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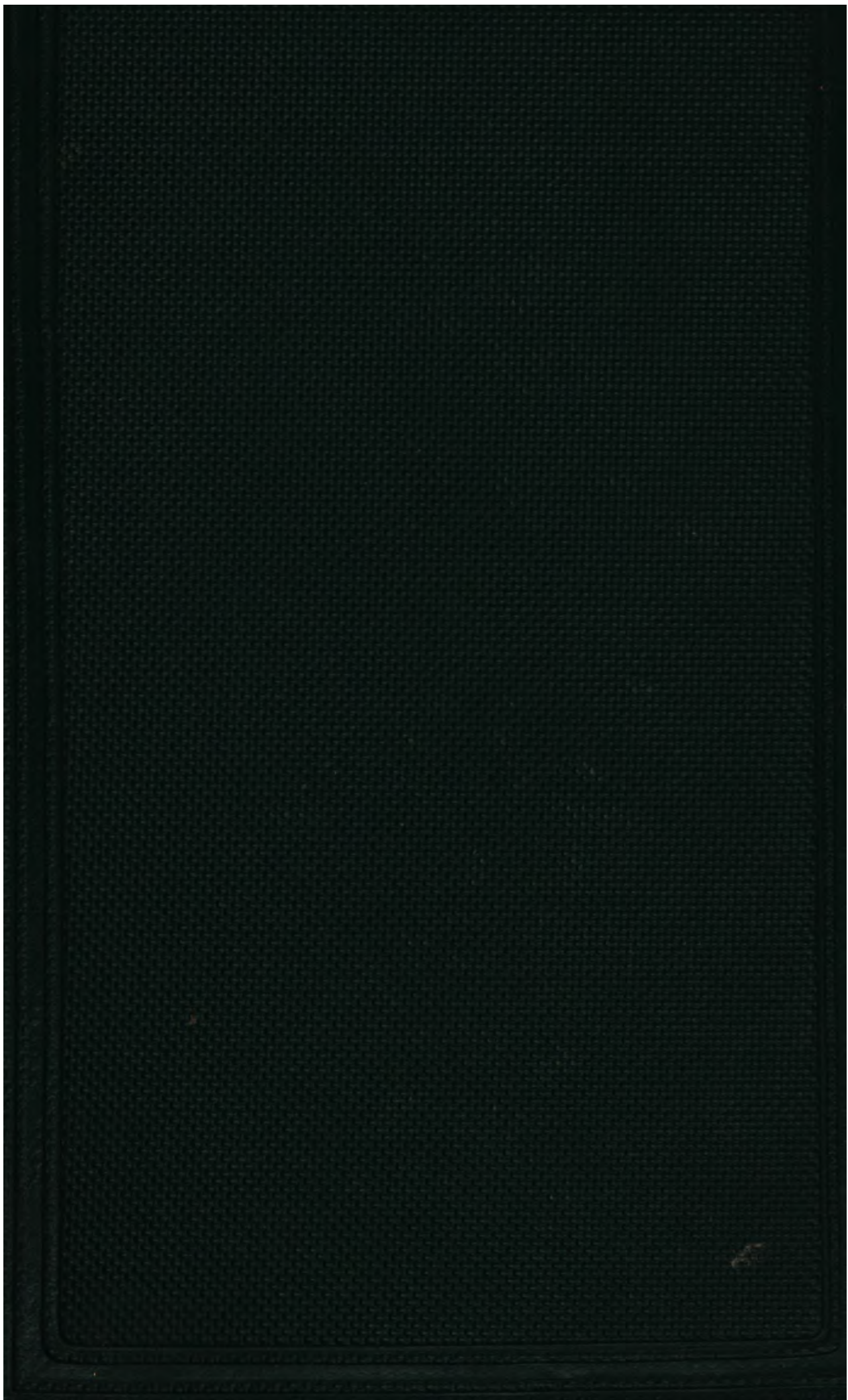
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UNCONVENTIONAL.

A Novel.

By THOMAS SUTTON, B.A.

EDITOR OF "PHOTOGRAPHIC NOTES," &c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



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SAMPSON LOW, SON, & MARSTON,
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1866.

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92
93
94
95
96
97
98
99
100



CONTENTS
OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

Chap.	Page
1. SHADOWS OF COMING EVENTS	1
2. GOSSIP AFTER HALL	6
3. A COLLEGE EXAMINATION	38
4. A RETURNED EMIGRANT	47
5. TWO NELLIES	59
6. OLD FRIENDS AGAIN	99
7. A PLOT	130
8. A DOVE FOR THE COLOMBIER	144
9. THE CAGE	170
10. A LEAP IN THE DARK	196
11. A BREAK-DOWN	222
12. THE RESCUE	235
13. DREGS OF A DRAUGHT	254
14. TELEGRAMS	290
15. A SICK ROOM	295
16. HOME AGAIN	308
17. A FATHER AND HIS CHILD	320
18. MATRIMONY OR MATHEMATICS	332
19. THE END	357



UNCONVENTIONAL.



CHAPTER 1.



SHADOWS OF COMING EVENTS.

THE following extracts from letters which passed between Mark and Angelina, towards the end of November, foreshadow coming events :—

From Angelina to Mark.

“ My pupil lent me, a few days ago, a love-story to read, which you have given her, and which has amused us a great deal. But she does not quite like the hero. She prefers dark, proud men ; while he is a fair, frank, merry creature, who only takes half a good degree,

and then goes sketching about Switzerland, and playing tunes upon the horn. Someone she knows is taller, and darker, and prouder than this Paul; and not to be satisfied with twentieth Wrangler, and third in the second class classics. Do you know such an one? More ambitious, and less tractable too, I fear? I hope you feel flattered by her remarks. The young ladies strike me as oddities; and Mary holds a dangerous theory about first impressions; do you not think so? Their first night's boating trip was decidedly incorrect, and is a blemish in the tale. They might have been introduced in some other way. The old people are the best; but the attempted suicide, and the rescue, at the end, are improbable and inartistic.

“But, don't suppose that I am writing to you about this story. That is only a ruse to get a few words smuggled into the envelope with Nelly's letter. To be more serious. The news has just reached me of an event which has occurred in the Antipodes—the wave from which is now rolling onwards towards this shore—upon which it will break in a few months, and involve yourself. That strange wave theory of light, which you once told us about, suggests

my simile. Be prepared. I see on the far horizon a dark cloud, but *tipped with light*; no larger yet than a man's hand, but which will spread,—and who knows what? Your place then must be by Nelly's side, and nowhere else. Events are moving on; and for my little pupil a great sorrow, and a great joy too, may be near at hand. *I* am the true prophetess. Believe in no one else. Take my hint, and be prepared. I cannot say more now, but I will keep you warned in time.

“Poor Nelly is very dull, and we are grieved to see it. Even your sister's visit only cheered her for a time. We never hear her merry laugh now; and her thoughts are often far away, while her eyes are upon her book. To my Aunt she is quite an altered girl, and gives no trouble now—being gentle and docile as a lamb. I tell her sometimes that she may see you back sooner than she thinks; but she only smiles sadly, for she seems to guess a reason why. Her poor Mamma is sinking, and she knows it. The state of things at the little cottage is getting very sad to see. It lies with yourself to come over when you choose. My Aunt will not object.”

Reply from Mark.

“Your note is most perplexing. I conjure you to say plainly, shall I throw it all up here, and return to Sark at once? Is that the hidden meaning of your words?”

Reply from Angelina.

“No! Do not come yet. All I meant was, that you must be prepared. You shall have due warning. Perhaps I was imprudent for saying what I did. The news I have heard may not affect *you* greatly after all. I alone know of it,—and you must not betray me.”

“What,” thought Mark, as he read those two letters for the twentieth time, “can the strange news be which she has heard? Some strange mystery must hang over her connexion with the Mays. But what? Is Mrs. May aware of it? I am to be prepared to give up Cambridge, and fly to Nelly’s side, before many months are passed,—but why? A great sorrow, and a great joy too, may be in store for *her*. The sorrow may be her mother’s death—but the joy, what can *that* be? A black cloud tipped

with light ! A wave from the Antipodes which is rolling on to break upon their shore ! Strange ! Inexplicable ! What can Angelina mean ?”

Thus he reasoned, but could gather no clue. He turned to his books again ; but much of the old interest in them was gone,—for it was not *them* that he had ever loved, but the high place to which they were to lead.

CHAPTER 2.

GOSSIP AFTER HALL.

ONE day, towards the end of the October term, Mark's "coach," and his coach's brother (a writer in one of the magazines), as well as two or three other men, dropped in upon him after Hall; so the cupboard in the bookcase, and the wine bin were rummaged for such good cheer as could be improvised on the spur of the moment, whilst the gyp was sent out for more. Presburg biscuits, with some walnuts, and a pound-cake were quickly produced by the host, but his wine he did not recommend;—

“The Port, gentlemen,” he said, “I can't vouch for, as I didn't make it myself; but the other wine I think I *can* warrant of the true

Hertfordshire growth—rhubarb or gooseberry—who cares now for the failure of the grape? There's some sparkling Moselle or Burgundy—call it which you like—but I don't guarantee any fellow against the effects of a Seidlitz just after Hall; and there's some sweet Frontignan, flavoured with sugar of lead. I found it in the bin, and bought it of the last fellow at a broker's valuation, as in duty bound, three shillings per dozen, bottles and all. Now buckle to, and make yourselves at home."

The room was soon filled with a cloud of tobacco smoke; and the guests drew round the fire, and did as they were told. A pale-faced youth of the party was congratulated by the "coach" on being about again, and explained how a fortnight's confinement to his bed had been occasioned by over-exerting himself in the boats.

The Author shook his head. "I met the other day in France," he said, "a poor cripple of five-and-twenty—one of eight who had pulled in the University race the year before—a complete wreck—complaint of the heart—a magnificent young fellow once—twelve stone thirteen, and pulled three—but now a mere

shadow. He told me that five more of the same crew were either ruptured, or suffering like himself. What insanity to be sure !”

“ Make it the subject of your next romance,” said Tomkins—he of the red comforter story, and the lion adventure in Algeria. “ I know a fine young fellow in this very room—and the pictures on the walls tell of his heart left behind somewhere, do they not?—a heart not diseased yet, but with all its valves and ventricles in good order. Well, our friend here—who came up to *read*, mind you—has just been fool enough—excuse me, Levisne, but I *will* say so—fool enough to join the boats. The insanity is just taking root and beginning to sprout in him. Now, there’s a capital hint for a sensation novel. Observe, please—everything goes well with him, until, in an evil hour, he comes up here, and takes to the boats. Then you introduce the boat fever, and all goes wrong. Degree blasted—health too—and his sweetheart, in disgust, marries a rival. Take the hint—and make the boating-mania the point of misery of the tale. It would do a deal of good. I wish the Oxford fellows would *always* win, until our men get heartily sick of it, and give it up.

The boating here has become a positive pest. Billy Whistle was quite right. When my sons come up I sha'n't allow them a penny for boats. Exercise is one thing—aye, and *hard* exercise too—I approve of it as much as any man, and know what it is—but the way they carry on the game here in the boats is another thing, quite. Now, don't cough me down, you Cannibals who cannot pull, because you know as well as I do that what I say is true."

"Suppose," said the Author, "you were to encourage novelties in the building of boats, propelled by various mechanical contrivances, and were to race with *them*—would not that please you all as well?"

"No, no. It would bore us to death," said the Cannibals, all speaking at once.

"But let me go on. No good comes of these races at present, you'll admit. Nobody learns anything from them. No new principle, of any practical use, is evoked. They are all labour thrown away. Thompson and Johnson row against each other, and Johnson wins. Well, what then? No good comes of it. One can make nothing of it, to be utilised in any way. The result isn't worth twopence to any body.

There is nothing proved by it. It is essentially unscientific of young fellows studying here, to waste an experiment like that, which is exhaustive of so much animal strength. Don't laugh, please, gentlemen Cannibals. I am not sermonizing. I am only telling you the truth, that the great world outside looks on these unmeaning boat races with contempt, as unworthy of yourselves. But the athletic sports, running, jumping, climbing, swimming, &c., are quite another thing, and much more sensible, every way, than pulling in an eight-oared outrigger boat. You learn something by them, which may be of the greatest practical use to you in life, whilst they exercise the muscles every bit as well as the boating folly."

His brother, the "coach," here slapped him on the shoulders, and put in a word for cannibalism and the canoes.

"Excuse me, Jack. You know nothing at all about the matter. Your wonderful models might do very well on the Serpentine, for London fellows of five-and-thirty, like yourself; but we Cantabs have got young blood in our veins. When we shut up our books, and rush out into the fresh air, we demand some strong animal

excitement—something to put both soul and body in a ferment. Then comes Hall—and you eat like tigers, and heap on more coals for the animal combustion—and then at it again after Chapel, with your brains. Depend upon it the boating does a vast deal of good. Work the machine hard every way; it's a fine thing. Let old Cambridge be the place for a grand spirt—a something to look back upon in after life. Why the fellows here would as soon think of nursing a girl's doll, as of racing with boats propelled by clockwork, or by steam."

"Hear, hear," from the Cannibals, one and all. "Bravo, 'coach'—you're a brick."

"Mayn't I say another word?" asked the Author, as he looked round upon the youths.

"Oh, go on," said his brother. "Roar away till you're black in the face. What do you suppose I brought you here for, Jack, except to set us all on the broad grin at your jolly innocence?"

"Go on, please," said Tomkins. "I'll back you, if you want help. They sha'n't catch *me* pulling in their blessed boats. I'm an old navy man, and rather too wide-awake for that."

“ Well then ; I’ll tell you what I was thinking about. There ought to be a grand Gymnasium in the University ; and prizes should be given—not to the *best* athlete, but to all those who come up to a certain standard. And the same system should pervade *all* branches of work at the University—that is to say, classify the men after an examination, without arranging them in nice order of merit, one above the other, as you do now. That system has, I think, the serious drawback of exciting emulation too much—which produces an exhaustive amount of work at first, and a complete breakdown afterwards. My crippled friend of the racing boat is an example of what I mean ; and the same insanity in mental work produces just similar results. No one who wants to rear a fine horse would think of overburdening him as a two-year old. How very few of the men who take high degrees up here do any good in after life. That, I think, proves the system to be wrong somewhere. The fault lies in putting too severe a strain upon the brain when young. You ruin it for the *man’s* work, which is to come after. I speak as a Londoner—a man of the great world—a looker on, and a speculator

upon what I see here. You are on your defence, gentlemen. What have you to say? But mind—I grant you the system does not *always* break down; there are *some* iron frames strong enough to bear it. But is it right to ruin fifty for the sake of one?"

"Yes, decidedly it is," said Levisne. "*Let* the weak ones go to the wall—that's just what we want to see. Weed them out, and the race will be improved. Better one great man, than fifty little ones, creeping on for ever in the old rut."

"That's one way of looking at it, certainly," replied the Author.

"But the men *are* classified now," said the 'coach,' "in the Poll degree. They have done away with the Captainship, and it works well. No doubt, something of the same kind might be done in the Honor Triposes, and the course of reading might be advantageously restricted to fewer subjects. There might be five classes of honours instead of three. For instance—first and second class Wranglers—first and second class Senior Ops,—and the Junior Ops; while competency in a certain number of subjects should entitle a man to rank in a certain class.

And I should like to see the style of papers altered a little—more easy riders set, and no *very* hard problems. The work now demanded of the youthful mind amongst the High Honour men is more severe even than that demanded of the body in the boat-races. The two systems are radically the same, and I almost agree with my brother in thinking them both carried to an extreme. I hate precocious children—I doubt your admirable Crichtons—I prefer a system which enables me to see your fine, strong, hard-headed man, in the prime of his life, at thirty.”

“Then you would have no Senior Wrangler?”

“No; but something of this sort instead. A prize which should be a test of that rarest of God’s gifts—and the most useful too—INVENTION. Every year I would propose for solution some practical mathematical problem which the world wants to see solved; and the man who solves it should be first prizeman of the year—the prize being open to all the world. The sciences of mechanics, optics, &c., would furnish many such problems. Take, for instance, the new art of Photography. When that came up, there were no lenses suitable for it; and they had to be

invented and perfected, mostly by practical men working by rule of thumb. Then came the Stereoscope, Binocular Vision, &c. Cambridge Mathematics has had very little to do with any of these inventions—or with improvements in the lenses of the microscope. The mathematics up here is not practical enough—it is too analytical—too much of playing with symbols—and too much cramming of bookwork. If the Cambridge men were often beaten in the contest for the prize I speak of, it would prove that their system is wrong—for the *Fellows* at least have leisure enough to go warmly into such a competition. To my mind, the system here does not work so well as it should. I should like to see more Cambridge men identified with grand discoveries and inventions which push the world along. I wish a Cambridge man had invented the Ophthalmoscope. I wish a Cambridge man had hit on the Spectrum Analysis—and fifty things besides that are going on about us—all very simple when found out.”

“Naval Architecture,” said Tomkins. “There’s a chance for some one, to reduce it to an exact science. But it’s true enough, we work hard, and cram for a place; and then disgorge, and

too often relapse into idleness afterwards. The interest of our studies ought to be kept up—amongst the Fellows, at least.”

“Do you consider an Oxford Degree better than a Cambridge one?” asked the Author.

An Oxford *Poll* Degree I consider better,” replied his brother, “because it does prove something, viz., a fair knowledge of Classics, up to prose composition in the Greek and Latin tongues; while a Cambridge *Poll* Degree proves nothing, except that a man has kept his terms. I look on a *Poll* Degree *here* as a disgrace—because it shows that a man has been so foolish and cowardly—or so innately stupid—as to throw a grand chance away. Men of this kind are positively mischievous in the world—and what is funny, they mostly go into the Church—which accounts for the dreadful sticks you see in the pulpit. But a high Cambridge Mathematical Honour is another thing quite—and far before anything that Oxford has to confer; while a first class Classical Degree at Cambridge is also a higher test of sound scholarship than an Oxford first class. Decidedly I put Cambridge first, for *both* kinds of Honour. The men work much harder here than they do at Oxford—and more

with reference to an ulterior object in life. An Oxford man has no conception of what the High Wranglers go through, and of the amount of valuable knowledge which their Degree involves. I don't mean knowledge of the old dusty past—but knowledge of the highest branch of science in its *present* advanced state. Classics are child's play in comparison with this. A school-girl might take an Oxford Honour; but it requires a *man's* intellect to grapple with Cambridge Mathematics."

"And yet," said one of the party, "a classic will laugh at you for making a false quantity, while he feels no humiliation himself in being proved guilty of false reasoning on a very simple point of mathematics."

"Exactly so," replied the other. "The classics are but poor mental training; and the too exclusive study of them engenders vanity, pedantry, and a host of silly little faults of character. Classics are *not* the *gentlemanly* study that some people, mostly ladies, suppose. They rather tend to make a man a bore and a cad; and as for training of the mind, Science, whether physical or abstract, is not only infinitely better, but most important knowledge is accumulated at

the same time. The class of men who stick to Classics only will soon cease to be considered well-educated and well-informed. Science has become now a necessary element of a liberal education. Without it, no man's opinion will be considered worth a dump. Schools and Colleges where this truth is ignored will soon be pushed out. The old system of education is doomed. It cannot stand against the enlightenment of the age. The world is progressive and utilitarian; while the lumber of the past is merely picturesque. There is so much that is new, and surprising, and important to learn respecting Nature's laws, that too much groping amongst old lumber is an abuse of God's best gifts—one's time and faculties."

"The whole system of school education wants reform, no doubt," said Tomkins. "Oral instruction, and amusing lectures ought to constitute one-third of it at least; and our glorious English language ought to be better taught; and I would have more done by emulation, and less by the cane and birch. Keep *them* for bad morals, and *shame* a lad out of being a dunce. As for the masters, those who can't teach without coercion have mistaken their calling, and should give up the attempt."

“The lower branches of education ought to be made compulsory on all,” said another. “Society can’t afford to pay for, and to be plagued with the vices which ignorance engenders, as a matter of course.”

“And the TASTE ought to be more cultivated than it is,” added Levisne. “I mean taste in everything about us; for good taste is not only more pleasing than bad,—it is positively cheaper. Besides, one man’s bad taste may be offensive to thousands. Society ought to see to this. We ought not to be plagued with dull blockheads, whose whole life is an exhibition of ugliness and dreariness. Tax them well, I say, and hunt them down.”

“Then you’d have to tax and hunt down that exquisite society of modistes and hair-dressers in Paris, who give laws to the fashionable world,” said the youngest of the party.

“Wouldn’t I just serve them out! But have you heard of the New Society (limited) for Reforms in Ladies’ Dress? Is not *that* an out-and-out idea? Give the darlings an art education—cultivate their tastes—don’t let them make such guys of themselves as they do now.”

At this interesting point in the conversation, the Chapel bell rang,—and half of the men hurried on their gowns, and made a bolt.

“You ’ll come back for coffee, and another jaw—won’t you?” said Mark.

“No—not to-night, old fellow. Bye-bye.”

Those who remained drew closer round the fire.

“What was discussed at the Union, last night?” asked one.

“The pros and cons of the American war,” said Tomkins.

“How there can be any pros in the matter, I can’t think,” said Mark. “*A* and *B* are partners in a concern. *B* wants to retire and set up for himself. *A* says, ‘No, you sha’n’t, I’ll cut your throat first.’ *B* says, ‘But I *will* secede’; and so at it they go. *A* sharpens his knife, and sticks it into the other. Now if *A* is not a murderer I don’t know what murder is. To me the question appears very simple. *A* is all for himself, and the Monroe doctrine; but *B* holds no such theory. *A* consults his own interests, and tries to bully *B* into them. So did Manning, when he knocked *his* victim on the head. I see no difference in *principle*

between the two—the act of Manning, and the act of the Federal Government in declaring war against the South. Both were acts of deliberate murder for a selfish purpose ; and they only differ in the magnitude of the scale. By that Great Being who made us, and who told us to love one another, will the blood of every murdered Southerner be required at the hands of that gigantic Cain, the Federal Government of the United States.”

“By Jove—you come out strong, Levisne,” said one of the party. “Suppose the Southern States had no right to secede—what then? Suppose Ireland, or India, should say, ‘we wish to govern ourselves,’ what then? Is England not to put them down?”

“That’s a mere quibble—whether the South had a right or not to secede. The question does not turn on any such nice point. There is enormous evil going on—and there *must* be enormous wrong somewhere. One-third of the population of a great country invaded by the rest, who are striving to put them down! What has quibbling to do with this? Who began this hateful war? for on *them* the whole blame of it must rest.”

“But suppose they succeed at last.”

“Success wouldn’t justify the means. Think of what war is—and then talk about success. I call it *failure*, at the *best*. The Federals are cursed by every honest man in the old world, and depend upon it they will be cursed. The fratricides will never prosper. They will have to lick the dust.”

“Strong language, my young friend,” said the Author. “That wouldn’t do for New York. I wish we had John Bright here, and a few more of the Peace Congress fellows, to defend the war—and Mrs. Beecher Stowe to do the sentimental over a million of slain whites—and her brother, the parson, to offer up a prayer. For what is a war without good stout praying, on *both* sides, for the Almighty’s help?”

“May I be permitted to say a word or two for the poor Federals?” asked a pale-faced youth.

“No, you mayn’t,” said Levisne. “We are all Southern sympathizers here. They are our own flesh and blood—gentlemen—aristocrats. The Federals are a low-lived money-grubbing set; with too much bounce by half. Chaw up Canada—rouse the French out of Mexico—

upset Napoleon the Third—invade Ireland—and God knows what other wonderful things they are not going to do by-and-bye. Let the French only meet them on a fair field, and with numbers equal on both sides—and see where the braggarts would soon be. A thorough good hiding would teach them better manners—and not before they want it.”

“Have you done?” said the youthful partisan of the North. “Well then; let me put in a word. I can show you another picture quite. Look at the United States as they were, before this rebellion broke out. A great free country governing itself, and shaming all the rotten old monarchies of Europe. Every man with a vote, and a voice in making the laws. Universal suffrage, and no hereditary legislators—any more than hereditary judges, or doctors, or engineers. Common sense that, surely. But it so happens that one-third of the citizens of this great country are slave-holders—growers of cotton by slave labour—while the other citizens who live in the colder regions have different interests, and decry slavery. Hence arises a difference and a difficulty; and the slave-holders, foreseeing that before very long they will be outvoted,

and slavery abolished, determine to secede in time, and form a separate government. That is to say, they are willing to destroy the unity of a great nation, in order that they may uphold their own infamous institution of Slavery; which they make no bones of defending on *principle*, as consistent with the usages of antiquity, the commands of God in Holy Writ, and the conditions essential to national greatness! In this state of affairs, the others say 'No, you shall *not* secede. We will treat you as rebels, and put you down. Our great country shall *not* be split up. We will fight to preserve its unity. We will fight for our national existence.' Now if these are really the circumstances of the case, and if I have stated them correctly, the invasion of the South by the Federals is surely justifiable. If war is a horror and a curse, let the curse rest on the heads of those who provoked it. The South are rebels; and rebels should be put down."

"No, no, no! The civil war was a blunder; which is even worse than a crime. What it has cost already would have been enough to purchase and liberate every slave three times over. A million white lives sacrificed—five

hundred millions of debt incurred—and an immensity of property destroyed—for what? To liberate, say, five million blacks before they were fit for freedom, and thereby render them ten times more wretched than they were before, under the worst of treatment. The thing is absurd. They should have let the Southerners go. Slavery would have died out of itself as soon as it ceased to pay. A republic with such an anomalous institution could not have existed long against the moral sense of the whole civilised world. An appeal to violence is always wrong; it is brutal—unworthy of christians—unworthy of men. The aggressors in any war are always wrong; quibbles should be settled by arbitration,—for a clear case of right could be established by an appeal to the moral feelings of mankind at large. War flows direct from the evil that is in our nature; and a result gained by violence is always an immensely costly one. War is the last resource of bad statesmanship. It will go on until this truth is universally admitted,—and then mankind will give it up, and look back upon the blood-stained history of their race as something too horrible for contemplation.”

“Suppose we change the subject,” said another disputant. “Let those who like republics go to America, and join one; and let them take their choice of either Continent—North or South—it matters not which. But God bless the Queen, say I; and I mean to hold fast by what succeeds in practice.”

“What is to be your next subject of debate at the Union?” asked the Author, who was only too glad of the hint to change a subject of which he was heartily sick and tired.

“Why rather an exciting one,” said his brother, the “coach.” “A question of the currency. One of our topping men here is to open the debate. He intends to prove that there is not enough of the current medium in circulation to meet the wants of society; and as a remedy for this astounding evil—the source of many other astounding evils—he proposes that the Government should issue seventy millions of £1 Exchequer Notes; but observe, not stamped with ‘I promise to pay one golden sovereign on demand,’ but simply ‘This is one pound; made legal tender by Act of Parliament.’”

