end of April, over the water came lightly bounding, and on a mossy bank alighted, young Eöa Nowell.

"To and fro, that's the way I go; don't you see, Uncle John, I must; only the water is so narrow. It scarcely keeps me in practice."

"Then your standard, my dear, must be very high. I should have thought twice about that jump, in my very best days!"

"You indeed!" said Eöa, with the most complacent contempt; eyeing the parson's thick-set figure and anterior development.

"Nevertheless," replied John, with a laugh, "it is but seven and forty years since I won first prize at Sherborne, both for the long leap and the high leap; and proud enough I was, Eöa, of sixteen feet four inches. But I should have had no chance, that's certain, if you had entered for the stakes."

"How could I be there, Uncle John, don't you see, thirty years before I was born?"

"My dear, I am quite prepared to admit the validity of your excuse. Tyrio cothurno! child, what have you got on?"

"Oh, I found them in an old cupboard, with tops, and whips, and whistles; and I made Mother Biddy take them in at the ankle, because I do hate needles so. And I wear them, not on account of the dirt, but because people in this country are so nasty and particular; and now they can't say a word against me. That's one comfort, at any rate."

She wore a smart pair of poor Clayton's "vamplets," and a dark morning-frock drawn tightly in, with a little of the skirt tucked up, and a black felt hat with an ostrich feather, and her masses of hair

rolled closely. As the bright colour shone in her cheeks, and the heartlight outsparkled the sun in her eyes, John Rosedew thought that he had never seen such a wildly beautiful, and yet perfectly innocent, creature.

"Well, I don't know," he answered, very gravely, "about your gaiters proving a Palladium against calumny. But one thing is certain, Eöa, your face will, to all who look at you. But why don't you ride, my dear child, if you must have such rapid exercise?"

"Because they won't let me get up the proper way on a horse. Me to sit cramped up between two horns, as if a horse was a cow! Me, who can stand on the back of a horse going at full gallop! But it doesn't matter now much. Nobody seems to like me for it."

She spoke in so wistful and sad a tone, and cast down her eyes so bashfully, that the old man, who loved her heartily, longed to know what the matter was.

"Nobody likes you, Eöa! Why every body likes you. You are stealing every body's heart. My Amy would be quite jealous, only she likes you so much herself."

"I am sure, I have more cause to be jealous of her. Some people like me, I know, very much; but not the people I want to do it."

"Oh, then you don't want us to do it. What harm have we done, Eöa?"

"You don't understand me at all, Uncle John. And perhaps you don't want to do it. And yet I did think that you ought to know, as the clergyman of the parish. But I never seem to have right ideas of any thing in this country!"

"Tell me, my dear," said Mr. Rosedew, taking her hand, and speaking softly, for he saw two great tears stealing out from the dark shadow of her lashes, and rolling down the cheeks that had been so bright but a minute ago; "tell me, as if you were my own daughter, what vexes your dear heart so. Very likely I can help you, and I will promise to tell no one."

"Oh no, Uncle John, you never can help me. Nobody in the world can help me. But do you think that you ought to know?"

"That depends upon the subject, my dear. Not if it is a family-secret, or otherwise out of my province. But if it is any thing with which I have to deal, or which I understand——"

"Oh yes, oh yes! Because you manage, you manage all—all the banns of matrimony."

This last word was whispered with such a sob of despairing tantalization, that John, although he was very sorry, could scarcely keep from laughing.

"You need not laugh, Uncle John. You wouldn't if you were in my place, or could at all understand the ways of it. And as for its

being a family-secret, ever so many people know it, and I don't care two pice who knows it now."

"Then let me know it, my child. Perhaps an old man can advise you."

The child of the East looked up at him, with a mist of softness moving through the brilliance of her eyes, and spake these unromantic words :—

"It is that I do like Bob so; and he doesn't care one bit for me."

She looked at the parson, as much as to say, "What do you think of that, now? I am not at all ashamed of it." And then she stooped for a primrose bud, and put it into his button-hole, and then she burst out crying.

"Upon my word," said Mr. Rosedew, "upon my word, this is too bad of you, Eöa."

"Oh yes, I know all that; and I say it to myself ever so many times. But it seems to make no difference. You can't understand, of course, Uncle John, any more than you could jump the river. But I do assure you that sometimes it makes me feel quite desperate. And yet all the time I know what a foolish thing I am. And then I try to argue, but it seems to hurt me here. And then I try not to think of it, but it will come back again, it always will come back again, and I am glad to have it. And then I begin to pity myself, and to be angry with every one else in the world. And after that I get better and whistle a tune, and go jumping. Only I take care not to see him."

"There you are quite right, my dear: and I would strongly recommend you not to see him for a month.'

"As if that could make any difference! And he would go and have somebody else. And then I should kill them both."

"Well done, Oriental! Now, will you be guided by me, my dear? I have seen a great deal of the world."

"Yes, no doubt you have, Uncle John. And you are welcome to say just what you like; only don't advise me what I don't like; but tell the truth exactly."

"Then what I say is this, Eöa: keep away from him altogether—don't allow him to see you, even when he wishes it, for a month at least. Hold yourself far above him, as you are in every thing. He will begin to think of you more and more. Why, you are ten times too good for him. There is not a man in England who might not be proud of you, Eöa, when you have learned a little dignity."

Somehow or other none of the Rosedews appreciated the Garnets.

"Yes, I dare say; but don't you see, I don't want him to be proud of me. I only want him to like me. And I do hate being dignified."

"If you want him to like you, do just what I have advised."

"So I will, Uncle John. Kiss me now, to make it up. Oh, you are such a dear!—don't you think a week would do, now?"

CHAPTER L.

TWO SMART LITTLE TERRIERS.

AT high noon of a bright cold day in the early spring of March, a labourer who had been "frithing," that is to say, cutting underwood, in one of the forest copses, came out into the green track, which could scarce be called a "lane," to eat his well-earned dinner.

As it happened to be a Monday, the poor man had a better dinner than he would see or smell again until the following Sunday. For there, as throughout rural England, a working man, receiving his wages on the Saturday evening, lives upon a sliding scale throughout the dreary week. He has his "bit of hot" on Sunday, smacking his lips at every morsel; and who shall scold him for staying at home to see it duly boiled, and feeling his heart move with every stir of the steaming and savoury pot-lid, more kindly than if he went to church, to watch the long, dry parson?

And he wants his old woman 'long of him; he see her so little all the week, and she be always best-tempered on Sundays. Let the young uns go to school to get their learning—though he don't much see the use of it, and his father and mother lived happy without it, and was allers respected—'bating that matter, which is beyond him, let them go, if they will, to hear parson, and bring home his tale to the old folk. Only let 'em come home good time for dinner, or they had best look out. "Now, Molly, lift the pot-lid again. Oh, it do smell 'nation good! But us ought to shove in another onion."

Having held high feast on Sunday, and thanked the Lord, without knowing it (by inhaling happiness, and being good to the children—our Lord's own pets and delight), off he sets on the Monday morning, to earn another eighteenpence—twopence a piece for the young uns. And he means to be jolly that day, for he has got his pinch of tobacco and two lucifers in his waistcoat pocket, and in his frail a most glorious dinner hanging from a hedge-stake.

All the dogs he meets jump up on his back, because he smells so good of meat; but he really cannot encourage them, with his own dog so fond of bones, and having the first right to them. Of course, his own dog is not far behind; for it is a law of nature, admitting no exception, that the poorer a man is, the more certain he is to have a dog, and the more certain that dog is to love him.

Pretermitting the dog, important as he is, let us ask of the master's dinner. He has a great hunk of cold bacon, from the cabbage-soup of yesterday, with three short bones to hold it together, and a cross junk from the clod of beef (out of the same great pot) which he will put up a tree for Tuesday; because, if it had been left at home, mother couldn't keep it from the children; who do scarce a stroke of work yet, and only get strong victuals to console them for school upon Sundays. Then upon Wednesday our noble peasant of this merry England will have come down to the scraping of bones; on Thursday he may get bread and dripping from some rich man's house; on Friday and Saturday nothing but bread, unless there be cold potatoes. And he will not have fed in this fat rich manner, unless he be a good workman, a hater of public-houses, and his wife a tidy body.

Now this labourer who came out of the copse, with a fine appetite for his Monday's dinner (for he had not been "spreeing" on Sunday), was no other than Jem—not Jem Pottles, the oracle, but the Jem who fell from the oak-branch, and must have been killed or terribly hurt, but for Cradock Nowell's quickness. Every body called him "Jem," except those who called him "father;" and his patronymic, not being Norman, matters "nout to nobody."

Now why could not Jem enjoy his dinner more thoroughly in the copse itself, where the witheys were gloved with silver and gold, and the primroses and the violets peeped, and the first of the wood-anemones began to star the dead ash-leaves?

In the first place, because in the timber-track happen he might see somebody just to give "good day" to; the chances were against it in such a lonesome place, still m' happen might so be. And a man who has been six hours at work in the deep forgottenness of a wood, with only birds and rabbits living, is liable to a gregarious weakness, when it comes to feeding-time.

Furthermore, this particular copse had earned a very bad name. It was said to be the harbourage of a white and lonesome ghost, a ghost with no consideration for embodied feelings, but apt to walk in the afternoon, in the glimpses of wooded sunshine. Therefore Jem was very uneasy at having to work alone there, and very angry with his mate for having that day abandoned him. And but that his dread of Mr. Garnet was more than supernatural, he would have wiped his billhook then and there, and gone all the way to the public-house, to fetch back that mate for company.

Pondering thus, he followed the green track as far as the corner of the coppice hedge, and there he sat down on a mossy log, and began to dine delightfully. He had washed his hands at a little spring, and gathered a bit of watercress, and fixed his square of cold bacon cleverly into a mighty hunk of brown bread, like a whetstone in its socket; and truly it would have whetted any plain

man's appetite to see the way he sliced it, and his concentrated interest.

With his mighty clasp-knife (straight, not curved like a gardener's) he cut little streaky slips along, and laid each on a good thickness of crust, and patted it like a piece of butter, and fondly looked at it for a moment, then popped it into his mouth, with a vigorous resolution that the next should be a still better mouthful, supposing such excellence possible. And all the while he rolled his tongue so, and smacked his lips so fervently, that you saw the man knew what he was about, dealt kindly with his hunger, and felt a good dinner—when he got it.

"There, Scratch," he cried to his dog, after giving him many a taste, off and on, as in fairness should be mentioned; "hie in, and seek it there, lad."

With that he tossed well in over the hedge—for he was proud of his dog's abilities—the main bone of the three (summum bonum from a canine point of view; and, after all, perhaps they are right), and the flat bone fell, it may be a rod or so, inside the fence of the coppice. Scratch went through the hedge in no time, having watched the course of the bone in air (as a cricketer does of the ball, or an astronomer of a comet) with his sweet little tail on the quiver. But Scratch, in the coppice, was all abroad, although he had measured the distance; and the reason was very simple—the bone was high up in the fork of a bush, and there it would stay till the wind blew. Now this apotheosis of the bone to the terrier was not proven; his views were low and practical; and he rushed (as a terrier ought to do) to an earthly-minded conclusion. The bone must have sunk into the bosom of the earth, being very sharp at one end, and heavy at the other. The only plan was to scratch for it, within a limited area; and why was he called "Scratch," but for scarifying genius?

Therefore that dog set to work, in a manner highly praiseworthy (save, indeed, upon a flower-bed). First he wrought well with his fore-feet, using them at a trot only, until he had scooped out a little hole, about the size of a rat's nest. This he did in several places, and with sound assurance, but a purely illusory bonus. Presently he began in earnest, as if he had smelled a rat; he put out his tongue and pricked his ears, and worked away at full gallop, all four feet at once, in a fashion known only to terriers. Jem came through the hedge to see what it was, for the little dog gave short barks now and then, as if he were in a rabbit-hole, with the coney round the corner.

"Mun there, mun, lad; show whutt thee carnst do, boy."

Thus encouraged, Scratch went on, emulative of self-burial, throwing the soft earth high in the air, and making a sort of laughing noise in the rapture of his glory.

After a while he sniffed hard in the hole, and then rested, and

then again at it. The master also was beginning to share the little dog's excitement, for he had never seen Scratch dig so hard before, and his mind was wavering betwixt the hope of a pot of money, and the fear of finding the skeleton belonging to the ghost.

Scratch worked for at least a quarter of an hour, and then ran to the ditch and lapped a little, and came back to work again, while Jem stood by at a prudent distance, and puffed his pipe commensurately, and wished he had somebody with him. Presently he saw something shining in the peaty and sandy trough, about two feet from the surface, something at which Scratch tried his teeth, but found the subject ungenial. So Jem ran up, making sure this time that it was the pot of money. Alas, it was nothing of the sort, nothing at all worth digging for. Jem was so bitterly disappointed that he laid hold of Scratch, and cuffed him well, and the little dog went away and howled, and looked at his bleeding claws, and stood penitent, with his tail down.

Nevertheless, the thing dug up had cost some money in its time, for gunmakers know the way to charge, if never another soul does. It was a pair of gun-barrels, without any stock, or lock, or ramrod, heavily battered and marked with fire, as if an attempt had been made to burn the entire implement, and then, the wood being consumed, the iron parts had been kicked asunder, and the hot barrels fiercely trampled on. Now Jem knew nothing whatever of guns, except that they were apt to go off, whether loaded or unloaded; so after much ponderous thinking and fearing—*fiat experimentum in corpore vili*—he summoned poor Scratch, and coaxed him, and said, "Hie, boy, vetch thic thur thin'!"

When he found that the little dog took the barrels in his mouth without being hurt by them, and then dragged them along the ground, inasmuch as he could not carry them, Jem plucked up courage and laid them by, to take them home that evening.

After his bit of supper that night, Jem and his wife held counsel, the result of which was that he took his prize down to Roger Sweetland's shop, at the lower end of the village. There he found that industrious blacksmith working overtime, repairing a harrow, which must be ready for Farmer Blackers next morning. The worthy Vulcan received Jem kindly, for his wife was Jem's wife's second cousin; and then he blew up a sharp yellow fire, and examined the barrels attentively.

"Niver zeed no goon the likes o' thissom, though a 'ave 'eered say as they makes 'em now to shut out o' t'other end, man. Whai, her han't gat niver na brichin'! A must shut the man as shuts wi' her."

"What wull e' gie vor 'un, Roger? Her bain't na gude to ussen."

"Gie thee a zhillin', lad, mare nor her be worth, on'y to bate up vor harse-shoon."

After vainly attempting to get eighteen-pence, Jem was fain to

accept the shilling ; and this piece of beautiful workmanship, and admirable " Damascus twist," was set in the corner behind the door, to be forged into shoes for a cart-horse. So, as Sophocles well observes, all things come round with the rolling years : the best gun-barrels used to be made of the stub-nails and the horse-shoes (though the thing was a superstition) ; now good horse-shoes shall be made out of the best gun-barrels.

But, in despite of this law of nature, those gun-barrels never were made into horse-shoes at all, and for this simple reason :—Rufus Hutton came over from Nowelhurst to have his Polly shodden ; meanwhile he would walk up to the Hall, and see how his child Eöa was. It is a most worshipful providence, and as clever as the works of a watch, that all the people who have been far abroad, whether in hot or cold climates (I mean, of course, respectively, and not that a Melville Bay harpooner would fluke in with a Ceylon rifleman), somehow or other, when they come home, groove into, and dovetail with, one another ; and not only feel a *pudor* not to contradict a brother alien, but feel bound by a *sacramentum* to back up each other's histories. To this rule of course there are some exceptions (explosive letters in the *Times*, for instance), but almost every one will admit that it is a rule ; just as it is not to tell out of school.

As regards Rufus and Eöa, this association was limited (as all of them are now-a-days, except in their powers of swindling), strictly limited to a keen and spicily patriarchal turn. Eöa, somehow or other, with that wonderful feminine instinct (which is far in advance of the canine, but not a whit less jealous) felt that Rue Hutton had admired her, though he was old enough to be her grandfather in those precocious climates. And though she would not have had him, if he had come out of Golconda mine, one stalactite of diamonds, she really never could see that Rosa had any business with him. Therefore, on no account would she go to Geopharmacy Lodge, and she regarded the baby, now imminent there, as an outrage and an upstart.

Dr. Hutton knew more about shoeing a horse than any of the country blacksmiths ; and as Polly, in common with many fast trotters, had a trick of throwing her hind-feet inwards, and " cutting" (as it is termed in the art), she liked to have her hind-shoes turned up, and her hoofs rasped in a peculiar manner, which Sweetland alone could execute to her perfect satisfaction.

" Ha, Roger, what have you got here?" said Rufus, having returned from the Hall, and inspected Polly's new shoes, which she was very proud to show him.

" Naethin' at all, yer honour, but a bit o' a old anshent goon, as happed to coom in last avening."

" Ancient gun, man ! Why, it is a new breech-loader, only terribly knocked about. I found it all out in London. But there are none in this part of the country. How on earth did you come

by it? And what made you spoil it, you stupid, in your forge-fire?"

"Her han't a bin in my varge-vire. If her had, her'd niver a coom out alaive. Her hath bin in a wood vire by the look o' the smo-uk."

Then Roger Sweetland told Dr. Hutton, as briefly as it is possible for any New Forest man to tell any thing, all he knew about it; to which the inquisitive doctor listened with the keenest interest.

"And what will you take for it, Sweetland? Of course it is utterly ruined; but I might stick it up for a rose-stake, or something."

"I'll tak whutt I gie vor 'un; no mare, nor no less. Though be warth a dale mare by the looks ov 'un."

"And what did you give for it—twopence?"

"As good a croon-pace as wor iver cooined. Putt 'un barck in carner, if a bain't worth thart."

Dr. Hutton was glad to get it for that; but the blacksmith looked rather blue when he saw him, carefully wielding it, turn his mare's head towards the copse where poor Jem was at work. For to lose the doctor's custom would make his lie at four shillings premium an uncommonly bad investment, and Jem was almost sure to "let out" how much he had got for the gun-barrels.

After hearing all that Jem had to say, and seeing the entire process of discovery put dramatically, and himself searching the spot most carefully without any further result, and (which was the main point of all, at least in Jem's opinion) presenting the woodman with half-a-crown, and bidding him hold his tongue, Rufus Hutton went home, and sagely preferred Harpocrates to Hymen.

The which resolution was most ungrateful, for Hymen had just presented him with a perfect little Cupid, according to the very best judges, including the nurse and the mother, and the fuss that was made at the Lodge about it (for to us men a baby is neuter, a heterogeneous vocable, unluckily indeclinable); really the way every body went on, and worst of all Rufus Hutton, was enough to make a sane bachelor bless the memory of Herod. However, of that no more at present. Some one was quite awake to all the ridiculous parts of it, and perfectly ready to turn it all to profitable account, as an admirable reviewer treats the feeble birth of a novel.

That is to say, Mrs. Corklemore made the utmost of the geniality of the caudle period, and of all the privileges conferred thereby on ladies, and used her sympathetic power to such good effect, that before long she had added one, and this the fundamental, step to the ascending scale of the amiable monarch. For she could manage baby, and baby could manage Rosa, and Rosa could manage Rufus. Only Rufus was not lord of the world, except in his own and his wife's opinion.

As soon as Dr. Hutton could get away from this charmed and

charming circle, he took the barrels to his own little room, and examined them very carefully. Scarred as they were, and battered, and discoloured by the fire, there could be no question as to their having formed part of an implement but little known at that time, to wit a patent breech-loading gun ; even the hinge and the bolt still remained, though the wooden continuation of the stock was, of course, consumed ; moreover, there was no loop for ramrod, nor screw-thread to take the breeching. Then Rufus went to a little cupboard, and took out a very small bottle of a strong and mordent acid, and with a feather slightly touched the battered, and crusted, and rusty "bridge," in the place where a gunmaker puts his name, and for the most part engraves it wretchedly. In breech-loading guns, the bridge itself was only retained from the force of habit, and perhaps the love of appearance ; for as the breech-end is so much thicker than the muzzle-end of the barrel, and the interior a perfect cylinder, the line of sight (if meddled with) should be raised instead of being depressed at the muzzle-end, to give us a perfect parallel. Of course we know that shot falls in its flight, and there is no pure point-blank ; but surely the allowance for, and correction of, these defeasances, according to distance, &c., should be left to the marksman's eye and practice, not slurred by a crossing of planes at one particular distance.

Leaving that to wiser heads, which already are correcting it (by omitting the bridge entirely), let us see what Dr. Hutton did. As the acid began to work, it was very beautiful to watch the clouding and the clearing over the noble but fiercely-abused metal. There is no time now to describe it—for which readers will be thankful—enough that the result revealed the maker's name and address, "L——, C——r-street," and the number of the gun. Dr. Hutton by this time had made the acquaintance of that eminent gunmaker, who, after improving greatly upon a French design, had introduced into this country a rapid and striking improvement ; an implement of slaughter as far in advance of the muzzle-loader as a lucifer-match is of flint and tinder. And Rufus, although with a set design to work out his suspicions, would have found it a very much slower work, but for a bit of accident.

A few weeks ago he had been sauntering from Charing Cross to the westward, looking in at every window (as his manner was, for he loved all information), when suddenly he espied the very "moral" —as the old women say—the exact fac-simile of the thing in his waistcoat pocket.

Instantly he entered the shop, and asked a number of questions. Though it was clear that he came to purchase nothing, he was received most courteously ; for it is one of the greatest merits of men who take the lead with us, that they drop the snarl of the British lion, and substitute for John Bull's jumble of surliness and serfdom, the courtesy of self-respect

Then the brevity and simplicity of the new invention—for every thing is new with us during five-and-twenty years ; and it took thirty years of persistent work to make Covent Garden sell rhubarb —all the great advantages, which true Britons would " consider of," were pointed out to Rufus Hutton, and he saw them in a moment, though of guns he had known but little.

And now, by means of this information, he espied so much of import in his new discovery, that he resolved to neglect all other business, and start for London the very next morning, if Rosa could be persuaded to let him, without having heard his purpose. But in spite of all his eagerness, he did nothing of the sort ; for Rufus junior that very night was taken with some infantile ailment of a serious kind, and for more than a month the doctor could not leave home for a day even, without breach of duty towards his wife, and towards the unconscious heir of his orchard-house and pyramids.

Troubles were closing round Bull Garnet, but he knew nothing of them ; and, to tell the truth, he cared not now what the end would be, or in what mode it would visit him. All he cared for was to defer (if it might be so) the violence of the outburst, the ruin of the household, until his darling son should be matured enough of judgment, and shaped enough in character, to feel, and to make others feel, that to answer for our own sins is quite enough for the best of us.

Yet there was one other thing which Mr. Garnet fain would see in likely course of settlement ere the recoil of his own wrath should sweep upon his children. It regarded only their worldly affairs ; their prospects, when he should have none. And being the mixture he happened to be—so shrewd, and so sentimental—he saw how good it was to exert the former quality, when his children were concerned ; and the latter, and far larger one, upon the world at large.

He had lately made some noble purchase from the Government Commissioners—who generally can be cheated, because what they sell is not their own—and he felt that he was bound by the very highest interests to be a capable grantee, till all was signed, and sealed, and safely conveyed to uses beyond attaint of felony. Therefore he was labouring hard to infuse some of his own rapidity into the breasts of lawyers—which attempt proves the heat of his nature more than would a world of testimony.

CHAPTER LI.

OUT UPON THE OCEAN.

"WHY should I care for life or death? The one is no good, and the other no harm. What is existence but sense of self, severance for one troubled moment from the eternal unity? We disquiet ourselves, we fume, and pant—lo, our sorrows are gone, like the steam of a train, and our joys like the noise behind it. Why should I fear to be mad, any more than fear to die? What harm if the mind outrun the body upon the road of return to God? And yet we look upon loss of mind as a thousand times worse than loss of soul.

"How this gliding river makes one think of life and its fugitive flowing. Not because the grand old simile lives in every language. Not because we have read and heard it, in a hundred forms and more. A savage from the Rocky Mountains feels the same idea—ideas strongly stamped by nature are a part of the feelings.

"Why does the mind so glide away to some calm sea of melancholy, when we stand and gaze intently upon flowing water? And the larger the spread of the water is, and the grander the march of the tideway, the deeper and more irresistible grows the sadness of the gazer.

"That naval captain, so well known as an explorer of the Amazon, who dined with us at Nowelhurst one day last July, was a light-hearted man by nature, and full of wit and humour. And yet, in spite of wine and warmth, he made the summer twilight creep with the sadness of his stories. Nevertheless, we hung upon them with a strange enchantment; we drew more real pleasure from them than from a world of drolleries. Poor Clayton tried to run away, for he never could bear melancholy; but all he did was to take a chair nearer to the voyager. As for me, I cried; in spite of myself, I cried; being carried away by the flow of his language, so smooth, and wide, and gliding, with the mystery of waters.

"And he was not one of those shallow men who talk for effect at dinner-parties. Nothing more than a modest sailor, leaving his mind to its natural course. Only he had been so long upon that mighty river, that he never more could cease from gliding, ever gliding, with it.

"Once or twice he begged our pardon for the sweep of hazy sadness moving (like the night on water) through his tales and scenery. He is gone there again of his own free choice. He must die upon that river. He loves it more than any patriot ever loved his country. Betwixt a man and flowing water there must be more than similitude, there must be deep, congenial, unutterable sympathy."

"*Tap-Robin*, ahoy there! Ahoy, every son of a sea-cook of you. Heave us over a rope, you lubbers. Would yer swamp us with parson aboard of me?"

This was Mr. Jupp, of course, churning up Crad's weak ideas, like a steam-paddle in a fish-pond. Perhaps the reason why those ideas had been of such sad obscurity, and so fluxed with sorry sentiment, was that the vague concipient believed himself to be shipped off for an indefinite term of banishment, without even a message from Amy. Whereas, in truth, he was only going for a little voyage to Ceylon, in the clipper ship *Taprobane*, A 1 for all time at Lloyd's, and never allowed to carry more than twice as much as she could.

How discontented mortals are! Young Cradock surely ought to have been even jollier than a sandboy, for he had a cabin all to himself (quite large enough to turn round in), and, what of all things we Britons love best, a happy little sinecure. He was actually appointed —on the strength of his knowledge of goods earned at the Cramjam terminus, but not through any railway influence (being no chip of the board, neither any attorney's "love-child"—if there be such a heterogeny), only through John Rosedew's skill and knowledge of the world, Cradock was actually made "under-supercargo" of a vessel bound to the tropics.

The clipper had passed Greenhithe already, and none had hailed her or said "Farewell." The *Taprobane* would have no tug. She was far too clean in the bows for that work. Her mother and grandmother had run unaided down the river; even back to the fourth generation of ships, when the Dutchmen held Ceylon, and doubtless would have kept it, but for one great law of nature: no Dutchman must be thin. But even a Dutchman loses fat within ten degrees of the line. So Nature reclaimed her dear Dutchmen from a position which baffled even her resources. Most likely these regions are meant, in the end, for the Yankee, who has no fat to lose, and is harder to fry than a crocodile.

But who can stop to theorize while the *Taprobane* is dancing along under English colours, and swings on her keel just in time to avoid running down Mr. Rosedew and Issachar? Mr. Jupp is combining business with pleasure, being, as you may say, under orders to meet the *Saucy Sally*, and steer her home from Northfleet to the Surrey Docks. So he has taken a lift in a collier, and met Mr. Rosedew at Gravesend, according to agreement, and then borrowed a boat to look out alike for *Saucy Sally* and *Taprobane*.

When words and gifts had been interchanged—what Amy sent is no matter now; but Loo Jupp sent a penny 'bacco-box, which beat father's out and out (as he must be sure to tell Cradock), and had "Am I welcome?" on it, in letters of gold at least—when "God bless you" had been said for the twentieth time, and love tied the tongue of gratitude, the *Taprobane* lay-to for a moment, and the sails all shivered noisily, and the water curled crisply, and hissed

and bubbled, and the little boats hopped merrily to the pipe of the rising wind.

Then Mr. Rosedew came down the side, lightly of foot and cleverly; while the under-supercargo leaned upon the rail and sorrowfully watched him. Ponderously then and slowly, with his great splay feet thrust into the rope-ladder, even up to the heel, quite at his leisure descended that good bargeman, Issachar Jupp. This noble bargee had never been seen to hurry himself on his own account. He and his deeds lagged generally on the bight of a long and slack tow-rope.

The sailors, not entering into his character, thought that he was frightened, and condemned his apprehensive luminaries, in words of a quarter the compass. Then Mr. Jupp let go with both hands, stood bolt upright on the foot-rope, and shook his great fists at them. "Let him catch them ashore at Wapping, if the devil forewent his due; let him catch them, that was all!" Thereupon they gave him a round of cheers, and promised to square the account, please God.

Mr. Rosedew and the bargeman looked up from the tossing wherry, and waved their last farewell, the parson reckless of Sunday hat, and letting his white locks glance and flutter on the cold March wind. But Cradock made no reply.

"All right, gov'nor!" said Jupp, catching hold of the parson; "no call for you to take on so. I've a been the likes o' that there mysel' in the days when I tuk' blue ruin. The rattisination of it are to fetch it out of him by travellin'. And the *Tap-Robin* are a traveller, and no mistake. D'rectly moment I comes to my fortin', I'll improve self and family travellin'."

Zakey, to assert his independence as his nature demanded, affected a rough familiarity with the man whom he revered. The parson allowed it as a matter of course. His dignity was not so hollow as to be afraid of sand-paper. The result was that Issachar Jupp, every time, felt more and more compunction at, and less and less of comfort in, the unresented liberties.

As he said "good-bye" at the landing-place—for he had seen the *Sally* coming—he put out his hand, and then drew it back with a rough bow (disinterred from long-forgotten manners), and his raspy tongue thrust far into the coal-mine of his cheek. But John Rosedew accepted his hand, and bowed, as he would have done to a nobleman. Even if a baby smiled at him, John always acknowledged the compliment. For he added Christian courtesy, and the humility of all thoughtful minds, to a certain grand and glorious gift of radiating humanity.

Cradock Nowell was loth to be sent away, and could not see the need of it; but doubtless the medical men were right in prescribing a southern voyage, a total change of scene and climate, as the likeliest means to re-establish the shattered frame and the tottering

mind. And so he sailed for the gorgeous tropics, where the sun looks not askance, where the size of every climbing, swimming, fluttering, or crawling thing (save man himself) is doubled ; where life of all things bounds and beats—until it is quickly beaten—as it never gets warm enough to do in the pinching zones, tight-buckled.

Meanwhile John Rosedew went to his home—a home so loved and fleeting—and tried to comfort himself on the road with various Elzevirs. Finding them fail, one after another, for his mind was not in cue for them, he pulled out his little Greek Testament, and read what a man may read every day, and never begin to be weary ; because his heart still yearns the more towards the grand ideal, and feels a reminiscence such as Plato the divine, alone of heathens, won.

John Rosedew read once more the Sermon on the Mount, and wondered how his little griefs could vex him as they did. That sermon is grander in English, far grander, than in the Greek ; for the genius of our language is large, and strong, and simple—the true spirit of the noblest words that ever on earth were spoken. How cramped they would be in Attic Greek (like Mount Athos chiselled) ; in Latin how nerveless and alien ! Ours is the language to express ; and ours the race to receive them.

What man, in later life, whose reading has led him through vexed places—whence he had wiser held aloof—does not, on some little touch, brighten, and bedew himself with the freshness of the morning, thrill as does the leaping earth to see the sun come back again, and, dashing all his night away, open the power of his eyes to the kindness of his Father ?

John Rosedew felt his cares and fears vanish like the dew-cloud among the quivering tree-tops ; and bright upon him broke the noon, the heaven wherein our God lives. Earth and its fabrics may pass away ; but that which came from heaven may surely be trusted to go back again.

Meditating, comforted, strengthened on the way, Mr. Rosedew came to his little hearth, and was gladdened again by little things, such as here are given or lent us to amuse our exile life. Most of us, with growing knowledge and keener sense of honesty, more strongly desire from year to year that these playthings were distributed more equally amongst us. But let us not say " equably." For who shall impugn the power of contrast even to heighten the zest of heaven ?

Amy met him, his own sweet Amy, best and dearest of all girls, a thoroughly English maiden, not salient like Eöa, but warmly kind, and thoughtful, and toned with self-restraint. But even that last she threw to the winds when she saw her father returning, and ran with her little feet pattering, like sweet-gale leaves, over the gravel, to the unpretentious gate.

"Darling father!" was all she said; and he seemed to find it quite enough.

Of late she had dropped all her little self-will (which used to vex her aunt so), and her character seemed to expand and ripen in the quiet glow of her faithful love.

Thenceforth, and for nearly a fortnight, Amy Rosedew, if suddenly wanted, was sure to be found in a garret, whose gable-window faced directly towards the breadth of sea. When a call for her came through the crazy door, she would slam up with wonderful speed her own little Munich telescope, having only two slides and a cylinder, but clearer and brighter than high-powered glasses, ten stories long perhaps, and of London manufacture: and then she would confront the appellant, with such a colour to be sure, and a remark upon the weather, as sage as those of our weather-clerks, who allow the wind so much latitude that they never contrive to hit it. But which of the maids knew not, and loved her not the more for knowing, that she was a little coast-guard now, looking out for her *eau de vie?* Of course she saw fifty *Taprobanes*—every one more genuine than its predecessor—and more than fifty Cradocks, some thirty miles away, leaning over hearts of oak, with a faint sweet smile, waving handkerchiefs as white as their own unsullied constancy, and crying with a heavy sigh, "My native land, good night!"

Facts, however, are stubborn things, and will not even make a bow to the sweetest of young ladies. And the fact was that the Ceylon trader fetched away to the southward before a jovial north-east wind, and, not being bound to say any thing to either Plymouth or Falmouth, never came near the field of gentle Amy's telescope.

That doctor knew something of his subject—the triple conglomerate called man—who prescribed for Cradock Nowell, instead of noxious medicines—*medicina a non medendo*—the bounding ease and buoyant freedom of a ship bound southward.

Go westward, and you meet the billows, headers all of them, exceeding even the glorious Psalmist's picture (for he was never in the Bay of Biscay), and a wind that stings the tears of a patriot with the everlasting brine. Go eastward, and you meet the ice, or (in summer) shoals and soundings, and a dreary stretch of sand-banks. Go northward, and the chances are that you find bad chance of coming back. But go full-sail to the glorious south, and well beyond the long cross-ploughings and headland of the Gulf Stream, you slide into a quiet breast, a confidence of waters, over which the sun more duly does his work and knows it, and under which the growth of beauty weaves a world of wonder.

When shall we men leave off fighting, cease to prove the Darwinian theory, and the legends of Kilkenny (by leaving only our tails behind us, a legacy for new lawsuits); and in the latter days ask God the reason we were made for? When our savage life is

done with, and we are no longer cannibals—and at present cannibals are perhaps of more practical mind than we, for they have an object in homicide, and the spit justifies the battle-field—when we do at last begin not to hate one another ; not to think the evil first, because in nature prior ; not to brand as maniacs, and marks for paltry satire, every man who dares to think that he was not born a weasel, and that ferocity is cowardice—then a man of self-respect may begin to be a patriot. At present, as our nations are, all abusing one another, none inquiring, none allowing, all preferring wrong to weakness, if it hit the breed and strain ; each proclaiming that it is the favoured child of God, the only one He looks upon (merging His all-seeing eye in its squint ambition)—at present even we must feel that "patriotism" is little more than selfishness in a balloon.

Poor Cradock, wasted so and altered (when he left black London) that nothing short of woman's true love could run him home without check, began to feel the change of sky, and drink new health from the balmy air, and relish the wholesome mind-bread, leavened with the yeast of novelty. A man who can stay in the same old place, and work the blessed old and new year at the same old work, dwell on and deal with the same old faces, receive and be bound to reciprocate the self-same old ideas, without crying out, "Oh, bother you !" without yearning for the sea-view, or pining for the mountain—that man has either a very great mind, or else he has none at all. For a very great mind can create its own food, fresh as the manna, daily, or dress in unceasing variety the fruit of other intellects, and live thereon amid the grand and ever-shifting scenery of a free imagination. On the other hand, a man of no mind gets on quite contentedly, having never tasted thought-food ; only wind him up with the golden key every Saturday night, and oil him with respectability at the Sunday service.

