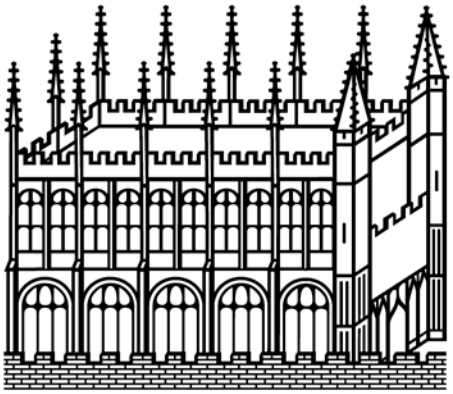


Bodleian Libraries

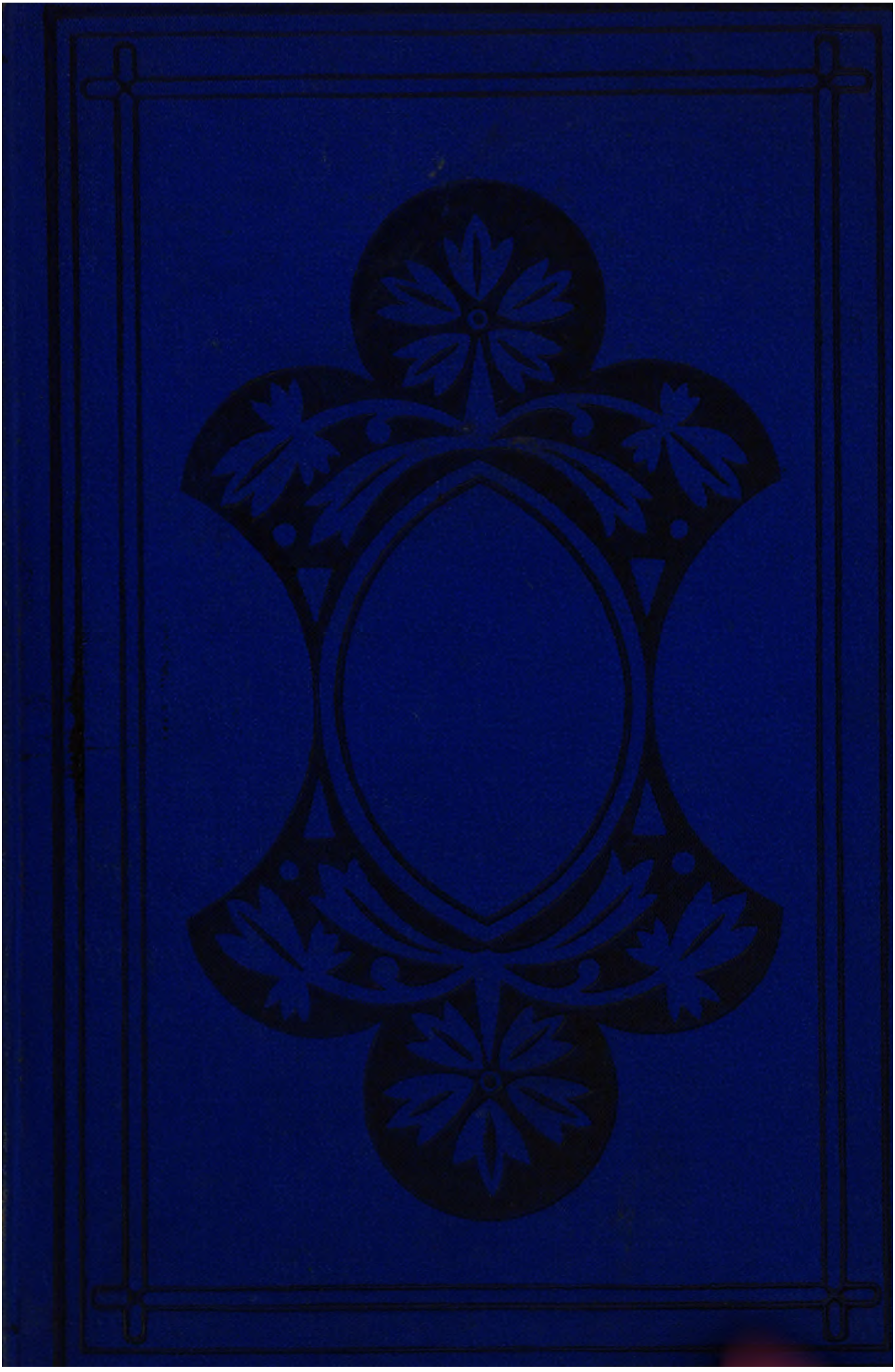
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

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

For more information see:

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

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



600057086W

A MARRIAGE OF CONSCIENCE.

A MARRIAGE OF CONSCIENCE.

A Novel.

BY

ARTHUR SKETCHLEY,

(GEORGE ROSE),

AUTHOR OF "A MATCH IN THE DARK," "MRS. BROWN AT THE PLAY," ETC.

In Three Volumes.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
TINSLEY BROTHERS, 8, CATHERINE STREET, STRAND.
1879.

[*All rights reserved.*]

251. e. 643

[illegible] BRADBURY AND EVANS,
[illegible] PALACE PRESS.

A MARRIAGE OF CONSCIENCE.

CHAPTER I.

As days and weeks passed on, Frank's time was more fully and profitably filled up; for apart from his drawing lessons, he devoted himself to improvement in every way, for the furtherance of which end facilities presented themselves in a very agreeable and unexpected way. Owing, in great measure, to the young fellow's prepossessing manners and appearance, but mainly to the good offices of M. Pitrou, who, having, through failing health, been of late relieved of much of his duty at the chapel, was able to bestow more time and thought on his pupil, a labour of love, and one which his increasing infirmities did not preclude him from pursuing.

It was the habit of our young friend to attend three evenings a week the instructions of the worthy Abbé, and the progress he made surprised his preceptor, for not only did he soon master the elements of Latin, but became rapidly a proficient in French and Italian, of both which languages the Abbé, being a native of Nice, had a perfect command.

From time to time, as Frank passed up the stairs of the house where his kind tutor lodged, he was accustomed to hear the sound of the piano touched by a well-skilled hand. Being passionately fond of music, the lad would linger for a few minutes to listen, for he had remarked that as soon as he entered the Abbé's room the playing ceased. Having on one occasion spoken to M. Pitrou of the pleasure he took in hearing music, as an apology for his having stopped longer than usual on the stairs to enjoy the sweet sounds that issued from the parlour, the old gentleman replied, "*Ah, ah! vous aimez donc la musique!* Then you shall hear him more close," continued the good-natured priest. *Tiens!* what is to-night? Ah, Monday. They are

alone. . We shall go to pay a visit, since you have so well done your lesson, as I have already asked the permission of Madame to present you to her." Frank assenting quite readily to the proposal, though not without a slight feeling of bashfulness, followed M. Pitrou to the ground-floor and into by far the prettiest room the lad had yet seen.

Though small, the apartment was so tastily furnished and arranged as to denote the taste and refinement of the occupant, a still young-looking lady dressed in black, to whom the Abbé introduced Frank.

"Ah, madame," he said, in French, "this is my *protégé*, in whose history you took so much interest. Frank, this is Madame De Courcy, a lady as distinguished by birth as she is gifted by nature."

"*Ah, mon Dieu, M. l'Abbé, c'est de trop!*" exclaimed the lady, as, turning to Frank, she continued in French to express the pleasure she had in making his acquaintance.

"I cannot speak French," replied Frank, "though I understand what you are kind enough to say."

"You must practise," replied the lady in very pure English, "and when Adèle is here you must both speak French, for she is getting out of the habit, she associates with so many English."

"You speak English perfectly, madame," said Frank.

"Ah, I am Polish; all my race speak foreign languages well."

"I have brought this young fellow to hear some of your charming music," continued the Abbé, "as I discover he is so rude as to listen to you on the stairs."

Frank turned very red, as though convicted of a fault; but the lady spoke so kindly, as though she considered his having done so a compliment, that he at once recovered his self-possession.

At that moment the door was opened, and a young girl entered the room and at once flew to the arms of Madame De Courcy, exclaiming, "Dear mamma, I am so happy, I have gained a prize."

"Speak French, darling," replied the lady; "and do you not see M. l'Abbé, and also this

young gentleman?—*c'est le joli garçon dont tu m'as souvent parlé.*"

The young lady turned to Frank, who, understanding the lady, was now blushing up to his eyes, and exclaimed: "Oh yes, I know you by sight; I have seen you often when you came to the door to go up to M. l'Abbé."

Frank had, from time to time, observed a young lady at the parlour-window, but had never presumed to stare at her, and was therefore unaware of her personal appearance, which was extremely prepossessing.

"You are to speak French with this young gentleman, my darling," said Madame De Courcy; "and now we will give our friend some tea, and then we will have some music."

Frank had never before seen so much beauty in either place or person as that by which he was now surrounded—Madame De Courcy still retaining much personal attraction, and the little girl was in his eyes simply charming. In his heart of hearts he would have liked something more substantial than

tea and *brioche*; but they were as nectar and ambrosia to him under existing circumstances; and when the light repast was over, a real treat was in store for him when Madame De Courcy and her daughter played duets and other choice musical pieces to him.

Such a state of existence was as a revelation of new life to the lad, who sat listening enraptured to the performance, and when roused from his reverie by the Abbé rising to wish the ladies "Good-night," he started as from a dream, and, with much regret, took his leave, not without having received a very warm invitation from both mother and daughter to repeat his visit.

Madame De Courcy was the daughter of a Polish noble, who had perished in the last struggle made by Poland against the power of Russia, and his widow and daughter—then a mere child—took refuge in France, where the latter subsequently became the wife of a Frenchman of good family. Left a widow in early life, she had come to England in order to increase a slender income by teaching, and had been so far successful as to have been able to

support the declining years of her mother, and impart a good education to Adèle, her only child. At the time of her introduction to our readers, Madame De Courcy had lost her mother, who had been dead some two years, a loss which was in a great measure made up to her by the rapid development of her child's character, who day by day became more companionable, displaying considerable natural ability, and easily susceptible of all the educational advantages her mother was able to afford her.

Madame De Courcy lived in the strictest retirement, fully employed during the day with teaching, and devoting her evening exclusively to Adèle, who passed the day with some French ladies who took pupils and superintended her general education. From the time of his first introduction to the ladies, Frank was a favourite, and soon became established, as Madame De Courcy said, "*enfant de la maison.*" He did not exceed in the matter of his visits, and from time to time presented Madame De Courcy with trifling offerings in the

shape of flowers, the produce of Mr. Tozer's garden, which, though small, was so well tended as to be very productive of the more ordinary kinds of plants, whilst a small corner covered in with glass enabled him to produce not a few exotics, which, if not rare, were at any rate a pleasure to see; and, as Mrs. Tozer often observed, "only shows what you can do in a small place with keeping cats and sparrows at bay."

It was not without misgiving that the worthy woman saw the growing intimacy of Frank with his foreign friends, and she did not fail to caution him on the subject; because, as she observed, "It is well known as forriners is a deceitful race, 'cos look at Bonyparty, as were put down at Waterloo, as weren't no better than a common robber, but come to 'is end on a penil settlement, and serve 'im right; not but wot there's 'undreds about as bad as 'im; so I always says, in dealin' with forriners, keep your weather-eye up and your powder dry, as was King George's last words to Lord Nelson, as was a match for forriners, though he 'ad a wall-eye

and 'is arm shot away, as was all through forriners."

In spite of these warnings and hints, during the whole of the ensuing winter did Frank on two evenings of the week, after his lessons, pass a couple of hours or so in the charming society of Madame De Courcy; not merely as a pastime, but in reading works which she suggested of an educational kind, and also taking lessons in music, for which he displayed both taste and aptitude. These visits were attended with the best results to a nature like Frank's, which was highly susceptible of improvement, and for which the refined had an instinctive attraction. The whole atmosphere surrounding the widow and her daughter was replete with the charming, the appointments of the little apartment being, as we have said, elegant in the extreme; whilst its occupants excelled in all that was accomplished and refined. From sheer good feeling towards Frank did Madame De Courcy apply herself to the development of his character and attainments with absolute devotion to the work.

Mrs. Tozer at first objected to his being "so much out of evenings," as she used to say; "but as he was always in to supper, and did not go 'idlin' about the streets, as in gen'ral ends in them gallawantun' ways as I don't 'old with, tho' in course I don't say nothink about it, not to fly in Tozer's face as 'is words to me is ever, 'Let the boy alone, he's as right as a trivet,' as the sayin' is, tho' bless my 'art he grows that fast as he seems a-shootin' up by inches afore my very eyes, and grows more like 'is mother every 'our; as proves to me that there sailor wagger-bone weren't never 'is father, as I could indemnify among ten thousand, and will 'ave the truth out of 'im if ever he should turn up, as if I 'adn't seen the boy born with my own eyes, and should 'ave said as he'd been stole by gipsies and stained with walnut-juice, not but wot he's got a skin like a lily underneath."

This was the burden of a conversation that Mrs. Tozer held with the Abbé and Madame De Courcy, to whom she paid a visit when Frank first began to extend the hours of his absence on the two

evenings of the week, not that she distrusted his statements, but because she was really anxious to know what the worthy priest thought of her young charge.

Eliciting nothing but the most favourable opinions of him from both the Abbé and Madame De Courcy, to whom she was introduced, the good woman went home delighted to strengthen her husband's oft-repeated opinion that the boy would turn out trumps as sure as fate.

Among other accomplishments being acquired by Mademoiselle De Courcy, dancing was of course included, in which art she received lessons from a professor on two afternoons in the week, and it was one of Frank's privileges, as he esteemed it, to call for and escort the young lady home from the small but very select dancing academy she attended. For though but a short distance from where she lived, it was not always convenient for Madame De Courcy to call or send for the little girl, and as she took her lessons on the same day that Frank came to the Abbé, the lad's services were put in requisition as her body-guard. He called for Adèle at five o'clock, having left

his office at four o'clock, so had plenty of time on his hands; and as Mr. Crocket did not approve of his staying to work after hours, he made his way at once to the dancing academy, and waited in a little room till the young lady was ready. As he sat reading, he was wont to hear the shuffling of feet and the scraping of the violin in an adjoining room; clear indications that the votaries of Terpsichore were devoting themselves to her service. Now it so fell out that on one afternoon when Frank was waiting for Adèle, M. Coulon Pierrot, the eminent professor, an elderly Frenchman, was in despair, for he had arranged to give an elementary lesson in quadrilles of eight, and alas! there were only seven pupils present. In this emergency Adèle thought of Frank, and at once suggested his being enlisted in the professor's ranks.

The agile M. Pierrot in an instant had skipped into the little parlour, and would have dragged Frank into the dancing-room by main force, but his powers were not equal to the resistance which the youth offered. He then, with a profusion of apologies, endeavoured to induce the young gentleman

to join the youthful class. Frank was not in the least awkward or shamefaced, and at once expressed his readiness to make himself useful, but he said: "I cannot dance; I never saw a dance."

"Ah! ah! you shall try; you are so young, so *gentil*. Ah, mademoiselle, it must be—you persuade him."

"I really have no idea what to do," said Frank, in reply to Adèle's entreaty.

"Only stand up," she said; "it will please M. Pierrot so much. Do, please, to oblige me."

Frank at once assented, and was enabled, with a few gentle pushes from Adèle, and a great many directions from M. Pierrot, to master the mysteries of the first set, so far as to manage walking through a quadrille.

"I do not care to go in any more," he said to the Abbé. "I shall never want dancing, and besides, I cannot afford to have lessons."

"You had better learn. I will arrange with my old friend Pierrot," said the priest; "it will improve your walking, though you are not bad to walk."

"Mr. Tozer was in the army formerly," said

Frank; "and he has drilled me since I was nine years old."

"What, alone?" said the Abbé.

"No; he taught drilling at a school, and used to take me there with him."

Madame De Courcy's influence had more effect in inducing Frank to accept the dancing lessons offered by M. Pierrot. "You do not," she said, "give him any additional trouble; in fact, you rather assist him."

In consequence of this reasoning Frank was induced to join M. Pierrot's class twice a week, and before the winter was over had become a proficient in the waltz and other dances.

Nothing gave him more pleasure than dancing with Adèle, who, in her turn, was delighted with such a partner.

In spite of all this enjoyment Frank firmly adhered to the determination he had formed not to attend M. Pierrot's annual ball—a very select affair, from which Adèle was also absent, her mother considering her too young for such an

entertainment. She had no sort of objection to M. Pierrot's pupils; but, as she said, there was plenty of time for her child to enter upon such description of amusement, especially as she was herself disinclined to accompany her.

Frank mentioned his having declined the ball, greatly to Mrs. Tozer's disappointment, for she was much concerned to think that he should be deprived of any enjoyment, "as would look that nice," she said, "with your 'air brushed up, in a clean shirt, with white cotton gloves, and pumps as would cost next to nothink; and as to your clothes, I'm sure there ain't never a speck on 'em from stem to stern, as the sayin' is. Besides," as she continued, "it does seem a pity as all your dancin' should be throwed away; but in course, as the young lady ain't a-goin', you don't care about it."

"She is but a little girl," observed Frank, in a tone of affected carelessness, though Mrs. Tozer observed a slight flush suffuse his face.

"Why, as to that, she's only three years younger than you," replied Mrs. Tozer; "for that's

wot 'er ma told me, and though you are tall for your age, she'll grow up."

Frank merely said: "Most likely;" for he was not by any means anxious that good Mrs. Tozer should expatiate on the subject of their present conversation, as the worthy woman had more than once alluded to the young lady as his little sweetheart, at which Frank laughed at first most heartily; but somehow, since the dancing lessons, Adèle had become more affectionate in her manner, though no sort of undue familiarity had grown up between them.

In the course of the first twelve months of their acquaintance, Adèle passed Frank in the race for puberty, and she was rapidly becoming a graceful young woman, whilst he remained merely a growing lad. Winter, spring, and autumn passed away, and found our young people growing up together, till Madame De Courcy was startled, when, on one occasion they came into her room—their countenances glowing with animation on their return from the dancing lesson, which had been resumed with

the approach of winter—to see before her a young man and woman. The anxious mother felt that their childhood had indeed passed away, and that it was necessary, for the future happiness of all, that the great intimacy between the pair should be checked. Two years had now slipped away since their original acquaintance, and Madame De Courcy had for some time past resolved to return to the Continent for the purpose of completing Adèle's education, and now felt convinced that it would be more prudent to separate the girl from Frank; for though she called him her brother, and was perfectly guileless, yet the quick eye of the mother could detect the pleasurable emotion with which Adèle received any trifling attention from her companion, and although, as she admitted in a conversation with the Abbé, she should only be too happy to have secured such a husband for her child, yet she said it would not be just by either to encourage, under existing circumstances, an attachment that could not lead to any satisfactory result for at least many years.

As to Frank, though the soul of honour, he could not find it in his heart to repel the gentle loving ways of the girl now budding into womanhood, when he had encouraged and reciprocated the playful advances of the child. He was quite conscious of the attractive influence she had over him, but he would not for a moment encourage sentiments which he felt in his position would be both dishonourable and disastrous. It was on this account that he cultivated that spirit of self-denial so essential to the formation of the manly character; and so far disciplined his well-regulated mind, that it did not tend to the indulgence in day dreams never likely to be realised.

In all this he was both guided and assisted by the counsels of the Abbé, who had grown to regard him as a son, and was fondly attached to him.

As he never spoke of Adèle to his spiritual guide as the object of his affections, he received no intimation of her probable departure, till Madame De Courcy one evening mentioned that she was going to spend Easter in Paris.

"Indeed!" said Frank; "then you will be leaving England in a few weeks?"

"Exactly a month from to-day," she replied.

"Does Mademoiselle Adèle go with you?" he inquired.

"Of course, my friend. Where should I leave her?"

"It will be a great pleasure for you to introduce her to Paris," continued Frank.

"I do not know that," was the lady's reply. "We shall both feel it very dull at first."

"When do you propose returning?" said Frank, in an eager tone, struck by the manner in which Madame De Courcy had last spoken.

She looked at him very kindly as she said: "My dear young friend—never!"

Frank fairly jumped from his chair. "What!" he exclaimed. "Are you leaving England entirely?"

"I am. Adèle's education is my principal reason for going, and above that, I have family matters to arrange, but we shall eventually settle near Paris. I hope we shall meet again there, as you will come

to see us when you travel; the more so as the good Abbé will be domiciled near us."

"He is not going away too!" said Frank, in a tone of despair.

"Not till next year," said the Abbé, who entered the room just as Frank spoke; "but come, bah! you will see us often." The youth's heart was too full to speak; he remained silent for a few minutes, and then rose to take his leave. Adèle was not there; she had gone to bed early with headache; and so it was that Frank went away with the heaviest heart he had ever known since the death of Mrs. Welbyn, and on arriving at home said nothing to Mrs. Tozer, but, declining supper, went at once to bed.

CHAPTER II.

"Mr. Elvey, I will not allow it. It must not be. I will have medical advice. I am sure my father cannot be of sound mind to dream of such a thing, and I am disgusted with you in this affair. I thought I could have trusted you with the honour of my family."

These words, jerked out with great vehemence, were uttered by Lord Mildown, as he walked up and down his room, evidently under great excitement, his demeanour contrasting forcibly with that of Mr. Elvey, who, seated on a sofa, with an expression of face at once calm and determined, maintained a resolute silence.

"What do you suggest to be done, Mr. Elvey?" continued his lordship. "Of course you feel the

imperative necessity of some action being taken under the circumstances. For my father to marry again would be bad enough, but to form *such* an alliance——"

"I can only repeat the assurance I have already given your lordship," said Mr. Elvey, as Lord Mildown paused and waited for a reply; "I know little about this marriage, with which I had nothing to do."

"You expect me to believe this, when you admit this person to be your stepdaughter? Of course my unhappy father must have made her acquaintance through you. It is not the first affair of the kind in which he has had your assistance."

Mr. Elvey grew a shade more pale, and his washy blue eyes opened a little more widely as he said:

"I do not know to what your lordship refers; but I can tell you that neither you nor I can prevent this marriage from taking place; for, to tell you the whole truth, it was solemnised at an

early hour yesterday morning, and I have been deputed by your noble father to convey to you the announcement of it."

Mr. Elvey spoke slowly, and watched his companion closely, for though he had no fear of such a man, yet he thought it just possible that he might, in an outburst of fury, throw the inkstand at him.

But Lord Mildown was too unnerved to do anything of the sort. He sank back in his easy-chair, and for a minute or two gazed vacantly at his informant.

At length he spoke, with trembling voice, his lips white with fury.

"Get out of the room, you lying, sneaking hound!" he exclaimed, "and tell your step-daughter, or whatever she may be to you, that she shall regret this day, and so shall you. I know too well that my infatuated father has been entrapped by her arts and yours, and should she attempt to force herself into society on the strength of my father's name, she shall get such a reception as will

make her glad enough to retreat from her false position to the purlieus from which she springs. Go, and tell her this."

"I will go," said Elvey, speaking very slowly, "leaving your lordship this letter to read when you are more yourself;" and with these words he moved towards the door, having placed on the table a letter, written on a large sheet of paper, folded and sealed in old-fashioned style, and not enclosed in an envelope.

Lord Mildown had walked to the window, which commanded only a view of the leads and the stable-wall; and the somewhat gloomy prospect seemed to have had a soothing effect on him, for his fit of rage, being in some degree over, he felt afraid of having offended one who had much influence over his father, and had in his possession many family secrets, besides being not entirely ignorant of matters which his lordship did not wish to be ventilated.

He was about to offer a sort of half-apology to Mr. Elvey, and implore him to use his influence to

induce the newly-married couple to reside on the Continent.

He had, however, no opportunity of saying anything, for when he returned to his seat Mr. Elvey had left the room.

For some minutes he sat and gazed vacantly at the letter left for his perusal, and then muttered: "No doubt it contains some proposition, so monstrous that even that fellow had not the impudence to make it openly.

"This letter has been written some time," he thought, as he looked at the address, which was to himself; and surveyed the epistle, the general aspect of which was somewhat faded.

As though fascinated, he held the document in his hand for some time, vainly conjecturing as to its contents, whilst hesitating through nervousness to make himself master of them.

At last he broke the seal, and read that which absorbed him entirely for a few seconds, and then caused him to spring to his feet and ring the bell violently.