“Well, that is a rum idea,” many of them exclaimed at once.

“How could such notes be put in circulation?” enquired Mark.

“Easily enough,” was the reply. “Pay the army and navy—government contractors—government officials—the interest of the national debt—and all that sort of thing with them; and accept them back again in payment of taxes. Only fancy what a relief it would be.”

“No more monetary panics, I suppose, after that?” said the Author. “The great capitalist non-plussed and circumvented—no more of the tyranny of gold—labour holds up its head—the condition of the working-class is ameliorated—violent extremes of riches and poverty done away—the world restored to a garden of delight. Do any of you gentlemen understand this subject? It is important; and I should like to hear it discussed. Why wouldn't counters, or paper, stamped by the State, do for money instead of gold? There is a mighty principle involved here. We are all deeply concerned in working it out. It is assuredly the great problem of the day.”

The young men looked at each other in blank amazement; and one of them laughed outright.

“What is to be the next subject of debate, after that?” enquired the Author, again changing the subject.

“Something more in *your* line,” said Mark. “They say, we mathematicians have no taste, and want a little enlightenment on matters of Art. It is proposed to discuss the Analogy between the Fine Arts. Do you believe there is such an analogy? Artists and art critics make a sad boggle of discussing questions of this sort. They seem to have no power of close reasoning. We mathematicians are to be invited to cut in, and try to help them.”

“Who can doubt the analogy between the Fine Arts?” said the Author. “Most decidedly there exists such an analogy; and you can often illustrate one Art by a reference to another.”

“The amount of Truth that is right and necessary in Art,” said Tomkins, “appears to be a vexed question. I have never seen it logically discussed. Will you kindly favour us with your views on the subject?”

“With pleasure; and take them for what they are worth. The question has always presented itself to me in this form. If you

want nothing but literal truth, and careful selection, the arts of photography and plaster casting would suffice, and the artist's occupation would be simply to select, and perform dexterous mechanical manipulations. A romance writer, for instance, would only have to select some sort of characters for his story, go amongst them, take down their conversations by shorthand, and illustrate his works by photographs. Now I don't mean to say that if the mechanical appliances for this sort of work were good, and the selection good also, that highly interesting results might not be obtained thereby—more interesting, possibly, than anything by pure Art that has ever been exhibited. The interest with which you read true accounts of wild and horrible adventures, affecting scenes, trials of celebrated criminals, atrocious murders, and so on, is greater than that with which you ever read a work of fiction, detailing similar imaginary scenes. I think I am right in saying that one would rather read a true and faithful account of the last days of Pompeii, by the pen of Macaulay, if such a thing were possible, than Bulwer's beautiful novel of the same."

“ Stop, please. Why then is History often so dull, and fiction so entertaining ? ” asked Levisne.

“ Because a mere catalogued record of leading facts does not make a picture,” was the reply. “ A work of fiction, related in the same style, would be still duller. Macaulay’s history is a picture. Had he written in his happiest style a graphic account of the last days of Pompeii, as the events really occurred ; and had he selected a happy set of characters, and photographs to illustrate them, his work would have been preferred by everyone to Bulwer Lytton’s novel. That is to say, if one were not permitted to read both, one would choose Macaulay. Am I right so far ? ”

“ We will assume it. Go on.”

“ But now comes another consideration. The interest with which you regard the plain statement of a fact, happily selected, is *not of the same kind* as the interest with which you regard a work of art proper. They cannot, strictly speaking, be compared, because they are not things of the *same kind*. The record of a fact is interesting chiefly because it is so much knowledge gained ; the work of art proper is

interesting because it is an intellectual product — a work of mind addressed to mind. If an artist attempts no more than could be done by a camera, or by plaster casting, aided by careful selection, he mistakes his vocation, for his work will not be a work of imagination. An artist must show invention in his work, or it ceases to be a work of art. His work must suggest noble or pleasing thoughts, which have been filtered through a human brain. Now I think it follows, from what I say, that the interest of a good novel is derivable from two sources: First, if the incidents are well and graphically told, they interest you for the same kind of reason as they would if the story were true. And secondly, in addition to that source of pleasure, is superadded the other, which is peculiar to a work of art, viz., that you perceive the imagination of the author appealing to your own. In addition to the semblance of reality in the incidents, there is superadded the psychological exhibition of an effort of the imagination, which is the peculiar province of art, and which art alone can exhibit. Have I made myself clear on a subject of some difficulty?"

"Yes—I think so," said Mark. "But let me

try to illustrate your meaning, so as to be sure I am right. A very rough sketch, highly suggestive, but extremely unfinished, may please you often more than a finished picture. That is because the artist's mind addresses your mind through the sketch, and suggests a beautiful idea. On the other hand, a highly-finished picture, which is merely a portrait of some uninteresting place, may *not* please you so much as the ideal sketch, because the selection of the view may not have been happy."

"Yes. But bear in mind that the kind of interest is different in the two cases. A work of art is bound to be psychological. It does not belong to art if it is not. The definition of ART includes that idea. Mere copying is not ART. There may be *taste* in selection, but not *Art*. A photograph may be a work of *taste*; but it can never be a work of *Art*."

"Stop—stop—stop," said Tomkins. "There is a fallacy in your reasoning, my friend. A photograph from a beautiful model, placed by the artist in some well-selected and expressive attitude, speaks to your mind. The artist's mind addresses your mind through his copy of

the model. Ergo, his photograph is a work of Art, and Photography a Fine Art.—Q.E.D.”

“Wait a bit. What does the photograph say, when it addresses your mind? Why, that it is a copy of a model, posed in a certain manner, in order to express a certain idea; and your mind is highly diverted by that mode of expressing the idea,—and you burst out laughing at the bungling attempt. Therefore photography does *not* suggest the idea intended, and is *not* a Fine Art.”

Their conversation was interrupted at this critical point for poor photography, by a man from the grocer, who lived opposite the porter's lodge, bringing in coffee and anchovy toast. Soon after this had been discussed, the little party broke up, and Mark put on his Academic toggery for a stroll with the Author, by starlight, towards his hotel.”

“Did you ever know, or meet, in early life, a literary man named May?” he enquired of his companion.

“May? Yes. Why do you ask?”

“Because I am most anxious to hear something about him? Did you happen to know him near, or about, the time of his death?”

“Ha! Why do you ask? The question sends a cold shiver through my frame.”

“Why so?”

“Because some strange mystery hangs over that event. I hardly know whether I ought to speak about it.”

“Oh, pray do. Tell me all you know. I do not ask out of idle curiosity; I am personally interested in the matter, and intensely anxious to learn all I can about it. Pray go on.”

“Well then; people said he was drowned; but I am much mistaken if I did not see him alive, and in the flesh, some three months after that supposed event. The adventure interested me greatly at the time; and I took infinite pains to solve the riddle, but could not.”

“Please go on. I have a strong personal interest in the family.”

“So my brother told me, now I come to think of it. You shall hear, then, what occurred. It was as nearly as possible three months after his reported death—which of course shocked us all greatly—and I had just landed at the pier at Gravesend, from a steamer, when, as certainly as I ever saw anything in this world, I saw May rush past me, and hurry down the steps towards

a number of men, who were plying with their sailing boats at the jetty. There happened at the time to be a fine ship passing down the river before a light wind, with one or two sails set, and towed by a steamer. The person I supposed to be May jumped into one of the boats, and the waterman rowed her swiftly towards the vessel; but his chance of reaching her seemed hopeless. I stood watching the affair in great excitement, when presently a stranger at my side said, "They'll never pick her up; how can they?" "Oh yes they will, Sir," replied a waterman, who overheard the remark. "Jim knows what he's about. The tug will cast her off at the bottom of the Hope, and then he'll hail her on her way back, and she'll turn round again, and follow the ship, and put the gen'l'man aboard. If he'll pay for it, that's easy enough. Jim can do it, if he'll only come down with the dibs." 'What's the name of the vessel, my good friend,' I asked, 'and where's she bound for?' 'The WIRWID, Sir, for Port Philip,' he replied. I waited a couple of hours on the pier, determined to hear the result. By-and-bye the boat came back without the passenger. 'Well, my man,' I asked, 'did you put your

gentleman aboard?' 'Oh, yes, Sir—it was all right. I got the tug to do it.' 'Did he tell you his name? Did you see it on his luggage? Think now. I'm most anxious to know.' 'Well, Sir, I did see some name painted on his box, for I'd been waiting ever so long, ready, before he came down, and tried to spell it over in case, but I can't tell you what it was—for I'm no great scholar at that kind o' work.' Was it MAY, do you think? Were these the letters, MAY?' 'No, Sir, that I'm sure it wasn't. It was a word of twice as many letters as that.' So this man, so strangely resembling Mr. May, was off in the VIVID, for Port Philip! But one more chance remained for me to learn his name, and I called on the owner of the vessel, and saw the passenger list. The name of MAY was not amongst them. If that apparition were he, in truth, he must have changed his name and left the country. Still, I felt convinced that it *was*—for he was not a man to be mistaken—tall and strikingly handsome—with a noble beard. But his face that day wore a jaded, agonized look, which I shall never forget. Once his eye met mine, and in haste he turned away—I am certain of it. And now comes

some corroborative evidence. A mutual friend of ours saw him that very same day, a few hours before I did, hail a cab in Oxford street, and get in. Whether he is alive or dead now, who can say? for this was some ten or eleven years ago; but the story of his being drowned cannot be true. I kept my own counsel, and there the matter dropped. It was no affair of mine."

Such was the Author's strange story. They parted at the door of the hotel; and Mark returned to his own rooms, deep in thought.

CHAPTER 3.

A COLLEGE EXAMINATION.

WEEKS and months rolled on again; and the trees in the College grounds were in full leaf, and the nightingales' high notes were heard, and the freshmen at all the Colleges were in for their Examinations for Scholarships,—for it was the end of the May term, and in another week the long vacation would commence. Talking of nightingales—they literally swarm at this season in the old trees about Cambridge, and their voices are never mute, by night or by day. “Why, Mrs. Brown,” said the writer of this tale to his bed-maker, one fine morning in May, “you look pale and ill; what is the matter with you?” “Oh, Sir,” was the reply,

“them nasty nightingales has kept me awake all night!”

Mark Levisne had kept steadily at work during the eight months which had now expired of his Cambridge course; and at length the tussle had come for the first place amongst those men of his year at Caius, who were reading for mathematical honours. Out of thirty-three who had entered with him, five were talked of as likely to be amongst the Wranglers, and four or five more amongst the Senior Ops; so that it was a good year for a small College. It was to be a race between Levisne and Tomkins for the first place—the latter being supposed to be the best man in his Euclid, and good at deductions—while the former was thought the stronger in his analytical subjects, and conic section problems. Bets were made, and the odds were five to four on Levisne. Neither he nor his competitor had done much in the Classical Examination in March, Levisne having been fifth, and Tomkins thirteenth. The Examination was to last two days, and the men were to have two papers a day. Euclid and Algebra on the first day; Problems, with Trigonometry and Conic Sections on the second.

On the first day Levisne floored both papers, and got out a deduction which Tomkins missed—a clever one too. In his Algebra paper he also polished off all the riders—one of which was a very queer series to sum—and Tomkins did not sum it. On the first day, therefore, Levisne was evidently a-head, and odds rose to three to one upon him. After Hall he went to a man's rooms to wine, and throw it all off his mind; whilst Tomkins, rather disgusted with himself, spent the whole evening looking over his Trigonometry and Conics, and was at it again at four the next morning, while Levisne was fast asleep until seven—a much more politic proceeding. In the problem paper on the morning of the second day, Levisne, who went in as fresh as a fluke, and with all the vivacity and pluck of two and twenty against one and thirty, made three or four splendid hits, and did nine out of sixteen of the problems set; whilst his antagonist, worn out with anxiety, and his four hours previous work before breakfast, did only four of them. After they came out of Hall from this paper, a little knot of men followed Mark into his room, in order to hear the news; but as he entered in the midst of them, flushed and

trembling with excitement, his bed-maker handed him a telegraphic message, which had just arrived, and was to the following effect :—

“ Come to me at once, Levisne, without a moment’s delay, on board the EIONE, at Southampton Pier. Start by the first train.

“ XENOSTHES.”

“ What a sell !” said poor Mark, as he put down the telegram. “ I shall lose my best paper now, this afternoon. What a floorer ! Isn’t it infernal ? I *must* go, and I shall be nowhere now. D—n.”

“ Oh, humbug,” said one of his friends, who had betted largely on him. “ There is a train at five, that will do surely. There can’t be such an infernal hurry about it that you must lose your best paper, man. Have your lunch now,—then run to the Tutor and get your Exeat,—go into the next paper,—and cut off the instant it’s done. Then you’ll save the five o’clock train from Cambridge, and the half-past eight mail from Waterloo, and be on board the yacht by twelve. Surely that will do.”

“ No—no—it’s all up now. I am under too much obligation to the confounded fellow to cry

off. I have humbugged him twice. I must go. I must indeed."

So saying, he took a few mouthsfull of lunch,—packed up a portmanteau,—got his Exeat from the Tutor, and was off by two.

That telegram was the first message he had received from Xenosthes since they parted in the Solent, nearly a year before. Since then no one in England had heard any tidings of him, except that the EIONE had been reported once as having arrived at Teneriffe, and once at the Island of St. Vincent in the West Indies. The SWALLOW had also been reported, as having arrived before the other at both places. According to the dates, both yachts must have spent some weeks amongst the Islands on this side of the Atlantic, probably in order to avoid the hurricanes during the autumn months in the tropics.

With respect to the Marquis and Giovanna, no news had turned up of their movements, and the probability seemed to be that they had both escaped together to the Continent immediately after the fire. Mark thought it quite certain that the Italian girl was *not* on board the SWALLOW, and that his friend had gone on a fool's errand in chase of her. But what did

that matter? His vindictive feelings would have time to cool, and the trip would do him good. He would be back some day—red hot possibly on a new hobby. As for the ruins of the old house—the weeds were shooting up amongst them, and the martens were nestling amidst the blackened bricks, while the grounds were scarcely a greater desert than they were before. Julius Storr had left Grantchester for home, as soon as he could be safely removed thither; and Bertie had gone out in the Poll, and was reading for his *voluntary* Theological Examination, which he would be *compelled* to pass the next October. Mark had seldom met him, for they belonged to a different College, and a different set.

With respect to the doings of our friends in Sark. During the winter months Mrs. May had rallied a good deal, but as the spring advanced her disease seemed to be gaining ground again. It was therefore arranged that Dr. Brownlow was to take her to Paris, accompanied by Nelly, in order that she might consult his friend; and they had started rather suddenly about a week before the College Mathematical Examinations came on. Their original plan was, that as soon

as the May term was over, Levisne was to join them in Sark, and go with them to Paris, and spend the vacation with them wherever they might happen to be ; for he had received the promised warning from Angelina to keep close to his Nelly's side now, and shape his future course by what might occur ; but Dr. Brownlow had been suddenly compelled to start a fortnight sooner than he intended, and thus a new arrangement had been made for Mark to join them in Paris as soon as he could, at the address which they were to forward to him the instant they were settled in comfortable lodgings. The two lovers had corresponded regularly, you may be sure, during the months which had elapsed since they parted, and the thoughts of soon meeting again was an intense delight to both. The chagrin, therefore, which Mark felt at receiving a telegram from Xenosthes, at that precise nick of time, can be easily conceived. Nor were his disappointment and annoyance in any way diminished by the postman putting into his hand a letter from his dark friend, as he passed the porter's lodge on his way to the train, to the effect that his services would be required for the *next three*

weeks! To lose his last Examination Paper, and his chance of the first place in the College, as well as the speedy meeting with his “Nelly-bird,” on which he had so long and so fondly counted, were “disgusting” in the extreme; and he inwardly anathematized his hard fate, and consigned the whole Hebrew race to perdition, with all his might. But go he must, of course. He was under a deep obligation to his friend, and it would be a scurvy and contemptible thing to refuse a favour demanded in such pressing terms. There was no time to write to Nelly—in fact he did not know her address; neither would she know where to write to him; so that it was altogether a mess.

Tomkins did better in his last paper, and pulled up; but a man named Smith, who had kept his powers somewhat dark, and was thought a rowing blade, but who had read on the sly, surprised them all. When the list was published in the lobby outside the Hall, three days after poor Mark had left, the names ran thus:—

1. Levisne }
Smith }
2. Tomkins,
&c.

So Levisne was bracketted first, and beat Tomkins, after all. The moral of which is, never to read during an Examination, but to go into it fresh and plucky. Also, to keep your eye on some of the rowing blades—for they are artful dodgers, and read on the sly; besides which, they have often an immensity of cleverness and vital force, and go up well-prepared from the public schools. Many a rowing man, therefore, does well his first year, if only in virtue of the momentum which he has gained at school, and by making a sort of spree of the Examination. Remember also, that if you can bowl over a clever problem or two, it counts immensely; and the Examiners put you higher in the list for it than they would do if only marks determined your place. Levisne was evidently the best man of the year; and they bracketted him first, altho' he had lost one telling paper. It was some weeks, however, before the poor fellow heard the welcome news.

CHAPTER 4.

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A RETURNED EMIGRANT.

THE scene of our story must now be shifted to the gay city of Paris, at the end of that same month of May,—the month in which Parisians begin to put on their light summer finery, and turn out of doors into the Boulevards and the Champs Elysées, to sip syrup, ices, sorbets and bière gazeuse, at little round enamelled iron tables in the open air; or play at dominoes, or ride on cork-horses, or see mermaids with two tails, or whirl up and down in swings. Such are a Frenchman's ideas of pleasure; and he sneers at his neighbours across the Channel, and calls them *tristes*, because such are not always their ideas of pleasure too.

It was the last day of May, in the year subsequent to that in which our story opened; and the population of the gayest city in the world had just been increased by the arrival of an English traveller from the Antipodes, who put up at one of those moderate but comfortable hotels, known to a quiet class of visitors to Paris as the Hotel de N——, in the Rue St. Honoré.

The new arrival was one of those grand, artistic-looking men, whom children, as well as romantic young ladies who have but a slender acquaintance with the inartistic facts of life, set down as types of great people. It may happen sometimes that this aristocratic personal presentment is borne out by a corresponding mental calibre of the individual possessing it,—and it ought always to be so, according to some theories of art,—but at other times, and I fear much oftener, the converse is the fact. In the present case, however, the manner and bearing of the handsome stranger did not in any respect belie his prepossessing exterior; and the most critical judge would have pronounced him a gentleman in his own right. In person he was tall and strongly built; and his counte-

nance exhibited intellect and self-reliance. His age was of that uncertain kind in which the face of a man apparently not much over forty is contradicted in its indications of the prime of life by hair prematurely white ; besides which, it was a face deeply bronzed by exposure to the weather. His features were bold and expressive—his forehead broad and massive—his eyes grey—his nose Roman—and his mouth and chin decorated with a magnificent white silky beard ; his hair also was thick, white, and curly ; and there were no signs of even incipient baldness. His gait was that of a man in robust health and vigour ; but the least perceptible bow in the legs told plainly of a life which had been spent in the saddle. Nevertheless, he walked with the proud step of an English gentleman ; a step which you may recognize at once—whether on the glaciers of Switzerland, the arena of the Coliseum, or the gay Boulevards of Paris—from its dignity, without either arrogance or conceit. Quiet, good-humoured, unassuming, but entirely self-possessed, was the manner of this handsome stranger, as he entered the *salle-à-manger* of the Hotel in question, where the guests had already seated themselves at the

table d'hôte; and his appearance did not fail to attract general attention.

The Hotel de N — is a well-known resort of English tourists, and the conversation amongst them at the dinner table soon became animated and general; the topics discussed relating chiefly to travel and adventure, the rearing of horses, novelties in farming, colonization, gold digging, the cultivation of flax in New Zealand, explorations in Central Australia, &c.; while from these topics it finally diverged into a discussion, with anecdotes relating to Art and Literature. On all these matters the stranger seemed perfectly well-informed, and spoke with that confident knowledge which is not derived from books or newspapers, but from actual personal experience. Without an effort apparently, he soon became the leader of the conversation; and there was so much natural politeness about him, and at the same time so much quaint humour, graphic detail, and interesting information in his remarks, that long after the cloth was removed he retained a knot of fascinated listeners around him.

It appeared that he had just returned from Australia, where he had occupied a farm on the banks of the Murray for about ten years, with

a fair amount of success. Many were the amusing stories he told of colonial life. He had galloped after stock over the vast park-like prairies—he had driven bullock drays—shorn sheep—run down on foot, and stuck with his bowie-knife, wild boars in full career—and terrified into submission, by the resounding crack of his long-thonged and short-handled stock-whip the most ferocious amongst his wild herds. He had eaten of the opossum and the kangaroo—he had felled the hard gum tree, and had put up with his own hands log huts and stockades—and he had been to Ballarat in the heat of the gold-digging fever, and had contributed descriptive articles and sketches of the scene to the Illustrated press. After ten years spent in the wilds of Australia, he was now on his return to the dear old country, having visited, on his way home, the tropical scenery of Ceylon, the antique ruins of Egypt, the mosques and minarets of the East, the classical remains of Greece and Rome, and the stupendous mountain passes of Switzerland. And then the conversation turned into another channel, in which he was again quite as much at home as before. He had mixed intimately in early life with

authors, artists, actors, and odd people of all sorts ; and he poured forth such a fund of humorous and entertaining anecdotes concerning the celebrities of that period, as kept the ear of every listener on the *qui vive*, and frequently provoked his merry smile, or a burst of hearty laughter. It was a real event to his hearers to meet this charming stranger, who seemed to know everything, to have seen everything, to remember everything, and to be able to reproduce it all for their amusement with so much good nature, modesty, pleasant humour, and graphic truth. The Opera Comique, the Hippodrome, the Champs Elysées, were forgotten by the guests that night ; and the evening was wound up by the new comer producing, for their inspection, a large portfolio of photographs which he had collected on his travels, as well as a series of water-colour drawings which he had himself taken of Australian scenery, and the interesting places visited on his overland route from Ceylon. As these pictures were being turned over and passed from hand to hand, a little girl, the daughter of one of the ladies present, came nestling up to the stranger's side, and was taken at once upon his knee,—

while a boy, still younger, was permitted to mount upon his back, and look at the pictures over his shoulder. That weather-beaten grey-headed man, who had passed through so many strange scenes, had a passion for all young things, and loved them dearly. There was a natural affinity between him and them, and the youngsters found it out instinctively, and were irresistibly drawn towards him.

“Have you any of those small fry yourself, Sir?” asked one of the ladies, with bewitching simplicity.

At that unlucky question, thus abruptly put, the colour deepened perceptibly on the stranger’s cheek, and his manner showed evident embarrassment.

“I had a daughter once,” he replied, “the same age as this little pet upon my knee, and she was beautiful as a bird of paradise; but it is eleven years since I saw her, and we should pass each other now if we met. I always carry about with me a little portrait of what she was then; and I bless the new art of photography whenever I look at it, for that portrait has been my chief solace and support during years of separa-

tion from her, the agony of which no soul can tell."

As he said this, with a sigh, he handed to the lady a case containing a Daguerrotype portrait of a lovely little girl about four years of age. It was passed round and much admired; but no more questions were put about her, as a cloud seemed to have settled upon the father's brow. He excused himself, shortly after returning the case to his pocket, for rather abruptly leaving the rest of the party to look over his pictures at their leisure, by saying that a chord of feeling had been unwittingly struck, which vibrated with morbid acuteness, and that they must kindly allow him to leave them for a solitary stroll, in order to recover his composure.

Slowly the returned emigrant threaded his way through the crowd of pleasure seekers in the Rue St. Honoré, the Rue de Rivoli, and the Champs Elysées, to the Arc de Triomphe; thence over the Pont des Invalides, and along the Quais on the south of the river, to the Pont Neuf. There he pondered awhile, and then continued his walk; but after crossing the bridge, instead of turning to the left towards his hotel he turned to the right, and once more followed the upward

course of the stream. As he passed along the Quai de la Megisserie the fair face of a young English girl, looking out of one of the third floor windows, attracted his attention. It was a bright moonlight night, and she was watching intently the scene below. The ways of a great city were evidently new to her, and she was enjoying the novelty of the view. It was certain, too, that she was an English girl, for our fair countrywomen are scarcely to be mistaken at any age for French. Their superior beauty, their modest reserve, and the graceful simplicity of their dress, when they do not copy ugly foreign fashions, but trust to their own good taste, distinguish them from Frenchwomen, as much as the bearing and manner of an English gentleman distinguish him. Think it not extraordinary then, if I say that this vision of youthful beauty from his own land, seen thus in the silvery moonlight, arrested the attention of a returned emigrant from the Australian wilds, and caused him to stop suddenly in his stroll, take up a concealed post of observation, and feast his artist's eye upon a study of rare attractiveness. But apart from the mere beauty of the girl, the gracefulness of her attitude, and the poetry

of the light and the hour, there were indefinable thoughts which the sight of her aroused in the stranger's mind; and a then unsuspected chord of affinity between himself and her was made to vibrate, which bound him to the spot, and compelled him to watch her motions with a pleasing but intense interest. She might be, as far as he could judge, about sixteen, and therefore the same age then as his own daughter, on whose fond image his thoughts had been fixed for the previous hour. Would *she*, he thought, resemble that lovely vision at the window, and be as fair, as innocent, and as enthusiastic? Why not? Possibly some faint resemblance between the features of that young English girl and his own little darling's, when he last saw her, might have suggested the idea. At any rate he lingered on the spot, and could have continued to feast his eyes upon that lovely face for ever; when suddenly some disagreeable object in the street immediately beneath her window seemed to attract the young girl's attention, and she retired within, closed the folding sash hastily, and drawing a curtain before it.

There had, in fact, been *two* persons watching her, but unobserved by each other. For five

minutes, or more, a vulgar-looking dark young man, a sort of half-caste between Frenchman and Malay, had stood with folded arms, in the street below, immediately opposite to the young lady, and with his dark eyes fixed impudently upon her. This young man was elaborately dressed in the very pink of the fashion, and bedizened with a profusion of jewellery. Although quite three or four and twenty, his moustache had only just begun to sprout, and form a dark down upon his upper lip,—while his smooth effeminate neck was long and bare, and his coarse, greasy-black hair collected into a sort of bunch behind. But in spite of all that tailor or coiffure could do to make the odious creature presentable, there was a disgusting impudence in his manner which betrayed his innate vulgarity and low birth. The young lady at the window had met him accidentally a day or two before at a photographic studio, and he had followed her home, and haunted her ever since. The sight of the detestable creature, planting himself directly in front of her window, with folded arms and impudent stare, drove her in at once, and compelled her to draw the curtain upon him in disgust.

But this bit of by-play was lost upon the stranger from the Antipodes. All he knew was that for some reason or other the fair vision had suddenly withdrawn herself from his gaze. Why then did he continue to stand watching there, still lost in reverie? He aroused himself from his train of thought, took note of the number of the house, and the name of the Quay, and returned at once to his hotel. The half-caste also took himself off, and retired to his own den, wherever that might be.