Now the under-supercargo of the *Taprobane* was beginning to eat his meals like a man, to be pleased with the smell of new tar, and the head-over-heel of the porpoises, and to make acquaintance with sailors of large morality. In a word, he was coming back, by spell and spate, to Cradock Nowell, but as yet so merely skew-nailed to the pillar of himself, that any change of weather caused a gape, a gap, a chasm.

Give him bright sun and clear sky, with a gentle breeze over the water spreading wayward laughter, with an amaranth haze just lightly veiling the union of heaven and ocean, and a few flying-fish, or an albatross, for incident in the foreground—and the young man would walk to and fro as briskly, and talk as clearly and pleasantly, as any one in the ship could.

But let the sky gather weight and gloom, and the sullen sun hang back in it, and the bright flaw of wind on the waters die out, and the sultry air, in oppressive folds, lean on the slimy ocean—and

Cradock's mind was gone away, like a bat flown into darkness.

Sometimes it went more gradually, giving him time to be conscious that his consciousness was departing; and that of all things was perhaps the most woeful and distressing. It was as if the weak mind-fountain bubbled up reproachfully, like a geyser over-gargled, and flushed the thin membrane and cellular tissue with more thought than they could dispose of. Then he felt the air grow chill, and saw two shapes of every thing, and fancied he was holding something when his hands were empty. Then the mind went slowly off, retreating, ebbing, leaving shoal-ground, into long abeyance, into faintly-known bayous, feebly navigated by the nautilus of memory.

It is not pleasant, but is good, now and then to see afar these pretty little drawbacks upon our self-complacency—an article imported hourly, though in small demand for export. However, that is of little moment, for the home consumption is infinite. How noble it is to vaunt ourselves, how spirited to scorn as *faber* Him who would be father; when a floating gossamer breathed between the hemispheres of our brain makes imperial reason but the rubbish of an imperious flood.

Upon a glaring torpid sea, a degree or two south of the line, the *Taprobane* lay so becalmed that the toss of a quid into the water was enough to drive her windward, or leeward, whichever you pleased to call it. The last of the trade winds, being long dead, was buried on the log by this time; and the sailors were whistling by day and by night, and piping into the keys of their lockers; but no responsive dimple appeared in the sleek cadaverous cheek of the never-changing sea.

What else could one expect? They had passed upon the wind's-eyes so adverse a decision—without hearing counsel on either side—that really, to escape ophthalmia, it must close its eyelids. So every thing was heavy slumber, sleep of parboiled weariness. Where sea and sky met one another—if they could do it without moving—the rim of dazzled vision whitened to a talc-like glimmer. Within that circle all was tintless, hard as steel, yet dull and oily, smitten flat with heat and haze. Not a single place in sky or sea to which a man might point his finger, and say to his mate, "Look there!" No skir of fish, not even a shark's fin, or a mitching dolphin, no dip of wing, no life at all, beyond the hot rim of the ship, or rather now the "vessel," where many a man lay frying, with scarcely any lard left. And how the tar and the pitch did smell, running like a cankered apricot-tree, and the steam of the bilge-water found its way up, and reeked through the yawning deck-seams!

But if any man durst look over the side (being gifted with an Egyptian skull, for to any thin head the sunstroke is death, when

taken upon the crown), that daring man would have seen in blue water, some twenty fathoms below him, a world of life, and work, and taste, complex, yet simple, more ingenious than his deftest labours. For here no rough rivers profane the sea with a flood of turbulent passion, like a foul oath vented upon the calm summer twilight; neither is there strong indraught from the tossing of distant waters, nor rolling leagues of mountain surf, as in the Indian Ocean. All is heat and sleep above, where the sheer dint of the sun lies; but down in the depth of those glassy halls they heed not the fervour of the noon-blaze, nor the dewy sparkle of starlight.

"Typhoon by-and-by," said the first mate, yawning, but too lazy to stretch, under the awning of a sail which they wetted with a hydropult, a most useful thing on shipboard, as well as in a garden.

"Not a bit of it," answered the captain, looking still more lazy, but managing to suck cold punch.

"We shall see," was all the mate said. It was a deal too hot to argue, and he was actually drinking ale, English bottled ale, hoisted up from a dip in blue water, but as hot as the pipes in a pinery.

The under-supercargo heeded not these laconic interchanges. The oppression was too great for him. Amid that universal blaze and downright pour of stifling heat, his mind was gone wool-gathering back into the old New Forest. The pleasant stir of the stripling leaves, the shadows weaving their morrice-dance, and trooping away on the grass-tufts at the pensive steps of evening; the sound and scent of the vernal wind among the blowing gorse; the milky splash of the cuckoo-flower in swarded breaks of woodland, the bees in the belfry of cowslips, the frill of the white wind-flower, and the fleeting scent of violets—all these in their form and colour moved, or lay in their beauty before him, while he was leaning against the side-rail, and it burned his hand to touch it.

"Wants a wet swab on his nob," said the first mate tersely; "never come to himself, sure as my name is Cracklins."

"Don't agree with you," answered the captain, who always snubbed the mate; "he's a sight better now than at Blackwall. Poor young gent, I like him."

"So do I," said the mate, pouring out more boiling beer; "but that ain't much to do with it. There's the wet swab anyhow."

About an hour before sunset, when the sky was purple, and the hot vapours piling away in slow drifts, like large haycocks walking, a gentle breeze came up and made little finger-marks on the water. First it awoke shy glances and glosses, light as the play upon richly-glazed silk, or the glimpse upon mother-of-pearl. Then it breathed on the lips of men, and they sucked at it as at spring-water. Then it came sliding, curling, ruffling, breaking the image of sky upon sea, but bringing earthly life and courage, hope, and the spirit of motion. Many a ruff and gruff tar shed tears, not

knowing the least about them, only from nature's good-will and power, as turpentine flows from the pine-wood.

"Hearty, my lads, and bear a hand." "Pipe my eye, and be blessed to me!" They rasped it off with their tarry knuckles, and would knock down any one of canine extraction, who dared to say wet was the white of their eyes.

The gurgling of the water sounded like the sobs of a sleeping child, as it went dapping and lipping and lapping, under the bows and along the run of the sweetly-gliding curvature. Soon you could see the quiet closure of the fluid behind her, the fibreing first (as of parted hair) convergent under the counter, the dimples circling in opposite ways on the right and left of the triangle, and then the linear ruffles meeting, and spreading away in broad white union, after a little jostling. You may see the same at the tail of a mill-stream, when the water is bright in July, and the alder-shade falls across it. For the sails were beginning to draw again now, and the sheets and tacks were tightening, and the braces creaking merrily, and every bit of man-stuff on board felt his heart go, and his lungs work. Therefore all were glad and chaffing, as the manner is of Britons, when the man in the foretop shouted down, "Land upon the port-bow."

"I have looked for it all day," said the captain; "I was right to half a league, Smith."

The skipper had run somewhat out of his course to avoid a cyclone to the westward, but he had not allowed sufficiently for the indraught of the Gulf of Guinea, and was twenty leagues more to the eastward than he had any idea of being. Nevertheless, they had plenty of sea-room, and now from the trending of the coast might prudently stand due south. They had passed Cape Lopez three days ago, of course without having sighted it, and had run by the log three hundred miles thence, despite the dead calm of that day. So they knew that they could not be very far from the mouth of the river Congo.

As they slipped along with that freshening breeze, the water lost its brightness, and soon became of a yellowish hue, as if mixed with a turbulent freshet. Then they lay-to in fifteen fathoms, and sent off a boat to the island, for the intense heat of the last few days had turned their water putrid. The first and second mates were going, and the supercargo took his gun, and declared that he would stretch his legs and bring home some game for supper. What island it was they were not quite sure, for there was nothing marked on the charts just there, to agree with their reckoning and log-run. But they knew how defective charts are.

When the water-casks were lowered, and all were ready to shove off, and the mast of the yawl was stepped, and the sail beginning to flap and jerk in a most impatient manner, Cracklins, who was a good-natured fellow, hollaed out to Cradock,—

"Come along of us, Newman, old fellow. You want bowsing up,

I see. Bring your little dog for a run, to rout up some rabbits or monkeys for Tippler. And have a good run yourself, my boy."

Without stopping to think—for his mind that day had only been a dream to him—Cradock Nowell went down the side, with Wena on his arm, and she took advantage of the occasion to lick his face all over. Then he shuddered unconsciously at the gun which lay under the transoms.

"Look sharp, Cracklins," shouted the captain from his window; "the glass is down, I see, half an inch. I can only give you two hours."

"All right, sir," answered the mate; "but we can't fill the casks in that time, unless we have wonderful luck."

The land lay about a mile away, and with the sail beginning to tug, and four oars dipping vigorously,—for the men were refreshed by the evening breeze, and wild for a run on shore,—they reached it in about ten minutes, and nosed her in on a silvery beach strewn with shells innumerable. A few dwarf rocks rose here and there, and the line of the storms was definite, but for inland view there was nothing more than a crescent terrace of palm-trees. The air felt beautifully fresh and pure, and entirely free from the crawling miasma of the African coast. No mangrove swamps, no festering mud, no reedy bayou of rottenness.

But the boat-crew found no fresh water at first; and they went in three parties to search for it. The mate with three men struck off to the right, the boatswain with three more made away to the left, only Cradock and the supercargo walked directly inland. Wena found several rabbits, all of a sandy colour, and she did enjoy most wonderfully her little chivies after them. Most of the birds were going to rest, as the rapid twilight fell, but the trees were full of monkeys, and here and there a squirrel shook the light tracery of the branches.

Tippler and Cradock wandered inland for half a mile or more, keeping along a pleasant hollow which they feared to leave, lest they should lose the way back, and as yet they had seen neither spring nor brook, although from the growth and freshness they knew that water must be near them. Then suddenly the supercargo fired his gun at a flying green pigeon, whose beauty had caught his eyes.

To his great amazement, Cradock fell down, utterly helpless, pale as a corpse, not trembling, but in a syncope. His comrade tried to restore him, but without any effect, then managed to drag him part way up the slope, and set him with his back to an ebony-tree, while he ran to fetch assistance. Suddenly then an ominous sound trembled through the thick wood, a mysterious thrill of the earth and air, at the coming of war between them. It moved the wild grapes, the flowering creepers, the sinuous caoutchouc, the yellow nuts of the palm-oil-tree, and the pointed leaves of the ebony.

When the supercargo ran down to the boat, the men were pushing

off hastily, the water curling and darkening, and a sullen swell increasing. A heavy mass of cloud hung to leeward, and the tropical night fell heavily, till the ship was swallowed up in it.

"Jump in, Tippler! Just in time," cried the first mate, seizing the tiller-ropes; "not a moment to lose. We must go without water; we shall have enough out of the sky to-night. I could not tell what to do about you, and the signal's 'Return immediately.'"

"But I tell you, we can't go, Cracklins. Poor Newman is up there in a fit, or something. Send two men with me to fetch him."

"How far off is he?"

"Nearly a mile."

"Then I daren't do it. We are risking our lives already. The Typhoon will be on us in half an hour. Said so this morning—skipper wouldn't listen. Jump in, man, jump in; or we're off without you. Can't you see how the sea is rising? Ease off the sheet, you lubber there. We must down with the sail in two minutes, lads, soon as ever we've got way on her. Lend a grip of your black fist, Julep, instead of yawing there like a nigger. Now will you come, or won't you?"

Tippler was a brave and kind-hearted man; but he thought of his wife and children, and leaped into the boat. Although he was not a sailor, he saw the urgency of the moment, and confessed that nine lives must not be sacrificed for the sake of one. The power of the wind was growing so fast, and the lift of the waves so menacing, that the nine men needed both skill and strength to recover their ship, ere the storm burst.

And a terrible storm it was, of the genuine Capricorn type, sudden, deluging, laced with blue lightning, whirling in the opposite direction to that which our cyclones take. At midnight the *Taprobane* was running under bare poles, shipping great seas heavily, with an electric coronet gleaming and bristling all around truck and dog-vane. And by that time she was sixty miles from her under-supercargo.

CHAPTER LII.

TWO GOOD RECEPTIONS.

DR. HUTTON'S baby was getting better, and Rosa, who had been, as the nurse said, "losing ground so sadly, poor dear," was beginning to pick up her crumbs again. Therefore Rufus, who (in common with Rosa and all the rest of the household) regarded that baby as the noblest and grandest sublimation of humanity, if not as

the final cause of this little world's existence, was beginning now to make up his mind that he really might go to London that week, without being (as his wife declared he must be, even to think of such a thing) cruel, inhuman, unfatherly, utterly void of all sense of duty, husbandly feeling, or common affection.

And she knew quite well what he wanted. All he wanted was to go and see Mr. Rivers's peach-trees in blossom, as if that was such a sight as her baby. Yes, her baby, ma's own darling, a dove of a dumpling dillikins ; to think that his own pa should prefer nasty little trees without a hair on them, and that didn't even know what "bo" meant, to the most elegant love of a goldylocks that ever was, was, was !

Master Goldylocks had received, from another quarter, a less classical, and less pleasing, but perhaps (from an objective point of view) a more truthful and unprismatic description of the hair it pleased God to give him.

"Governor's carrots, and no mistake," cried Mrs. O'Gaghan the moment she saw him, which, of course, was upon his first public appearance—catch Biddy out of the way when any baby, of any father or mother she had ever heard of, was submitted even to the most privileged inspection—"knew he must have 'em, of course. You niver can conquer that, ma'am, if your own hair was like a sloe, and you tuk me black briony arl the time. Hould him dacent will yer, nurse ? Not slot his head down that fashion ! He don't want more blood in his hair, child. Oh yes, I can see, ma'am ! Niver knowed more nor two wi' that red-hot poker colour, colour of the red snuff they calls 'Irish blackguard' in the top of a hot shovel ; and one of the two were Mr. Hutton, ma'am, saving your presence to spake of it ; and the other were of Tim Brady, as were hung at the cross-roads, near Clonmel, for cutting the throat of his grandmother."

"Oh, Mary, take her away. What a horrid woman !"

Here Mrs. Gaghan was marched away, amid universal indignation, which she could not at all understand. But she long had borne against Rufus Hutton the bitterest of all bitter spites (such as only an Irishwoman can bear), for the exposure of her own great mistake, and the miserable result which (as she fully believed) had sprung from all his meddling. And yet she was a "good-hearted" woman. But a good heart is only the wad upon powder, when a violent will is behind it.

Not to attach undue importance to Biddy's prepossessions, yet to give every facility for a verdict upon the question, we are bound to state what an old-young lady, growing every month more satirical, because nobody would have her, yet quite unconscious that the one drawback was the main cause of the other (for all men hate sarcastic women),—how tersely she expressed herself.

"Ridiculous likeness! Was he born with two cheroots in his mouth?"

But a lady, who would marry for ever, because she was so soft and nice, came to see darling baby again, the moment she was quite assured that he was equal to the interview, having denied herself from day to day, although it had affected her appetite, and was telling upon her spirits. Neither would she come alone—that would be too selfish: she must make a gala day of it, and gratify her relatives.

So Mrs. Hutton had the rapture of sitting behind her bedroom curtain, and seeing no less than three carriages draw up in a thundering manner; while Rufus was in the greatest fright that they would not find room to turn, but must cut up his turf. Luckily the roller was in the way; or else those great coachmen, who felt themselves lowered by coming to a place of that size, would have had their revenge on the lawn. The three carriages were, of course, that of Nowelhurst Hall in the first rank, with two noble footmen behind it, and Georgie in state inside. Then the "Kettledrum rattletrap," as the iconoclastic termed it, with Mr. Kettledrum driving, and striking statuesque attitudes for the benefit of the horses, and Mrs. Kettledrum inside, entreating him not to be rash. Last of all the Coo Nest equipage, a very neat affair, with Mr. Corklemore inside, wanting to look at his wife in the distance, and wondering what she was up to.

"Oh, such shocking taste, I know," cried Georgie, directly the lower order were supposed to be out of hearing, "horribly bad taste to come in such force; but what could we do, Dr. Hutton? There was my sister, there was my husband, there was my own silly self, all waiting, as for a bulletin, to know when baby would receive. And so, at the very first moment, by some strange coincidence, here we are all at once. And I do hope darling Rosa will allow some of us to come in."

"Jonah," shouted Rufus Hutton, going away to the door very rudely (according to our ideas, but with Anglo-Indian instincts), "see that all those men have beer."

"Plaise, sir, there bain't none left. Brewer hain't a been since you had that there half-gallon." As every one in the house heard this, dear Georgie had some revenge.

However, babe Rufus received his ovation; and the whole thing went off well; as most things do in the counties of England, when plenty of good wine produces itself. Luncheon was ready in no time; and, as all had long ago assented to Mrs. Corklemore's most unselfish proposition that she, as the privileged of pet Rosa, should just steal up-stairs for a minute, and then come down again—after giving notice, of course, that dear baby should have all his lace on—the pleasant overture of the host was accepted with little coyness:—

"Let us suppose that we have dined: because the roads are so very bad. Let us venture upon a light dessert. I have a few pears,

even now in April, which I am not altogether afraid to submit to the exquisite taste of ladies,—'Van Mons' Inconnu,' and 'Josephine.' May we think that we have dined?"

As the company not only thought, but felt that they had made an uncommonly good dinner, this little proposal did pleasant violence to their sense of time. It would be so charmingly novel to fancy that they had dined at three o'clock! Oh, people of brief memory! For Kettledrum Hall and Coo Nest loved nothing better than to dine at two; which, perhaps, is two hours too late, according to nature *versus* fashion.

"For such an occasion as this," said Rufus, under all the excitement of hospitality multiplied by paternity, "we will have a wine worth talking of. Clicquot, of course, and Paxarette for the ladies, if they prefer it; which perhaps they will do, because it is sweeter than port. But I do hope that some will deign to taste my 1820, President's unrefreshed."

Georgie's pretty lip came out, like the curl of an opening convolvulus; to think of offering her sweet wine, when choice port was forthcoming! There are few better judges of a good glass of port than Mrs. Nowell Corklemore.

"Port, sir, for my wife, if you please. She likes a rather dry wine, sir, but with plenty of bouquet. There is no subject, I may say, in which she has—ha, haw—a more profound capacity."

"My dear Nowell, why you are perfectly calumnious. Thank you, no champagne. It spoils the taste of—your beautiful water. How dreadfully we were alarmed in Ringwood. We all but drove over a child. What a providential escape! I have scarcely yet recovered it. It has made me feel so nervous. What, Dr. Hutton, port for a lady, at this time of day, and not ordered medically!"

Thereupon, of course Rufus prescribed it, till Georgie, being quite overcome by the brilliance, as the host himself decanted it, capitulated at last for "strictly half a glass."

After a little, the ladies withdrew, to see double perfections in the baby, and Mrs. Hutton, who knew quite well what they had been doing, while she was discussing arrowroot, received them at first rather stiffly. But she had no chance with Georgie, who entered beautifully into the interesting room, and exclaimed with great vivacity,—

"Oh, dear Mrs. Hutton, as the little boys say, 'here we are again.' And so glad to get away, because your husband is so hospitable, and we thought of you all the time. I wanted so much to bring you a glass of that very exquisite—let me see, I think it must have been port, though I never know one wine from another—only I feared it might seem rude, if I had ventured to propose it. Of course Dr. Hutton knew best."

"Of course he didn't," said Rosa pettishly; "he never thought about it. Not that I would have taken it; oh dear no! Ladies

cannot have too little wine, I think. It seems to make them so masculine."

"Well, dear, you know best. Very likely you heard us laughing. I assure you we were quite merry. We drank his health 'three times three'—don't they call it about a baby? And I was nearly proposing yours; only a gentleman ought to do that. Oh, it was so interesting, and the wine superb—at least, so said the gentlemen; I do wish they had brought you some, dear."

"I am very glad they did not. It is so very lowering to a fine sense of the ideal. I heard you laughing, or making some noise; only I was so absorbed in these lovely poems. 'To my Babe' is so very beautiful, so expressive, so elevating! I feel every single word of it. And this sonnet—about the first cropper! And the stanzas to his little red shoes, terminating with 'pinch his nose!' You have had so many husbands, dear; you must know all about it."

"My darling child, how I feel for you! But, in all probability, he will come up when both decanters are empty; let him find you in a good temper, dear."

But this (which must have grown into a tiff, for Georgie had even more spirit than tact, and Rosa was equal to any thing), all this evil was averted, and harmony restored by the popping in of nurse, who had not taken her half-crowns yet, but considered them desirable, and saw them now endangered.

"Goldylocks, Goldylocks! Oh, bring him here, nurse. Skillikins, dillikins! oh, such a dove! And if nobody else cares for poor mamma, he has got so much better taste, hasn't he?"

Goldylocks very soon proved that he had; and Georgie, having quite recovered her temper, admired him so ecstatically, that even his mother thought her judgment was really worth something.

"Give him to me; I can't do without him. Oh, you beautiful cherub! Kicklewick, I am sure you never saw any one like him."

"That indeed I never did, ma'am" answered nurse Kicklewick, holding her arms out, as if she must have him back again; "many a fine child I have seen, and done for to my humble ability, ma'am, since the time I were at Lord Eldergun's; and her ladyship said to me, 'Kicklewick,' says she——"

"Oh, his love of a nosey-posey! Oh, then his bootiful eyes, dick, dock! And then his golden hair, you know, so lovely, chaste, and rare, you know! Will um have a dancey-prancey?"

And Georgie, forgetting all dignity, went through a little Polish dance, with the baby in her arms, to his very grave amazement, and the delight of all beholders.

Although of the genuine Hutton strain, he was too young to crow yet, nevertheless he expressed approval in the most emphatic water-colours. Mrs. Hutton's heart was won for ever.

"Oh, darling, I am so obliged to you. He has positively popped

two bubbles. A thing he never did before! How can I ever repay you?"

"By letting me come over and dance him twice a week. Oh, that I only had a boy!—because I do love boy-babies so."

"One would think that you must have had fifty, at least, before you were five-and-twenty! How on earth do you understand him so? I only know half what he means, though I try for hours and hours."

"Simply by sympathizing with him. I feel all his ideas come home to me, and I put them into shape."

"You are the loveliest creature I ever saw."

And, indeed, Georgie did look very well, for it was not all mere humbug now, though perhaps it was at first.

"Oh, no wonder baby loves you. Kicklewick, isn't it wonderful?"

"Indeed, then, and it would be ma'am," replied Mrs. Kicklewick, rapturously—for now she had four half-crowns in her pocket—"only for it bein' nature, ma'am. Nature it is as does it, as must be. Nothing else no good again it. And how I should like to be long of you, ma'am, when your next time come, please God. Would you mind to accept of my card, ma'am, unpretenshome but in good families,—Sarah Kicklewick, late to Lord Eldergun, and have hopes to be again, ma'am, if any confidence in head-footman. 'Mrs. Kicklewick,' he says, and me upon the bridge, ma'am, with the wind a-blowin'——"

"To be sure," said Georgie, "and the water a-flowing; how cleverly you describe it!"

But we must cut her short, as she cut short nurse Kicklewick. Enough that she won such influence over the kind but not too clever Rosa, that Rufus Hutton's plans and acts, so far as they were known to his wife, were known also to his wife's best friend.

But one thing there was which Mrs. Corklemore could not at all understand,—why should he be going to London so, and wanting to go again, in spite of domestic emergencies? She very soon satisfied herself that Rosa was really in the dark upon this point, and very indignant at being so. This indignation must be fostered and pointed to a practical end. Mrs. Kettledrum, of course, had been kept in the background all this time, and scarcely allowed to dandle the baby, for fear of impairing her sister's triumph.

"How wonderfully kind and thoughtful of you!" said Rosa, as Georgie came in again. "Have you really brought me a glass of wine? And no one else in the house to suppose that I ought to have any nourishment! How can I thank you, Mrs. Corklemore?"

"No more 'Mrs. Corklemore,' if you please. I have begun to call you 'Rosa'—it is such a pretty name—and you must call me 'Georgie,' darling. Every one does who loves me."

"Then I am sure all the world must. Dearest Georgie, how did you get it? I am sure I would not touch it, only for your sake."

"Oh, I did such a shameful thing. Such a liberty I never took before! I actually sent the servant to say, with Mrs. Corklemore's compliments, that she felt the effect of the fright this morning, and would like another glass of port, but would not touch it if any of the gentlemen left the table even for a moment. And they actually sent me a dock-glass, in pleasantry, I suppose: but I am very glad they did."

"I will take some, if you take half, dear."

"Not a drop. My poor weak head is upset in a moment. But you really need it, dear; and I can so thoroughly feel for you, because the poor Count, when my Flore was born, waited on me with such devotion, day and night, hand and foot."

"And I am sure Mr. Corklemore must do the same. No husband could help adoring you."

"Oh, he is very good, 'according to his lights,' as they say. But I have known him let me cough three times without getting up for the jujubes. And once—but perhaps I ought not to tell you: it was so very bad."

"Oh, you may safely tell me, dear. I will never repeat it to any one."

"He actually allowed me to sneeze in the carriage without saying that I must have a new fur cloak, or even asking if I had a cold."

"Oh dear, is that all? I may sneeze six times in an hour, and my husband take no notice, but run out and leave the front door open, and prune his horrid little trees. And then he shouts for his patent top-dressing. He thinks far more of dressing them than he does of dressing me."

"And don't you know the reason? Don't cry, sweet child; don't cry. I have had so much experience. I understand men so thoroughly."

"Oh yes, I know the reason. I am cross to him sometimes. And of course I can't expect a man with a mind like his——"

"You may expect any man to be as wise as Solomon, if you only know how to manage him. It is part of the law of nature."

"Then I am sure I don't know what that means: except that people must get married, and ought to love one another."

"The law of nature is this. Between a wife and a husband there never must be a secret, except when the lady keeps one. Now your husband is, to some extent, a rather superior man——"

"Oh yes, to the very greatest extent. No one of any perception can help perceiving that."

"Then he is quite sure to attempt it; to reserve himself, upon some point or other, in an unsympathetic attitude. This is just what you must not allow. You have no idea how it grows upon them, and how soon it supplants affection, and makes a married man a mere bachelor."

"Oh, how dreadful! But I really do think, dear, that you must

be wrong this once. My husband has never kept any thing from me; any thing, I mean, which I ought to know."

"Then he told you about that poor wild Polly? How very good and kind of him!"

"Polly! What Polly? You don't mean to say——"

"No, no, dear, nothing of that sort! Only the mare running away with him at night through the thickest part of the forest."

"My Polly that eats from my hand! Run away with Rufus!"

"Yes, your Polly. A perfect miracle that both of them were not killed. But of course he must have told you."

Then, after sundry ejaculations, Rosa learned all about that matter, and was shocked first, and then thankful, and then hurt.

"And now," said Mrs. Corklemore, when the sense of wrong was paramount, "he has some secret, I am almost sure, about our very sad affair at Nowelhurst. And I am sure, even if you were not his wife, dear, he need not conceal any matter of that sort from the daughter of Sir Cradock Nowell's old friend, Mr. Ralph Mohorn."

"I will tell you another thing," answered Rosa, shaking all her pillows with the vehemence of her emotions, "whether he ought or not, he shall not do it, Georgie darling. As sure as I am his lawful wife I will know every word of it before I sleep one wink. If not, he must take the consequences upon both his wife and child."

"Darling, I think you are quite right. Only don't tell me a word of it. It is such a dreadful matter, it would make me so unhappy——"

"I will tell you every single word, just to prove to you, Georgie, that I have found the whole of it out."

After this laudable resolution, Rosa may be left to have it out with Rufus. It requires greater skill than ours to interfere between man and wife, even without the *tertium quid* of an astounding baby.

* * * * * *

The ides of March were come and gone, the balance of day and night was struck; and Sleep, the queen of half the world, had wheeled across the equator her poppy-chintzed throne, or had got the stars to do it for her, because she was too lazy. Ha, that sentence is almost worthy of a great stump-orator. What we mean to say is, that All Fools' Day was over. Blessed are the All Fools who begin the summer (which accounts for its being what it is in England); and blessed be the All Saints who begin the winter, and leave it thereafter to Beelzebub.

"In April, she tunes her bill." Some nightingales were doing this, because the spring was early, and perhaps too early were many nests conned, planned, and contracted for. Blessed birds, that never say, "What are your expectations, sir?" or "How much will you give your daughter?"—but feather their nests without waiting for a snug niche in the Treasury. Nest-eggs, too, almost as sweet

as those of addled patronage, were beginning to accumulate; and it took up half a bird's time to settle seniority and precedence among them, fettle them all with their heads the right way, and throw overboard the cracked ones. Perhaps, in this last particular, they exercised a discretion, not only unknown to, but abhorred by any British Government.

It was nearly dark by this time, and two nightingales, across the valley, strove in Amoibæan song till the crinkles of the opening leaves fluttered with soft melody.

> "In poplar shadows Philomel complaineth of her brood,
> Her callow nestlings plunder'd from her by the ploughman rude:
> From lonely branch all night she pours her weeping music's flow,
> Repeats her tale, and fills the world with melody and woe."
>
> GEORG. iv. 511.

Mr. Garnet heeded neither crisp young leaf nor bulbul; neither did his horse appear to be a judge of music. Man and horse were drooping, flagging, jaded, and bespent; wanting only the two things which, according to great authority, are all that men want here below—a little food, and a deal of sleep.

Bull Garnet was on his return from Winchester, whither he now went every week, for some reason known only to himself, or at least unknown to his family. It is a long and hilly ride from the west of Ytene to Winton, and to travel that distance twice in a day takes the gaiety out of a horse, and the salience out of a man. No wonder then that Mr. Garnet slouched his heavy shoulders, and let his great head droop; for at five-and-forty a powerful man jades sooner than a slight one.

Presently he began to drowse; for the stout grey gelding knew every step of the road, and would take uncommonly good care to avoid all circumambience: and of late the rider had never slept, only dozed, and dreamed, and started. Then he muttered to himself, as he often did in sleep, but never at home, until he had seen to the fastening of the door.

"Tried it again—tried very hard and failed. Thought of Bob, at last moment. Bob to stand, and see me hang—and hate me, and go to the devil. No, I don't think he would hate me, though; he would say, 'Father could not help it.' And how nice that would be for me, to see Bob take my part. To see him with his turn-down collars standing proudly up, and saying, 'Father was a bad man—according to your ideas—I am not going to dispute them—but for all that I love him, and so my children shall.' If I could be sure that Bob would only think so, only make his mind up, his mind up, his mind up—for there is nothing like it—whoa, Grayling, what be looking at?—and take poor little Pearl with him, I would go to-morrow morning, and do it over at Lymington."

"Best do it to-night, gov'nor. No time like the prasent, and us knows arl about it."

A tall man had leaped from behind a tree, and seized Bull Garnet's bridle. The grey gelding reared and struck him; but he kept his hold, till the muzzle of a large revolver felt cold against his ear. Then Issachar Jupp fell back; he knew the man he had to deal with, how stern in his fury, how reckless, despite the better part of him. And Issachar was not prepared to leave his Loo an orphan.

"No man robs me," cried Mr. Garnet, in his most tremendous voice, "except at the cost of my life, and the risk of his. I have seven and sixpence about me; I will give it up to no man. Neither will I shoot any man, unless he tries to get it."

"Nubbody wants to rob you, gov'nor, only to have a little rattysination with you. Possible you know me now?"

Bull Garnet fell back in his saddle. He would rather have met a dozen robbers. By the voice he recognized a man whom he had once well known, and had good cause to know;—through his outrage upon whom, he had left the northern counties; the man whom he had stricken headlong down a coal-shaft, as the leader of rebellion, the night after Pearl was christened, nigh twenty years ago.

"Yes, I know you; Jupp your name is. Small credit it is to know you."

"And smarler still to know you, Bull Garnet. Try your pistol thing, if you like. You must have rare stommick, I should think, to be up for another murder."

"Issachar, I am sorry for you. Do you call it a murder to keep such a fellow as you off?"

"No, I dunna carl that a murder, because I be arl alive. But I do carl a murder what you did to young Clayton Nowell."

"Fool, what do you know of it? Let go my horse, I say. You know pretty well what I am."

"I know you ha'n't much patience, gov'nor, nor much rattysination."

Jupp hesitated, but would not be beaten, whatever might be the end of it.

"Issachar Jupp, I am ready to listen to all you have to say. But not with your hand on my bridle."

"There goeth free then. Arl knows you be no liar."

"I am glad you remember that, Issachar. Hold the horse, while I get off. Now throw the bridle over that branch, and I will sit down here. Come here into the moonlight, man; and look me in the face. Here is the pistol for you, if you bear me any revenge."

Scarcely knowing what he did, because he had no time to think, Jupp obeyed Bull Garnet's orders even to the last—for he took the pistol in his hand, and tried to look straight at his adversary; but

his eyes would not co-operate. Then he laid the pistol on the bank; but so that he could reach it.

"Issachar Jupp," said Mr. Garnet, looking at him steadily, and speaking very softly; "have you any children?"

"Only one—a leetle gal, but an oncommon good un."

"How old is she?"

"Five year old, plase God, come next Valentine's Day."

"Now, when she grows up, and is pure and good, would you like to have her heart broken?"

"I'd break any cove's head as doed it."

"But supposing she were betrayed and ruined, made a plaything, and then thrown away—what would you do then?"

"God Almighty knows, man. I can't abide to think of it."

"And if the—the man who did it, was the grandson of the man who had ruined your own mother, lied before God in the church to her, and then left her to go to the workhouse, with you his outcast bastard—while he rolled in gold, and laughed at her—what would you do then, Jupp?"

"By the God that made me, I'd have my revenge, if I went to hell for it."

"I have said enough. Do what you please. Me you cannot help or harm. Death is all I long for—when my duty is done to my children."

Still he looked at Issachar, but now without a thought of him; only as a man looks out upon the earth, or sea, or sky, without expecting answer. And Issachar Jupp, so dense and pig-headed—surly and burly, and weasel-eyed—in a word, retrospectively British—gazing at Bull Garnet then, got some inkling of an anguish such as he who lives to feel—far better were it for that man that he had never been born.

CHAPTER LIII.

CHANCES TURN AGAINST HIM.

To bar the entail of crime. A bitter and abortive task; at least, in this vindictive world, where Christians dwell more on Mount Sinai than on the mount that was not made to quake and burn with fire.

And yet for this, and little else, still clung to fair fame and life the man who rather would have lain beneath the quick-lime of Newgate. It was not for the empty part, the reputation, the position, the respect of those who prove the etymon of the word by truly looking backward—not for these alone, nor mainly, did Bull Garnet

bear the anguish now from month to month more bitter, deeper, less concealable. He strove with himself, and checked himself, and bit his tongue, and jerked back his heart, and nursed that shattered lie, his life, if so might be that Pearl and Bob should start anew in another land, with a fair career before them. Not that he cared, more than he could help, whether they might be rich or poor; only that he would like them to have the chance of choosing.

This chance had not been fair for him, forsaken as he was, and outcast; banned by all the laws of men, because his mother had been trustful, and his father treacherous. Yet against all chances, he, by nothing but his inborn power, deeply hating and (which was worse) conscientiously despising every social prejudice, made his way among smaller men, taught himself by day and night, formed his own strong character, with the hatred of tyranny for its base, and tyranny of his own for its apex; and finally gained success in the world, and large views of Christianity. And in all of this he was sincere!

It was a vile and bitter wrong to which he owed his birth. Sir Cradock Nowell, the father of the present baronet, had fallen in love (of some sort) with a comely Yorkshire maiden, whose mother's farm adjoined the moors, whereon his shooting quarters were. Then, in that period of mean licence, when fashionable servility was wriggling, like a cellar-slug, in the slime-track of low princes, Sir Cradock Nowell did what few of his roystering friends would have thought of—unfashionable Tarquinian, he committed a quiet bigamy. He had lived apart from Lady Nowell, even before her second confinement; because he could not get on with her. So Miss Garnet went with him to the quiet altar of a little Yorkshire church, and fancied she was Lady Nowell; only that must be a secret, "because they had not the king's consent, for he was not in a state to give it."

When she learned her niddering wrong, and the despite to her unborn child, she cast her curse upon the race, not with loud rant, but long scorn, and went from her widowed mother, to a cold and unknown place.