"Ask Mr. Elvey to be so kind as to come here," he said to the servant, in his most winning tone, as though he half suspected that Mr. Elvey might be within ear-shot.

"He has gone, my lord."

"Send after him at once; tell him I want to see him most particularly, if he will be so good as to return immediately."

As he said this he seated himself on the sofa, and having taken a glass of water, leant back as though overcome with faintness.

Mr. Elvey was not to be found, and consequently did not obey his noble patron's summons till the day following the scene we have just recorded; and when he presented himself he did so as though nothing unpleasant had occurred. He was closeted for some time with his lordship, by whom he was subsequently induced to stay to lunch, at which meal he was graciously received by Lady Mildown, and superciliously by her hopeful son, for with neither of them was the man of business a favourite.

Her ladyship had frequently and openly ex-

pressed her contempt for him, whilst the youthful Blomberg denounced him to his valet as "a sneaking cad."

One great reason for the dislike entertained for him by both mother and son was the fact of his once having expressed it as his opinion that the boy was being ruined at home, and urged upon the Marquis the necessity of his grandson being sent to a public school; a course that was most objectionable to the youth and his doting mamma.

It was perfectly true that the heir of the house was being trained about as badly as an heir could well be. His health was the constant excuse for his conduct, however objectionable it might be. He had a tutor, a meek-spirited sort of upper flunkey, who coincided with everything Lady Mildown suggested, and allowed his pupil to do very much as he pleased in all respects.

"What will you do this afternoon, my love; drive out with me, or ride with Mr. Denvil?" inquired her ladyship of her son when lunch was nearly over.

"I'd rather stay at home; I want to read."

"My dear boy, Dr. Maltby said you must have exercise," replied the fond mother. "You read too much."

"Decidedly you must take exercise," interposed Lord Mildown. "Exercise," he continued, "is, I believe, in fact I have read, the secret——"

"Oh! my side," exclaimed the son and heir, displaying an entire want of curiosity as to the secret in question, and evidently only anxious to cut his noble parent's oration short.

"Where is the pain?" inquired the anxious mother.

Her son paused before replying; it might have been from the effect of suffering, but it rather seemed as though he were making up his mind as to the exact spot on which he should fix as the seat of his disorder.

"Ah! my love," exclaimed her ladyship, "you must have on a mustard-plaster. I told you not to eat that cutlet. I don't know why it was sent up. I ordered roast mutton entirely on your account."

"I hate roast mutton, and don't want any

plaster," replied the youth. "I'm better now, and should like some port-wine."

"Is it good for you, my dear boy?" asked his father.

"Oh yes," remarked Lady Mildown; "Dr. Maltby ordered it."

"Give Mr. Blomberg some port," said his lordship.

The butler, observing there was none up, proceeded to the cellar, and in due time produced the wine.

"Oh, what filth!" exclaimed the hope of the house when he had gulped down half a glass; "I don't believe it is port."

"It is some as your lordship ordered particular," observed the butler, in a tone as though his honour were impugned by the denunciation of the wine.

"My dearest boy, your mouth is out of taste," said her ladyship; "the wine is too strong for you."

"Oh no," replied the boy, "I am all right, but that wine is downright beastly."

"Hush, my dear boy," said his father, in a half-apologetic tone, "bring me that wine, Simmons."

"Yes," he said, putting it to his lips, "it is the same that Lord Screwby recommended."

"Then, no wonder," remarked the boy, "it is poison; why he has it from a grocer's. Tom Screwby told me so."

"Oblige me, Mr. Elvey, by tasting that wine," said Lord Mildown.

"I dare not touch a drop of port, my lord, as I am suffering from suppressed gout," replied the diplomatic Elvey.

"Oh! never mind, pray don't taste it," said his lordship. "I merely wished to show you that my son is, as usual, giving way to his idle fancies, in which he is too much encouraged."

As Lord Mildown uttered these words, the subject of his remarks rose from the table and flung himself out of the room, followed almost immediately by his mother and subservient tutor.

As soon as they had gone, Lord Mildown said,

"Well, then, Mr. Elvey, I think we understand each other."

"I hope we do, my lord; and I have no doubt that things will work pleasantly enough. I am sure it will not be my daughter's fault if they do not, for she is most anxious to keep peace in the family. I am leaving town for a short time, but should your lordship want anything, I have ordered all my letters to be forwarded every day. I shall not be away more than a week or so."

Mr. Elvey spoke in a tone which implied that he was master of the situation; and with a slight bow left the room.

Poor Mildown went to the Club in a most depressed and wretched state of mind, to announce to his brothers-in-law what had occurred, and to take counsel with them as to what had best be done under the circumstances.

He found them both in the smoking-room, and as they were its only occupants he was able at once to open his grief.

From neither did he receive any comfort; they

were not surprised. Bolderstone, in fact, said he was glad it was no worse, and expressed a hope there would be no row made by the women, because, he added, "that sort of thing is so low."

"Oh! decidedly there must be no row," said Lord Charles. "I shall speak to Augusta seriously on that point."

"I'm sure my wife would prefer peace," continued Bolderstone, "and if she doesn't I shall insist on it."

Each individual was actuated by widely different motives in taking the same view as to how the Marquis's marriage was to be treated. Lord Charles Fobbington, as a younger son, could not afford to quarrel with a father-in-law who would, under the circumstances, be desirous to conciliate his children.

Lord Bolderstone, on the other hand, thought that the advent of a young and handsome woman to Blomberg House would make a visit there less unsupportable.

In the views of his brothers-in-law poor Mildown could only coincide; he did not wish to quarrel with his father, and was anxious to propitiate Mr. Elvey, and yet most careful not to be suspected of any such design.

When Lord Bolderstone encountered his wife, which he did just before dressing for dinner expressly for the purpose of giving her the news, he found that his intelligence had already reached her, and that she was consequently in as high a state of excitement as her nature and position would allow.

"It is useless," she remarked, "to waste time in the discussion of this wretched business; the question is, how are we to act? I have a letter from my infatuated father inviting us to meet him and his bride at Falklands, and spend a few days with them. Of course Augusta will go, and as to Mildown, he cannot help himself—he dare not offend papa; and it would be indeed absurd if that tallow-chandler's daughter, his wife, were to give herself airs."

Such was the designation that Lady Bolderstone applied to her sister-in-law, whose father was a Russia merchant.

"We'll do as you please, my love," replied Bolderstone. "It will be an infernal bore to be at Falklands for three days."

"It will be easily got over by you men," replied his wife, "but imagine my feelings at seeing dearest mamma's place occupied by a creature little better than an outcast," and here a burst of tears checked her ladyship's utterance.

"Pray don't give way to your feelings, my dear," said her husband, in a tone of something like sympathy. "It is so underbred to indulge in this sort of thing. Hang the old fool, let him marry whom he pleases. Don't go near him if you don't like. We want nothing of him."

"That is indeed a comfort," sobbed her ladyship; "but she's sure to be received, and——"

"Yes," continued her husband. "I hear she's very handsome, with plenty to say for herself, and nothing against her character, so of course both

your brother and sister will go over to her side, and you'll be left out in the cold; so I should advise you to make the best of it."

"Don't let us talk any more about it," exclaimed the lady, "for I really hardly know what to say or do, I'm so distressed. I must see Augusta at once."

"Then I leave it in your hands, my dear," continued Bolderstone, as he kissed his wife's forehead, and left her to consider how she had best play her cards under existing circumstances.

CHAPTER III.

It is now due to our readers that they should be informed of some of the details of the wedding of the Marquis and Marchioness of Cankerfield.

The ceremony was performed with the least possible ostentation, though by special licence, at a small village church in the parish of Bonfleet, near which the bride had been residing for a week previous with her papa and her friend Mrs. Melcombe; an arrangement to which Mr. Elvey submitted, though he particularly disliked Mrs. Melcombe; in fact, he felt himself to a certain extent in her power, inasmuch as she knew more of his deceased wife's antecedents than he did himself, she having formerly been in the position of a domestic servant to the late Mrs. Elvey, and

had been raised in the social scale shortly before that lady's second marriage, and was constantly about her till her death.

It was by the express desire of the bride that the marriage was so quietly conducted, for being aware that she had no belongings to play the part of her own family on the occasion, she preferred the obscurity of a quiet country church to any attempt at display in the metropolis.

This arrangement suited the Marquis's views exactly, as he had a latent suspicion that he was making something very like a fool of himself, and he was uncertain as to the line that his son might take under the circumstances.

He met his bride at the church, and though highly nervous at the commencement of the ceremony, brightened up at its conclusion, and went off from the church door in a chaise and four to catch a train for town, *en route* for the Continent.

He had taken a cordial leave of Mr. Elvey, had pressed an envelope into Mrs. Melcombe's hand,

containing a substantial recognition of past services, and an earnest, as she hoped, of his future good-will.

She neither loved nor trusted Mr. Elvey, and was not a little relieved when he announced to her that he did not intend to return to the apartments, but would make his way to town forthwith.

A short sojourn in Paris served as a honeymoon to the happy pair, the Marquis being anxious to return to town, as he said, in connection with some new business, but really because he was anxious to get over any difficulty that might arise between himself and his family.

So it was that, within a month, the Marquis and Marchioness were duly domiciled at Blomberg House, the Marchioness making herself as much at home there, within four-and-twenty hours of her arrival, as though she'd been born to the position.

Her demeanour to her husband had a slight air of submission, but to everyone else, though perfectly agreeable, her manner was easy and self-possessed.

"She certainly is a remarkably fine young woman, though you can see at a glance that she's not one of the upper ten," observed Mr. Graves, groom-of-the-chambers, to Mr. Johnson, the butler, who in company with Mrs. Ellis, the housekeeper, and Mr. Lowndes, the Marquis's own servant, were taking tea in the steward's room at Blomberg House.

"Well," observed Mr. Johnson, "I should say as she'd caught the tone wonderful easy, for though only at home two days, she gives her orders quite collected."

"Oh! certainly," said Mr. Graves, "for when I asked her about receiving visitors, she said, quite cool, 'I'll speak to the Marquis and let you know in the morning;' and sure enough, this morning down came her orders wrote out for the day, just as if she'd been used to it all her life."

"Oh!" said Mr. Lowndes, "no doubt she's sharp, or she would not be where she is."

"Ah! that she is," observed Mrs. Ellis, with an expressive look, "and of course he's given her

many hints, but she don't do it like a real lady bred and born for all that. I'm sure it made me feel quite uncomfortable to stand there and take her orders the first morning, not a bit like my dear old mistress, as always said 'Good morning, Ellis,' with a smile, and 'Take a chair,' though as proud as Lucifer in a proper way; but this one were quite different—civil, I must say, but not that free with me, as a lady would be."

"She improved wonderful when we was on the Continent," observed Mr. Lowndes. "At first, I think she was afraid of me, but by the end of a week ordered me about just as if she'd been born to it."

"Oh!" said Mr. Johnson, "females are always so sharp. I knew a party that married his mother's maid, as soon held her head up with the best of them."

"And why not?" inquired Mrs. Ellis, in a tone that implied reproach at Mr. Johnson's having put such a case. "There are many," she continued, "as are driven to service that wasn't born to it."

"No doubt, no doubt," said the butler, apologetically.

"I was meant for the Church," said Mr. Graves, "but misfortune overtook my family before I was born."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Ellis, "I might have rode in my carriage if I'd have stooped to it, as is well known to a many. Only I always remembered my dear mother's words, that a humble crust was better if earned honest, than luxuries with gilded vice."

"Ah! that's high morality, that is," said Mr. Johnson; "but I must remark I'm sorry for his lordship, because, as I say, why have married at all at his time of life?"

"Ah! It's a pity," observed Mrs. Ellis with a sigh, "for he is a nobleman, after all is said and done."

What Mrs. Ellis meant by this last remark cannot be either explained or understood; she said no more in consequence of the entrance of a smartly-dressed youngish person, a foreigner,

my lady's new maid, engaged in Paris, and just imported.

"Will you have any tea, ma'amselle?" inquired Mrs. Ellis.

"Ah, very leetle, a great sugar, and much milk, or I shall not sleep the night," was the reply.

As she spoke she helped herself copiously to strawberry jam, which she piled on a tea-cake, to the extreme disgust of the housekeeper.

"It is a grand dinner to-night, is it not?" inquired mademoiselle.

"Oh dear no," replied Mrs. Ellis, "only the family. How many covers, Mr. Lowndes?"

"Let me see," replied that functionary, speaking with much caution, "only ten; the family, Mr. Elvey, and Lady Caroline."

"She's sent an apology," said Mr. Johnson.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Ellis, "I thought she wouldn't be desirous——"

"Ahem!" coughed Mr. Lowndes, with a glance at mademoiselle.

"How well you speak English, ma'amselle,"

said Mr. Graves, in a patronising tone, which came well from a portly person with a bald head.

"I speak but leetle, I not understand much, excep you speak slow."

"Ah, I daresay not," he answered, at the same time dropping one eyelid slightly at Mrs. Ellis.

"Have you been in England before?" inquired the housekeeper.

"Ah, yes, leetle time, when I travel with the Princess Orchywastki."

"Oh, indeed!" said Mrs. Ellis, graciously, who, though she despised foreign nobility, was a little in awe of a princess of any nation. "What country did she come from?"

"Russia, grand country, such diamonds, such dress, all England nothing," said the animated Frenchwoman, cramming her mouth with jam.

"She don't get that jam at tea again," thought Mrs. Ellis, in whom a growing dislike to mademoiselle was taking very deep root.

"My lady's bell," exclaimed the housekeeper,

"it's for you, ma'amselle; and you've not done your tea."

"Oh, I have enough, I fly!" said the lady's-maid as she left the room.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Ellis, "that just shows what she is, ringing her up from meals; why my poor dear lady would never have done such a thing, not if she'd been dying. She was a lady."

"No doubt," said Mr. Graves, "but I'm sure, as Mr. Johnson will agree, likewise Mr. Lowndes, as it will never do to express ourselves before that young person, though a foreigner, as is not so young as she looks by a long chalk."

Mr. Graves's views on this subject having been endorsed by those to whom he appealed, Mrs. Ellis accepted the warning in a deferential manner, though she could not help observing "it was painful to see such changes."

"Now," she added, "mark my words if there ain't greater changes before long."

"No doubt," said Mr. Graves, "there will be if Elvey can do it, for I do believe he hates us all."

"Of course he does," exclaimed Mrs. Ellis; "we know too much about the way he's got on; why there was a time, when my own aunt was housekeeper here, he was glad to get his cup of tea in her room."

"He was picked out of the street, bless you," said Mr. Johnson; "and I've heard a nice character of him, and believe he ought to have been transported."

"We don't want to know any more," said Mrs. Ellis, "than that business with that Mrs. Walker, as one of her own family told me about, as was only a kitchenmaid at Lord Liversuch's, and a nice penny that cost my lord, and no doubt all shared with Elvey, as was once steward's-room boy there."

"I've thought it a duty to speak now as we've got home," said Mr. Lowndes. "Don't trust ma'amselle whatever you do."

Mrs. Ellis shook her head; and Mr. Johnson remarked, "He couldn't understand how anyone could have foreigners about them after Mrs. Manning and that Courvoisier."

"I knew that fellow well by sight," said Mr. Lowndes, "through living three doors off from the house he left to go and live with poor Lord William, little thinking he'd so soon be his victim."

Mrs. Ellis said that "she only hoped nothing unpleasant would occur from the first foreigner ever known in that family;" implying by her tone and manner of speaking, that the introduction of foreigners into families was usually attended with most serious results.

Further discussion on this and other subjects was suspended for the present, as the members of the household were obliged to go on their several ways to prepare for the dinner-party which was to introduce the new Marchioness to her husband's family.

CHAPTER IV.

By a sort of judicious compromise, the introduction of Laura to her husband's family and relations had been arranged to take place in town instead of the country.

"We can get through an hour or two with her," said Lady Bolderstone to her sister, "but three days at Falklands would have been intolerable."

"It is sad enough to have to receive her at all," replied Lady Augusta, "but we are the creatures of circumstances."

"Yes," thought Lady Bolderstone, "and some of us of narrow ones;" but she said nothing, and the ladies drove on in silence, for they were on their way to the family mansion, Lady Bolderstone having kindly volunteered to call for her sister and her

husband, an attention for which they were indebted to a suggestion from Bolderstone, who did not wish to be exposed to a *tête-à-tête* with his wife, by way of prologue to the meeting with his father-in-law; as he did not heartily concur in all the invectives in which his indignant spouse had been wont of late to indulge against her stepmother.

Attired in an elegant costume of violet velvet, and unadorned by any of the family jewels (she had too much tact to wear them), Lady Cankerfield sat in the gloomy drawing-room of Blomberg House, awaiting the arrival of her formidable guests.

Her appearance was calculated to inspire respect, if not admiration, for she looked a very Juno, as she occupied a commanding position on a massive fauteuil.

She had a book in her hand, though evidently not deeply interested in its contents, her eyes wandering every instant from the timepiece to the door.

She was soon joined by the bridegroom, dressed to death, with the glossiest of black wigs, and clothes

to match. His whiskers were dyed to the very tips, he was redolent of perfume, and displayed more embroidery and jewellery than well-bred persons are wont to indulge in.

In a very few minutes Mildown and his wife arrived, displaying every appearance of satisfaction.

He was obsequious to the last degree, and having already, earlier in the day, been presented to his new mamma, made a great ceremony of introducing his wife to her, who went through the ordeal with a tolerable show of cordiality.

She stood in awe of her father-in-law, and was rewarded by him for her behaviour to his bride with an affectionate kiss.

Just as she was submitting to this tender mark of his regard, her sisters-in-law arrived, and were most affectionately received by their papa, who led them up to his wife, saying, "My dears, you will love her, I know, for my sake." A slender basis enough for the bride's popularity to rest upon.

Nothing could be better, however, than the manner in which she received the family assault,

maintaining a dignified reserve, though she submitted to the somewhat patronising style of reception accorded her by both her stepdaughters.

Poor Mildown, bent on being amiable, was gracious in his manner, evidently resolved on propitiating his new relative; conduct for which his sisters bestowed on him glances expressive of the bitterest contempt.

Both Bolderstone and Fobbington were decidedly taken with the bride, and but for fear of their wives, would have wished to have made themselves particularly agreeable to her.

From policy, however, they contented themselves with being studiously polite. Behaviour for which the Marquis resolved to ask Fobbington how much would set him straight with his creditors, and offer Bolderstone the shooting over one of his moors in the autumn.

In spite of these gleams of light the scene was gloomy, the moral atmosphere being oppressive, and its temperature almost zero.

Conversation was absolutely a physical exertion,

and carried on in the most feeble style till the arrival of Lady Caroline Dashwater, the Marquis's sister, who had withdrawn her refusal to come at the earnest solicitation of the bridegroom, who had been most anxious to secure his sister as a partisan, and had almost implored her to be present, having stated, both by word and in affectionately-penned letters, that he had been mainly induced to marry again in consequence of the neglectful behaviour of his children.

Lady Dashwater disliked them all, and was consequently prepared to endorse any act of her brother's which would cause them annoyance.

She had written to the happy pair in tones of warmest congratulation, and had actually snubbed Lady Bolderstone for daring to speak disparagingly of her father's marriage, and had declined the dinner through fear of a scene, against which her brother had guaranteed her.

Caroline, Lady Dashwater, was no inconsiderable ally for the Marchioness to have gained. She was a leader in society, by which she was courted, being both feared and disliked.

She had married a wealthy commoner, having a fine jointure of her own, and was left a widow with a magnificent settlement.

She was the second wife of the late Sir Guy Dashwater, by whom she had no family, and having never either loved or respected her husband, she thoroughly revelled in the liberty which by his death she had acquired.

In her youth she had been a beauty, and though perfectly aware that she could no longer lay claim to that proud position, she yet maintained as far as possible the ascendency to which her personal attractions had formerly entitled her.

She was vain, capricious, and selfish; could make herself very agreeable or the reverse, according to circumstances; was really kind-hearted; but, when offended, woe betide the victims of her merciless tongue.

Her brother was afraid of her, and her nieces detested her—a feeling which she repaid with interest; and as to poor Mildown, he trembled in her presence, whilst she entertained for him sentiments of contempt to which no pen could adequately do justice.

She had been very fond of his elder brother, whom she had made her heir; and though on his death she had made a fresh will, there was no reason to suppose his younger brother had been benefited under it.

Fortunately for the harmony of the evening, Lady Caroline was, on the present occasion, in one of her most radiant good humours.

She entered the room all smiles, embraced her brother, and taking both the bride's hands, kissed her affectionately on both sides of the face, saying: "My dear Laura, I'm delighted to make your acquaintance."

She then nodded benignly to her nieces, and turning to Mildown said: "Ah! Gus, how are you?"

She never addressed him as the son-and-heir, having regarded his assumption of that position in the light of an intrusion upon the hereditary honours of the house.

"How is Blomberg?" she inquired of Lady Mildown. "Not at Eton yet? Ah! too delicate, is he? What a pity! School would be the making of that boy."

Dinner being announced checked momentarily the flow of her ladyship's remarks; but during the meal, to which she did ample justice, she kept up an animated conversation with everyone present.

She was fond of teasing Mildown, and knowing him to be a timid horseman, would ask him about hunting, a sport he especially detested; and scolded him for taking part in a steeplechase, well knowing that he would as soon have led a forlorn hope as attempt to take a fence three feet high.

"I hope you are not going to allow him to waste his life on such amusements," she added, addressing his wife, who merely replied with a sickly smile. "I was sorry not to have met you at Goodvale, Adelaide," she said to Lady Bolderstone; "the duchess was so charming, and we had such a pleasant visit; everyone was there."

Adelaide turned red and pale; she had not been invited by her grace, after having done her utmost to obtain an invitation.

"Augusta, my love, your old flame Lord Tau-

pington is consoled for your cruelty, and is married to such a pretty girl."

Augusta had tried during three seasons to entrap wealthy old Taupington, and the world said had married penniless Charles in pique and despair.

"I hope, my dear brother, we shall meet at Lady Cloughburton's to-night," she said presently.

"Why, my dear Caroline, we had thought of a pleasant, quiet evening at home," replied the Marquis.

"Oh, my dear brother, we're a delightful family, but we shall be very tired of one another by eleven o'clock; and, besides, I told Lady Cloughburton I should bring my new sister-in-law to see her. You would like to go, would you not, my dear Laura?"

Lady Cankerfield having looked deferentially at her husband, and seeing by the smile on his lips that he was pleased with his sister's proposition, replied: "Oh, indeed, I should! and I shall feel so much more at my ease if I am with you."

A smile and a nod of approval from Lady

Caroline showed that she appreciated the compliment implied in that answer.

Lady Bolderstone and her sister exchanged glances, which were not lost on the Marchioness, who, however, maintained a most amiable demeanour towards her stepdaughters, even in the drawing-room where she was alone with them, as their aunt fell asleep after her coffee and curaçoa, in spite of a display on the piano by Lady Mildown, who really played well, and elicited some very warm approval from Lady Cankerfield, being herself no mean proficient in musical skill.

High encomia were passed in the steward's room on the way in which the new marchioness had acquitted herself.

There was, of course, a great amount of allowance made for her by Mr. Johnson, the butler.

Mr. Graves spoke of her in a patronising tone, as did Mr. Lowndes, but all agreed that they had been surprised.

Mrs. Ellis listened somewhat incredulously, though she went so far as to say that "she thought

Lady Caroline would soon form her new sister-in-law," adding, that "of course my lady appeared to advantage by the side of Lady Mildown, who always looked as if she had put on her things with a pitchfork."

"You may say what you like," persisted Mr. Graves, though uncontradicted, "she have done the honours first-rate. I certainly was sorry for Lady Adelaide," he added, "as was evident took aback."

"Lady Augusta was haughty as ever," observed Mr. Johnson.

"I never saw his lordship in such spirits," remarked Mr. Lowndes; "for when I went into his room just now to help him change his coat, he said, 'Never mind, Lowndes, go to your supper,' and when I said I had supped, he said, 'Then go and have your grog—I don't want any help;' though I did persuade him to let me set him a little bit to rights, as he was going out."

"Where are they gone?" asked Mrs. Ellis.

"To Lady Cloughburton's grand ball; the cards have been here three weeks; but I don't think my

lord would have gone but for Lady Caroline. She insisted on their going, and she's head of the family after all."

"How she does tease Lord Mildown," said Mr. Lowndes; "she was going on at him half the dinner about the grouse he sent her, that tough she couldn't touch them."