CHAPTER 5.

TWO NELLIES.

THE next morning, when the returned emigrant joined the party at breakfast in the *salle-à-manger*, he was received with a gracious smile from all; and no sooner had he seated himself amongst them than the juveniles crept up to his side again, and received their full share of recognition also. From a dish before him he took a green sweetmeat, coloured with arsenite of copper, and popped it into the mouth of the little girl; then a lump of soft yellow cake coloured with chromate of lead, and popped it into the mouth of the elder boy; and lastly a lump of chocolate, not poisoned at all, which he popped into the mouth of the smallest urchin.

The attention was highly gratifying to their parents, and not less so to the children themselves. The poison administered in the lollypop, and the cake, did not exceed in quantity the one-twentieth part of a fatal dose, and it only made the poor little innocents sick and fretful in the afternoon. The colours looked pretty, and there was no very great harm done. Nevertheless it might be well for Governments to revive some of the old forms of torture and execution, to meet the especial case of the manufacturers of such articles.

Having thus innocently poisoned the children, the stranger looked round the table upon the guests, with a humorous twinkle of his grey eyes, which seemed to challenge some whimsical remark that might start the conversation. The cloud which had gathered on his brow the previous night was gone, and he seemed to be in high good humour, and equal to any demand that might be made upon him for fun and pleasantry.

“You look pale and ill, Sir, this morning,” said a young Cantab, chaffingly. He had been rusticated, and was keeping his May term in Paris, instead of at the University.

“Always the effects of the first night in Paris, upon a new comer,” added an older guest, following up the joke.

“Who can resist those syrens at the Cafés Chantants?” added a third.

“Or the nymphs at the Salon de Terpsichorée?” added a fourth.

“After ten years in the bush,” said a fifth.

The good-humoured smile on the stranger’s face grew broader at each successive jest in allusion to his stroll of the previous night. He shook his head with mock gravity, and replied to the banterers

“Nymphs and syrens indeed! What has an old Polar bear like me to do with Terpsichore and the Cafés Chantants? And as for my looking pale and ill—why I don’t think I ever felt better in my life.”

“I wish *I* could feel well and lively in the morning,” said the second speaker. “Come now, tell us how you managed it. We are all dying to hear your adventures of last night.”

“Did Père la Chaise look pretty by moonlight, Sir?” asked the young Cantab.

“Perhaps you went down into the Catacombs,” said another guest; “or visited the Morgue;

or attended midnight service in the Church of St. Roch."

"At any rate we can't suppose that you went out, and kept right on walking," said another. "You must have stopped somewhere. You had some adventure, of course. Do tell us all about it. It's a duty you owe to society."

But the stranger's face now became again overcast, as on the occasion of the unlucky question about his offspring, on the previous night. "Suppose we change the subject, gentlemen," he said. "*Garçon*, bring me a cup of *café-au-lait*."

"What a rum old cock he is," whispered the Cantab to his next neighbour.

After breakfast the Polar bear, as he called himself, romped merrily with the children for ten minutes, and then started off by himself for another walk.

This time he confined himself to the north side of the Seine. As he strolled through the principal streets and Boulevards, and noted the changes which had taken place in Paris since he visited it some fourteen years before, he could not help noticing what must now strike every observing visitor to that gay city after so

many years of absence, viz., the number of new barracks and military stations which have been erected so as to command the leading thoroughfares, and render future revolutions and *émeutes* within the walls next to impossible without the connivance of the Imperial troops. These new military works have grown up so gradually under the eyes of a resident as to be scarcely perceived by him; but to a stranger revisiting the City, after a long absence, they are a striking novelty, and have a pointed moral. Paris is now completely under the thumb of the Emperor, and can never again, probably, become the theatre of such tragedies as have once been enacted within it, — tragedies which are a disgrace even to blood-stained history. No lover of order and real progress can fail to be pleased by this proof of sagacity in the ruler of a people, who are perhaps the least fit of any in the world to be trusted with civil liberty.

But the steps of the stranger were ere long directed towards an irresistible centre of attraction, the Quai de la Mégisserie, where he had beheld the beautiful vision at the window on the previous night. After passing along the

principal Boulevards, he turned into that of Sebastopol, which brought him almost straight to the spot. The window was wide open, but no young lady there. For some time he leant over the parapet next the river, watching alternately the course of the stream, the towers of Notre Dame, the pyramid of old buildings on the Isle de la Cité, the "École de Natation pour les Dames" which was moored alongside, and then that open window on the third story of the house upon the Quai. "It is only a question of time," he said to himself. "She will come sooner or later, and if I wait long enough I shall assuredly see her again. I *must* see her once more before I hurry away. Some strange link of affinity seems to bind me to that lovely child. I cannot get her fair face out of my thoughts. It haunted me all night, and sleeping or waking, I cannot banish it from my mind. Who knows? She may indeed be, as my dream suggested, my own beloved daughter. Some strange fate may have decreed that I should meet her *here* for the first time, and not, as I have all along anticipated, in her own quiet home. But could I yet confess myself to her? No. I must still keep a strict watch over the

doors of my lips, and quell the strange tumult at my heart as I gaze upon her.”

Presently the graceful figure of a young English girl, about sixteen years of age, and rather above the middle height, came out of the ladies' swimming bath, and tripped lightly across the wooden bridge which led from it to the shore. The keen eye of the stranger detected at once in her the nymph of the window. She was returning from her dip, braced and buoyant, after the ablution of her graceful limbs in the rapid current of the Seine; and her face was radiant with youth and health. In one hand she carried a book, which proved to be a catalogue of the Louvre, and in the other a parasol, but more for form's sake than for use, as the broad-brimmed hat she wore sufficiently shaded her features from the nearly vertical rays of the June sun. From her dress and appearance you might have fancied her suddenly transported from among her own flower beds, or some quiet green lane in the heart of merry England, to that gay city of Paris, without a moment allowed for preparation or change of attire, so simple was her dress, and so oddly contrasted with that of the people about her.

And yet, simple as it seemed, it was quite as much the result of art, and infinitely more the result of good taste, than theirs; for there is no people in the world who have such radically bad taste in dress, and in the æsthetics of personal appearance, as the French. All the hideous fashions and monstrosities of apparel come from France. Powder, perriwigs, starch, swallow-tailed coats, hoops, crinoline, tufted chins, shorn whiskers, and pointed moustachios, have their origin in France. Read what Eustace says on this subject in his Classical tour; and he is perfectly right. But the manner of that graceful young English girl betrayed no consciousness of being in any way remarkable. It never once occurred to her that her crinoline was the smallest possible which a hideous fashion compels—that her skirts were not sweeping the unsavoury refuse from the pavement, as other ladies were doing, but were displaying to the gallants of Paris the prettiest little feet and ankles in the world—and that her sweet face, instead of being framed in a staring “kiss-me-quick,” overloaded with gay ribbons and flowers, was modestly shaded by the broad brim of a plain but very pretty straw hat. Of all this

she was perfectly unconscious—and also that many wondering and envying female eyes were fixed upon her, as she tripped lightly along. All she knew was that she was an English girl—a lady in feeling, and by education—innocent as a May morning—and attired in clean plain clothes, harmonious in their colour, graceful in their lines, and faultless in their fit. But, in fact, she never thought about herself at all. She was thinking about pictures and statues, and how dearly it would please some one she knew to be with her that morning, in a scene as strange to him as it was to her—and to ramble with her through the noble gallery to which she was then bound.

The stranger followed her with beating heart, and wild sensations which defied analysis, until she entered the Louvre; and then, up the broad staircase, and into the long *Galerie de Tableaux* he followed her also, you may be sure. But she did not observe him at first. For a long time she was deep in the contemplation of the pictures—passing from one to the other—but dwelling longer upon those of which the subjects pleased her fancy, and skipping others which were merely remarkable for technical

skill, or historic association, or which showed melodramatic and exaggerated treatment. As the stranger watched her motions with curious eye, he was gratified to see that her choice was always good, and her taste correct; and he inwardly longed for some happy chance which might permit of his introducing himself to her. She was alone, which was rather singular; and he quite hoped that something might occur which could be converted by him into an apology for addressing her, and offering her the escort of a fellow-countryman round the gallery.

His hopes were soon gratified, but in a way which he little expected. The young lady's movements were being watched by other eyes as well as his; and he became aware, after a time, that a dark, vulgar, overdressed young man was dogging her footsteps, and beginning to annoy her by his impudent stare. It was in fact the same half-caste who had stood with folded arms before her window on the previous night, and compelled her to retire. The polar bear eyed this flat-nosed thick-lipped importation from the Tropics with growing indignation, as he observed his rudeness to the young lady, and the annoyance it was giving her; and once or

twice he planted himself between him and her, and scowled ferociously upon the intruder. But the cool impudence of the latter was not to be put down by a mere look, however threatening, and he persevered in his course of annoyance. The young lady, terrified at last at finding herself the object of such marked attention from an ill-looking lump of vulgarity, and anxious to avoid him, seated herself within a niche which was certainly not wide enough for two persons; but this movement, so far from repelling her persecutor, only brought matters sooner to a crisis, for the instant she had seated herself, he actually squeezed himself into the same seat by her side. It was now high time for the polar bear to interfere, particularly as the lady's eyes seemed to appeal for help to her great strong fellow-countryman. He strode straight up to the Malay, with the determination of taking him by the nape of the neck and hurling him to the opposite side of the gallery; when the latter, aware that nothing less than his instant annihilation was now meant, decamped at once, and was seen no more that day in the Louvre.

The Englishman offered his arm to the young lady, and she took it without hesitation. Who

could doubt the perfect integrity of that grand aristocratic-looking man, with the long white beard and white curly locks? He said to her in his blandest tones, as they walked off together:

“You must never, my dear young lady, venture to these places again, alone. You are a stranger to Paris, I see, and you don't know what a great wicked place it is.”

“I am sorry to hear you say so,” she replied, “for unfortunately I have not a single friend here to be my guide and escort; and the dream of my life has been to see the wonders of this beautiful city. I am left here alone with a poor sick Mamma, who is confined to her room; but she could spare me for an hour or two every day to go and see the churches and picture galleries, if I dared visit them by myself. I thought that surely I might venture in the morning into a public place like this without fear of becoming the object of rudeness. It will not be very flattering to the vaunted politeness of the French, if I am compelled to stay in-doors during the whole of our visit to Paris, for want of a male companion to protect me.”

“But you have an escort now, whom I venture to say no rude foreigner will presume to despise. Come then; let me pilot you round the gallery, and afterwards see you home in safety. I am myself a stranger here, and I shall be most happy to have you for my companion.”

The young lady had read of such things as girls of her age being entrapped by plausible benevolent-looking middle-aged gentlemen; but a glance at her protector was sufficient to reassure her, and dispel all idle fears. Besides which, she had a high spirit of her own, which defied imaginary danger. She therefore took confidently the offered arm of the tall stranger, and they strolled over the Louvre together.

The paintings formed for some time the chief subject for their conversation, for it was one on which the gentleman was perfectly well-informed, and he did not dare trust himself at first to broach any other topic. But even on this familiar theme he felt for some time strangely embarrassed; for the pressure of his companion's soft hand upon his arm, and the silvery tones of her voice, made his heart beat quickly, and filled it with an unaccountable sensation—a long-

ing to pass his fingers over her silky hair, and to look into her eyes, and say "Who are you, my sweet child? Why have you thus fascinated me? Why are you now hanging upon my arm, and causing such a strange tumult in my breast?"

But after a time he became more self-possessed, and began to pour into her ear some of that eloquence which had charmed his companions at the hotel on the previous evening. But his theme was not now of wild boars and stockyards. It was of Art and Artists. They had wandered into the sculpture room, and the young lady, as she looked round—for the first time in her life, she said—upon the marvellous beauty of sculptured forms, expressed her utter inability to criticise such works, because they all seemed to her marvels of perfection. Paintings she could perceive were not unfrequently disagreeable in subject, crude in colour, vulgar in treatment, and false in perspective; but statues all seemed to her alike in their calm graceful repose, their dignity of expression, and an ideality and poetry which seemed far above the noblest works of the sister art.

"And yet," said her companion, "you must

not suppose that sculpture has really risen to a higher level than painting. We must not rank these antique marbles above the works of Raphael and Correggio,—Rubens, Titian, Guido, —Turner, Eastlake, Etty, Creswick, and other celebrated painters of modern times. Both painting and sculpture are equally high branches of ideal art, and neither of them must be put before the other. These solid forms around us are, in truth, just as much open to criticism as the flat painted canvases in the other gallery. It is because you happen to know perhaps little or nothing of the technical details and mechanical processes of sculpture that it seems to you to have been brought to such uniformly high perfection as compared with painting. To criticise any work of art properly, requires something more than mere natural good taste in the critic. It requires a practical knowledge of the process employed. It is because critics are so often merely literary men that we read such sad nonsense in the journals about art, and art exhibitions. To be a sound critic of paintings or statues you must be yourself a painter or a sculptor; to be a sound critic of a new opera you must be yourself a musician; to be a

reviewer of a new poem or novel you ought yourself to have written good poetry or prose fiction. The same thing is as true in Art as in all other branches of human labour. To be a good judge of a ship you must be a naval architect ; and of a piece of cabinet-work a carpenter. I heard a photographer once extolling in rapturous terms the merits of his lenses, but I said to myself, 'All very fine, Mr. Photographer, but the opticians, who make lenses, are better judges than you are of their merits and defects.' "

"I think your opinion is peculiar," replied the young lady. "I was reading the other day a charming work by Allan Cunningham, on the lives of the painters, and I remember the following remark in it:—'Art represents Nature, and by Nature Art must be judged.' "

"True. I remember the passage ; but there never was a greater fallacy. How can an untrained mind enjoy a noble work of art ? Is not a child satisfied with the gaudy pictures in children's books ? Does not the ignorant public greatly appreciate those hideous reproductions in oil colour which are given away in the Christmas numbers of the 'Illustrated

London News'? Does not the publican think the Black Bull upon his signboard the very perfection of a black bull? Does not a butcher boy go to sleep at an Oratorio, and greatly prefer Jim Crow? The mind must be educated before it can enjoy a fine work of art to the full, or, it may be, even at all."

"But granting all that," she replied, "may not a well-educated person be a good judge of sculpture without having been himself a carver or a modeller?"

"He may be, to some extent, a judge, of course; but I affirm that his criticism of it would only be such as to satisfy persons like himself. It would never satisfy a sculptor. *He* would smile at it, and why? Because he would perceive that such a critic knew nothing of the peculiar difficulties to be overcome in sculpture; that he put his standard of excellence too high, and expected too much; and that an infinity of technical successes and beauties were overlooked by him, and ignored altogether. No artist ever works quite up to his own ideal, or ever can do so; it is not in the nature of things; but your literary art-critic does not know this practically, and in his ignorance he expects too

much. He may perhaps be trusted in his condemnation of a very bad work; but he is a sorry guide in pointing out the excellencies of a really good one. I was born in Florence, and I remember, as a boy, thinking Brunelleschi's marvellous dome of the Cathedral there very ugly, and Ghiberti's famous bronze gates black, stupid things, not worth a handful of marbles; and yet Michael Angelo used to sit for hours upon a stone which they shew you, admiring that very dome; and the gates he pronounced fit to be those of Paradise. But he was an architect and a sculptor,—I an ignorant child. Mrs. Beecher Stowe, the authoress of 'Uncle Tom's cabin,' made but a sorry critic of the noble works of art in the European galleries; and the reason was exactly such as I have endeavoured to point out to you."

"My poor Papa was born in Florence, and I have seen a picture of the dome you speak of, done by him."

"Ah! Have you no Papa now?"

"No; only a Mamma; and she is a great invalid. We have come to Paris in order that she may consult a celebrated physician here. But will you kindly criticise some of these

statues for me, and try and explain to me their beauties and defects. I long to learn. Everything relating to Art interests me."

"Well then; look at the drapery of this figure before us. Do you not see that it is like wet calico sticking to the limbs of the figure, and cut up into a multitude of confused little folds. But look at the drapery of the figure next to it. That is broad and grand, without any littleness or confusion. But mind, I do not praise it merely because it is more natural than the other, or more like real drapery. No such thought entered into my head; and I wish you particularly to observe that in art close fidelity to nature is by no means a recommendation, or a desirable quality. In art we must strive to rise beyond what is merely truthful, and mount to the ideal; although I grant you our spring upwards must always be made from a solid basis of truth. Mere literal truth bears to ideal art some such relation as a barber's painted waxen bust with a wig and glass eyes bears to some of these noble statues, unnatural in colour, without eyes at all, and with lumps of marble for hair. Mere literal truth may now be left to the photographer. It has become his province,

par excellence. I think, then, you will grant me that the drapery in this statue is finer than that in the other."

"Yes. I see the difference now; and I think I might have found it out had I been copying the two figures."

"Are you an artist? Can you draw and paint?"

"A little; and I am dearly fond of it."

"I knew you were, from your criticism of the pictures. Old fellows like me learn to make shrewd guesses. You are fond of music too, I know."

"Yes, very. But most young ladies play so well now that I am rather ashamed of my own performance. I like simple melodies; but grand clattering pieces are more the fashion now."

"I am afraid you are very charming. Ah, me! Well! But here is another fine subject for criticism. An antique Muse, with some modern restorations. Tell me now; see if you can find out which is the antique, and which the restored part."

The young lady scanned the figure attentively for some time, and then an arch smile dimpled her cheek.

"I think I know," she said. "The hand has been restored, has it not?"

"What makes you think so? Don't guess, but give me a reason."

"The ancient part of the figure looks grave and majestic; and there is a sentiment about it which I cannot describe. But the hand looks affected, and the fingers are tapered too daintily. Am I right?"

"Let us compare it with your own. See if you can put your little hand into that position; and tell me how you feel when you have done so."

"The young lady took off her glove quite innocently, and her strange friend held it for her whilst she tried to arrange her own fingers in a way similar to those of the statue; but the effect was ridiculous, and they both laughed.

"You were right you see, and I have made you a little critic of sculpture already, although you have never touched chisel and mallet; which goes somewhat against my own theories."

"But my hand is the real, and the other the ideal," replied the young lady, humorously.

"Did you not say just now that Art must rise above nature, and not render truth too literally?"

"So I did. But I am afraid the real has

charms too. And now let us go. Your poor Mamma will be getting anxious about you. I must take you home. But we will just stroll once round the Palais Royal together, before we part."

So saying, he pocketed the young lady's glove, in a sort of absent fit, and they left the Louvre for a turn through one or two of the principal streets, and then into the Palais Royal. Many were the gay shops they entered, and the pretty things which the stranger bought, and pressed upon his companion's acceptance; and his manner to her became by degrees so much warmer and more familiar, that at last the poor girl was almost in as much alarm at the kind attentions of her protector, as she had been at the bare-faced impudence of the Malay. She begged at length to be taken straight home, on the plea that her Mamma would be getting anxious at her long absence.

"Only *one* more little delay," her companion replied, "and then I will let you off. I am compelled to leave Paris to-night, and we may never meet again. Not that I think such a thing at all probable, but who knows what may happen in this eventful life? I want you to

give me your portrait, as a memento of the happy hours which I have spent with you to-day. See ; here are the cases of some photographer, whose studio is up above. Let us go in, and have your portrait taken ; and after that I give you my word that I will see you straight home, and say good-bye, let the pang of parting from you cost me what it may."

The poor girl had no choice but to submit, though she did so with much embarrassment, for her companion's manner had assumed a tenderness and *empressement* which really alarmed her. So they mounted together to the glass room.

It was a hot glaring little place, about twelve feet square, littered with photographic paraphernalia, and with blue, white, and black clouts tacked up here and there to keep out the sunshine. The artist was a polite little man, with a thin tuft of yellow hair under his chin, and dirty hands, with long bird-like nails in deep mourning. He polished a plate—posed the young lady in a brace of shakes—with her head screwed into an iron claw behind, and one hand resting upon a bit of balcony,

while in the other she held a gay volume of Paul de Kock's—and in a trice he took the first negative. The young lady did as she was told during the exposure, and stared steadily at the lens, with the glaring glazed end of the room behind it full in her eyes, causing her to wink three times during a pose of only twice as many seconds. The instant it was over, her features assumed an expression of infinite relief, and she exchanged a smile with her companion as she stepped off the dais, and readjusted her hat and shawl.

The polite little artist soon returned from his dark room, with the dripping negative. It was “*magnifique*,” he said, and he despaired of doing anything better. Mademoiselle had sate, or rather stood, as still as a statue; and if he were to try a hundred times he would never get a more charming pose. Might he keep one print for himself? It would be the gem of his collection.

“By-the-bye, there is the printing to come after this,” said the stranger. “Confound it. My good little friend, can't you give me a portrait which I can take away with me now; for I must leave Paris to-night?”

“ *Ma foi, Monsieur*, you can't have prints until to - morrow night. They must be properly washed or they would fade in a week. A print to-day! *Mon Dieu! c'est impossible!*”

“Do you mean to tell me that you don't take glass positives, or Daguerreotypes?” replied the stranger.

The little man shrugged his shoulders with an intensity of negation. Glass positives, he said, were only taken by the *canaille* of his profession; and as for Daguerreotypes, they were altogether out of fashion.

“And why, I should like to know?” asked the other. “Do you modern collodionists delude yourselves and the public with the idea that your coarse paper prints are to be compared for one instant to a good Daguerreotype? And then, what a convenience it was to have a portrait finished at once, and be able to take it away with you. What is the use of that negative to me? I tell you I am leaving Paris to-night. Surely you ought not to give up altogether, for a mere silly fashion, the finest photographic process of all.”

The little man shrugged his shoulders again. “We must live, Monsieur, and the public are our

masters. They will have paper, and we must submit. Amateurs can use what processes they like, but we poor professionals must consider what pays best, and cringe to the whims of our sitters."

"Look here," said the stranger, producing from his pocket the Daguerreotype which he had shown to the guests at the hotel on the previous evening. "Examine this little portrait, which has been done now a dozen years or more, and show me, if you can, a paper picture in the whole of your modern collection which is to be compared to it."

"*Mon Dieu ! c'est délicieux,*" said the artist. "A superb portrait of Mademoiselle ; beautiful as she must have been then, but still more beautiful now. Why a photograph like this would have been the despair of Correggio. The sight of it would have killed him outright. I dare say, Monsieur, all the wealth in Paris would not purchase it from you?"

At this assertion of the likeness between the little portrait and the young lady by his side, the stranger became visibly embarrassed, and turned away to conceal his emotion. The young girl took her supposed portrait from

the hands of the artist, and examined it attentively.

“Well,” said the stranger, recovering himself in a minute or two, with an effort, “How do you like my little picture?”

“It is lovely. It is a perfect gem.”

“But it is your own portrait, my fair friend. This gentleman says so.”

“Oh, impossible!”

“Then we must look at the initials on the back of it, and see. But tell me first what yours are, before we look.”

“E. M.”

“I knew it; my heart told me so from the first,” muttered the stranger to himself. “She is indeed my own dear child.”

The artist quickly removed the portrait from the case; and, strange to say, upon the back of it were written the initials E. M., with the date, May 9, 184—.

“There, you see,” said the stranger. “Those initials coincide exactly with your own. Did I not tell you it would be so, before we looked? Does not the circumstantial evidence convince you that this is indeed your own portrait?”

“I am afraid not,” said the young lady, laughing. “That little picture is, I fancy, a portrait of your own daughter, for I see a strong resemblance in it to yourself.”

“You are right. It *is* my daughter; and we have not met for eleven long years. She will now be about the same age as yourself; and I venture to hope that she may be like you. Can you now forgive the interest I take in you, my sweet child, when even our friend the artist here sees a strong likeness between yourself and this little portrait?”

The young lady blushed and smiled; and the great polar bear, without any resistance, parted her soft curls with his hand, and imprinted a loving kiss upon her forehead.

“What a tall girl you have grown, Nelly,” he added, “and as graceful as an antelope. I call you Nelly, because my own little daughter’s name is Nelly, and she is ever in my thoughts.”

“My name is really Nelly.”

“Of course it is; and your surname is Winter, is it not?”

“No. May.”

“Then you are not my daughter after all, for her name is Nelly Winter. See, here is

my name upon my card, Mr. Lorenzo Winter. I look like Winter, don't I, with this snowy poll, and great white beard."

"But her initials are E. M.; the same as mine. How can that be? They ought to be E. W., if her surname is Winter."

"Ah, I forgot. They belong to her Christian names, Elinor Margaret."

The artist now returned with the negative dried and varnished. "Where shall I send the prints, Monsieur?" he asked.

"Keep them till I call again, in a few days, on my return to Paris. Here is my card."

The artist hesitated, and began to look confused. He had something disagreeable to say, and he hardly knew how to say it, before such a pretty girl, and such a *distingué* looking gentleman. The latter divined his thought, and paid a Napoleon in advance; and then they left the studio. All three were the happier for that visit.

"You are not afraid of me now, Nelly, are you?" said Mr. Winter, as she took his arm again, and they strolled towards the Quai de la Mégisserie.

“No, not now. I never was. At least I”

“But tell me. How long are you going to stay in Paris?”

“Only a short time. Poor Mamma has only come here for medical advice; and a young gentleman, a friend of ours, is to come over to us, and take us home, as soon as his term at College is over, in about three weeks.”

“And this young student—who may *he* be, Nelly? Ah, you blush. I am too inquisitive.”

Very little more was said until they reached the young lady's home upon the Quai; and there they were to part.

No; not yet. The words “*Appartement meublé à louer*” in a window of the fourth story met the stranger's eye, and it brightened up at once with a happy thought.

“Although I am compelled to leave Paris to-night,” he said, “and to wish you good-bye now, yet I shall be coming back soon, and then I hope to see you again. Now, when I return, suppose I were to lodge in this house, in that room upstairs which I see is to let. Would you like to have me for a neighbour, until your friend the student comes? Tell me

candidly. Would you be pleased to renew our acquaintance?"

"Oh yes, indeed I should; and poor Mamma would be so pleased too, I know."

"You funny little innocent," said the stranger, smiling, and patting her soft cheek. "Well then,—that is all happily settled. I will engage the room at once. *Concierge*, have the kindness to show me the apartment to let, *au quatrième*."

So they all three mounted the staircase together; but at the *troisième étage* our old friend Nelly May, whom the reader, of course, has recognised, ran in to their own room, and told her Mamma hurriedly all that had occurred.

But although Mr. Winter was shown the *appartement meublé*, over head, he could not on the instant arrange to take it, because a certain *Madame*, who would have to be a party to the bargain, had to be fetched, and that might take an hour or more. Never mind. It would delay the parting moment with Nelly, by so much, and he would wait, with all the patience of a lamb.

"*Monsieur* is very obliging," said the *concierge*; and he left him to amuse himself at the window.