So soon as Bull Garnet was old enough to know right from wrong, and to see how much more of the latter had fallen to his share, two courses lay before him. Two courses now were possible to a strong and upright nature; to a false and weak one fifty would have presented themselves, and a little of each been taken. Conscious as he was of spirit, energy, and decision, he might apply them all to very ungenial purposes, to sarcasm, contemptuousness, and general misanthropy. Or else he might take a larger view, pity the poor old-fashioned prigs who despise a man for his father's fault, and generously adapt himself to the broadest Christianity.

The latter course was the one he chose; in solid earnest, too, because it suited his nature. And so perhaps we had better say

that he chose no course at all, but had the wiser one forced upon him. Yet the old Adam of damnable temper too often would rush out of Paradise, and prove in strong language that he had learned more of evil than of good perhaps. Exeter Hall would have owned him, however, in spite of all backslidings, as a very "far-advanced Christian;" because he was so "evangelical." And yet he never dealt in cant, nor distributed idyllic tracts, Sabbatarian pastorals, where godly Thomas meets drunken John, and converts him in a page and a half of monologic dialogue.

And now this man, whom all who knew him either loved or hated, felt the troubles closing round him, and saw the end soon coming. He had kept his own sense of justice down, while it jerked (like a caltrop on springs) in his heart; he had worn himself out with thinking and thinking what would become of his children, whom he had wronged more heavily than his own bad father had wronged him—only the difference was that he loved them; and worst of all he had let a poor fellow, whom he liked and esteemed most truly, bear all the brunt, all the misery, all the despair of fratricide.

Now all he asked for, all he prayed for—and, indeed, he prayed more than ever now, and with deeper feeling; though every one else would have feared to pray—now his utmost hope was to win six months of life. In that time all might be arranged for his children's interest; his purchase of those five hundred acres from the Crown Commissioners—all good land, near the Romsey-road, but too full of juice—would soon be so completed that he could sell again at treble the price, so well had he reclaimed the land, while equitably his; and then Bob should have half, and Pearl take half (because she had been so injured), and, starting with the proceeds of all his earthly substance before it should escheat, be happy in America, and think fondly of dead father.

Nothing else was left to this unhappy man to live for. He felt that he had lived long enough; and too long to die happily; yet so that almost any death would be a blessing to him, if it did not leave behind a curse upon his children.

The thought of these lay on his mind so heavily, that often now he could not put things one against another, as he used to do. If his mind had only been quite rid of heart and conscience, nothing would have been allowed to get the better of him.

Still his troubled heart could not prevent his rapid mind from working in its own way now and then; so that he knew, quite as well as those now in pursuit of him, who they were, and what they wanted, and how much they had to find.

Three foes now were closing round him; all of whom, by different process, and from different premises, had arrived at the one conclusion. These three, acting, happily for him, without any concert, were Dr. Hutton, Issachar Jupp, and Mr. Chope of Southampton.

Of the first he held undue contempt (not knowing all his evidence); the second he had for the time disarmed, by an appeal *ad hominem;* the third was the most to be dreaded, because so crafty, keen, and deep, and hard to have to deal with.

Mr. Chope, the partner and "brains" of Cole (the coroner), was absent upon a lawyer's holiday, at the time of the inquest on Clayton Nowell. When he came home, and heard all about it, and saw the place, and put questions, at first he knew not what to think. Only upon one point he was certain—the verdict had been wrong. Either Cradock Nowell had shot his brother purposely, or some one else had done so. To Chope's clear intuition, and thorough knowledge of fire-arms—for his one relaxation was shooting—it was plain as possible that there had been no accident. To the people who told him about the cartridge "balling," he expressed no opinion. But to himself he said, "Pooh! I have seen Cradock Nowell shoot. He always knew all he was doing. He never would put a green cartridge into his gun for a woodcock. And the others very seldom ball. And even if he had a green cartridge, look at the chances against it. I would lay my life that Clayton Nowell either shot himself, or else was shot on purpose."

Then, of course, Mr. Chope set to, not only with hope of reward, but to gratify his own instinct, at the puzzle and wards of the question. If he had known the neighbourhood well, and all the local politics, and had not been interrupted, he must have arrived at due conclusion long before he did. But a heavy piece of conveyancing came into the office of Cole, Chope, and Co., and, being far more lucrative than amateur detectiveness, engrossed for the time all attention.

But now that stubborn piece was done with, and Mr. Chope again at leisure to pursue his quest. Twice or thrice every week he was seen, walking in his deliberate way (never straightening his knees, but setting his feet down at a dead level, as if every step were paid for), going thus through the village of Nowelhurst, and into the haunts of the woodmen. He carried his great head downwards, as a bloodhound on the track does, but raised it, and met with a soft sweet smile all who cared to look at him. In his hand he bore a fishing-rod, and round his hat some trout-flies; and often he entered the village inn, and had bread and cheese in the tap-room, though invited into the parlour.

Although his boots were soaked and soiled, as if he had been wading, and the landing-net, slung across his back, had evidently been dripping, he opened to none his fishing-creel, neither had any trout fried, but spoke in a desponding manner of the shyness of the fish, and the brightness of the water, and vowed every time that his patience was now at last exhausted. As none could fish in that neighbourhood without asking Sir Cradock's permission, or trespassing against him, and as the old baronet was most duly tenacious

of all his sporting rights, every body wondered what Mark Stote was about to allow a mere far-comer to carry on so in Nowelhurst water. But Mark Stote knew a great deal better what was up than they did.

Four or five times now, Bull Garnet, riding on his rounds of business, had met Simon Chope, and bowed politely to him. On the first occasion, Mr. Chope, knowing very little of Garnet, and failing to comprehend him, lost his slow sequacious art, because he carried his nose too low. All very cunning men do this; even my Lord Bacon, but never our brother Shakspeare.

But Mr. Garnet read him truly, and his purposes also, by the aid of his own consciousness; and a thrill of deep, cold fear went through that hot and stormy heart. Nevertheless, he met the case in his usual manner, and puzzled Mr. Chope on the third or fourth encounter by inviting him to dinner.

The lawyer found some ready plea for declining this invitation; sleuth and cold-blooded as he was, he could not accept hospitality to sift his host for murder. Of course Mr. Garnet had foreseen the refusal of this overture; but it added to his vague alarm, even more than it relieved him from a momentary trial. Clearly enough he knew, or felt, that now he was running a race against time; and if he could only win that race, and give the prize to his children, how happily would he yield himself to his only comfort—death. With his strong religious views—right or wrong, who shall dare to say? for the matter is not of reason—he doubted God's great mercy to him in another world no more than he doubted his own great love to those he should leave behind in this one.

Sad it was, and enough to move the tears of any Stoic, to behold Bull Garnet now sitting with his children. Instead of being shy and distant (as for a while he had been, when the crime was new upon him) he would watch them, word by word, smile by smile, or tear for tear, as if he never could have enough of the little that was left to him. They, on the other hand, were beginning to talk before him comfortably, cheerfully, and at random, as the manner of the young is. Bob had found that the vague, dark cloud, of whose origin he knew nothing, was lifted a little, and lightened; and Pearl, who knew all about it, was trying to slip from beneath its shadow, with the self-preservation of youth, and into the long-obscured but never quenched delight of youth and beauty in their own luxuriance.

And all the while their father, the man of force and violence, would look from one to the other of them, perceiving, with a curious smile, little traits of himself; often amused at, and blessing them for, their very sage inexperience; thinking to show how both were wrong, yet longing not to do it. And then he would begin to wonder which of them he loved more deeply. Pearl had gained upon him

so, by the patience of her wrong, by coming to the hearth for shelter from the storms of alien love.

In all races against time, luck (itself the child of time), is apt to govern the result more than highest skill may. So far, all of the luck had been in Mr. Garnet's favour; the approach of unlucky Cradock in the dusk, and with senses so distracted, the hurried and jostled aim acknowledged and insisted upon by the youth himself; the arrival of Mr. Rosedew; the blundering and timid coroner and the soft-hearted jury; even the state of the weather; and since that time the perversion and weakness of the father's mind: all these had prevented that close inquiry which must have ended in Bull Garnet's conviction or confession. For, fall foul or fall fair his children, he was man enough to confess at once, ere ever an innocent man should be in danger for his blood-guiltiness.

Only in one important matter—so far at least as he knew yet, not having heard of Jem's discovery, and Mr. Hutton's advance upon it—had fortune been against him; that one was the crashing of his locked cupboard, and the exposure of the broken gun-case to Rufus Hutton's eyes. And now it was an adverse fate which brought Mr. Chope upon the stage; and yet it was a kindly one which kept him apart from Hutton. For Simon Chope and Rufus Hutton could not bear one another, according to the old repulsion between cold blood and hot blood.

As it happened, Mr. Chope was Mrs. Corklemore's pet lawyer: he had been employed to see that she was not defrauded of any possible rights uxorial upon her second marriage. And uncommonly good care he took to secure the lion's share for her. Indeed, had it been possible for him to fall in love at all with any thing but money, that foolish lapse would have been his, at the very first sight of Georgie. Sweetly innocent and good, she did so sympathize with "to wit, whereas, and notwithstanding;" she entered with such gush of heart into the bitter necessity of making many folios, and charging for every one of them, which the depravity of human nature has forced on a class whose native bias rather tends to poetry; she felt so acutely (when all was made plain to her, and Mr. Corklemore paid the bill) how very very wrong it was not to have implicit confidence—"in being cheated," under her breath, and that shaft was Cupid's to Mr. Chope—in a word, he was so smitten, that he doubled all his charges, and inserted an unusual power of appointment, because Nowell Corklemore had the gout, and Chope might come in for remainder.

"Hang it," he said, for his extreme idea of final punishment was legal; "hang it, if I married that woman, our son would be Lord Chancellor. I never did see such a liar."

Now it was almost certain that, under Sir Cradock Nowell's settlement upon marriage, an entail had been created. The lawyers, who do as they like in such matters, and live in a cloud of their own

breath, are sure to provide for continuance, and the bills of their own grandchildren.

"Alas, how sad!" thought Georgie, as she lay back in the Nowelhurst carriage on her way to Cole, Chope, and Co.; "how very sad if it should be so. Then there will be no cure for it, but to get up the evidence, meet the dreadful publicity, and get the poor fellow convicted. And they say he is so good-looking! Perhaps I hate ugly people so much, because I am so pretty. Oh, how I wish Mr. Corklemore walked a little more like a gentleman. But as a sacred duty to my innocent darling, I must leave no stone unturned."

Fully convinced of her pure integrity, Georgie drove up in state and style to the office of Cole, Chope, and Co., somewhere in Southampton. She would make no secret of it, but go in Sir Cradock Nowell's carriage, and then evil-minded persons could not misinterpret her. Mr. Chope alone could tell her, as she had said to "Uncle Cradock" (with a faint hope that he might make some slip), what really was the nature and effect of her own marriage-settlement. Things of that sort were so far beyond her, so distasteful to her; sufficient for the day was the evil thereof; she could sympathize with almost any one, but really not with a person who looked forward to any disposal of property, unless it became, for the sake of the little ones, a matter of strict duty; and even then it must cause a heart-pang—oh, such a bitter heart-pang!

"Cole's brains" was not the man to make himself too common. He always required digging out, like a fossil, from three or four mural *septa*. Being disinterred at last from the innermost room, after winks, and nods, and quiet knocks innumerable, he came out with both hands over his eyes, because the light was too much for him, he had been so hard at work.

And the first thing he always expressed was surprise, even though he had made the appointment. Mr. Simon Chope, attorney and solicitor, was now about five-and-thirty years old, a square-built man, just growing stout, with an enormous head, and a frizzle of hair which made it look still larger. There was a depth of gravity in his paper-white countenance—slightly marked with small-pox—a power of not laughing, such as we seldom see, except in a man of great humour, who says odd things, but rarely smiles till every one else is laughing. But if Chope were gifted, as he may have been, with a racy vein of comedy, nobody ever knew it. He was not accustomed to make a joke gratis, neither to laugh upon similar terms at the jokes of other people. Tremendous gravity, quiet movements, very clear perception, most judicious reserve—these had been his characteristics since he started in life with the office-broom; and these would abide with him until he got every thing he wanted; if any man ever was known to do that.

With many a bow and smile, expressing surprise, delight, and

deference, Mr. Chope conducted to a special room that lady in whom he felt an interest transcending contingent remainder. Mrs. Corklemore swam to her place with that ease of movement which was one of her chief fascinations, and fixed her large grey eyes on the lawyer with the sweetest expression of innocence.

"I fear, Mr. Chope—oh, where is my husband? he promised to meet me here—I fear that I must give you, oh, so much trouble again. But you exerted yourself so very kindly on my behalf about eighteen months ago, that I cannot bear to consult any other gentleman, even in the smallest matter."

"My services, such as they are, shall ever be at the entire disposal of Madame la Comtesse."

Mr. Chope would always address her so; "a countess once, a countess for ever," was his view of the subject. Moreover, it ignored Mr. Corklemore, whom he hated as his supplanter; and, best reason of all, the lady evidently liked it.

"You are so very kind, I felt sure that you would say so. But in this case, the business is rather Mr. Corklemore's than my own. But he has left it entirely to me, having greater confidence, perhaps, in my apprehension."

She knew, of course, that so to disparage her husband, by implication, was not in the very best taste; but she felt that Mr. Chope would be pleased, as she quite understood his sentiments.

"And not without excellent reason," answered the lawyer softly; "if any lady would be an ornament to our profession, it is Madame la Comtesse."

"Oh no, Mr. Chope, oh no! I am so sadly and shamefully simple. And I never should have the heart to do the things you are compelled to do. But to return: this little matter, in which we hope for your assistance, is a trifling exchange of mixed land with Sir Cradock Nowell."

"Ah, to be sure!" said Chope, feeling slightly disappointed, for he had looked forward to something far more lucrative; "if you will give me particulars, it shall have our best attention."

"I think I have heard," said Georgie, knowing thoroughly all about it, "that there is some mode of proceeding, under some Act of Parliament, which lightens, perhaps, to some extent, the legal difficulties—and, oh yes, the expenses."

Mrs. Corklemore knew how Mr. Chope had drawn her a very long bill—upon his imagination.

"Oh, of course," replied Mr. Chope, smitten yet more deeply with the legal knowledge, and full of the future Lord Chancellor; "there is a rough and ready way of dealing with almost any thing. What they call a statutory proceeding, shockingly careless and haphazard, and most ungermanely thrust into an Enclosure Act. But we never permit any clients of ours to imperil their interests so, for the sake, perhaps, of half a sovereign. There is such a deal

of quackery in all those dabblesome interferences with ancient institutions. For security, for comfort of mind, for scientific investigation, there is nothing like the exhaustive beauty of a good common-law conveyance. Look at a proper abstract of title! A charming thing to contemplate; and still more charming, if possible, the requisitions upon it, when prepared by eminent counsel. But the tendency of the present age is to slur and cut short every thing. Melancholy, most melancholy!"

"Especially for the legal gentlemen, I suppose, Mr. Chope?"

"Yes. It does hurt our feelings so to see all the grand safeguards, invented by men of consummate ability, swept away like old rubbish. I even heard of a case last week, where a piece of land, sold for as much as 400*l.*, actually cost the purchaser only 80*l.* for conveyance!"

"Oh, how disgraceful!" cried Georgie, so nicely, that Chope detected no irony: "and now, I presume, if we proceed in the ordinary way, we must deliver and receive what you call 'abstracts of title.'"

"Quite so, quite so, whichever way you proceed. It is a most indispensable step. It will be my duty and privilege to deduce Mr. Corklemore's title; and Mr. Brockwood's, I presume, to show Sir Cradock Nowell's. All may be completed in twelve months' time, if both sides act with energy. If you will favour me with the description of parcels, I will write at once to Mr. Brockwood; or, indeed, I shall see him to-night. He will be at the Masons' dinner."

For a moment Mrs. Corklemore was taken quite aback. It is needless to say that no interchange of land had ever been dreamed of, except by herself, as a possible method of learning "how the land lay;" and indeed there was no intermixed land at all, as Mr. Chope strongly suspected. Neither was he, for the matter of that, likely to meet Mr. Brockwood; but when it becomes a professional question, a man can mostly out-lie a woman, even as experience outgoes imagination.

"Be guided by me, if you please," said Georgie, smiling enough to misguide any man; "we must not be premature, lest we seem too anxious about the bargain. And, I am sure, we have done our very best to be perfectly fair with Sir Cradock. Only, for some of the tenants' interests, or some little hitch of that kind, nothing is to be said at present about this friendly transaction. Only, as mere matter of business, we must ascertain, they tell me, whether he has reposing, composing—oh, how stupid I am! I mean disposing power; that there is no awkward entail in the way."

Here she looked so preternaturally simple, which she would never have done but for her previous flutter, that Simon Chope in a moment knew exactly what her game was. Nevertheless, he answered nicely in that tantalizing way which often makes a woman flash forth.

"We shall, of course, enter into that question as our first preliminary. Of course Sir Cradock would not propose that exchange unless he had full power. Is it quite certain that poor Clayton Nowell left no legitimate offspring?"

Oh, what a horrible suggestion! Such a thing would quite upset every scheme. Georgie had never thought of it. And yet it might even be so. There was something in the tone of Mr. Chope's whisper, which convinced her that he had heard something.

And only think; young men are so little looked after at Oxford, that they can get married quite easily, at Headington or at Abingdon, as had happened a score of times, without any thing being heard of it. At least, so thought Mrs. Corklemore. And then oh, if poor Clayton had left a child, how his grandfather would idolize him! Sir Cradock would slip from her hands altogether; and scarcely any hope would remain of diverting the succession. Even if the child was a daughter, probably she would inherit, and could not yet have committed felony. Oh, what a fearful blow to think of!

All this passed through that rapid mind in about half a second, during which time, however, the thinker could not help looking nonplussed. Mr. Chope of course perceived it, and found himself more and more wide-awake.

"Well, what a strange idea!" she exclaimed, with surprise, which for once was natural. "There has not been the slightest suggestion of any thing of the kind. And indeed I have lately heard what astonished me very much, that he had formed an—an improper attachment in a quarter very near home."

"Indeed! Do you know to whom?" It was Mr. Chope who was trying now to appear indifferent.

"Yes. I was told. But it does not become me to repeat such stories."

"It not only becomes you in this case, but it is your absolute duty, and—and your true interest."

"Why, you quite frighten me, Mr. Chope. Your manner is so strange."

"It would grieve me deeply indeed to alarm Madame la Comtesse," answered the lawyer, trying in vain to resume his airiness; "but I cannot do justice to any one who does not fully confide in me. In a case like this, especially, such interests are concerned, the title is so—so complicated, that purely as a matter of business we must be advised about every thing."

"Well, I see no reason why I should not tell you. It cannot be of any importance. Poor Clayton Nowell had fallen in love with a girl very far beneath him—the daughter, I think she was, of a Mr. Garnet."

"Oh, I think I had heard a report of that sort"—he had never heard, but suspected it—"it can, of course, signify nothing, if the matter went no further; nevertheless, I thank you for your gratify-

ing confidence. I apologize if I alarmed you ; there is nothing alarming at all in it. I was thinking of something very different." This was utterly false ; but it diverted her from the subject.

"Oh, yes, I see. Of something, you mean, which might have caused a disagreement between the unfortunate brothers. Now tell me your opinion—in the strictest confidence, of course—as to that awful occurrence. Do you think—oh, I hope not——"

"I was far away at the time, and can form no conclusion. But I know that my partner, Mr. Cole, the coroner, was too sadly convinced,—oh, I beg your pardon, I forgot for the moment that Madame la Comtesse——"

"Pray forget my relationship, or rather consider it as a reason ; oh, I would rather know the sad, sad truth. It is the suspense, oh, the cruel suspense. What was Mr. Cole's conclusion?"

"That if Cradock Nowell were put on his trial, he would not find a jury in England but must convict him."

"Oh, how inexpressibly shocking ! I am so sorry to give trouble, but may I ask for a glass of water? Oh, thank you, thank you. No wine, if you please. I am so overcome that I must hurry away quite rudely. The fresh air will revive me. I cannot conclude my instructions to-day. How could I think of such little matters? Please to do nothing and say nothing, until you hear from me. Yes, I hear the carriage. I told Giles to allow me ten minutes only, unless Mr. Corklemore came. You see how thoroughly well I know the value of your time. We feel it so acutely always, that I must not presume ; no further, if you please !"

Having thus appraised Mr. Chope, and apprised him of his distance, from a social point of view, Georgie gave him a smile which disarmed him, at least for the moment. But he was not the lawyer, or the man, to concede her the last word.

"We lawyers never presume, madam, any more than we assume. We must have every thing proved."

"Except your particulars of account, which you leave to prove themselves."

"Madame la Comtesse is too clever for the whole profession. To her we can only prove our own inferiority."

He stood, with his great bushy head uncovered, looking after the grand apparatus, and three boys sitting behind it ; and then he went sadly back, and said, "Our son must have been Lord Chancellor. But this time, I am really afraid that I out-lied her !"

CHAPTER LIV.

MAIDENS IN THE SPRING-TIDE.

TWO months of opening spring are past, and the forest is awaking. Up, all we who love such wakening; come and see more glorious doings than of man or angel. However hearts have been winter-bound with the nip of avarice, and the iron frost of selfishness, however minds have checked their sap in narrowness of prejudice, let us all burst bands awhile before the bright sun, as the leaves are doing. Heaven's young breath is stirring through crinkled bud and mossy crevice, harmless lance of reed, and peaceful sabretash of willow, "bloody warriors," whose breath proclaims them gilly-flowers, and flags that wave, but not for battle.

Lo, where the wind goes, while we look, playing with and laughing at us, chasing the turn of a primrose-bank, and touching sweet lips with dalliance. Lifting first the shining tutsan, gently so, and apologizing, then after just one tender whisper to the nodding milkwort, away to where the light blue eyes of the periwinkle hesitate. Last, before he dies away, the sauntering ruffler looks and steps into a quiet tufted nook, overhung with bank, and linteled with the twisted oak-roots. Here, as in a niche of Sabbath, dwells the nervous shy wood-sorrel, feeding upon leaf-mould, quivering with its long-stalked cloves, pale of hue, and shunning touch, delicate wood-sorrel, coral-rooted, shamrock-leafed, loved and understood of few, except good Fra Angelico.

Tut—we want stronger life than that; and here we have it overhead, with many a galling boss and buff, yet, on the whole, worth tree's exertion, and worth man's inspection. See the oak-leaves bursting out, crimped and crannied at their birth, with little nicks and serrate jags (like "painted lady" chrysalids, or cowries pushing their tongues out) throwing off the hidesome tuck, and frilled with pellucid copper. See, as well, the fluted beech-leaves, started a full moon ago, offering out of fawn-skin gloves, and glossed with water-proof copal. Then the ash—but hold, I know not how the ash comes out, because it gives so little warning; or rather, it warns a long, long time, and then does it all of a sudden so. Tush—what man cares now to glance at the yearly manuscript of God? Let the leaves go; they are not *inscripti nomina regum.*

Yet the brook—though time flees faster, who can grudge one glance at brooklet? Where the mock-myrtle begins to dip, where the young agrimony comes up, and the early forget-me-not pushes its claim upon our remembrance, and the water-lily floats half-way up, quivering dusk in the clearness, like a trout upon the hover.

Look how the little waves dance towards us, glancing and casting over, drawing a tongue with limpid creases from the broad pool above, then funnelling into a narrow neck over a shelf of gravel, and bubbling and babbling with petulant freaks into corners of calmer reflection. There an old tree leans solemnly over, with brows bent, and arms folded, turning the course of the brook with his feet, and shedding crystal darkness.

Below this, the yellow banks break away into a scoop on either side, where a green lane of the forest comes down and wades into the water. Here is a favourite crossing-place for the cattle of the woodland, and a favourite bower for cows to rest in, and chew the cud of soft contemplation. And here is a grey wooden bridge for the foot-path, adding to rather than destroying the solitude of the scene, because it is plain that a pair of feet once in a week would astonish it. Yet in the depth of loneliness, and the quiet repose of shadow, all is hope, and reassurance, sense of thanks, and breath of praise. For is not the winter gone by, and forgotten, the fury and darkness and terror, the inclination of March to rave, and the April too given to weeping? Surely the time of sweet flowers is come, and the glory of summer approaching, the freedom of revelling in the sun, the apparelling of the magnificent trees, and the singing of birds among them.

Through the great Huntley Wood, and along the banks of the Millaford brook, this fine morning of the May, wander our Rosalind and Celia, Amy to wit, and Eöa. It is a long way from Nowelhurst, but they have brought their luncheon, and mean to make a day of it in the forest, seeking balm for wounded hearts in good green leaf and buoyant air. Coming to the old plank-bridge, they sit upon a bank to watch the rising of the trout, for the stone-fly is on the water. Eöa has a great idea that she could catch a trout with a kidney-bean stick and a fly; but now she has not the heart for it; and Amy says it would be so cruel, and they are so pretty.

"What a lovely place!" cries Amy; "I could sit here all day long. How that crab-apple, clothed with scarlet, seems to rouge the water!"

"It isn't scarlet, I tell you, Amy, any more than you are. It's only a deep, deep pink. You never can tell colours."

"Well, never mind. It is very pretty. And so are you, when you are good and not contradictory—'contradictionary,' as James Pottles calls Corœbus."

"Well, it does just as well. What's the good of being so particular? I am sure I am none the better for it; and I have not jumped the brook ever so long, and have thrown away my gaiters just because Uncle John said—oh, you are all alike in England."

"What did my father say, if you please, that possessed such odious sameness?"

"There, there, I am so glad to see you in a passion, dear;

because I thought you never could be. Uncle John only said that no doubt somebody would like me better, if I gave up all that, and stayed in-doors all day. And I have been trying hard to do it; but he is worse than he was before. I sat on a bench in the chase last Monday, and he went by and never noticed me, though I made quite a noise with my hat on the wood, until I was nearly ashamed of myself. But I need not have been alarmed, for my lord went by without even looking."

"And what do you mean to do about it?" Amy took the deepest interest in Eöa's love-affair.

"Oh, you need not smile, Amy. It is all very well for you, I dare say; but it makes me dreadfully angry. Just as if I were nobody! And after I have told Uncle Cradock of my intentions to settle."

"You premature little creature! But my father was quite right in his advice, as he always is; and not for that reason only. You belong to a well-known family, and, for their sake as well as your own, you are bound to be very nice, dear, and to do only what is nice, instead of making a tomboy of yourself."

"Tomboy, indeed! And nice! Nice things they did, didn't they—shooting one another?"

Almost before she had uttered the words, she was thoroughly ashamed of herself, for she knew about Amy and Cradock from the maiden's own confession. Amy arose without reply, and, taking her little basket, turned into the homeward path, with a little quiet sigh. Eöa thought for a moment, and then, having conquered herself, darted after the outraged friend.

"I wish to have no more to do with you. That is all," cried Amy, with Eöa's strong arms round her waist.

"But, indeed, you shall. You know what a brute I am. I can't help it; but I will try. I will bite my tongue off to be forgiven."

"I simply wish, Miss Nowell, to have nothing more to do with you."

"Then you are a great deal worse than I am; because you are unforgiving. I thought you were so wonderfully good; and now I am sorry for you, even more than for myself. I had better go back to the devil's people, if this is the way of Christians."

"Could you forgive any one in a moment who had wounded you most savagely?"

"In a moment,—if they were sorry, and asked me."

"Are you quite sure of that?"

"Sure, indeed! How could I help it?"

"Then, Eöa, you cannot help being more like a Christian than I am. I am very persistent, and steadily bitter to any one who wrongs me. You are far better than I am, Eöa; because you cannot hate any one."

"I don't know about being better, Amy; I only know that I

don't hate any one—with all my heart I mean—except Mrs Nowell Corklemore."

Here Amy could not help laughing at Eöa's method of proving her rule; and the other took advantage of it to make her sit down, and kiss her, and beg her pardon a dozen times, because she was such a little savage; and then to open her own lunch-basket, and spread a white cloth, and cover it with slices of rusk and reindeer's tongue, and hearted lettuce, and lemonade, and a wing of cold duck at the corner.

"I left it to Hoggy," she cried in triumph; "and he has deserved my confidence. Beat that if you can now, my darling."

"Oh, I can beat that out and out," said Amy, who still was crying, just a drop now and then, because her emotions were "persistent:" then she smiled, because she knew so well no old butler could touch her in catering; but we must not tell what Amy had, for fear of making people hungry. Only in justice it should be said that neither basket went home full; for both the young ladies were "hearty;" and they kissed one another in spite of the stuffing.

"Oh, Amy, I do love you so, whenever you don't scold me. I am sure I was meant for a Christian. Here's that nasty sneak's lawn handkerchief. I picked her pocket this morning. I do twice a week for practice. But I won't wipe your pretty eyes with it, darling, because I do so loathe her. Now, if you please, no more crying, Amy. What a queer thing you are!"

"Most truly may I return the compliment," answered Amy, smiling through the sparkle of her tears. "But you don't mean to say that you keep what you steal?"

"Oh no; it is not worth it. And I hate her too much to keep any thing. Last week I lit the fire in my dressing-room, on purpose to burn her purse. You should have seen the money melting. I took good care, of course, not to leave it in the ashes, though. I am forming quite a collection of it; for I don't mind keeping it at all, when it has been through the fire. And you can't think how pretty it is, all strings and dots of white and yellow."

"Well! I never heard such a thing. Why, you might be transported, Eöa!"

"Yes, I know, if they found me out; but they are much too stupid for that. Besides, it is such fun; the only fun I have now, since I left off jumping. You know the old thing is so stingy."

"Old thing, indeed! Why, she is not five-and-twenty!"

"I don't care; she has got a child. She is as old as Methusalem in her heart, though she is so deucedly sentimental"—the old Colonel's daughter had not forgotten all her beloved papa's expressions—"I know I shall use what you call in this country 'physical force,' some day, with her. I must have done it long ago, only for picking her pocket. She would be but a baby in my hands, and she is quite aware of it. Look at my arm; it's no larger than

yours, except above the elbow, and it is nearly as soft and delicate. Yet I could take you with one hand, Amy, and put you into the brook. If you like, I'll do it."

"Much obliged, dear; but I am quite content without the crucial test. I know your wonderful strength, which none would ever suspect, to look at you. I suppose it came to you from your mother."

"Yes, I believe. At any rate, I have heard my father say so; and I could hold both his hands most easily. But oh, she is such a screw, Amy, that sympathetic Georgie! She never gives any one sixpence; and it is so pleasant to hear her go on about her money, and handkerchiefs, and, most of all, her gloves. She is so proud of her nasty little velvet paws. She won't get her gloves except in Southampton, and three toll-gates to pay, and I steal them as fast as she gets them. She grumbles about it all dinner-time, and I offered her eighteenpence for turnpikes—out of her own purse, of course—because she was so poor, I said. But she flew into such a rage that I was forced to pick her pocket again at breakfast-time next morning. And the lies she told about the amount of money in her purse! Between eight and nine pounds, she said the last time, and there was only ten rupees. Uncle Cradock made it good to her, because he guessed that I had done it, though he was afraid to tell me so. But, thank God, I stole it again the next day when she went out walking; and that of course he had nothing to say to, because it did not occur in his house. Oh, what a rage she was in! She begins to suspect me now, I think; but she never can catch me out."

"You consummate little thief! why, I shall be afraid to come near you."

"Oh, I would never do it to any one but her. And I should not do it to her so much, only she thinks me a clumsy stupid. Me who was called 'Never-spot-the-dust!' But I have got another thing of hers, and she had better take care, or I'll open it."

"Something else! Take care, Eöa, or I must really go and tell."

"No, you know better than that. It is nothing but a letter she wrote, and was going to post at Burley. I knew, by her wonderful sympathies that day, that she was at something nasty; and she would not let it go in the post-bag. So I resolved to have it; and of course I did. And she has been in such a fright ever since; but I have not opened it yet."

"And I hope you never will. Either confess, or post it at once, or I shall be obliged to ask my father what I ought to do."

"Oh, you need not be hot, Amy; you don't know any thing at all about it. I know that she is doing all sorts of things; and I need not have any scruples with her, after what I caught her doing. Twice she has been at my desk, my own new desk Uncle Cradock

gave me, where I put all the letters and relics that were found on my dear, dear father." Here Eöa burst out crying, and Amy came near again and kissed her.

"Darling, I did not mean to be cross; if the wretch would do such a thing as that, it justifies almost any thing."

"And what do you think I did?" said Eöa, half crying, and half laughing: "I set a fishhook with a spring to it, so that the moment she lifted the cover, the barb would go into her hand; and the next day she had a bad finger, and said that little Flore bit it by accident while she was feeling her tooth, which is loose. I should like to have seen her getting the barb out of her nasty little velvet paw."

"I am quite surprised," cried Amy; "and we all call you so simple—a mere child of nature! If so, nature is up to much more than we give her credit for. And pray, what is your next device?"

"Oh, nothing at all, till she does something. I am quits with her now; and I cannot scheme as she does."

Suddenly Amy put both her hands on Eöa's graceful shoulders, and poured the quick vigour of English eyes into the fathomless lustre of darkly-fringed Oriental orbs.

"You will not tell me a story, dear, if I ask you very particularly?"

"I never tell stories to any one; you might know that by this time. At any rate, not to my friends."

"No, I don't think you would. Now, do you think that Mrs. Corklemore is at the bottom of this vile thing?"

"What vile thing? The viler it is, the more likely she is to have done it."

"Oh no, she cannot have done it, though she may have had something to do with it. I mean, of course, about poor Cradock."

"What about Cradock? I love Cousin Cradock, although I have never seen him, because he is so unlucky; and because you like him, dear, so much."

"Don't you know it? You must have seen what wretched spirits I was in. And this made me feel it so much the more, when you said what you did just now. We have heard that an application has been made in London, at the Home Office, or somewhere, that a warrant should be issued against Cradock Nowell, and a reward be offered for him as——Oh, my Cradock, my Craddy!"

"Put your head in here, darling. What a brute you must have thought me! Oh, I do so love you. Don't think twice about it, dear. I will take care that it all comes right. I will go to London to-day, dearest, and defy them to dare to do it. And I'll open that letter at once. It becomes a duty now; as that nasty beast always says, when she wants to do any thing wrong."

"No, no!" sobbed Amy, "you have no right to open her letter,

and you shall not do it, Eöa, unless my father says that it is right. Will you promise me that, dear? Oh, do promise me that."

"How can I promise that, when I would not have him know, for a lac of rupees, that I had ever stolen it? He would never perceive how right it was: and, though I don't know much about people, I am sure he would never forgive me. He is such a fidget. But I will promise you one thing, Amy—never to open it till you tell me."

Amy was obliged at last to be contented with this; though she said it was worse than nothing, for it forced the decision upon her; and scrupulously honest and candid as she was, she would feel it right to settle the point against her own desires.

"Old Biddy knows I have got it," cried Eöa, changing her humour: "and she patted me on the back, and said, 'Begorra, thin, you be the cliver one; hould on to that same, me darlint, and we'll bate every bit of her, yit; the purtiest feet and ankles to you, and the best back legs, more than iver she got, and now you bate her in the stalin'. And plase, Miss, rade yer ould Biddy every consumin' word on it. Mullygaslooce, but we've toorned her, this time, and thank Donats for it.'"

Eöa mocked Biddy so cleverly, even to the form of her countenance, and her peculiar manner of standing, that Amy, with all those griefs upon her, could not help laughing heartily.

"Come along, I can't mope any longer; when I have jumped the brook nine times, you may say something to me. What do you think of a bathe, Amy? I am up for it, if you are—and our tablecloths for towels. Nobody comes here once in a year; and if they did, they would run away again. What a lovely deep pool! I can swim like a duck; and you like a stone, I suppose."

Amy, of course, would not hear of it, and her lively friend, having paddled with her naked feet in the water, and found it colder—oh, ever so much—than the tributaries of the Ganges, was not so very sorry (self-willed though being) to keep upon the dry land; only she had made up her mind to be off at once for the Queen's Mead, and Amy must come with her, and run every yard of the way, to get away from trouble.

Amy was light enough of foot, when her heart was light; but Eöa could "run round her," as the sporting phrase is, and she gave herself the rein at will that lovely afternoon; as a high-mettled filly does, when she gets out of Piccadilly. And she chatted as fast as she walked all the time, hoping so to divert her friend from this new distress.

"I should not be so very much surprised, if we saw that—Bob, here somewhere. We are getting near one of his favourite places—not that I know any thing about it; and he is always away now in Mark Ash Wood, or Puckpits, looking out for the arrival of honey-buzzards, or for a merlin's nest. Oh, of course we shall not see him."