"She never could endure him," said Mrs. Ellis; "and as to that, whoever could, I should like to know; not even his own mother—a mean little wretch."

The entrance of mademoiselle put a stop to the conversation, and a dead silence ensued, broken only when Mr. Johnson asked the young Frenchwoman if she would take spirits.

"Oh no!" she cried, "never; I can't bear it; it's so strong."

"Well, though wine is only allowed on Sundays," he remarked, "except what's left at dinner, I can give you some claret."

"Oh! *oui*, that make me some good; I shall take him, but also the water with him, if you please."

The remains of a bottle of claret having been produced, mademoiselle proceeded to regale herself with a very small quantity of wine to a large proportion of water.

"Oh, my lady, how superb; she is gone out in all her jewels as looks beautiful," said the lady's-maid, in an enthusiastic tone; "she no wish to wear them, but madame, the old lady, insist, and she is gone, radiant as one star."

No response being won by this burst, mademoiselle tried to elicit some opinion respecting her mistress, but in vain; and so at last she went to bed in a pet, mentally inveighing against "those English stupids, who are no use but to eat and to drink."

Great was the disgust of both Lady Bolderstone and her sister, when, after the dinner at Blomberg House, they encountered their stepmamma about midnight at Lady Cloughburton's.

She was a centre of attraction, and though she wore some of the family jewels, had by no means overdone herself with respect to them.

It was one of the earliest reunions of the season, and all the world was there, and Lady Cankerfield was by turn introduced to the extensive circle into which she had entered.

A less cool brain than hers would have been in a whirl of excitement; but no, she was as easy and collected as though she had been accustomed to the best society all her life.

To tell the truth, she found it terribly dull work to talk even to peers and cabinet ministers, when all they had to say was necessarily mere commonplace compliment.

She did not care to walk through a quadrille with an earl for a partner and a duke for a *vis-à-vis,* and even found royalty somewhat tedious when in the form of an elderly gentleman who would breathe in her face and had been dining.

The ladies were all agreeable, and none of them at all given to patronise the *debutante,* her stepdaughters always excepted; for Lady Bolderstone took occasion to say, in a loud tone, "It must be a

terrible bore for you, Lady Cankerfield, to be so entirely among strangers."

"Oh, I can never regard your father's friends as strangers," was the reply; "and everyone is so kind that indeed I feel quite at home."

Lady Augusta fared no better than her sister in an attempt to take her stepmamma down; for when she asked her what she thought of society, now that she was in it, Lady Cankerfield replied that "Ladies and gentlemen were much the same everywhere, so that among well-bred people no one could feel other than at ease."

It was not, however, by any attempt at brilliancy or repartee that the newcomer held her own, but by steadily maintaining a self-possessed, dignified tone and manner, combined with a quiet grace that seemed natural to her.

"I told you she'd be a success," said Bolderstone to his lady, as they drove home together, a very unusual proceeding, by-the-way, on their part.

"Oh, it's all Aunt Caroline's doing," said the lady, "and only done to annoy me. We must make

the best of it, though certainly it was a trial to see that person in dear mamma's jewels; not but what I'd really prefer she should have them rather than that miserable creature, my brother's wife."

Lady Bolderstone at this juncture sobbed audibly, and was getting hysterical as she reached home; so she went at once to her room, while her husband consoled himself with a cigar, and reflected, while smoking it, how much more lucky his father-in-law had been than himself in his selection of a partner for life.

Mildown went home in a towering rage, and vented his ill-humour on his wife, and let off steam by rehearsing to her all that he intended to say to his father in the morning; not having, however, the faintest intention of venturing to utter a word on the subject that could be in any way displeasing to his parent.

Lady Augusta had fairly broken down and given in. "What was I to do?" she said to her sister, in the course of a drive they were taking together the day after the family dinner.

"Charles hasn't a shilling; I was obliged to go to papa yesterday, and he was so kind—asked how much we could manage to live upon, gave me a cheque, and said he'd made a definite settlement."

"When he had spoken to his wife, I suppose," interrupted Lady Bolderstone, in a contemptuous tone.

Lady Augusta was silent, for those had been the very words Lord Cankerfield had used.

"Ah, here she is," she exclaimed; "upon my word, Aunt Caroline with her, too. One would hardly believe it possible that our new mamma could have assumed the airs of a lady so readily."

These remarks were made as the dashing turnout of Lady Cankerfield passed the carriage of her stepdaughters.

With a pleasant smile and nod did she recognise its inmates, whilst Lady Caroline merely gave her nieces a very short form of recognition, being apparently much interested in the conversation she was holding with her new sister.

"I do believe aunt is only appearing so very intimate with her to annoy us," said Lady Augusta.

"My dear Augusta, remember Aunt Caroline hated our dearest mother."

"I know that," replied Lady Augusta. "It was through dearest mamma's family being so superior to that of her husband's—a point which the present Lady Cankerfield cannot at any rate presume to contest."

"I often wonder what could have induced papa to make such a marriage," exclaimed Lady Bolderstone.

"Oh, as to that," said Lady Augusta, "Charles says we'd better not inquire."

"It was no doubt a trap laid for him by that Elvey," continued Lady Bolderstone; "and our unfortunate father married to avoid some disgraceful *exposé*."

"Ah well," said Lady Augusta, "the less we know of what men do the better; we women, luckily for our peace of mind, hear very little of what our fathers, brothers, and husbands are about the greater part of their time."

"It certainly is well that we do not, if half that one is told of other men be true," said Lady Bolderstone.

"Will you please drop me at home, Adelaide?" asked Augusta, "for I should like to see my darlings before they go to bed."

"By all means," replied Lady Bolderstone, "if you are bent on sacrificing yourself at the shrine of maternal duty. I hardly ever see my girls," she added, "during the season, except now and then for a few minutes when I am dressing, because, as you know, the duties one owes to society quite absorb all one's time when in town; but then one sees more than enough of the dear creatures when in the country."

At the conclusion of this speech Lady Bolderstone dropped her sister at her home in a street near Park Lane, and then returned to enjoy another turn among the *élite* in that vortex of fashion, the Park; a gay scene at the close of a fine spring afternoon, when all the world delights to see and be seen.

A very few weeks sufficed to make Lady Cankerfield a pronounced success with everyone except her stepchildren.

They were in some degree mollified towards her; for Lady Augusta knew that it was through her stepmother that she got a handsome allowance settled on her, besides a sum of money to purchase and furnish a *bijou* residence at Kensington; whilst a judicious offering of his late wife's diamonds, made by the Marquis, appeased Lady Bolderstone. Affectionate attention bestowed by the Marchioness on Lady Mildown quite won the heart of that hitherto neglected member of the family, secured the affection of her son, and disarmed any expression of ill-will on the part of Mildown.

Lady Cankerfield had the happy faculty of doing favours without patronising. She would not take offence, or notice slights of any kind, dismissed Mademoiselle on the complaint of Mrs. Ellis that the Frenchwoman gave herself airs, and repeated remarks made by the upper servants within the sacred precincts of the steward's room.

From the world at large Lady Cankerfield won golden opinions, and there was only one individual in the family who deliberately, though secretly, hated her, and that was her stepson, through dread of her influence over his father, as being likely to increase that of the feared and detested Mr. Elvey.

All, however, went smoothly with the happy pair, and Blomberg House became a centre of attraction, to an extent its gloomy walls had never before known.

The Marquis was in the highest good humour, elated with his wife's success, and taking no small degree of credit to himself for the sagacity he had displayed in selecting such a partner.

He was above all pleased at the discretion of Elvey, who absented himself more and more from Blomberg House, declined invitations to dinner on the score of gout, though he came and lunched with his daughter when she was alone.

The influence exercised by Lady Cankerfield over her husband was most apparent, not only in

the way that he behaved to his daughters and daughter-in-law, but in the whole management of the household, wherein everything was done on a most liberal scale; for though all the change was her doing, never did the young wife even appear to oppose her lord and master, and it seemed as though everything emanated from him.

All therefore went in glowing colours with the family and its dependents; for not only was Lady Cankerfield triumphant, but all around her seemed to glow in the reflected light of the brilliancy of her success.

CHAPTER V.

"MIND. yourself!" "Look out!" "Hold hard!" were the cries uttered by several passers-by, as a youth, who was crossing Langham Place, came suddenly in contact with a handsomely-appointed carriage, and was thrown under the wheels.

In an instant a crowd had assembled round and raised him.

"Are you hurt?" "Can you stand?" were the inquiries of the bystanders.

"It is nothing," said the lad, as he endeavoured to disengage himself from the friendly arms which supported him; but the effort was unavailing, and he would have fallen to the ground had it not been for renewed support afforded him.

A magnificent flunkey, powdered and in canary-

coloured livery, made his way to the sufferer, saying, "Get him a cab, and take him to the hospital."

"The lady's a-calling on yer out of the carriage, old ginger-legs," said a boy.

This appellation raised a laugh at the expense of the footman, as he returned to the carriage in which a lady was seated.

"Is he much hurt?" she inquired.

"They think that his leg is broken, your ladyship."

"Oh dear," she exclaimed, "I hope not, poor fellow! Where can he be taken?"

"Why, the 'ospital's close at hand," said a decent-looking man; "it ain't five minutes' walk, not three in a carriage."

"Put him in the carriage, Henry," said the lady.

The tall footman merely touched his hat, and with the assistance of one or two bystanders the lad, who had fainted, was lifted into the carriage and conveyed to the hospital, amid expressions of approbation from the crowd at the lady's humanity.

On arriving at the hospital, Lady Cankerfield—for it was she—alighted from the carriage, and waited in the hall to hear the doctor's report.

"It is a case of simple fracture," said the house-surgeon, "just above the knee, where the wheel passed over him."

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed Lady Cankerfield. "I hope he won't be a cripple."

"No fear of that," replied the surgeon.

He was about to inquire whom he had the honour of addressing, when he was interrupted by the lady placing in his hand a card, and requesting that the lad's friends might be informed of the accident, and also that she might be applied to if he required any help.

"I am so extremely sorry," she said as she re-entered the carriage. "I am sure it was not your fault, Benson."

"Certainly not, my lady," replied the stout coachman in a gratified tone; "the young fellow was reading and slipped off the curb. And a nice mess he've made them cushions in," he added, in

an undertone to six-feet Henry, who rejoined him on the box.

Lady Cankerfield's strong recommendation of the case may or may not have accelerated the action of the medical staff, but within a short time every possible attention had been paid to the sufferer, who, fairly exhausted, was allowed to remain quiet for a time, unquestioned as to himself or his friends.

Later on in the evening, when the surgeon made him a visit, he inquired his name and other particulars respecting him.

"My name," replied the patient, "is Frank Welbyn—at least I believe it is."

"Who and what is your father?" inquired the doctor.

"I have no father nor mother; I live with friends—Mr. and Mrs. Tozer, Church Street, Edgeware Road."

"All right," said the surgeon, "we'll send to them."

"Don't alarm them," said Frank.

"There's nothing to alarm them about; you're

better already; you'll soon be home again. Now go to sleep."

So saying, the doctor withdrew, and quite agreed with the matron and nurse in saying that the patient was as fine-limbed a boy as they'd ever had in that ward.

Frank, left to doze, fell into a sort of semi-dreaming state, from which he was roused about eight o'clock, and to his great delight recognised at his bedside the kind familiar faces of Mr. and Mrs. Tozer.

"I'm so sorry to have given you so much alarm and trouble," he said as he took their hands.

"Now, didn't I say as his first thoughts would be about other parties, and not about 'isself?" exclaimed Mrs. Tozer. "My dear boy, 'owever come you to do sich a thing, as I've always said, whatever you do, mind them crossings, as I've always a horror on, thro' a aunt of my own dear mother's being jammed frightful 'tween the mail-coach and a brewer's dray in Drury Lane, thro' being hard of hearing, in a black beaver bonnet

tied under 'er chin, as is nasty things for a stopping up the ears! But you don't feel no pain?"

"No," said Frank, "only a little headache and an uncomfortable sensation all over me."

"Ah! I knows—all overish like, as I've felt myself often and often; for I never shall forget that time as I had a fall thro' frost, and me in pattens, a goin' out sudden for to get a couple of eggs and a rasher of bacon, thro' expectin' Tozer in to breakfast; and a turning the corner sharp, up went my 'eels and down went my 'ead, with that 'oller crash as you might 'ave 'eard it half a mile I'm sure, and me with my elber out, as I've 'eard say is worse than a downright break."

"I say, Tilly," observed Tozer, who had been hitherto sitting quietly and holding Frank's hand, "suppose you was to hold in a little bit, you'll tire the boy out."

"Tire 'im out, that I shan't, bless 'im, he's too much used to me for that; but we mustn't stop long now, because he must go to sleep, and it's only through a great favour as they let us in so

late. So we must soon say good-night, my dear boy; I shall come and see you early in the morning."

After a little more conversation, judiciously checked by the nurse, who suggested that it would be as well that the patient should not be disturbed any longer, Tozer gave the word to his worthy lady, and they took leave of their *protégé*, who was well satisfied to be left in the kind hands to which he had been consigned.

Descending to the lower regions of the hospital, and after making some inquiries as to the details of the accident, and expressing herself much relieved at having had Frank's assurance that he was not reading when the accident happened, though he had a book in his hand, Mrs. Tozer, with many expressions of admiration for hospitals in general, and this one in particular, and not without one or two short anecdotes relating to her own experience therein, took her leave, having astonished both the nurse and the house-surgeon by the knowledge she had displayed as to the duties of both.

"I never altogether fancy them 'ospitals," she observed to Tozer, when they got home, "as no doubt is great blessin's to the poor; but them young doctors is often a larky lot, not as I thinks this one is, as is a pleasant-speakin' young gentleman, and no doubt cheerful, as a doctor did ought to be in my opinion, and will do his dooty by that dear boy's leg, as I feel as they all will, 'cos if they'd 'ave meant mischief they'd 'ave took and whipped it off without a lettin' us know; as no doubt bein' brought to the 'ospital by a real lady, in 'er own carridge, made a difference; as it were 'er footman as 'ad come to inquire just as we went in, as spoke to you."

"Of course I know that," replied Tozer; "and a very respectable, nice-spoken young man too; none of your rubbish, as they're so fond of making out them swell footmen to be. He spoke very kind, and said as if there was anything required we was to let her ladyship know, as lives in Blomberg House, tho' not long married."

"Oh, indeed!" replied Mrs. Tozer. "Ah!

them lords they have the best of it every way, both in weddin's and berryin's too, for I never see such a funeral as they gave that Dook of Wellington at St. Paul's there."

"I shouldn't care much myself about as grand a funeral as they could give me," said Tozer; "and besides, all dukes ain't buried like that; and he deserved it, he did, through having conquered Bonyparty."

"And serve him right too, a bloodthirsty wretch," said Mrs. Tozer, "as I've 'eard my mother tell about often, as 'ad two wives and poisoned 'em with his own 'ands through considering of them to be plagues in Egypt, as he'd caught from the Turks, and wanted to get rid on. You may laugh, Tozer, but I've seen it in print with my own eyes, and if there ain't twelve a-strikin' and we only jest in bed. Well, God bless that dear boy, I'm sure I shan't close my eyes a thinkin' of him all night."

We are happy to be able to inform our readers, on the authority of no less a person than Tozer himself, that Mrs. Tozer having taken a bit of

supper and a drop of something warm before retiring for the night, "because the beer struck cold," slept as soundly as her most ardent admirers could have wished her to have done, in spite of her anxiety on her dear boy's account.

Within a week of the occurrence we have just related, Mrs. Tozer, in compliance with a summons from Lady Cankerfield, paid a visit to Blomberg House, where she was most graciously received.

Lady Cankerfield made many inquiries respecting the lad, and evinced great interest in him; and Mrs. Tozer came away fully convinced, as she said, that Frank had "fell on 'is feet."

During his stay at the hospital, inquiries were made respecting him by her ladyship, books were sent for his perusal, and dainties to tempt his appetite; so that by dint of so much care, and thanks to a strong constitution, Frank was able in a few weeks to quit the hospital, where he had received many visits from his kind friends, and also one from Mr. Crocket; the latter an unexpected attention from one who had scarcely ever bestowed

any personal attention on the lad, though, as we know, he had shown himself interested in his welfare.

"You are getting stronger every day, are you?" said he; "that's right; now don't be worrying yourself about your place, I'll keep it for you, or get you another."

Frank was immensely relieved at this intelligence; for though aware that Lady Cankerfield had been very liberal, yet he felt that his claim on her bounty would soon come to an end, besides which he seemed to have an instinctive horror of anything like dependence.

Mr. Crocket's visit had not terminated when Mrs. Tozer arrived, in high glee, and announced that the doctor had given it as his opinion that within a week Frank might with safety be moved.

"Where are you thinking of taking him?" inquired Mr. Crocket.

"Why at fust he must come 'ome, as I wouldn't 'ave 'im run no risks with lodgins, even at the sea-side, as might prove damp beds, as would be orful on the top of a brokin limb, as will require

care, as you knows yourself, no doubt, sir, though aperiently sound wind and limb, as the sayin' is; not but wot there's no tellin' 'ow soon the best on us may be took; for there was Mr. Bellamin, as was a fine man tho' run to flesh, and as 'arty as a buck, gone in three days through a pimple on his leg with a tight boot, and as turned to arrysipilus in four-and-twenty hours."

"Ah, indeed!" said Mr. Crocket, assuming an air of the deepest interest in Mrs. Tozer, whom he had seen once before, and to whom he listened with profound attention for some time, whilst she discoursed fluently on many subjects.

Then at last, when he rose to go, he begged Mrs. Tozer not to let her charge over-fatigue himself, or return to the office till he had had a change with plenty of fresh air, and was in her opinion quite strong again.

"As he certingly shall be," she replied, "and not put 'isself too for'ard, like Mrs. Chisby, the butcher's wife, as would get about within three weeks, as nearly cost 'er life and the infant's too,

as did ought to have knowed better through being 'er fourth; but as to air, I'm sure it's fresh enuf in our place, as comes in quite strong, and smells that beautiful in at the back door, through a blowin' off Kilburn and the canal."

Mrs. Tozer's house was a picture of neatness, with a pretty garden at the back; for at the date of our story the ravaging hand of Time had spared that neighbourhood.

Seated on a sofa at the back window, with his books all round him, was Frank, one fine afternoon about a week after his release from hospital; and so intent on what he was reading that he was hardly roused by a thundering double knock at the door, which caused Mrs. Tozer to upset a box of pins, and nearly knocked Liza, her servant, backwards downstairs.

After a short interval the door of the room was thrown open, and a lady entered whom Frank at once conjectured to be Lady Cankerfield, who, advancing with a pleasant smile, held out her hand as she said:

"I'm so pleased to find you so far recovered, for I hardly expected that you had been able to be removed from the hospital when I called there to-day, and was quite surprised to find that you had been there so long. I hope they were kind to you."

Frank duly and warmly acknowledged all the kindness he had received in the hospital.

"I will not talk to you much now," said the lady, "but I should like to hear some particulars as to your future career. Ah! there is your kind friend in the garden. May I join her?"

"By all means," said Frank, "if it is not giving you too much trouble."

"Oh, not at all; besides, I am very fond of flowers."

With these words Lady Cankerfield, to the great surprise of Mrs. Tozer, appeared at the back door, as that worthy woman subsequently observed to her husband, "jest for all the world like the sun a comin' out sudden on the top step, a smilin', and a bowin', and apologisin' for intrudin' on me; and

that pleased with the gardin, through bein' small though cheerful; for I'd jest stepped out there when she come to let 'er 'ave a few words with Frank, as she says she'll be a friend to; as makes my dreams over that boy come true, as was 'im mixed up with fire, as is always 'asty news; and were that surprised to 'ear as he were a foundlin', as you may say he is through not 'avin' no parents."

"You be very careful what you say about him, Tilly, 'cos that boy's uncommon feelin' over that point," observed Tozer.

"Oh yes, I know he is, and I were wery careful, though I didn't 'ardly know whether I was on my 'ead or my 'eels, as the sayin' is, and never more flustered than when I see the carridge drive up to the door through the front-parlour blinds, a settin' at work by the winder, so jest stepped into the gardin a tryin' to remember whether we'd 'ad anythink with onions for dinner, which, as luck would 'ave it, were a bit of loin of mutton with the fat took well off; and certainly were dressed beautiful, and in my favourite colours. But, law,

'ow I'm a maggin', with supper ready, as is biled rabbits, as 'll suit that boy, through 'im not 'avin' got 'is appytite yet."

During supper Mrs. Tozer could not talk of anything but her visitor.

"How she did go on about the gardin to be sure, and is a-goin' to send you some roots, with gereniums in pots for me, and I'm sure she've quite took a fancy to Frank, and will be a-wantin' to adopt 'im; won't she, my boy?"

"She was very kind," said Frank, colouring, "but I do not want her to adopt me, nor to send me anything more."

"She *would* 'ave one of 'is drawin's, wouldn't she, Frank?"

"Yes," replied the lad. "She wanted to pay me for it, but I begged she would accept it as a slight return for all she had sent me in the hospital. She brought me some books besides the fruit and flowers to-day."

"Come, Frank," said Tozer, "you look pale; it's time I helped you up to bed."

Without offering any objection, Frank took his friend's proffered arm, and retired for the night.

"I tell you what it is, mother," said Tozer, on his return to the room, "that boy's proud as Lucifer, and don't like accepting favours, not even from that grand lady."

"I hope he won't go a-standin' in 'is own light, as the sayin' is," replied Mrs. Tozer; "'cos if he don't 'is fortin's made, I considers; and he certingly do look downright noble, though a little pale, and 'ave grown decided whilst in bed; why, he's up to your shoulder quite; but must be careful for fear as 'is leg might break down agin now as the splinters is off, and it would break my 'art if he was even to limp; but I must talk to him about this lady, for it won't never do for 'im to lose a good friend, as no doubt he have found, thro' a carridge-wheel throwin' of them together, as ain't a chance as everyone gets every day."

"The boy's all right, I tell you," replied Tozer, "so don't you bother about him."

With these words the worthy couple retired for the night. Tozer, having looked in to see if Frank wanted anything, fell fast asleep as soon as in bed, just as his wife was going to repeat to him the description she had already so often given of Lady Cankerfield's deportment and dress.

Lady Cankerfield was not the only visitor who came to relieve the tedium of Frank's convalescence, for the good Abbé came several times to see him, and on one fine evening, to his delight and surprise, accompanied by Madame De Courcy and her daughter. The kind expressions of both, and the tender tones of Adèle, went to Frank's heart, and made him feel almost inclined to rejoice in his late accident. His pleasure at the visit was considerably damped, however, when Madame De Courcy said to him at parting, "You must get well very soon, for I am going to be left alone, as Adèle is going to school in France at once, and I am detained here a few months longer."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Frank.

"I hope you will be able to come and see us before she goes. Adieu."

"Adieu," whispered Adèle; "I am so glad you were not hurt."

Frank looked in her eyes; they were full of tears, with a deep expression of tenderness and love. He grasped her hand fervently, and she returned the pressure with a warmth that made every nerve in his body thrill with pleasure; he longed to fold her to his heart.

"Bah!" he said to himself, as she left the room, "she is only a little girl, and yet I love her dearly—as a sister, of course."

As he thought thus, the door reopened, and Adèle reappeared. She had left her parasol. "Once more good-bye, dear young Frank," she cried.

"Good-bye," he said, and held out his arms, into which the young girl leaped and returned most heartily the brotherly kiss which he for the first time imprinted on her rosy lips.

Frank felt at first as though he had acted

wrongly; but still he reflected that it was only as a brother that he loved Adèle. He felt sure that his behaviour could not be objectionable in any way to her mother, for Madame De Courcy had of late treated him with much affection, and he had been frequently left alone with Adèle, with whose assistance he practised both the piano and singing, an art in which he promised to become very successful, his voice having broken into an agreeable tenor. It was in consequence of the intimacy existing between them that Frank justified to himself the demonstrative form his regard for Adèle had taken; whilst he felt, when the door closed on her, that half the charm of life was gone, at any rate for a time.

CHAPTER VI.

On the morning following her visit to Frank, as Lady Cankerfield sat at breakfast with her husband, she gave him a full and glowing account of Frank; to which the Marquis listened with great interest, as he did indeed to anything that fell from her fascinating lips. So completely had she gained mastery over him that he became a fond slave, and had taken to rising early, in order that he might take his breakfast with her at nine o'clock, the hour at which she preferred that meal.