After a time Nelly tapped at the door, and was let in.

“ Ah, what now, my little pet ? ”

“ Poor Mamma is not so well, I am sorry to say, to-day, and has gone back to bed. But she begs you will go in with me, and have some lunch ; and she is so sorry she cannot entertain you herself.”

“ She is very kind, that dear Mamma of yours, Nelly, — and I dare say you love her dearly. Come then, let us go. But are you sure she won't join us ? Are you sure she is in bed ? It is years since I mixed in ladies' society. I come from the wilds of Australia ; and I feel shy. I could not face your Mamma now, you understand, all of a sudden like this, for the world. We shall meet soon, I hope, but not to-day. I couldn't indeed.”

Nelly assured her friend that her Mamma would not be able to appear, and was actually in bed ; and then he consented to enter their room, and take some refreshment. As she ushered him in, however, his agitation became too violent for concealment, and he had to lean a minute or two against the doorpost for support. Nelly was terrified at his sudden

paleness, and the tottering of his knees, and had to put her slight girlish arms around the strong man to keep him from falling upon the floor. Presently, however, he rallied, and smiled.

“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “It is only a sudden dizziness to which I am subject at times—the effects of a sun-stroke in the Colonies. I am all right now.”

The lunch was spread out upon the table, and he helped himself to a glass of wine. Then he chatted away again; and at length completely recovered his composure.

An hour passed quickly away, and the things were removed, but still *Madame* did not arrive; so Nelly brought out a box of stereoscopic slides to amuse her guest with.

“Some of these I took myself,” she said, “but most of them are views of Paris, which have been given me by a friend. I have found them of the greatest use in preparing me for this visit. Every new place I see I now recognize at once. How wonderful photography is. No artist’s picture, or author’s description, however correct and minute, gives you nearly so true an idea of a place as one of these slides.”

“That may be right, to some extent,” replied her guest, “but stereoscopic slides generally make the objects look dwarfed, and too near. At least so it always seems to me; and that is why I don’t altogether like them. Photography has been too much petted by half. He is a villain. So far from rendering things truthfully, as people say, and not flattering, he takes a mischievous delight in going to an extreme the other way. His tendencies are bad, and until they are corrected he is not fit for honest folks’ society.”

But the interest with which this severe critic of photographs was now examining Nelly’s own productions—mostly views of Sark—contradicted his caustic remarks. Still, no power of hers could induce him to put the slides into the stereoscope, for he preferred to inspect them singly under a powerful little magnifier of his own.

“So you took them yourself, Nelly?” he said, at last; “you have turned photographer. Well; why not? But you must not stain your pretty fingers. Let me look at them, to be sure you do not.”

“I am afraid I do, sometimes,” she said,

laughing, as he examined one of her little hands, both back and front.

“Do you know anything of Palmistry, Nelly? Did any old gipsy woman ever tell your fortune by the lines upon your palm?”

“No, never.”

“Shall I do so? Yours is a smooth little palm, unfurrowed by any deep lines, and it points to a happy future. Shall I go on? Shall I tell you all about it? I am a Magus from the East—a necromancer—a clairvoyant. Have you courage to listen to your fate?”

“I am afraid I have no faith. Tell me first something true about the past, and then perhaps I may believe your predictions of the future.”

He took her open palm in his left hand, and passed the forefinger of his right along the lines which faintly crossed it.

“This,” he said, “is called the line of life; and by its meanderings and irregularities, I am able to scan both your past history and your future fate. You were born, I see, in an island, and that a very small one.”

“How extraordinary. How could you possibly tell that?”

“At an early age, I see, you lost your father.”

“I did indeed.”

“But you lived on with your Mamma, in a cottage by the sea. You never left it. It is still your home.”

“It is, indeed.”

“And a governess lived with you, and brought you up. She was much younger than your Mamma.”

“Ah now, you are wrong there. I was sent to school.”

“Yes, I see. I admit there is a little confusion here about the lines. But, ah me, what do I behold now? A grand commotion. A youth appears upon the scene. A Cambridge student!”

Nelly blushed crimson at this announcement; and the fortune-teller smiled and proceeded.

“And then follows a visit to a great city; and next some lines which run parallel to each other, and seem to strengthen as I look at them. I did not observe them before. Must I go on? Can you bear to hear the truth?”

“Oh, yes. Pray tell me all. Pray go on.”

“I foresee a great trouble coming,—but a great happiness too. The lines run side by side. There is something lost, and something found; and then all runs smoothly on again.

I see a pale student's face, and white bands, and a black gown; and I hear village bells ringing their jubilee for a fair girl's wedding; and then. Shall I go on?"

"No; I've heard quite enough. It's all fudge. Please let my hand go."

A tap at the door interrupted their pleasant chat, and the arrival of *Madame* was announced.

Mr. Winter rose to leave the room, and Nelly hesitated whether to follow him upstairs, or not.

"Come, Nell," he said, "what do we men know about choosing rooms. Come and help me. I shall trust to you to have it all in order for me by this day week."

Madame was a plain little French woman, but who could resist her charming ways? She laid herself out to please—and yet without an effort, for she had practised the art all her life. To be obliging and agreeable had become to her a habit, a second nature; and a very charming habit it is, and how easily acquired after all. You have only to respect the feelings of the person you address, and put your own egotism in your pocket, and how can you help being charming and agreeable? There is no other secret in the matter.

The room was one of those so often seen in France, in which the bed is contained in a recess which can be shut up by folding doors, so as not to show by day. But now came a rather puzzling question from Nelly. Was her new friend to be alone—or was his daughter to come with him? Because, in the latter case, another bed-room would be required. True. How was he to manage that? for no other room in the house was then to let.

“We have three rooms,” said Nelly, “and perhaps your daughter could sleep with me.”

“Capital. Yes, she can sleep with you. Both the Nellies together. How funny that will be. Both of them the dearest little innocents in the world; there is not a pin to choose between them.”

And thus the matter was arranged.

And now those two must say good-bye. But Mr. Winter was only to be gone a week — perhaps less. He promised to be back as soon as he could.

As he passed along the passage on his way out, he saw a girl in close conversation with the *concierge*. She had come in, a minute or two before, and was hearing all the news about

the lodger who had taken the spare room *au quatrième*. She was a lodger also in that house, and had taken a room *au cinquième* about a week before. She turned upon the tall Englishman, as he passed, a pair of bold impudent black eyes, and a look of searching scrutiny, which he returned by taking measure of her personal appearance from head to foot. Neither of those faces once seen could be easily forgotten. The girl was Giovanna Cazzola !

She looked after the stranger until he turned a corner of the street, and then went upstairs to her own room. As she passed the Mays' door she tapped, and put into Nelly's hand a letter which she had just fetched for her from the Post Office. It was addressed to Miss May, *Poste Restante*, Paris. The writing was Mark Levisne's, and the post - mark Hennebon. What could it possibly mean ? Nelly thought her lover was still at Cambridge. A fortnight had elapsed since she had heard from him, and now he was addressing her from a little town on the coast of Brittany. What could it all mean ?

Giovanna knew perfectly well. She had damped the gum of the envelope, opened it,

read the contents, and fastened all up again so neatly that no one could detect the act.

The artful Italian girl had taken up her abode in that house with no good intent, you may be sure. Poor Nelly! You will need a protector soon, — while he who should have remained to guard you is hurrying away, and leaving you to your fate!

CHAPTER 6.

—
OLD FRIENDS AGAIN.

NELLY tore open her letter, cast her eyes hurriedly over the contents, and then ran to her Mamma with the joyous news that she had heard from Mark, and that he would be with them in a few days. He was living on board a yacht at Hennebon—a little town on the western coast of Brittany—and she must write to him instantly and tell him their address in full, as he had left Cambridge suddenly, and before her first letter from Paris had reached him. Only think—they were both in France then, and separated by but a few hours of rail—while the trains to Paris, he said, passed along a viaduct almost directly above his head. It was nearly a year

since they parted, and in a few days they were to meet again !

But her first glance at her Mamma quelled at once all this transport, and brought a profound anxiety in its stead. She was sitting up in bed, with her face flushed, her eyes bedewed with tears, and every sense apparently converted into that of listening. The head of the bed stood against a partition of thin wood which cut off the room from the landing of the staircase, and she had distinctly heard the voice of the stranger, as he said at parting with her daughter, in accents trembling with emotion, "Good-bye, Nell, I'll come back soon." The sound of that voice, and the old familiar words, roused the poor invalid like an electric shock. Her whole frame shook, first with a strange terror—and then with a wild hope. She at once applied her ear to the partition, and listened intently to the sound of the footsteps descending the stairs ; and then, weak as she was, strove to get out of bed and crawl to the window, to catch a glimpse of the stranger as he passed along the street. But her strength failed, and she was found by her daughter in the state which has been described.

“Oh, dear Mamma,” said Nelly, caressing her tenderly, “are you ill?”

“Is he gone, child? Tell me. Is he gone?”

“Who, dear Mamma? Who?”

“HE! child, HE! Your . . . oh, oh, help—I’m fainting.”

She sank back upon the pillow, insensible; and Nelly, in an agony of fear, ran upstairs to the Italian girl for help. Giovanna, if your woman’s heart has not yet become as hard as stone, go down with that young girl, and aid her.

Giovanna went. They applied a cold damp sponge to the poor lady’s forehead—held a smelling bottle under her nose—rubbed the palms of her hands—and after a time she revived, and looked wildly about her. Then they laid her down again in bed, and drew the clothes around her. At length, with her daughter’s cool hand resting upon her brow, and her loving eyes bent affectionately upon her, she fell asleep.

Giovanna retired, and left the daughter watching by her mother’s side. As she stood at the half-closed door, eyeing the helpless pair—alone and friendless in that great city—a strange,

cold, hard expression crept over her face. For half a minute, or more, her heartless black eyes rested upon them ; and then she went upstairs again to her own room, there to concoct an infamous plot against that young girl, for her share in the successful execution of which she was to receive from her Uncle a thousand francs.

For an hour, or more, the daughter watched by her mother's side—her letter forgotten—her every thought concentrated on the beloved sleeper. What a beautiful spectacle is the unselfishness of love ! But, after all, commend me most to that love which is ever proving itself in *little* things, and *little* acts of kindness. Keep to yourself, if you prefer it, that much-vaunted goodness of heart which is reserved for grand occasions, but breaks down in querulous petulance when only small sacrifices are required of it. I believe in good-nature in trifles. I have vast faith in that urbanity of manner which flows from habitual abnegation of self. Grand occasions, for the development of *latent* good qualities, may never occur, or if they do, they may safely be left to the charge of that unselfishness which in all little matters has become a habit of the mind. I have about

the same faith in *latent* good qualities as I have in the strength of a muscle which is never used.

At length the sleeper opened her eyes, with a heavy sigh, and strove to collect her thoughts.

“Are you better now, dear Mamma?”

“Better? Have I been ill? Have I been dreaming? Have I been talking in my sleep?”

“No, dear Mamma. You have slept like an infant. Once or twice I was almost alarmed about you, you slept so still, and breathed so faintly.”

“But I must not die yet. Oh, I *must* see him once more.”

“Who, dear Mamma? Tell me.”

“Have I been dreaming, Nelly? Oh, don’t say so. Surely there was a strange gentleman here just now. Did I not hear him say, ‘Good-bye, Nell, I’ll be back soon’? Oh, *don’t* tell me *that* was a dream.”

“No, dear Mamma, it was not a dream. Don’t you remember I told you I met him in the Louvre, and that he saw me home? He stopped here for more than an hour, in the other room—and I shewed him all my stereoscopic slides—and he is coming back to lodge here—and has engaged the room overhead. He is such a nice

gentleman ; and he has a daughter sixteen, like me, and named Nelly. She is coming back with him ; and she is to have half my bed.”

Mrs. May was now wide awake, and more composed. She cast her eyes around the room, and saw an open letter upon the toilet table.

“ You hav’ n’t read your letter yet, dear child. Go and read it. Never mind me. Read your letter first, and we will talk about that kind gentleman afterwards.”

But Nelly put her arms around her mother’s neck, and kissed her, and said that she *had* read the letter, (which was a little fib). And then they talked about the tall, handsome, strange gentleman with the grand white beard ; and Nelly shewed her Mamma all the pretty presents he had given her, and told her about going to have her portrait taken, and the likeness between the two Nellies—and, in fact, all that was related in the last chapter.

The poor invalid listened so earnestly to these particulars, and asked so many questions, and seemed so much absorbed in the story of that strange gentleman, that at last her daughter asked

“ Do you think he knows us, dear Mamma ?”

At this question the poor lady could bear up no longer, but turned away her head from the light, and strove to conceal her emotion; and then followed a succession of sobs which she could not repress. She drew the clothes above her head and sobbed on; and Nelly, with correct instinct, went to the window and looked out. But the crowded Quay, and the rushing Seine, and the towers of Notre Dame were like objects seen in a dream, for her thoughts were with her poor Mamma, and her new friend, between whom and them it was evident there was some strange connexion. But what? Perhaps, she thought, he had been a friend of her Mamma's in Italy, before she married, and went to live in Sark. It was a mystery which she could not fathom; and thus a full half-hour passed away, and her Mamma once more fell asleep.

It was time then to think of Mark's letter, which she knew required an immediate reply. But she must read it all through first. It contained some strange news, the nature of which will be gathered from the following extract:—

I am writing to you, dearest Nell, from the cabin of Xenosthes' yacht, which is now moored

in the midst of a narrow stream called the Blavet, not far from its mouth, at the pretty little town of Hennebon, in Brittany. Look for it in your map of France. But I left Cambridge all of a sudden, and before I could hear from you, and learn your address. Heaven grant that this letter, directed *Poste Restante*, Paris, may find you soon, and that you will answer it at once. A grand new viaduct spans the river, directly over our head, and the trains are often running. Only fancy, Nell—both of us now in France—and soon to meet.

But I can't leave this place yet. That strange being, Xenosthes, has turned up again, and he has ordered me instantly to his side, by a telegram and a letter, which came almost together, and before the Examination was over—so I lost one paper, which I can't tell you how much I deplore—as well as your letter, which I expected that night. Still, you know, I felt bound to him as much as if our compact had not been dissolved, and I started at once to join him, as he wished. The boat's crew of the *EIONE* were waiting for me at the Southampton Pier, and I jumped into the stern-sheets of the gig, and

was no sooner on board the yacht than they weighed anchor, and set sail.

Xenosthes met me at the gangway, and pressed my hand. He was glad to see me, and I him. He has grown stouter, and much sun-burnt, and looks all the better for his trip. He is brighter too in manner, and less reserved. After the few first words of greeting, he went below, and I remained on deck.

We had a fine steady breeze from N.N.E., and the EIONE was soon laying over to it, and bowling along at her usual eleven knots. She is a lovely craft, and a regular clipper; and another piece of news I have for you is, that he has given her to me! At least, she is to be mine after his return to England in her, in a few days. Isn't he a queer fellow? The present crew are Greeks, and the Captain also. I can make them understand now and then, by a word or two of the ancient tongue, written down, but not spoken—for our English pronunciation is all wrong, and I wonder the great classical guns at the Universities don't see to it.

The sun was setting as we passed the Needles, and then we soon began to feel the long roll of the open sea. We had whipped two fine

yachts on our way down the Solent—rather to the mortification of their owners, I fancy—and their dark forms were astern, pegging away after us. The Needles are great blocks of chalk, sticking up out of the sea like an old man's grinders, and on one of them the lighthouse is built, near the water's edge. The adjacent cliffs are chalk also, and very high, with a perpendicular face. The top is smooth and rounded, and covered with close shaven turf, with sheep feeding on it—great shaggy white ones, and not like the little black stunted things in Sark. You would be surprised to see white rocks, and a sea the colour of pea-soup. We kept right on, bowling away before the wind; and the steward brought me up some refreshment on deck, by myself. I wondered where we were bound for, but asked no questions. Suppose it had been round the Horn—he had got me fast, and I couldn't resist. We had mainsail and gafftopsail set on the mainmast—squaresail, foresail, and squaretopsail on the foremast—and the forestaysail and jib not drawing, being to leeward of the others. She is fore-and-aft schooner rigged, with immense beam, and a very light draught of water for a yacht

—only seven feet aft, and four feet forward. But holds a capital wind, notwithstanding, and we have never met a vessel which could touch us on any point of sailing. I tell you all these particulars, Nell, because this lovely toy is to be our own, and we may have a cruise in her together some day.

S.W. and by S. was our course after dark, and that was about straight for the Channel Islands. I stayed on deck until eight bells (midnight), and was then going below to find Xenosthes, and turn in, when he came up with a cigar, and seated himself by my side, upon a buffet stuffed with cork and covered with painted canvas.

“So they burnt down the old house, Levisne, the very first night after I left it.”

“Yes,” I replied, “and I was deeply grieved about it. But you know I was on board the yacht when it happened—and the next night I spent with the Fanos, and——”

“Not another word. D—— the Fanos. As for the house I’m glad it’s gone. It’s off my mind. I meant to have given it to that poor d——l Lucius, what was his name? and he may have the ruins still, if you can find him;

but, bah! what's the good of talking about it. It was delightful, however, to think of that old scoundrel mizzling so quick. He got precious little out of me. I beat him on every tack. That is some satisfaction."

"Have you heard any tidings of him—or of Giovanna?"

"Hush! Mind your own business."

"What is my business? I want to know."

"Simply this. Listen. We are bound now for St. Malo, and there I shall leave you. You must stay with the yacht, and keep strict guard upon a young girl in the cabin, while the fellows take her round by way of Ushant to a little town this side of Nantes, called Hennebon, a few miles up the river Blavet, which runs into the Bay of Biscay. There I shall rejoin you, as soon as I can, after your arrival; and then you may leave, and go to the d——l your own way. But mind. The instant I appear, everything must be ready for a start. I shall pounce upon you like the bridegroom on the ten virgins, and you must be all ready—the boat manned at the Quay to put me on board—a steam tug, with her fires banked up, to tow us down the stream—and you there ready to hand

me over in safety my jewel of a little Mestee, and say, 'Off with you, I've done my part faithfully for once—though I humbugged you every time before.' Do you understand? Be ready; for life or death may hang upon my finding you prepared, and I can't tell to a day, or even to a week, when I may be down upon you. That is all a chance. If you are faithful and trusty in this matter, the EIONE shall be yours. If not—mark me, I will be revenged. I will persecute you to your very grave."

I promised; and no more was spoken by either of us for some time. It was a calm moonlight night, and the wind had gone down a good deal. I leant for some time over the taffrail, and watched the ripple in her wake. At last he spoke again.

"In the cabin beneath our feet, Mark, there sleeps a little angel, twelve years old—my Lurline by another name—and Earth holds not a brighter morsel of animated clay. I bought her for fifteen hundred dollars at New Orleans. She was sold by auction. Many persons bid at first, but at last only one remained against me. When my bid rose to fifteen hundred

dollars, he knocked off. 'Stranger,' he said, 'I reckon she's too dear for me.' So I bought her, and she's down below."

"And what do you mean to do with her?" I asked.

"Do with her? Why, marry her, when she is old enough, of course. What else should I do with her? She shall know me as her deliverer from bondage—she shall love me for all the benefits I will heap upon her—she shall never hear an angry word from me—she shall be the idol of my worship—the divinity I serve. I go in now for goodness, Mark. I have done with the old world. I have had enough of intellect. Bah! Goodness is a much rarer, and a much finer thing. The African race are the best after all. I shall be proud, man, proud to think that the blood of that meek kindly race will flow in my children's veins, and temper the Oriental savagery of my own."

"For my own part," I replied, "I believe in the Caucasian race, for *all* good qualities. But where do you propose to make your home? Where is the Helleno-Nigger-o colony to be planted?"

"In one of the brightest spots of earth. In a lovely island, washed by the purple waves

of the Gulf of Panama. I have bought that island too. In a month from this I hope to be on my way thither, in a good stout ship of my own, freighted with every necessary, and manned by faithful blacks."

"You will make a summer passage round the Horn, which will be, perhaps, as well. Shall you navigate the ship yourself?"

"Certainly I shall. And when I drop the English coast, I shall hope never to see an Anglo-Saxon face again."

"Nor a French one—nor an Italian one, either, perhaps?"

"Exactly so. I have only one last duty to perform in Europe—and then off to the coral isle."

"Shall you take a governess with you?"

"Governess be ——."

"Your photographic things?"

"Photography be ——."

"Palette, brushes, pipe-clay, plaster, modelling sticks?"

"The Fine Arts be ——."

"A Missionary to convert the natives."

"That be ——. And now suppose you answer some of *my* questions, Mark, since you are in such a chaffing vein. Are you a half-made

parson yet? Has the bishopric hove in sight? Can you make out its gallant-yards? Are you getting well primed for discussions with the Zulus? Have you satisfied yourself that the historical part of the Pentateuch is worthy of belief? Have your difficulties respecting miracles been cleared away? Or do you mean to get the bishopric first, and settle these questions afterwards—which I should think much the safer way? Once in the Church, you may preach what you like, and write treatises on the credibility of scripture—the eternity of future punishment—the nature of faith—and all sorts of exciting essays and reviews, but you mustn't venture on that sort of thing *before* you get in, or you mightn't get in at all. Be prudent in your scepticism, and wide awake. For my part, the more I see of these wretched religious disputes, and the juggling tricks of priests of all ages and all creeds, the more convinced I am that there is nothing in the universe, which *we* are concerned with, but MATTER and LAW. I believe in the nebular theory, and the doctrine of selection. First the spiral nebula begins to spin—then the planets are thrown off as the central mass shrinks into a sun—and behold

the germ of a solar system. Then we go on spinning away again — worlds rotating about their axes, and revolving in their orbits about a common centre of gravity—all little suns at first, but cooling down, and a crust forming which renders them opaque. And then follows organic life, with its vital and its mental principles;—and then the doctrine of selection begins to work, and the development of the different orders of animals takes place—the stronger and better adapted ones for the fierce struggle of life pushing the others out. Vide the Mammoths and Megalosauri — huge monsters, who have been civilised off the earth, whilst the little shrimp and the sand-hopper still hold on.”

“ And thus,” I said, interrupting him, “ we may look back upon ages spent by malformed creatures, dragging their agonised forms through life, to be improved at last, by chance steps, into beings better adapted for the fearful struggle, and with perfect enough organization to enable them to get on more comfortably. Ages spent by malformed agonised beings, writhing in this world, as well as in the countless orbs above us! A vast universe of reeking, toiling, anxious torture—developing by chance steps into more

perfect adaptation, and with no guiding hand to direct events."

"Exactly so. Jump overboard into this sea beneath us, and you will find it a vast slaughter-house. You will first be stifled, and then eaten up—or by way of adding a little pleasant excitement to your last moments a shark may snap off both your legs. Take care you *don't* tumble overboard. Take care you *don't* do this, or that, or the other, from the time you get up in the morning till the time you go to rest at night,—and when you *are* at rest, mind that a policeman keeps watch over you. All through life it is the same story—take care, or some fearful harm may happen to you. Oh, what a heaven it would be, if for one single hour in the twenty-four we could be exempted from this dreadful care. Inflexible laws of Nature—ye are indeed hard masters!"

"Would you like them changed into caprices?"

"No, indeed—that would be worse still?"

"Then what *would* you have?"

"Answer that question yourself, first. A country living, Mark; and a nice young bride? Plenty to eat and drink—a soft bed to lie upon—peasants to touch their hats to you—and very

little to do? Intellectual tastes—gentlemanly leisure—pleasant hobbies? To be set up like a black beacon upon a rock, looking down in safety upon the tempest-tossed world beneath, and giving it advice from *your* point of view? Not a bad idea, I grant. But it involves the stifled voice of truth—the Sunday preaching with gagged mouth—the life-long hypocrisy—the ever-present reproach of meanness, which you can't quite quench. This would be to *some* minds a drawback, I suspect; while the artfully worded Essay or Review, or the artfully questioned inspiration of the Five old books, would be no relief—only a confession of your own hypocrisy. Men of the world know what *that* means, and they think you a spiritless humbug. 'Come out of it, and work like us,' they say. 'Earn your bread by wholesome honest labour, as we do. Don't let your whole life be a mean lie, and a reproach.'"

"You do me foul wrong, Xenosthes," I replied. "I have given up all idea of entering the Church."

"Then there will be one more honest man in the world, if you keep out of it. But tell

me, what *are* you working for? Gratified vanity—or knowledge for its own sake?”

“The ambition to excel is not vanity—and knowledge is worth working for. When I found that my duty to you did not interfere with it, I followed up my original intention of striving for a High Degree.”

“But tell me,—have you got any new lights up there? Have you modified your theories of a future state? Have you reasoned yourself *into*, or *out* of materialism? You remember our old argument about it—and its unsatisfactory termination?”

“My conclusion is this,” I replied. “Religion is a sentiment. You say you believe now in goodness,—believe then in the immortality of the soul. Can you look now upon the dawn just breaking in the East, and not feel a something within you which says positively that you also will rise again, when the darkness of death is past?”

“I feel a something within which tells me, and my reason and observation tell me also, that I am a part of nature, and not to be destroyed; but also that I am a part much too humble and too imperfect to be perpetuated

through all time, in my present form. What I am is not worth preserving, while if you meddle with me too much, my identity is gone. No. Break me up—pound me into my ultimate atoms—scatter my particles to the winds—and let my immaterial essence, mere function as it is of the machine, vanish with the disintegration of that machine. I care not. Then, mould my atoms into some higher form—not me—and let them live again as a new body and a new soul. That is the only idea I can form of a future state of higher bliss than this. But the new form will not be Xenosthes, the wealthy, the sensual, the hump-backed Jew,—it will be a something else. I shall lose my identity with my last breath. Compare me now, even, with what I was when a day old—and tell me in what consists my identity. Even *here* we lose it, during life. We change even in *this* stage of being both our bodies and our minds. Not an atom now remains of what I had when seated on my nurse's knee; and since then I have gained many pounds in weight. Throw me now into this sea, and I quake with terror, choke, and sink. But throw me in next year, perhaps, and I revel in the brine, and ride

joyously upon the wave, because I may have learnt to swim. To-day I am in ignorance of some truth, and hold an error which tinges my every thought, and affects my whole course of life,—but next year I may have gained knowledge, and cast the error off. To-day, perhaps, I cherish some deep revenge which crushes me to earth,—to-morrow I may have thrown it off, and may rise, gaily as a lark. Where is my identity in all this?”

“Your opinions,” I replied, “are neither peculiar, nor new. They have been held in all ages, from Epicurus to the present time. I cannot *prove* them false, but I dislike them. They do not harmonise with my sentiments and my tastes. I prefer to think that a higher destiny awaits me after death—that my identity *will* be preserved—and that I shall meet and love in a better world those whom I have loved in this. If I thought otherwise, all nature would seem robed in black—all the poetry of existence would be gone. The golden hues of sunrise—the freshness of the wave—the scent of the flower—the song of the bird—the sweet face of innocent girlhood would lose all their charm. I should go about armed always with

a pill, with which to terminate this mortal career when misfortune came. I should be a heartless coward—a weary wanderer—a reckless sensualist—an unprincipled rogue—if I believed I should lose my identity at death, and that there was no Father of Mercy to receive my soul, and to forgive my sins.”