"Now, you know you will," replied Amy, laughing at Eöa's clumsiness; "and you have brought me all this way for that very reason. Now, if we meet him, just leave him to me, and stay out of hearing. I will manage him so that he shall soon think you the best and the prettiest girl in the world."

"Well, I wish he would," said Eöa, blushing beautifully; "wouldn't I torment him then?"

"No doubt you would, and yourself as well. Now where do you think he will be?"

"Oh, Amy, how can I possibly guess? But if I did guess at all, I should say there was just an atom of a chance of his being not far from the Queen's Mead."

"Suppose him to be there. What would bring him there? Not to see you, I should hope?"

"As if he would go a yard for that! Oh no, he is come to look for—at least, perhaps he might, just possibly, I mean——"

"Come to look for whom?" Amy was very angry, for she thought that it was herself, under Eöa's strategy.

"A horrid little white mole."

"A white mole! Why, I had no idea that there was such a thing."

"Oh yes, there is: but it is very rare; and he has set his heart upon catching this one."

"That he shan't. Oh, I see exactly what to do. Come quickly, for fear he should catch it before we get there. Oh, I do hate such cruelty. Ah, there, I see him! Now, you keep out of sight."

In a sunny break of tufted sward, embayed among long waves of wood, young Bob Garnet sat, more happy than the king of all the world of fairies. At his side lay several implements of his own devising, and on his lap a favourite book with his open watch upon it. From time to time he glanced away at a chain of little hillocks about twenty yards in front of him, and among which he had stuck seven or eight stout hazel rods, and brought them down as benders. He was trying not only to catch his mole, but also to add another to his many observations as to the periods of molar exertion. Whether nature does enforce upon these clever miners any Three Hour Act, as the popular opinion is; or whether they are free to work and rest, at their own sweet will, as seems a world more natural.

Amy walked into the midst of the benders, in her self-willed, characteristic manner, as if they were nothing at all. She made believe to see nought of Bob, who, on the other side of the path, was fluttering and blushing, with a mixture of emotions.

"Some very cruel person," she exclaimed, in loud self-commune, "probably a savage boy, has been setting mole-traps here, I see. And papa says the moles do more good than harm, except perhaps in my flower-beds. Now I'll let them all off very quietly. The boy

will think he has caught a dozen; and then how the moles will laugh at him. He will think it's a witch, and leave off, very likely, for all cruel boys are ignorant. My pretty little darlings; so glossy, and so clever!"

"Oh, please not to do that," cried Bob, having tried in vain to contain himself, and now leaping up in agony; "I have taken so much trouble, and they are set so beautifully."

"What, Master Robert Garnet! Oh, have you seen my companion, Miss Nowell, about here?"

"Look there, you have spoiled another! And they'll never set so well again. Oh, you can't know what they are, and the trouble I have had with them."

"Oh yes, Master Garnet, I know what they are; clumsy and cruel contrivances to catch my innocent moles."

"Your moles!" cried Bob, with tremendous wrath rising, as she coolly destroyed two more traps; "why are they your moles, I should like to know? I don't believe you have ever even heard of them before."

"Suppose I have not?" answered Amy, screwing up her lips, as she always did when resolved to have her own way.

"Then how can they be your moles? Oh, if you haven't spoiled another!"

"Well, the Queen's moles, if you prefer it, Master Garnet. At any rate, you have no right to catch them."

"But I only want to catch one, Amy; a white one, oh, such a beauty! I have heard of him ever since he was born, and had my eye on him down all the galleries; and now he must be full-grown, for he was born quite early in August."

"I hope he'll live to be a hundred. And I will thank you, Master Garnet, to speak to me with proper respect. My name is Miss Rosedew."

Up went another riser. There was only one left now, and that a most especial trap, which had cost a whole week's cogitation.

"I declare you are a most dreadful girl. You don't like any thing I do. And I have thought so much of you."

"Then, once for all, I beg you never more to do so. I have often wished to speak with you upon that very subject."

"What—what subject, Miss Rosedew? I have no idea what you mean."

"That is altogether false. But I will tell you now. I mean the silly, ungentlemanly, and very childish manner, excusable only in such a boy, in which I have several times observed you loitering about in the forest."

Bob knew what she meant right well, although she would not more plainly express it—his tracking of her footsteps. He turned as red as meadow-sorrel, and quivered like a bobbing float.

"I am—very—very sorry. But I did not mean it. I mean—I could not help it."

"You will be kind enough to help it now, for once and for all. Otherwise, my father, who has not heard of it yet, shall speak to yours about it. Insufferable impudence in a boy just come from school!"

Amy was obliged to turn away, for fear he should look up again, and see the laughter in her eyes. For all her wrath was feigned; inasmuch as to her Bob Garnet was far too silly a butterfly-boy to arouse her real anger. But of late he had been intrusive; and the wisest plan was to stop it.

"If I have done any thing wrong, Miss Rosedew, any thing in any way unbecoming a gentleman——"

"Yes, try to be a good boy again," said Amy, very graciously; at the same time giving the stroke of grace to his masterpiece of mechanism, designed to catch the white mole alive; "now take up your playthings and go, if you please; for I expect a young lady here directly; and your little tools for cockchafer-spinning would barbarize the foreground of our sketch, besides being very ugly."

"Oh!" cried Bob, with a sudden access of his father's readiness —"you spin a fellow worse than any cockchafer, and you do it in the name of humanity!"

"Then think me no more a divinity," answered Amy; because she must have the last word; and even Bob, young as he was, knew better than to paragogize the feminine termination. Utterly discomfited, as a boy is by a woman—and Amy's trouble had advanced her almost to that proud rank—Bob gathered up his broken traps, and scuttled cleverly out of sight. She, on the other hand (laughing all the while at herself for her simple piece of acting, and doubting whether she had been right in doing even a little thing so much against her nature), there she sat, with her sketching-block ready, and hoped that Eöa would have the wit to come and meet her beloved Bob, while labouring under this vile rebuff.

But Eöa could not do it. She had wit enough, but too much heart. She had heard every word of Amy's insolence, and was very indignant at it. Was Bob to be talked to in that way? As if he knew nothing of science! As if he had an atom of any sort of cruelty in him! Was Amy so very ignorant as not to know that all Bob did was done with the kindest consideration, and for the interest of the species, though the pins through the backs were unpleasant, perhaps? But that was over in a moment, and he always carried ether; and it was nothing to the Fakirs, or the martyrs of Christianity.

Therefore Eöa crouched away, behind a tuft of thicket, because her maidenhood forbade her to come out and comfort him, to take advantage of his wrong, and tell him how she felt for him. Therefore, too, she was rather sharp with Amy throughout the homeward

road; vindicating Bob, and snapping at all proffered softness; the truth being that she had well known his boyish whim for Amy, and now was sorry for him about it, and a little hurt with both of them.

From that true touch of woman's nature she learned more dignity, more pride, more reservation, and self-respect, than she could have won from a score of governesses, or six seasons of "society."

CHAPTER LV.

ALMOST PAST DISSEMBLING.

"NOT another minute to lose, and the sale again deferred! All the lots marked, and the handbills out, and the particulars and conditions ready; and then some paltry pettifogging—and another fortnight will be required to do 'justice to my interests.' Justice to my interests! How they do love round-mouthed rubbish! The only justice to me is, from a legal point of view, to string me up, and then quick-lime me; and the only justice to my interests is to rob my children, because I have robbed them already. Robbed them of their birth and name, their power to look men in the face, their chance of being allowed to do what God seems chiefly to want us for—to marry and have children, who may be worse than we are; though, thank Him, mine are not. Robbed them even of their chance to be met as Christians (though I have increased their right to it), in this wretched, money-seeking, servile, and contemptuous age.

"But who am I to find fault with any, after all my wasted life? A life which might, in its little way, have told upon the people round me, and moved, if not improved them. Which might, at least, have set them thinking, doubting, and believing. Oh, the loss of energy, the loss of self-reliance, and the awful load of fear and anguish—I who might have been so different! Pearl is at the window there. I know quite well who loves her—an honest, upright, hearty man, having what is now a scarce thing, true respect for women. But will he look at her when he knows——Oh God, my God, forsake me, but never forsake my children!—Bob, what are you at with those cabbages?"

"Why, they are clubbed, don't you see, father, beautifully clubbed already, and the leaves flag directly the sun shines. And I want to know whether it is the larva of a *curculio*, or *anthomyia brassicæ;*

and I can't tell without pulling the plants up, and they can't come to any good, you know, with all this ambury in them."

"I know nothing of the sort, Bob. I know nothing at all about it. Go into the house to your sister. I can't bear the sight of you now."

Bob, without a single word, did as he was told. He knew that his father loved him; though he could not guess the depth of that love, being himself so different. And so he never took offence at his father's odd ways to him, but thought, "Better luck next time; the governor has got red spider this morning, and he won't be right till dinner-time."

Bull Garnet smiled at his son's obedience, with a mighty fount of pride in him; and then he sighed, because Bob was gone—and he never could have enough of him, for the little time remaining. He loved his son with a love surpassing that of woman, or man for woman. Men would call him a fool for it. But God knows how He has made us.

Thinking none of this, but fretting over fierce heart-troubles, which now began to be too many even for his power of life—as a hundred wolves pull down a lion—he turned again through the espalier-walk, where the apple-trees were in blossom. Pinky shells spread to the sun, with the little close tuft in the middle; some striped, some patched, some pinched with white, some streaky, as the fruit would be, and glancing every gloss of blush—no two of them were quite alike, any more than two of us are. Yet the bees knew every one of them, among the countless multitude, and never took the wrong one; even as the angels know which of us belongs to them, and the order of their visiting.

Bull Garnet, casting to and fro, and taking heed of nothing, not even of the weeds which once could not have lived before his eyes, began again in a vague loose manner (the weakness of which would have angered him, if he had been introspective) to drone about the law's delays, and the folly of institution. He stood at last by his wicket gate, where the hedge of Irish yew was, and there carried on his grumbling.

"Lawyers indeed! And cannot manage a simple thing of that sort! Thank God, I know nothing of law."

"Excuse me, Mr. Garnet. It is possible that you may want to know something of law, shortly."

"By what right, sir, dare you break in upon my privacy like this?"

Pale as he was, and scorning himself for the way in which his blood shrunk back, Bull Garnet was far too strong and quick ever to be dumb-foundered. Chope looked at him, with some admiration breaking through the triumph of his small comprehensive eyes.

"Excuse me, Mr. Garnet. I forgot that a public man like you

must have his private moments, even at his own gate. I am sorry to see you so hot, my dear sir; though I have heard that it is your character. That sort of thing leads to evil results, and many deplorable consequences. But I did not mean to be rude to you, or to disturb you so violently."

"You have not disturbed me at all, sir."

"I am truly happy to hear it. All I meant, as to knowledge of law, was to give you notice that there is some heavy trouble brewing, and that you, on your principal's behalf, must be prepared to meet some horrible accusations."

"May I trespass further upon your kindness, to ask what their nature is?"

"Oh, nothing more than a rash and of course unfounded charge of murder."

Mr. Chope pronounced that last awful word in a deeply sepulchral manner, and rivetted his little eyes into Bull Garnet's great ones. Mr. Garnet met his gaze as calmly as he would meet the sad clouded aspect of a dead rabbit, or hare, in a shop where he asked the price of them, and examined their eyes as the test of their freshness. Chope could not tell what to make of it. The thing was beyond his experience.

But all this time, Bull Garnet felt that every minute was costing him a year of his natural life; even if he got a chance of living naturally.

"How does this concern me? Is it any one on our estates?"

"Yes, and the heir to 'your estates.' Poor young Cradock Nowell."

Bull Garnet sighed very heavily; then he strode away, and came back again, with indignation swelling out the volume of his breast, and filling the deep dark channels of brow, and the turgid veins of his eyeballs.

"Whoever has done this thing is a fool; or a rogue—which means the same."

"It may be so. It may be otherwise. We always hope for the best. Very likely he is innocent. Perhaps they are shooting at the pigeon in order to hit the crow."

"Perhaps you know best what their motives are. I see no use in canvassing them. You have heard, I suppose, the rumour that Mr. Nowell has left England?"

"I know very little about it. I have nothing to do with the case; or it might have been managed differently. But I heard that the civil authorities, being called upon to act, discovered, without much trouble, that he had sailed, under a false name, in a ship called the *Taprobane*, bound direct for Ceylon. And that, of course, told against him heavily."

"Ah, he sailed for Ceylon, did he? A land full of venomous reptiles, that crawl round people's houses."

"Yes, Ceylon, where flying foxes are. Not so cunning, perhaps, as our foxes of the Forest. And yet the fox is a passionate animal. Violent, hot, and hasty. Were you aware of that fact?"

"Excuse me; my time is valuable. I will send for the game-keeper, if you wish to have light thrown upon that question; or my son will be only too glad——"

"Ah, your son! Poor fellow!"

These few short words, pronounced in a tone of real feeling, with no attempt at inquiry, quite overcame Bull Garnet. First extrinsic proof of that which he had so long foreseen with horror—the degradation of his son. He dropped his eyes, which had borne till now, and returned, the lawyer's gaze; and the sense of his own peril failed to keep the shame and sorrow in. Up to this time Mr. Chope was doubting, and even beginning to reject his shrewd and well-founded conclusion. Now he saw and knew everything. And even he was overcome. Passion is infectious; and lawyers are like the rest of us. Mr. Chope had loved his mother.

Bull Garnet gave one quick strange glance at the eyes of Simon Chope, which now were turned away from him, and then he looked at the ground, and said,—

"Yes; I have wronged him bitterly."

Simon Chope drew back from him mechanically, instinctively, as human skin keeps far from cold iron in the arctic regions. He could not think, much less could he speak, though his mind had been prepared for it.

To human nature it is so abhorrent to take the life of another: to usurp the rights of God. To stand in the presence of one who has done it, touches our pulse with death. We feel that he might have done it to us, or that we might have done it to him; and our love of ourselves is at once accelerated and staggered. And then we feel that "life for life," the tit for tat of the hangman, is such low revenge; the vendetta imposed by cowardice. Very slowly are we beginning to enter into our manhood.

Bull Garnet was the first to speak, and now he spoke quite calmly.

"You came with several purposes. One of them was, that I should break to Sir Cradock Nowell these tidings of new trouble; the news of the warrant which you and others have issued against his poor lost son. I will see to it to-day, and I will try to tell him. It will be a difficult thing to do. You may not think so. I believe, Mr. Chope, that as yet you have no children."

Mr. Chope happened to have two sons, not to be loosely boasted of, whom he meant to take into the office, pseudonymously, some day; and he was rather inclined to like these little, but hopeful, *nullius filii*. First, because they were his own; secondly, because they had big heads; thirdly, because they had cheated all their fellow school-boys in a style which was truly promising. Nevertheless, he was in no hurry to be confidential about them. Yet, without

his knowing it, or at least with only despising it, this little matter shaped its measure upon his present action.

The lawyer lifted his hat to Bull Garnet in a very peculiar manner, conveying to the quick apprehension what it would not have been safe to pronounce—to wit, that Mr. Chope quite understood all that had occurred; that he would not act upon his discovery until he had well considered the matter, for, after all, he had no evidence; lastly, that he was very sorry for Mr. Garnet's position, but would rather not shake hands with him.

The steward watched him walking softly among the glad young leaves, and down the dell where the sunlight flashed on the merry leaps of the water. Long after the lawyer was out of sight Bull Garnet stood there watching, as if the forest glades would show him the approaching destiny. Strong and firm as his nature was, he had suffered now such wearing, wearying agonies, that he almost wished the weak man's wish—to have the mastery taken from him, to have the issue settled without his own decision.

"Poor Cradock sailed in the *Taprobane!* What an odd name," he continued, with that childishness in which sometimes the overwrought brain relieves itself; "tap, tap-root, tap-robin! Tush, what a fool I am! Oh Heaven, that I could only think! My God, that I could only learn whether my first duty is to You, or to my children! Let me go indoors and think."

In the passage he met his son, and kissed his forehead gently, as if to atone for the harshness of his words to him only an hour ago.

"Father," said Bob, "shall you want me to-day? Or may I be from home till dark? I have so many things, most important things, to see to."

"Birds' nests, I suppose, and grubs, field-mice, toads, and tadpoles. Yes, my son, you are wise. Enjoy them while you can. And take your sister also for a good run, if you can. You may carry your dinner with you: I shall do well enough."

"Oh, it's no use asking Pearl; she never will come with me. And I am sure I don't want her. She does much more harm than good; she can't kill anything properly, nor even blow an egg. But I'll ask her, as you wish it, sir; because I know that she won't come."

Mr. Garnet had not the heart to laugh at his children's fine sense of duty towards him; but he saw Bob start with all his tackle, in great hopes and high spirits. The father looked sadly after him, wondering at his enjoyment, yet loving him the more, perhaps, for being so unlike himself. And as he gazed he could not help saying to that poor bad self—

"Sure it is that I shall never see him look at me so again, but perhaps have to look at him when he will not care to look at me. Yet he must know, in the end, and she, the poor thing, she must know how all my soul was on them. Now God in heaven, lead me aright! Half an hour shall settle it."

CHAPTER LVI.

IN A LOVELY ISLAND.

MEANWHILE, if any warrant ever has a chance of issuing, let us see what chance it has of ever being executed. And it may be a pleasant change to flit to southern latitudes from the troubles, and the drizzle, and the weeping summer of England.

Poor Cradock, as we saw him last, backed up by the ebony-tree, and with Wena crouching close to him, knew nothing of his lonely plight and very sudden abandonment; until the sheets of plashing rain, and long howls of his little dog, awoke him to great wonderment. Then he arose, and rubbed his eyes, and thought that his sight was gone, and felt a heavy weight upon him, and a want of power to grope about, and a vain desire to scream, such as comes in nightmare. Meanwhile, he felt something pulling at him, always in the same direction, and he did not like to put his hand down, for he had some idea that it was the devil.

Suddenly a great flash of lightning, triple thrice repeated, lit up the whole of the wood, like day; and he saw black Wena tugging at him, to draw him into good shelter. He saw the shelter also, ere the gush of light was gone—an enormous and hollow mowana-tree, a little higher up the hill. Then all was blackest night again, wherein even Wena was swallowed up.

So, with both hands spread, to fend the blows of hanging branch or creeper, he committed himself to the little dog's care, and she took him to the mowana-tree. Then another great flash lit up all the hollow; and Wena was frightened and dropped her tail, but still held on to her master.

Cradock neither knew nor cared what the name of the tree was, nor whether it possessed, as some trees do, especial attractions for lightning. "Any harbour in a storm," was all he thought, if he thought at all; and he lay down very snugly, and felt for Amy's present to him, and then, in spite of the crashing thunder and the roaring wind, snugly he went off to sleep; and at his feet lay Wena.

In the bright morning the youth arose and shook himself, and looked round, and felt rather jolly than otherwise. Travellers say that the baobab, or mowana-tree, is the hardest of all things to kill, and will grow along the ground, when uprooted, and not allowed to grow upright. Frenchmen have proved, to their own satisfaction, that some baobabs now living grew under the deluge of Noah, and not improbably had the great ark floating over their heads. Be that as it may, and though it is a Cadmeian job to cut down the baobab,

for every root thereupon claims, and takes, a distinct existence; we can all of us tell the travellers of a thing yet harder to kill—the hope in the heart of a young and good man. And, the better man he is, the more of hope's spores are in him; and the quicker they grow again, after they have all been stamped upon. A mushroom in the egg likes well to have the ground beaten overhead with a paviour's rammer, and comes up all the bigger for it, and lifts a pave-stone of two hundredweight. Shall then the pluck of an honest man fail, while his true conscience stirs in him, though the result be like a fleeting fungus, supposed to be born in an hour by those who know nothing about it, and who make it the type of an upstart—shall not his courage work and spread, although it be underground, as he grows less and less defiant; and rear, perhaps in the autumn of life, a genuine crop, and a good one?

Cradock Nowell found his island not at all a bad one. There was plenty to eat at any rate, which is half the battle of life. Plenty to drink is the other half, in the judgment of some philosophers. But may we not say that plenty to look at should form at least a third of it? The pride of the eyes, if not exercised on that vanishing point, oneself, is a pride legitimate, and condemned by no apostle. And here there was noble food for it; and it is a pride which, when duly fed, slumbers off into humility.

Oh the glory of everything, the promise, and the brightness; the large leading views of sky and sea, and the crystal avenues onward. The young man looked at his lovely island, and was well content with it. It was not more than four miles long, and perhaps three miles across; but it was gifted with three grand things—beauty, health, and nourishment. It might have been ages, for all he saw then, since man had sworn or forsworn in it; perhaps none since the voyagers of Necho, whose grand truth was so incredible. There were no high hills, and no very deep holes; but a pleasant undulating place, ever full of leaves and breezes. And as for wild beasts, he had no fear; he knew that they would require more square miles than he owned. As for snakes, he was not so sure; and indeed there were some nasty ones, as we shall see by-and-by.

Then he went to the shore, and looked far away, even after the *Taprobane*. The sea was yet heaving heavily, and tumbling back into itself with a roar, and some fishing eagles were very busy, stooping along the foam of it; but no ship was to be seen anywhere, and far away in the south and south-east the selvage of black clouds, lopping over the mist of the horizon, showed that still the typhoon was there, and no one could tell how bad it was.

Cradock found a turtle, at which Wena looked first in mute wonder, with her eyes taking jumps from their orbits; and then, like all females, she found tongue, and ran away, and barked furiously. Presently she came back, sniffing along, and drawing her nose on the sand, yet determined to stick by her master, even if the

turtle should eat him. But, to her immense satisfaction, the result was quite the converse: she and her master ate the turtle; beginning, *ab ovo*, that morning.

For, although Crad could not quite eat the eggs raw (by-the-by, they are not so bad that way), and although he could not quite strike a light by twirling one stick in the back of another, he had long ago found reason for, and he rapidly found that excellent goddess in, the roasting of eggs. And for that, he had to thank Amy. Only see how thoughtful women are!—yes, a mark of astonishment.

But the astonishment will subside, perhaps, when we come to know all about it; for then all the misogynes may declare that the thought was born of vanity. Be that as it may, we greatly prefer to think it born of love.

Amy had sent him a photograph of her faithful self, beautifully done by Mr. Silvy, of Bayswater, and framed in a patent lover's box, the present writer forgets its name—something French, of course—so ingeniously contrived, that when a spring at the back was pressed, a little wax match would present itself, from a lining of asbestos, together with a groove to draw it in. Thus by night, as well as by day, the smile of the loved one might illumine the lonely heart of the lover.

Now this device stood him in good stead—as doubtless it was intended to do by the practical mind of the giver—for it served to light the fire wherewith man roasteth roast, and is satisfied. And a fire once lit in the hollow heart of that vast mowana-tree (where twenty men might sit and smoke, when the rainy season came), if you only supplied some fuel daily, and cleared away the ashes weekly, there need be no fear of philanthropy making a trespasser of Prometheus. Cradock soon resolved to keep his head-quarters there, for the tree stood upon a little hill, overlooking land and sea, for many a league of solitude. And it was not long before he found that the soft bark of the baobab might easily be cut so as to make a winding staircase up it; and the work would be an amusement to him, as well as a great advantage.

Master and dog having made a most admirable breakfast upon turtles' eggs, "roasted very knowingly"—as Homer well expresses it—with a large pine-apple to follow, started, before the heat of the day, in search of water, the indispensable. Shaddocks, and limes, and mangosteens, bananas—with their long leaves quilling—pine-apples, mawas, and mamoshoes, cocoa-nuts, plantains, mangoes, palms, and palmyras, custard-apples, and gourds without end, besides fifty other ground fruits, ay, and tree-fruits for that matter, quite unknown to Cradock—no fear remained of dying from drought; and yet the first thing to seek was pure water. If Cradock had thought much about the thing, very likely it would have struck him that some of the fruits which he saw are proof not so much of human cultivation, as of human presence, at some time or other.

But he never thought about that; and indeed his mind was too full for thinking. So he cut himself a most tremendous bludgeon of camel-thorn, as heavy and almost as hard as iron, and off he went whistling, with Wena wondering whether the stick would beat her.

He certainly took things easily; more so than is quite in accord with human nature and reason. But the state of his mind was to blame for it; and the freshness of the island air, after the thunder and storm of the night.

Even a rejected lover, or a disconsolate husband, gives a jerk to his knee-joints, and carries his elbows more briskly, when the bright spring morning shortens his shadow at every step. Cradock, moreover, felt quite sure that he would not be left too long there; that his friends on board the *Taprobane* would come aside from their track to find him, on their return-voyage from Ceylon; and so no doubt they would have done, if it had only lain in their power. But the *Taprobane*, as we shall see, never made her escape, in spite of weatherly helm and good seamanship, from the power of that typhoon. She was lost on the shoals of Benguela Bay, thirty miles south of Quicombo; and not a man ever reached the shore to tell the name of the ship. But a Portuguese half-caste, trading there, found the name on a piece of the taffrail, as well as a boat which was driven ashore.

After all, we see then that Cradock was wonderfully lucky—at least, if it be luck to live—in having been left behind, that evening, on an uninhabited island. "Desolate" nobody could call it, for the gifts of life lay around in abundance; and he soon had proof that the feet of men, ay, of white men, trod it sometimes. Following the shore, a little further than the sailors had gone, he came on a pure narrow thread of crystal, a current of bright water dimpling and twinkling down the sand. Wena at once lay down and rolled, and wetted every bit of herself; and then began to lap the water wherein her own very active and industrious friends were drowning. That Wena was such a ladylike dog; she washed herself before drinking, and she never would wash in salt water. It made her hair so unbecoming.

Cradock followed up that stream, and found quite a tidy little brook, when he got above the sand-ridge, full of fish, and fringed with trees, and edged with many a quaint bright bird, scissor-bills and avosets, demoiselles and flamingoes. Wena plunged in and went hunting blue rats, and birds, and fishes, while her master stooped down, and drank, and thanked God for this discovery.

A little way up the brook he found a rude shanty, a sort of wigwam, thatched with leaves and waterproof, backed by a low rock, but quite open in front and at both ends. Under the shelter were blocks of ebony, billets of bar-wood piled up to the roof, some hundred tusks of ivory, bales of dried bark, and piles of rough cylinders

full of caoutchouc, and many other things which Cradock could not wait to examine. But he felt quite certain that this must be some trader's depôt for shipping : the only thing that surprised him was that the goods were left unprotected. For he knew that the West Africans are the biggest thieves in the world, while he did not understand the virtue of the hideous great Fetich, hanging there.

It was made of a long dried codfish, with glass eyes, ground in the iris, and polished again in the pupil, and a glaring stripe of red over them, and the neck of a bottle fixed as for a tongue, and the body skewered open and painted bright blue, ribbed with white, like a skeleton, and the tail prolonged with two spinal columns, which rattled as it went round. The effect of the whole was greatly increased by the tattered cage of crinoline in which it was suspended, and which went creaking round, now and then, in the opposite direction.

No nigger would dare to steal any thing from such a noble idol. At least so thought the Yankee trader who knew a thing or two about them. He had left his things here in perfect faith, while he was travelling towards the Gaboon, to complete his cargo.

Cradock was greatly astounded. He thought that it must be a white man's work ; and soon he became quite certain, for he saw near a cask the clear mark of a boot, of civilized make, unquestionably. Then he prized out the head of the cask, after a deal of trouble, and found a store of ship-biscuit, a little the worse for weevil, but in very fair condition. He gave Wena one, but she would not touch it, for she set much store by her teeth, and had eaten a noble breakfast.

Having made a rough examination of the deserted shed, and found no sort of clothing—which did not vex him much, except that he wanted shoes—he resolved to continue the circuit of his new dominions, and look out perhaps for another hut. He might meet a man at any time ; so he carried his big stick ready, though none but cannibals could have any good reason to hurt him. As he went on, and struck inland to cut off the northern promontory, the lie of the land and the look of the woods brought to his mind more clearly and brightly his own beloved New Forest. He saw no quadruped larger than a beautiful little deer, lighter than a gazelle, and of a species quite unknown to him. They stood and looked at him prettily, without either fear or defiance, and Wena wanted to hunt them. But he did not allow her to indulge that evil inclination. He had made up his mind to destroy nothing, even for his own subsistence, except the cold-blooded creatures which seem to feel less of the death-pang. But he saw a foul snake, with a flat heavy head, which hissed at and frightened the doggie, and he felt sure that it was venomous : monkeys also of three varieties met him in his pilgrimage, and seemed disposed to be sociable ; while birds of every tint and plumage fluttered, and flashed, and flitted. Then Wena

ran up to him howling, and limping, and begging for help; and he found her clutched by the seed-vessels of the terrible uncaria. He could scarcely manage to get them off, for they seemed to be crawling upon her.

When he had made nearly half his circuit, without any other discovery—except that the grapes were worthless—the heat of the noonday sun grew so strong, although it was autumn there—so far as they have any autumn—that Cradock lay down in the shade of a plantain; and, in a few seconds afterwards, was fast asleep and dreaming. Wena sat up on guard and snapped at the nasty poisonous flies, which came to annoy her master.

How heavenly tropical life would be, in a beautiful country like that, but for those infernal insects! The mosquito, for instance,—and he is an angel, compared to some of those Beelzebubs,—must have made Adam swear at Eve, even before the fall. And then those awful spiders, whose hair tickles a man to madness, even if he survives the horror of seeing such hideous devils. And then the tampan—but let us drop the subject, lest we should fail to sleep to-night. Cradock awoke in furious pain, and spasms most unphilosophical. He had dreamed that he was playing football upon Cowley Green, and had kicked out nobly with his right foot into a marching line of red ants. Immediately they swarmed upon him, up him, over him, into him, biting with wild virulence, and twisting their heads and nippers round in every wound to exasperate it. Wena was rolling and yelling, for they had attacked her also. Cradock thought they would kill him; although he did not know that even the python has no chance with them. He was as red all over, inside his clothes and outside, as if you had winnowed over him a bushel of fine rouge. Dancing, and stamping, and recalling, with heartfelt satisfaction, some strong words learned at Oxford, he caught up Wena, and away they went, two solid lumps of ants, headlong into the sea. Luckily he had not far to go; he lay down and rolled himself, clothes and all, and rolled poor Wena too in the waves, until he had the intense delight of knowing that he had drowned a million of them. Ah! and just now he had made up his mind to respect every form of life so.

But surely we may defy any man—even the sage Archbishop of York, who reads novels to stop other people—to have lectured Crad under the circumstances, or to have failed to let out an oath, with those twenty thousand holes in him. The salt water went into Cradock's holes, and made him feel like a Cayenne pepper-castor; and the little dog sat in the froth of the sea, and reasoned within her blistered mind that even dogs must be allowed a hell.

After that there was nothing to do, except to go home mournfully—if a tree may be called a home, as no doubt it deserves to be—and then to dry the clothes, and wish that the wearer knew something of botany. Cradock had no doubt at all that around

him grew whole stacks of leaves which would salve and soothe his desperate pain; but he had not the least idea which were balm and which were poison. How he wished that, instead of reading so hard for the scholarship of Dean Ireland, he had kept his eyes open in the New Forest, and learned just Nature's rudiments! Of course he would have other leaves to deal with; but certain main laws and principles hold good the whole world over. Bob Garnet would have been quite at home, though he had never seen one of those trees before.

There Cradock was, and there he stopped; because he could not get away. Than which there can be no finer reason for leaving him to meditate. Enough that he found no other trace of man upon the island, except the trader's hut, or store, with the hideous scarecrow hanging, and signs of human labour, in the growth of some few trees—about which he knew nothing—and in a rough piece of ground near the shanty, cleared for a kitchen-garden. Cassavas, and yams, and kiobos, and pea-nuts, and some other things, grew there; which, as he made nothing of them, we must treat likewise. There had even been some cotton sown, but the soil seemed not to suit it. It was meant, perhaps, by the keen American, who thought himself lord of the island, for a little random experiment.

When would he come back? That was the question Cradock asked, both of himself and Wena, twenty times a day. Of course poor Cradock knew not whether his lord of the manor were a Yankee or a Britisher, a Portuguese or a Dutchman; "Thebis nutritus an Argis." Only he supposed and hoped that a white man came to that island sometimes, and brought other white men with him.

Now he had cut a winding staircase up the outer walls of his castle, and added a great many rough devices to his rugged interior. Twice every day he clomb his tree, to seek all round the horizon; and at one time he saw a sail in the distance, making perhaps for Loanda. But that ship was even outside the expansive margin of hope. So he divided his time between his grand mowana citadel and the storehouse, with whose contents he did not like to meddle much, because they were not his property.

There he placed the ship's hydropult, which he had found lying on the beach; for the mate had brought it to meet the chance of finding shallow water, where the casks could not be stooped or the water bailed without fouling it; and the boat's crew, in their rush and flurry, had managed to leave it behind them. Cradock left it in the storehouse, because it was useless to him in his tree where he had no water, and it amused him sometimes to syringe Wena from the brook which flowed hard by. Moreover, he thought that if any thing happened to prevent him from explaining things, the owner of the place, whoever he might be, would find in that implement more than the value of the biscuits which Cradock was eating,

and getting on nicely with them; they seemed to chasten so beautifully the richness of his turtles.

Truly, his diet was glorious, both in quality and variety; and he very soon became quite a pomarian Apicius. Of all fruits, perhaps the mangosteen (*Garcinia mangostana*) is the most delicious, when you get the right sort of it—which is not to be had in Brazil—neither is the lee chee a gift to be despised, nor the chirimoya, and several others of the Anona race; some of the Granadillas, too, and the sweet lime, and the plantains, and many another fount of beauty and delight—all of which, by skill and care, might be raised in this country, where we seem to rest content with our meagre hothouse catalogue.

Not for a moment that all these fruits were native to "Pomona Island," as Cradock, appreciating its desserts, took the liberty of naming it; but most of them were discoverable in one part or another of it; some born from the breast of nature, others borne by man or tide. And almost all of them still would be greatly improved by culture.

So the head-gardener of the island, who left the sun to garden for him, enjoyed their exquisite coolness, and wondered how they could be so cool in the torrid sunshine; and though he did not know the name of one in fifty of them, he found out, without long inquiry, which of them were the nicest. And soon he discovered another means of varying his diet; for he remembered having read that often, in such lonely waters, the swarming fish will leap on board of a boat floating down the river. Thereupon he made himself a broad flat tray of bark, with a shallow ledge around it, and holding a tow-rope, made also of bark, launched it upon the brook. Immediately a vast commotion arose among the finny ones; they hustled, and huddled, and darted about, and then paddled gravely and stared at it. Then, whether from confusion of mind, or the reproaches of their comrades, or the desire of novelty, half a dozen of them made a rush, and carried the ship by boarding. Whereupon Cradock, laughing heartily, drew his barge ashore; and soon Wena and himself were wondering how many bones there can be in a fish.

All these fresh delights, and all the newness of increasing knowledge and enlarging wonder, taken in the balmy air, and with the brilliant heaven above them, and the graceful trees around, softly were beginning now, and sweetly were proceeding to find their way across the borders of incessant sorrow.

CHAPTER LVII.

HOW TO REPEL INVASION.

NOW and then Pomona Island had its own anxieties. How much longer was Cradock Nowell to live upon fruit, and fish, and turtle, with ship-biscuit for dessert? When would the trader come for his goods, or had he quite forgotten them? What would Amy and Uncle John think, if the *Taprobane* went home without him? And the snakes, the snakes, that cared not a rap for the enmity of man, since the rainy season set in, but came almost up to be roasted! And worst of all and most terrible thing, Crad was obliged to go about barefooted, while the thorns were of nature's invention, and rasped up every way all at once, like a hedgehog upon a frying-pan.

For that last evil he found a cure before he had hopped many hundred yards. He discovered a pumpkin about a foot long, pointed, and with a horny rind, and contracted towards the middle. He sliced this lengthwise, and took out the seeds, and planted his naked foot there. The coolness was most delicious, and a few strips of baobab bark made a first-rate shoe of it. He wore out one pair every day, and two when he went exploring; but what did that matter, unless the supply failed? and he kept some hung up for emergency.