"You can't think, my dear," she said, "what a remarkably nice lad he is; so very good-looking, and quite superior in his manners. He is very pale, with a pair of eyes nearly as handsome as your own."

The Marquis could only acknowledge this compliment with a smile, for he had his mouth full of muffin, with the mastication of which he was a little baffled, owing to his having a set of new teeth which at present were rather more ornamental than useful.

"I am going to send him to Margate for a few weeks, and then I must see what can be done for him. I'm not going to worry you about him; I'll ask papa; I've no doubt he'll be able to suggest something that will suit him."

"Has he no friends?" inquired the Marquis.

"No, he is an orphan, and has been brought up by kind people in a humble station, to which he is apparently superior."

"What are they?" inquired the Marquis.

"I really cannot say," replied the lady; "the good woman did not clearly explain; in fact, clearness is not her strong point; but they seem rather comfortably off. The lad himself has been in a situation, which I am afraid through this accident he is likely to lose."

"I daresay Elvey will find something for him," said the Marquis. "Was it a bad fracture?"

"I think not, or he would not have got over it so soon; it is little more than a month since he met with the accident; I trust he'll not be lame."

"That won't matter to a person in his rank of life," said my lord. "He won't want to go into the army, and dancing in his position is not requisite. Not that it can be a privation to anyone, not being able to dance, I should say; besides, I think those working people often get on better when they are cripples—they win sympathy and are more likely to be steady. By-the-bye, I had a note from Elvey last night, announcing he was unwell."

"Indeed?" said the Marchioness, "I must send to inquire after him this morning."

"I am going to do so," replied her husband. "I suppose it's only gout. What are you going to do to-day?" he added.

"I promised to take Blomberg to Richmond this afternoon; he is coming to lunch."

"I think you rather pet that boy, my love."

"Well, poor child, perhaps I do; but he is so delicate and so unhappy at home that he makes me quite compassionate him. Both parents spoil him —Mildown by constant irritation, and his wife by absurd indulgence."

"I am glad you are kind to the boy," said the Marquis; "and I do think Mildown appreciates you."

"He is very kind," said the lady in a slightly ironical tone.

"I mean," said the Marquis, "that he might have made himself more disagreeable under the circumstances."

"I am sure, my dear love," replied the Marchioness, "your daughters have done quite enough in that way to support the honour of the family; but come," she added gaily, as she saw a dark cloud pass over the old man's brow, "let us talk of more agreeable things. You are coming to Richmond with me of course?"

"If I'm not in the way," replied the Marquis.

"I will not allow you to talk in that way," ex-

claimed the lady, imprinting a kiss on his withered forehead, as she added, "you will send to inquire after papa, and let me know how he is at lunch. So now I'll leave you to your *Times*. I am going out with your sister this morning; we are to settle our dresses for the Court ball."

With these words the Marchioness left the room, and in a short time after Mr. Graves made his appearance to administer a restorative to his lordship, in the shape of a soda-and-brandy, during the consumption of which he indulged in a cigar—a luxury allowed by Lady Cankerfield in her breakfast-room, to the no small enjoyment of her spouse.

As he smoked he thought over her behaviour since she had been his wife, and the more he reflected thereon the more did he admire both her conduct and the talent she evinced for filling the position in which he had placed her.

These reflections naturally led him to the consideration of the way she had behaved to his daughters, and the treatment she had experienced at their hands.

"They would insult and trample on her if they dared," thought he, "and no doubt, when I am gone, they'll attempt it. Ah! I'll take care that she has the whip-hand of them then, and of Mildown, too; for in spite of his sneaking manner, I know he'd do her an ill turn if he dared."

Lord Cankerfield was right, for in spite of the favours directly and indirectly showered upon them by their father's wife, both her stepdaughters hated her; whereas Mildown, though afraid of her, was terribly annoyed that both his wife and son had taken to her so cordially.

In the case of Lady Mildown, there may have been a slight suspicion as to the partiality for the Marchioness being in a great degree attributable to the dislike she entertained for both Lady Bolderstone and Lady Adelaide.

Blomberg was sincere and outspoken in his love and admiration for his "dear granny," as, in a spirit of good-humour, Lady Cankerfield insisted he should call her.

"I do love her," he said to his mother; "she's

so jolly, and plays to me as long as I like; and such lovely tunes."

He was not strong, and had been so bothered with over-care, that when through his "granny's" influence he. was emancipated from the doctors, and allowed to give up his pony and ride on a horse, in her agreeable society, life began to have new charms for the hitherto moping, peevish boy.

So little satisfied was Lady Cankerfield by the report she received during the morning of Mr. Elvey, that she postponed the visit to Richmond, and betook herself to see him at his chambers in Gray's Inn, to which he had removed six months after the marriage of his stepdaughter.

The rooms were ample in size, well appointed, and just suited to a man who wishes to lead the luxurious life to which bachelorhood entitles him.

It must be confessed that, as opposed to the cares of housekeeping, life in chambers is to a single man a sort of paradise; for who is so inde-

pendent, so irresponsible as he? He can come in and go out as he likes, can have society congenial to his tastes, without the surveillance of servants or the remarks of neighbours. He can be alone without charging his attendant to say, "Not at home." He goes to the seaside or the Continent, locks his door, and has no thought of home cares or ties till he chooses to return to them. It is indeed the perfection of existence for any man under sixty, in the enjoyment of health and a moderate competence. This last-named may be moderate almost to the extent of penury, but yet he can live in chambers more economically and comfortably than elsewhere.

This is all very well till the days of life begin to shorten, or are gloomy and lowering; but when bad attacks of bronchitis come with winter, when gout is an occasional visitor at all seasons, or when, after a long course of ailment, it is apparent that the closing scene is at hand, then chambers are not lively abodes, especially in the small hours, when pain is banishing sleep, when intolerable thirst parches the mouth,

and the sufferer longs for a drop of water to cool his tongue, and no loving face is bending down to the bedside to give the required draught, or gentle, soothing voice uttering words of comfort and peace, suggesting hope of a better world, in which suffering will have no place.

Chambers seldom afford to their occupants such consolations as these in the hours of sickness, though they are no doubt delightful places of residence in the time of health; but at the day of death the ward of a hospital or poor-house would be far more acceptable to the majority of men than solitary luxury in chambers; since sympathy, however meagre—companionship, however rough—are the things for which man must yearn at last from his fellow-man.

Mr. Elvey had no reminiscences of gay life in chambers wherewith to contrast the gloom which pervaded them at present; he nevertheless felt the depressing influence of the place, and gave his daughter a half consent to have somebody with him

if he were not better when she came again, as she proposed, in the evening.

On her arrival at that time she found that the condition of the invalid had grown much worse—he was almost unconscious—and she immediately sent off the servant who had attended her for the eminent Dr. Kilman, having directed the laundress, whom she found with Mr. Elvey, to summon the medical man who had already been called in.

As she sat by the sick man's bedside she felt no deep emotion; she had never felt or professed any affection for her stepfather.

She knew his character, and she was no actress; her one object in life had been to emancipate herself from his control; and now that he was dying she experienced a sense of relief that a link between her and the unpleasant past was about to be severed.

It seemed as though the sufferer were disturbed by her presence, for he became very restless, and at length woke up and stared at her.

"Do you know me, papa?" she inquired.

A sound of assent was the sole sign of recognition he could make.

She offered him water, but he motioned it away, and then tried to take her hand.

Seeing this to be his wish, she took his semi-lifeless hand in hers, and became aware that he desired to raise it to his neck.

"What is it?" she asked, as he put her hand on his throat; "this piece of cord?"

He nodded assent, as she drew from his bosom a small wash-leather bag, which he wore attached to a piece of hair-chain.

"It cannot be any souvenir of my poor mother," she said to herself, "that would be too absurd."

Whatever were the contents of the little bag, it was evident that he meant her to possess it, for he acquiesced in its removal from his neck, and nodded approval when she asked him if she was to take it.

At this moment the laundress returned with the apothecary, to whom Lady Cankerfield, explaining

her relationship to the sick man, apologised for having sent for Dr. Kilman without his concurrence.

Nothing could be more satisfactory to the general practitioner than to meet so eminent a member of the profession, although he expressed a fear that no human skill could avail in this case, a view fully confirmed on his arrival by the physician, who, having been called away from a very agreeable dinner-party to see what was practically a corpse, was hardly consoled by the prospective fee.

He was very particular, however, in making himself master of the case, and took his leave after Lady Cankerfield had requested him to call on her in the morning.

Shortly after this, as the condition of the sufferer led to no hope of his rallying sufficiently to recognise her, Lady Cankerfield, having secured the services of a nurse, took her leave with a sense of depression, having done all in her power, leaving strict injunctions that she might be informed of the condition of the patient the last thing that night and also the first thing in the morning.

The painful scene she had witnessed did not, however, prevent her from fulfilling an engagement to meet her noble husband at a *soirée,* where he had promised to call for her after a dinner he had been attending with some of the leading personages of the day.

She did not say much, when he joined her, as to Mr. Elvey's condition, sickness and death being subjects the Marquis did not care to discuss or even touch upon.

He barely admitted to himself that both were likely to be his own lot, and spoke of the deaths of others as a sort of casualty, invariably attributing it to some neglect or inherent weakness of constitution of the departed.

Besides, he was unusually gay that night, for he saw the Duchess of Dulldrum engaged in a *tête-à-tête* with his wife, and, on approaching them, heard her grace pressing the Marchioness to visit her in the Highlands to meet royalty, and this he knew to be the culminating point of his wife's social triumph.

CHAPTER VII.

Mr. Elvey died during the night, and due notice of the melancholy event was given to his step-daughter, who communicated it to the Marquis, who evinced something approaching emotion, though not of a sorrowful kind.

She had not told him over-night of the critical condition of the patient, and when she went to his dressing-room with the melancholy news, he exclaimed:

"Dead! dead! the devil he is! I should like to know who's going to manage my affairs for me now? He was a deuced useful fellow, and if I'd known he'd been so ill, I'd have gone to see him. Mildown shall go to his funeral; I can't; I hate funerals and black and all that sort of thing."

"Don't disturb yourself about anything of that sort, my love," said the Marchioness, "I shall of course wear mourning for a month or so, and cannot dine at the German Minister's to meet the Pasha; of course you'll go. I shall remain at home for a week. Beyond that we need make no difference. We are not engaged to anyone we care about for the next few days."

"I suppose the funeral can take place this week?" said the Marquis.

"Oh dear yes," she replied. "Let me see, to-day is Tuesday, so Saturday will do. I will attend to everything, and I intend in future to be your man of business."

Fondly patting her cheek, the old man gave her his arm, and they went in to breakfast as cheerily as though nothing unusual had occurred.

Immediately the morning meal was finished, Lady Cankerfield made her way to Gray's Inn, and on entering the chambers of the deceased, found a singular-looking elderly man seated in the arm-chair of the defunct.

On the entrance of her ladyship the visitor rose, as though doubtful whether he would be recognised.

"Mr. Crocket," said her ladyship, "it is a long time since we met last."

"It is, indeed, my lady," he replied; "you were quite a little girl. I should not have known you, and am flattered to find I am not forgotten."

"I never forget faces," was the reply, "especially those which have impressed me." She did not add what the impression had been in Mr. Crocket's case, but went on to say, "I am sorry to meet you under such melancholy circumstances."

Mr. Crocket said something very commonplace on the subject of death, and then at once proceeded to inform her ladyship that he had seen Mr. Elvey a few days previous to his decease, and that he had his will in his possession; by which, with the exception of a legacy to himself as executor, all his property was bequeathed to "my dear step-

daughter, the Marchioness of Cankerfield, out of love and affection for her."

This announcement did not either surprise or produce any effect on the legatee, till Mr. Crocket went on to say that the money was thirty thousand pounds, well invested, and consequently producing a handsome annuity.

"He has left you joint executor with me," he continued, "with control of everything, and as there are among his papers documents of importance relating to the affairs of your husband's family, I think these desks and bookcases had better be sealed up at once, till a careful inventory can be made by some trustworthy person—someone not immediately connected with the family."

"I entirely concur with your view of the case," said Lady Cankerfield, "and will appoint an early day, after the last tokens of respect have been paid to the departed, to meet you and discuss matters more fully."

"I hope Lord Cankerfield's health is good," said Mr. Crocket.

"Oh, thank you, yes; but I am obliged to be very careful of him, and shall get him away now as soon as possible for a little change, as this melancholy event has given him a great shock."

Mr. Crocket took his leave, and went home, pondering over Lord Cankerfield's health, knowing him to be afflicted with that incurable and increasing malady, three score years and ten.

Mr. Elvey was buried with all becoming decorum, followed to the grave by Lord Mildown, Mr. Crocket, his executor, and the two doctors.

Lord Mildown occupied the first mourning-coach alone, absorbed in his own reflections; the humbler mourners filled a second vehicle of woe, discussed the usual topics of the day, and hardly referred to the departed, who was a stranger to all but Mr. Crocket.

Lord Mildown felt a sort of satisfaction at seeing lowered into the grave one whom he regarded as a barrier between his father and himself; and thought that now he should be able to manage matters more to his own satisfaction. How

far he was right the course of events will show.

Lady Cankerfield led a life of complete seclusion for a fortnight after the death of her stepfather, but was by no means idle, or in fact a prey to grief, the departed having been entitled neither to respect or affection at her hands.

She met Mr. Crocket on the Monday after the funeral at the chambers in Gray's Inn, and agreed with that gentleman as to keeping the rooms closed, with seals on the inner doors.

"I must investigate everything very closely," she said; "it was poor dear Mr. Elvey's wish that I should do so."

"You will exercise a wise discretion in following his directions," observed Mr. Crocket; "he was an admirable man of business, and devoted to your interests."

Whilst this conversation was being held, a slight tap was heard at the outer door which Mr. Crocket at once opened, and admitted Lord Mildown.

He started very much on seeing Lady Canker-

field, and stammered out excuses for intruding on her.

"No apology is necessary," replied her ladyship. "It is natural that you should come and see how matters are likely to be conducted; and you will, I know, be happy to hear that this gentleman, Mr. Crocket—— I beg pardon for not having introduced him. Lord Mildown, my stepson," she added, as Mr. Crocket bowed slightly in acknowledgment of his lordship's very cold salute.

"I have had the honour of meeting his lordship before," he remarked.

"I was saying," continued Lady Cankerfield, "that Mr. Crocket, who is an old and trusted friend of mine, and I, are Mr. Elvey's executors, and therefore you need be under no anxiety as to any matters becoming public property."

"Oh yes, no doubt," replied Lord Mildown. "I was speaking to my father this morning, and he agreed that it would be as well that I should call and inquire to whose custody Mr. Elvey's papers would be entrusted."

"Did your father send you here?" inquired the lady, in a somewhat emphasised manner.

"Well, not exactly; only, you know, I thought that——"

"Pray don't trouble yourself to either think or speak on the subject. I have explained everything to my husband, and he has reposed every confidence in me. It is very kind and thoughtful of you to have called, but under the circumstances I feel that I need not detain you. Good-day! All well at home, I hope? Give my love, and tell Blomberg I shall soon be able to take him out again."

Lord Mildown would have flown into a rage and used hard words, but the expression of his stepmother's eye and the tone of her voice quelled him, and with a very brief form of adieu he left the room.

"Can he suspect the existence of any documents that he would wish destroyed?" asked Lady Cankerfield of her companion as his lordship withdrew.

"Do you know of the existence of any?" inquired Mr. Crocket.

"I have my suspicions," replied the lady. "Papa, some time before his death, charged me on no account to let anyone have access to his papers till I had personally inspected them with your assistance. I can't imagine," she continued, "what there can be which he desired to be so carefully guarded."

"I am aware that Mr. Elvey advanced Lord Mildown sums of money at various times for which he held his lordship's bond," suggested Mr. Crocket.

"That must be it," said Lady Cankerfield, "and yet I don't suppose Mildown would attempt any fraud that would be likely to be discovered."

"Well, well, be that as it may," observed Mr. Crocket, "we will, as your ladyship suggests, seal up the rooms till your return to town. How long will you be away?"

"A month at the least," she replied, "for really Lord Cankerfield requires sea air; this sad

event has shaken him, and I of course feel anxious about him."

"No doubt, no doubt," said Mr. Crocket; "and now," he continued, "we'll summon the laundress, and see the rooms shut up before sealing the inner door and locking the outer."

The laundress was accordingly bidden to appear, and in a few minutes the shutters were closed, the inner door locked and sealed, the outer door simply locked, and the key taken possession of by the Marchioness.

"Let me see you in a day or two," said she to Mr. Crocket, as he handed her into a cab. "I wish to speak to you particularly."

"Oh yes, by all means," replied Mr. Crocket. "I'll wait on your ladyship the day after to-morrow."

"What a wonderfully lucky girl that has been," thought Mr. Crocket, as the cab drove off. "She knows her way about too. Mildown is no match for her; it was no doubt to catch him that she came down in a hack cab; if he had seen the

carriage he wouldn't have come in. Ah! she's a deep one; and what a fortune she'll have when the old fellow croaks!"

Absorbed in these reflections, Mr. Crocket returned to his office.

CHAPTER VIII.

"MRS. TOZER," said Frank, one evening as they were sitting together at an open window commanding a fine sea view, and inhaling the bracing air of Margate, "do you suppose there was anything disgraceful connected with my birth?"

"Law bless the boy; no, in course not. Why, haven't I told you 'ow the priest came to your poor dear mother; as he wouldn't 'ave done if there had been anything wrong!"

Frank made no reply.

"Ah," continued Mrs. Tozer, "think of it's bein' sixteen years ago; when we gets 'ome we must look through them little boxes as I've told you about as belonged to your poor mother."

"Yes," said Frank, jumping up, "the sooner the better."

"But you ain't a-going to start now, I suppose; so don't jump up sudden like that, it gives me such a turn, for I thinks as you'll fall, through not being used to it."

"I'm all right now," said Frank, "I could dance; why, we've been here three weeks, and the bathing has brought me on very quickly, and my leg is stronger than ever. I shall be glad to get home."

"Well, Tozer will be down to-morrow, and then on Monday off we go, not as I can say I have not enjoyed myself, for I have, and as to them shrimps, fresh caught, they're quite a relish for a cup of tea. It's singular where they all come from, as is caught by the millions fresh every morning, leastways overnight, so as to get boiled by breakfast-time, along with the hot bread and fresh butter. But come, we must be thinking about supper, as one seems to relish this hot weather."

So saying Mrs. Tozer busied herself in giving orders for that meal, but Frank was too deeply absorbed in his own reflections to pay any attention to what she was saying or doing, a circumstance

which made very little difference to that worthy matron, who had a happy knack of talking more as though she were thinking aloud, unconscious of not being attended to, or rather unaware of the neglect, because one of her chief points in praising Frank was as to his character as a listener.

Frank had listened now, for Mrs. Tozer had spoken on a subject deeply interesting to him, though he had avoided asking questions, waiting patiently for the information to come from Tozer, who had promised he would enter fully into details *some day*.

It was on the evening before they left Margate that Tozer, in the course of a walk, gave the lad all the information possessed by himself or his wife on the subject of his parentage.

"Oh, if I could only find that sailor," said Frank; "though I am sure he was not my father."

"No, no, my boy," replied Tozer. "I've often thought whether it would do to advertise for him; we didn't like to when you was young, because the missus had promised your mother to protect you from him."

Frank pressed his benefactor's hand in recognition of the friends that he and his wife had been, as he said, "I would give anything to clear up the mystery; it often makes me feel very uncomfortable when my parents are referred to. I felt I was turning scarlet when Lady Cankerfield has asked me about them."

"Never mind, my boy," said Tozer; "be true to yourself and it will be of no consequence who your father was, though I'm pretty sure he was a gentleman."

"No," said Frank; "had he been, he would not have deserted my mother and left her to the care of such a man as this Morgan."

"Well," replied Tozer, "you mustn't judge, because you don't know."

Frank was silenced, but for some days the name of Morgan haunted him; and had that individual been at hand to see the lad, he could not have expressed greater surprise than Mrs. Tozer evinced when she saw him standing on the deck of the steamer, on board which she and her husband were returning to town, accompanied by their young charge.

"Tozer," she said, "I declare as I can't keep my eyes off of 'im; why, he must have growed a foot, and I do believe them doctors must 'ave stretched 'is legs in settin' of them."

"Don't be a fool, Tilly," was the brusque reply this remark elicited. "Why there was only one broke; it's a-layin' in bed as 'ave made 'im shoot up, and a splendid young man he'll be."

"And he's got such a way with 'im, too. Why, when fust he come aboard, if the captin didn't touch his cap to 'im. I do like them clothes as the Marchioness 'ave ordered for 'im, tho' he didn't like takin' them. Ah! she's a real lady, tho' the 'ousekeeper did turn up her nose at her that time I went there, a-sayin' as she were not high-born. I'm sure she's behaved like a princess, a-sayin' to me, 'Mrs. Tozer, spare no expense;' and when I said as we was comfortable through our own means, and all the children provided for, to send that bank-note, a-sayin' as she insisted as we should keep it for him, as is fifty."

"I haven't told him yet," said Tozer, "but

old Crocket's got a place for him through the Marchioness."

"You don't say so, Tozer! bless his 'art, his fortune's made;" and the kind soul actually shed tears of joy. "But why not tell him?"

"Because I've said as the old gentleman wants to see him, and he'd better tell him first what it is; so don't you go a-lettin' it out, or we shall fall out over it, and it won't be much to hold your tongue till to-morrow, will it?"

"I'm sure, Tozer, silent as the grave is what I can be when there's occasion; there, that boy is a-talkin' away, makin' friends everywhere; but I must speak to 'im, for he's a-standin' up too long, I'm sure."

At that moment Frank, who had been in conversation with one of the passengers, turned and saw Mrs. Tozer's anxious look as she beckoned to him.

"What is the matter?" he inquired.

"You're a-standin' about too much on your leg, my dear, I'm afraid."

"I think not," he replied; "my leg feels quite strong, thank you."

"Ah! but you didn't ought to overtask it, though I've heard say as when once a bone is broke it's stronger than ever; not as I can make it out, for I'm sure things as is riveted is apt to come apart; and Tozer's chair as the leg give way, though fastened with a screw and glued back and front, is very rickety, as I never sits down with no confidence on, for fear of overstraining it, as must be the same with your leg."

Frank cheerfully adopted Mrs. Tozer's advice as to the expediency of resting, and, having a book, seated himself, and was soon absorbed in its contents; whilst Mr. and Mrs. Tozer enjoyed the fresh breeze as the *Queen of the Isles* steamed away up the river, and about four o'clock deposited a large portion of her freight on Blackwall Pier, and, amongst others, the Tozer party, who took their way home by rail.

All was in apple-pie order when they arrived at home, where, under the superintendence and with

the assistance of Mrs. Challen, Liza had achieved wonders in the cleaning line, at the sacrifice of a single pane of glass in the back-kitchen window.

"Hadn't you better lay down as soon as you have had your tea?" said Mrs. Tozer to Frank, as she was preparing that refreshing beverage.

"No, thank you, I don't feel at all tired; in fact I hope to be able to get to the office to-morrow morning."

"We'll wait till to-morrow comes," said Tozer. "I daresay you'll get on very well, but you'll feel your leg at first."

"Ah, that he will," observed Mrs. Tozer; "for well I remember a young officer, as used to come a-visitin' where I lived 'ousemaid, as had his toes froze off in the northern regents, as they called 'em, and used to feel his corns throb like life whenever there was a change of weather a-comin' on; and it's well beknown to thousins as them as 'ave 'ad their legs took off will feel the cramp in their calves, though they've been a smoulderin' in

the grave miles and miles away, or per'aps in the oshun's depths, as the sayin' is."

Both Tozer and Frank listened, as was their wont, whilst Mrs. Tozer, discoursing according to her habit, dispensed the tea; and when that meal was concluded Tozer informed Frank that he had received a note from Mr. Crocket, stating that as soon as Frank felt himself quite strong, he would be glad to see him any morning about ten o'clock.

"I am more than strong enough to do anything," exclaimed Frank, in high glee. "I never felt so well in my life, and shall be with Mr. Crocket to-morrow; at least I hope so."