“Or rather, to punish you for them everlastingly,—which would much more probably be your fate. And as for the pill,—look here,” he said, showing me a small glass tube, hermetically sealed, containing a pale brown powder, which he always carried about with him. “Frederick the Great used to go to battle with a box of corrosive sublimate in his pocket—because he dreaded pain; and in the event of a mortal wound, he would have taken some to help himself quietly out of life. I too engage in the battle of chances, armed with a similar weapon against adverse fate; but it is not corrosive sublimate—that was a brutal idea. But come, you mustn’t lose your night’s rest. Let us go below. This life is all a mystery. We want a bigger brain—with richer blood to pump into it from the heart—and more vital force. That will come in time. Development *must* go on. It is only a

question of centuries, ages, æons if you like—but it will come in time. The difference between us two is this;—you prefer to believe in a most unpleasant fiction, while I prefer to remain in doubt. Yet after all, this glorious sunrise is enjoyed by both. I wish poor Ciss could see it too—but she is a child of the balmy South, and the morning air in these latitudes is raw and chill.”

We both paced the deck for a short time in silence, after this conversation, and then turned in.

I roused up again at eight bells. The breeze was still from N.E., and blowing stiff, but they didn't shorten sail, and on she scudded—more like a skimming sea-bird than a deep ploughing ship—and doing thirteen knots. The coast of France, Alderney, and the Caskets had come in sight, and that dearest of all little isles to me, Sark, looking like a thin grey line. We ran boldly through the Race, and as we passed the little isle I saw with my glass the pretty white cot—desolate now, for *you* had left. Then we stood on to the westward of Jersey and the Minquiers Reef, and ran into St. Malo before night.

At breakfast Ciss was introduced—the only she thing on board—a little darling of twelve years old—complexion white—eyes soft and dark—hair long and silky—and figure straight and flexile as a lath. In manner she is timid and subdued, and looks at you as you can fancy a poor little slave would. She is a perfect ignoramus, of course. Angelina would go into fits with her, and Fano too. As for me, there is a great charm in mind, and I could not yield up my heart to a doll like this, however good or pretty.

St. Malo is a strange place; but you may have seen it too, Nell—only think. Suppose you had been looking at us from the walls, as we ran in. You must have been there on your way to Paris, not many days before. And what do you think of France? The rocks here look as if they had been sown broadcast for three miles round the entrance, and we hoisted our Jack at the foremast head, for a pilot; and for an hour or more stood off and on. At last one boarded us, and took us in. We triced up the main tack, and threaded our way amongst buoys and beacons, with rocks awash on each side, along a devious course, which it would

have been destruction to attempt without exact knowledge of the place. The Cathedral bell tolled eight as we anchored in the roads.

This, you know, is my first visit to France, and the strangeness of everything is delightful, is it not? First, the *Douaniers* came on board, and examined our papers—very civil fellows—but they talked loud, gesticulated, and made a wonderment of everything. A fine English yacht with a Greek crew—a gigantic dark man as owner—your humble servant, shall we say, to give an air of respectability to things—and a young mestee girl, the only female on board—was no doubt *très extraordinaire*. But our appointments were unexceptionable—our papers *en règle*—and we received on all sides *une considération la plus distinguée*.

The next morning we went ashore in the gig. But first let me tell you—for you may not have been here after all—what a pretty place it looked from the deck. We were lying at the mouth of a narrow winding river, with steep rocky banks. Before us was the citadel of St. Servan—and on one side that queer old place, St. Malo—built on a peninsula, jutting out into the sea—enclosed by high walls—and with rows of

handsome tall houses peeping over the parapet, with high pointed roofs—very picturesque; and the passage boats crossing backwards and forwards to Dinard, with their tall masts and lug sails, and full of country-women in queer white caps, made a lively scene.

Xenosthes, Cissy, and I went ashore in the gig; and the former started at once in a *voiture* for Rennes, after repeating all his instructions to me about Hennebon, and leaving me to show the little lady about, and amuse her that day. We were to leave again in the yacht early the next morning. Cissy and I then wandered about the old place together, hand in hand—went into the Cathedral and heard the organ—drove in a rattling old *calèche* to St. Servan—strolled to the tomb of Chateaubriand, on an island near, which you can reach when the tide is down—and then joined a crowd of bathers upon the beach. A very funny scene—gentlemen and ladies ducking together, in gay bathing dresses, and walking to their machines high above, beyond the reach of the tide. Cissy swims like a fish, but her action isn't quite right. I dare say you can beat her now. We dived, and cut some capers, to the great amusement of the lookers on—then

dressed, and went to dinner at the *table d'hôte*—a most enjoyable scene. After this, we wound up with a visit to a theatre on wheels; and I fancy that day will not be soon forgotten by her. I spent a few francs upon her in showy little presents, which delighted her more than the choicest works of art.

The French are a queer people—highly civilised in some things, but just as backward in others. There is not so much caste among them as amongst us English, and they all seem well-behaved, through all ranks, down to the lowest—and with no boorishness. All this I like; but I don't like the open gutter down the middle of the street, and some of their detestable dirty ways. We have much more respect for outward appearance in England, and are a people of a cleaner and a neater order of mind. A Frenchman, they say, is only washed twice—once at his birth, and again after he is dead—excepting, of course, the bathers at the seaports. They are very cruel to their horses—and have the barbarous custom of making the women work, while the men idle about with a cigar, and play at dominoes. Such are my first impressions of France. It is a funny

place, and I am always on the broad grin. The words *Débit de Tabac—Magasin de Nouveautés—Ici on rase—Marchand Epicier, &c.*, if seen only in a photograph, would I am certain make me laugh. One's first day in France is a strange new sensation.

The next morning at sunrise we got under weigh again. Wind still fair, and from N.E. Sea short and chopping. Up squaresail again when outside, and bowling along at a prodigious pace round the Brittany coast, but not near enough to make much out, except the grey rocks. When off the entrance to the Blavet we hailed a pilot, and towed her up in the gig, to Hennebon, with the flood tide. We are now moored in mid-stream, just above a fine railway viaduct which spans the river. The banks are hilly and pretty, and the town picturesque—the houses built in terraces one above the other—and a suspension bridge across the stream. We got in last night, and the first thing this morning I am writing to you.

I went to see about a steam tug, &c., as soon as we arrived, but no such thing is to be had here. Xenosthes has been quite mistaken in the place. The yacht can only leave again at

the top of high water, and must drop down with the ebb. It is of no use for us to keep constantly on the look out. We can only be always ready to start when the tide serves; and I hope it *will* serve when he turns up.

May that blessed hour, which is to liberate me, soon arrive. It is torture to be waiting here. I do hope Dr. Brownlow will not leave you alone, before I can join you in Paris. Send me your address at once. Write the moment you get this.

Cissy went to the Station with me last night, and watched the railway trains. Who do you think I saw there? The Signora Bruna, of Grantchester! I raised my hat to her for old friendship's sake, but she cut me dead! Never was such an impudent thing. She stared straight at me for a full minute, and then turned coolly off. But I was not going to be snubbed like that. I accosted her with "Surely I am addressing Madame Brown?" "*Pardon, Monsieur*, you are mistaken. I know nothing of that lady, indeed."

The Station-Master told me that she lives at an old château a few leagues from here, called the Château Noir; and he said this with a knowing shrug of the shoulder, and a meaning

smile. Is it possible that Xenosthes' business in this neighbourhood can have any reference to her? I half fear so. Perhaps he has got a clue to Giovanna. Things look suspicious, and it will be a blessing to be clear of the whole lot of them. Oh, what joy it will be to find myself seated in one of those dear trains, and hurrying away to my Nelly's side. * * * *

CHAPTER 7.

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A PLOT.

IN the evening of the day on which Nelly received the letter from Mark, from which I have given a lengthy extract in the previous chapter, Giovanna left her room on the *cinquième étage* of the house on the Quai de la Mégisserie, where Mrs. May was lodging, and walked quickly along the crowded streets of Paris until she arrived at the private door of another tall house, in one of the gayest and busiest of the boulevards. This door opened into a passage which led to a flight of stairs; and those again led to a large and handsome glass room upon the roof—the studio of a professional photographer. It was long past business hours, and the door was

closed, and the cases of portraits taken in. A ring at the bell, however, brought a servant, who in reply to the enquiry whether the Marquis De Lux was at home, informed the visitor that he was, and at that moment alone, and smoking a cigar in the reception room.

Giovanna was no stranger to that establishment, but, on the contrary, a frequent operator there,—although more commonly engaged in a distant part of the country, in a far different branch of photography from that of common portraiture. She and her Uncle, when thrown upon their own resources, had, in fact, made a profession of the black art, and in such a way as to turn it to good account—though without being too scrupulous always as regards the means. On the evening in question, the Italian girl hurried upstairs, and joined her respected relative.

The reception room in which this amiable couple were *tête-à-tête*, was a handsome apartment, separated from the studio by a broad curtain of dark cotton velvet. It was furnished in a costly style, with sofas, ottomans and mirrors; and a carved oak table in the centre was strewn with card portraits and stereoscopic slides, which some

one had evidently just been looking over. I regret to add that these were for the most part of a description not in keeping with the otherwise respectable appearance of the place.

The Marquis was seated at an open window, puffing away at the fragrant weed, in rivalry of the chimney pots about him.

“He has just been here again, Giovanna,” he said, as his Niece entered. “The little fat emissary of the Pacha, I mean; and he brings back a lot of these things, with the old story. None of them will do, after the ravishing vision he saw in this room a few days since. Even the art studies from my beautiful Niece he calls coarse and vulgar—‘fat, flabby, and theatrical’—those were his very words. Don’t redden and look vexed—we must all grow old and ugly in time—it is the decree of fate. The good Pacha, however, is only to be satisfied with grace and beauty—nothing else will do. But where is such a model to be found? It is the old difficulty. The willing ones are not of the right sort—and those who are of the right sort are not willing. Besides, his thoughts are fixed on that young English girl who came here for her portrait the other day. He will

hear of no one else—he will believe in no difficulties—he cannot understand those English beauties, and their prudish pride. He is a despot, and in his own country his slightest nod is law. A bribe, he thinks, *must* outweigh all scruples, and he doubles his last offer. It is now to be three thousand francs. They leave Paris in a week, and the fat little pimp is most importunate. Here are the twelve studies which he has chosen. A dozen prints from each,—and the negatives to be from *her*. Such are the terms, if we can but compass it.”

“Hush, Uncle,” said Giovanna. “Let us first clear the room of listeners.”

So saying, she looked round the studio—then into a cupboard—and lastly into a large ottoman—when, lo and behold, out jumped our dark friend of the Louvre—the young Malay!

“*S— écouteur,*” screamed the Marquis, unsheating his sword-stick, and following the fugitive down stairs—both at the top of their speed—until the latter, running for dear life, escaped into the street, and slammed the front door after him.

“Marie,” said the Marquis to the servant, as he remounted to the upper regions, “Let no

one enter. Let no one interrupt us. Do you understand? We are not at home. My orders are *de rigueur*."

"You see," said Giovanna, when her Uncle returned, "we have a traitor in the camp, which makes things doubly difficult. Poor idiot—he is love-sick, and trying to save her. I knew I should find him here listening. He has heard every word that passed between you and the fat man. When will you learn common prudence, Uncle?"

"Let me catch the *nègre*. I'll cure him of listening. But to the other matter now. Three thousand francs for a morning's work,—and the negatives to be ours, and worth as much more. Has any new light dawned upon you, Niece? How *can* we manage it?"

"*Here* we can't manage it—it is impossible—but at the Château, yes. As for bribing her to sit—that is absurd. She has English prejudices, and millions of francs would never tempt her. She must be entrapped into a journey *there*, on a false pretence, but to all appearance with her own consent. Then, when the job is over, she must be liberated on condition of signing a receipt, in acknowledgment of a certain sum

which she admits to have received for the favour accorded. We shall then be safe from all legal interference. Besides, she would never dare to publish to the world the story of her visit to the Château Noir, and the particulars of what occurred there."

"But how is she to be coaxed to go? On what pretence could we persuade her to make the journey?"

"All that I have considered, and it will be easy enough. I thought I knew her the instant she entered our glass room; and my guess has been confirmed to-day. I saw her portrait in a locket of Levisne's, at the old house; and to-day she has received a letter from him, which I read. She is his *fiancée*—and I will serve her out. But where do you suppose he is?"

"How should *I* know?"

"On board the *EIONE*, at Hennebon! Only seven leagues from the Château. And why is the Signor *there*, I wonder?"

At this question, thus suddenly put, she fixed her dark eyes upon her Uncle, and perceived a slight embarrassment in his manner, and also that he turned away his face, in order to avoid her searching glance.

“Did you know he was in France, Marquis?”

“On my honour, no. I swear it by all the saints. But go on with your plan of entrapping that young girl. Never mind the Jew. Three thousand francs for a dozen cartes! Does not that sharpen your dull wits?”

“Of course it does. Listen then. She is alone in Paris with her sick mother. Their old friend the Doctor, who escorted her about, has left; and the other Doctor goes to them but once a day. But that fine beau of hers may join them soon, and what we do we must do at once. Here then is my plan. You must get some Englishman—the waiter of the Hotel d’Angleterre will do—to translate for me into English what I have written in this note. Then I will copy it in her lover’s hand so skilfully that she will never know the letter did not come from him—and you shall present it to her to-morrow night at dusk,—and start off with her at once. She will go of course. You will not want me. I shall stay here, and take care of her Mamma.”

The Marquis read the draft of the proposed note, by which poor Nelly was to be entrapped, and clapped his old bony hands in approbation

of the scheme. But on second thoughts the old sinner changed his tune.

“No, Giovanna. It will not do, after all. The risk is too great. The police will be down upon us, and we shall get into a mess. I dare not venture on such a step.”

“But you can prove that she went with you of her own accord. How could you force her to go? The idea is absurd. And then the signed receipt. The studies, too, are classical and chaste. You may see fifty such in cases in the public streets. Besides, she would not dare to publish what had occurred. I shall receive her when you bring her back; and her fond Mark, and her dear Mamma will never know a word of what has happened. The secrets of the black Château she will never dare to divulge. The first Napoleon once said, ‘When the linen is too dirty it must be washed at home.’ Her two days’ absence from her mother I can find some story to explain. I am their *friend*, you know, and they put faith in *me*. Besides, the portraits are for a Pacha, and her woman’s vanity will be tickled at the thought. Who knows what may come of it? Is she not a daughter of Eve, and

like all the rest of us womankind? A fig for your difficulties. I do not see one."

"Very well, then," replied the Marquis. "I will get the note translated at once, and tomorrow you shall copy it, and I will present it, as you say. But you must come with us, Niece. I cannot leave you behind. Angelo is not to be trusted on a job like this. It must be first-rate work. Nothing else will do."

Giovanna shook her head, and smiled:—

"I have my own little interests to provide for, Uncle dear,—and Paris is the safest place for me just now. Don't look so innocent. You are found out. I know you well."

They both laughed significantly, and wished each other *Bon soir*. The Marquis went to keep an appointment with a friend; and Giovanna returned to her lodging on the Quai.

The next morning, a tall dark young man visited that same studio, and sat for a C.D.V. The Marquis was not there; he was playing billiards with the young Cantab of the Hotel de N——, and lightening him of his tin—a more profitable occupation, as it happened, than

helping to amuse the sitters, or selling indecent photographs upon the sly. The Malay—who was an operator there—had absented himself too—possibly through fear of the Marquis's stick; and Giovanna was left alone to prepare and develop plates, while an artist, kept for the purpose, posed the sitters. She had just completed the development of the first negative of the sitter who had just arrived; but when she laid it against her dark sleeve in order to judge by reflected light of its effect, she almost sank upon the floor with terror—for the image was that of Xenosthes, the detested Jew!

Her first impulse was to bolt the door of the dark room; her next, to hand the plate to the artist through the partly opened door, and *then* bolt herself in. But, alas, for all her attempts at concealment. It was Xenosthes himself who took the plate from her hand; and in doing so, he pushed the door wide open, and walked in. There he stood before her—the man whom she had tried to poison! There stood the pair, at last—face to face in that little operating room, with its sickly yellow light!

The Jew closed the door behind him, and addressed the lady in his kindest tones. Her

own mother's voice could not have been more affectionate and reassuring.

“Do not be alarmed, Giovanna,” he said, “I have not come here for any purpose of revenge. You hear the roaring traffic outside—your friend the artist is in the next room—and you are safe, of course. Your Uncle, also, can tell you that it is full two months since I returned from the west; and if revenge had been my motive I could have had it before this. Why then am I here? I will tell you, and you can doubt no longer. It is simply to FORGIVE you, and to say adieu for ever. There was wrong, I grant, and irritation on both sides. For years you did your duty well and faithfully by me, and no sooner had I got the clue to your whereabouts, and felt that you were in my power, than my heart relented, and I determined to forgive you. I am an altered man now, and I hope a better; and I do forgive you from the bottom of my heart. You will never see me again, for I am leaving Europe in a day or two, for good. But I would not leave without removing from your mind all doubts and fears of my revenge. Adieu then, fair Italian. Keep that negative of me, as a memento of to-day.”

He turned away and left her, without another word. Before she could recover from her astonishment, her hated visitor was gone; and a minute or two after, she saw from the window his tall figure striding down the street.

In the afternoon Xenosthes met the Marquis at an appointed place.

“She has taken alarm,” said the latter, “and I cannot induce her to leave Paris. I told you so last night. By the strangest chance she intercepted to-day a letter from Levisne to his sweetheart, who is staying here for a time, and from that she learnt that you had returned, that your yacht was at Hennebon, and that you had some strange duty to perform—towards herself, of course.”

“Stuff. Your wits are half asleep, Adolphe. I have seen her myself, this very morning, at the studio. I have been alone with her in the dark room. I have reassured her with a full and free pardon, delivered in the kindest of tones—enough to soften the arch-fiend himself. She will go with you now. She *must* go. I must and will have my revenge. I have sworn it to my infernal self, and you know I never break that oath. It is but a small matter. It will do

her no great harm. A fright only—nothing more; but *that* she must and shall have. Think of the reward I offer for your help. But the Château Noir it *must* be. *Here* I should not be safe from the police.”

“Double it then, and I consent. Remember, she is my Niece.”

“Agreed. Fix the day. The place to be the Château Noir.”

“Then, say three days from this. I cannot spare her sooner. I have a job on hand which must be done. Some negatives for a Pacha; and the reward he offers is as high as yours.”

So thus the bargain stood.

The reader will hardly need to be informed that Nelly had visited that studio on the Boulevards, with her friend Dr. Brownlow, a day or two before he left Paris. On that occasion Giovanna first saw her, and recognised her for the original of the portrait in Mark's case. She perceived too, on that same occasion, the admiration of the Pacha for the young English girl of whom he had caught a glimpse in the studio; and when, the next day, his

Highness's fat emissary called, and begged for a print of the *belle Anglaise*, she resolved, with that prescience which had aided her in many a dark plot, to take the portraits home herself, and reconnoitre where the young beauty lived. As the plot thickened, the scheming Italian girl thought it wise to take a lodging in the same house with Nelly, and make friends with one thus highly honoured ; for an intrigue of that sort was to her the very breath of life.

CHAPTER 8.

A DOVE FOR THE COLOMBIER.

LATE in the afternoon of that same day, Nelly was surprised by a second visit from the physician, — he having already called in the morning, as usual. He was that friend of Dr. Brownlow's who had made a special study of her Mamma's complaint, and whom they had gone to Paris expressly to consult. A second visit from him on the same day, so contrary to usual custom, had something ominous about it, and seemed to bode no good.

“Well, Mademoiselle,” he asked, “how is your Mamma now?”

“Oh, she is so much better to-day,” Nelly replied. “She has never once complained of

pain, and has been dozing a great deal. Her spirits have been unusually good too, when awake. I never saw poor Mamma look so happy as she has done to-day,—and she talked quite composedly.”

The Doctor went in to see his patient; but she was asleep, and he did not therefore disturb her.

“Have you anyone here whom you could send to fetch me during the night, in case of emergency?” he enquired, as he returned to the sitting-room.

“Oh, Sir, why do you ask?” said Nelly, with a look of intense anxiety.

“Because she might not be so well, perhaps, in the night, and might want another composing draught. But I must see her before it is administered.”

“Is she in any danger?” asked Nelly, in a voice scarcely articulate through emotion.

The Doctor shook his head ominously.

“It is my duty, dear young lady, to tell you the truth. Your Mamma is dying. She cannot last many days. All I can do now is to soothe her with minute doses of morphia. She might otherwise suffer greatly. A sudden change

came on for the worse yesterday evening. She is now, I fear, past all human help. I telegraphed this morning to Dr. Brownlow to come here at once. It is sad to think that you are left here all alone—very sad—very.”

At that instant some one tapped at the door. The Doctor opened it, and let in Giovanna. She was the bearer of a telegram from Napoléonville, which ran thus

“I hope to be with you, Miss May, in two days from this. Please expect me.”

“LORENZO WINTER.”

“Is he an intimate friend?” asked the Doctor, when he had read the telegram.

“He is a kind gentleman who met me yesterday in the Louvre. He has engaged the room upstairs, in order to be near us.”

“Did you ever see him before?”

“No, never.”

“And this Italian girl—who is she?” he whispered.

“A kind creature who lodges upstairs, and helps us all she can.”

The Doctor looked thoughtful. “I wish Brownlow was here,” he said. “Mind now—send for me at once if you are in any trouble.

Do nothing without first consulting me. Promise me faithfully."

But poor Nelly could only faintly answer, "Yes." She trembled in every limb, and turned deadly pale; but she did not burst into tears, or quite lose her self-command.

"I will send you a nurse at once," the Doctor added. It is absolutely necessary now. She is a most respectable woman, and you can trust her the same as you would me. Of your other friends, whom you have picked up here, I know nothing. Do you understand me? Be on your guard. Paris is a bad place."

The Doctor and Giovanna left the room together; and Nelly went in to her Mamma, and gazed fondly upon her sleeping face—so soon to sleep the sleep of death! As she gazed—and gazed—the thoughts of all the past crowded thick upon her memory—and at last the big tear drops came, and broken choking sobs.

Thus an hour, or more, passed on; and then another tap at the door announced the arrival of the nurse. Kind Doctor, to send a trusty friend to that poor girl's aid.

At last the shades of evening closed in, and

Nelly was seated again at the window of their sitting room—that same open window at which Mr. Winter first saw her seated, two nights before, radiant and happy, watching with eager pleasure the bustle in the street beneath. But how changed now was that lovely face—with the eyes red with weeping—and the sad thoughts far away!

Again a tap was heard at the door, and the voice of a man talking to Giovanna. Before Nelly could creep on tiptoe across the room, and answer the summons for admission, the door was opened from without, and the Marquis and his Niece walked in. The former bore in his dress and manner the appearance of a man who had travelled far in hot haste, and who is the bearer of important news.

“Is this young lady Mademoiselle May?” he demanded of Giovanna.

The Italian girl nodded assent, and fixed her dark eyes upon Nelly, who already stood trembling before them, with a strange pre-sentiment of evil.

“Then,” said the old man, “I must beg leave to deliver into your own hand, Mademoiselle, this note, which I have brought myself, at the utmost

speed of express train, direct from the hand of the writer, who is staying at my château, many leagues from hence. I grieve to be the bearer of such sad news, but the letter will explain all. Please to read it yourself.”

Nelly cast a trembling glance at the figure of the traveller—short and wiry—with iron grey hair, grey moustache, and wicked grey eyes—and felt at once that instinctive aversion and distrust which a bad character always inspires at first sight. Do not suppose, selfish, cruel, dishonest man, that you can pass muster amongst your fellows for true coin. It is not so. You have set a mark upon yourself as surely as God set one upon Cain, and it is a mark which all men can interpret, if they will. Every base and selfish thought is not only a stain upon the mind, but stamps its legible impress upon the face, the gait, the manner. It exerts a pull upon every muscle of expression; and in time, these muscles, often pulled by the same strain, accommodate themselves to it, and tell an outward tale of the evil forces that are at work within. Thus, there is a visible something about every bad man, which warns his fellow creatures to beware of him, if they will interpret it aright.

Nelly took the note from the hand of the cobra who brought it, and read as follows :—But, cobra did I say? Forgive me, poor snake, so foul a libel. *You* are as you came from the hand of your maker, and your venom is *his* work. You use it only to kill your lawful prey, or in self-defence; and you know no more harm in using it than the ox does in using his tooth to crop the grass. But the venom in the heart of a bad man is his own foul work—and he knows it. The cobra is an innocent babe compared with him. *It* has no conscience—no abstract knowledge of good and evil—no power of choice—no privilege to be wicked if it chooses, in defiance of broken laws. I beg a thousand pardons of the poor snake for comparing a bad man to *it*.

Nelly took the note from the Marquis's hand, and read as follows :

“Come to me at once, oh, dearest of my heart, come. I cannot die until I have seen you once more. Come and receive my last breath. Your devoted lover, Mark Levisne, asks of you this last favour. I am lying here, mortally wounded in a duel. I cannot live many hours. Come, oh, come to me at once, my darling pet.”

The note was to all appearance in Mark's

hand-writing, but the expressions were strange, and not like his. They were French, theatrical, overstrained. There was nothing of the plain common-sense Englishman about them. Nevertheless, a mist came over poor Nelly's eyes as she read those horrid words, and her knees tottered under her. A second time she strove to read the note, and extract all its terrible meaning—but in vain. The lines became like red-hot bars before her eyes—or rather, like chains made up of red-hot links—and the words seemed to writhe about as if on fire. But still she stood up before the guilty pair, and did not faint, or scream, or wring her hands, or burst into a wild paroxysm of grief. As she looked into their hard unpitying faces, and noted their cold eyes watching her every movement, and smiling cynically on the tortures of their victim, that mark that I spoke of just now—stamped broad enough and deep enough upon the old man's face to be plainly read, even in the first bewilderment of a mental agony—told its hideous tale, and reassured her. She thought that perhaps it was all a deception—a snare to entrap her into some bad place. He was a bad old man, she could plainly see—and Giovanna was bad too, for there was no pity, or

sympathy in her pale face now—only a pair of large stony eyes, watching her curiously, as a surgeon's might a case of vivisection. Perhaps the two were in league together, and it was all a trick. Paris was a bad place, and she was all alone there with a poor sick mother. But if not? If her poor Mark was really dying, and she should refuse to go to him? Oh, think of that other horror, worse than all—for *her* to refuse *his* last request!