As to the snakes, though he did not find out the snake-wood; or the snake-stone, or the fungoid substance, like a morel, which pumices up the venom; he invented something much better, as prevention is better than cure. He discovered a species of aspalathus, perfectly smooth near the root, and not very hard to pull up, yet so barbed, and toothed, and fanged upon all except the seed-leaves, that even a python—whereof he had none—could scarcely have got through it. Of this he strewed a ring all round his great mowana-tree, and then a fenced path down the valley toward his bathing-place, and then he defied the whole of that genus so closely akin to the devil.

But Wena had saved his life ere this from one of those slimy demons. Of course we know how hateful it is to hate any thing at all, except sin and crime in the abstract; but surely a man may be forgiven for hating snakes and scorpions. At any rate, if he cannot be, he ought to be able to help it.

While Cradock was making his fence aspalathine, and before he had finished the ring yet, a little snake about two feet long, semi-transparent, and jellified, of a dirty bottle-green colour, like the caterpillar known as the pear-leech (*Selandria Æthiops*), only some hundreds of sizes bigger, that loathsome reptile sneaked in through,

and crouched in a corner, while Cradock thought that he smelt something very nasty, as he smoked a pipe of the trader's tobacco, before turning into his locker.

He had cut himself a good broad coving from the inside of the mowana-tree, about three feet from the ground, fitted up with a flap and a pillow-place, and strewn with fresh plantain-leaves. Across the niche he had fastened a new mosquito net, borrowed from his friend the trader, whose goods he began to look upon now as placed under his trusteeship. And in that rude couch he slept as snugly, after a hard day's work, as does the pupa of the goat moth, or of the giant sirex. Under his feet was Wena's hole, wherein she crouched like a rabbit, and pricked her ears every now and then, and barked if ever the wind moaned. *Fortunatos nimium;* there was nobody to rogue them.

And yet no sooner was Craddy asleep, upon the night we are come to, than that dirty bottle-green snake, flat-headed, and with a year's supply of venom in its tooth-bag, came wriggling on its dappled belly around the hollow ring, while the dying embers of the fire —for the night was rather chilly and wet, and Cradock had cooked some fish—showed the mean sneak, poking its head up, feeling the temper of the time, like a radical candidate, ready to wriggle to any thing. Then it came to the bedposts of Cradock's couch, which he had cut, in a dry sort of humour, from the soft baobab wood. It lifted its head, and heard him snoring, and tapped its tail, and listened again. Very likely it was warm up there, and the snake was a little chilly, in this depth of the winter. So without any evil forethought—for justice is due, even to a snake—though ready to bite, at a move or a turn, the animal known as "man," up went that little serpent, cleverly and elegantly, as on a Bohemian vase. Cradock would have died in two hours after that snake had bitten him. But before that lissom coil of death had got the whole of his tail off the ground, fangs as keen as his own, though not poisonous, nipped him by the nape of his neck. Wena knew a snake by this time, and could treat those sneaks aright. She gave the devilish miscreant not a chance to twist upon her, but tore him from his belly-hold, and walked pleasantly to the fire, and with a spit of execration threw him into it, and ran back, and then ran to again, and barked at the noise he made in fizzing. Therewith Cradock awoke, and got out of bed, and saw the past danger, and coaxed the little dog, and kissed her, and talked to her about Amy, whose name she knew quite as well as her own.

After all his works were finished, and when he hardly knew what public improvement next to try, Cradock received visitors, unexpected, but most fashionable. In fact, they were all stark naked; showing themselves far in front of our period; which proves its good taste by reserving that privilege for the ladies.

Climbing his tree, one beautiful morning, he saw four or five

little marks on the sea, as of so many housemaids' thumbs, when the cheek of the grate has been polished. Staring thereat with all his eyes—as we loosely express it—he found that the thumb-marks got bigger and bigger, until they became long canoes, paddling, like good ones, towards him.

This was not by any means the sort of thing he had bargained for; and he became, to state the matter mildly, somewhat inclined to be nervous. He saw that there were invading him five great double canoes, each containing ten or twelve men; and he had no gun, nor a pinch of powder. Very likely they were cannibals, and would roast him slowly, to brown him nicely, and then serve up Wena for garnish. He shook so up there among the rough branches—for he did not so very much mind being killed, but he could not bear to be eaten—that Wena began to howl down below, and he was obliged to come down to quiet her.

Then he tied up black Wena, and muzzled her, to her immense indignation, with a capistrum of mowana bark, which quite foreclosed her own, and then he crept warily through the woods, to observe his black brethren's proceedings. They were very near the shore by this time, and making straight for the trader's hut, of which, perhaps, they had obtained some inkling.

Cradock felt his courage rising, and therewith some indignation, for he knew that the goods could not be theirs, and by this time he considered himself in commission as supercargo. So he resolved to save the store from pillage, if it could any how be done, even at the risk of his own life.

For this purpose he lay down in a hollow place by the water-side, where he could just see over the tide-bank without much fear of discovery, at least till the robbers had passed the shed, which, of course, was their principal object.

A high-born king of men was he, who stood at the prow of the foremost canoe, with a javelin in his great black hand, poised, and ready for casting. His apparel consisted of two great ear-drops, two rings upon his right wrist, and one below either knee; also a chain of teeth was dangling down his brawny bosom. He was painted red, and polished highly, which had to be done every morning; and he looked as dignified and more powerful than a don or dean. In each of the other canoes, one man was painted and polished also—to prove to the ignorant outer world that good birth deserves good blacking.

When the bottom of the double canoe grated upon the beach, the negro king flung back his strong arm, and cast at the shed his javelin. It passed through the roof and buried itself in the body of the fetich, which swung horribly too and fro, while the crinoline moved round it. Hereupon a yell arose from the invading flotilla, and every man trembled, waiting to see what would come of such an impiety.

Finding that nothing at all ensued, for Cradock had not the presence of mind to advance at the moment, they gave another yell and landed, washing a great deal of red from their legs. But the king was carried ashore, dry and bright, sitting on some officers' shoulders. Then they came up the bank, without any order, but each with his javelin ready, and his eyes intent on the idol. How Cradock longed for a piece of packthread, to have set the dried codfish dancing!

At last they came quite up to the shed, and held a consultation, in which it seemed the better counsel to allow the god, who looked ever so much more awful now they were near him, a certain time to vindicate himself, if he possessed the power to do so. Cradock was watching them closely, through a tussock of long sea-grass, and, in spite of their powerful frames and elastic carriage, he began to despise them in the wholesale Britannic manner. They should not steal his property, that he was quite resolved upon, although there were fifty of them. They were so near to him now that he could see their great white teeth, and hear them snapping as they talked.

When the allotted time, which their Agamemnon was telling upon his fingers, had quite expired, and Olympian Jove had sent as yet no lightnings, the king, who was clearly in front of his age, cast another javelin through the frame of crinoline, and leaped boldly, like Patroclus, following his dart. Suddenly he fell back, howling and yelling, cured for ever of scepticism, and with both his great eyes quite slewed up, and all his virtue in his heels. Away went every nigger, drowning the royal screams with their own, pell-mell down the beach, any how, only caring to cut hawser. Words like these came back to Cradock, as they rolled over one another,—

"Mbongo, pongo; warakai, urelwäi;" which mean, as interpreted afterwards by the Yankee trader,—

"He is a God, a great God; he maketh rain, yea, very great rain!"

Headlong they tumbled into their boats, not stopping to carry the king even, for which he kicked them heartily, as soon as he got on board, and every son of a woman of them plied his knotted arms at the paddle, as if grim Death was behind him.

Cradock laughed so heartily, that he rolled over with the hydropult on him, and threw his heels up in the air, and if they had not yelled so, they would have been sure to hear him. Very skilfully he had brought the nose of that noble engine to bear full upon the royal countenance, and the jet of water from the little stream passed through the ribs of the fetich. That god had asserted himself to such purpose, that henceforth you might hang him with beads, and give him a wig of tobacco, and no black man would dare to covet them.

Cradock Nowell felt almost too proud of his mighty volunteer

movement, and began to think more than ever that the whole of the island was his. These things show, more than any thing else can, his return to human reason; for of the rational human being—as discovered ordinarily—the very first instinct and ambition is the ownership of a peculium. What man cannot sympathize with that feeling who has got three fields and six children?

Therefore when a beautiful schooner, of the true American rig, which made such lagging neddies of our yachts a few years since, came into view one afternoon, and fetched up, with the sails all shaking in the wind, abreast of the shed, ere sun-down, Cradock felt like the owner of a house who sees a man coming towards his gate. Then he came down quietly with Wena, and sat upon a barrel, with a pipe of Cavendish in his mouth, and Wena crouched, like a chrysalis, between his pumpkin'd feet.

Even the Yankee, who had not been surprised at any incident of life since his nurse dropped him down an oil-well, when he was two years old, even he experienced some sensation, when he saw a white man sitting and smoking upon his barrel of knowingest notions, with a black dog at his feet. But Recklesome Young was not the man to be long taken aback.

"Darn me, but yoo are a cool hand. Britisher, for ten dollars. Never see none like 'em, I don't."

"You are right," answered Cradock, "I am an Englishman. Very much at your service. What is your business upon my island?"

"Waal," said the Yankee, turning round to the four men who had rowed him ashore; "Zebedee, this is just what I likes, and no mistark about it. One of them old islanders come to dispute possession. And perhaps a cannon up the hill, and a company or sojers. Ain't it good, Zeb, ain't it? Lor, how I do love them!"

"Now, don't be too premature," said Cradock, "it is the fault of your nation, as the opposite is ours."

"Darned well said, young Britisher, give us your hand upon it; for, arter all, I likes yoo."

Cradock shook hands with him heartily, for there was something in the man's face and manner, when you let his chaff drift by, which an Englishman recognizes, as kindly, strong, and sincere, although now and then contemptuous. The contempt alone is not genuine, but assumed to meet ours or any body's. The active, for fear of the passive voice.

"You are welcome to all the island," said Cradock, "and all my improvements, if you will only take me home again. The whole or it belongs to me, no doubt; but I will make it all over to you, for a passage to Southampton."

"Can't take you that way, young Boss, and don't want your legal writings. How come you here, to begin with?"

Cradock told him all his story, while the men were busy; and the keen American saw at once that every word was true.

"Strikes me," he said, with a serious drawl, which the fun in his eyes contradicted, "that yoo, after the way of the British, have made a trifle free, young man, with some of my goods and chattels he-ar; and even your encro-aching country can't prove tittle to them."

"Yes," replied Cradock; "and I will pay you, if I have not done so already. I will give you the thing which has saved the whole from plunder, and perhaps fire afterwards."

Then he fetched the little machine, which the Yankee recognized at once as an American invention, and he laughed till his yellow cheeks were reeking at the description of the "darned naygurs'" retreat.

"Rip me up, young man," he said, "but yoo'd be a credit to us a'most. Darn'd if I thought as any Britisher wud ever be up to so cute a dodge. Shake hands agin, young chap, I likes yoo. And you've airned your ticket anywhor, and a hundred dollars to back of it. We'll take you to the centre of the univarsal world, and make you open yer eyes a bit. Ship aboard of us for Noo Yerk, and if that don't make a man of yoo, call me small pumpkins afterwards."

"But I want to get to England," said Cradock, looking very blank; "and I have no money for passage from New York to Southampton."

"Thur now, you be all over a Britisher agin, and reck-wirin enlight'ment. You allas spies out fifty raisons agin a thin' smarter than one in it's favior. Harken, now, I'll have yoo sot down in the docks of Suthanton, free, and with fifty dollars to trade upon, sure as my name is Recklesome Young. Thur, now! Bet, I don't, will yoo, and pay me out o' my own spisshy?"

Not to dwell too long upon these little side-paths, suffice it to say that Captain Recklesome Young, of New York, and the schooner, *Don't you wish you may catch me*, made sail two days afterwards, with half of his best cabin allotted to Cradock and to Wena. And, keen as he was to the shave of a hair, in striking a contract or cutting it; in a question of friendship he scorned all higgling, as a thing only fit for "darned niggers." No English duke or prince of the blood could or would have behaved to Cradock so grandly as Recklesome Young did, when once he understood him. In such things the Yankees are far ahead of us. Keen as they are, and for that same reason, they have far more trust than we have, in large and good human nature. Of the best of them, many a true tale has the present writer heard, such as bring tears to the eyes of a man accustomed to British suspicion; and such as one never could hope to hear of our noblest London merchants. Proofs of grand faith, and Godlike confidence in a friend once approved, and loved, which enlarge the heart of him who hears them, and makes him scorn small satire.

CHAPTER LVIII.

SUCH A SHOCK FOR GEORGIE.

BOB GARNET, with his trowel, and box, and net, and many other impediments, was going along very merrily, in a quiet path of the Forest, thinking sometimes of Amy and her fundamental errors, and sometimes of Eöa, and the way she could catch a butterfly, but for the most part busy with the display of life around him, and the prospects of a great boring family, which he had found in a willow-tree. Suddenly, near the stag-headed oak, he chanced upon young Eöa, tripping along the footpath lightly, smiling and blushing rosily, and oh! so surprised to see him! She darted aside, like a trout at a shadow, then, finding it too late for that game, she tried to pass him rapidly, with her long eyelashes drooping.

"Oh, please to stop a minute, if you can spare the time," said Bob; "what have I done to offend you?"

She stopped in a moment at his voice, and lifted her radiant eyes to him, and shyly tried to cloud away the sparkling night of hair, through which her white and slender throat gleamed like the Milky Way. The sprays of the wood and the winds of May had romped with her glorious tresses; and now she had been lectured so, that she doubted her right to show even her hair.

"Miss Nowell," said Bob, as she had not answered, but only been thinking about him, "only please to stop and tell me what I have done to offend you; and you do love beetles so—and you never saw such beauties—what have I done to offend you?"

An English maiden would have said, "Oh, nothing at all, Mr. Garnet;" and then swept on, with her crinoline embracing a thousand brambles.

But Eöa stood just where she was, with her bright lips pouting slightly, and her gaze absorbed by a tuft of moss.

"Only because you are not at all good-natured to me, Bob. But it doesn't make much difference."

Then she turned away from him, and began to sing a little song, and then called, "Amy, Amy!"

"Don't call Amy. I don't want her."

"Oh, I beg your pardon, I'm sure I rather thought you did."

"Eöa!" said Bob; and she looked at him, and the tears were in her eyes. And then she whispered, "Yes, Bob."

"You have got on the very prettiest dress I ever saw in all my life."

Here Bob was alarmed at his own audacity, and durst not watch the effect of his speech.

"Oh, is that all?" she answered. "But I am very glad indeed that you like—my frock, Bob." Here she looked down at it, with much interest.

"And, to tell you the truth," continued he "I think, if you will please not to be offended, that you look very well in it."

"Oh yes, I am very well. I wish I was ill, sometimes."

"Now, I don't mean that. What I mean is, very nice."

"Well, I always try to be nice. But how can I, out butterfly-hunting?"

"Now, you won't understand me. You are as bad as a weevil that won't take chloroform. What I mean is, very pretty."

"I don't know anything about that," said Eöa, drawing back; "and I don't see that you have any right even to talk about it. Oh, there goes a lovely butterfly!"

"Where, where? What eyes you have got! I do wish I was married to you. What a collection we would have! And you would never let my traps off. I am sure that you are a great deal better and prettier than Amy. And I like you more than anybody I have ever seen."

"Do you, Bob? Are you sure of that?"

She fixed her large eyes upon his; and in one moment her beauty went to the bottom of his heart. It changed him from a boy to a man, from play to passion, from dreams to thought. And happy for him that it was so, with the trouble impending over him.

She saw the change; herself too young, too simple (in spite of all the evil that ever had drifted by her) to know or ask what it meant. She only felt that Bob liked her now better than he liked Amy. She had no idea of the deep anticipation of her eyes.

"Eöa, won't you answer me?" He had been talking some nonsense. "Why are you crying so dreadfully? Do you hate me so much as all that?"

"Oh no, no, Bob. I am sure I don't hate you at all. I only wish I did. No, I don't, Bob. I am so glad that I don't. I don't care a quarter so much, Bob, for all the rest of the world put together."

"Then only look up at me, Eöa. I can't tell what I am saying. Only look up. You are so nice. And you have got such eyes."

"Have I?" said Eöa, throwing all their splendour on him; "oh, I am so glad you like them."

"Do you think that you could give me just a sort of a kiss, Eöa? People always do, you know. And, indeed I feel that you ought to do something of that sort, you know."

"I scarcely know what is right, Bob, after all the things they have told me. But perhaps you understand the proper thing in this country, Bob."

"Then, I'll tell you what. Just let me give you one. The leaves are coming out so."

"Well, that's a different thing," said Eöa. "Amy can't see us, can she?"

* * * * * *

Sir Cradock was very angry when his niece came home, and told him, with an air of triumph, all that Bob had said to her.

"That butterfly-hunting boy, Eöa! To think of his presuming so! A mere boy! A boy like that!"

"That's the very thing, uncle. If he had been a girl, you know, I might not have liked him half so much. And as for his hunting butterflies, I like him all the better for that. And we'll hunt them all day long."

"Oh!" exclaimed Uncle Cradock, smiling at the young girl's earnestness in spite of his indignation; "that is your idea of married life then, is it? But we must not think of such nonsense, Eöa: he is not your equal."

"Of course not, uncle. He is my superior in every possible way."

"Scarcely so, in the matter of birth; and as for money—he has none."

"For both of those I don't care two pice. You know it is all very nice, Uncle Cradock, to live in large rooms, where you can put three chairs together, and jump over them all without even knocking your head, and to have beautiful books, and prawns for breakfast, and flowers all the year round; and to be able to scold people without their daring to argue about it. That is all very nice; but I could do without a single bit of it—but I never could do without Bob."

"I fear you must, indeed, my dear. As other people have had to do."

"Well, I don't see why, unless God takes him; and then He should take me too. And, indeed, I had better tell you once for all, Uncle Cradock, that I do not mean to try. It would be so shabby of me, after what I told him just now, and after his saving my life; and you yourself said yesterday that no Nowell had ever been shabby. You have been very kind to me and good; and I love you very much, I am sure. But in spite of all that, I wish you clearly to understand, Uncle Cradock, that if you try any nonsense with me, I shall get my darling father's money, and go and live away from you."

"My dear," said the old man, smiling at the manner and tone of her menace, which she delivered as if her departure must at least annihilate him, "you are laying your plans too rapidly. You are not seventeen until next July; and you cannot touch your poor father's money until you are twenty-one."

"What do I care for that?" she answered; "he is sure to have been right about it. But I will tell you another thing. Everybody says that I could earn ten thousand a year as an opera-dancer in

London. And I should like it very much,—that is to say, if Bob did. And I would not think of changing my name, as they say that you made your son do. I should be 'Miss Eöa Nowell, the celebrated dancer.'"

"God forbid!" said Sir Cradock. "My only brother's only child! My darling, how little you know of the things you talk about so lightly! Have I not been kind to you, my pretty dear Eöa?"

"Yes, to be sure, you have, Uncle Cradock; kinder than ever I can deserve. And I would do anything to please you, except about giving up my poor Bob. I like him ten times as much since you told me that he has got no money. I never knew any one fit for anything after they got money. All they think of, is more and more, and to starve themselves, and everybody. You know, Uncle Cradock, you do it yourself, because you have got such a lot of money."

"What do you mean, Eöa?"

"As if you did not know now! You know you are starving your own son, my poor Cousin Cradock. I am sure he was very nice, uncle, from what everybody says of him, and I am quite certain that you behaved very badly to him."

"My dear, you are allowed to say what you like, because nobody can stop you. But your own good feeling should make you spare me the pain of that sad subject."

"Not if you deserve the pain for having been hard-hearted. And much you cared for my pain, when you spoke of Bob so. Besides, you are quite sure to hear of it; and it had better come from me, dear uncle, who am so considerate."

"Something new? What is it, my child? I can bear almost any thing now."

"It is that some vile wretches are trying to get what they call a warrant against him, and so to put him in jail."

"Put him in jail? My unfortunate son! What more has he been doing?"

"Nothing at all. And I don't believe that he ever did any harm. But what the brutes say is that he did that terrible thing on purpose. Oh, uncle, don't look at me like that. How I wish I had never told you!"

Sir Cradock Nowell's mind was not so clear and strong as it had been; although the rumours scattered by Georgie were shameful exaggerations. The habit of brooding over his grief, whenever he was alone—a habit more and more indulged, till it grew into a morbid pleasure—the loss moreover of his wonted air, and wholesome exercise (for he never would go out riding now, having no son to ride with him) these, and the ever-present dread of some inevitable inquiry, were now beginning to cloud and darken a quick and clear intelligence.

He fell into the depths of an easy-chair, and wondered what it was he had heard. The lids of his mind's eye had taken a blink, as will happen sometimes to old people, and to young ones too for that matter; neither was it the first time this thing had befallen him.

Then Eöa told him again what it was, because he made her tell it; and again it shocked him dreadfully; but that time he remembered it.

"And I have no doubt," continued his niece, with bright tears on her cheeks, "that Mrs. Corklemore herself is at the bottom of it."

"Georgie! What, my niece Georgie!"

"She is not your niece, Uncle Cradock. I am your niece, and nobody else; and you had better not think of wronging me. If you call her your niece any more, I know I will never call you my uncle. Nasty limy slimy thing! If you would only give me leave to choke her!"

"My darling child," cried her uncle, who loved her the more (though he knew it not) for siding with his son so, "you are so very hot and hasty. I am sure Mrs. Corklemore speaks of you with the warmest pity and affection."

"Shall I tell you why she does, Uncle Crad? Shall I tell you in plain English? Most likely you will be shocked, you know."

"My dear, I am so used to you, that I am never shocked now at anything."

"Then it is because she is such a jolly liar."

"Eöa, I really must send you to a 'nice institution for young ladies.' You get worse and worse."

"If you do, I'll jump over the wall the first night, and Bob shall come to catch me. But now without any nonsense, uncle, for you do talk a good deal of nonsense, will you promise me one thing?"

"A dozen, if you like, my darling. Anything in reason. You did look so like your poor father then."

"Oh, I am so glad of that. But it is not a thing of reason, uncle; it is simply a thing of justice. Now will you promise solemnly to send away Mrs. Corklemore, and never speak to her again, if she vows that she knows nothing of this, and if I prove from her own handwriting that it is her plot altogether, and also another plot against us, every bit as bad, if not worse?"

"Of course, Eöa, I will promise you that, as solemnly as you please. What a deluded child you are!"

"Am I? Now let her come in, and deny it. That's the first part of the business."

Without waiting for an answer, she ran to fetch Mrs. Corklemore, whom she well knew where to find, that time of the afternoon. Dear Georgie had just had her cup of tea with the darling Flore, in her private audience-chamber—"oratory" she called it, though all her few prayers were public; and now she was meditating what dress she should wear at dinner. Those dinners were so dreadfully

dull, unless she could put Eöa into a vehement passion—which was not very hard to do—and so exhibit her in a pleasant light before the serving-men. Yet, strange to say, although the young lady observed little moderation, when she was baited thus, and sunk irony in invective, the sympathies of the audience were far more often on her side than on that of the soft tormentor.

"Come, now, Sugar-plums," said Eöa, who often addressed her so, "we want you down-stairs, if you please, for a minute."

"Tum, pease, Oh Ah," cried little Flore, running up; "pease tum, and tell Fore a tory."

"Can't now, you good little child. And your mamma tells stories so cleverly, oh, so very cleverly, it quite takes away one's breath."

"I'll have my change out of you at dinner-time," said Georgie to herself most viciously, as she followed down the passage.

Eöa led her along at a pace which made her breath quite short, for she was not wont to hurry so, and she dropped right gladly into the chair which Sir Cradock politely set for her. Then, as he himself sat down, facing her with a heavy sigh, Georgie felt rather uncomfortable. She was not quite ready for the crisis, but feared that it was coming. And she saw at a glimpse that her hated foe, "Never-spot-the-dust," was quite ready, burning indeed to begin, only wanting to make the most of it. Thereupon Mrs. Corklemore, knowing the value of the weather-gage, and being unable to bear a slow silence, was the first to speak.

"Something has occurred, I see, to one of you two dear ones. Oh, Uncle Cradock, what can I do to prove the depth of my regard for you? Or——"

"To be sure, *the depth* of your regard," Eöa interrupted.

"Or is it for you, you poor wild thing? We all make such allowance for you, because of your great disadvantages. If you have done anything very wrong indeed, poor darling, anything which hard people would call not only thoughtless but unprincipled, I can feel for you so truly, because of your hot temperament and most unhappy circumstances."

"You had better not go too far!" cried Eöa, grinding her little teeth.

"Thank Heaven! I see, dear, it is nothing so very disgraceful after all, because it has nothing to do with you, or you would not smile so prettily. You take it so lightly, it must be something about dear Uncle Cradock. Oh, Uncle Cradock, tell me all about it; my whole heart will be with you."

"Our silky hen has broken her eggs. Nothing more," said Eöa. "De-ar, oh we do love you so!" She made two syllables of that word, as Mr. Corklemore used to do, in her many gushing moments. Georgie looked at Eöa with wonder. How stupid to think her a stupid!

Then Sir Cradock Nowell rose, in a stately manner, to put an end to all this little nonsense.

"My niece, Eöa, declares, Mrs. Corklemore, that you, in some underhand manner, have promoted a horrible charge against my poor son Cradock, a charge which no person in any way connected with our family should ever dare to utter, even if he or she believed its justice, far less dare to bring forward, and even force into the courts of law. Is this so, or is it not?"

"Oh, Uncle Cradock, how can you speak so? What charge should I ever dream of?"

"See how her hands are trembling, and how white her lips are; not with telling black lies, Uncle Cradock, but with being found out."

"Eöa, have the kindness not to interrupt again."

"Very well, Uncle Cradock; I won't, unless you make me."

"Then, as I understand, madam, you deny entirely the truth of this accusation?"

"Of course I do, most emphatically. What can you all be dreaming about?"

"Now, Eöa, it is your turn to establish what you have said."

"I can't establish anything, though I know it, Uncle Cradock."

"Know it, indeed, you poor wild nautch-girl! Dreamed it you mean, I suppose."

"I mean," continued Eöa, not even looking at her, but bending her fingers in a manner which Georgie quite understood, "that I cannot prove anything, Uncle Cradock, without your permission. But here I have a letter, with the seal unbroken, and which I promised some one not to open without her leave, and now she has given me leave to open it, with your consent, and in the presence of the writer. Why, how pale you are, Mrs. Corklemore!"

"My Heavens! And this is England! Stealing letters, and forging them——"

"Which of the two do you mean, madam?" asked Sir Cradock, looking at her in his old magisterial manner, after examining the envelope; "either involves a heavy charge against a member of my family. Is this letter yours, or not?"

"Yes, it is," replied Georgie, after a moment's debate, for if she called it a forgery, it must of course be opened; "have the kindness to give me my property. I thought there was among well-bred people a delicacy as to scrutinizing even the directions of one another's letters."

"So there is, madam; you are quite right—except, indeed, under circumstances altogether exceptional, and of which this is one. Now for your own exculpation, and to prove that my niece deserves heavy punishment (which I will take care to inflict), allow me to open this letter. I see it is merely a business letter, or I would not ask even that; although you have so often assured me that you have no secret in the world from me. You can have nothing confidential to say to 'Simon Chope, Esq.;' and if you had, it should remain sacred and

secure with me, unless it involved the life and honour of my son. Shall I open this letter?"

"Certainly not, Sir Cradock Nowell. How dare you to think of such a thing, so mean, so low, so prying?"

"After those words, madam, you cannot continue to be a guest of mine; or be ever received in this house again, unless you prove that I have wronged you, by allowing me to send for your husband, and to place this letter in his hands, before you have in any way communicated with him."

"Give me my letter, Sir Cradock Nowell, unless your niece inherits the thieving art from you. As for you, wretched little Dacoit," here she bent upon Eöa flashing eyes quite pale from wrath, for sweet Georgie had her temper, "bitterly you shall rue the day when you presumed to match yourself with me. You would like to do a little murder, I see. No doubt it runs in the family; and the Thugs and Dacoits are first cousins, of course."

Never had Eöa fought so desperate a battle with herself, as now to keep her hands off Georgie. Without looking at her again, she very wisely ran away, for it was the only chance of abstaining. Mrs. Corklemore laughed aloud; then she took the letter, which the old man had placed upon the table, and said to him, with a kind look of pity,—

"What a fuss you have made about nothing! It is only a question upon the meaning of a clause in my marriage-settlement; but I do not choose to have my business affairs exposed, even to my husband. Now do you believe me, Uncle Cradock?"

"No, I cannot say that I do, madam. And it does not matter whether I do or not. You have used language about my family which I can never forget. A carriage will be at your service at any moment you please."

"Thanks for your hospitable hint. You will soon find your mistake, I think, in having made me your enemy; though your rudeness is partly excused, no doubt, by your growing hallucinations. Farewell for the present, poor dear Sir Cradock Nowell."

With these words, Mrs. Corklemore made him an elegant curtsy, and swept away from the room, without even the glisten of a tear to mar her gallant bearing, although she had been so outraged. But when she got little Flore's head on her lap, she cried over it very vehemently, and felt the depth of her injury.

When she had closed the door behind her (not with any vulgar bang, but firmly and significantly), the master of the house walked over to a panelled mirror, and inspected himself uncomfortably. It was a piece of ancient glass, purchased from an Italian chapel by some former Cradock Nowell, and bearing a mystic name and fame among the maids who dusted it. By them it was supposed to have a weird prophetic power, partly, no doubt, from its deep dark lustre, and partly because it was circular, and ever so slightly, and quite

imperceptibly, concave. As upon so broad a surface no concavity could be, in the early ages of mechanism, made absolutely true—and for that matter it cannot be done quite perfectly, even now—there were, of course, many founts of error in this Italian mirror. Nevertheless, all young ladies who ever beheld it were charmed with it, so sweetly deeply beautiful, like Galatea watching herself and finding Polypheme over her shoulder, in the glass of the blue Sicilian sea.

To this glass Sir Cradock Nowell went to examine his faded eyes, time-worn, trouble-worn, stranded by the ebbing of the brain. He knew too well what Mrs. Corklemore meant by her last thrust; and the word "hallucination" happened, through a great lawsuit then in progress, to be invested with an especial prominence and significance. While he was sadly gazing into the convergence of grey light, and feebly reassuring himself, yet like his image wavering, a heavy step was heard behind him, and beside his flowing silvery locks appeared the close-cropped massive brow and the gloomy eyes of Bull Garnet.

CHAPTER LIX.

MR. GARNET DECLARES HIMSELF.

As the brothers confronted one another, the well-born and the base-born, the man of tact and the man of force, the luxurious and the labourer, strangely unlike in many respects, more strangely alike in others; each felt kindly and tenderly, yet timidly, for the other.

The old man thought of the lying wrong inflicted upon the stronger one by their common father; the other felt the worse wrong done by himself to his brother. The measure of such things is not for us. God knows, and deals with, and forgives them.

Even by the failing light—for the sun was westering, and a cloud flowed over him—each could see that the other's face was not as it should be, that the flight of weeks was drawing age on, more than the lapse of years should.

"Garnet, you do a great deal too much. I shall recall my urgent request, if you look so harassed and haggard. Take a holiday now for a month, before the midsummer rents fall due. I will try to do without you; though I may want you any day."

"I will do nothing of the sort; work is needful for me—without it I should die. But you also look very unwell. You must not attempt to prescribe for me."

"I have not been happy lately. By-and-by things will be better. What is your impression of Mrs. Nowell Corklemore?"

"That she is an arrant hypocrite, unscrupulous, foul, and deadly."

"Well, that is plain speaking; and by no means complimentary. Poor Georgie, I hope you misjudge her, as she says bad people always do. But for the present she is gone. There has been a great fight, all along, between her and Eöa; they could not bear one another. And now my niece has discovered a thing which brings me to her side in the matter; for she at least is genuine."

"That she is indeed, and genuinely passionate; you may trust her with anything. She has been very rude indeed to me; and yet I like her wonderfully. What has she discovered?"

"That Mrs. Corklemore is at the bottom of this horrible application for a warrant against my son."

"I can well believe it. It struck me in a moment; though I cannot see her object. I never understand plotting."

"Neither do I, Garnet; I only know she has made me insult the dearest friend I ever had or shall have upon earth."

"Yes, Mr. Rosedew; I heard of it, and was astonished at your weakness. But it did not become me to interfere."

"Certainly not: most certainly not. You could not expect me to bear it. And the Rosedews never liked you."

"That has nothing to do with it. Very probably they are right; for I do not like myself. And you will not dislike, but loathe me, when you know what I have to say."

Bull Garnet's mind was now made up. For months he had been thinking, forecasting, doubting, wavering—a condition of mind so strange to him, so adrift from all his landmarks, that this alone, without sense of guilt, would have kept him in constant wretchedness.

Sir Cradock Nowell only said, "Keep it for another time. I cannot bear any more excitement; I have had so much to-day already."

Bull Garnet looked at him sorrowfully. He could not bear to see his brother beaten so by trouble, and to feel his own hard hand in it.

"Don't you know what they say of me? Oh, you know what they say of me; and nothing of the kind in the family!" The old man seemed to prove that there was, by the vague flashing of his eyes: "Garnet, you are my brother; after all, you are my brother. And they say I am going mad; and I know they will try to shut me up, without a horse, or a book, or a boy to brush my trousers. Oh, Garnet, you have been bitterly wronged, shamefully wronged, detestably; but you will not let your own brother—brother, who has no sons now to protect him,—be shut up, and made nothing

of? Bull Garnet, promise me this, although we have so wronged you."

Garnet knew not what to do. Even he was taken aback, shocked by this sudden outburst, which partly proved what it denied. And this altogether changed the form of the confession he was come to make—and changed it for the better.

"My brother"—it was the first time he had ever so addressed him; not from diffidence, but from pride—"my brother, let us look at things, if possible, as God made them. I have been basely wronged myself, almost as much as my mother was—blasted, both of us, for life, according to the little ideas of this creeping world. In many cases, the thief is the rogue; in even more, the robbed one is the only villain. Now can you take the large view of things which is forced upon us outsiders when we dare to think at all?"

"I cannot think now of such abstract things. My mind is astray with trouble. Did I ever tell you your mother's words, when she came here ten or twelve years ago, and demanded a share of the property? Not for her own sake, but for yours, to get you into some business."

"No, I never heard of it. How it must have wrung her proud heart!" Bull Garnet was astonished; because it had long been understood that his mother should not be spoken of.

"And mine as well. I gave her a cheque for a liberal sum, as I thought. She tore it, and threw it at me. What more could I do? Did I deserve her curse, Garnet? Is all this trouble come upon me because I did not obey her?"

"I believe that you meant to do exactly what was right."

"I hope—I believe, I did. And see how wrong she was in one part of her prediction. She said that I, and my father also, should pay the penalty through you, through you, her only son. Could she have made any greater mistake? You, who are my right arm and brain; my only hope, my support, and comfort!"

Sir Cradock Nowell came up, and looked with the deepest trust and admiration at his unacknowledged brother. A few months ago, Bull Garnet would have taken such a look as his truest and best revenge for the cruel wrong to his mother. But now he fell away from it, and muttered something, sad and dark, and choked with his own misery. His mind had been settled to come and tell all; but how could he do it now, and wrench the old man's latest hope away?

Then suddenly he remembered, or knew from his own feelings, that an old man's last hope in earthly matters should rest upon no friend or brother, nor even upon a wife, but upon his own begotten, his successors in the world. And what he had to say, while tearing all reliance from himself, would replace it where it should be.

Meanwhile Sir Cradock Nowell, thinking that Garnet was too grateful for a few kind words, followed him, and placed his slender tremulous and pure-bred hand in the useful cross-bred palm which had sent Mr. Jupp down the coal-shaft.

"Bull, you are my very best friend. After all, we are brothers. Promise to defend me."

But Garnet only withdrew his hand, and sighed, and could not look at him.

"Oh, then, even you believe it; I see you do! It must be true. God have mercy upon me!"

"Cradock, it is a cursed lie; you must not dwell upon it. Such thoughts are spawn of madness. Turn to another subject. Just tell me what is the greatest thing one man can do to another?"

"To love him, I suppose, Garnet. But I don't care much for that sort of thing, since I lost my children."

"Yes, it is a grand thing to love; but far grander to forgive."

"Is it? I am glad to hear it. I always could forgive."

"Little things, you mean, no doubt. Slights and slurs—and so forth?"