On reaching Mr. Crocket's chambers, he found a note appointing a meeting the next day at that gentleman's private residence; consequently he returned to his friends, and later in the day repaired to the abode of his revered Abbé, where he was rejoiced to learn that the departure of Madame De Courcy and her daughter had been delayed, and though both out, were expected home shortly. It was not long ere Frank's watchful ear detected the

light foot of Adèle approaching the door. The good Abbé was dozing, so the young man slipped out of the room and entered the parlour immediately after the object of his growing affections. He was much struck with her appearance—she seemed quite a woman in his eyes. She looked at him so lovingly that he did not hesitate to fold her in his arms, and whisper "Beloved Adèle." She did not repulse his advances, and listened to the warm expressions of affection that he whispered in her willing ear, for he was only talking like a loving brother, and her mamma had given her permission to think of him in that light.

Madame De Courcy returned in due time, and a most delightful evening did the friends pass together, the more so as it was the last, for Adèle was to go in a day or two, and her mother declined any further visit from Frank till she was gone.

So it was that, with a parting not less heartfelt though less tender than their meeting in the evening, the young people took leave of one another, and life for some days to come threatened

to be a sad blank to our hero, and would have been so, but luckily he was too fully employed to be able to indulge in day-dreams or sentimentality. He had been so fortunate as to secure work of importance, and was resolved to throw all his energy into the execution of it. He did not put the memory of Adèle out of his mind, but, still regarding her in the light of a sister, did not become either desponding or romantic in thinking of her; in fact, fully persuaded that it was highly to her interest she should go to the Continent to finish her education, he was almost reconciled to the separation—at least he nearly persuaded himself into the belief that such were his feelings on the matter, so that with a light heart he found himself the following morning, before ten o'clock, at Mr. Crocket's residence in a street near Islington church.

It was a shabby, dreary-looking abode, requiring paint and other decoration; but the interior, though sombre, was not uncomfortable, and seemed a fitting residence for an elderly man of Mr. Crocket's habits and disposition.

He received our hero with something like cordiality of manner, and said, "I never saw a young fellow grown so much in so short a time;" and added, with something like a smile, "why I think I'll get run over myself; it might do me some good."

Frank was astonished, for he had never heard the old gentleman say anything before that bore the least resemblance to a jocose remark, and was still more taken by surprise when he heard him say, half to himself, "I haven't got such a face for a fortune as that."

A very short time sufficed to explain to Frank what was wanted of him, which was to overlook, under Mr. Crocket's superintendence, the papers of the late Mr. Elvey.

"You can come with me now to his chambers, if you're sure you feel strong enough, and I'll show you what to do. You will get thirty shillings a week."

Frank, having assured him that he was stronger than ever, was about to express his thanks for so

good an appointment, when Mr. Crocket stopped him by saying, "Don't thank me, it was Lady Cankerfield who mentioned you, and I was able to say that I knew you and thought you could be trusted."

"I hope you'll never have reason to regret having given me a good word," replied Frank; "I'll do my very best."

"I know you will, my lad; so now let us get a 'bus to Holborn. I suppose you're not too great a swell for a 'bus?"

Frank disclaimed any such view of his character, and was glad to climb on to the roof of one of those detestable conveyances, a proceeding on his part that would have alarmed Mrs. Tozer very much if she had witnessed it.

From that day for some time did Frank attend at Gray's Inn, assisting Mr. Crocket in taking a careful inventory of all Mr. Elvey's books and papers, the latter being all carefully labelled and arranged in tin boxes.

Many of these, referring to the Marquis of

Cankerfield, were transferred to the keeping of that nobleman's solicitors.

Among the earliest visitors to Mr. Elvey's chambers after Frank's attendance there was Lord Mildown, who came, as he said to Mr. Crocket, "to see what was to be done about the family papers; and," added his lordship, "I should much like to see if there are not some documents belonging to *me* among them."

"I have received your father's directions, my lord," replied Mr. Crocket, "as regards the family papers; but as everything is entrusted to the Marchioness, who is Mr. Elvey's sole representative, you can have no anxiety about family matters."

"I am particularly anxious," said his lordship, "to see whether there is not a letter addressed to me."

"Should there be, my lord, it will be duly forwarded, I assure you; but I have strict orders to allow no one access to the papers till all have been arranged."

"I hope that task will be given to some trustworthy person," observed Mildown.

"Oh yes, my lord," replied Mr. Crocket, "the Marchioness was very particular about that, and we have both reason to be perfectly satisfied with the person employed."

Lord Mildown withdrew, baffled but not defeated, and within the next two days again visited the chambers; and as the laundress was about leaving them when he arrived at the door, he walked unannounced into the room where Frank was busily employed at a desk in putting up letters.

"Oh!" said his lordship, advancing quickly towards the desk, "you don't know me, but I am Lord Mildown, Lord Cankerfield's son, and am come for some family papers."

Frank had just time to rise from his seat and turn to face the invader, and as he did so to close the sliding cover of the desk, which he instantly locked.

"Mr. Crocket will be here very shortly," he said, "and if your lordship will take a seat——"

"I am in a great hurry to get back to my father, as I am anxious to show him the papers I require; they may not be here, but you will be so good as to look for them at once."

"I should not know which they were," said Frank.

"Oh, but I should," replied his lordship.

"I could not allow you to take them away without Mr. Crocket's leave," said the lad firmly, as he put the keys of the desk in his pocket.

"Oh, but you know you must. You know me, or have no doubt heard my name; I will pay you for the extra trouble;" and with these words Lord Mildown pulled out his portemonnaie.

"Your lordship will not have to pay me for extra trouble," said Frank, "as I shall have none."

"Do you mean that you will not allow me to inspect the papers in that desk?"

"Certainly; I am under strict orders to allow *no one* to see them."

"Then I shall be obliged to bring my father,

Lord Cankerfield, here, and he is unwell, and will be very angry at being troubled in this way."

"It will be unnecessary to give him the trouble of coming, my lord, because if Mr. Crocket thinks fit you can see the papers."

"Ah, but you see time presses, and Mr. Crocket is out of town—at least I think he must be," he continued, checking himself hastily.

"I am sorry your lordship has had the trouble of coming, for I can allow you neither to see nor touch any paper here."

"There is no occasion to be insolent, my good lad; of course you don't know any better."

"I am not, nor have I been, insolent, my lord."

"Your refusal is insolent."

"No, no, my lord," exclaimed Mr. Crocket, who at that moment entered the room; "this young man has only done his duty."

"Mr. Crocket," replied his lordship, "I must say that I am treated with marked discourtesy, and I certainly shall represent to my father the conduct of your subordinate."

"I should advise your lordship to apply to Lady Cankerfield on the subject; everything here is under her control."

Lord Mildown bit his lip and was silent.

"May I inquire," continued Mr. Crocket, "why, if your lordship knew I was out of town, you selected this particular day for your visit?"

"Because there is a letter among Mr. Elvey's papers—a private letter, addressed to me."

"Very likely," said Mr. Crocket.

"And," continued his lordship, "I came for it, as I am very anxious to show it to my father; in fact, I have come expressly for it; so could you let me have it?"

"Certainly not; you will have nothing, my lord, from here; the family solicitors have all the papers."

"But this is a private letter to me. I have a copy, and want to see the original."

"If you have a copy, the original can only be of use to prove its authenticity."

"Yes, exactly; that's what I want to do."

"All in good time, my lord; you shall hear when we find it, as I told you before."

Lord Mildown departed without a very formal leave-taking, and when he was gone Frank gave Mr. Crocket a full account of what had passed during the visit.

"I know him well," said the old gentleman. "I daresay Elvey had some of his affairs to settle. But you were quite right to act as you did; allow no one to see or take anything—except, of course, her ladyship.

"I don't know," said Mr. Crocket to Frank, "where to find the key of this cashbox. It is not on the bunch."

"Which box is it, sir?" inquired Frank; "that small one? I have not touched it, supposing that you knew all about its contents," said the lad.

"I've not examined it," said Mr. Crocket, giving the aforesaid box a shake, from which no sound as of cash was elicited. "Perhaps they are

some private papers," added Mr. Crocket; "or, it may be, notes."

It so happened that later on in the day Lady Cankerfield visited the chambers, as she had already done on one or two previous occasions; and the subject of the visit of Lord Mildown and the keyless box having been brought under her notice, she desired that it might be given to her; for the mention of it brought to her mind the fact that in the little bag she had taken from her step-father's neck, after his death, there was nothing but a small key.

"I think I know the contents of this box," she said, "so I will take it home with me;" and as Mr. Crocket could offer no objection, the Marchioness took possession of the article in question.

"Allow the lad to put it in the carriage for your ladyship," said Mr. Crocket.

"Oh dear no," she replied; "it is not heavy; I can manage to carry it."

Evidently unwilling to relinquish a hold of her prize, she was indeed glad to have it in her

possession, for she had an idea that its contents had some reference to her mother, respecting whom she had a vague dread that unpleasant disclosures might come to light, although her stepfather, Mr. Elvey, had frequently assured her that he had taken every precaution with regard to her mother's memory.

With the little box in her hand she rose to go, saying, as she left the room, "Should Lord Mildown apply again for any information respecting Mr. Elvey's affairs, please refer him to me."

Mr. Crocket merely bowed and desired permission to see her ladyship to her carriage, and as he accompanied her downstairs took occasion to tell her how Frank had acted under the somewhat trying circumstances of his interview with Lord Mildown.

Lady Cankerfield expressed herself much pleased with the lad's conduct, and said, "I shall not forget him, Mr. Crocket, and when this affair is settled we must see what can be done for his future;" a remark which Mr. Crocket heard with

the greatest satisfaction, but did not repeat to the subject of it, for fear, as he said to himself, of making the lad "expect too much; not that he's at all forward, though decidedly ambitious."

A few more weeks sufficed to wind up all Mr. Elvey's affairs, and the proceeds of his estate turned out much larger than had been anticipated.

The Marchioness expressed herself much gratified at the manner in which everything had been done, and through her recommendation Mr. Crocket was admitted, very much to Lord Mildown's annoyance, to the Marquis's confidence, whilst Frank received from the Marchioness a present of a watch and chain, as a mark of her ladyship's approval of his conduct.

CHAPTER IX.

At the conclusion of Mr. Elvey's business, Frank resumed his post at Mr. Crocket's, and, to his no small surprise, at the increased stipend he had received of late. In reply to a remark he made to his employer on the subject, he got a short but kind reply as to his making good use of his money.

During his late employment Frank had not discontinued his lessons with the worthy Abbé, though he had abridged them, partly through fear of fatiguing the worthy old gentleman. Moreover, he was desirous of getting instruction in mathematics, a science in which the kind priest was not proficient.

He was proud of the extraordinary progress his pupil had made in Latin, whilst, as regarded modern languages, he pronounced him to be as perfect as

any young man could be without having resided on the Continent.

Frank had continued his visits to Madame De Courcy, and having met at her apartments several foreigners unacquainted with English, had had opportunities of hearing both French and Italian spoken, and of making by no means unsuccessful attempts at expressing himself in both languages.

It was nearly twelve months after her daughter's departure from England that Madame De Courcy followed, much to Frank's regrets, which were greatly increased when, a few months after, he had to take leave of his dear valued friend the Abbé, who had resolved to return to France to die. "I love, bless, and shall ever pray for England," he said; "but I have one wish—it is to lay my bones in France. Farewell, my own beloved boy," he said to Frank; "all blessings attend you. Do not forget me, and when you travel come and see me, if I am alive, to be folded to my heart; if I should be gone, you will not fail to say an 'Ave' for me at my grave. Keep steadfast in the course on which you have entered,

and your future must be happy and brilliant." Frank's heart was too full to speak, and it was with difficulty he could repress his tears as he took leave of his venerable friend.

It was no part of our hero's nature to despond; he devoted himself with increased vigour to his studies, to which he was enabled to give nearly all his time, as his employment with Mr. Crocket was merely nominal.

He was, however, enabled to be useful to his employer in other ways than in the discharge of mere official employment; and so it was that in a very short time after his return to Mr. Crocket's office he had become on almost confidential though not familiar terms with him, being consulted on several matters of business, and as a mark of high esteem and regard was frequently invited to dine with him on Sunday, which Mrs. Tozer considered equivalent to having become his adopted son.

It so happened that Mrs. Tozer herself was able, through Frank's instrumentality, to render

Mr. Crocket a great service within a couple of months of Frank's increased intimacy with that gentleman.

Mrs. Grump had died somewhat suddenly, and left behind her a paralysed woman, a lodger; the individual to whom she had referred as being "sensible," when, in days gone by, she cautioned Frank not to slam the door.

The old woman's death had caused Mr. Crocket some trouble regarding the surviving invalid, but Frank had suggested consulting Mrs. Tozer, whom he fetched forthwith; and in a day or two a new home was found for the sufferer, in the immediate neighbourhood of Mrs. Tozer's, at the house of one Mrs. Arber, who let lodgings.

In token of his appreciation of Mrs. Tozer's kindness in this matter, Mr. Crocket invited her, with her husband, to accompany Frank, and dine with him on the following Sunday.

"It certingly were a great 'oner as he've done us, Tozer, and we did ought to go, for Frank's sake."

"With all my heart," said Tozer, "though I'd rather be at 'ome in my own place. I'm sure that boy's delighted, 'cos I can always tell when he's pleased, for his face seems to smile all over."

The dinner was a great success. Mrs. Tozer had most of the talking; and as she subsequently observed to a friend, "A finer bit of salmon, with a leg of lamb and pigeon-pie, wasn't never put on a table."

In the course of the meal Mr. Crocket inquired about the bed-ridden woman.

"Well, sir," replied Mrs. Tozer, "if you was to ask me 'ow she is, and I were to anser 'pretty well,' I should be a deceivin' you, as is a poor shaky thing at all times, as a suddin puff might do for any moment; but yet, for all that, might 'ang on for years; 'cos the creakin' 'inge, as the sayin' is—— But what terrifies me is her drinkin'."

"Why surely they don't let her drink?" exclaimed Mr. Crocket. "That's been her destruction."

"I'm not illudin' to sperrits, nor yet beer, but

only to tea or arrer-root, as she'll get in 'er throat and gurgle over till nearly black in the face; for I often goes in and sets with 'er a bit atween the lights, and though she wanders a deal——"

"Wanders!" exclaimed Mr. Crocket, who was very matter-of-fact; "why, I thought she was bed-ridden."

"I mean in 'er 'ead, sir; but at times she's quite sensible, though give to start in wakin' up suddin, and will fancy as she's aboard ship, as 'ave had a bad 'usban' I should say."

"Oh, it's a disagreeable business, and we won't talk about it," observed Mr. Crocket. "I only undertook the charge as a matter of business for a friend. She's got an annuity that I pay. People give themselves a great deal of trouble through their follies," he observed.

"Oh, that they do, sir, as is the case with a many as I've know'd, for there was Mrs. Prattel's mother, as were past sixty when she took and married the baker's boy, as beat 'er, and sold 'er up under the year, and everythink pawned, down

to the gold as 'er teeth was set in, as he took and knocked out of 'er 'ead with a blow on the nape of the neck, and then levanted, a knock-kneed thief, as was always a wistlin', as is a bad 'abit I considers when a-waitin' for a bakin' at the airey, as is making a deal too free for to chalk the railin's, and then cheek me for tellin' 'im on it; but I'm sure, sir, a more agreeable arternoon and evenin' I never did spend, and it ain't twice in a blue moon, as the sayin' is, as I can get my good gentleman out, as am proud to wish you a very good-night, and return you a many thanks."

These parting words Mrs. Tozer addressed to Mr. Crocket at his own door, and then, having overtaken her worse half, who had strolled on, they made their way to a 'bus for Maida Hill, near to which the worthy couple had recently removed into a larger house.

"It certingly do my 'art good to 'ear that old gentleman talk about Frank, though he don't say much, as is aperiently proud on 'im as 'is own son, and well he may be, for I never did see such a fine

fellow, and as to 'is leg bein' damaged, jest 'ear 'ow he's a-comin' runnin' to ketch us up, through waitin' to rite a address for Mr. Crocket."

The subject of these remarks soon joined the pair in a high state of pleasurable excitement, nor was his delight greater than theirs when he told them that Mr. Crocket had settled with the Marchioness that he should enter at once at the London University.

Mrs. Tozer had no idea what was meant by this step in life, but feeling certain it was for the lad's advantage, she was in a high state of delight, which was in some measure damped when, on mentioning the matter to her friend Mrs. Padwick, that lady thought fit to designate the Gower Street seat of learning as "a low radical place that didn't believe in nothink."

With his usual assiduity and high principle did Frank, during the ensuing two years, attend to his studies, for which, as well as for other purposes, money was supplied to him by Mr. Crocket, who, at the Marchioness's request, made fitting arrange-

ments for his maintenance with Tozer, agreeing with that stanch friend of our hero that the sum in the savings bank should remain intact.

Considering the disadvantages with respect to early training under which the lad had laboured, his progress in learning was extraordinary.

He had only one cause of regret, and that was his inability to give much time to the pursuit of the fine arts, though he did not entirely abandon his drawing or music.

By the time he attained the age of eighteen, so rapid and satisfactory had been his progress at Gower Street, especially in mathematics, that his masters most strongly urged upon him and Mr. Crocket the advisability of his going to Cambridge.

This proposition appeared to Frank so utterly hopeless and impossible, that he dismissed all thought of such a thing from his mind, and begged Mr. Crocket not to mention the subject to the Marchioness, who continued to take an interest in him.

From time to time she had entertained him at lunch, and presented him on one occasion to the Marquis, whose vision was so impaired as to be unable to recognise anyone distinctly.

He was, however, very gracious to the young man, and said he was "a finely-grown lad for his age."

This was true, for he had developed as much physically as mentally, and was now fully six feet high, and altogether a model young Englishman both in manner and appearance.

He was dressy without being foppish, and the only extravagance of which Mrs. Tozer could accuse him was in what she termed "his linen;" "but a clean shirt he shall have as often as he likes, as would be every day, I do believe; for with a clean shirt on he looks the nobleman, and polishes his own boots like a looking-glass; and I'm sure you'd think he would wear every bit of nap off his clothes, and his a-brushin' on 'em that constant, without a 'air out of its place, and 'is whiskers and beard a-growin'

like black silk; and never did I see sich a set of teeth except Mr. Rummel's, the chimbly-sweep's, as the black nat'rally sets 'em off, with them large eyes as 'ave a melancholy look with them jest the same as 'is poor dear mother, as can see 'er fix 'em on my face in askin' me to purtect 'im; as I 'opes to prove to 'er some day I 'ave, when I meets 'er in 'eaven, as is my 'umble 'opes."

CHAPTER X.

When Frank had been nearly two years attending Gower Street, he was not a little shocked by the sudden death of Mr. Crocket, who succumbed after ten days' illness to a sharp attack of pleurisy and gout.

"And never did I expect 'im to get through it," said Mrs. Tozer, "as soon as I see 'im, for 'is only words was 'air,' with a lump of lead at the pit of his stomick; and as to that servant of 'is, though she 'ave lived with 'im over five years, no more idea of a drop of beef-tea than our cat; but they've put seventy-six on 'is coffin, and the naybours says he's lived in that same 'ouse over forty-five year, and never a young man not in nobody's recollection, so must 'ave been full that, 'cos of remembering the Princess Charlotte and Mrs.

Siddens, as he told me would be 'ard on eighty if she 'adn't been cut off, as the sayin' is; but that 'ouse was enuf to 'ave killed anyone; not as it were dirty, but wanted a coat of paint and the whitewashers; but, law, it don't matter now, do it, Tozer?"

"In course not, mother," said Tozer; "but I've got a bit of news for you as 'll stifle you."

"Why, Tozer, wotever can it be?"

"Why, if the old chap ain't been and left a lump of money to Frank."

"Law, Tozer, how much?"

"Why, about five 'undred pounds down, and the rest to come when he's the age of five-and-twenty."

"Well, I never did; you 'ave took my breath away. Does the boy know it?"

"No, it's the lawyer's clerk as told me, so don't say a word till he 'ears more, 'cos it may not be true."

"Ah, that's where it is," admitted Mrs. Tozer; "tho' surely the lawyer's clerk must know."

"Yes, but he didn't ought to have talked about

it, and I dessay wouldn't, only we got a-chattin' friendly over a glass in comin' away from the simmetry, arter selectin' the ground."

Mrs. Tozer promised not to say a word, but would have had some difficulty in keeping the secret to herself, had not the temptation to reveal it been removed by Frank's absence from home the greater part of the evening, and the fact that on his return Tozer was on guard.

They talked of the old man, whom they all regretted, though, as Frank observed, "It was quite impossible ever to get on easy terms with him. For my part," he continued, "I never could quite make out whether he cared for me or not."

"Law, my dear boy, not care for you? Why you was like his son."

"I say, mother," interrupted Tozer, "suppose we was to go to bed; why, it's past eleven, I do declare."

This statement had the effect of stopping Mrs. Tozer and dispersing the party, and Frank went to bed unconscious of his good fortune.

Within a few days Mr. Crocket was laid in his grave, followed by Frank and Mr. Holden, of the firm of Jackson and Holden, solicitors to the deceased.

The funeral was conducted as quietly as possible; Frank and his fellow-mourner—a remarkably taciturn gentleman—parted at the grave; Mr. Holden being conveyed to his domicile in a mourning-coach, whilst Frank returned home on foot, having received no intimation of his acquired wealth.

It was, therefore, a great surprise to him when, on the following morning, Mr. Holden called at Mrs. Tozer's and informed our hero that, under Mr. Crocket's will, he was entitled to five hundred pounds down, with about eight thousand pounds to be paid over to him on his attaining the age of twenty-five, the interest meanwhile to be paid him, "in order," as Mr. Holden observed, "to enable you to pursue your studies."

As quick as lightning thoughts of a future career rushed through Frank's brain; he could

with difficulty express himself as he asked for some particulars respecting this unexpected bequest.

He had always understood that Mr. Crocket was a man without relatives, and had imagined him to be wealthy. This, however, was not the case to any extraordinary degree, for although he had enjoyed a comfortable income, his estate was under ten thousand pounds, out of which, Frank was glad to hear, the servant and the housekeeper were amply provided for.

"When will you feel inclined to come to town?" asked Mr. Holden.

"To-day; this moment," said Frank.

"Then we'll go at once," was the reply.

"But, law bless me," said Mrs. Tozer, "you must put a hatband on, as will only cost eightpence, and show that respect as is proper; for your clothes being that dark gray is mourning already, and only a pair of gloves for to fit you up."

"I've got everything I wore at the funeral, Mrs. Tozer," said Frank.

"Law, 'ow stupid on me, in course you 'ave;

but mind you don't go over-tiring of yourself, that's a dear fellow, as might bring on your leg again."

"I'll take care of him, my good lady; besides, your husband is coming with us," said Mr. Holden, in a grave tone, as he took Frank by the arm and led him away. "I wish you good-morning."

"Well, I'm sure them lawyers has a wonderful way with them ov sealing up your lips like with a word; but I do hope as he won't go a-putting no proud ways into Frank's 'art, as 'ave got a haughty turn of the 'ead of 'is own, if anythink puts him out."

These remarks were made to Tozer as he was putting on his hat preparatory to joining Mr. Holden and Frank, who were sitting in a cab waiting for him.

"All right, old lady," he said, "nobody won't spoil Frank. Now mind, we shall be home to dinner at three."

So saying he hurried away, and Mrs. Tozer descended to the lower regions, in order to super-

intend the construction of a meat-pie, a dish on the concoction of which she prided herself.

During the process of preparing it, she gave Liza a lecture on the evil habit of "dealing 'eavy in condiments, as," she said, "spoils many a bit of wholesome food; no, always leave parties for to pepper and salt theirselves is the best plan, and then they can't complain; but whatever you do, Liza, tell the baker to be careful not to put it into too quick a oven, as will scorch the crust and harden the meat. In fact, I've half a mind to try and bake it at 'ome, only that oven of ours takes such a time to 'eat. Besides, I don't see as the dish could be got in, for I never see anythink like the way as they make the grates nowadays; a oven as won't 'old anythink, and a biler as don't fill itself, and will go off like a cannon through being red-hot, an' me going to fill up unawares with the waterin'-pot, as knocked me slap under the dresser and brought the plates down like a 'ailstorm on my 'ead. So just step over with it, Liza, and tell

Mrs. Edmonds, with my respects, as I shall consider an extra eye on it a favour."

Having discharged this important duty, Mrs. Tozer devoted her energies to setting things to rights in her own way. "For, though clean," she observed, "nothink was in its proper place."