These thoughts passed quickly through her burning brain, and then, as a last despairing hope, she fell upon her knees before the bad old man, and implored him not to deceive a poor friendless broken-hearted girl. She appealed to his sense of honour—to his manhood—to his common feelings of humanity, if they were not all extinct—to tell her truly, was it really as the note said?

But she appealed to him in vain! He lifted her gallantly from the ground, and repeated the cruel and the monstrous lie. Her lover, he assured her, on his solemn oath, was lying mortally wounded at a château many miles distant, and had scarcely twelve hours to live. Every moment was precious, if she wished to

see him alive once more. She could return to her mother's side the next day, but if she wished to see her lover alive once more, she must start at once. The château where he was lying, at the brink of death, was fully sixty leagues distant; and in half an hour the last train to the nearest station would depart. A carriage was at the door ready to take her to the terminus; and he, the Marquis, would himself escort her to his château, and see her safe back. But it was a question of minutes. There was no time for preparation. She must go as she was. He had solemnly promised her lover that he would use all means short of force to take her to his side; "but," he added, "if you doubt me, Mademoiselle, I must return alone. I cannot make you go against your will." And then, as he saw her still hesitate, he added, looking at his watch, "You have just three minutes to decide. We have lost much time. I cannot wait longer, or I shall lose the train myself."

So saying, he seated himself upon a chair, and looked down upon the watch which he held open in one hand, whilst he coolly twirled his moustachios with the other.

The poor girl, thus terribly beset, went in with the note to her dying mother, but found her still asleep. Then she put on her hat and cloak,—enclosed the note quickly in an envelope, with a line to the Doctor, and gave it to the nurse to deliver when he came,—and was ready to start. Once—twice—twenty times she kissed her mother's pale forehead, lying there so cold and still; and then, with bursting heart, tore herself away. It was a last parting. She never saw her poor Mamma again!

Sobbing and trembling she followed the Marquis down stairs, and then, without a word to Giovanna, entered the carriage, and they drove off. It happened that there was a stoppage for a minute or two at the corner of the street, and the Malay, who had so often annoyed her with his vulgar stare, thrust in his hand through the open window, and dropped a small note upon her lap. Her handkerchief was at her eyes at the time, and she did not perceive the act; but the Marquis did, and read the note. It ran thus:—

“Do not go with him, dear Miss. I have tryed to warne you, but culd not. What he has tolled you is all a ly.”

As the old man pocketed the note, his fingers crunched it into a mass, his teeth ground together, and his grey eyes flashed revenge and hate. He looked through the window, but the Malay was not to be seen. Then he got out of the carriage, and looked behind it, but he was not there. He had vanished as suddenly as he appeared. As the Marquis took his seat again, the diabolical expression of his features, which did not at once smooth down, was noticed by his companion, and a strange thought suddenly flashed across her mind. Could he possibly be the Adolphe, of whom she had so often read in Mark's letters? And could the Italian girl, at their lodgings, who then called herself Beatrice, be the wicked Giovanna? And if so, what were they then wanting to do with *her*? She remembered also that when, a few days before, Dr. Brownlow, on one of her walks with him in the Boulevard, had taken her into a photographer's studio for her *carte-de-visite*, she had seen that very same old man conversing with a dark Oriental grandee, whose eyes had followed her impudently about the room. She remembered also, on leaving the place, that a carriage stood at the door, and

that Dr. Brownlow pointed out a royal crest upon the panel. These thoughts and recollections flashed quickly across her mind, as they drove on again towards the terminus ; and she began to feel certain that the note was a forgery, and herself the victim of some infamous plot. But whither were they then taking her, and for what purpose ? It mattered not. She resolved, as soon as the carriage stopped, to put herself under the escort of a policeman, and return home.

They soon arrived at the Terminus—that of the Paris and Nantes railway—and the Marquis handed her gallantly out.

“I will now wish you good night, Monsieur Adolphe,” she said, firmly, “for it is my intention to go with you no further. I know who you are now ; and if you dare to offer any impediment to my leaving you, I will call for help from the police.”

The Marquis merely shrugged his shoulders, and smiled. “I was prepared for this, Mademoiselle,” he said, “and I only wonder that you did not know me before. It is true, I *am* Adolphe. But that does not alter the main fact which concerns yourself. I tell you again that

your lover is now in a dying state at my château, pierced through the side by a bullet from Signor Xenosthes, of whom you have heard, no doubt. The Signor has escaped in his yacht, and he has left your lover in my charge, with instructions to defray all expenses. When gentlemen quarrel, this sort of thing is always the result. If you return with me now, you may be in time to see Monsieur Levisne once more; but if you doubt me you will not. It is at your own free choice either to go or stay. It is a matter with which the police have no concern. It wants now a few minutes only to the departure of the train. Here are two Napoleons. Procure your ticket for Nantes, yourself, and go with me, if you choose; or if you prefer it, give them back to me and go home. It is for you to decide. You are the mistress of the situation. I have no wish to interfere with you in the least."

Poor Nelly almost sank to the ground in helpless despair. The tale was plausible. The yacht—the château—the dark Signor—the quarrel—the duel—it might all be true! If not, what could they possibly want with *her*? She resolved to brave all and go; and thus, in a few

minutes, she and her odious companion were seated *vis-à-vis* in a first-class carriage, rattling swiftly over the rails towards Nantes.

They spoke to each other not a word. There was an instinctive repulsion between them—the natural aversion of the dove for the rattle-snake, on the one hand—and the unpitying regard of the rattle-snake for its prey, on the other. The Marquis had not quite outlived the gallantry of his youth, nor was he altogether insensible to the charms of beauty; but the beauty of innocence was a reproach to him, and he hated it—for he knew that between his nature and what that expressed there could be no sympathetic bond. He wrapt himself in his cloak, and composed himself in his corner to sleep; while Nelly sat opposite to him, leaning back with her head against the cushions—the big tears coursing each other down her cheeks, and her heart filled with desolation and despair; for what was life then worth to her—with its bright hopes crushed, its best affections blighted, and all its sunshine gone?

And yet the thought that it *might* be all a hideous falsehood, fabricated for some vile purpose against herself, grew stronger as she

reflected on the facts; and in the unselfishness of love she strove to convince herself that it really was so. Then again, she asked herself, to what place were they then bound; and if for no good purpose, would it not be important for her to take note of every object, and the name of every station, as they passed along? Why, too, had the Marquis insisted on her taking her own ticket herself, and getting into the carriage last—acts so unpolite for him? With these thoughts she roused herself—wiped away her tears—and resolved to bear up more bravely, and be ever on the watch. And thus the train rattled them along—in the broad light of a summer moon—past the historic old towns of Orléans and Blois,—and when daylight came at last, through Anger, and to the splendid city of Nantes—by the side of the rapid Loire—through many a league of lovely scenery, swiftly passed.

It was breakfast time when the train reached Nantes; and as it did not proceed again for an hour, they got out to take refreshment, and as the Marquis said, to stretch their legs. But before leaving the carriage, Nelly asked him timidly how much further they would have to

go, and to what place they were bound? He yawned with apparent unconcern, and answered

“My château, Mademoiselle, is situated on the banks of the river Blavet, a few leagues from Hennebon, and many hours yet from here. We shall not arrive there until late in the afternoon. It is a dreary journey for an old man like me to undertake; and you can fancy how fatigued I must be in making it twice without rest. Pray forgive my having slept in your sweet presence. But we shall stop here an hour for our *déjeuner*. Permit me to offer you my hand, and help you out.”

Strange to say, when they left the carriage, and stood upon the platform, Giovanna joined them. She had accompanied them in another carriage. To Nelly's look of infinite surprise at seeing her there, she replied at once

“I have come to cheer you in your trouble, Mademoiselle. When I saw you start alone, my heart smote me, and I followed. We women have fond hearts, you know. I have come to help you, and to cheer you if I can. Perhaps, after all, it may not be so bad as this kind gentleman fears it is. Indeed I feel sure that it is not. Your lover is young and strong,

and will get over it, no doubt. Come, let me dry your eyes, for they are red with weeping. Cheer up. All will yet be well."

"Excuse me," said Nelly, shrinking back, and refusing her proffered aid, "I know now who you are, and the sight of you makes me shudder. I am sure you are not here for any good purpose,—and I mean to accompany you no further."

The Italian girl exchanged with her Uncle a meaning glance, and then turned upon their victim a cold hard stare, which passed into a smile of contempt and hate. She took her Uncle's arm into the breakfast room, and they walked off together, leaving Nelly to follow, or not, as she might think fit.

What was the poor girl now to do? To telegraph to Paris for money, and in due time return, would be simple enough. But the thought of the bare possibility of her Mark really dying at the château, outweighed every other scruple, and she followed the guilty pair; as, in fact, they knew she would. That the note was a forgery, and the tale a falsehood, she now felt *nearly*, though not *quite* convinced. Still, in order to solve all doubt, she resolved,

having come thus far, to brave the rest. Besides, their route lay on towards Hennebon, where her lover would be, if safe ; and she thought she might join him there, perhaps—or send to him for help, if needful. A few francs she had about her would suffice for any urgent necessity of that kind. She was a high-spirited self-reliant girl ; and in daring the worst of this adventure, for her lover's sake, she called to her aid all her powers of observation, and presence of mind. She resolved to go on with her companions, but to watch them closely, and be prepared.

After breakfast they started again—all three—in a third-class carriage,—Nelly taking her own ticket, with money which the Marquis gave her, for a little station called Landevent, which she looked for in the bill, and found, to her joy, was not far from Hennebon. It was a slow train, and nearly three o'clock when they arrived ; so that already a falsehood of the Marquis's stood detected—for he had not described the journey as being near so long as that. And then came the question, should she stop, and telegraph to Hennebon,—or still go on with *them* ? They hated her beyond a

doubt, and divined, with malicious pleasure, what was passing in her thoughts. But still they left her to herself.

At this little station the Marquis seemed well known. A ricketty *calèche*, with a leathern hood, a lean horse, and a boorish driver, were soon procured; and the old nobleman gallantly handed in his Niece, and then got in himself, leaving Nelly to follow, or not, as she preferred. She hesitated a moment—coloured deeply at the slight which had been put upon her—and then got in. Before they drove off, the Marquis beckoned to the station-master, who had been a looker-on, and called him to witness that the young *Anglaise* had joined them of her own accord, and that she was now at full liberty to leave them if she chose, and with money which he offered her to take her back to Paris, or elsewhere, if such should be her wish. But she refused to leave them. So the driver cracked his whip, and they went on again, together.

Whether Nelly's conduct was right or not thus far, it is difficult to say. Perhaps she ought not to have left her mother's side at all. Perhaps she ought to have turned back at the first Terminus,—or not have proceeded beyond Nantes

—or Landevent. Perhaps, as fresh incidents threw fresh light on the affair, and showed her increasing evidence of a plot against herself, she ought to have hesitated, and have left her lover to his fate—or at any rate have stopped to telegraph to him from Landevent. But the horrid thought that he *might* be dying after all—confirmed by the malicious pleasure which her hated companions always took in watching her indecision at every fresh move—prevailed at last, and she went on with them. Whether this was right or not, I cannot say. The reader must decide. But this I *will* say, that it was the conduct of a brave and a loving heart, regardless—too much perhaps—of self.

It was a sultry and oppressive afternoon, and yet the hood of the vehicle was kept up, and Nelly made to sit behind, in order, no doubt, that she might see as little as could be helped of the objects they passed along the road. But she kept her eyes about her, and noted all she could, and listened to every word which her companions said. When they had thus jogged slowly on for a dozen miles, or so, they had to stop an hour to bait the horse; and she was then told to dismount, and enter a little roadside inn.

As she did so, her quick eye and ear informed her that the landlord of the "*Croix Rouge, tenu par François Duval*," as intimated by a superscription over the doorway, knew the Marquis well, and respected him as little,—for after an impudent stare and a leer at *her*, he turned to her aristocratic *compagnon de voyage* with a familiar wink, and said, in a low tone

"Another young dove for the colombier, Monsieur Adolphe?"

"Hold your fool's tongue, *bête*," was the polite reply.

But the dove had caught the words, and, strange to say, they fell like music on her ear, for they satisfied her at last that Mark was safe. It was only a plot directed against herself. *He* was safe. Oh, what happiness, to feel convinced of that. She mounted the dark and dirty stairs which led to the prison chamber in which she was to stop, with a light step, and a heart disburdened of a load of grief. For herself she cared nothing, so that *he* was safe.

The little Inn at which they stopped was in a dull village street, and the window of the back room in which she sat looked out upon a yard. At any other time she might have been amused

by watching the queer rustic scenes enacted below by Breton peasants, in black, broad-brimmed hats, and waistcoats lined with a double row of buttons on each side; but her thoughts had other occupation then. How was she to escape from their dark designs, whatever they might be, and return quickly to her poor Mamma? Still she could not help observing that the strange creatures in the yard beneath were but a stage removed from the savage state, and far behind the Sark peasantry in the arts of civilized life. An hour of anxious waiting passed away in that dull room, and with no plan formed for meeting a danger the nature of which she could not conceive. At last she saw the *calèche* drawn out again, and the horse put to, ready for another start.

But before they left for this last stage, the Marquis took the *aubergiste* aside, and whispered in his ear

“You will have a guest here to-night, François, perhaps,—or, at any rate, to-morrow. A dear friend of mine, you understand. He must be treated well, and his comforts looked to by your wife. Get the *salon* ready for him, and your best *chambre à coucher*—not the one you put

the *Anglaise* into, mind; and let there be no whispering allowed, or any suspicious folk about. All to be dark as —. Lay in a stock of good common things, for he may stay with you some days—I can't say how long—perhaps a week. Wine I will send back in the *calèche*; don't let him touch your execrable stuff from Nantes. You will know him by these marks. Very tall and dark—with one shoulder up, like a *bossu*—a curly black beard—a sunburnt face—and eyes like a hawk's. If he gets *ennuyé*, let your eldest son take him down to the stream with his rod and line, and show him some sport. Keep him amused anyhow; but don't babble, for he is a *philosophe*; and don't let him come to *me* until *I* am ready, or it would spoil all. I must come for him myself. And another thing. He will want, by-and-bye, a horse—the best and swiftest in Bretagne—for a ride to Hennebon—only one. Let him have Leconte's. You understand? If the brute stumbles it is not our fault. The bill he will pay without reckoning up, and in hot haste; so don't rob yourself. He is a dear pet of mine. Use him well."

"Your devoted, humble servant always, Marquis," said François, with a low bow. "It

is a pleasure to serve you. Is that pretty dove for the dark *bossu* ?”

“*Mon Dieu* ! no. That is another matter quite. I shall be passing by here to-morrow with her, about this time, if all goes right, to put her safe into the train again, with a free ticket for the ark. Such doves as that are too dangerous for *us* to keep. I shall not stop, if *he* is here, until I am on my way back.”

At last they started again in the jingling old trap, and went jogging slowly on behind their raw-boned nag, with the shaggy blue sheepskin over his shoulders, and the bells upon his collar, and the rough rope harness, and the driver “he-he-ing,” and laying on ferociously with his heavy whip. ’Tis a true picture. How would you like to be a Frenchman’s horse ?

The scenery from Nantes, thus far, had been flat, arid, and ugly in the extreme ; but it became prettier, and more wooded as they approached the romantic banks of the river Blavet, which winds about deliciously between rocky heights and flowery meads, from its rise in the Montagnes Noires to its mouth at Hennebon. Every fresh league they knocked off now, the country became more hilly, the views more extensive, the fields

greener, and the road more varied and picturesque; with many a grand old oak and elm in the hedgerows by their side, and many a shady green lane leading to a thatched and homely cot. At length the river came in sight, meandering at a vast depth beneath them, round the base of a steep cliff, the side of which they began presently to descend by an almost Alpine zigzag pass; and then a sudden turn round a sharp elbow brought into view a long avenue of dark fir trees, and the high pointed roofs of a black old building by the river side. It was the Château Noir. The trio from Paris have arrived safe. The *calèche* is before the gate. The young dove is about to enter that sacred retreat—the *colombier*, as it was facetiously called by the *aubergiste*.

CHAPTER 9.

—
THE CAGE.

It was late in the day when the travellers pulled up before the entrance gates of the Château Noir; and the setting sun was tipping with deep copper colour the high roofs and tall chimney stacks of as strange a building as one often sees. Its original architect, about a century and a half ago, was a wealthy shipowner, of the neighbouring seaport of l'Orient; and after erecting one of the queerest places under the sun, in a style more in accordance with his own notions, as a naval architect, than with that of any other dwelling on dry land, he had the walls licked over with coal-tar, and all the wood work painted white, from a theory he held re-

specting beauty, viz., that it must necessarily flow out of what was right. Therefore, he argued, since coal-tar is a good thing to keep out damp, and white paint a good thing to preserve wood from the splitting effects of sunshine, the use of the two for these respective purposes must needs be in accordance with good taste. Nor was the worthy shipwright far wrong, after all. Strange to say, the effect of the white doors and window frames upon the black ground was good,—particularly when heightened by some pretty ornamental work round the jambs and architraves, painted in bright vermillion, and cobalt. Those who build square boxes, and colour the plastered walls with hot staring yellow ochre, and paint the woodwork a dull red, or black, should take a hint from the Château Noir. I say this seriously, and not in jest,—for I have only to look off my paper, and out of the window of the room in which I am writing, to see a dozen such staring yellow square boxes as I describe, disfiguring one of the prettiest little bays in the British Isles. The surroundings of the château were, however, in more questionable taste, the grounds having been thickly planted with firs and cedars, which,

as they grew up, cast a gloomy and funereal look over the place. What with the black house, and these dark trees about it, it is not therefore surprising that in the course of time the original name of this strange property became changed, and that the title of "Château de l'Orient" gave place to the shorter and more appropriate soubriquet of the "Château Noir."

But as for conveying to the reader's mind an adequate idea of this strange old place, the offspring of as odd a whim as ever entered a man's brain, the thing is impossible without a dozen different photographs of it, at least, taken from as many different points of view. But this much can be understood, viz., that in addition to its singular outside colour and decoration, it resembled floating structures in other respects; for instance, in the graceful sweep of its leading lines,—the absence of squareness, straightness, and right-angled corners,—and in the hints which had been taken from the fanciful sterns, poops, quarter-galleries, bows, and figure-heads of the odd-looking men-of-war of those days. Additions had also been made to the building from time to time, without regard to the original symmetry of the plan; and as it soon became

evident that its flat wooden roofs, at first put up, and which were caulked and pitched, were much given to leak, as well as being costly to keep in repair, they had been removed, and high pointed ones, covered with small black tiles, erected in their stead. On the whole, the building, when fresh and new, was not so inartistic in effect as one might suppose; but as, in the course of time, it passed from hand to hand, and was left to go without a repetition of tar or paint—for what Frenchman ever dreams of painting the outside of a house more than once—it got to look seedy, like an old black coat; and the touch of time did not beautify it, as it does other old buildings when left in a state of neglect. The property had passed to the present owner through his great grandmother, the daughter of the original architect, having married a scion of the noble family De Lux. For a century or more it had been left to go to wrack, and it now looked as wicked an old place as you could desire to see, and very much like an ugly black stain upon the lovely scenery around it. It is only necessary to add that one side of the building sprung perpendicularly out of the river, which washed

its walls—upon which was left a record of the previous winter's highest flood, in the form of a green belt of moss and slime, a couple of metres broad, above the present summer level of the stream.

For several years the place had been deserted by its present owner, and the land belonging to it let to a small farmer, who lived in the out-buildings, and, after a fashion of his own, took charge of the main dwelling. But towards the close of the previous autumn the Marquis had taken the place into his own hands, and converted it into a sort of manufactory; but of *what* the semi-barbarous people of the neighbourhood could not clearly understand. Report said that a black art was carried on within its dingy walls, for a black and an infamous purpose; but the exact nature of that purpose those plain rustic folks could not, happily, divine. Certain it was, however, that ribald laughter, and women's screams, were sometimes heard within by the peasants passing to their work in the fields, and by the bargemen gliding along the stream beneath its windows. But its inmates, whatever their occupation might be, held but little commune with the outer world, and kept aloof from

strangers; while heavy boxes passed to and from the nearest railway station, as well as jars and cases of chemicals; and sometimes scraps of paper would be picked up in the neighbouring fields, or be found floating down on the river beneath the walls, having been blown there by the wind, which bore hideous and strange pictures that raised a blush on modest cheeks.

Such was the Château Noir, — too justly named! Within that black and lonely house amongst the firs, one of the brightest discoveries of modern science was being prostituted to a vile purpose, on a large scale. Photography has originated a new and obscene traffic; and here a supply was raised to meet a portion of the very large demand. To this infamous place Miss Nelly May had been inveigled by an atrocious lie, and for an object which the pen can scarce relate. Let those who purchase indecent photographs — or from any motive whatever consent to look upon such things — —reflect on the scenes which must accompany the taking of the negatives, and the wholesale printing of the proofs. It is not to the honour of the French that they have the credit of being the largest producers of such pictures,

and of possessing, in the highest degree, that pruriency of imagination which can invent a constant succession of fresh scenes. It is not to the honour of the French, with all their vaunted refinement and *politesse*, that they should take the lead in the manufacture of every description of obscene article, no matter what. Their present Emperor is, however, striving to wipe away this shocking stain from the character of the great and clever people whom he rules.

We left the *calèche* standing before the entrance gates, at the end of a long avenue which led straight to the house. They were locked; and it was not until after repeated ringing of the bell that anyone within could be made to answer the unexpected summons,—although the laughter of girls at a distance could be plainly heard. At last, however, an impudent-looking youth came swaggering towards them with the key. He wore a pair of light cotton trousers, of the cut called “pegtops,” from their amplitude about the loins, fastened by a leathern belt around the waist; and a striped flannel shirt, open at the collar, and with the sleeves turned up. Both these garments were well bespattered with black silver stains. He had greasy curly

black hair, black eyes, and ruddy cheeks, and but for his vulgar impudence of bearing, might perhaps have been pronounced a handsome lad. The Marquis was in a towering passion at being kept so long waiting at the gate; and the sight of this swaggering youngster, whistling, and dawdling along the avenue towards them at his own pace, chucking up the key and catching it as he went, made the fiery old man's choler rise to its boiling point. As the youth coolly unlocked and opened the gates for the vehicle to pass through—leering as he did so at the fresh importation upon the back seat beneath the hood—his master took the driver's heavy whip, and watching his opportunity, gave the impudent young fellow a smart lash with it across the legs. At this hint to be more alert the next time his master was waiting at the gate, the youth set up a yell of pain, and flung himself upon the grass, venting, as he rubbed his tingling calves, a volley of threats and curses against them all. Nor was he long in putting one of the mildest of these threats in execution, for the vehicle had scarcely gone many yards, before a large stone which he hurled at it burst through the leathern hood behind. Happily it

struck no one ; but the Marquis instantly jumped down, pulled from his waistcoat pocket a small pistol, and fired slap at the youth. The ball, however, missed, as might have been expected ; and then the young miscreant thought it high time to absquatulate behind the trees.

“ What a savage you are, Uncle,” said Giovanna, as her amiable old relative remounted, and took his seat by her side, “ When will you learn to control your ferocious temper ? The poor boy had done nothing, that I could see, to vex you ; and now you have spoiled one of our best subjects — Truth crowned by Apollo. That mark across his legs would show on every negative for the next month to come. You may knock off two hundred and fifty francs for *that* stupid piece of folly ; and that’s how the money goes. What is the use of *my* working and slaving, if *you* can’t control your horrid temper ?”

“ Apollo, indeed !” muttered her Uncle, as they drove on. “ Call things by their right names, do. Art-studies ! Pshaw ! The humbug in the world is enough to make one sick. And now look out again ; there are a Venus, and a Psyche, I suppose, giggling at us out of window, instead of minding their work ; and a fat Juno

in the rear. Take that you idle, impudent young ——.” And as he said it, he cracked the long heavy whip, with a louder report than that of the pistol, within an inch of the girls’ faces,—making them jump back into the room as if their noses had been whipped off.

“ That old Brown,” he added, “ has been at the bottle again, I see. *Mille tonnerres de Brest* upon the sot. She is incorrigible. It is no good my talking and moralizing—I must start her off. Look at all those pressure frames, Giovanna, out still in the damp air, while the girls are idling at the window, and that young scamp playing off his impudence on me; and Angelo, I’ll be bound, is on the spree too. Drink is the bane of the disgusting old Saxon, and I shall start her off at once. I will not have drunkards here. Anything but that. When a person takes to drink, you had better knock him on the head at once. Innocent pleasures are one thing, but it is another to make yourself a real beast. The world will be wiser some day; and I rather think *we* are enlightening it a bit. For the want of that fanciful thing called Modesty, you may be fined and imprisoned for twelve months; while for

being found roaring drunk in the gutter, you simply have to pay a five-franc piece, and get off with a reprimand. It drives one mad to think of the follies and the inconsistency of the age."

The *calèche* was now at the door of the Château; and Giovanna got out on one side, while the Marquis, with recovered politeness, handed out Nelly on the other.

"Come with me, Mademoiselle," he said, kindly. "I will conduct you at once to your lover."

She had no choice but to follow, while he led the way across a large open space, fitted up with slanting benches for printing frames—a hundred or more of which were still left out in the heavy dew. As she passed between the rows, she could see on the backs of the negatives, indistinctly, strange-looking figures, the nature of which, happily, she could not distinctly make out. They then entered a narrow winding walk amongst the fir trees; and she followed her conductor for some distance in almost total darkness, until they emerged upon a terrace skirting the river, at the end of which was a sort of summer-house, or

belvedere. The Marquis led her up to it—unlocked the door—threw it open—and requested her to walk in.

But she hesitated. Now that the crisis had actually come, her courage failed. Her heart beat violently—her knees trembled—and she leant against the parapet of the terrace for support.

“What is your fear, Mademoiselle?” said the old nobleman, in his blandest tones. “Have you borne up so bravely thus far, and quelled your doubts, and come with us of your own accord, as we can prove, to break down like a silly *niaise* at last? Believe me, not a soul in this place dares even to *look* upon you without *my* leave. *I* am master here, and the slightest glance of my eye is law. That you must have seen already. What then have you to fear? You cannot surely think that *I* have any wish to injure you; *I*, who have already offered you the chance, as well as the means, of returning to your friends, if you choose? Besides, I *dare* not injure you. There is a law in France which protects you as strongly now, as if you were walking in the Place Vendôme; and that law I dare not break. I *dare* not injure you, if

I would ; and you *must* know that you are safe."

"Why then, have you brought me here?" she asked, in a faltering voice. "Oh, tell me that my friend is safe and well, and let me return in the *calèche*. Be generous for once. Relent. Think of my poor dying mother ; and that you have dragged me all these leagues away from her. Oh ! let me go, I pray. I am helpless and in misery ; a stranger, with scarcely a friend in France."