"Yes, and great things also. But I am not what I was. You know what I have had to go through—many things, yes, many things; I cannot remember half of them."

"Can you forgive as deep a wrong as one man ever did to another?"

"Yes, I dare say. I am sure I don't know. What makes you look at me like that?"

"Because I shot your son Clayton; and because I did it on purpose."

"Viley! my boy Viley shooting! Oh, I had forgotten. What a stupid thing of me! I thought he was dead somehow. Now, I will open the door for him, because his hands are full. And let him put his game on the table—never mind the papers—he always likes me to see it. Oh, Viley, how long you have been away! What a bag you must have made! Come in, my boy; come in."

Bull Garnet's heart cleaved to his side, as the old man opened the door, and looked, with the leaping joy of a father's love, for his pet, his beloved, his treasured one. But nothing except cold air came in.

"The passage is empty. Perhaps he is waiting, because his boots are dirty. Tell him not to think twice about that. I am fidgety sometimes, I know; and I scolded him last Friday. But now he may come any how, if he will only come to me. I am so dull without him."

"You will never see him more"—Bull Garnet whispered through a flood of tears, like grass waving out of water—"until it pleases God to take you home, where son and father go alike; sometimes

one first, sometimes other, as His holy will is. He came to an unholy end. I tell you again—I shot him."

"Excuse me; I don't quite catch your words. There was a grey hare, with a nick in her ear, who came to the breakfast-room window all through the hard weather last winter, and he promised me not to shoot her; and I am sure that he cannot have done it, because he is so soft-hearted, and that is why I love him so. Talk of Cradock—talk of Cradock! Perhaps he is cleverer than Viley—though I never will believe it—but is he half so soft and sweet? Will the pigeons sit on his shoulder so, and the dogs nuzzle under his coat-lap? Tell me that—tell me that—Bull Garnet."

He leaned on the strong arm of his steward, and looked eagerly for his answer; then trembled with an exceeding great fear, to see that he was weeping. That such a man should weep! But Garnet forced himself to speak.

"You cannot listen to me now; I will come again, and talk to you. God knows the agony to me; and worst of all that it is for nothing. Yet all of it is not a thousandth part of the anguish I have caused. Perhaps it is wisest so. Perhaps it is for my children's sake that I, who have killed your pet child, cannot make you know it. Yet it adds to my despair, that I have killed the father also."

Scarcely knowing voice from silence, dazed himself, and blurred, and giddy—so strong is contagion of the mind—Bull Garnet went to the stables, saddled a horse without calling groom, and rode off at full gallop to Dr. Buller. By the time he got there his business habits and wonted fashion of thought had returned, and he put what he came for in clear form, tersely, crisply, dryly, as if in the world there were no such thing as ill-regulated emotion—except on the part of other people.

"Not a bit of it," said Dr. Buller; "his mind is as sound as yours or mine, and his constitution excellent. He has been troubled of course a good deal; but bless me—I know a man who lost his three children in a month, and could scarcely pay for their coffins, sir. And his wife only six weeks afterwards. That is what I call trouble, sir!"

Bull Garnet knew, from glistening eyes, and the quivering of grey locks, that the man Dr. Buller was speaking of happened to be his own only son.

Reassured about Sir Cradock, yet fearing to try him further at present, Mr. Garnet went heavily homewards, after begging Dr. Buller to call, as if by chance, at the Hall, observe, and attend to the master.

Heavily and wearily Bull Garnet went to the home which once had been so sweet to him, and was now beloved so painfully. The storms of earth were closing round him, only the stars of heaven were bright. Myriad as the forest leaves, and darkly moving in

like manner, fears, and doubts, and miseries sprang and trembled through his heart and soul.

No young maid at his door to meet him lovingly and gaily. None to say, "Oh, darling father, how hungry you must be, dear!" Only Pearl, so wan and cold, and scared of soft affection. And as she timidly approached, then dropped her eyes before his gaze, and took his hat submissively, as if she had no lips to kiss, no hand to lay on his shoulder, he saw with one quick glance that still some new grief had befallen her, that still another trouble was come to make its home with her.

"What is it, Pearl?" he asked her sadly; "come in here and tell me." He never called her his Pearly now, his little native, or pretty pet, as he used to do in the old days. They had dropped those little endearments.

"You will be sorry to hear it—sorry, I mean, that it happened; but I could not have done otherwise."

"I never hear anything, now, Pearl, but what I am sorry to hear. This cannot make much difference."

"So I suppose," she answered. "Mr. Pell has been here to-day, and—and—oh, father, you know what."

"Indeed I have not been told of anything. What do I know of Mr. Pell?"

"More than he does of you, sir. He asked me to be his wife."

"He is a good man. But of course you said 'No.'"

"Of course I did. Of course, of course. What else can I ever say?"

She leaned her white cheek on the high oak mantel, and a little deep sob came from her heart.

"Would you have liked to say 'Yes,' Pearl?" her father asked very softly, going to put his arm round her waist, and then shrinking back from doing it.

"Oh no! oh no! At least, not yet, though I respect him very highly. But I told him that I never could, and never could tell him the reason. And oh, I was so sorry for him—he looked so hurt, and disappointed."

"You shall tell him the reason very soon, or rather the newspapers shall."

"Father, don't say that; dear father, you are bound for our sake. I don't care for him one atom, father, compared with—compared with you, I mean. Only I thought I must tell you, because—oh, you know what I mean. And even if I did like him, what would it matter about me? Oh, father, I often think that I have been too hard upon you, and all of it through me, and my vile concealment!"

"My daughter, I am not worthy of you. Would God that you could forgive me!"

"I have done it long ago, my father. Do you think a child of yours could help it, after all your anguish?"

"My child, look kindly at me; try to look as if you loved me."

She turned to him with such a look as a man only gets once in his life, and then she fell upon his neck, and forgot the world and all it held, except her own dear father. Wrong he might have done, wrong he had done; but who was she, his little child, to remember it against him?

She lay for a moment in his arms, overcome with passion, leaning back, as she had done there, when a weanling infant. For him it was the grandest moment of his passionate life—a father's powerful love, ennobled by the presence of his God. Such a moment teaches us the grandeur of our race, the traces of a higher world stamped on us indelibly. Then we feel, and try to own, that in spite of satire, cynicism, and the exquisite refinements of the purest selfishness, there is, in even the sharpest and the shallowest of us, something kind and solid, some abiding element of the all-pervading goodness.

"Now I will go through with it"—Bull Garnet was recovering—"my own child; go and fetch your brother, if it will not be too much for you. If you think it will, only send him."

"Father, I will fetch him. I may be able to help you both. And now I am so much better."

Presently she returned with Bob, who looked rather plagued and uncomfortable, with a great slice of cork in one hand and a bottle of gum in the other, and a regular housewife of needles in the lappet of his coat. He was going to mount a specimen of a variety of "devil's coach-horse," which he had never seen before, and whose tail was forked like a trident.

"Never can let me alone," said Bob; "just ready to begin I was; and I am sure to spoil his thorax. He is getting stiff every moment."

Bull Garnet looked at him brightly and gladly, even at such a time. Little as he knew or cared about the things that crawl and hop—as he ignorantly put it—skilled no more in natural history than our early painters were, yet from his own strong sense he perceived that his son had a special gift; and a special gift is genius, and may (with good luck) climb eminence. Then he thought of what he had to tell him, and the power of his heart was gone.

It was the terror of this moment which had dwelt with him night and day, more than the fear of public shame, of the gallows, or of hell. To be loathed and scorned by his only son! Oh that Pearl had not been so true; oh that Bob suspected something, or had even found it out for himself! Then the father felt that now came part of his expiation.

Bob looked at him quite innocently with wonder and some fear. To him "the governor" long had been the strangest of all puzzles,

sometimes so soft and loving, sometimes so hard and terrible. Perhaps poor Bob would catch it now for his doings with Eöa.

"Sit down there, my son. Not there, but further from me. Don't be at all afraid, my boy. I have no fault to find with you. I am far luckier in my son, than you are in your father. You must try to bear terrible news, Bob. Your sister long has borne it."

Pearl, who was ghastly pale and trembling, stole a glance at each of them from the dark end of the room, then came up bravely into the lamplight, took Bob's hand and kissed him, and sat close by to comfort him.

Bull Garnet sighed from the depths of his heart. His children seemed to be driven from him, and to crouch together in fear of him.

"It serves me right. I know that, of course. That only makes it the worse to bear."

"Father, what is it?" cried Bob, leaping up, and dropping his cork-slice and gum-bottle; "whatever the matter is, father, tell me, that I may stand by you."

"You cannot stand by me in this. When you know what it is, you will fly from me."

"Will I, indeed! A likely thing. Oh, father, you think I am such a soft, because I am fond of little things."

"Would you stand by your father, Bob, if you knew that he was a murderer?"

"Oh come," said Bob, "you are drawing it a little too strong, dad. You never could be that, you know."

"I not only can be, but am, my son."

Father and son looked at one another. The governor standing square and broad, with his shoulders thrown well back, and no trace of emotion in form or face, except that his quick wide nostrils quivered, and his lips were white. The stripling gazing up at him, seeking for some sign of jest, seeking for a ray of laughter in his father's eyes; too young to comprehend the power and fury and stillness of large passion.

Ere either spoke another word—for the father was hurt at the son's delay, and the son felt all abroad in his head—between them glided Pearl, the daughter, the sister, the gentle woman—the one most wronged of all, and yet the dearest one to forgive it.

"Darling, he did it for my sake," she whispered to her brother, though it cut through her heart to say it. "Father, oh father, Bob is so slow; don't be angry with him. Come to me a moment, father, for I still shall love and honour you!"

Those last few words to the passionate man were like heaven poured into hell. That a child of his should still honour him! He kissed her with tenfold the love that young man has for maiden; then he turned away and could not, for the moment, speak or think.

Very little more was said. Pearl went away to Bob, and whis-

pered how this fate befell; and Bob wept great tears for her sake, and most of all for his father's sake. Then, as the father lay cramped up upon the little sofa, wrestling with the power of life and the promise of death, Bob came up, and kissed him dearly on his rugged forehead.

"Is that you, my own dear son? God is far too good to me."

CHAPTER LX.

BEFORE THE EXAMINERS.

THAT night the man of violence enjoyed the first sweet dreamless sleep that had spread its velvet shield between him and his guilt and sorrow. Pearl, who had sat up late with Bob, comforting and crying with him, listened at her father's door, and heard his quiet breathing. Through many months of trouble, now, she had watched him kindly, tenderly, fearing ever some wild outbreak upon others or himself, hiding in her empty heart all its desolation.

The very next day, Bull Garnet resolved to have it out with his son; not to surprise him by emotion to a hasty issue, but now to learn what he thought and felt, after taking his time about it. All this we need not try to tell, only so much as bears upon the staple of the story.

"Father, I know that you had—you had good reason for doing it."

"There could be no good reason. There might be, and were many bad ones. Of this I will not speak to you. I did it in violence and fury, and under a false impression. When I saw him, with his arm cast round my pure and darling Pearl, and when I thought of my mother's wrong, Satan's rage is a baby's rattle compared to the fury of my heart. He had his gun, and I had mine; I had taken it to shoot a squirrel which meddled with our firework nonsense. I tore her from him before I could speak, thrust her aside, stepped back two paces, gave him 'one, two, three,' and fired. He had time to fire in self-defence, and his muzzle was at my head, and his finger on the trigger; but there it crooked, and he could not pull. Want of nerve, I suppose. I saw his finger shaking, and then I saw him fall. Now, my son, you know everything."

"Why, father, after all then, it was nothing worse than a duel. He had just the same chance of killing you, and would have done it, only you were too quick for him."

"Even to retain your love, I will have no lie in the matter, Bob;

although a duel, in my opinion, is only murder made game of. But this was no duel, no manslaughter even, but an act of downright murder. No English jury could help convicting me, and I will never plead insanity. It was the inevitable result of inborn violence and self-will, growing and growing from year to year, and strengthened by wrongs of which you know little. God knows that I have fought against it; but my weapon was pride, not humility. Now let this miserable subject never be recurred to by us, at least in words, till the end comes. As soon as I hear that poor innocent Cradock is apprehended, and brought to England, I shall surrender myself and confess. But for your sake and poor Pearly's, I should have done so at the very outset. Now it is very likely that I may not have the option. Two persons know that I did it, although they have no evidence, so far as I am aware; a third person more than suspects it, and is seeking about for the evidence. Moreover, Sir Cradock Nowell, to whom, as I told you, I owned my deed, although he could not then understand me, may have done so since, or may hereafter do so, at any lucid interval."

"Oh, father, father, he never would be so mean——"

"He is bound by his duty to do it—and for his living son's sake he must. I only tell you these things, my son, to spare you a part of the shock. One month now is all I crave, to do my best for you two darlings. I will not ruin the chance by going again to poor Sir Cradock. God saved me from my own rash words, doubtless for your pure sake. Now, knowing all, and reflecting upon it, can you call me still your father, Bob?"

This was one of the times that tell whether a father has through life thought more of himself or of his children. If of himself, they fall away, like Southern ivies in a storm, parasites which cannot cling, but glide on the marble surface. But if he has made his future of them, closer they cling, and clasp more firmly, like our British ivy engrailed into the house wall.

So the Garnet family clung together, although no longer blossoming, but flagging sorely with blight and canker, and daily fear of the woodman. Bob, of course, avoided Eöa, to her great indignation, though he could not quite make up his mind to tell her that all was over, without showing reason for it. In the forcing temperature of trouble, he was suddenly become a man, growing daily more like his father, in all except the violence. He roamed no more through the wilds of the forest, but let the birds nest comfortably, the butterflies hover in happiness, and the beetle cast his shard unchallenged. All those things he might care for again, if he ever recovered his comfort.

Now Eöa, as everybody knew, did not by any means embody the spirit of toleration. She would hardly allow any will but her own in anything that concerned her. In a word, she was a child, a very warm-hearted and lovely one, but therefore all the more requiring a strong will founded on common sense to lead her into the life-

brunt. And so, if she must have Bob some day, she had better have him consolidated, though reduced to three per cent.

Not discerning her own interests, she would have been wild as a hare ought to be at the vernal equinox, but for one little fact. There was nobody to be jealous of. Darling Amy, whom she loved as all young ladies love one another—until they see cause to the contrary—sweet thing, she was gone to Oxford with her dear, good father. They had slipped off without any fuss at all (except from Biddy O'Gaghan, who came and threw an old shoe at them), because Mr. Rosedew, in the first place, felt that he could not bear any public farewell, and thought, in the second place, that it would be an uncourteous act towards Sir Cradock Nowell to allow any demonstration. And yet it was notorious that even Job Hogstaff had arranged to totter down on Mark Stote's arm, followed by a dozen tenants (all of whom had leases), and the rank and file of Nowelhurst who had paid their house-rent; and then there would be a marshalling outside the parsonage-gate; and upon the appearance of the fly, Job with his crutch would testify, whereupon a shout would arise pronouncing everlasting divorce between Church and State in Nowelhurst, undying gratitude to the former, and defiance of the latter power.

Yet all this programme was set at nought by the departure of John and his household gods at five o'clock one May morning. Already he had received assurance from some of his ancient co-mates at Oriel (most cohesive of colleges) that they would gladly welcome him, and find him plenty of work to do. In less than six weeks' time, of course, the long vacation would begin. What of that? Let him come at once, and with his widespread reputation he must have the pick of all the men who would stay up to read for honours. For now the fruit of a lifetime lore was ripening over his honoured head, not (like that of Tantalus) wafted into the cloud-land, not even waiting to be plucked at, but falling unawares into his broad and simple bosom, where it might lie uncared for, except for the sake of Amy. So large a mind had long outlived the little itch for fame, wrongly perhaps supposed to be "the last infirmity of noble minds." Their first it is, beyond all doubt; and wisely nature orders it. Their last is far more apt to be—at least in this generation—contempt of fame, and man, and God, except for practical purposes.

Mr. Rosedew's careful treatises upon the Sabellian and Sabello-Oscan elements had stirred up pleasant controversy in the narrow world of scholars; and now at the trito-megistic blow of the Roseororine hammer, ringing upon no less a theme than the tables of Iguvium, the wise men who sit round the board of classical education, even Jupiter Grabovius (the original of John Bull), had clapped their hands and cried, "Hear, hear! He knows what he is talking of; and he is one of us."

That, after all, is the essence of it—to know what one is talking of. And the grand advantage of the ancient universities is, not the tone of manners, not the knowledge of life—rather a hat-box thing with them—not even the high ideal, the manliness, and the chivalry, which the better class of men win ; but the curt knowledge, whether or not they are talking of what they know. *Scire quod nescias* is taught, if they teach us nothing else. And though we are all still apt to talk, especially among ladies, of things beyond our acquaintance—else haply we talk but little—we do so with a qualm, and quasi, and quemadmodum, and fluttering sense that effrontery is not—but leads to—"pluck."

As they rose the hill towards Carfax, Amy (tired as she was) trembled with excitement. Her father had won a cure in St. Oles —derived no doubt from *oleo*—and all were to lodge in Pembroke Lane, pending mature arrangements. Though they might have turned off near the jail, and saved a little cab fare, John would go by the broader way, as his fashion always was ; except in a little post-humous matter, wherein perhaps we have over-defined with brimstone the direction-posts.

Be that as it may,—not to press the *scire quod nescias* (potential in such a case, we hope, rather than conjunctive)—there they must be left, all three, with Jenny and Jemima outside, and Jem Pottles on the pavement, amazed at the cheek of everything. Only let one thing be said. Though prettier girl than Amy Rosedew had never stepped on the stones of Oxford since the time of Amy Robsart, if even then,—never once was she insulted.

Lowest of all low calumnies. There are blackguards among university men, as everybody knows, and as there must be among all men. But even those blackguards can see the difference between a lady, or rather between a pure girl and—another. And even those blackguards have an intensified reverence for the one ;—but let the matter pass ; for now we hide in gold these subjects, and sham not to see their flaunting.

Be it, however, confessed that Amy (whose father soon had rooms in college, not to live, but to lecture in), being a very shy young maiden, never could be brought to come and call him to his tea,—oh no. So many young men in gorgeous trappings, charms, and dangles, and hooks of gold, and eye-glasses very knowing—not to mention volunteer stuff, and knickerbockers demonstrant of calf—oddly enough they always happened to feel such interest in the architecture of the porter's lodge whenever Amy came by, never gazing too warmly at her, but contriving to convey their regret at the suppression of their sentiments, and their yearning to be the stones she trod on, and their despair at the possibility of her not caring if they were so—really all this was so trying that Amy would never go into college without Aunt Doxy before her, gazing four-gunned cupolas even at scouts and manciples.

And this was a most provoking thing upon the part of Amy, not only to the hearts that beat under waistcoats ordered for her dear sake, but also to the domestic kettle a-boil in Pembroke Lane. For, over and over again, Uncle John, great as he was in chronology and every kind of "marmora," and able to detect a flaw upon Potamogeiton's tombstone, lost all sense of time and place, *me* and *te*, and *hocce* and Doxy, and calmly went home some two hours late, and complacently received Doxology.

But alas, we must abandon Amy to the insidious designs of Hebdomadal Board, the velvet approaches of Proctor and Pro, and the brass of the gentlemen Bedels, while we regard more rugged scenes, from which she was happily absent.

CHAPTER LXI.

TO FLY IS NOT TO FLY AWAY.

FOR by this time Dr. Hutton had discovered the missing link, and at the same time the strongest staple, of the desired evidence. The battered gun-barrels had been identified, and even the number deciphered, by the foreman of Messrs. L—— and Co. And the entry in their books of the sale of that very gun (number, gauge, and other particulars beyond all doubt corresponding) was—"to Bull Garnet, &c., Nowelhurst Dell Cottage," whom also they could identify from his "strongly-marked physiognomy," and his quick, decisive manner. And the cartridge-case, which had lain so long in Dr. Hutton's pocket, of course they could not depose to its sale, together with the gun; but this they could show, that it fitted the barrels, was not at all of a common gauge, but two sizes larger—No. 10, in fact—and must have been sold during the month in which they sold the gun, because it was one of a sample which they had taken upon approval, and soon discarded for a case of better manufacture.

Then as to motive, Rufus Hutton himself could depose to that, or the probability of it, from what he had seen, but not understood, at the fixing of the fireworks; neither had he forgotten the furious mood of Bull Garnet, not only then, but also in his garden during the morning.

While he was doubting how to act—for, clearly as he knew his power to hang the man who had outraged him, the very fact of his injury made him loth to use that power; for he was not at all a vindictive man, now the heat of the thing was past, and he saw that

the sudden attack had been made in self-defence—while he was hesitating between his sense of duty and pity for Cradock on one hand, and his ideas of magnanimity and horror of hanging a man on the other, he was thrown, without any choice or chance, across the track of Simon Chope.

Perhaps there is no more vulgar error, no stronger proof of ignorance and slavery to catch-words, than to abuse or think ill of any particular class of men, only by reason of their profession—although, perhaps, we might justly throw the burden of proving their merit upon hangmen, body-snatchers, informers, and a few others—yet may we think (deprecating most humbly the omen of this conjunction) that solicitors, tailors, and Methodist parsons fight at some disadvantage both in fact and in fiction? Yet can they hold their own; and sympathy, if owing, is sure to have to pay them—notwithstanding, goose, and amen.

Away with all feeble flippancy! Heavy tidings came to Nowelhurst Hall, Dell Cottage, and Geopharmacy Lodge simultaneously, as might be, on the 20th of June. The *Taprobane* had been lost, with every soul on board; and this is the record of it, enshrined in many journals:—

"By recent advices from Capetown, per the screw-steamer *Sutler*, we sincerely regret to learn that the magnificent clipper-built ship *Taprobane*, of 2200 tons (new system), A 1 at Lloyd's for 15 years, and bound from the Thames to Colombo, with a cargo valued by competent judges at 120,000*l.*, took the shore in Benguela Bay during a typhoon of unprecedented destructiveness. It is our melancholy duty to add that the entirety of the valuable cargo was entirely lost, although very amply assured in unexceptionable quarters, and that every soul on board was consigned to a watery grave. A Portuguese gentleman of good family and large fortune, who happened to be in the neighbourhood, was an eye-witness to the catastrophe, and made superhuman exertions to rescue the unfortunate mariners, but, alas! in vain. Senhor José de Calcavello has arrived at the conclusion that some of her copper may be saved. The ill-fated bark broke up so rapidly, from the powerful action of the billows, that her identity could only be established from a portion of her sternpost, which was discovered half buried in sand three nautical miles to the southward. We have been informed, upon good authority, although we are not at liberty to mention our source of information, that Her Britannic Majesty's steam-corvette *Mumbo Jumbo*, pierced for twenty-eight guns, and carrying two, is under orders to depart, as soon as ever she can be coaled, for the scene of the recent catastrophe. Meanwhile, the tug *Growler* has arrived with all the memorials of the calamity, after affording the rights of sepulture to the poor shipwrecked mariners cast up by the treacherous billows. The set of the current being so adverse, we have reason to fear that the rest of the bodies must have fallen a prey to the

monsters of the deep. But sanguine hopes are entertained of recovering much of the specie."

Mrs. Corklemore happened to be calling at Geopharmacy Lodge, when the London papers arrived in the early afternoon. Rufus begged pardon, and broke the cover, to see something in which he was interested. Presently he cried, "Good God!" and let the paper fall; and, seasoned as he was, and shallowed by the shifting of his life, it was not in his power to keep two little tears from twinkling.

"Too late all my work," he said; "Heaven has settled it without me."

"How very sad!" cried Mrs. Corklemore, dashing aside an unbidden tear, when she came to the end of the story; "to think of all those brave men lost! And perhaps you knew some of them, Dr. Hutton? Oh, I am so sorry!"

"Why, surely you know that the *Taprobane* was the ship in which poor Cradock Nowell sailed, under Mr. Rosedew's auspices?"

"Oh, I hope not. Please not to say so. It would be so very horrible! That he should go without repenting——"

"You must have forgotten, Mrs. Corklemore; for I heard Rosa tell you the name of the ship, and her destination."

"Oh, very likely. Ah, now I remember. For the moment it quite escaped me. How truly, truly grieved—it has quite overcome me. Oh, please not to notice me—please not. I am so stupidly soft-hearted. I shall have no relations left. Oh—ea, isha, isha, ea!"

No woman in the world could cry more beautifully than poor Georgie. And now she cried her very best. It would have gone to the heart of the dryest and bitterest sceptic that ever doubted all men and women because they would doubt him. But Rufus, whose form of self-assertion was not universal negation, in what manner then do you suppose that Rufus Hutton was liquefied? A simple sort of fellow he was (notwithstanding all his shrewdness), although, or perhaps one might say because, he thought himself so knowing; and his observation was more the result of experience than the cause of it. So away he ran to fetch Rosa, and Rosa wiped dear sensitive Georgie's eyes, and coaxed her very pleasantly, and admired her more than ever.

Bull Garnet rode home at twelve o'clock from a long morning's work. He never could eat any breakfast now, and his manner was to leave home at six (except when he went to Winchester), gallop fiercely from work to work, or sometimes walk his horse and think, often with glistening eyes (when any little thing touched him), and return to his cottage and rest there during the workmen's dinner-time. Then he had some sort of a meal himself, which Pearl began to call "dinner," and away with a fresh horse in half an hour, spending his body if only so he might earn rest of mind. All this was telling upon him fearfully; even his muscular force was going,

and his quickness of eye and hand failing him. He knew it, and was glad.

Only none should ever say, though every crime was heaped upon him, that he had neglected the interests of his master.

He tore the morning journal open in his sudden turbulent fashion, as if all paper was rags, and no more; and with one glance at each column knew all that was in the 'tween-ways. Suddenly he came to a place at the corner of a page which made him cease from eating. He glanced at Pearl, but she was busy, peeling new potatoes for him. Bob was not come in yet.

"Darling, I must go to London. If possible I shall return to-night, if I catch the one o'clock up express."

Then he opened the window, and ordered a horse, his loud voice ringing and echoing round every corner of the cottage, and in five minutes he was off at full gallop, for the express would not stop at Brockenhurst.

At 3.15 he was in London, and at 3.40 in the counting-house of Messrs. Brown and Smithson, owners, or at any rate charterers, of the *Taprobane*, Striped-ball Chambers, Fenchurch Street. There he would learn, if he could, what their private advices were.

The clerks received him very politely, and told him that they had little doubt of the truth of the evil tidings. Of course the fatality might have been considerably exaggerated, &c., &c., but as to the loss of the ship, they had taken measures to replace her. Would he mind waiting only ten minutes, though they saw that he was in a hurry? The Cape mail-ship had been telegraphed from Falmouth; they had sent to the office already, and expected to get the reply within a quarter of an hour. Every information in their power, &c. —we all know the form, though we don't always get the civility.

Bull Garnet waited heavily with his great back against a stout brass rail, having declined the chair they offered him; and in less than five minutes he received authentic detail of everything. He listened to nothing except one statement, "every soul on board was lost, sir."

Then he went out, in a lumpish manner, from the noble room, and was glad to get hold of the iron rail in the bend of the dark stone staircase.

So now he was a double murderer. Finding it not enough to have killed one brother in his fury, he had slain the other twin through his cowardly concealment. Floating about in tropical slime, without a shark to eat him, leaving behind him the fair repute of a money-grabbing fratricide. And he, the man who had done it all, who had loved the boy and ruined him, miserably plotting for his own far inferior children.

No, no! Not that at any rate,—good and noble children: and how they had borne his villainy! God in mercy only make him, try to make him, over again, and how different his life would be. All

his better part brought out; all his lower kicked away to the devil, the responsible father of it. "Good God, how my heart goes! Death is upon me, well I know, but let me die with my children by —unless I turn hymn-writer"——

Quick as he was in his turns of thought—all of them subjective—he was scarcely a match for the situation, when Mr. Chope and Bailey Kettledrum brushed by the sleeves of his light overcoat, and entered the doors with "push—pull" on them, but, being both of the pushing order rather than the pulling, employed indiscriminate propulsion, and were out of sight in a moment. Still, retaining some little of his circumspective powers, Bull Garnet knew them both from a corner flash of his sad tear-laden eyes. There was no mistaking that great legal head, like the breech-end of a cannon. Mr. Kettledrum might have been overlooked, for little men of a fussy nature are common enough in London, or for that matter everywhere. But Garnet's attention being drawn, he knew them both of course, and the errand they were come upon, and how soon they were likely to return, and what they would think of his being there, if they should happen to see him. Nevertheless, he would not budge. Nothing could matter so very much now. He must think out his thoughts.

When this puff of air should pass which some men breathe almost long enough to learn that it was "life," some so long as to weary of it, none so long as to comprehend its littleness and greatness—when that should be gone from him, and absorbed into a boundless desert even more unknown, would not the wrong go with it, if left in this world unatoned, and abide in the other world evermore? And not to think of himself alone—what an example now to leave to his innocent injured children! The fury hidden by treachery, the cowardice washed by penitence!

His mind was made up to no more of it. His cursed mind was made up now. A man can die in the flesh but once. His spirit had been dying daily, going to the devil daily, every day for weeks and months; and no place found for repentance. As for his children, they must abide it. No man of any mind would blame them for their father's crime. If it was more than they could bear, let them bolt to America. Any whither, any where, so long as they came home in heaven—if he could only get there—to the father who had injured, ruined, bullied, cursed, and loved them so.

After burning out this hell of thought in his miserable brain, he betook himself to nature's remedy,—instant, headlong action. He rushed down the stairs, forgetting all about Chope and Bailey Kettledrum, shouted to the driver of a hansom cab so that he sawed his horse's mouth raw, leaped in, and gave him half a sovereign through the pigeon-hole, to get to D——'s bank before the closing time. But at Temple Bar, of course, there was a regular Chubb's lock, after a minor Bramah one at the bottom of Ludgate Hill.

Cabby was forced to cut it, and slash up Chancery Lane, and across by King's College Hospital, and back into the Strand by Wych Street.

It is easy to imagine Mr. Garnet's state of mind; yet the imagination would be that, and nothing more. He sat quite calmly, without a word, knowing that man and horse were doing their utmost of skill and speed, and having dealt enough with both to know that to worry them then is waste.

The Bank had been closed, the day-porter said, as he girded himself for his walk to Brixton, exactly—let him see—yes, exactly one minute and thirty-five seconds ago. Most of the gentlemen were still inside, of course, and if the gentleman's business was of a confidential—— Here he intimated, not by words, that there were considerations——

"Bow Street police-office," Mr. Garnet cried to the driver, not even glancing again at the disappointed doorkeeper. In three minutes he was there. Man and horse seemed strung and nerved with his own excitement.

A stolid policeman stood at the door, as Bull Garnet leaped out anyhow, with his high colour gone away as in death, and his strong legs cramped with vehemence. Then Bobby saw that he had met his master, the perception being a mental feat far beyond the average leap of police agility. Accordingly he touched his hat, and crinkled his eyes in a manner discovered by policemen, in consequence of the suggestion afforded by the pegging of their hats.

"Mr. Bennings gone?" asked Bull Garnet, pushing towards the entrance.

"His wusship is gone arf an hour, sir; or may be at most fifty minutes. Can we do anything for you, sir? His wusship always go according to the business as is on."

"Thank you," replied Mr. Garnet; "that is quite enough. What time do they leave at Marlborough Street?"

"According to the business, sir, but gone afore us a'most always. We sits as long as anybody, and gets through twice the business. But any message you like to leave, or anything to be entered, I can take the responsibility."

"No. It does not matter. I will only leave my card. Mr. Bennings knows me. Be kind enough to give him this, when he comes to-morrow morning. Perhaps I may call to-morrow. At present I cannot say."

The policeman lifted his hat again, like a cup taken up from a saucer, and Bull Garnet sat heavily down in the cab, and banged the door-shutters before him. "Strand," he called out to the driver; "D—— and C——'s, the watchmakers." There he bought a beautiful watch and gold chain for his daughter Pearl, giving a cheque for nearly all his balance at the banker's. The cheque was so large that in common prudence the foreman declined to cash it

without some confirmation; but Mr. Garnet gave him a reference, which in ten minutes was established, and in ten more he was off again with his very handsome trinkets, and a large sum in bank-notes and gold, the balance of his draft.

"Where now, sir?" shouted the driver, delighted with his fare, and foreseeing another half-sovereign.

"I will tell you in thirty seconds."

"Well, if he ain't a rum 'un," Cabby muttered to himself, while amid volleys of strong language he kept his horse gyrating, like a twin-screw ship trying circles; "but rum customers is our windfalls. Should have thought it a reward case, only for the Bobby. Keep a look-out, any how; unless he orders me back to Bedlam."

"Not Bedlam. Waterloo Station, main line!" said Bull Garnet, standing up in front, and looking at him over the roof. "Five minutes is all I give you, mind."

"What a blessed fool I am," said the cabman below his breath, but lashing his horse explosively, "to throw away half a sovereign sooner than hold my tongue! He must be the devil himself to have heard me—and as for eyes—good Lord, I shouldn't like to drive him much."

"You are wrong," replied Mr. Garnet through the pigeon-hole, handing him twopence for the tollman; "I am not the devil, sir, as you may some day know. Have no fear of ever driving me again. You shall have your half-sovereign when I have got my ticket. Follow me in, and you shall know for what place I take it."

The cabman was too dumb-foundered to do anything but resolve that he would go straight home when he got his money, and tell his old woman about it. Then he applied himself to the whip in earnest, for he could not too soon be rid of this job; and so Bull Garnet won his train, and gave the driver the other half-sovereign, with a peculiar nod, having noticed that he feared to approach while the ticket was applied for.

Bull Garnet took a second-class ticket. His extravagance towards the cabman was the last he would ever exhibit. He felt a call upon him now to save for his family every farthing. All was lost to them but money, and alas, how much was lost of that! Now if he cut his throat in the train, could he be attainted of felony? And would God be any the harder on him? No, he did not think He would. It might be some sort of atonement even. But then the shock to Pearl and Bob, to see him brought home with his head hanging back, and hopeless red stitches under it. It would make the poor girl a maniac, after all the shocks and anguish he had benumbed her with already. What a fool he had been not to buy strychnine, prussic acid, or laudanum! And yet—and yet—and yet—— He would like to see them just once more—blessed hearts—just to say "good-bye."

He sat in the last compartment of the last carriage in the train, which had been added, in a hurry, immediately behind the break-

van, and the swinging and the jerking very soon became tremendous. He knew not, neither cared to know, that Simon Chope and Bailey Kettledrum were in a first-class carriage towards the middle of the train. Presently the violent motion began to tell upon him, and he felt a heavy dulness creeping over his fiercely-excited mind; and all the senses, which had been during several hours of tension as prompt and acute as ever they were in his prime of power, began to flag, and daze, and wane, and seem to belong to some one else; until at last he fell into a waking dream of trouble, a loose impersonality flitting over all he saw, or felt, or tried to think of.

But first—whether for suicide, or for self-defence, he had tried both doors and found them locked; and he was far too large a man to force his way through the window.

He dreamed (without knowing dream from memory) of the simple and trustful childhood, the boyhood's aspiration, the young man's sense of ability confirming the right to aspire. Even his bodily power and vigour revived in the dream before him, and he knitted his muscles, and clenched his fists, and was ready to fight fools and liars.

Who had fought more hard and hotly against the hard cold ways of the age, the despite done to the poor and lowly, the sarcasm bred by self-conscious serfdom in clever men of the world, the preference of gold to love, and of position to happiness? All the weak gregarious tricks, shifts of coat, and pupa-ism, whereby we noble Christians reduce our social history to a passage in entomology, and quench the faith of thinking men in Him whose name we take in vain—the great Originator—all these feminine contradictions, and fond things foully invented, fables Atellan (if they be not actually Fescennine) had roused the combatism of young Bull, ere ever he learned his own disgrace.

And when he learned it, such as it was—a proof, by its false incidence, how infantile our civilization is—all his mother's bitter wrong, her lifelong sense of shame and crushing (because she had trusted a liar, and the hollow elder-stick "institution" was held up against her, and none would take her part without money, even if she had wished it)—then he had chosen his mother's course, inheriting her strong nature, let the shame lie where it fell by right and not by rule, and carried all his energies into Neo-Christian largeness.

All that time of angry trial now was passing before him, and the five years of his married life (which had not been very happy, for his wife never understood him, but met his quick moodiness with soft sulks); and then in his dream-review he smiled, as his children began to toddle about, and sit on his knees, and look at him.