It occupied Frank and his legal adviser many weeks to arrange Mr. Crocket's affairs; but during this period he had ample opportunity of bestowing time and attention on his books; so much, in fact, that Mrs. Tozer had her misgivings about his health standing so much study. "For," as she remarked to her husband, "takin' in so much into the brain when you ain't done growin' must try the strength, as makes me sometimes wish as we lived out of town a little way, with a good bit of gardin, as he might be inticed into; as turnin' up fresh earth, I've 'eard say, is that 'ealthy, and carries off a many disorders as anyone might contract a-settin' porin' over them books." To which Tozer only replied "she might live where she liked."

Frank, however, opposed the idea of moving, well knowing Mrs. Tozer's preference for a town life; besides, there were other considerations which made it desirable that they should remain in London.

Frank attended classes regularly, and worked at modern languages, in the acquisition of which he excelled, especially Italian.

He wished to share his entire income with his friends, but of this Tozer would not hear, although, to satisfy Frank, he agreed to receive a sum annually for his board.

One charge that devolved on Frank, as residuary legatee of Mr. Crocket, was the care of the bed-ridden woman, the former occupant of the upper part of the house in which Mr. Crocket had his offices.

It is true that Mrs. Tozer relieved the youth of any responsibility as to personal superintendence by unremitting care and supervision, and there was an annuity settled on her, so that all anxiety or real charge was provided against.

Her condition was hopeless; she had had several slight paralytic seizures, by which her speech was so much affected as to render it impossible to hold any conversation with her.

She had, from the time of her removal to the lodgings Mrs. Tozer had provided for her, been tranquil and docile, though at times she evinced a degree of irritability when she was in any way thwarted. Mrs. Tozer, on such occasions, would be called in, and her presence seemed to act as a composing draught on the sufferer.

On the occasion of one visit, Mrs. Tozer found her patient more than usually restless; she vainly attempted to make herself understood. Once she tried to write; but after having succeeded in pacifying the poor woman by giving her pencil and paper, Mrs. Tozer returned home, taking with her the attempt at writing, which was to her illegible, thinking that Frank and Tozer, together or separately, might be able to master the scrawl.

Both set to work with diligence, and to some extent were successful, for they made out that the

writer intended to give all her property to Mrs. Tozer.

"It is her will!" exclaimed Frank.

"Of course it is," said Tozer, "but no more use than a bit of waste paper; it ain't signed even."

"I can make out one word," said Frank, "that reads like Morgan."

"Perhaps that's her real name," said Mrs. Tozer, "though she always went by the name of Melcombe; and as to property, she ain't got nothink but a old 'air trunk, and a bag as 'ad 'er dirty linen in it."

"Mr. Holden will tell you wot to do about it when she's dead and gone," remarked Tozer.

"That's wot she were drivin' at then," said Mrs. Tozer, "when she kep' a-pointin' to that 'air trunk this arternoon; per'aps she wants me to look into it, as I'll do the fust thing in the mornin', while she's alive and sensible in 'er 'ead, and Mrs. Corby a-standin' by, as is a woman as anyone might trust with untold sea-chests or trunks either."

"All right, mother," observed Tozer; "and

now me and Frank's got some letters to read, so perhaps you wouldn't mind a-droppin' it."

"I'm a-goin' to my own room, as is where my work's cut out," replied Mrs. Tozer, as she left the apartment and was seen no more till supper.

"Law, 'ow sing'ler if she should turn out to be—— But no, she can't, 'cos he was a man," she then observed.

"Who was a man?" asked Tozer.

"Why that party as brought Frank's mother to Mrs. Welbyn's."

"It's a very common name is Morgan," observed Tozer; "for if he's dead and gone it's no loss as could indemnify him out of a thousand."

"Well, it may be," said Mrs. Tozer, "but she might be 'is widder, for they certainly are alike about the licker; for he was dead drunk last time as Mrs. Welbyn see 'im, and this poor creature 'ave brought 'erself to death's door, as the sayin' is, through lappin'; leastways that's the doctor's notions."

"Talking about Morgan," said Tozer, "did

you give Frank them trifles as belonged to his poor mother?"

"Yes, weeks ago; there's only the little picter, as is dreadfully faded, one or two bits of lace, and some writin' as is forrin', and Frank says is poetry about love, and is rote in the name of Ernest, or something like that."

"Well, the boy's got 'em, and they may lead to something some day," said Tozer, as he prepared to take his night's rest; for this colloquy, like many other confidential communications of the worthy couple, was carried on in the retirement of the sleeping apartment of Mr. and Mrs. Tozer, selected for such discussions as both were anxious to avoid, as much as possible, any allusion in Frank's presence to the circumstances of his birth or parentage.

"I shan't never forget," said Mrs. Tozer, "the colour as come up in his face that day as I give 'im them two little boxes. The little picture were rolled up in a bit of silk, but I do think as Mrs. Welbyn done that, 'cos it were round 'er neck,

poor dear, when we laid her out, as no doubt the 'eat 'ave faded it. I do wish as she may turn out somebody, for, poor boy, he do champ and grieve dreadful over not knowin' who he is; not as I can think as it matters much, but he's a deal of pride he 'ave, tho' wot I calls proper pride, as 'ave kep' 'im out of the streets; and Lady Cankerfield soon found out as he weren't a-goin' to be no pauper, as is why I think she 'ave took to 'im so; for when he went there he was shown into 'er own parlour, and wouldn't taste no cake or wine, as I think was a carryin' pride too far; and now as they've gone abroad, along of my lord's eyes bein' that bad, no doubt he'll be asked to go there agin when they return."

Filled with these reflections, Mrs. Tozer lay awake for some ten minutes, which circumstance induced the belief on her part that she hadn't, as she expressed it, "slept a wink for 'ours after gettin' to bed," a statement flatly contradicted as usual by Tozer.

CHAPTER XI.

THREE years have elapsed since our hero inherited Mr. Crocket's legacy, on the interest of which he was able to go up to the University without accepting any assistance from the Marchioness, whose interest in him, however, continued unabated.

It was in Cambridge, on a lovely summer's morning, that, just as Frank was debating with a friend as to where he should spend the "Long," that he received an invitation to sojourn a short time at Falklands, the country seat of the Marquis of Cankerfield.

"Are they relations of yours?" asked Egerton of John's, who was breakfasting with Frank, and to whom he was obliged to communicate the contents

of his letter, as they had been thinking of going somewhere together to read.

"Oh dear no," replied Frank. "Ours is what might literally be termed an *accidental* acquaintance. I was lucky enough to be knocked down by Lady Cankerfield's carriage, and to break my leg, and she has been my friend ever since."

"Well, if you call that lucky, you are thankful for small mercies," replied his friend.

"It has been the means, indirectly, of placing me where I am; for, as I've told you, I come——" He was going to say "of poor but honest parents;" but he stopped and substituted, "Oh, I am a nobody."

"I am glad that somebodies have taken you up," said Egerton; "they'll make your fortune."

"I'll make that for myself," rejoined Frank, "for I'm not ambitious for more than a moderate competency."

"Which someone has defined to be four thousand a year, paid quarterly in advance," replied his friend; "but I must be off. I shall see you after hall."

So saying, Egerton went away, and Frank devoted a short time to writing a reply to the Marchioness, and then applied himself to his daily work.

"I don't think I ever met a more gentlemanly man than Welbyn" (for it was by that name Frank was known), said Egerton to Graham, as they strolled by the river-side during the early part of the afternoon.

"Oh, he's more than gentlemanly," replied Graham, "he's absolutely aristocratic."

"I'm sure there's a mystery about his birth," said Egerton, "he creates a sensation everywhere he goes, though he is so quiet there is no drawing him out."

"I'd have given anything," continued Graham, "if he'd gone to the ball last week; but he wouldn't; and yet he's not shy or awkward, for when he breakfasted with me that day when my people were up, my father was quite struck with his conversational powers, and as to the girls, they were all smitten with him."

"Why I think there is some mystery about him," said Egerton; "he had a letter this morning from Lady Cankerfield, inviting him to pay them a visit during the 'Long.'"

"I daresay," observed Graham, "that he's some relation they can't acknowledge, though they wish to notice. I've heard my governor say that the old Marquis was a frightful reprobate."

"So I've heard," replied Egerton; "but Welbyn is a wonderfully clever fellow; he'll take high honours, and yet was never at a public school."

"He's the only man who has not been," remarked Graham, "that I ever fancied."

"There is no mistake about him, he's a first-rate specimen," observed Egerton; "he does everything as well as though he'd been captain of any school."

"It's rather a pity he's a Catholic," said Graham, "though I don't see that it matters much; for what on earth is a man's religion to anyone else, provided he has brains and conduct?

The days for tests and so-called orthodoxy are passing away; let a man believe what he likes, so long as he'll allow his neighbours similar liberty."

"I quite agree with you," said Egerton; "I only hope bigotry may not stand in Welbyn's way."

"He'll work through that, depend on it," replied Graham. "Well, I'm off for a ride. You wine with me to-day; Welbyn is coming, for a wonder."

"All right," answered Egerton; adding to himself, as he strolled to his rooms, "what pleasure a man can take in a ride such a hot afternoon as this is quite beyond my powers of comprehension."

Frank, it will be seen, had become popular at the University, where he led the quietest life possible; not only from economical motives, but because he was extremely sensitive as to his social position. He often smiled mentally when he thought of his humble home with his worthy friends, as contrasted with the abodes of some of his present companions.

Both Tozer and his partner had frequently urged Frank to go elsewhere to live; but he would not hear of it, nor would he consent to take his meals in the parlour, dedicated by Mrs. Tozer to his special use and service.

"I'm sure college ain't made no difference with him," said she, "except per'aps in bein' a thought more partikler over 'is linen, and dressed that beautiful, with them boots as shines without blackin'; and in course he did ought to go and live in chambers, like Mr. Oldin wanted 'im to; but he wouldn't 'ear on it, as certingly were a load off my 'art when he said as he'd stop with us, thro' a-knowin' them young swells in chambers is, as rantipole a lot as any goin'; but them ain't Frank's ways, as grows 'ansomer and 'ansomer every time as he comes 'ome, as I'm sure must feed 'im well at that college, or he wouldn't thrive so."

These were the remarks of Mrs. Tozer to her friend Mrs. Padwick, on the occasion of Frank's return to her roof after his first term at Cambridge; subsequent terms and vacations only

tending to increase Mrs. Tozer's admiration for college life, which, as she said, "Certingly do turn 'em into fust-rate young men."

"Ah," said Tozer, "that's true; but the stock must be there, for not all the training in this world wouldn't make a cart-'orse into a racer; and if that boy 'adn't been well born, he wouldn't 'ave come out such a slap-up young top-sawyer of a swell."

Frank usually passed his vacation reading in the country; but always came to see Mrs. Tozer at Christmas, to the great delight of both that worthy woman and her husband.

Since his sojourn at Cambridge, our hero had indeed developed both morally and physically; so much had he improved and altered, that Lady Cankerfield did not know him when, in compliance with her invitation, he called at Blomberg House as he was passing through town, two years after his going into residence at the University.

The Marquis's health having necessitated residence in a warm climate during the winters immediately succeeding Frank's residence at Cambridge,

the Marchioness saw nothing of her *protégé*; she could do nothing more for him at present, though she was resolved not to lose sight of him.

Since the death of Mr. Crocket she had felt the want of some confidential person to whom she might entrust matters that she could not confide to those about her, and it was out of the question to attempt to repose any sort of confidence in her step-son, a proceeding to which, had she been so inclined, her husband would have been violently opposed, for his dislike to his son seemed to increase as years rolled on.

It was on one occasion, after a long interview with his solicitor, that Lord Cankerfield was regretting his inability to arrange his papers. The Marchioness had hitherto acted as his private secretary, but the sight of a room, the walls of which were lined with deed-boxes and cases full of papers, made her shrink from the attempt to sort and arrange them, a duty which had formerly devolved on Mr. Elvey, and had been entirely neglected since his death.

It was after their arrival at Cankerfield from a lengthened sojourn abroad, that it occurred to Lady Cankerfield that Frank would be the very person to select as a sort of secretary to the Marquis.

"I shall incur no end of sensorious remarks," she said to herself; "but what do I care? I flatter myself I am able to defy the malice of Lord Mildown and his amiable sisters."

We see by this reflection the estimation in which her ladyship held her husband's children, who, by their venomous and dastardly attacks on her, made persistently behind her back, had completely forfeited all claim on her regard or respect.

Mildown was still fawningly civil, as was Lady Adelaide; but Lady Bolderstone, after a very few months, threw off the mask, and more than once spoke of her father's wife as "a low person of doubtful antecedents."

There had been no scenes or quarrels, Lady Cankerfield being too clever to allow any such thing, and she received her stepdaughters as usual; but she managed to keep the Marquis as

much out of England as possible, and was stigmatised in the foulest terms as to her motives for so doing by all his amiable family, Lady Mildown and her son always excepted. It was at this stage of events that Lady Cankerfield invited Frank to Falklands, whither, within a month of leaving Cambridge for the "Long," he was being driven in a well-appointed dog-cart that had met him at the train.

The morning had been wet, but in the afternoon and evening there was brilliant sunshine, and the country looked all the better for having had a copious shower-bath.

The distance from the station to the house was just over two miles, the Marquis having at first opposed the nearer approach of the line to his residence—a course he now regretted, as the road between him and the station was hilly, and frequently a source of inconvenience both to himself and his guests.

As Frank was driven along briskly, he experienced a sense of nervousness at the thought of

being introduced into society so widely at variance with that to which he had been accustomed.

It is true that of late years he had been associating with highly cultivated and educated people, yet he could not forget that the greater part of his life had been passed with those whose position and English were by no means on a par with their moral worth.

It was not actually his first appearance in high life, for he had lunched twice at Blomberg House, and had been honoured with an invitation to dine there during the preceding spring.

It was true he only met one of the Marquis's country agents, a solicitor, a country parson, and a junior lord of the Treasury.

Frank thought the guests must have been selected from the very outposts of society, the conversation being chiefly carried on during dinner between the Marchioness and the junior lord, whilst the Marquis absorbed the solicitor and the agent.

The parson evidently enjoyed his dinner, and did not waste much time in conversation; he did,

however, honour Frank with a few remarks, especially with reference to the weather and the crowded state of the streets.

The conversation was decidedly not brilliant; in fact, the whole affair was slow, and even more so as it drew to a conclusion, for as soon as the Marchioness had withdrawn the Marquis dozed, the solicitor and agent talked business, and the parson fell foul of the junior lord on the malt-tax and free trade; so Frank was left very much to himself till they were summoned for tea to the library, which served for a drawing-room on the occasion of small dinner-parties.

On the mantelpiece were placed miniatures of the Marquis and his late wife, also one of the late Lord Mildown when a boy. These were being pointed out to Frank good-naturedly by the country agent, a Mr. Holmes, who spoke with a strong provincial accent:

"He was a first-rate fellow," observed Holmes, looking at the deceased Mildown's likeness, "quite a contrast—I mean very different—that is to say, a

very splendid——" And so Mr. Holmes, who had taken plenty of wine, got rather confused.

The Marquis snored in an easy-chair, but no one noticed him, for the parson was, as a matter of course, endeavouring to enlist her ladyship's sympathies for his "work;" whilst the solicitor and the junior lord were hard at it on the subject of cheap foreign wines.

The Marchioness, though bored with the parson, treated him with polite deference, and promised an increased subscription to his schools, which of course were models; but unfortunately, as he was obliged to admit, "his pet scholars were frequently turning out ill."

"When do you return to Cambridge, Mr. Welbyn?" she inquired, by way of noticing Frank.

"The day after to-morrow," he replied.

"At Cambridge? Intended for the Church?" asked the parson.

"No," replied the Marchioness.

"I am very glad to have heard of your success, Mr. Welbyn," she continued, "and so is the Marquis.

We hope it may suit you to come and see us in the country during the vacation."

This was said in a sort of adieu tone, and Frank at once wished her ladyship good-night, which movement woke up the Marquis and broke up the party, to the no small relief of all who had been concerned in it.

"Which way do you go?" asked Mr. Holmes of Frank at the door.

"I am going north," was the reply.

"I'll give you a lift as far as the Marble Arch," said Holmes; "I'm staying at The Gloucester; I've put up there these thirty years. Nice people, my lord and his lady?" he added.

"Very," replied Frank.

"She's no rubbish about her," said Holmes; "remembers that she was nobody, and so treats one decently. The old man he's failing fast, nearly blind, and when he's gone there'll be a kettle of fish to be sure; he eats and drinks enough to kill a horse; but she's your friend, and that's best. What are you going to be?"

"I shall go to the Bar, I think," said Frank.

"Starving work," said Holmes; "never earn enough to powder your wig; better go into the Church and get a good living and a pretty wife; nothing to do but once a week, then only an hour or two; rubbish to call that work, mere child's-play."

"I couldn't think of that," said Frank.

"It's the best trade out," observed his companion; "why, you can marry at once, and have bread and butter spread and cut for you and your family; only got to open your mouth and eat it. I've two sons parsons, both got livings now; but when the youngest had only a curacy of forty pounds a year, he got married, and I had to keep him; and nicely his mother and all the women bullied me because I objected; they seemed to think me worse than a heathen. Well, here I am at my hotel. Shall you take the cab on?"

"No, thank you; I shall get an omnibus, as it's not late."

"That's right, my boy, save your money. Good-

night, I'm glad I've met you; if you come down our way, mind you look me up; you know the place."

Thanking him and wishing him good-night, Frank hurried away, and with the co-operation of an omnibus reached the Edgeware Road a little after eleven, where he found Mrs. Tozer sitting up for him.

She was much disappointed at the account of the company, as she had formed an idea they "would be nothink but lords and ladies, and in nothink but stars and garters;" and though partly consoled by hearing that there was gold and silver on the table, yet she didn't think much honour had been done to Frank.

"As to the gold and silver," she observed, as she was that thankful as it didn't belong to her, "for I'm sure when I've got my silver teapot out, I always fancies as parties is a lurkin' in the front gardin for to grab it thro' the kitchen-winder; and well I may as 'ave 'ad three silver teaspoons lost, as in my opinion were throw'd away with

washin' up the tea-things, as is why I always does it myself with my best chiney out."

Mr. Holmes went to bed with a firm conviction on his mind that the "young chap with whom he had just parted was in some way related to the noble family of Blomberg."

"Never saw such a likeness to the late Lord Mildown. The old man's too blind to see it, but I wonder the voice don't strike him. I didn't like to say anything to the young fellow himself, but gave Johnson my mind as he helped me on with my coat."

This was the substance of a conversation that on his return home Mr. Holmes held with his wife, who said she "shouldn't be surprised at anything that happened in that family; for she didn't consider any of them renewed characters; not even the late Marchioness, though she did attend a gospel ministry," by which Mrs. Holmes meant some preachers holding the same style of religious views as those entertained by herself, she coming of a strong dissenting family.

Mr. Holmes's views of Frank's resemblance to the family were identical with those entertained by both Mr. Graves and Mr. Johnson, the latter declaring, "When the young fellow asked for seltzer-water the first time as he came to lunch, it was like the late Lord Mildown speaking out of his grave."

Mrs. Ellis said she'd "give anything to see him, for if ever she had loved a young nobleman it was that dear Lord Mildown; not that this young fellow could be his son; though let me see," she added, "law, how time does fly! Why he'd be four-and-forty this very month, for we was born the same week, as my aunt told me, only there's nine years difference; and I well remember him coming of age, and the row about his mother's money as parted him and his father."

"Ah, Elvey had a hand in that," observed Johnson; "but he's dead and gone, and I will say we've no call to complain of his daughter."

"She was never no daughter of his," said Mrs. Ellis. "Bless you, she's got the blood of

a lady in her veins, or she never could have took the place she has, and kept all the family at bay and made them respect her."

"I only hope as his lordship has taken good care of her when he's gone," said Johnson, "for she won't get much mercy at his children's hands."

"She don't want it," said Mr. Lowndes; "she's more than a match for them all put together any day. See how she managed Elvey's property; why, I'm told that that brings her in nearly two thousand a year."

"Well, she's the best of the bunch," observed Mrs. Ellis, "and I respected her from the first for sending away that French minx, and I only wish as the young lord had left a son, that's all I've got to say."

With these remarks the party, which was assembled after supper in the steward's room at Blomberg House on the occasion of Frank dining there, broke up; Mrs. Ellis observing "it was quite a treat to be able to open one's mouth now,

without spies," a reference to the departed mademoiselle, whose gossiping propensities had cost her her place.

Mr. Lowndes and Mr. Johnson discussed Frank freely over a pipe they enjoyed in a remote part of the house, and both agreed that "young men would be young men, but they hadn't no patience with old reprobates;" and made remarks on the present Lord Mildown and his son, tending to show that neither of them was any more popular among the household than with the family, or in society at large.

They also conversed generally on the differences existing among the various members of the family, and agreed as to the total disruption that would ensue on the old Marquis's death.

"But," said Mr. Johnson, "I hope as he'll leave my lady the whip-hand over the lot."

Whilst we have been talking retrospectively about upstairs and downstairs at Blomberg House, our hero is being driven briskly from the station to the Marquis's seat.

The road lay for some way through the park, which seemed interminable to Frank. Elegantly laid-out gardens were skirted before he was deposited at the hall-door.

"My lord and her ladyship are out, sir," said the groom of the chambers, who came forward to receive the visitors; "would you like to go to your room?"

"If you please," was the reply; and having so said, Frank followed a footman, to whose care he was consigned, across a vast hall, up a magnificent staircase of white marble, and along a corridor adorned with paintings and exotic plants.

The hall was anomalous as to architecture, but beautiful in the way of decoration, with which Frank's artistic eye was much struck as he trod the velvet-carpeted way that led to his room.

"Dinner is served at a quarter to eight, sir; it is now seven," said the footman, as he unfastened the straps of his portmanteau. "The gong will sound twice, half an hour and five minutes before dinner. Will you want anything else, sir?"

"Nothing, thank you," said Frank, as he drew near the window to admire the prospect.

Immediately beneath his room was spread forth an Italian garden, laid out in exquisite style, adorned with fountains, statues, &c. Beyond this was a lawn and extensive park, bounded by a lake and adorned with magnificent timber, affording such a landscape as England alone can display.

"How supremely happy must the owner of this be!" thought Frank, as he gazed on the scene before him.

At that moment a carriage drove up to a side entrance, of which Frank commanded a view; the Marchioness was driving, and by her side sat a decrepit old man, whom two stalwart footmen half lifted from his seat and led into the house.

"He must be quite blind to be led about in that way," thought Frank, "and evidently much worse than when I last saw him in town. At any rate, she seems to enjoy life."

This remark was elicited by the elegant appearance afforded by Lady Cankerfield, as she

stood patting a magnificent pair of ponies she had been driving, and was now regaling with lumps of sugar.

"It is altogether a magnificent place indeed, and if its occupants should not be happy one would think it must be their own faults."

So absorbed was Frank in these reflections and the beauty of the scene before him, that he had scarcely completed his toilette when the second gong summoned him to the drawing-room, where, to his relief, he found himself the first arrival.

Whilst awaiting that of others, he had time to take a survey of the spacious suite of rooms, all thrown open to afford the full enjoyment of the lovely evening breeze, which wafted into the apartment exquisite odours of the rich tropical plants growing on the garden terrace, and gave an additional charm to the palatial adornments of the richly-appointed mansion.

CHAPTER XII.

The entrance of the Marchioness, and her cordial welcome, soon put Frank completely at his ease.

"You left your kind friends in town quite well, I hope?" she asked, as she shook hands with her visitor, now an elegant young man, in whom she could hardly recognise the lad whose acquaintance she had made some five years before under such unusual circumstances of introduction.

"You will find us a dull party," she said, "for the state of the Marquis's health shuts us out from much society. I hope you like the country?"

"I am enthusiastically fond of it," replied Frank.

"That is fortunate," continued her ladyship.

"You will have to amuse yourself, for at present we are alone, with the exception of the Marquis's eldest son, Lord Mildown, his wife, and Mr. Blomberg, their son. I forget whether you have met them."

"Never," said Frank, almost smiling at the question.

"We shall have more of the family here to-morrow, when I hope my sister-in-law, Lady Caroline Dashwater, will join us; she is very lively and agreeable."

A hacking cough heard in the gallery announced the approach of the Marquis, who the next minute entered the room, leaning on his son's arm.

The Marchioness went to meet him, saying: "Mr. Welbyn is here, my love."