"It is for *you* to be generous, Mademoiselle," he replied, "and to grant *me* a little favour first. The example of generosity must first be shown by *you* ; then perhaps my old heart, which has become somewhat hardened by long buffeting with the world, may soften and relent. Oblige me first. Come with me into yonder room, and I will tell you how. It is not much I ask of you. Promise me to grant it, good-naturedly, to-morrow morning, and then we will treat you kindly in return, and at noon you shall leave for Paris again in the *calèche*. I myself will escort you to Landevent, and give you a ticket back."

But Nelly looked wistfully along the reaches of the river, which made a sudden elbow at that point,—and scanned the towing path on the other side,—casting a hurried glance over the lanes and fields about, to see whether a scream for help could be heard from any neighbouring house, or by any peasant who might be near, or by any bargeman who might be navigating the stream. But it all seemed a blank solitude; and her heart would have sunk with terror but for the blessed assurance which supported her, viz., that her Mark was really safe, on board the yacht at Hennebon, about five leagues distant, and therefore within a walk. Mr. Winter, too, was near her—a man as strong and bold as Mark. His telegram had been dated from Napoléonville, a town as near to her as Hennebon, and within a walk also. On each side of her, therefore, was a trusty friend, if she could but let him know her plight.

“Come, Mademoiselle,” said the Marquis, in a sterner key, as he watched her eye, and read her thoughts. “Be kind enough to enter that room at once. I am not a very patient man, as you may know; and you have tried my

temper quite enough. My word is law within these walls. Enter that room at once."

So saying, he took her rudely by the arm, pushed her in, followed her, and locked the door behind him.

It was a small square chamber, in a cheerless and dilapidated state, built over a boat-house, and having but one door by which they entered, and one window, opening inwards down to the ground, and overlooking the placid river which washed the walls of the building, and flowed sluggishly beneath. The papering was old, discoloured with damp, and in many places torn off, and hanging down in strips. The furniture consisted of a rude table, made of poplar, in the centre; a couple of hard chairs; and a long box or ottoman, without a cover, and having a large iron ring at each end. Against the wall, opposite to the door, hung a solitary print of a piece of sculpture; and lastly, the floor was an inch thick with dirt, although it was inlaid, and had once been stained and *ciré* in the French style.

"Now, Mademoiselle," said the Marquis, as they stood in the middle of the room, before the table, "hear what I have to request. In the

first place, give me back that note, by means of which I enticed you hither."

"Indeed, Sir, I have not got it," she replied. "I enclosed it, before I left home, in an envelope addressed to Mamma's doctor, which I begged the nurse to give him when he came. I did this in order that he might be able to tell her why I had left so suddenly, and at such a time. She would otherwise have been most anxious about me."

"Thousand thunders," growled the Marquis between his teeth. "Tell me no lies, Mademoiselle. You had not time to do anything of the sort. Had I thought you *could* have done such a thing, I should have asked you for the note before we left the house. Give it me back this instant, or I will have you searched—here on this very spot—and if it is found upon you your back shall smart for the falsehood you are telling. Give it up, I say, or I will use force. Lies will not answer here. We know how to deal with people who do not choose to tell the truth."

At this savage threat of violence, poor Nelly burst into tears, and reiterated her assertion that indeed she had not got the note.

The Marquis was too good a judge of human nature not to see that what she said was true. Where, then, was the use of bullying her? He assumed a kinder tone, although still deeply vexed.

“Forgive my passion, Mademoiselle, and make allowances. I am not used to deal with innocents like you; and bad habits grow upon a man. Look here.”

He opened the lid of the ottoman, and exposed to view some pieces of rope, a riding whip, and various old tools and leathern straps. After she had looked in, he closed the lid, and locked it; adding, as he did so,

“You spoke the truth, I know. But had you *not* done so I would have forced it from you. These old walls resound sometimes with the shrieks of the idle and the disobedient: but from doves like you I have only to ask a favour to be at once obeyed. Is it not so?”

But neither his remark, nor his sudden change of manner reassured the poor girl at all, and her tears continued to flow fast and thick. She had braved the worst, and now the worst was come; and yet she knew not, she could not as yet form a conception of what they wanted

her to do, or of the purpose for which she had been inveighed to that place.

“You are alarmed, Mademoiselle, I see. You are agitated with vain fears,” continued the Marquis. “But be calm, and listen to me patiently. No harm whatever shall happen to you, if you will be kind and obliging in the matter which I require you to do. I will tell you at once why you have been enticed here—for your lover is safe, of course—as you knew all along. Do me the favour to look at that old print upon the wall. It is a copy of a statue by Canova, now in the Borghese Palace at Rome. You may see it there, perhaps, one day, leaning on your lover’s arm, and thinking of the old Marquis—the *philosophe*. It is a portrait of the loveliest woman of her time—PAULINE, sister of Napoleon the First. She sat to the sculptor for her portrait—robed only as you see.”

Nelly looked at the picture through her tears, but said nothing. The old “*philosophe*” went on with his harangue.

“That royal lady, Mademoiselle—sister of an Emperor—had no mock modesty or false shame. She believed in the nobility of ART; but she

knew also that without models Art must cease,—without them there could be no more painted or sculptured representations of Nature's fairest work, for models are a necessity to the artist. Knowing this, that great lady condescended to unveil her beauties to the gaze of the sculptor. Had photography been known in her time, I do not in the least doubt, Mademoiselle, that that royal lady would have had innumerable cartes taken of her faultless form, for the admiration of the present as well as of all future ages. But unfortunately the art was not discovered until after her time; and thus the Cleopatras, and Phrynes, and Pauline Buonapartes have passed away, without leaving to posterity a single truthful image of their unrivalled charms."

He paused an instant, at this point of his harangue, in order to observe its effects on his companion. The reader must not judge her harshly, if I say that she felt for an instant a strong inclination to laugh outright. Her smile, at the discovery of the strange purpose for which they wanted her,—a purpose now sufficiently revealed,—and also at the methodistical whine in which the old sinner enunciated his sentences,

and approached the delicate request he had to make, — her smile, I say, showing like a rainbow through her tears, reassured him, and he continued thus :

“And what, Mademoiselle, do you suppose was the reply of the great and good Pauline—the exalted, the beautiful, the condescending sister of an Emperor—to an old lady, when that silly soul, with her English notions of propriety, enquired whether she had not found it a little *incommode* to sit to a sculptor? Her answer was this—delivered with child-like innocence and naiveté—“*Non, Madame, la chambre était chauffée.*” She had found no inconvenience at all—why should she? for the room was heated. And now, Mademoiselle, I will tell you why we have brought you here. It is that you may emulate the brave example of Pauline, and obey the honoured request of one of the first Princes in the world, who has become enraptured with your beauty. But I shall not require you to go through the same ordeal as Pauline, the Emperor’s sister. I promise you that no eyes save those of my Niece shall look upon you, and no hands but hers assist to place you in position. To-morrow the studio

shall be locked against all intruders, and devoted solely to the purpose for which I have brought you hither. It is but a small favour I ask of you, as a boon to ART. Twelve negatives only are required; and the instant they are taken, you shall have leave to depart. The job may be over by noon, if you will assist us heartily in the work; and you may then leave us at once, and by the next morning early you can be at your mother's side again. The old Marquis will then be forgiven, I know. Your charms, exhibited on the truthful carte, will be the admiration of crowned heads, and of the first artists in the world, who will sigh over perfections which neither their brush nor their chisel could so truthfully portray. Besides which, the elegant fables of antiquity will receive a new grace from the illustration which your beauty will afford of the poet's dreams. Look, Mademoiselle; here are a few crude and vulgar hints of the studies which his Highness proposes that we should make from you."

He took from his pocket a case containing a dozen small photographs of the C.D.V. size, and spread them out upon the table before her. By this time she had dried up her tears, and

begun to reflect on the peculiarities of her position ; while, as the truth burst upon her, respecting the object for which she had been entrapped, a smile stole once more over her face. But the Marquis did not mistake the meaning of that smile. He well knew that it was not one of gratified vanity, or amiable acquiescence in his wish. There was derision in it, and scorn upon her curling lip !

The cartes were what are called "ART-STUDIES," and were as far removed from open and avowed indelicacy as such things *can* be. But she had seen nothing of the kind before, nor had she conceived of the possibility of the existence of such pictures. Her compulsory examination of them was, therefore, not unmixed with curiosity, until she came to one of Truth crowned by Apollo, in which a female figure was represented in the same picture with the portrait of the youth who had opened the gate for the calèche. At this she blushed deeply, and pushed the rest of the pictures on one side, with a resolute air. The Marquis observed, with fury in his eye, the little impression which his logic had really made upon her ; and he then knew that his Niece would

have a troublesome sitter after all. It was a pity. It would occasion delay. There would be a risk of the discovery of the plot; while a still darker plot against another victim might have to be delayed. With an angry look, which he did not attempt to dissemble, he said, at last

“I will now leave you, Mademoiselle, to your own reflections, and to the careful study of these pictures, which will save time to-morrow in arranging the *poses*. You must pass the night here upon that couch, for I cannot accommodate you amongst the others within the house. They are not fit companions for you. My Niece will bring you some refreshment presently; and in the meantime I will leave you the key, so that you may, if you choose, lock yourself in. You now know exactly why we have brought you here; and you know also that resistance and obstinacy will only occasion delay in your return. I have the honour to wish you good night.”

He handed her the key, and, after leaving the room, barred the door on the outside, in order to prevent the possibility of her escape.

That strange scene over, the Marquis returned to the house, and joined his Niece in his own

private sanctum. There he found her enjoying a *petit souper* which she had provided for herself and him, during his long absence with the caged dove.

“I thought you were never coming back, Uncle,” she said. “What an immense time you have been with that impudent *Anglaise*. Do sit down, and eat something, for you must be quite exhausted. There is nothing which makes *me* so hungry as travelling, so you see I did not wait for you,—although our dinner at the *Croix Rouge* certainly took off the rough edge of my voracity.”

Her Uncle did not want pressing, but, after locking the door, sat down to the repast.

“Did they send *her* up any dinner, at the *auberge*?” he asked.

“No. It was forgotten.”

“We shall have trouble with that girl yet. It is an ugly job. I wish I had never undertaken it.”

“Pooh. What so easy as to put on the screw? She had her last meal at Nantes this morning, and she has had nothing since—not so much as a drop of water. I will forget to take her any supper to-night, or any breakfast

to-morrow morning; and by the time we are ready to begin, I promise you she will be as docile as a lamb."

"There will hardly be time for that mode of reasoning, Giovanna. Starvation is too slow work. This is a case in which we must be quick, or we may have the police upon our heels. She *must* leave here at noon to-morrow, come what may. There are two things I dread. First, the treachery of the Malay; and then the evidence from that note which she has left behind. She enclosed it to the Doctor, and he will find out, from the *concierge*, who *you* are, and then put the police upon our scent. I tell you we must be quick about this job, and get her off at once. I have given her a hint of whip and cord, and I promise you it had some effect. Those old rattletraps in the large box were a happy thought of mine."

"You men are all for violence; but with our sex it never answers. Leave her to me. To-night I will prepare two dozen plates, and the first thing to-morrow morning we will arrange the properties, and begin exposing at ten. By twelve it will be all over, and she can then start. A day's fasting, and a penance, will do

her good. Think of what *I* have had to go through, myself."

"Well, do as you like. I told the man with the *calèche* to put up here to-night, and wait."

"But what did you tell François?"

"That our dark friend would be at the *auberge* to-night. Ah, that is a plot more in my line, Giovanna,—and worth a dozen such as this. Exquisite, is it not? And to think that *you*, my brave girl, will help."

"Yes; but I am driven to it in my own defence. Ah, *sio mio*, you would sell me to him if I did *not* consent."

"The odious *gobba*. He is caught at last. He has thrust his own neck into the noose."

For two hours did that delectable pair continue to discuss their new plot against Xenosthes; and then the crafty Italian adjourned to the dark room, and prepared her plates for the morrow's work.

CHAPTER 10.

A LEAP IN THE DARK.

THE summer-house at the end of the terrace, in which Nelly was confined, had, as I said before, a door which was bolted on the outside, and a window opening inwards down to the floor, and overlooking the river beneath, which washed the walls of the building. It was fortunate that this window could be opened from within ; and as soon as the Marquis had left, and barred the door outside, the captive locked it on the inside, and then opened the window, and seated herself before it,—meditating on the peculiar difficulties of her case, and how she might surmount them, and, if possible, escape ; her fond hope being, that some bargeman, or peasant,

might perhaps come in sight, and be made to hear her scream for help.

As she sat thus, upon one of the hard chairs, before the open window, looking anxiously about her, she observed that the river was not wide, although it seemed to be deep; and also that there was a towing-path on the other side, which she knew must lead to Hennebon, where Mark was now living, on board the *ETONE* yacht. Oh, what happiness to think that the horrid story about *him* was false, and the note a wicked forgery! What was her present trouble compared with what it would have been, if she had found *him* in that black old house, lying upon the bed of death? One, at least, of her loved ones was still spared to her; and even if she should find herself compelled on the morrow to yield to the vile purpose for which she had been entrapped, yet she felt sure of *his* forgiveness, since it was for *his* sake that she had braved the risk. Still, it was sad in the extreme to be cut off thus from her poor Mamma's bedside, during her last hours,—although she did not blame herself for leaving, for it had always appeared to her that she was acting for the best.

But were there really no means of escape? Might not some barge pass along the stream? or might she not see some peasant on the towing-path, or in the fields, to whom she could call out, or make a signal of distress? With this fond hope she sat before the window, watching both the reaches of the river, and the country round as far as her eye could see, for the sign of any human being, male or female, to whom she might appeal for help. But she watched in vain! French peasants are early in their habits, and had long since retired to their beds; while sometimes many days would pass without a barge being seen upon that stream,—it being a mere branch of the main canal from Nantes to Brest. This the Marquis knew well enough; and he knew also, that if a young girl *had* been seen calling out from that window, it would only have raised a laugh, and have been construed against herself. Thus, hour after hour passed away, and at length darkness gathered over the desolate scene, without affording the poor captive a ray of hope. Neither did Giovanna appear with the promised supper; and her hunger was now beginning to be extreme. In the midst of her grief she had eaten but

little that morning at breakfast, and nothing on the previous day, after hearing the sad news from the Doctor of her mother's alarming state; so that her system was almost sinking for want of food. And then she thought of the long ottoman, with its hideous contents; and of the old man's threat of violence, if she dared to disobey! Oh, what was she to do? Were there really no means of escaping from that horrid room?

It was a lovely summer's night, and the full moon was already flooding the landscape with her silver rays; but the tall dark fir trees about the building intercepted them from that gloomy spot, and cast their own long ebony shadows across the elbow of the river, making it appear as black as ink. Still, cold and dismal as the water looked beneath the window, it was the only chance by which she could escape, and her thoughts, at length, became centered upon it. Seriously, she began to ask herself, "Can I drop from this window into the river, and swim across,—then walk in my wet clothes to the nearest house, and pray for help?"

It will be remembered that Mark had given her a few lessons in swimming, the year before,

in the little bay under their cottage at Sark ; while, after he left, she struggled on by herself, to try and master that delightful art. Every day during the remainder of the summer she took her dip, with old Nep for her companion and safeguard ; and after a time the happy moment came when she found her feet fairly off the bottom, and striking out. From that day she rapidly improved ; and before the end of the season she could swim fairly about twenty yards. She had also learnt to dive, and jump in head foremost, without the slightest fear, from a height of two or three feet above the surface of the water. And again, during her short stay in Paris, she had taken a course of improving lessons at the Ladies' Swimming Bath, which lay moored under the windows of their lodging on the Quay ; and this had given her more confidence, particularly in fresh water. The idea, therefore, seriously occurred to her at last, whether she might not be able to effect her escape by leaping into the water, and swimming to the opposite bank.

The idea, horrible as it may seem to some of my fair readers, and ludicrous to others, gained more and more in plausibility as she reflected

on the hopelessness of all other plans; and at last it took entire possession of her mind. She then endeavoured to foresee and provide for all the contingencies that might occur in the event of her making this desperate attempt. It first occurred to her that the cord which she had seen in the box might help her in lowering herself into the stream, or in preventing an accident afterwards, if she found herself unable to reach the opposite side. But alas, the box was locked; while in examining it carefully all round she again perceived the iron rings in the ends, to which she supposed the hands and feet were tied of the poor creature who was laid across it to receive the lash; so terribly had the threat of the old Marquis worked upon her imagination. This thought added wings to her fear, and confirmed her in her resolution. After turning over in her mind every possible plan which suggested itself of escaping by the river, there seemed to be only one, viz., to take off nearly all her clothes, tie them up tightly in a bundle, throw it into the middle of the stream, then leap in after it from the window, strike out for the opposite shore, and push the floating ball in front of her as she advanced.

Once arrived in safety at the opposite bank, she could dress herself in her wet clothes, and make for the nearest cottage, or farm house ; or follow the towing-path to the first lock, and there ask for help, food, and shelter, until a messenger could be sent for Mark.

But then another thought occurred to her. Would she be justified in risking her life in such an attempt? Would it not be more proper, after all, to yield quietly to a fate which she could not resist, and trust to the old man's promise to let her return to Paris the next day? or even to submit to torture rather than risk her life? What would poor Mark do if she were drowned? Think what *she* had felt at the thought of losing *him*. Once more she looked over the pictures upon the table, and thought of the hideous fate that awaited her the next morning, but the sight of them only made her courage rise. Where was the great risk, after all, in her proposed attempt? Had not Mark, a hundred times, leaped from a rock much higher than that window above the water, and risen again all joyous from the plunge? It was but to hold her breath, and leap boldly

in—not fall in—and all would be right. The risk was nothing, after all.

So, at last, she made up her mind to try the leap and the swim, and leave it to the Father of Mercy to protect his child in her escape from shame. Without another look upon the black water,—and with the resolve to plunge boldly in, head first, with a spring as far forwards as she could, and as obliquely, so as to reduce as much as possible the distance to be swum,—she proceeded partly to undress; for to swim in crinoline, or even in an English woman's ordinary bathing gown, would be nearly as impossible as to swim in a Turkish sack. It is a mistake to advance, in favour of crinoline, that if it renders death by fire extremely probable to the wearer, it has a set off by rendering death by drowning almost impossible to her. The contrary is the fact, because the air enclosed by a crinoline would support the middle of the body, and the lower extremities, while it compelled the deeper immersion of the head. The best swimmer in the world would not dare to leap into deep water, with a crinoline on. The odious fashion of wearing such an appendage has not a single recommendation.

It is an ugly and a stupid fashion, from every point of view.

And now behold her ready for the plunge. She has tied up her clothes into a tight compact bundle, leaving only one thin garment on, confined round her waist by a ribbon, to which was attached her purse, containing a few francs; and she has offered up, on her knees, a prayer to her Maker, without whose aid she had been taught that all human efforts are of no avail.

But before she leaps from the window sill into that dark flood, let me pause an instant to describe minutely the leading features of that bold attempt of a young English girl to escape from what *some* girls might think anything but an unpleasant necessity. *Some* girls, I say, because it has been affirmed by one of the leading photographers of the day, that the models who sat to him for his "Two Ways of Life," and other composition pictures including the nude figure, were women of the highest respectability and most unimpeachable morals. Be that as it may. The sill of the window, with the boathouse beneath, was about eight feet above the level of the water,—the width of the river was about forty yards,—the opposite

bank was low and convex,—and the water, to all appearance, was very deep on the concave side of the bend next to the summer-house, although apparently more shallow on the other. To only a *moderately* good swimmer, therefore, the plunge and the swim across would have been a mere act of sport; but allowance must be made for a young girl who had never yet ventured far beyond her depth, and whose natural courage was not, of course, equal to that of the other sex. Besides which, a sort of dismal horror was thrown over the adventure, by the fact of its being late at night, and that the moon, which was lighting up the rest of the landscape, happened to throw a deep shadow from the dark trees across that elbow of the river, so as to make the water look black, cold, and repulsive. It was, however, free from weeds in the deepest part; while its great apparent depth under the summer-house, when you reasoned upon it, ought really to diminish the risk of leaping into it from a height above. But, on the other hand, there was no help near; and to lose presence of mind, and fail in the attempt to reach the opposite bank, would be certain death. My *fair* readers will, there-

fore, I am quite sure, when they think of all these drawbacks to the adventure, pity poor Nelly, as she dragged her bundle to the window, and with beating heart looked down upon the uninviting river beneath.

But she must not stand gazing there, or all her courage will ooze out at her fingers' tips. Now, or never, she must take the plunge. The fatal moment has come, and she must not shrink back. Behind her are the brutal Marquis and the un pitying Giovanna, the rings and cords, the horrid studio, and direful disgrace. Before her are freedom, her lover's protection, a quick return to Paris, and her dying mother's last embrace. How can she hesitate, when all is ready—when the moment for deliverance has at length arrived?

She threw her bundle as far as she could into the sluggish stream, and then, for a few seconds, watched it sailing slowly down. This first desperate step taken, of parting with her clothes, she screwed up her courage to the sticking point, held her hands straight together before her head, bent her knees for a vigorous spring, drew in a long breath and held it tight between her teeth, and, with eyes wide open, launched herself gallantly off!

It was magnificently well done that spring into the black water. Mark himself could not have taken a finer plunge. In she went, not too much downwards, but obliquely, with her outstretched arms cleaving the way before her head, and her lower limbs pressed close together, and straight behind her as an arrow. But the whirl through the air, which lasted just half a second, was a horrid new sensation; and she felt it a relief from what seemed to be an eternity of flying, to go delving into the buoyant water, and whirring along beneath it to an unknown depth, and then quickly up again into her native element. On reaching the surface, however, she was so bewildered that she hardly dared look round her for the bundle; but when at last she did perceive it, floating in the black shadow of the terrace wall, it was some yards behind her, and nearer to the side from which she sprang. But her heart beat so violently, and she breathed so quickly, and felt so anxious, that she dared not swim towards it, but struck out straight for the opposite bank. When about two-thirds across, her panting became so quick, and her terror so great, that she let her feet drop to feel for the bottom; but instead of

touching it, sank in over head. In a fright she rose again, but even then did not lose her presence of mind, but laid her cheek upon the water, and took slower strokes. Oh, that distant bank—could she ever reach it? Oh, that Mark was by her side to help! Oh, she would be drowned, she knew she would! And yet she kept struggling on, all right really, though her poor little heart was convulsed with fear; and thus, nearer and nearer grew the bank, until once more she let her feet down to sound the depth. To her joy it was scarcely half a yard. It was a firm gravelly bottom that she touched; and upon that she waded to the bank, and then sank down, fairly exhausted with the effort she had made, and with the terror she had gone through.

Thus far, then, she was safe, and had put the river between herself and the hated château. But what was she to do next? cold, wet, half-clad, bare-footed, in the dead of night, and with her bundle lost!

For some minutes she lay panting by the towing-path; and then burst into an hysterical fit of weeping. She had had a narrow escape, —or at any rate she thought so,—and had

really passed through an agony of fear. She had endured for some moments that awful suspense, when it is a struggle for dear life, and all depending on your power of holding out — on your strength — your wind — and your presence of mind. Who that can swim has not, at some time or other, gone through this horror, when a learner? and what words can describe that terrible sensation?

But the chill night air, and the coldness of the wet garment which clung to her, soon restored her to herself; and with heartfelt thankfulness for her merciful deliverance, she rose to her feet. But where was the bundle? She could see it nowhere. It must have become saturated, and have sunk. What then was she to do? There she stood upon the bank, with life saved it was true, but half-naked, shivering in the cold moonlight, and without shoes to protect her poor little feet from the sharp stones and thorns, and with no dry warm dress to cover her shivering limbs.

In this wretched plight there was no help for it but to crawl slowly along the towing-path, as well as she could, to the nearest cottage or lock-house, and there beg for help

and shelter. Savage indeed must that heart be, she thought,* which could refuse her succour in such a strait.

After walking slowly, and very soon with bleeding feet, for about half a mile along the towing-path, *down* the river, she spied a thatched outhouse, in a field near, with a light glimmering through a narrow window in the gable end. It was the first sign of a human dwelling she had seen since leaving the château, and she made direct for it, across the prickly fresh-mown grass. The door of that clay-built cabin was wide open, and the whole interior on the ground floor turned out to be a cow-shed,—but empty then, the animals being tethered in the field. After groping all round it for the stairs to the upper room where the light was, she came at last to a ladder fastened against the wall, and her foot was just upon the first round, in the act of mounting, when the moonlight which streamed in through the open doorway was suddenly intercepted by the burly form of a huge mastiff, which entered with a frightful growl. She had scarcely time to scream for help, but mounted quickly to the loft above, and after passing through an

open trap door, closed it upon the brute, and was safe again.

The barking and growling of the savage guardian of the place below presently aroused an old crone, who was sleeping in the loft; and in an angry tone, and in a strange *patois* of which Nelly could not understand a word, she demanded to know the meaning of the uproar, and who it was that had intruded into her room, and roused her from her sleep.

Nelly answered in good French, which it appeared the old woman understood

“I am a poor English girl, in deep distress, having just swum across the river, and lost nearly all my clothes. I am wet, and cold, and almost starved with hunger, having eaten nothing for two days. Help me, dear good woman, for the love of God.”

“Where do you come from?” asked the crone, sitting up in bed, and speaking now in French, though with a strong provincial accent. It was the Breton language which she had spoken before, a sort of Celtic dialect, not unlike the Welsh.

“I have been entrapped into that dreadful chateau opposite, which they call the Chateau

Noir; and I jumped out of a window into the river to escape, and have swum across, at the peril of my life. My home is in Paris, and I am anxious to get back. But I have a friend at Hennebon, too. If you can help me, he will pay you well. I want clothes, and food, and a carriage to take me to him, when the daylight comes. Oh, help me, dear good mother, I implore.”

The old crone, who had been bedridden for upwards of a year in that wretched loft, stretched out her bony arm for the lantern which was on a table by the bedside, and threw the light of the bull’s-eye upon Nelly’s shivering form. She had once seen better days; but her own grinding misery had hardened her heart, and the tale of another’s troubles roused no pity there. The sight of the poor half-naked trembling fugitive from the château, who had escaped the dangers of the river, and the mastiff’s jaws, only excited the cupidity of the old wretch, and raised the thought of how the matter might be turned to her own advantage.

“ You come from the black château, eh, young —? Well; get in there amongst the hay; and do not go down the ladder again, or *Didon*

will eat you up." And then she muttered to herself, loud enough for poor Nelly to hear: "I will send Jeannette up there in the morning to say that she is here; and that will be worth something more than a pinch of snuff to me, I know."

But all this time the dog continued to growl and bark below; until at last the old woman could bear the noise no longer, and she screamed out in a harsh gruff voice, which the brute could hear through the closed trap door

"A bas, Didon, à bas, chienne à bas, b—sse."