Once he awoke, and gazed about him. The train had stopped at Winchester. He was all alone in the carriage still, and all his cash was safe. He had stowed it away very carefully in a hidden pocket. To his languid surprise, he fell back on the seat. How unlike him-

self, to be sure; and with so much yet to do! He strove to arise and rouse himself. He felt for the little flask of wine, which Pearl had thrust into his pocket, but he could not pull it out and drink; such a languor lay upon him.

This strange weakness had touched him before; but never before had vanquished him. Once or twice, an hour or so before the rising of the sun, this deep, silent, deathlike chill (like a mammoth nightmare frozen) had lain on him, in his lonely bed, and gone to his heart, and spread over him; and then he felt what death was, and only came back to life again through cold sweat and long fainting.

He had never consulted any doctor about the meaning of this. With his bold way of thinking, and judging only by his own experience and feeling, he had long ago decided that all medical men were quacks. What one disorder could they cure? All they had learned, and that by a fluke, was a way to anticipate small-pox: and even that way had been over-trodden.

Now he fell away, and feared, and tried to fold hands upon breast, and tried to pray to God; but no words came, nor any thoughts, only sense of dying, and horror at having prayed for it. A coldness fell upon his heart, and on his brain an ignorance; he was falling into a great blank depth, and nothing belonged to him any more—only utter, utter loss, and not a chance of heaven.

Happy and religious folk, who have only died in theory, contemplating distant Death, knowing him only as opportune among kinsfolk owning Consols, these may hope for a Prayer-book end, sacrament administered, weeping friends, the heavenward soul glad to fly through the golden door, *animula, vagula, blandula*, yet assured of its reception with a heavenly smile of foretaste—this may be; no doubt it may be, after the life of a Christian Bayard; though it need not always be, even with so pure a spirit.

All we who from our age know death, and have taken little trips into him, through fits, paralysis, or such-like, are quite aware that he has at first call as much variety as life has. But the death of the violent man is not likely to be placid, unless it come unforeseen, or has been filtred through years of remorse, weakness, weariness, and repentance.

At last, Bull Garnet tried to rise, and fought once more, with the agony of athletic life, against the heavy yet hollow numbness in the hold of his deep wide chest, against the dark, cold stealth of death, and the black and bottomless depth of the grave.

* * * * * *

The train ran lightly and merrily into Brockenhurst Station, while the midsummer twilight floated around, like universal gossamer. In the yard stood the Kettledrum "rattletrap," and the owner was right glad to see it. To his eyes it was worth a dozen of the carriages from Nowelhurst.

"None of the children come, dear?" asked Bailey, having kissed his wife, as behoves a man from London.

"No, darling, not one. That——" here she used an adjective which sounded too much like "odious" for any man to trust his ears—"Georgie would not allow them. Now, darling, did you do exactly what I told you?"

"Yes, darling Anna, I followed your directions, as far as ever I could. I had a basin of mulligatawny at Waterloo going up, and one of muck-turtle coming back, and at Basingstoke ham-sandwiches, a glass of cold cognac and water, and some lemon-chips. Since that, nothing at all, because there has been no time."

"You are a dear," said Mrs. Kettledrum, "to do exactly as I told you. Now come round the corner a moment, and take two glasses of sherry; I can see quite well to pour it out. I am so glad of her new crinoline. She won't get out. Don't be afraid, dear."

Oh, Georgie, Georgie! To think that her own sister should be so low, so unfeeling, and treacherous! Mr. Kettledrum smacked his lips, for the sake of euphony, after the second glass of sherry; but his wife would not give him any more, for fear of spoiling his supper. Then they came back, and both got in, and squeezed themselves up together in the front seat of the old carriage, for Mrs. Corklemore occupied the whole of the seat of honour.

"You are very polite, to keep me so long. Innocent turtles; sweet childish anxiety! The last survivor of a wrecked train! So you took advantage, Anna dear, of my not being dressed quite so vulgarly as you are, to discuss this little matter with him, keeping me in ignorance."

The carriage was off by this time, and open as it was, they had no fear of old coachey hearing, for it took a loud hail to reach him.

"Take the honour of a Kettledrum," cried Bailey, smiting his bosom, "that the subject has not even been broached between my wiser part and myself. Ladies, in this pure aerial—no, I mean ethereal—air, with the shades of night around us, and the breezes wafting, would an exceedingly choice and delicately aromatic cigar——"

"Oh, I should so like it, Bailey; and perhaps we shall have the nightingales."

"I fear we must not think of it," interposed Mrs. Corklemore, gently; "my dress is of a fabric quite newly introduced, very beautiful, but (like myself) too retentive of impressions. If Mr. Kettledrum smokes, I shall have to throw it away."

"There goes the cigar instead," cried Bailey; "the paramount rights of ladies ever have been, and ever shall be, sacred with Bailey Kettledrum."

But Mrs. Kettledrum was so vexed that she jumped up, as if to watch the cigar spinning into the darkness, and contrived with

sisterly accuracy to throw all her weight upon a certain portion of a certain lovely foot; whereupon there ensued the neatest little passes, into which we need not enter. Enough that Mrs. Corklemore, having higher intellectual gifts, "won," in the language of the ring, "both events"—first tear, and first hysterical symptom.

"Come," cried Mr. Kettledrum, at the very first opportunity, to wit, when both were crying; "we all know what sisters are: how they mingle the—the dulcet sensitiveness of affection with a certain—ah, yes—a piquancy of expression, most pleasant, most improving, because so highly conducive to self-examination!" Here he stood up, having made a hit, worthy of the House of Commons. "All these little breezes, ladies, may be called the trade-winds of affection. They blow from pole to pole,"—

"The trade-winds never do that," said Georgie.

"They pass us by as the idle wind, when the clouds are like a whale, ladies, having overcome us for a moment, like a summer dream. Hark to that thrush, sitting perhaps on his eggs"—"Oh, Oh!" from the gallery of nature—"can there be, I pause for a reply, anything but harmony, where the voices of the night pervade, and the tranquil melody of the spheres?"

"You—you do speak so splendidly, dear," sobbed Mrs. Kettledrum from the corner; "but it is a nasty, wicked, cruel story, about dear papa saying that of me, and he in his grave, poor dear, quite unable to vindicate himself. I have always thought it so unchristian to malign the dead!"

"What's that?" cried Georgie, starting up, in fear and hot earnest; "you are chattering so, you hear nothing."

A horse dashed by them at full gallop, with his rider on his neck, shouting and yelling, and clinging and lashing.

"Missed the wheel by an inch," cried Kettledrum, drawing his head in faster than he had thrust it out; "a fire, man, or a French invasion?" But the man was out of hearing, while the Kettledrum horses, scared, and jumping as from an equine thunderbolt, tried the strength of leather and the courage of ladies.

Meanwhile, at the station behind them, there was a sad ado. A man was lifted out of the train, being found in the last compartment by the guard who knew his destination—a big man, and a heavy one; and they bore him to the wretched shed labelled, "First-Class Waiting-room."

"Dead, I believe," said the guard, having sent a boy for brandy; "dead as a door-nail, whoever he be."

"Not thee knaw who he be?" cried a forester, coming in. "Whoy, marn, there be no mistaking he. He be our Muster Garnet."

"Whew!" And the train whistled on, as it must do, whether we live or die, or whether itself has made mincemeat of us.

CHAPTER LXII.

WHO CAN FIGHT FOR EVER?

THAT night there had been great excitement in the village of Nowelhurst. A rumour had reached it that Cradock Nowell, loved in every cottage there, partly as their own production, partly as their future owner, partly for his own sake, and most of all for his misfortunes, was thrown into prison, to stand his trial for the murder of his brother. Another rumour was that, to prevent any scandal to the nobility, he had been sent to sea alone in a seventy-four gun ship, with corks in her bottom tied with wire arranged so as to fly all at once, same as if it was ginger-beer bottles, on the seventh day, when the salt-water had turned the wires rusty.

It is hard to say of these two reports which roused the greater indignation; perhaps on the whole the former did, because the latter was supposed to be according to institution. Anyhow, all the village was out in the street that night; and the folding of arms, and the self-importance, the confidential winks, and the power to say more (but for hyper-Nestorean prudence) were at their acme in a knot of gaffers gathered around Rufus Hutton, and affording him good sport.

Nothing now could be done in Nowelhurst without Rufus Hutton. He had that especial knack (mistaken sometimes in a statesman for grand administrative power) which becomes in a woman fine capacity for gossip. By virtue thereof Rufus Hutton was now prime-minister of Nowelhurst; and Sir Cradock, the king, being nothing more now than the shadow of a name, his deputy's power was absolute. He knew the history by this time of every cottage, and pigsty, and tombstone in the churchyard; how much every man got every week, and how much he gave his wife out of it, what he had for dinner on Sundays, and how long he made his waistcoat last.

Suddenly the double-barrelled noise which foreruns a horse at full gallop came from the bridge, and old folk hobbled, and young got ready to run away.

"Hooraw—hooraw!" cried a dozen and a half of boys, "here be Hempror o' Roosia coming."

Boys will believe almost anything, when they get excited (having taken the trick from their fathers), but even the women were disappointed, when the galloping horse stopped short in the crowd, and from his withers shot forward, and fell with both hands full of mane, a personage not more august than the porter at Brockenhurst Station.

"Catch the horse, you fool!" cried Rufus.

"Cuss the horse," said the porter, trying to draw breath; "better been under a train, I had. Don't stand gaping, chawbacons. Is ever a saw-bones, surgeon, doctor, or what the devil you call them in these outlandish parts, to be got for love or money?"

"I am a sawbones," said Rufus Hutton, coming forward with his utmost dignity; "and it's a mercy I don't saw yours, young man, if that's all you know of riding."

The porter touched his hair instead of his hat (which was gone long ago), while the "chawbacons" rallied, and laughed at him, and one offered him a "zide-zaddle," and all the women of the village felt that Dr. Hutton had quenched the porter, and vindicated Nowelhurst.

"When you have recovered your breath, young man," continued Rufus, pushing, as he always did, his advantage; "and thanked God for your escape from the first horse you ever mounted, perhaps you will tell us your errand, and we chawbacons will consider it."

A gruff haw-haw and some treble he-he's added to the porter's discomfiture, for he could not come to time yet, being now in the second tense of exhaustion, which is even worse than the first, being rather of the heart than lungs.

"Station—Mr. Garnet—dead!" was all the man could utter, and that only in spasms, and with great chest-heavings.

Rufus Hutton leaped on the horse in a moment, caught up old Channing's stick, and was out of sight in the summer dusk ere any one else in the crowd had done more than gape, and say, "Oh Lor!" By dint of skill he sped the old horse nearly as quickly to the station as the fury of Jehu had brought him thence, and landed him at the door with far less sign of exhaustion. Then walking into the little room, in the manner of a man who thoroughly knows his work, he saw a sight which never in this world will leave him.

Upon a hard sofa, shored up with an ash-log where the mahogany was sprung, and poked up into a corner as if to get a bearing there, with blankets piled upon him heavily and tucked round the collar of his coat, and his great head hanging over the rise where the beading of the brass ends, lay the ill-fated Bull Garnet,—a man from birth to death a subject for pity more than terror. Fifty years old—more than fifty years—and scarce a twelvemonth of happiness since the shakings of the world began, and childhood's dream was over. Toiling ever for the future, toiling for his children, ever since he had them, labouring to make peace with God, if only he might have his own, where passion is not, but love abides. The room smelled strongly of bad brandy, some of which was oozing now down his broad square chin, and dripping from the great blue jaw. Of course he could not swallow it; and now one of the women (for three had rushed in) was performing that duty for him.

"Turn out that drunken hag!" cried Dr. Hutton, feeling he had

no idea how. "Up with the window. Bring the sofa here; and take all but one of those blankets off."

"But, master," objected another woman, "he'll take his death of cold."

"Turn out that woman also!" He was instantly obeyed. "Now roll up one of those blankets, and put it under his head here—this side, can't you see? Good God, what a set of fellows you are to let a man's head hang down like that! Hot water and a sponge this instant. Nearly boiling, mind you. Plenty of it, and a foot-tub. Now don't stare at me."

With a quick light hand he released the blue and turgid throat from the narrow necktie, then laid his forefinger upon the heart and watched the eyelids intently.

"Appleplexy, no doubt, master," said the most intelligent of the men; "I have 'eared that if you can bleed them——"

"Hold your tongue, or I'll phlebotomize you." That big word inspired universal confidence, because no one understood it. "Now, support him in that position, while I pull his boots off. One of you run to the inn for a bottle of French cognac—not this filthy stuff, mind—and a corkscrew and a teaspoon. Now the hot water here! In with his feet, and bathe his legs, while I sponge his face and chest—as hot as you can bear your hands in it. His heart is all but stopped, and his skin as cold as ice. That's it; quicker yet! Don't be afraid of scalding him. There, he begins to feel it."

The dying man's great heavy eyelids slowly and feebly quivered, and a long deep sigh arose, but there was not strength to fetch it. Dr. Hutton took advantage of the faint impulse of life to give him a little brandy, and then a little more again, and by that time he could sigh.

"Bo," he whispered very softly, and trying to lift his hand for something, and Rufus Hutton knew somehow (perhaps by means of his own child) that he was trying to say "Bob."

"Bob will be here directly. Cheer up, cheer up, till he comes, my friend."

He called him his friend, and the very next day he would have denounced him as murderer to the magistrates at Lymington. Now his only thought was of saving the poor man's life.

The father's dull eyes gleamed again when he heard those words, and a little smile came flickering over the stern lines of his face. They gave him more brandy on the strength of it, while he kept on looking at the door.

"Rub, rub, rub, men; very lightly, but very quickly. Keep your thumbs up, don't you see? Mustn't get cold again for the world. There now, he'll keep his heart up until his dear son arrives. And then his children shall nurse him, much better than any one else could; and how glad they will be, John Thomas, to see him looking so well and so strong again!"

All this time, Rue Hutton himself, with a woman's skill and tenderness, was encouraging, by gentle friction over the stagnant heart, each feeble impulse yet to live, each little bubble faintly rising from the well of hope, every clinging of the soul to the things so hard to leave behind. "While there is life, there is hope." True and genial saying! And we hope there is hope beyond it.

Poor Bull Garnet was taken home, even that very night. For Dr. Hutton saw how much he was longing for his children, who (until he was carried in) knew nothing of his danger. "Please God," said Rufus to himself, as he crouched in the fly by the narrow mattress, even foregoing his loved cheroot, and keeping his hand on his patient's pulse; "please God, the poor fellow shall breathe his last with a child at either side of him."

Meanwhile, an urgent message from Sir Cradock Nowell was awaiting the sick man at his cottage. Eöa herself had brought word to Pearl (of whom she longed to make a friend) that her uncle was walking about the house, perpetually walking, calling aloud in every room for Mr. Garnet and John Rosedew. He had heard of no disaster, any more than she had, for he seldom read the papers now; but Mr. Brockwood had been with him a very long time that morning, and Dr. Buller came in accidentally; and Eöa could almost vow that there was some infamous scheme on foot, and she knew whose doing it was; and oh that Uncle John would come back! But now they wanted Mr. Garnet, and he must hurry up to the Hall the moment he came home.

Mr. Garnet, of course, they could not have: his soul was wrecked, his heart benumbed, his mind incapable of effort, except to know his children, if that could ever be one. And in this paralytic state, never sleeping, never waking, never wholly conscious, he lay for weeks; and time for him had neither night nor morning.

But Mr. Rosedew could be brought to help his ancient friend, if only it was in his power to overlook the injury. He did not overlook it. For that he was too great a man. He utterly forgot it. To his mind it was thenceforth a thing that had never happened:—

> "To-morrow, either with black cloud
> Let the Father fill the heaven,
> Or with crystal sunshine:
> Yet shall He not erase the past,
> Nor beat abroad, and make undone,
> What once the fleeting hour hath borne."

Truly so our Horace saith. And yet that Father gives, sometimes, to the noblest of His children, power to revoke the evil, or at least annul it,—grandeur to undo the wrong done by others to them. Not with any sense of greatness, neither hope of self-reward, simply from the loving-kindness of the deep humanity.

In truth it was a noble thing, such as not even the dryest man, sapped and carked with care and evil, worn with undeserved rebuff, and dwelling ever underground, in the undermining of his faith, could behold and not be glad with a joy unbidden, could turn away from without wet eyes, and a glimpse of the God who loves us,—and yet the simplest, mildest scene that a child could describe to its mother. So let me tell it, if may be, casting all long words away, leaning on an old man's staff, looking over the stile of the world.

It was the height of the summer-time, and the quiet mood of the setting sun touched with calm and happy sadness all he was forsaking. Men were going home from work; wives were looking for them; maidens by the gate or paling longed for some protection; children must be put to bed, and what a shame, so early! Puce and purple pillows lay, holding golden locks of sun, piled and lifted by light breezes, the painted eider-down of sunset. In the air a feeling was—those who breathe it cannot tell—only this, that it does them good; God knows how, and why, and whence—but it makes them love their brethren.

The poor old man, more tried and troubled than a lucky labourer, wretched in his wealth, worse hampered by his rank and placement, sat upon a high oak chair—for now he feared to lean his head back—and prayed for some one to help him. Oh, for any one who loved him; oh, for any glimpse of God, whom in his pride he had forgotten! Eöa was a darling, his only comfort now; but what could such a girl do? Who was she to meet the world? And the son he had used so shamefully. His own, and now his only son! And now he knew, with some strange knowledge, loose and wide, and wandering, that his son was innocent after all, and lost to him for ever, through his own vile cruelty. And now they meant to prove him mad—what use to disguise it?—him who once had the clearest head, chairman of the Quarter Sessions——

Here he broke down, and lay back, with his white hair poured against the black and carven oak of the chair, and his wasted hands flung downward, only praying God to help him, anyhow to help him, now that all men were against him so.

Then John Rosedew came in softly, half ashamed of himself, half nervous lest he were presuming, overdrawing the chords of youth, the bond of the days when they went about with arm round the neck of each other. In his heart was pity, very deep and holy; and yet, of all that filled his eyes, the very last to show itself.

Over against the ancient friend, the loved one of his boyhood, he stopped and sadly gazed for a moment, and then drew back with a shock and sorrow, as of death brought nearer. At the sound, Sir Cradock Nowell lifted his weary eyes and sighed; and then he looked intently; and then he knew the honest face, the smile, the gentle forehead. Quietly he arose, with colour flowing over his

pallid cheeks, and in his eyes strong welcome, and ready with his lips to speak, yet in his heart unable. Thereupon he held the chair, and bowed with the deepest reverence, such as king or queen receives not, till a life has earned it. Even the hand which he was raising he let fall again, drawn back by a bitter memory, and a sudden spasm of shame.

But his friend of olden time would not have him so disgraced, wanted no repentance. With years of kindness in his eyes and the amnesty of ancient love, he came, without a bow, and took the hand that now was shy of him.

"Cradock, oh, I am so glad."

"John, thank God for this, John!"

Then they turned to other subjects, with a sort of nervousness—the one for fear of presuming on pardon, the other for fear of offering it. Only both knew, once for all, that nothing more could come between them till the hour of death.

The rector accepted once again his well-beloved home and cares, for the vacancy had not been filled, only Mr. Pell had lived a short time at the Rectory. The joy of all the parish equalled, if it could not well surpass, the joy of parson and of patron.

And, over and above the ease of conscience, and the sense of comfort, it was a truly happy thing for poor Sir Cradock Nowell, when the loss of the *Taprobane* could no longer be concealed from him, that now he had the proven friend once more to fall back upon. He had spent whole days in writing letters—humble, loving, imploring letters to the son in unknown latitudes—directing them as fancy took him to the Cape, to Port Natal, Mozambique, or even Bombay (in case of stress of weather), Point de Galle, Colombo, &c., &c., in all cases to be called for, and invariably marked "urgent." Then from this labour of love he awoke to a vague sort of conviction that his letters ought to have been addressed to the bottom of the ocean.

CHAPTER LXIII.

DEATH.

AUTUMN in the Forest now, once again the autumn. All things turning to their rest, bird, and beast, and vegetable. Solemn and most noble season, speaking to the soul of man, as spring speaks to his body. The harvest of the ample woods spreading every tint of ripeness, waiting for the Maker's sickle, when His breath is frost.

Trees beyond trees, in depth and height, roundings and massive juttings, some admitting flaws of light to enhance their mellowness, some very bright of their own accord, when the sun thought well of them, others scarcely bronzed with age, and meaning to abide the spring. It was the same in Epping Forest, Richmond Park, and the woods round London, only on a smaller scale, and with less variety.

And so upon his northern road, every coppice, near or far, even "Knockholt Beeches" (which reminded him of the "beechen hats"), every little winding wood of Sussex or of Surrey brought before Cradock Nowell's eyes the prospect of his boyhood. He had begged to be put ashore at Newhaven, from the American trader, which had rescued him from Pomona Island, and his lonely but healthful sojourn, and then borne him to New York. Now, with his little store of dollars, earned from the noble Yankee skipper by the service he had rendered him (freely given and freely taken, as behoves two gentlemen), and with great store of health recovered, and recovered mind, he was walking all the way to London, fifty miles or may be more; so great a desire entered into him of his native English land, that stable versatility, those free and ever-changing skies, which all her sons abuse and love.

Cradock looked, let us assure you, as well, and strong, and stout, and lusty, as may consist with elegance at the age of two-and-twenty. And his dress, though smacking of Broadway, "could not conceal," as our best writers say, "his symmetrical proportions." His pantaloons were of a fine bright tan colour, with pockets fit for a thousand dollars, and his boots full of eyelets, like big lampreys, and his coat was a thing to be proud of, and a pleasing surprise for Regent-street. His hat, moreover, was umbratile, as of the Pilgrim Fathers, with a measure of liquid capacity (betwixt the cone and the turned-up rim) superior to that of the ordinary cisterns of the London water-companies. Nevertheless he had not acquired the delightful hydropultic art, distinctive of the mighty nation which had been so kind to him. And, in spite of little external stuff (only worthy of two glances—one to note, and the other to smile at it), the youth was improved in every point worth a man's observation. Three months in New York had done him an enormous deal of good; not that the place is by any means heavenly (perhaps there are few more hellish), only that he fell in with men of extraordinary energy and of marvellous decision, the very two hinges of life whereupon he (being rather too "philosophical") had several screws loose, and some rust in the joints.

As for Wena, she (the beauty) had cocked her tail with great arrogance at smelling English ground again. To her straight came several dogs, who had never travelled far (except when they were tail-piped), and one and all cried, "Hail, my dear! Have you seen any dogs to compare with us? Set of mongrel parley-woos, can't

bark or bite like a Christian. Just look round the corner, pretty, while we kill that poodle."

To whom Wena—*leniter atterens caudam*—"Cordially I thank you. So much now I have seen of the world that my faith is gone in tail-wags. If you wish to benefit by my society, bring me a bit from the hock of bacon, or a very young marrow-bone. Then will I tell you something." They could not comply with her requisitions, because they had eaten all that themselves. And so she trotted along the beach, like the dog of Polyphemus, or the terrier of Hercules, who tinged his nose with murex.

'Tis a very easy thing to talk of walking fifty miles, but quite another pair of shoes to do it; especially with pack on back, and feet that have lost habitual sense of Macadam's tender mercies. Moreover, the day had been very warm for the beginning of October—the dying glance of Summer, in the year 1860, at her hitherto foregone and forgotten England. The highest temperature of the year had been 72° (in the month of May); in June and July, 66° and 68° were the maxima, and in August things were no better. Persistent rain, perpetual chill, and ever-present sense of icebergs, and longing for logs of dry wood. But towards the end of September some glorious weather set in; and people left off fires at the time when they generally begin them. Therefore, Cradock Nowell was hot, footsore, and slightly jaded, as he came to the foot of Sydenham Hill, on the second day of his journey. The Crystal Palace, which long had been his landmark through country cross-roads, shone with blue and airy light, as the sun was sinking. Cradock admired more and more, as the shadows sloped along it, the fleeting gleams, the pellucid depth, the brightness of reflection framed by the softness of refraction.

He had always loved that building; and now, at the top of the hill, he resolved (weary as he was) to enter and take his food there. Accordingly Wena was left to sup and rest at the stables; he paid the shilling that turns the wheel, and went first to the refreshment court. After doing his duty there, he felt a great deal better; then buttoned his coat like a Briton, and sauntered into the transept. It had been a high and mighty day, for the Ancient Order of Mountaineers (who had never seen a mountain) were come to look for one at Penge, with sweethearts, wives, contingencies, and continuations. It boots not now to tell their games; enough that they had been very happy, and were gathering back in nave and transept for a last parade.

To Cradock, now so long accustomed to sadness, solitude, and bad luck, the scene, instead of being ludicrous (as a youth of fashion would have found it), was interesting and impressive, and even took a solemn aspect as the red rays of the sun retired, and the mellow shades were deepening. He leaned against the iron rail in front of the grand orchestra, and seeing many pretty faces,

thought about his Amy, and wondered what she now was like, and whether she were true to him. From Pomona Island he could not write; from New York he had never written; not knowing the loss of the *Taprobane*, and fearing lest he should seem once more to be trying the depth of John Rosedew's purse. But now he was come to England, with letters from Captain Recklesome Young, to his London correspondents, which ensured him a good situation, and the power to earn his own bread, and perhaps in a little while his Amy's.

As he leaned and watched the crowd go by like a dream of faces, the events of the bygone year passed also in dark parade before him. Sad, mysterious, undeserved—at least so far as he could judge, though he did not dare to say so—how had they told upon him? Had they left him in better, or had they left him in bitter frame with his father God and his fellow-man?

That question might be solved at once, to any but himself, by the glistening of his eyes, the gentleness of his gaze around, the smile with which he drew back his foot when a knickerbocked child trod on it. He loved his fellow-creatures still; and love is law and gospel.

While he thought these heavy things, feeling weary of the road, of his life half weary, shrinking from the bustling world again to be encountered, suddenly a grand vibration thrilled his heart, and mind, and soul. From the great concave above him, melody was spreading wide, with shadowy resistless power, like the wings of angels. The noble organ was pealing forth, rolling to every nook and corner, sweeping over the heads of the people and into their hearts (with one soft passport), "Home, sweet home!"

The men who had come because tired of home, the wives to give them a change of it, the maidens perhaps to get homes of their own, the children to cry to go home again;—all with one accord stood still, all listened very quietly, and said nothing at all about it. Only they were the better for it, with many a kind old memory rising, at least among the elder ones, and many a large unselfish hope making the young people look, with trust, at one another.

And what did Cradock Nowell feel? His home was not a sweet one; bitter things had been done against him; bitter things himself had done. None the less, he turned away and wept beneath a music-stand, as if his heart would never give remission to his eyes. None could see him in the dark there, only the God whose will it was, and whose will it often is, that tears should make Him look at us.

"I will arise, and go home to my father. I will cry, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and against thee.'"

And so he had. Not heavily, not wilfully, not wittingly, not a hundredth part so badly as that father had sinned against him. Yet it was wrong in him not to allow the old man to recover

himself; but, forgetting a son's love-duty, so to leave him—hotly, hastily, with a proud defiance. Till now he had never felt, or at least confessed to himself, that wrong. Now, as generous natures do, he summed up sternly against himself, leniently against others. And then he asked, with yearning and bitter self-reproach, "Is the old man yet alive?"

* * * * * *

The woods were still as rich and sweet, and the grass as soft as in May month; the windings of the pleasant dells were looped with shining waters; but she who used to love them so and brighten at their freshness, to follow the steps of each wandering breeze, and awake to the sun as a flower does—now she came through her favourite places, and hardly cared to look at them.

Only three short months ago she had returned to her woodland home, and the folk that knew and loved her, in the highest and brightest spirits of youth, conscious beauty, and hopefulness. All her old friends were rejoicing in her, and she in their joy delighted, when her father thought it his sorrowful duty, in this world of sorrow, to tell her the bad news about her ever unlucky Cradock.

At first she received it with scorn—as the high manner of her mind was—utter unbelief, because God could not have done it. Being simple, and very young, she had half as much faith in her heavenly Father as she had in the earthly and fallible parent; neither was she quite aware that we do not buy, but accept from Heaven.

But, as week upon back of week, and month upon head of month, went by, Amy's faith began to wane, and the maid herself to languish. She watched the arrival of every mail from the Cape, from India, from anywhere; her heart leaped up as each steamer came in, and sank at each empty letter-bag. Meanwhile her father was growing very unhappy about her, and so was good Aunt Doxy. At first John had said, when she took it so calmly, "Thank God! How glad I am! But her mother cared for me more than that." Like many another loving father, he had studied, but never learned his child.

Now it was the fifth day of October, the weather bright and beautiful, the English earth and trees and herbage trying back for the summer of which they had been so cheated. Poor pale Amy asked leave to go out. She had long been under Rue Hutton's care, not professionally, but paternally (for Rufus would have his own way, when he was truly fond of any one), and she asked so quietly, so submissively, without a bit of joke about it, that when she was gone her father set to, and shook his head, till a heavy tear came and blotted out a reference which had taken all the morning. As for Aunt Doxy, she turned aside, and took off her spectacles quickly, because the optician had told her to keep them perfectly dry.

Where the footpath wanders to and fro, preferring pleasure to duty, and meeting all remonstrance by quoting the course of the

brook alongside it, Amy Rosedew slowly walked, or heavily stopped every now and then, caring for nothing around her. She had made up her mind to cry no more, only to long for the time and place when and where no crying is. Perhaps in a year or so, if she lived, she might be able to see things again, and attend to her work as usual. Till then she would try to please her father, and keep up her spirits for his sake. Every one had been so kind to her, especially dear Eöa, who had really cried quite steadily; and the least thing poor Amy herself could do was to try and deserve it.

Thinking thus, and doing her best to feel as well as think it, yet growing tired already, she sat down in a chair as soft as her own weary heart was. A noble beech, with a head of glory overlooking the forest, had not neglected to slipper his feet with the richest of nature's velvet. From the dove-coloured column's base, two yards above the ground-spread, drifts of darker bulk began, gnarled crooks of grapple, clutching wide at mother earth, deeply fanged into her breast, sureties against every wind. Ridged and ramped with many a hummock, rift, and twisted sinew, forth these mighty tendons stretched, some fathoms from the bole itself. Betwixt them nestled, all in moss, corniced with the golden, and cushioned with the emerald, nooks of cool, delicious rest, wherein to forget the world, and dream upon the breezes. "As You Like It," in your lap, Theocritus tossed over the elbow, because he is too foreign,—what sweet depth of enjoyment for a hard-worked man who has earned it!

But, in spite of all this voluptuousness, the "moss more soft than slumber," and the rippling leafy murmur, the poets could tell that Amy Rosedew managed to have another cry ere ever she fell asleep. To cry among those arms of moss, fleecing, tufting, pillowing, an absorbent even for Niobe! Can the worn-out human nature find no comfort in the vegetable, though it does in the mineral, kingdom?

Back, and back, and further back into the old relapse of sleep, the falling thither whence we came, the interest on the debt of death. Yet as the old Stageirite hints, some of day's emotions filter through the strain of sleep; it is not true that good and bad are, for half of life, the same. Alike their wits go roving haply after the true Owner, but some may find Him, others fail—Father, who shall limit thus Thine infinite amnesty?

It would not be an easy thing to find a fairer sight than Amy. Her white arms on the twisted plumage of the deep green moss, the snowy arch of her neck revealed as the clustering hair fell from it, and the frank and playful forehead resting on the soft grey bark. She smiled in her sleep every now and then, for her pleasant young humour must have its own way when the schoolmaster, sorrow, was dozing; and then the sad dreaming of trouble returned, and the hands were put up to pray, and the red lips opened, whispering, "Come home! Only come to your Amy!"

And then, in her dream, behold he was come—raining tears upon her cheek, holding her from all the world, fearing to thank God yet. She in her dream was smiling at him; not by any means prepared to jump into his arms, but still—oh, it was so delicious! Suddenly she opened her eyes. What made her face so wet? Why, Wena!

Wena, as sure as dogs are dogs: mounted on the mossy arm, lick-lick-licking, mewing like a cat almost, even offering taste of her tongue, while every bit of the Wena dog shook with ecstatic rapture.

"Oh, Wena, Wena! what are you come to tell me, Wena? Oh that you could speak!"

Wena immediately proved that she could. She galloped round Amy, barking and yelling, until the great wood echoed again; the rabbits, a mile away, pricked their ears, and the yaffingales stopped from tapping. Then off set the little dog down the footpath. Oh, could it be to fetch somebody?

The mere idea of such a thing made Amy shake so, and feel so odd, she was forced to put one hand against the tree, and the other upon her heart. She could not look, she was in such a state; she could not look down the footpath. It seemed, at least, a century, and it may have been half a minute, before she heard through the bushes a voice—tush, it was the voice.

"Wena, you bad dog, come in to heel. Is this all the Yankees have taught you?"

But Wena broke fence and everything, set off full gallop again to Amy, tugged at her dress, and retrieved her.

What happened after that, Amy knows not, neither knows Cradock Nowell. So anything we might set down, would be a fond thing vainly invented.

All they remember is—looking back upon it, as both of them do, as the zenith of their lives—that neither of them could say a word except "darling, darling, darling!" all pronounced as superlatives, with "my own," once or twice between, and an exclusive sense of ownership, illiberal to the last degree, and most unphilosophical.

What business have we with such minor details? Who has sworn us accountants of kisses? All we have any right to say is, that after a long spell of inarticulate tautology, Amy looked up when Cradock proposed to add another cipher; very gravely, indeed, she looked up; except in the deepest depth of her eyes.

"Oh no, Cradock. You must not think of it. Seriously now, no more, love."

"Why? I should like to know, indeed! After all the time I have been away!"

"I have so little presence of mind. I forgot to tell you in time, dear. Why, because Wena has licked my face all over, darling. Darling, yes, she has, I say. You are too bad not to care about it.

Now come to my own best father, dear. Offer your arm like a gentleman."

"So they"—as Milton concisely says. Homer would have written "they two." How sadly our language wants a dual! We, the domestic race, have we rejected it because the use would have seemed a truism?

* * * * * *

That same afternoon Bull Garnet lay dying, calmly and peacefully going off, taking the accounts of his stewardship to a larger world. He knew that there were some heavy items underscored against him; but he also knew that the mercy of God can even outdo the hope He gives us for token and for keepsake.

A greater and a grander end, after a life of mark and power, might, to his early aspirations and self-conscious strength, have seemed the bourne intended. If it had befallen him—as but for himself it might have done—to appear where men are moved by passion, vigour, and bold decision, his name would have been historical, and better known to the devil.

As it was, he lay there dying, and was well content. The turbulence of life was past, the torrent and the eddy, the attempt at forereaching upon his age, and sense of impossibility, the strain of his mental muscles to stir the great dead trunks of "orthodoxy," and then the self-doubt, the chill, the depression, which follow such attempts, as surely as ague tracks the pioneer.

Thank God, all this was over now, and the violence gone, and the dark despair. Of all the good and evil things which so had branded him distinct, two yet dwelled in his feeble heart, only two still showed their presence in his dying eyes. Each of those two was good, if two indeed they were—faith in the heavenly Father, and love of the earthly children.

Pearl was sitting on a white chair at the side of the bed away from the window, with one hand in his failing palm, and the other trying now and then to enable her eyes to see things. She was thinking, poor little thing, of what she should do without him, and how he had been a good father to her, though she never could understand him. That was her own fault, no doubt. She had always fancied that he loved her as a bit of his property, as a thing to be managed. Now she knew that it was not so; and he was going away for ever, and who would love or manage her? And the fault of all this was her own perhaps.

Rufus Hutton had been there lately, trying still to carry on some little show of comfort, and a large one of encouragement; for he was not the man to "say die" till a patient came to the preterite. Throughout the whole, and knowing all, he had behaved in the noblest manner, partly from his own quick kindness, partly from that protective and fiduciary feeling which springs self-sown in

the hearts of women when showers of sorrow descend, and crops up in the manly bosom at the sunshine of golden fees. Not that he took or thought of fees; but that his professional habits revived, with a generosity added, because he knew that he would take nothing, though all were in his power.