"Ah, Mr. Welbyn, glad to see you!" said his lordship. This was a mere form of speech, for, as his lordship wore a deep shade over both eyes, he could see nobody.

He shook hands with Frank, and introduced him to Mildown, who gave the young man a

patronising nod as he said, "You come from town to-day; anything new?"

Frank gave the usual reply to such a question as Lady Mildown entered the room, accompanied by her son and followed by the butler, who announced dinner.

The Marquis gave his daughter-in-law his arm, Mildown took the Marchioness, leaving the young men, unintroduced, to follow, forming a contrast in appearance very much to the disadvantage of the heir of the house, who, from a sickly boy, had grown into a weedy, seedy, though not ill-looking young man.

The dinner was not lively, though the Marchioness did her best to keep up the conversation.

"Are you a boating-man, Mr. Welbyn?" she asked.

"I'm very fond of the water," he replied.

"I'm glad to hear it," said the Marquis; "you can take the ladies on the lake; the boats are all in order, are they not, Blomberg?"

"I don't know. I've not been much on the

lake since I've been here," replied the youth, in a half-sulky tone.

"Not been on the lake?" said the Marquis.

"He is not strong enough for such work," said his father; "besides, the lake is full of eddies."

"Only on the farther side is there any need of caution," said the Marquis; "and there are two men to take care of him."

"I hate going out with boatmen," said Blomberg.

"I trust you would not venture out alone," exclaimed his father.

"Mr. Welbyn must explore the lake to-morrow," said the Marchioness; "and then perhaps he may feel equal to taking care of me in a boat. I confess to not being over-brave on the water, but with an experienced waterman like Mr. Welbyn, and accompanied by my grandson, I shall feel quite safe."

"I'll take you, granny," said Blomberg, with a smile.

"You are not fit for such violent exercise," interposed Lady Mildown.

"He never will be if he does not begin," replied the Marquis. "Why, it would do him good—open his chest and make a man of him; so Mr. Welbyn had better give him some lessons, that is if he will be so good."

"Mr. Welbyn is very good, it is so very kind of him," exclaimed Lord Mildown, as he heard Frank expressing his willingness to meet the Marquis's wishes; "but, my dear father," he continued, "I do not wish Blomberg to go into a boat. I've often observed that there is water at the bottom of a boat, and I'm very sure, if Blomberg were to disobey his doctor's directions——"

"Oh, bother doctors," said the Marquis, "you're too fond of quacking the boy."

"My dear father, I assure you if he were to sit with his feet in cold water it would be his death."

"I don't think it would be likely to hurt him at all to go on the water," continued the Marquis.

"I assure you," said Lady Mildown, in an

imploring tone, "he really is forbidden to do such things, and he is so very reckless."

Anything less like a reckless youth than poor Blomberg could hardly be conceived, but though not reckless he was ill-tempered, and sat at dessert tapping his plate with his knife till his grandfather said, rather sharply, "Don't make that noise, Blomberg," a speech which checked him suddenly. At that moment the Marchioness, to cover his annoyance, gave the signal, and the ladies left the table.

Blomberg, intensely annoyed at the rebuke he had received, for once in his life obeyed his mother's nod almost cheerfully, and, rising, followed her out of the room.

"I wonder, Gus, you don't bring that boy out more," said the Marquis; "he's too old to be treated like a child; why he'll come of age in less than six months."

"My dear father, you are very kind—I mean you intend to be; but really he's so delicate, and rash to the last degree—not to be trusted out of my sight,

in fact. Why it was only last week I met him in a hansom cab."

"Well," said the Marquis, "what harm was there in that?"

"Oh, they're so very unsafe," replied Mildown. "Fancy, if the horse were to kick! Besides, I object to them on another ground; suppose the horse were glandered, you'd be sure to take the glanders, for I've always observed that those cab-horses are perpetually snorting, and their saliva flies all over you, so I never ride in one on any account."

The Marquis gave a short laugh, and said: "Ah, you always were precious careful of yourself."

To this Mildown made no reply, and in a short time rose and quitted the room, leaving Frank to a *tête-à-tête* with his host, who chatted away cheerfully for some time ere they adjourned to the drawing-room; whence in less than an hour Frank was in his own chamber absorbed in his books.

The following morning was devoted to the stables, to which Lady Cankerfield acted as Frank's guide, and placed a horse at her visitor's disposal;

and in the afternoon Frank devoted his attention to the boats, which were in perfect order, and pulled and sailed on the lake for some time.

It was a fine expanse of water, though on one side there was a strong stream and a formidable lasher.

The boatmen informed Frank that the heir of the house was particularly fond of the boats, and especially disliked being interfered with or directed as to the management thereof.

On entering the drawing-room before dinner, Frank found that there was a considerable addition to the party in the persons of the daughters of the Marquis and their husbands, to whom Lord Mildown introduced Frank as "a young gentleman, a friend of the Marchioness," who at that moment entered the room, accompanied by Lady Caroline Dashwater, through whose happy manner the second evening of Frank's visit passed away more agreeably than the first.

The dinner-party was increased by the presence of a clergyman recently appointed to a neighbouring

parish. He was an agreeable man, and made dinner more lively by his conversation, chiefly relating to distant lands, for having been a chaplain in the Navy he had visited most parts of the globe.

When the ladies retired, the conversation was carried on by the Marquis and his reverend guest, Lord Mildown preserving a marked silence; he never, in fact, addressed Frank, for having recognised him as his opponent at Mr. Elvey's chambers, he hated him in consequence; not that he acknowledged having seen him before, and Frank did not feel it necessary to claim his lordship's acquaintance, who designated him, in speaking of him to his wife, as "one of that woman's myrmidons."

Frank was listening to the conversation, which was about India, and in reply to some remark about the ravages of cholera, the clergyman observed that he had known them quite as bad in Europe.

"I remember," he continued, "some years ago, when we were cruising off Sicily, where it was raging, we picked up a boat, the whole crew of

which had died except a young fellow who turned out to be English, and a Sicilian girl."

"Ah, indeed!" said Lord Mildown, breaking into the conversation suddenly, as his father dozed. "Don't you take some Madeira? It is very fine; let me fill your glass; it has been to the East Indies twice; my grandfather laid it down."

Frank looked at the speaker, whose face was ghastly.

"It is very fine," observed the parson. "There was a very remarkable fact about those people," he continued; "they were nearly dead, and our captain, who spoke Italian with difficulty, elicited from the young girl, who was in the last stage of exhaustion, that her companion, an Englishman, almost at the point of death, wished to marry her, though she said she was already his wife. Poor fellow, he could not speak, but seemed restless and anxious; so to pacify them I performed the service. It was a curious case, wasn't it?"

"Yes," said Lord Mildown, "but won't you come to the drawing-room!"

"No," replied the parson, "I've a long drive, and I must be off; but as I was saying, I did marry them. The dying man was evidently intent on my doing so, as it pacified him, though he was hardly conscious, and died within an hour or two after we put him ashore at Messina. The poor girl was also evidently dying. We couldn't make out their names, except that the girl stated her companion's to be Ernesto."

"Ah, indeed!" exclaimed Lord Mildown, with a gasp. "Very interesting."

"Did the young girl die?" inquired Frank.

"Oh yes, I believe so; we sailed when we had given them over to the authorities of the health-office at Messina. But really I must say good-night," he added, addressing the Marquis, who had been dozing. "Pray make my apologies to Lady Cankerfield; I shall do myself the honour of paying her a visit very shortly."

During the foregoing conversation, Mildown's face had become more and more deadly pale, and he made more display of his agitation by the

ineffectual means he resorted to in order to conceal it.

"Oh," he said, "good-night; very droll, very funny, very interesting."

"I don't see anything either funny or droll in the story," said the parson. "I can assure you it was very distressing, and when I encounter my old commander, whom I'm going to visit in the Isle of Wight, I must ask him more about it."

As he said this he left the room, followed by Lord Mildown, who said, in an apologetic tone, "No, no! of course not. I did not mean funny. No, very sad indeed; but my father can't bear to hear anything of a distressing character, so perhaps you would be so very good as to avoid such subjects when we have the pleasure of seeing you again."

"Oh indeed! I am very sorry," said the departing guest.

"Yes! You see, you know, my eldest brother died abroad, and it's a very distressing subject."

"I'll be careful to avoid it in future," said

the parson, as he stepped into his dog-cart. "Good night."

"Good-night," said Mildown, as he returned to the house in anything but a happy frame of mind.

CHAPTER XIII.

During his stay at Falklands, Frank became hourly a greater favourite. The way he managed a boat, and the style in which he mounted and rode a horse, excited the admiration of both the ladies and the servants.

Lady Caroline was immensely struck by his appearance and manner; she made close inquiries of the Marchioness as to his antecedents. On hearing all that her sister-in-law had to say on the subject, she was silent; but on the following day she confidentially informed Lady Cankerfield that it was her firm conviction that Frank was Mildown's son.

"Impossible!" exclaimed the Marchioness.

"Oh, I don't mean Gus. I mean his brother. Such a dear fellow he was. Oh, how tiresome these young men are."

"I never understood that your eldest nephew was married," replied Lady Cankerfield, in a tone which conveyed that she said it with a view of drawing her sister-in-law out.

"Nor did I," replied Lady Caroline; "yet it wouldn't surprise me if he had been, for he was very eccentric. I only hope he may not have done what poor Lady Brazenout's son did."

"What was that?" inquired the Marchioness.

"Why he married a donkey-girl somewhere near Naples. His mother gave out that she was a princess; but when we were in Naples five years ago our courier found out the whole truth, and we went to see the family; people of the poorest class, but the girls all undeniably handsome."

"I think Mr. Welbyn was born in Stepney, and his mother, who was a foreigner, died at his birth," replied the Marchioness; "at least so a

very worthy woman told me who was present on the occasion. His father, who deserted his mother, was a sailor."

"I should like to see that person," said Lady Caroline; "for wherever that young man was born, he's my nephew's son. All the servants see the wonderful likeness," she continued; "my maid was telling me, as she was dressing me for dinner, that is the talk of the steward's room. Hasn't my brother observed it? Ah! No, I forgot his eyes; but I'm sure Gus must see it."

"I wouldn't say anything about it at present," said the Marchioness.

"Not for the world. Why, I do believe Gus would get him poisoned."

"My dear," exclaimed Lady Cankerfield, "what an awful idea!"

This conversation was held as the ladies, after coffee, were on their way to the lake, on which Frank was awaiting them, Lady Caroline having expressed a wish to go for a row by moonlight.

Lady Bolderstone and her sister had declined

joining the water-party, though there was a boat sufficiently large, with the additional services of the boatmen, for everyone.

It was an evening to have tempted even Lord Mildown on the water, but he was shut up in his sitting-room, reading the debates.

The Marquis had gone to sleep in the drawing-room, where his daughters were sitting with him; Bolderstone and his brother-in-law were smoking in the billiard-room, where, as Lady Mildown, who was writing in the morning-room, fondly hoped her son had followed them, for, though she disliked both billiards and smoking, and could not endure her brothers-in-law, yet she held their society to be better for her son than association with Frank, especially on the water.

Her ladyship had just finished her letter, when she heard voices on the terrace that announced the return of the water-party, and went out to meet them.

"I am so sorry you did not come with us," said the Marchioness, as they entered the drawing-room, where the Marquis still slept.

"It was most enjoyable," exclaimed Lady Caroline; "Mr. Welbyn is a perfect adept with the oars."

"You must come on the lake with us to-morrow," she continued, addressing her brother, whom she had roused from his nap, "you'll enjoy it, I know."

At this moment Frank entered the room, and was overwhelmed with compliments on his proficiency as an oarsman by Lady Caroline, who proceeded to what she termed "bring him out," and insisted on his singing, an art in which, thanks to Madame De Courcy's admirable instruction, our hero was decidedly proficient.

"Who is that singing?" asked the Marquis, waking from a doze. "Bless my soul!" he exclaimed, "I know that voice."

Lady Caroline gave the Marchioness a look as she crossed the room, and, seating herself by her brother, she said:

"It is Mr. Welbyn who has been favouring us; has he not a fine voice and good style? He has been well taught."

"His voice reminds me strangely of someone," said the Marquis.

At that moment Mildown entered the room hastily, and said to his wife in a tone of reproach, "My dear, why did you allow Blomberg to go on the water?"

"I never thought of such a thing at this hour," replied the anxious mother. "I thought he was with his uncles."

"They've not seen him all the evening," replied her husband.

"I don't think he can be gone on the water," said Lady Cankerfield; "we saw nothing of any other boat, did we, Mr. Welbyn?"

No reply was elicited, as Frank had left the room some minutes before.

"It will do him no harm," said Lady Caroline, "it is so very mild."

Neither Lord nor Lady Mildown were convinced on this point, and left the room.

Frank meanwhile had made his way to the lake, where he found the boatmen.

"Where is Mr. Blomberg?" he asked.

"Out a sculling," was the reply.

"How could you let him go out alone?"

"He never asked us; he got in the boat while we were in the boathouse, and pulled away; didn't he, Joe?"

"Why he knows next to nothing about a boat," said Frank.

"Oh yes he does," replied the man; "only he's kept quiet about it, and been out on the sly morning and evening."

"Is the large boat ready?" asked Frank.

"Yes, sir."

"Then let us go and look for him; for the water is so much higher to-night that he may have got drawn into the stream," observed Frank.

At that moment a faint and distant cry was heard for help, and instantly Frank sprang into a small boat, and was pulling vigorously to the other side of the lake, where the dangerous lasher was situated.

In a few minutes more an alarm had been raised, and a whole crowd was seen issuing from the house: visitors and servants hurrying to the water-side, Lady Mildown asking wildly for her son, and her wretched husband, struck dumb by grief and terror, following.

The Marchioness, though terribly frightened, was calm and self-possessed; she ordered the servants to bring lamps and candles, the moon having become obscured by clouds.

The large boat was about to be pushed off, containing the boatmen, who had been preparing to follow Frank.

"Hush!" exclaimed one, "he's coming."

The sound of oars being rapidly pulled was soon audible to all, and in a few moments the small boat shot alongside the large one, into which Frank leaped, and then, as he shouted "To the boathouse, get brandy and blankets!" he stepped on shore, bearing an apparently lifeless body from the boat.

All was confusion and everyone in the highest state of excitement, except Frank, who ordered

the doors of the boathouse to be closed, even against Lord Mildown, in a tone of such authority that he was at once obeyed.

With the assistance of the boatmen, aided by Johnson and Graves, Frank soon set about the work of resuscitation, in which he had been twice successful in similar emergencies at the University, and in a short time he became convinced his labour was not in vain; for within half an hour the rescued youth was in his bed, half-smothered in blankets, and taking a stiff glass of hot brandy-and-water, which he swallowed like a man, to the surprise of his father, who was speechless with a conflict of mingled feelings.

He shook hands with Frank repeatedly, but could say nothing. Lady Mildown fairly broke down, and, in an agony of tears, threw her arms round Frank's neck and kissed him, expressing her gratitude in most unmeasured terms; thereby raising herself very much in the estimation of Lady Caroline, though it is but justice to state that her conduct filled her sisters-in-law with intense disgust.

The following morning Blomberg was pronounced convalescent by the medical man, who, having been summoned over-night, had slept in the house at Lord Mildown's request, that nobleman having a vague notion as to the possibility of the water his son had imbibed settling on his brain or chest.

At lunch the young man appeared quite himself, and, to the intense disgust of Lady Caroline, gave Frank only a cool nod of recognition.

The Marchioness was pained at Blomberg's conduct, which she attributed to his father's influence.

No allusion was made to the affair of the preceding evening, and Frank, after lunch, returned to his rooms, as he had letters to write, and the post left early.

He was absorbed in his employment when a light tap at his door roused him, and great was his astonishment when, in answer to his "Come in," Blomberg entered the room, and holding out both his hands to grasp Frank's, exclaimed, in a tremulous

voice, "I say, look here, don't think me a brute; I am awfully obliged to you. Can you forgive me? Will you try to like me?"

Frank heartily pressed the proffered hands, as he replied, "Not another word. I do like you."

"Do you really?" replied Blomberg. "I'm so glad."

It was as though a spontaneous chord had been struck by both young men, and a feeling of affection at once took root in their hearts.

A long talk ensued, during which Blomberg, as he elicited more of Frank's characteristics, found more and more to admire in his newly-found friend.

It was with no small surprise, though with very great satisfaction, that the Marchioness saw the young men enter the drawing-room that same evening, evidently on the most cordial terms.

Lady Caroline, however, did not quite forgive Blomberg for his former want of cordiality in the expression of his gratitude to Frank, who was treated, very much to his discomfort, as a hero by all the rest of the party.

Both Lady Bolderstone and her sister thawed in manner, Lord Bolderstone offered him some pheasant-shooting later on in the autumn, and Lord Charles gave him a general invitation to dine with him some day during the winter at mess.

Everyone praised his singing, and when the ladies had retired for the night, he was cordially invited to take a weed in the billiard-room with Blomberg and his uncles.

During the week that ensued frequent were the excursions on the lake made by the whole party, Blomberg and Lord Charles taking turns at the oars with Frank. Lady Mildown made one on these occasions; and in fact the sojourn at Falklands, commenced so inauspiciously, shaped itself into a very agreeable form ere it concluded.

Mildown admonished his son not to over-rate Frank's services, but Blomberg at once silenced his father, and though by no means demonstrative, made no secret of his changed sentiments with regard to his preserver, from whom he became

inseparable during the remainder of Frank's visit; at the termination of which Blomberg accompanied him to the train, and at parting said:

"Now mind, old fellow, you write as soon as you get to your coach, and I shall come if he can have me, as I mean to go up to Cambridge next term. I've settled it all with my father."

With the heartiest possible shakes of the hand the young men parted, mutually delighted as to the change that had taken place in their sentiments with regard to each other, Frank having felt at first a sort of contempt for Blomberg, which that young man had reciprocated with aversion and distrust.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I'M sure, poor soul, as she didn't never die 'appy in 'er mind, with them boxes on 'er conshence, through not a-bein' able to make me understand, though I took and opened them over and over again, and took out everythink as she pinted to, as certingly is werry sing'ler as they should be like them things of that dear creetur's, and particklar the name Morgin, as I can't get out of my 'ead like. But, law, it's a reg'lar Providence if it should turn out so as we can prove it."

"There ain't nothink to be done but to advertise for 'er friends," replied Tozer; "that's what Frank 'ave gone with Mr. Holden about."

"I'm always in sich a twitter whenever the subjic turns up, in case as anythink should come

out as would 'urt that dear feller's feelin's over 'is parents. But, law, don't he look more 'andsome than ever, and got such a way with 'im, just like a lord mare; not as he's a bit 'orty, the same as young Welker, who give 'isself as many hairs 'cos 'is father were made a depity of 'is ward, and only in the tripe-and-trotter line, as give me a bad florin I can swear for change, out of 'arf-a-crown, over a cow 'eel, as I bought for to soften down that pea soup as I made out of the licker as I'd biled that leg of pork in, as were as salt as brine, as the sayin' is; but I'm glad as she were berried decent, and jest like that dear feller of ourn to come up a purpose to follow 'er, though he never said so, and 'er nothink to 'im in this world."

It was quite true that Frank had done so, for, on hearing that his pensioner was no more, he had somewhat hurried his departure from Falklands, thinking it due to Mr. Crocket's memory that he should attend the funeral, which had taken place the morning following his return to town.

Frank had listened with admirable patience the

evening before to Mrs. Tozer's account of the last moments of the departed, though the details were sometimes too realistic—not that Mrs. Tozer ever overstepped the bounds of propriety, and as she said, "always drawed a wail over anythink as were shockin'; but," as she added, "sayin' as parties' ends is peace is all rubbish, 'cos in course when they comes to their ends, they ain't got no chance of makin' no noise, not if they wanted to; not as she did, poor thing, but went off like the snuff of a candle, with a sigh, as 'ad swallered a cup of tea not ten minnits afore, as I give 'er with my own 'ands; but as to her things, there ain't nothink of no value in 'er boxes, as is warin' apparel, as they calls it, as is forrin-lookin' stuff; but all as puzzles me is them bits of old lace and silk as I found, the werry identical of them things as was in your mother's box, poor dear, and then this 'ere letter as is addressed to Mrs. Morgin, and signed inside 'Thomas Morgin,' as proves she was 'is wife, and 'ere's 'is fottygraft, as is sea-farin' all over."

"'Old on there, mother," exclaimed Tozer.

"Why shouldn't she 'ave been his mother, and that mayn't be his likeness?"

"Well, that might be, though I couldn't indemnify 'im on oath; but Mrs. Welbyn always told me as he were a weather-beaten man, past thirty, jest like this picter; and as to 'er, poor thing, she weren't over sixty, leastways under I should say, judgin' by 'er 'air and teeth, as was both false to the roots."

Frank said nothing; but taking possession of the fragments of silk and lace, he went to his room, and laid them in the drawer where he kept the few other relics of his mother already given him by Mrs. Tozer.

After attending the funeral, Frank had gone with Mr. Holden to his office, and there arranged the insertion of an advertisement in the papers for the deceased woman's relations, which was answered in a week by the appearance at the solicitor's office of Mrs. Melcombe, our old acquaintance.

The information which she could give respecting the deceased was meagre, and by no means

satisfactory. Her youthful career had been by no means creditable; she had become the wife of a soldier, the brother of Mrs. Melcombe's husband; had gone to Gibraltar with him, and had run away from there with a person named Morgan.

"That's the sea-farin' party," Mrs. Tozer observed, on hearing the report of the interview between Mr. Holden and Mrs. Melcombe.

"You might throw some light on it if you could find Morgan," observed Tozer.

"Yes," replied Frank, "I intend to advertise for him."

This was accordingly done; but though several captains and sailors of the name applied to Mr. Holden, none of them in any way corresponded to the individual required, nor made any claim to having been in any way connected with the late Mrs. Melcombe.

Shortly after these events Frank joined the reading-party in Devonshire, as agreed; and on his return to Cambridge found Blomberg, with whom he had corresponded regularly, in residence

at Trinity, at which college he had been entered some two years previously, though the anxiety of his parents on account of his health had prevented his going up till now.

It would be useless to pursue the academic career of the young men, whose friendship increased to a degree which can alone be attained at their time of life and under similar circumstances.

There was only one shade across the path of Blomberg, for he knew that, should he pursue his college career to the end, he would be deprived of Frank's society, as in little more than a year from their meeting at Falklands, Frank took his degree, and proposed, on leaving the University, to go into chambers, having entered himself as a student to the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple.

He strongly urged Blomberg to continue at Cambridge, and consented to make a long-vacation trip as his companion.

Lord and Lady Cankerfield had been much abroad again of late, and had been, during the

spring, passing several weeks at a German spa, in the hope that his lordship's health would be so generally benefited as to lead to the restoration of his eyesight, which had become somewhat improved.

He was not so blind as he had been, and could discern, by the aid of a powerful glass, small objects, writing, etc., when close to him.

His wife became more and more devoted to him, and was in fact absolutely essential, if not to his very existence, at any rate to his enjoyment of life.

She had a difficult game to play with regard to his family, whose bitter feelings towards her became daily more intense, in spite of all her good offices continually exercised on behalf of the several members of it.

Blomberg, although both peevish and selfish, was attached to her, and gladly accepted an invitation to join her and his grandfather at Homburg.

Mildown, of whom no notice was taken in the invitation, was much displeased, and opposed to his son going abroad, but was afraid of offending his father by a refusal.

Moreover, his wife, who had been invited with her son, settled the point, she having become paramount in the house.

So Mildown, whose temper by no means improved by the course of events, was silenced; in fact he was generally cowed. One thought disquieted him perpetually, the recollection of a certain letter addressed to him by Mr. Elvey at the time of his father's marriage with Miss Harcourt.

Our readers will remember the strong effect which the perusal of that letter had had on Lord Mildown, and how from that time he had dropped all active opposition to his stepmother, it being too late to oppose the matrimonial project.

It is now time that the contents of that letter should be made known to all interested in the story; they were as follows:

"My Lord,—With reference to the threat expressed by your lordship, regarding the lady whom your father has married, I think it right to state that I have in my possession documentary evidence

which would entirely set aside your claims as to being the heir to your father's title and estates. Should your lordship deem it desirable to adopt any course in opposition to your father's wishes, or should you in any way annoy, or cause to be annoyed, the lady your father has made his wife, I shall consider it my duty to produce the evidence to which I have alluded to above.

"I am, yours very respectfully,

"S. ELVEY."

What this evidence was Lord Mildown had in a subsequent conversation elicited from Mr. Elvey, who had produced letters and papers which so utterly paralysed the heir of Cankerfield that he submitted entirely to Mr. Elvey's dictation, and behaved outwardly with the utmost decorum to his new stepmother.

Mr. Elvey had, moreover, promised to destroy the papers, or bequeath them to Lord Mildown; and it was in order to discover whether he had

fulfilled that promise that Lord Mildown had, after Mr. Elvey's death, evinced so much anxiety to inspect the papers of the deceased, a design frustrated by the firmness of Frank and the intervention of Lady Cankerfield, who had been too sharp for him, having long before "her dear papa's death" been fully instructed as to the existence of these documents, though unaware of their contents, and warned above all things to rigorously exclude Lord Mildown from access to them, and therefore at once possessed herself of them, knowing them to be in the little box she had carried off from Mr. Elvey's chambers. It was shortly after her marriage that Mr. Elvey had told her of his possessing these precious documents, by means of which she could always have the upper hand of Lord Mildown.

The key to the box was that which he wore round his neck, of which, as we know, she had possessed herself. She had no idea as to the contents of the papers, but concluded from their being so carefully preserved that they would relate to

money matters, and thought it probable that her papa had advanced money to Lord Mildown in opposition to the Marquis's positive orders.

A little reflection, however, convinced her of the fallacy of this theory, and no sooner did she arrive at home with the box in question, than she at once proceeded to examine its contents.

Among them was a letter from the late Lord Mildown, addressed to Mr. Elvey, and dated from Paris.

In it the writer desired Mr. Elvey to acquaint the Marquis with his marriage with a young Sicilian lady of rank and fortune.

He also stated that he had embraced the Catholic faith, and added that he had made all necessary preliminary arrangements for a settlement of property on his future wife.

There was also a packet of letters from Mr. Crocket to Mr. Elvey, dated from Sicily, in which country that gentleman had remained some little time engaged in hunting up evidence as to the circumstances attending Lord Mildown's death.

It appeared also, from a statement in Mr. Elvey's writing, addressed to Mr. Crocket, that he had substantiated the fact of the marriage of the heir of Cankerfield, and also much information respecting the family of the lady whom, by the law of the country, he had made his wife.

It appeared also from these papers that the ill-fated couple, whose escape from the plague-stricken city we have recorded, had been picked up at sea by an English frigate, aboard which they had been taken to Messina, in the lazaretto of which port Lord Mildown had died, whilst the condition of his companion was apparently such as to render all communication with her impossible, and her recovery utterly hopeless.

Mr. Elvey added that, contrary to all expectations, she had rallied, was removed as soon as possible from the hospital, and after a time consigned to the care of some distant relations in Catania; from whose protection, however, she had subsequently removed herself; and Mr. Elvey, who had evidently carried on his inquiries with the

design of discovering the kind of connection Lord Mildown might have formed, and also finding out the subject of it, seemed at this point to have given up or lost the clue to the pursuit of his object; but a statement was added, to the effect that there was evidence of a marriage having been legally contracted between the parties.

All these particulars were correct. Mr. Elvey had indeed failed to encounter the unhappy Cattarina, who was for some weeks in a most precarious state, so much so as to render her removal from the lazaretto a matter of difficulty.

She was, however, claimed by some relations, and, after a sojourn in Messina, removed to Catania. So far Mr. Elvey had traced her, but on applying to those who had removed her from the lazaretto he was met with a total denial of the existence of any such person as he could describe; the fact being that Mr. Elvey's information was but scanty, and those of whom he made inquiry were, with the ingenuity peculiar to their race, easily able to baffle him.

CHAPTER XV.

As the design that Frank and Blomberg should pass the "Long" together would be frustrated in consequence of the Marquis and Marchioness having invited Lady Mildown and her son to join them, Blomberg only acquiesced in the arrangement on condition that Frank should be included in the invitation, for at any rate a part of the time. To this proposal the Marchioness readily acceded, and consequently Frank, in a few weeks after leaving Cambridge, joined the family circle at Homburg. The friendship existing between the young men was of no sentimental kind, but a firm healthy knitting together of two natures to a great degree akin, though in many points diverse.

During the sojourn at Homburg, everything tended to increase Frank's already great popularity with all the party. He was of much assistance to the Marquis in reading to him and writing for him during several hours of the day—a great relief to the duties of the Marchioness, who, though a devoted wife, was glad to have the care of her husband shared by one in whom she could repose confidence. The Marquis was always pleased to have Frank with him—in fact preferred him as a companion to his grandson, who, though he had become very dutifully attentive, had neither Frank's strength nor happy way in attending the infirm nobleman; to whose comfort did our hero become so indispensable in the course of a few weeks, that he was requested to accompany Blomberg, who was about to proceed with the Marquis and Marchioness to Naples, where, by the advice of his medical attendants, the Marquis was to pass the winter; Lady Mildown returning home to console her restless lord and master, who was constantly writing to urge her return and that of his son.

He was at first much opposed to the plan of his son's wintering abroad, but was silenced on that point by both maternal and medical authority; for Blomberg's health had failed much of late, and it was thought desirable by the doctors that he should avoid the inclement season in England, a view in which Lady Mildown concurred. Lord Mildown therefore withdrew his opposition, and the party went on—about the middle of September—by easy journeys, from Homburg to Naples. Frank accompanied his friends as far as Genoa, and thence returned to England with Blomberg, as both were anxious to keep the ensuing term at Cambridge, it being in fact the last during which Frank would reside. At the termination of it Blomberg at once set out for Naples; his friend remaining in London in order to keep his term at the Temple.

No sooner had he eaten the number of dinners necessary to the fulfilment of one step towards attaining the dignity of a "call," than he forthwith started for Italy, not without receiving much sound

advice and many cautions from Mrs. Tozer regarding the perils attendant on a lengthened sojourn in foreign parts, and especially did she warn him against quarrelling with "them Italians. For," said the good woman, "well I remembers hearing my dear mother talk about Naples, as is where Lord Nelson lost 'is eye, or 'is arm, or 'is 'art, through my mother's own aunt as did used to wash for Lady 'Amilton, as died in the Rules of the Bench, and serve 'er right; and it's all werry well a-talkin' about England's espectin' every man to do 'is dooty, but it wasn't 'is dooty to have a man 'ung like a dog from the yard-arm and throwed overboard; but come 'ome to 'em all through 'is body a-comin' up with the tide and a-lookin' at 'em after death, as was all out in a boat enjoyin' theirselves, as I've see a picter of 'im a-ritin' to that field-mate the day afore the battle, as would 'ave been better employed a-askin' forgiveness for sich a wicked act, as don't 'old with sich ways, as may be like all them Neros, as is all werry well in battle, as is fair fight, but no 'sassination ways for me."

Frank having assured his valued friend of his pacific dispositions towards all mankind, and of his entire concurrence with her views respecting assassination, took leave of her and her worthy spouse, both expressing much regret at his proposed absence from them at Christmas.

"Whatever you do," said Mrs. Tozer, "don't touch a bit of their plum-puddin', as will lay like lead in the constitution if not made proper, as no forriner never could make one, not even Merrykins, though they do blow so much over bein' Inglish by distraction, as is, we all knows, nothink but bunkem, as they calls it. Not but wot I will say as their turkeys is delicious; not as I 'olds with cranberry sauce, though not one to turn up my nose at anythink as is well meant."

Frank listened most deferentially, as he always did, to his kind friend's dissertations on men and manners, which would have extended to a general survey of European history, habits, and manners; but as time and trains wait for no man, except in Germany and the Isle of Wight, where stokers take

their own time, he was obliged to hurry away in order to leave by the mail for Paris. In the course of the journey his thoughts were much occupied with the hope of hearing news of Adèle, respecting whom he felt puzzled. She had not replied to his last letters in accordance with an announcement made to him some months ago, when Madame De Courcy wrote to say that it was her wish that the correspondence between him and her daughter should cease. The letter was written in an affectionate tone, but it was decidedly discouraging to a young and ardent admirer, who had been living on the hope of one day being the acknowledged suitor of the object of his boyish devotion. On reaching Paris he made his way at once to the environs of that city, to the residence of his dearly-valued friend, l'Abbé Pitrou, who received him literally with open arms. The joy of the meeting was, however, in a great measure damped when, in reply to Frank's inquiries respecting Adèle and her mother, the Abbé could only give vague and uncertain replies.

"It is a long time since I have seen them," said the old man.

"Where are they now?" inquired Frank.

"In Germany," was the reply.

"Whereabouts? I might pass through part of Germany on my way to Naples," said Frank. "I would make any journey that would insure to me the happiness of seeing them."

"Madame De Courcy will not permit me to give you their address," said the Abbé, smiling at the youth's impetuosity.

"She is very cruel!" exclaimed Frank; "but tell me, is Adèle well; is she single still?"

"I believe so," replied M. Pitrou; "at least her mother spoke of her as being well, happy, and very hard at work, when last she wrote."

Frank was silent for a minute or two; he felt annoyed and disappointed at hearing no news respecting the object of his affections from a quarter to which he had confidently looked for receiving the latest intelligence. He could only elicit that the Abbé was in the habit of corre-

sponding with Madame De Courcy, and that she had been the last to write.

"I cannot have offended her in any way," said Frank, in a desponding tone, "so am at a loss to imagine why she should have answered my last letter to Adèle, and have told me that she wished to put an end to our correspondence. I could not write again, as she stated she was leaving Paris, and did not give me any further address, so I could only send a few lines to the old one, where, no doubt, my earnest appeal to be allowed to continue to write is still lying unopened."

"My dear boy," said the Abbé, "Madame De Courcy did not wish to mar your prospects in life by burdening you with a mere childish attachment."

"Dear M. Pitrou, did I not tell you I loved Adèle in real earnest when she was a little girl?"

"Yes, yes, my dear; but you were only a boy."

"It is six years ago," exclaimed Frank, "and I am now a young man, with my heart still devoted to her."

"I am about to write to Madame De Courcy," said the Abbé.

"May I not send a few lines to Adèlê, under cover of your letter to her mother?"

"Assuredly, if you allow her mother to read it," was the reply.

"Of course she may," said Frank, as then and there he wrote the following:

"DEAREST ADÈLE,—Let me have one line to tell me that you are still the faithful love of your ever-loving FRANK. Address, with mamma's permission, Poste Restante, Naples."

After an interview of a few hours, Frank took his leave of the good Abbé, and went by the shortest route to Naples, where often did he inquire at the post-office, in the hope of finding a few lines from either Adèle or her mother, but no such communication awaited him. He was vexed, though not angry, and thought more and more of Adèle and of the chance of his falling in with her in Italy. The thought of possibly meeting her had

been more vividly present to his mind since he had been in Naples, for he remembered that both Naples and Sicily were the places mentioned by the Abbé as her probable whereabouts.

The early part of the winter was passed agreeably enough by our party, at Naples. The weather was exceptionally fine up to Christmas, affording opportunity of frequent visits to the delightful neighbourhood of that beautifully-situated city. At the beginning of the year, Frank and Blomberg arranged to pay a short visit to Sicily, a place which had especial attractions for Frank, as being not only the possible sojourn of Adèle, but also as being in some way connected with the mystery of his own birth and parentage. The steamer for Palermo, by which they had taken their berths, was advertised to leave early in the day; they were assured that this was an inaccuracy by the people at the hotel, under whose guidance our travellers did not get on board till quite late in the afternoon, which, however, proved to be fully in good time, for, from one cause and another,

the steamer was so long in getting under weigh that she did not quit the harbour, after many false starts, till quite the close of day.

Within a quarter of an hour of their departure, Frank was standing on the deck talking to Blomberg, when there came on board in the most helter-skelter style a body of men, some dozen or so in number, whose appearance at once bespoke them to be members of the Garibaldian army of deliverance. They were of all nationalities, many ragged, all dirty and noisy, but as they passed at once to the fore part of the vessel, there was no reason to apprehend that they would be any cause of annoyance to their fellow-passengers, in spite of their indulgence in loud talking and boisterous behaviour.

All went well till about ten o'clock, when the state of the weather having driven nearly all the first-class passengers below, the after-deck was quickly occupied by the fore-cabin passengers, who indulged in songs and loud cries of "*Viva l'Italia! Viva la Libertà!*" Several of them were intoxicated,

and making such an uproar as to call forth some remonstrance from one or two of the passengers still remaining on deck, and who appealed to the captain to maintain order. That functionary, however, was either afraid or disinclined to interfere. At length these brave fellows began to quarrel among themselves, and then ensued a scene that beggared description. Knives were drawn, heavy blows exchanged, and language used that fully proclaimed the utter lawlessness of the party.

Frank and his companion, having secured a cabin on deck, were partial witnesses of all that occurred; but being unwilling to risk any encounter with such ruffians, prudently withdrew to their shelter.

The weather was squally, and the sea decidedly rough, a state of things which materially affected Blomberg's comfort, but Frank bore up like an old salt. Having induced his companion to lie down, he gave himself up to indulging in thoughts of the past, and recollections of Adèle came crowding on his memory. He had hoped to have heard of or from

her during his stay in Naples, and his mind was fully occupied with her image.

"It is just possible," thought he, "that I may find her in Sicily, though it is but a vague chance that I have of doing so. What if she should be married, or even changed in her feelings towards me? I could not reasonably complain; she was a mere child, and, as they say, too young to know her own mind. Well, of course I cannot speak for her, but I am sure that I love her now more intensely than I ever did when we were like brother and sister. It seems as though it would be too great happiness for me to find her the same sweet loving girl she was when we used to read 'Paul and Virginia' together, and talk of love on an uninhabited island."

As Frank lay on his cot, half dozing and dreaming of the past and the future, the noise created on deck by the champions of liberty had, in a great measure, subsided, though from time to time fresh outbursts of singing and shouting broke through the increasing noise of the wind and

waters. Towards midnight there was silence for a short time among the revellers, succeeded by cries of "*Libertà!*" and denunciations against those opponents of perfect freedom of speech and action, the police of all nations. It was thus the night wore on, and Frank sat, awaiting with some anxiety the return of day and the arrival of the boat in Palermo; sleep, under the circumstances, being out of the question.

Time went tediously with our friends, and, as the sounds of singing and shouting grew fainter, Frank was thinking that he had a chance of getting a little rest, the more so as his companion, having ceased to suffer, had fallen asleep.

Just as he was dropping off into what would have doubtless proved a sound slumber, he was roused by a loud scream, evidently wrung in terror from a female in distress. At once rushing on deck, Frank made his way to the lower cabin, whence the scream and sound of voices proceeded, and to his surprise found it tenanted by the disorderly crowd from the deck, clamouring loudly for drink,

and about to make an inroad on the steward's pantry.

At the upper end of the cabin sat a lady, by no means young or lovely, and shrieking loudly for help; two ruffianly fellows, the worse for drink, having her in their grasp. In an instant Frank was by her side, and calling on the fellows to release her.

"We want not to hurt her," said one, in broken English; "only that she stop her noise. She is sea-sick, and must to lie down."

And as he spoke, he tossed the lady on to an upper sofa so roughly as to make her utter a piercing shriek. At that moment the door communicating with an adjoining cabin was thrown open, and Frank was petrified to see Adèle De Courcy, who, giving a slight cry indicative of delight and astonishment on recognising him, exclaimed, "Oh, save her from those men!"

Frank, who sprang towards her, replied, "Do not be afraid;" and then, turning to the men, he added in a loud tone, "these are soldiers, and mean no harm."

"I daresay not," said Adèle; "it is for the children I am anxious; this poor woman is their nurse. They are so terrified, thinking she is being murdered. Can you come back into our cabin?" she added, approaching the prostrate form of the nurse who had been the subject of such rough attentions from the military gentlemen.

"We do not mean harm to anyone; we came here for wine," said one of them in French. "I am a Pole, and would not hurt a woman. I meant no offence, nor did my comrade. We wished to help the lady."

"I was sure you did not," said Frank; "and now oblige the ladies by leaving here at once."

"We can do as we like about that," said the other fellow sulkily.

"If you want wine," said Frank, "apply to the steward."

"Will you drink with us and pay?" asked the man.

"Certainly not," replied Frank. "You have no claim on me."

"You are not half an Englishman, not to drink with the friends of liberty!"

Frank was about to reply, when a shout from the other end of the cabin of "*Viva la Libertà!*" intended to announce that a case of champagne had been discovered, removed any difficulty in Frank's way, for the marauders, beating a hasty retreat, left their fellow-passengers to rest. Frank had but a few moments' hurried conversation with Adèle, sufficiently long, however, to enable him to ascertain that she was governess in a German family resident in Messina, to which place she was now returning, after a long sojourn with her pupils in Bavaria.

"We shall meet in the morning," said Frank.

"I hope so," replied Adèle, and looked so tenderly at our hero as to at once reassure him as to the state of her feelings towards him. He pressed her hand fondly as she was hurrying back to the cabin, whither the heroine of the late adventure had preceded her, in a terrified condition, her sufferings

being much enhanced by a fresh accession of sea-sickness.

On their arrival at Palermo, the champions of liberty, more or less inebriated, indulging in shouts and singing, landed with perfect impunity, being evidently masters of the situation. Frank, in his anxiety to see Adèle, and introduce her to Blomberg, almost forgot their behaviour; but, to his intense disappointment, he was able only to have the shortest of interviews with her, as she was about to proceed by the same steamer with the family in which she was domiciled to Messina. She introduced Frank to a heavy-looking German and his wife, the heads of the family, who had come to Palermo to meet their children. They were very polite, and thanked Frank for his attention to their nurse, and expressed a hope of seeing him should he visit the place of their residence.

Tantalising as this short interview had been, it had sufficed not only to assure Frank that he still held his place in Adèle's heart, but also that she had received the few lines enclosed by him in the

good Abbé's letter, for she said, in answer to his inquiry as to her having received them, "Mamma has written to you."

"Has she, indeed!" exclaimed Frank. "Where did she address her letter?"

"To London," replied Adèle; "she thought you would have left Naples."

A glance sufficed to satisfy Frank that Madame De Courcy had withdrawn her opposition to their correspondence. "Dear Adèle," he said, "I will write to your mother at once. Where is she now?"

"In Rome," she replied. "Much out of health, I regret to say. I shall be going to her in a few months."

"May I send my letter to you, and will you forward it?" said Frank.

As she assented to this proposition she warmly returned the pressure of Frank's hand, and in a few minutes more he was making his way ashore.

"My dear Frank, what a charming girl! You would like to go on to Messina at once," said

Blomberg, when they were about to leave the steamer.

"I should, indeed," replied Frank; "but it is better as it is. Adèle will write to her mother, and by the time I see her she will have obtained her consent."

"Consent to what?" exclaimed Blomberg. "You don't mean to say you found time to make her an offer in the few minutes you were together?"

"There was no need of that," said Frank. "She knew already my feelings, so we settled it all in a few hasty words."

"The nature of which I will not ask," said Blomberg, in a kind tone, as he warmly grasped his companion's hand.

END OF VOL. II.

CHARLES DICKENS AND EVANS, CRYSTAL PALACE PRESS.

NEW NOVELS

By well-known Authors.

NOTICE.—Ready this day, at every Library in the United Kingdom,

NEW NOVEL BY EDWARD GARRETT.

The House by the Works.

By EDWARD GARRETT, Author of "The Capel Girls," "Occupations of a Retired Life," "Crooked Places," &c. 2 vols.

NEW SPORTING NOVEL.

Pigskin and Willow.

By BYRON WEBBER, late Editor of *The Sporting and Dramatic Newspaper*. 3 vols.

NEW NOVEL BY GEORGE W. GARRETT.

Maud Linden's Lovers.

By G. W. GARRETT, Author of "Squire Harrington's Secret," "The Belle of Belgravia," &c. 3 vols.

The Bachelor.

By ARTHUR MONTAGUE BROOKFIELD. 2 vols.

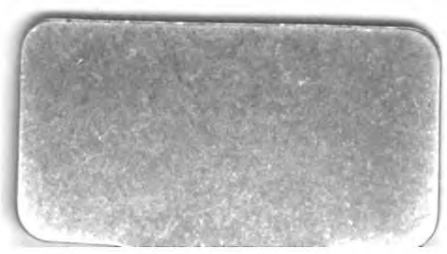
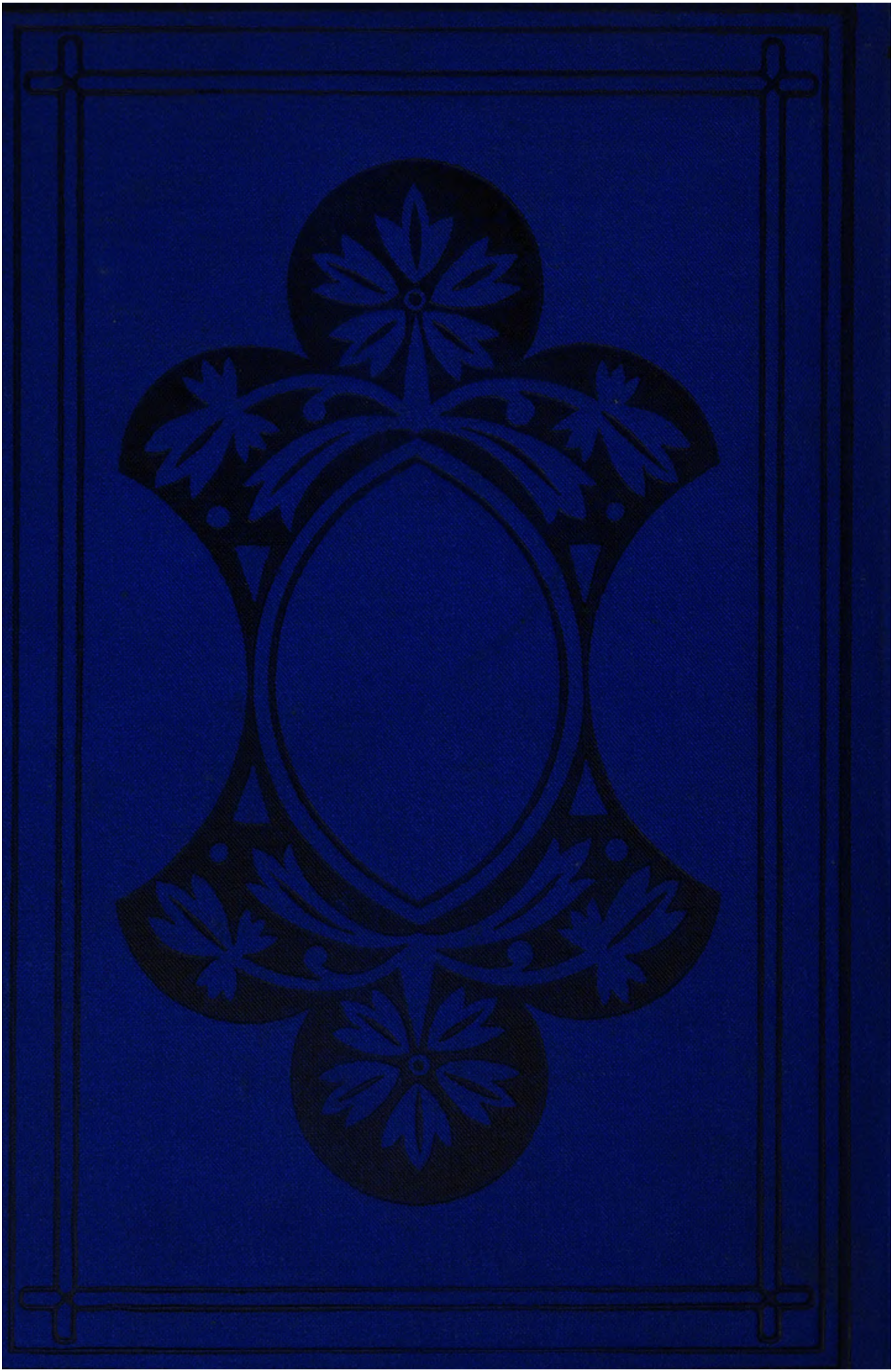
Tinsley Brothers, 8, Catherine Street, Strand.

TINSLEYS'

MAGAZINE.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

Entirely devoted to Light and Entertaining Literature, eminently suited for Family Reading,

---

The wearied man of business and the tired student can take up *Tinsleys'* and find genuine recreation.