Suddenly Mr. Pell came in, our old friend Octavius, sent for in an urgent manner, and looking as a man looks who feels, but cannot move upon, the hinge of his existence. Like a thorough gentleman, he had been shy of the cottage, although aware of their distress; eager at once and reluctant, partly because it stood not in his but his rector's parish, partly for deeper reasons.

Though Pell came in so quietly, Bull Garnet rose at his entry, or tried to rise on the pillow, swept his daughter back by a little motion of his thumb, which she quite understood, and cast his eyes on the parson's with a languid yet strong intelligence. He had made up his mind that the man was good, and yet he could not help probing him.

The last characteristic act of poor Bull Garnet's life, a life which had been all character, all difference from other people.

"Will you take my daughter's hand, Pell?"

"Only too gladly," answered Pell: but she shrank away, and sobbed at him.

"Pearl, come forward this moment. It is no time for shilly-shallying."

The poor thing timidly gave her hand, standing a long way back from Pell, and with her large eyes streaming, yet fixed upon her father, and no chance at all of wiping them.

"Now, Pell, do you love my daughter? I am dying, and I ask you."

"That I do, with all my heart," said Pell, like a downright Englishman. "I shall never love any other."

"Now, Pearl, do you love Mr. Pell?" Her father's eyes were upon her in a way that commanded truth. She remembered how she had told a lie, at the age of seven or eight, and that gaze had forced it out of her, and she had never dared to tell one since, until no lie durst come near her.

"Father, I like him very much. Very soon I should love him, if—if he loved me."

"Now, Pell, you hear that!"

"Beyond all doubt I do," said Octave, whose dryness never deserted him in the heaviest rain of tears; "and it is the very best thing for me I have heard in all my life."

Bull Garnet looked from one to the other, with the rally of his life come hot, and a depth of joyful sadness. Yet must he go a little further, because he had always been a tyrant, till people understood him.

"Do you want to know how much money, sir, I intend to leave her, when I die at four o'clock this afternoon?"

Cut-and-dry Pell was taken aback. A thoroughly upright and noble fellow, but of wholly different and less rugged road of thought. Meanwhile Pearl had slipped away; it was more than she could bear, and she was so sorry for Octavius. Then Pell up and spake bravely,—

"Sir, I would be loth to think of you, my dear one's father, as anything but a gentleman; a strange one, perhaps, but a true one. And so I trust you have only put such a question to me in irony."

"Pell, there is good stuff in you. I know a man by this time. What would you think of finding your dear one's father a murderer?"

Octavius Pell was not altogether used to this sort of thing. He turned away with some doubt whether Pearl would be a desirable mother of children (for he, after all, was a practical man), and hereditary insanity—— Then he turned back, remembering that all mankind are mad.

Meanwhile Bull Garnet watched him, with extraordinary wrinkles, and a savage sort of pleasure. He felt himself outside the world, and looking at the stitches of it. But he would not say a word. He had always been a bully, and so to the last he would be.

"Sir," said Octave Pell, at last, "you are the very oddest man I ever saw in all my life."

"Ah, you think so, do you, Pell? Possibly you are right; possibly you are right, Pell. I have no time to think about it. It never struck me in that light. If I am so very odd, perhaps you would rather not have my daughter?"

"If you intend to refuse her to me, you had better say so at once, sir. I don't understand a word of this."

"I wish you to understand nothing at all beyond the simple fact. I shot Clayton Nowell, and did it on purpose, because I found him insulting her."

"Good God! You don't mean to say it?"

"I never yet said a thing, Pell, which I did not mean to say."

"You did it in haste? You have repented? For God's sake, tell me that."

"Treat this as a question of business. Look at the deed and nothing else. Do you still wish to marry my daughter?"

Pell turned away from the great wild eyes now solemnly fixed upon him. His manly heart was full of wonder, anguish, and giddy turbulence. The promptest of us cannot always "come to time," like a prizefighter.

Pearl came in, with her chest well forward, and then drew back very suddenly. She thought her fate must be settled now, and would like to know how they had settled it. Then, like a genuine

English lady, she gave a short sigh and went away. Pride makes the difference between us and all other nations.

But the dignified glance she had cast on Pell settled his fate and hers for life. He saw her noble self-respect, her stately reservation, her deep sense of her own pure value (which never would assert itself), and her passing contempt of his hesitation.

"At all risks I will have her," he said to himself, for his manly strength gloried in her strong womanhood; "if she can be won I will have her. Oh, how I am degrading her! What a fool-bound fellow I am!"

Then he spoke to her father, who had fallen back, and was faintly gazing, wondering what the stoppage was.

"Sir, I am not worthy of her. God knows how I love her. She is too good for me."

Bull Garnet gathered his fleeting life, and looked at Pell with a love so deep that it banished admiration. Then his failing heart supplied, for the last, last time of all, the woe-worn fountain of his eyes. Strong and violent as he was, a little thing had often touched him to the turn of tears. What impulse is there but has this end? Even broadest laughter.

Pell lifted from the counterpane the large but shrunken hand, which was on the way to be offered to him, until sad memory stopped it. Then he looked down at the poor grey face, where the forehead, from the fall of the rest, appeared almost a monstrosity, and the waning of strong emotions left a quivering of hollowness. The young parson looked down with noble pity. Much he knew of his father-in-law! Bull Garnet would never be pitied. He drew his hand back with a little jerk, and placed it against his broad, square chin.

"I can't bear to die like this, Pell. I wish to God you would shave me."

Pell went suddenly down on his knees, put his firm brown hands up, and said nothing except the Lord's Prayer. Bull Garnet tried to raise his palms, but the power of his wrists was gone, and so he let them fall together. Then at every grand petition he nodded at the ceiling, as if he saw it going upward, and feared for the lath and plaster.

He had said he should die at four o'clock, for the paroxysms of heart-complaint returned at measured intervals, and he felt that he could not outlast another. So with his usual mastery and economy of labour, he had sent a man to get the keys and begin to toll the great church bell, as soon as ever the clock struck four. "Not too long apart," he said, "steadily, and be done with it." When the boom of the sluggish bell came in at the open window, Bull Garnet smiled, because the man was doing exactly as he had ordered him.

Right," he whispered "yes, quite right. I have always been

before my time. Just let me see my children." And after that he had no more pain.

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Amy came in very softly, to know if he was dead. They had told her she ought to leave it alone, but she could not see it so. Knowing all and feeling all, she felt beyond her knowledge. If it would—oh, if it would help him with a spark of hope in his parting, help him in the judgment-day, to have the glad forgiveness of the brother with the deeper wrong—there it was, and he was welcome.

A little whispering went on, pale lips into trembling ears, and then Cradock, with his shoes off, was brought to the side of the bed.

"He won't know you," Pearl sobbed softly; "but how kind of you to come!" She was surprised at nothing now.

Her father raised his languid eyes, until they met Cradock's eager ones; there they dwelt with doubt, and wonder, and a slow rejoicing, and a last attempt at meaning.

John Rosedew took the wan stiffening hand, lying on the sheet like a cast-off glove, and placed it in Cradock's sunburnt palm.

"He knows all," the parson whispered; "he has read the letter you left for him; and, knowing all, he forgives you."

"That I do, with all my heart," Cradock answered firmly. "May God forgive me as I do you. Wholly, purely, for once and for all!"

"Kind—noble—Godlike——" the dying man gasped very slowly, but with his old decision.

Bull Garnet could not speak again. The great expansion of heart had been too much for worn weariness. Only now and then he looked at Cradock with his Amy, and every look was a prayer for them, and perhaps a recorded blessing.

Then they slipped away, in tears, and left him, as he ought to be, with his children only. And the telegraph of death was that God would never part them.

Now, think you not this man was dying a great deal better than he deserved? No doubt he was. And, for that matter, so perhaps do most of us. Yet who can be blamed for that, but God?

CHAPTER LXIV.

REST YE IN THE WOODLAND.

SOFTLY and quietly fell the mould on the coffin of Bull Garnet. A great tree overhung his sleep, without fear of his wood-axe. Clayton Nowell's simple grave, turfed and very tidy, was only a few yards away. That ancient tree spread forth its arms on this one and the

other, as a grandsire spreads his hands peacefully and playfully on children who have quarrelled.

A lovely spot, as one might see, for violence to rest in, for long remorse to sink and sleep, and deep repentance hopefully abide the time of judgment. To feel the soft mantle of winter return, and the promising gladness of spring, the massive depths of the summer-tide, and the ripe disarray of autumn. And to be, no more the while, oppressed, or grieved, or overworked, passionate, or weary.

There shall forest-children come, joining hands in pleasant fear, and, sitting upon grassy mounds, wonder who inhabits them, wonder who and what it is that cannot wonder any more. And haply they shall tell this tale—become a legend then—when he who writes, and ye who read, are shadows in a larger forest.

Ay, and tell it better far, more simply, and more sweetly, never having gone astray from the inborn sympathy. For every grown-up man is apt to mar the uses of his pen with bitter words, and small, and twaddling; conceiting himself to be keen in the first, just in the second, and sage in the third. For all of these let him crave forgiveness of God, his fellow-creatures, and himself, respectively.

Sir Cradock Nowell, still alive to the normal sense of duty, tottered away on John Rosedew's arm, from the grave of his half-brother. He had never learned whose hand it was that dug the grave near by, and no one ever forced that bitter knowledge on him. This last blow, which seemed to strike his chiefest prop from under him, had left its weal on his failing mind in great marks of astonishment. That such a strong, great man should drop, and he, the elder and the weaker, be left to do without him!

He was going to the Rectory now, to have a glass of wine, after fatigue of the funeral, a vintage very choice and rare, according to Mr. Rosedew, and newly imported from Oxford. And truly that was its origin. It might have claimed "founder's kin fellowship," like most of the Oxford wine-skins.

"Wonderful, wonderful man!" said poor Sir Cradock, doing his best to keep his back very upright, from a sudden erection of memory, —"to think that he should go first, John! Oh, if I had a son left, he should take that man for his model."

"Scarcely that," John Rosedew thought, knowing all that had come to pass; "but of the dead I will say no harm."

"So quick, so ready, so up for any thing! Ah, I remember he knocked a man down just at the corner by this gate here, where we can't get the couch-grass out. And afterwards he proved to me how richly he deserved it. That is the way to do things, John."

"I am not quite sure of that," said the conscientious parson; "it might be wiser to prove that first; and then to abstain from doing it. I remember an instance in point——"

"Of course you do. You always do, John, and I wish you wouldn't. But that has nothing to do with it. You are always

cutting me short, John : and worse than ever since you came back, and they talked of you so at Oxford. I hope they have not changed you, John."

He looked at the white-haired rector, with an old man's jealousy. Who else had any right to him?

"My dear old friend," replied John Rosedew, with kind sorrow in his eyes, "I never meant to cut you short. I will try never to do it again. But I know I am rude sometimes, and I am always sorry afterwards."

"Nonsense, John ; don't talk of it. I understand you by this time ; and we allow for one another. But now about my son, my poor unlucky boy."

"To be sure, yes," said the other old man, not wishing to hurry matters. And so they stopped, and probed the hedge with their sticks, instead of one another.

"I don't know how it is," at last Sir Cradock Nowell said, being rather aggrieved with John Rosedew for not breaking ground upon him, "but how hard those stubs of ash are ! Look at that splinter, almost severed by a man who does not know how to splash ; Jem, his name is, poor Garnet told me, Jem—something or other—and yet all I can do with my stick won't fetch it away from the stock."

"Like a child who will not quit his father, however his father has treated him."

"What do you mean by that, John? Are you driving at me again? I thought you had given it over."

"I never give over anything," answered the parson, in a manner for him quite melodramatic, and above his usual key.

"No. We always knew how stubborn you were. And now you are worse than ever."

"No fool like an old fool," Mr. Rosedew answered, smiling sweetly, yet with some regret. "Cradock, I am such a fool I shall let out everything."

"What do you mean?" asked Sir Cradock Nowell, leaning heavily on his staff, and setting his white face rigidly, yet with every line of it ready to melt ; "John, I have heard strange rumours, or I have dreamed strange dreams. In the name of God, what is it, John? My son !—my only son——"

He could say no more, but turned away, and bowed his head, and trembled.

"Your only son, your innocent son, has been at my house these three days ; and when you like, you can see him."

"When I like—ah, to be sure ! I don't like many people. I am getting very old, John. And no one to come after me. It seems a pity, don't you think, and every one against me so?"

"You can take your own part still, my friend. And you have to take your son's part."

"Yes, to be sure, my son's part. Perhaps he will come back

some day. And I know he did not do it, now; and I was very hard to him—don't you think I was, John?—very hard to my poor Craddy, and he was so like his mother!"

"But you will be very kind to him now; and he will be such a comfort to you, now he is come back again, and going away no more, for ever."

"I declare you make me shake, John. You do talk such nonsense. One would think you knew all about him,—more than his own father does. What have I done, to be kept like this in the dark, all in the dark? And you seem to think that I was hard to him."

"Cradock, all you have to do is just to say the word; just to say that you wish to see him, and your son will come and talk to you."

"Talk to me! Oh yes, I should like to talk to him—very much—I mean, of course, if he is at leisure."

He leaned on his stick, and tried to think, while Mr. Rosedew hurried off; and of all his thoughts the foremost were, "What will Cradock my boy be like; and what shall I give him for dinner?"

Cradock came up shyly, gently, looking at his father first, then waiting to be looked at. The old man fixed his eyes upon him, at first with some astonishment—for his taste in dress was somewhat outraged by the Broadway style—then, in spite of all the change, remembrance of his son returned, and love, and sense of ownership. Last of all, paternal pride in the young man's height and magnitude, blended with soft recollections of the time he dandled him.

"Why, Cradock! Is it my Craddy, then? What a size you are grown, my boy, my boy!"

"Oh, father, I am sure you want me. Only try me once again. I am not at all a radical."

"Crad, you never could be. I knew you must come round at last to a proper way of thinking. When you had seen the world, Crad; when you had seen the world a bit, as your father did before you."

And thus they made the matter up, in politics, and dress, and little touches of religion, and in the depth of kindred love which underlies the latter; and never after was there word, except of migrant petulance, between the crotchety old man, and the son who held his heart's key.

* * * * * *

All this while we have been loth to turn to Mrs. Corklemore, and contemplate her discomfiture, although in strict sequence of events we ought to have done so long ago. But it is so very painful—and now-a-days all writers agree with Epicurus, in regarding pain as the worst of evils—so bitter is the task to describe a lovely mother failing, in spite of all exertion, to do her duty by her child,

in robbing other people, that really—ah well-a-day, physic must be taken.

At the time of her dismissal from the halls of Nowelhurst, Mr. Corklemore had been so glad to see his pretty wife again, and that queer little Flore, who amused him so by pinching his stiff leg, and crying, "haw," and he had found the house so desolate, and the absence of plague so unwholesome, and the responsibility of having a will of his own so horrible, that he scarcely cared to ask the reason why they were come home again. And Georgie—who was not thoroughly heartless, else how could she have got on so?—thought Coo Nest very snug and nice, with none to contradict her. So she found relief awhile, in banishing her worse, while she indulged her better half.

Let us also do the same by suppressing once for all the tendency to moralize. In Georgie's case, as well as ours, the indulgence possessed at any rate the attractions of change and variety. But, knowing how strictly we are bound by the canons of philosophy to suspect and put the curb on every natural bias, that good young woman soon refrained from over-active encouragement of her inclination to goodness. Rallying her sense of right, she vanquished very nobly all the seductions of honesty, and, by a virtuous effort, marched from the Capua of virtue.

She stood upon the wood-crowned heights which look upon Coo Nest, and as the smoke came curling up, the house seemed very small to her. What a thing to call a garden! And the pigeon-house at Nowelhurst was nearly as large as our stable! And oh that little vinery, where one knew every single bunch, and came every day to watch its ripening, and the little fuss of its colouring, like an ogre watching a pet babe roasting. Surely nature never meant her to live upon so small a scale; or why had she been gifted with such large activities?

She turned her back upon Coo Nest, and her face to Nowelhurst Hall, and in her mind's eye saw a place ever so much larger.

Then a pleasant sound came up the hollow, a nice ring of revolving wheels coquetting with the best C springs and all the new improvements. Well-mettled horses, too, were there, stepping together sonipedally, and a footman could be seen, whose legs must stand him in 60*l.* a year.

"That odious old Sir Julius Wallop and his wizen-faced wife come to patronize us again and say, 'Ha, Corklemore, snug little place, charming situation; but I think I should pull it down and rebuild; no room for Chang to stand in it. And how is my old friend, Sir Cradock, your forty-fifth cousin, I believe? Ah, his place is fit to look at.' I haven't the heart to meet them now, and their patronizing disparagement. Heigho! It is a nice turn-out. And yet they have at Nowelhurst three more handsome carriages. And it does look so much better to have two footmen there behind;

and I do like watered linings so. How nice Flo did look by my side in that new barouche! Oh, my darling child, I must not give way to selfish feelings. I must do my duty towards you."

Therefore she proceeded, against her better nature, in the face of prudence, with her attempt to set aside poor Sir Cradock Nowell, and obtain fiduciary possession of his property. Cradock was lost in the *Taprobane*,—of that there could be no doubt; and so she was saved all further trouble of laying before the civil authorities the stronger evidence they required before issuing a warrant. But all was going very nicely towards the beginning of an inquiry as to the old man's state of mind. Then suddenly she was checkmated, and never moved a pawn again.

One afternoon, Mrs. Corklemore was sitting in her drawing-room, expecting certain visitors, and quite ready to be bored with them, because they were leading gossips—ladies who gave the first complexion to any nascent narrative. And Georgie knew how to handle them. In the county talk which must ensue, only let them take her side, and all the world would feel for her in her painful and trying position.

After a rumble of rapid wheels, and a violent pull at the bell (which made the lady of the house to jump, because they had just had the bell-hanger) into her sanctuary came, with a cooler than cucumine temperature, not indeed Lady Alberta Smith and her daughter Victorina Beatrice, but Miss Eöa Nowell and her cousin Cradock.

For once in her life Mrs. Corklemore was deprived of all presence of mind, ghostly horror being added to bodily fear of Eöa. She fain would have fled, but her limbs gave way, and she fell back into a soft French chair, and covered her face with both hands. Then Eöa, looking tall and delicate in her simple mourning dress, came up to her very quietly, leading Cradock as if she were proud of him.

"I have taken the liberty, Mrs. Corklemore, of bringing my cousin Cradock to see you, because it may save trouble."

"I trust you will forgive," said Cradock, "our very sudden invasion. We are come upon a matter of business, to save unpleasant exposures and disgrace to our distant relatives."

"Oh," gasped poor Mrs. Corklemore, "you are alive, then, after all? You were proved to have lost your life upon the coast of Africa."

"Allow me to assure you that I am now proved to have saved it," Crad answered, bowing neatly.

"But it would have been so much better, under the sad, sad circumstances, for all people of good feeling, and all interested in the family."

"For the latter, perhaps it would, madam; not so clearly for the former. I am here to protect my father from all machinations."

"Leave her to me," cried Eöa, slipping beautifully in front of him, "I understand her best, because—because of my former vocation. And I think she knows what I am."

"That I do," answered Georgie, cleverly interposing first a small enamelled table; "not only an insolent, but an utterly reckless creature."

"You may think so," Eöa replied, with calm superiority; "but that only shows your piteous ignorance of the effects of discipline. I am now so sedate and tranquil a woman, that I do not hate, but scorn you."

Cradock could not help smiling at this, knowing what Eöa was.

"We want no strong expressions, my dear, on one side or the other," for he saw that a word would have overthrown Eöa's newborn discipline; "Mrs. Corklemore is far too clever not to perceive her mistake. She knows quite well that any inquiry as to my dear father's state of mind can now be of no use to her. And if she thinks of any further proceedings against myself, perhaps she had better first look at just this—just this document."

He laid before her a certificate, granted by three magistrates, that indisputable evidence had been brought before them as to the cause and manner of Clayton Nowell's death, and that Cradock Nowell had no share in it, wittingly or unwittingly. That was the upshot of it; but of course it extended to about fifty-fold the length.

Mrs. Corklemore bent over it in her most bewitching manner, and perused it very leisurely, as if she were examining Flore's attempts at pothooks. Meanwhile, with a side-glint of her eyes, she was watching both of them; and it did not escape her notice that Eöa was very pale.

"To be sure," she said at last, looking full at the Eastern maid, "I see exactly how it was. I have thought so all along. A female Thug must be charmed, of course, by the only son of a murderer. My dear, I do so congratulate you."

"Thank you," answered Eöa, and the deep gaze of her lustrous eyes made the clever woman feel a world unopened to her; "I thank you, Georgie Corklemore, because you know no better. My only wish for you is, that you may never know unhappiness, because you could not bear it."

Saying so, she turned away, and, with her light, quick step, was gone, before her enemy could see a symptom of the welling tears which then burst all control. But Cradock, who had dwelt in sorrow, compared to which hers was a joke, stayed to say a few soft words, and made a friend for evermore of the woman who had plotted so against his life and all his love.

Madame la Comtesse since that time has seen much tribulation, and is all the better for it. Mr. Corklemore died of the gout, and the angel Flore of the measles; and she herself, having nursed them both, and lost some selfishness in their graves, is now (as her

destiny seemed to be) the wife of Mr. Chope. Of course she is compelled to merge her strong will in a stronger one, and, according to nature's Salique law, is the happier for doing so. Whether this union will produce a subject for biography to some unborn Lord Campbell, time alone can show.

From the above it will be clear that poor Eöa Nowell was now acquainted with the secret of the Garnet family. Bob himself had told her all, about a month after his father's death, renouncing at the same time all his claims upon her. Of that Eöa would not hear; only at his urgency she promised to consult her friends, and take a week to think of it. And this was the way she kept her promise.

First she ran up to Cradock Nowell, with the bright tears still upon her cheeks, and asked him whether he had truly and purely forgiven his injurer. He took her hand, and answered her with his eyes, in which the deepened springs of long affliction glistened, fixed steadily on hers.

"As truly and purely as I hope to be forgiven at the judgment-day."

"Then that settles that matter. Now order the dog-cart, Craddy dear, and drive me to Dr. Hutton's."

Of course he obeyed her immediately, and in an hour they entered the gate of Geopharmacy Lodge. Rosa was amazed at her beauty, and thought very little, after that, of Mrs. Corklemore's appearance.

"For my part," said Rufus Hutton, when Eöa had laid the case before him in a privy council, "although it is very good of you, and very flattering to me, that you look upon me still as your guardian, I think you are bound first of all to consult Sir Cradock Nowell."

"How very odd! Now that is exactly what I do not mean to do. He never can understand, poor dear, and I hope he never will, the truth about poor Clayton's death. His present conviction is, like that of all the neighbourhood, that Black Will the poacher did it, the man who has since been killed in a fight with Sir Julius Wallop's gamekeepers. And it would shock poor uncle so; I am sure he would never get over it, if the truth were forced upon him. And if it were, I am sure he would never allow me to have my way, which, of course, I should do in spite of him. And I am not his heiress now, since Cradock came to life again. But I have plenty of money of my own; and I have quite settled what to give him the day that I am married, and you too, my dear guardy, if you behave well about this. Look here!"

She drew forth a purse quite full of gold, and tossed it in her old Indian style, so that Rufus could not help laughing.

"Well, my dear," he answered kindly, "who could resist such bribery? Besides, I see that your mind is made up, and we all

know what the result of that is. And after all, the chief question is, what effect will your knowledge of this have on your love for your husband?"

"It will only make me love him more, ever so much more, because of his misfortune."

"And will you never allude to it, never let him see that you think of it, so as to spoil his happiness?"

"Is it likely I should think of it? Why, my father must have killed fifty men. He was desperate in a battle. And Bob has never brought any one of those murders up against me."

"Well, if you take it in that light—decidedly not an English light——"

"And perhaps you never heard that Bob's father, by his quickness and boldness, saved the lives of fifteen men in a colliery explosion, before ever he came to Nowelhurst, and therefore he had a perfect right to—to——"

"Take the lives of fifteen others. Fourteen to his credit still. Well, Eöa, you can argue, if any female in the world can. Only in one thing, my dear child, be advised by me. If you must marry Robert Garnet, leave this country for a while, and take his sister Pearl with you."

"Of course I must marry Bob," said Eöa; "and of course I should go away with him. But as to taking Pearl with us, why, that's a thing to be thought about."

However, they got over that, as well as all other difficulties; Sir Cradock Nowell was at the wedding, Mr. Rosedew performed the ceremony, and Rufus Hutton gave away as lovely a bride as ever was seen. Bob Garnet spied a purple emperor, who had lost his way, knocking his head in true imperial fashion against the chancel-window, and he glanced at Eöa about it, between the two "I wills," and she lifted her beautiful eyebrows, and he saw that she meant to catch him. So, after signing the register, they contrived to haul him down, without letting Mr. Rosedew know it; then at the chancel-porch they let him go free of the Forest, with his glorious wings unsoiled. Not even an insect should have cause to repent their wedding-day.

And now they live in as fair a place as any the world can show, not far from Pezo da Ragoa, in the Alto Douro district. There Eöa's children toddle by the brilliant river's brink, and form their limbs to strength and beauty up the vine-clad mountain's side. Bob has invested his share of proceeds in a vineyard of young Bastardo, and Muscat de Jesu; moreover, he holds a good appointment under the Royal Oporto Company, agricultural of the vine.

Many a time Eöa sits watching with her deep bright eyes the purple flow of the luscious juice from the white marble "lagar," wherein the hardy peasants, with their drawers tied at the knee,

tramp to the time of the violin to and fro, without turning round, among the pulpy flood. Then Bob, who has discovered a perfect cure for oïdium, and knows how to deal with every grub that bores into or nips the vine, to his wife and bairns he comes in haste, having been too long away, bringing a bunch of the "ladies' fingers," or the Barrete de Clerigo, or it may be some magnificent insect new to his entomology; or, still more interesting prize, a letter from Pearl or Amy, wherein Mrs. Pell, or Nowell, gossips of the increasing cares which increase her happiness. Yet even among those lovely scenes, and under that delicious sky, frequent and fond are the glances cast by hope, as well as memory, at the bowered calm of the Forest brooks, and the brown glamour of the beech-wood.

And when they return to dwell in the Forest, and to end their days there, even Bob will scarcely know the favourite haunts of his boyhood—to such an extent has Cradock Nowell planted and improved, clothing barren slopes with verdure, adding to the wealth of woods many a new tint and tone, by the aid of foreign trees unknown to his father. In doing so, his real object is not so much to improve the estate, or gratify his own good taste, or even that of Amy; but to find labour for the hands, and food for the mouths, of industrious people. Sir Cradock grumbles just a little every now and then, because, like all of us Englishmen, he must have his grievance. But, on the whole, he is very proud of what his son is doing, and thoroughly enjoys his power of urging or repressing it.

And if on theoretic matters any question chances to arise between them, when one says "no" to the other's "yes"—as all true Britons are bound to do upon politics, port wine, and parsons,—then a gentle spirit comes and turns it all to laughter, with the soft and pleasant wit of a well-bred woman's ignorance.

For Amy still must have her say, and still asserts her privilege to flavour every dull discussion with lively words, and livelier glances, and a smile for both the disputants. Then Cradock looks at his dear young wife with notes of admiration, and bids her keep such piquant wisdom for the councils of the nursery. Upon which pleasant reminder, the old man chuckles, as if some very good thing had been said; then craftily walks with a spotted toy, capable of barking and exactly representing Caldo or Wena, whichever you please, to the foot of certain black oak-stairs, where he fully expects to hear the prattle of a small Clayton.

To wit, it has been long resolved, and managed with prospective wisdom down the path of years, that the county annals shall not be baulked of a grand Sir Clayton Nowell. And a very grand fellow indeed he is, this two-year-old Clayton Nowell—grand in the stolid sageness of his broad and steadfast gaze, grand in the manner of his legs and his Holbein attitude, grander still in

stamping when his meat and ale are late, but grandest of all, immeasurably grand, in the eyes of his grandfather.

Hogstaff, whose memory is quite gone, and his hearing too of every sound except the voice of this boy, identifies him beyond all cavil with the Clayton of our story. Many a time the bowed retainer chides his little master for not remembering the things he taught him only yesterday. Then Cradock smiles at his son's oblivion of the arts his uncle learned, but never reminds old Hoggy that the yesterday was rather more than five-and-twenty years ago.

Is it true or is it false, according to the rules of art, that the winding-up of a long, long story, handled with more care than skill, should have some resemblance to the will of a kindly-natured man? In whose final dispositions, no dependent, however humble, none who have helped him in the many pages of his life, far less any intimate friend, seeks in vain a grateful mention or a token of regard.

Be that as it may, any writer who loves his work (although a fool for doing so) feels the end and finish of it like the signature of his will. And doubly saddened must he be, if the scenes which charmed him most, and cast upon him such a spell that he could not call spectators in,—if these, for want of skill, have wearied eyes and hearts he might have pleased.

For surely none would turn away, whose nature is uncancelled, if once he could be gently led into that world of beauty. To rest in the majesty of shade, forgetting weary headache; to let the little carking cares, avarice and jealousy, self-conceit and thirst of fame, fly away on the wild wood, like the piping of a bird; to hear the rustle of young leaves, when their edges come together, and dreamily to wonder at the stretch of the world beyond us.

Shall ever any man enclasp the good that grows above him, or even offer to receive the spread of Heaven's greatness? Yet every man may lift himself above the highest tree-tops, even to the throne of God, by loving and forgiving.

And verily, some friends of ours, who could not once forego a grudge, are being taught, by tare and tret, how much they owe their Maker, and how little to themselves.

First of these is Rufus Hutton, quite a jolly mortal, getting fat, and riding Polly for the sake of his liver and renes. And all he has to say is this: first, that he will match trees and babies with any nurseryman; next, that as we have a knack of puffing good people and good things, he begs for reciprocity on the part of superior readers. And if this should chance to meet the eye of any one who knows where to find a really first-rate Manilla, conducted on free-trade principles, such knowing person, by addressing, confidentially under seal, "R. H., Post-office, Ringwood," may hear of something very greatly to his own advantage.

Now do we, without appeal to the blue smoke of enthusiasm, know of anything to the advantage of anybody whatever? Yes, beyond all doubt, we do. We may highly commend the recent career of the Ducksacre firm, and Mr. Clinkers, and Issachar Jupp the bargee. Robert Clinkers and Polly his wife are driving a first-rate business in coal and coke and riddlings, not highly aristocratic perhaps, but therefore free from all bad debts. You may see the name on a great brass-plate near the Broadway, Hammersmith, on the left hand, where the busses stop.

But Mr. Jupp flies at higher game. He has turned his length of wind, that once secured the palm of victory in physical encounters, to a higher and nobler use. In a word, Mr. Jupp is a Primitive Christian upon and beside the waters of Avon. There you may hear him preaching and singing through his nose alternately—ah, me, that is not what I mean—for either proceeding is nasal—every Sunday and Wednesday evening, when the leaks in the punt allow him. He gets five-and-thirty shillings a-week, as Sir Cradock's water-bailiff, and he has not stolen twig or catkin of all the trees he convoys down Avon. In seven or eight more summers, little Loo Jupp will be perhaps the prettiest girl in the Forest. May we be there to see her!

The best and kindest man of all who have said their say in this story, and not thrust their merits forward, John Rosedew, still leads his quiet life, nearer and nearer to wisdom's threshold, nearer and nearer to the door of God. His temper is as soft and sweet, his memory as bright and ready, and his humour as playful, as when he was only thirty years old, and walked every day to Kidlington. As for his shyness, that we must never ask him to discard; because he likes to know us first, and then he likes to love us.

But of all the people in the world, next to his own child Amy, most he loves and most he honours his son-in-law, Cradock Nowell.

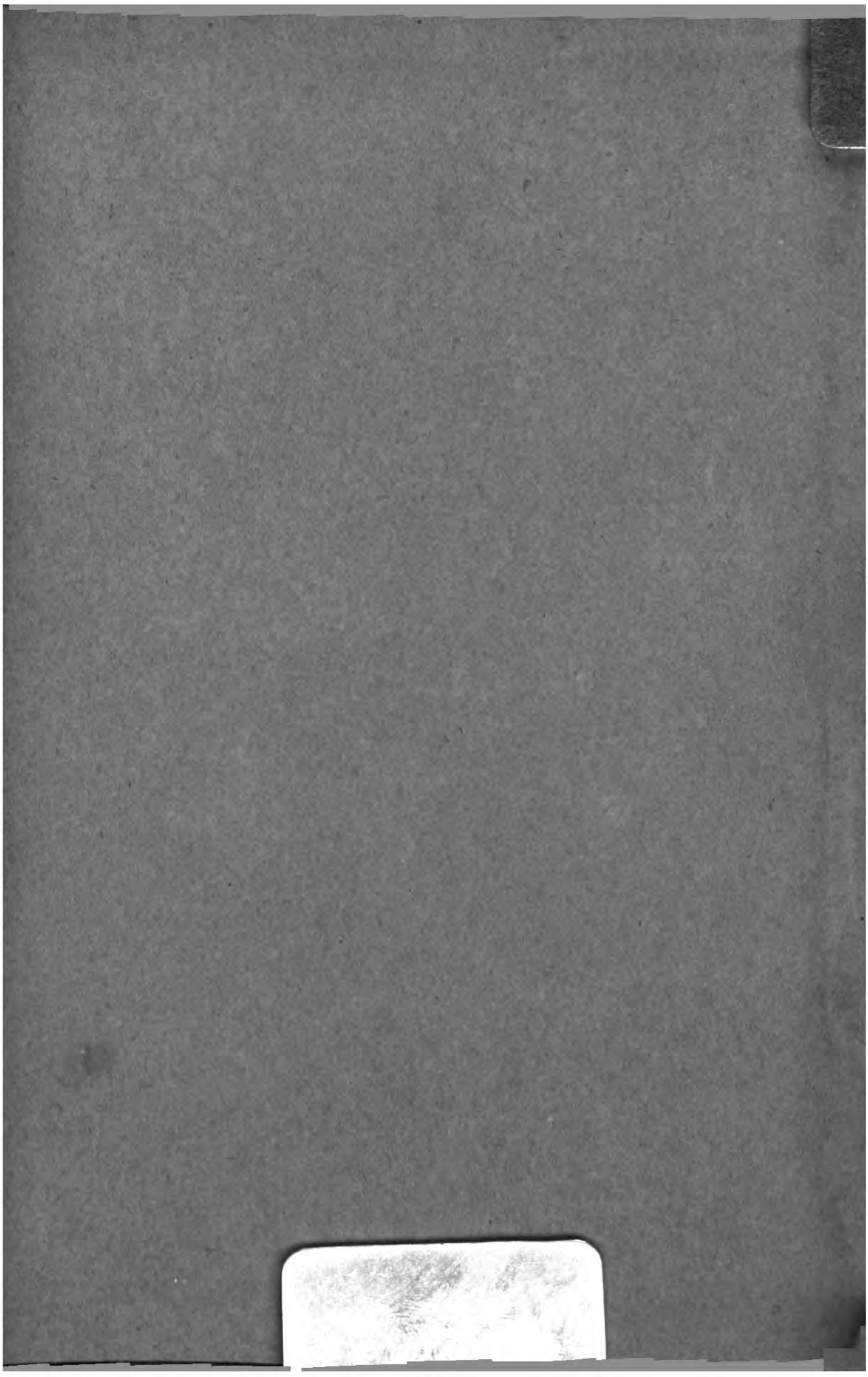
Cradock Nowell, so enlarged and purified by affliction, so able now to understand and feel for every poor man. He, when placed in large possessions and broad English influence, never will forget the time of darkness, grief, and penury, never will look upon his brethren, as under another God than his.

It is true that we must have hill and valley, towering oak and ragged robin, zenith cloud overlooking the sun, and crouching mist in the hollows. And true as well that we cannot see all the causes and needs of the difference.

But is it not still more true and sure, that the whole is of one universal kingdom (bound together by one great love), the high and low, the rich and poor, the powerful and the helpless?

And in the spreading of that realm, beyond the shores of time and space, when at last old men discover what the true aim of this life has been,—not greatness, honour, wealth, or science, no, nor

even wisdom (as we unwisely take it)—but happiness here, and hereafter happiness, a flowing tide whose fountain is our love of one another, then may we truly learn by feeling (whereby alone we can learn) that all the clefts of anguish, and the rifts into the heart of us, were but the needful entrance for the grafts of fruit eternal.

THE END.

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