This silenced the brute at last; and after a time, to Nelly's great relief, she saw, through a peep-hole in the thatch, the savage animal go away across the field to some farm buildings at the opposite corner. She did not speak again to the old crone, but nestled amongst the loose hay, and there turned over in her mind what she ought to do next,—for to be given up by Jeannette in the morning, for a pinch of snuff, after all the danger she had gone through, would be hard indeed.

Before very long, the old woman, satisfied that the young — from the château was safely trapped, fell asleep again, and began to

snore. At that welcome sound Nelly crept out from her snugery, and with soft and stealthy steps made a voyage of discovery about the loft, in hopes of being able to find some woman's garment in which she could make her escape, and for which she would leave her purse by way of a forced, but she hoped a fair exchange. Such was her plan; and then to descend the ladder, take her chance of meeting the dog, and hurry to the river side again.

The plan was well conceived, and, as it turned out, quite easy of execution. The lantern was still alight, and she could see that the bed in which the old woman slept was one of those so common in that part of France, being like a bunk in a ship's cabin,—a sort of fixture against the wall, with a wooden frame in front, having an oblong opening through which the occupant has to pass, and across which a curtain can be drawn to keep the fresh air out, and the foul air in. This bed she observed was wide enough for two persons, though only occupied then by one; while on a chair by its side were lying a woollen petticoat, and one of those cotton jackets which Breton peasant women wear; and under the bed a pair of wooden sabots stuffed with

straw. Here, then, was all that she required. Without, therefore, waking the crusty old dame to wish her a pathetic adieu, or to beg her concurrence in the bargain, Nelly, hard pressed as she was in her eagerness to escape before Jeannette appeared, put on the coarse garments, and left the contents of her purse upon the table in their stead; then, carrying the *sabots* in one hand, she stole softly across the room barefoot, raised the trap door as gently as she could, descended the ladder, and ran quickly and with beating heart towards the river side. The dog Didon did not appear again, and she reached the towing-path in safety.

But as she walked swiftly on once more towards Hennebon, decently equipped, though without a hat or cap, and with her long wet hair hanging loose about her shoulders, and her wooden *sabots* clattering more loudly than she cared to hear, she could not help reflecting that what she had done might perhaps be construed into a theft. And what a horrid thought *that* was. Suppose anyone should meet her, and, struck with her strange appearance, should question her, and, distrusting her true account of herself, should take her into custody, and hand

her over to the police, and she should be tried and convicted of a theft! What a fate! And how could Mark, or anyone else, then help her to escape from the clutches of the law which she had broken, or from the hideous penalty which she might have to pay for an act illegal, though perhaps justifiable under the circumstances? Full of these reflections, but compelled to act with courage and decision, she quickly banished from her mind the first idea which occurred to her of returning to the cow-house and putting back the clothes,—and determined to hurry onwards towards her lover, but avoid as much as possible meeting anyone, while she prosecuted her walk during the darkness and solitude of the night, and hid herself by day, in some copse by the river side, or other safe retreat. That seemed to be her best plan; for whatever risk there might be to her in travelling along that towing-path alone and by night, there seemed to be infinitely greater risk from her meeting, as she infallibly would do, many an officious and curious questioner, if she pursued her journey on foot by day. She resolved, therefore, to continue her walk, swiftly and stealthily, along the towing-path, in the downward direction

of the stream, towards Hennebon, until the morning light should compel her to desist; and then hide herself during the following day, and finish the remainder of the distance during the next night. Once under Mark's protection she would be safe; and the clothes could be returned, in some way, to their rightful owner, as soon as more suitable garments were obtained. The yacht's boat, which she remembered was to be always in readiness at the river side to convey the owner on board as soon as he appeared, would be there to take her on board the EIONE; and then she could share the lady's cabin with little Ciss, and borrow for a time some of her things, and fly to Paris on the wings of the express train. Such were her sanguine hopes. But suppose the yacht should be gone? Why then, she thought, she could telegraph to the good doctor, and wait till she heard from him. They would surely take her in at some hotel, and give her credit for a few days.

With these thoughts she walked swiftly on,—with the broad moon already sinking in the west, still lighting her lonesome way. Poor Nelly! Your little plans were well conceived,

and you had a brave and a hopeful spirit—but—we shall see.

Thus she trudged along, bold in her purpose, and game to bear fatigue, hunger, all that the Fates could heap upon her, so that she reached her Mark at last; and yet timid of observation as a startled deer. Thus she trudged along, in her coarse disguise, in sabots, and with her silky tresses streaming in the wind and curling as they dried,—along many a winding reach of that lonely river, until the moon had well nigh set, and the growing light in the eastern sky warned her that she must soon halt, and find a hiding-place until night came on again. Once she passed a lock-house, also a wooden bridge, and also a little village, with a cabaret near the water's edge; but the latter she avoided by making a *detour*. . . to

As the morning dawned she was well nigh beaten by fatigue, hunger, and two nights' loss of rest; but food, sleep, and shelter were then close at hand,—closer than she dreamt. On turning round the base of a steep rock which jutted into the river, and caused it to make a very sudden bend, she suddenly perceived two objects,—both of which might be turned to

good account. One was a milch cow, tethered by a rope and a long wooden peg upon a patch of grass by the water's edge; the other was a half-sunken barge, stranded upon a shelving shoal on the other side of the stream, and lying with its back broken, its bow immersed, and its stern raised high above the water. From the appearance of this wreck it must have lain there since the preceding winter's floods; and, in order to reach it, a lock-gate, and a weir a little further on would have to be crossed, and then a field. But the cabin of this barge, Nelly thought, would make a safe hiding-place for her during the day; while a draught of fresh milk from the good cow would recruit her fainting system, and set her up again till night. She had already picked up a broken pannikin, which would hold about a pint, in anticipation of a chance like this, and she milked the cow into it, I dare not say how often, and drank the refreshing draughts. Forgive the poor starving girl, kind reader, this second theft. She vowed that all should be paid for as soon as she found her Mark.

And now for the cabin of the wrecked barge.

The shutters were still up at the lock-house, and the good people in their beds. Timidly she stepped across the gate which closed the lock; then followed a little foot-path across an island to the weir; and then, emboldened by necessity, and fearful of delay, took off her *sabots*, and tripped barefoot along a row of stepping-stones by which the cascade was crossed, to a mill in mid-stream; and thence through the edge of the falling water itself, over a slippery pavement of flat stones, to the opposite bank. The mill was a disused one, and in ruinous plight, but it did not look so safe a retreat as the cabin of the wrecked barge; so on she went again, across a field; and then, by wading over a shoal, and scrambling up the great rudder, got safely on board the wreck.

In the stern of these large French barges, and in English ones too, there is generally a cabin about ten feet square, fitted up for the bargee, with his wife and youthful progeny, who all pig in it together. This cabin, when in use, is generally a horrid den, overrun with vermin, filled with a dense atmosphere of smoke, and redolent of tobacco, red herrings, and salt fish. All such unpleasant odours, and the vermin too,

had, however, been well scoured by the tide out of the cabin of the wreck ; and everything removable had also been taken from it. The water had once entered freely through a large hole at one corner, just above the platform ; and upon the floor was deposited a smooth layer of river mud, almost dry. Against the sides there still remained, as fixtures, two bunks ; and in one of these poor Nelly laid her weary limbs, secure at least that *there* she would not be interrupted or discovered until night came on again. Hennebon was about ten miles distant, as near as she could guess ; and before the next day dawned she hoped to arrive there in safety, and to place herself under Mark's protection. But the thoughts of her poor Mamma's sad state, and the certainty that she would have to wait another weary day before she could return to her, made her weep ; until at last, with tearful eyes and aching brain, she fell asleep.

It wanted about half an hour to sunrise when she hid herself in the cabin of the wrecked barge,—with its muddy floor, its half shattered bunks, and its little square sliding hatchway letting in the morning light. Was ever a fair young creature more strangely lodged ?

CHAPTER 11.

A BREAK-DOWN.

AFTER so much anxiety of mind, coupled with fatigue of body, loss of rest for two nights, and a perilous adventure, it is not surprising that Nelly's slumber in the cabin of the wrecked barge was long and deep, and that the sun was fast sinking in the west when, for the first time, she opened her eyes after closing them in the early morning. Neither is it surprising that she awoke with aching limbs, a dull pain across her forehead, and a burning thirst,—the first symptoms of a fever brought on by the troubles she had gone through. She got up, and was about to mount through the open hatchway to fill her precious pannikin with water from the

river, the gurgling of which she had heard close to her ear as she lay with her head against the side of the barge,—when the tolling of the bell of a church, or convent near, and the voices of some men apparently in a passing barge, together with the loud cracking of a whip, warned her of the close vicinity of many pair of eyes, and of the risk she would run of discovery, by showing herself outside the cabin before night set in. She could hear also, at times, what alarmed her still more, namely, the voices of children playing in the field near which the barge was lying, and not many yards from her. To mount through the hatchway, and show herself, would therefore lead to instant discovery; and that would lead to gossiping and questioning, and in all probability to a forced visit to the Mairie or Gendarmerie of the village; while, if the Marquis should have set on foot enquiry in the neighbourhood respecting her, or if the old woman should have complained to the authorities respecting the taking of the petticoat, her discovery might lead, either to her being compelled to return to the château, or even to some still greater unpleasantness, which would frustrate her plans, and prevent her speedy

return to Paris. Secrecy in all her movements, and the absolute avoidance of all contact with strangers, until she could join her lover at Hennebon, were evidently the safest policy she could pursue. Still, she ventured just to peep a little through the hatchway, above the deck of her retreat, and, in so doing, 'spied the lock, and the old mill on the island, and the weir which she had crossed in the grey of the morning; and on the heights above it, a picturesque little village, with a church spire, and the old tower of a castle peeping out from amongst the trees. It had been quite calm in the early morning, but now a fresh summer breeze was crising the surface of the river into quite an angry little ripple; and the setting sun was gilding with his rays the rugged crest of the high promontory round which she had passed, and near which she had found the cow, and was tipping with a brighter green the waving branches of the chesnut trees on the hill sides, and laying a patch of glowing burnt sienna upon the mast head, yard, and upper half of the high narrow tanned squaresail of a gaudily-painted barge which was swinging down before the wind in midstream. It was quite a

little picture, that scene, of which she caught a hasty glimpse; and the fresh air cooled her feverish brow, and the touch of the cold dewy deck was refreshing to her hot hands. But her mouth was parched, and the sight of the rippling water made her greedily long for some. It was torture to think of waiting until the sun had set, and night come on again before she could taste a single drop. How nice it would be, she thought, to dip her hands in the cool stream, and dash the water over her burning face and neck. Water, water, *must* be found somewhere, or she would madden with her thirst. Perhaps there might be a little pool in the leaky cabin; so she went down the steps again to see. Sure enough there was. A pint or two lay collected in the lower corner, hemmed in by clay, and filtered as clear as crystal. Carefully she scooped it up in her pannikin, a little at a time, so as not to disturb the mud, and drank it off as a thirsty Arab might, and rubbed some over her flushed face, and delved, with her hot hands, into the cool clay, and felt refreshed. Then she lay down again, in the same old bunk, and listened to the sounds without, and watched the square patch of sky

seen through the open hatchway, until at length she fell asleep again.

But this second nap was not deep and unbroken like the first. It was disturbed by a succession of distressing feverish dreams. Every few minutes she awoke; and as her eye fell upon the patch of light, still visible through the open hatchway, she saw that it grew dimmer and greyer, and that night was creeping on, and she knew that it would soon be time to start again for her ten-mile walk. But her head felt heavy, her limbs ached, and she had neither the wish nor the power to move. Fever was creeping upon her, and the phantoms of a disordered brain were beginning to flit before her mind. At one time she fancied herself struggling for life in the dark river; at another time weeping by her mother's bedside; or, she fancied herself rattling along in the train again, by the cold moonlight, with the old Marquis's cunning eye fixed upon her; or, that they were unrobing her in the horrid studio, to crown her with laurel as the representative of Truth; while, in the midst of her rebellion at this outrage, she seemed to feel herself hurried off along the terrace to the summer-house, to be tied down

upon the ottoman by the rings in its two ends. And then her lover appeared upon the scene, and she thought she stood hand in hand with him before an open window, ready to leap with him into a dark abyss.

As she awoke from these horrid dreams, and cast her eyes about her in that strange place, she saw, or thought she saw, a transparent ghostly film hovering between herself and the step ladder which led down from the open hatch,—and as she gazed upon it earnestly, it took by degrees a more definite form, and at length assumed a human shape. It became a female figure clothed in white, but half-transparent; and the face of it was like her mother's, looking down upon her in sorrow and reproach! For a few seconds she closed her eyes in an agony of fear; but on opening them again perceived that the apparition was gone. Then, trembling in every limb, and feeling sure that her poor Mamma's spirit had at that instant left its mortal tenement, and passed away—visiting her once more on its flight to a better world—she got up, and roused herself from the lethargy which had been creeping over her.

But the atmosphere of the cabin, which before

had felt so close and stifling, now seemed to strike to her very bones and marrow with its deathlike chill; and, shuddering with cold, she mounted the ladder, and stepped out upon the deck. Awe-struck, timid, and tottering, she crouched upon the dewy planks, and looked about her. The breeze had quite gone down, and a thick mist had settled upon the river; but it was clear overhead, and the hill tops could be seen lighted up with broad moonshine, whilst the objects on the lower level were hidden by the fog. It was the steam rising from the tepid water, and meeting the cold night air, which produced this strange effect; and no doubt the descent of the vapour into the cabin, aided by the disordered imagination of a feverish brain, gave rise to the phantom image which I have described. But Nelly was not in the least superstitious, the whole force of her education having tended the other way; and she no sooner saw the mist in which objects were enveloped, than she strove to account for the apparition of her mother on natural causes, and to shake off the gloom and terror with which it had oppressed her, and to hope for the best. But the attempt was vain! The image, whether real or mental,

which she had seen, was too vividly true in its impression to yield to the reasoning of a fevered brain; and for some time she sat upon the dewy deck, with her face buried in her hands, cold as ice, and sobbing as if her heart would break.

But the paroxysm was too violent to last long. She roused herself at length, and thought of her own sad condition, and of the long midnight walk that was before her. The moon was already high in the heavens, and time had been lost in unavailing grief. She must wrap her things about her, and struggle on again over four weary leagues, towards the sea-port where her lover was. With weak and tottering knees she descended from the deck by means of the broken rudder, and waded through the tepid steaming water to the shore; then stuffed her feet into the *sabots*, and made another start.

Her route lay over the weir and the lock gate which she had passed before; and this little trouble safely overcome, she found herself upon the towing-path again. But her strength was nearly gone, and her courage ebbing; and it was weary work to drag one poor leaden foot after the other, in the heavy *sabots*, over the rough

stones. Still she dragged on, hour after hour, without meeting a human being on her lonely walk, from one kilomètre stone to the next, until at last only three remained,

HENNEBON

3 KILO.

was on the last stone she reached; and by its side she seated herself, and rested her weary back against it, and, in thankfulness at having got thus far, prayed for strength to do the three more kilos which remained, before people were up and astir.

But the night was far spent, and her strength nearly gone. Many times during her walk she had stopped to fill her pannikin with water, and drink it off, for the burning fever heat had come on again; but she had felt no desire to eat. And now what was she to do? She roused herself at last, and stood up, and tried to think. The day was dawning in the East, and one cottage chimney she could see was already sending up a thin column of grey smoke. She must decide at once, whether to hide again during the day, and finish her walk at night,—or push boldly on in the full daylight, and take

her chance, when perhaps some cart, or other vehicle, might pick her up, and convey her to the yacht. But could she dare to brave the suspicious questionings and prying looks of every stranger she might meet? or must she again find some hiding-place where she might rest, and be safe till night? That was the question for her to decide.

It is not surprising that the idea of rest should have proved more welcome to her than that of dragging on further her weary limbs; and it was rendered doubly so by the sight of a thick plantation of young oaks on the opposite bank of the river, which could be reached by retracing her steps for a few yards, and crossing a wooden bridge which she had passed. But what rendered the sight of that thick copse even more tempting still, was that it was close to water, with which she could in safety quench her never-satisfied desire to drink. The sight of a natural hiding-place, so safe and so tempting, decided her, therefore, to stop and rest once more during the day, and finish her walk at night.

It was a thicket of young oaks which tempted her to cross the river, and seek a hiding-place

amongst them during the day. It extended nearly up an entire hill side, but a portion of it near the top had been cleared for the purpose of making charcoal of the young trees. The lower part of it had also been cleared for a sufficient width to form a passage for people to pass through; and the narrow alley run parallel to the river bank, at a few yards distance from it. Nelly crossed the river, and keeping along its side entered that narrow path; after following which for a time, she turned off at right angles towards the water, forcing her way as well as she could through the saplings and brushwood, and leaving, of course, a track behind her. At length she so nearly reached the edge of the stream, that only a thin screen of brambles and branches was interposed between her and it, and in that snug spot, safe, as she thought, from observation, and close to water with which to fill her pannikin, she resolved to spend the day. In order to make herself a leafy couch, upon which to lie and rest her weary frame, she broke off a few young branches from the trees, and plucked some broad ferns, and spread them out, so as to make a sort of bed a little raised above the damp ground, with a pillow

of leaves at one end; and when this was done, she sank down upon it, too much exhausted to make a single effort more. In a state of prostration, both of mind and body, and of such weakness as she had never felt before, she laid her aching head upon that leafy pillow, and in a few minutes fell asleep.

During her solitary walk of a dozen miles or so, by moonlight, along the towing-path of the lovely river Blavet, from the Château Noir to the plantation, in which I must now leave her for a time, she had not met a single soul, or heard a sound, save the croaking of the frogs, and the occasional bay of a hound in a neighbouring farm, except that once, and only once, a barge had passed along the river during the night,—to avoid observation from the men on board of which she had that once made a *détour*, and concealed herself behind a hedge. The people at the lock-houses were all in bed, as she passed; and it was seldom even that she saw a light in the window of any cottage, château, convent, or cabaret. The reason of this may be found in the fact that the French peasantry are early in their habits—going to bed at sundown, and rising with the dawn.

During the night it is rare in the extreme to meet any of them about, or find them drunk and disorderly on the roads ; for the law is strict and simple in France, and the Police force numerous and effective. Hence small vices are comparatively rare, being quickly detected and severely punished. It is not strange therefore that Nelly's walk by night along the towing-path should have been so safe and lonely ; while to have attempted the same thing by day would infallibly have got her into a scrape. To have been found connected with the Château Noir would have been no recommendation to gentle treatment ; while in the matter of taking the clothes which belonged either to the bed-ridden old-woman, or to her friend Jeannette, she had clearly been guilty of breaking the strict letter of the law.

CHAPTER 12.

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THE RESCUE.

WE must now return to Mark Levisne, who, the reader will remember, was left in charge of his friend's yacht at Hennebon, with instructions to have everything in readiness for a start the instant the owner presented himself, whenever that might be, either by day or night. The orders were, that a boat ready manned was to be in waiting alongside the Quay to put him on board; a steam tug, with fires banked up, ready to tow the vessel down the river to its mouth; and above all things that the safety and comfort of his little Cissy were to be well cared for in every respect.

Such were the orders ; but they had been given in ignorance of the exact nature of the place. The yacht drew seven feet of water, and the shallow river was only navigable for vessels of that draught at the top of high tide, so that it was only once in every twelve hours that she *could* be towed down to the sea ; neither was it possible to procure a steam tug, even from the neighbouring port of Lorient ; and lastly, the river was so narrow that the Quay could be even better watched from the deck of the vessel than from a boat alongside—while it would only be the work of a minute or two at any time to lower a boat from the davits, and pull ashore ; besides which, it might have looked suspicious, and would perhaps have attracted the attention of the police, had a boat, ready manned, been constantly in attendance at the Quay. On the whole, therefore, Mark thought it best to carry out his friend's instructions in the *spirit* rather than the *letter* ; and thus, while he took every precaution that things should be in readiness for weighing anchor twice in the twenty-four hours, namely, at high water—yet, during the time which intervened, he contented himself with keeping a watch con-

stantly on deck, and a boat ready to be lowered and pulled ashore, should Xenosthes at any instant heave in sight.

Thus the poor yachting folks remained, watching and waiting, day after day, in weariness and impatience; until at last, as neither the owner turned up, nor any telegram from him arrived by way of warning, they began gradually—for such is human nature—to relax in their vigilance, when they ought rather to have been more keenly on the alert. Both crew and passengers were, in fact, getting heartily sick of the inactivity of their position—even down to the little Ciss; and Mark at last ventured to take her ashore for an hour or two at a time, when the tide was down, and show her over the town, and take her for short country walks. Once, indeed, they took a trip together, by rail, to the neighbouring port of Lorient, about seven miles distant; during the whole of which truant freak Mark never once called to mind his friend's dream of the lost Lurline.

The town of Hennebon is situated about a mile below the first lock on the river, where there is a manufactory of tin plates for making the sardine boxes used in preserving the sprats

which they catch in abundance on that coast. The walk to this lock was a favourite one with Mark and his little *protégée*; for not only were the river banks very pretty at that spot, but it was amusing to go to the manufactory, look round at what was going on inside, watch them lift the salmon nets which were constantly spread at the tumbling weir, and then return by the opposite bank, and cross a suspension bridge over the river to the best side of the town again, or prolong their stroll by a visit to the railway station. The chief precaution to be observed on these rambles was, of course, to take them when the tide was down—or at any rate while it was flowing strongly—so that the yacht could not be moved; and before starting, to leave word with the Captain where they were going, and how long they would be away. I do not attempt to defend this breach of orders on the part of young Levisne, but it was characteristic of him that he did that sort of thing, —always, however, under the impression that he was justified in his conduct,—for what young fellow of his age ever thinks it possible that he can be in the wrong?

On the day when Nelly hid herself in the

plantation, which was about a mile above the lock, it was high water at ten; and Mark and Cissy started, after an early breakfast, for their accustomed stroll up the main street of the town, then round the shady promenade, or boulevard which skirted it, then down the cliff to the river bank, and so on to the lock. It wanted a couple of hours to high water when they got there; and a barge, with a boat astern, was waiting until the tide served for her to pass through on her way down. Now it happened that Cissy, and her companion too, had often looked with longing eyes up the pretty reach of the river which lay above the lock; and the sight of the bargee's broad, comfortable-looking green boat, lying on the still water, emboldened the little maid to suggest that it would be nice to have a row in it up the stream. Mark looked down upon her innocent little face as she said this, with such confiding *naïveté*, and resolved to gratify the poor child's whim; nor were the bargees difficult to coax, by the sight of a franc piece, into lending them the boat for an hour or so, until the tide was up, and the lock ready for them to pass through.

So now behold Mark rowing towards the

very spot where his Nelly was hiding, fast asleep upon her bed of leaves ! It was decreed that he should find her there ; and thus it happened :—

The plantation in which she hid herself, was, as I before said, in progress of being cut down to be manufactured into charcoal ; and in several places on the cleared part of the hill-side there were curious looking mounds, covered with turf, and smoking through their sides and tops. These attracted Mark's attention, and he determined to find out what they were ; so he tied the boat to one of the young trees by the river side, and leaving Cissy in it, mounted the cleared part of the cõtil. A man and a boy were near the top, cutting up the branches of the felled trees into lengths of about a yard, and binding them into faggots to be charred. From these civil fellows he learnt all the details of the operation ; how the wood was first barked, and the bark sold to the tanners ; and then, the faggots laid together upright, so as to form the mounds he saw, but leaving a chimney in the middle, filled with dry sticks, straw, and furze ; and then the mound covered with turf, and the combustibles inside lighted from the top. All

this having been explained to his satisfaction, he descended the cōtil on the opposite side of the plantation to that where he had tied the boat; and then turned into the narrow path which traversed it near the water's edge, and along which Nelly had actually preceded him only a few hours before! Little dreaming that *she* was then so near, but perceiving that some one had passed recently along the path, from the branches which had been broken or pushed aside, and from the marks of *sabots* with which the long dewy grass had been trodden down, he followed on the track, repeating to himself aloud, that fine Byronic stanza:

“There is a pleasure in the pathless woods;
There is a rapture on the lonely shore, &c.”

Thus he came at length to the place where the person whose track he was upon had diverged suddenly from the path, and turned off straight towards the river through the tangled brushwood. Prompted by Heaven knows what feeling, or perhaps without any definite motive at all, he turned off too along this new track, and continued to follow his unknown guide towards the water. There, a succession of chances—or if you prefer to think so, a decree of fate—so

ordered it that he was now following to his Nelly's side; though little dreaming of such a thing, for assuredly he thought her at that moment safe at Paris, with her poor sick Mamma.

A very few yards brought him before the figure of a girl, in a peasant's dress, sleeping upon a bed of leaves. To stop and gaze upon her was no more than an act of common curiosity; but the very first glance convinced him that she was no ordinary peasant girl, reposing under the trees from her labour in the field. There was a something in the attitude of her prostrate figure quite unlike that of wholesome sleep, and indicating extreme exhaustion,—a something suggestive almost of actual death,—besides which, the air of the early morning was raw and chill, the place selected for repose damp and secret, and a thick dew had condensed upon her hair and clothes.

Thus much was revealed at the first glance; and then, with curiosity much excited, Mark examined more attentively the sleeping figure of the girl before him. She had kicked off her *sabots*, and her poor little feet were exposed to view, bare, blistered, and chafed by the unaccustomed pressure against the hard wooden

shoes—which had, however, protected them from many a sharp stone and pointed thorn. He stooped down and laid his hand upon one of her bare insteps, and it felt burning hot. Then he laid his hand against one of hers, which was lying listlessly against her side, and that too felt hot and dry. Next, he moved away her long tresses—which had fallen loosely over her face, and concealed it from view—and so caught the outline of her features as they lay half-hidden against her arm, and in doing this perceived that her cheek and forehead were hot and flushed also. Thus he knew that she was a poor sick girl, who had dragged herself to that secluded spot, and laid herself down to sleep, in the midst of weariness, fever, and distress. Poor thing! And she was no common peasant girl either, but evidently a young lady of higher station, in disguise. That was certain too. Her soft white hand, with its clean, neatly cut finger nails, was proof enough of that; while her feet, her face, and her silky waving hair, long accustomed to the brush and comb, though dishevelled then, all told the same tale. And beautiful she seemed to be as a poet's vision. But what a vision to meet in such a place!

To rescue the poor girl from all this misery, and place himself, his purse, his boat, at once at her disposal, were, of course, Mark's first impulse. But how should he proceed? He felt that he must be gentle and cautious in what he did, or the first shock at finding herself discovered might be serious. She might faint with terror, or she might perhaps expire at his feet. Who could tell what might happen in the suddenness of a surprise to one whose first object in seeking such a spot had evidently been concealment? He resolved to arouse her gently, and then assure her, in the kindest tones, of his friendly intentions towards her, and of his devotion to her service.

He had not yet seen her features plainly, for she lay upon her side, with her face downwards, and resting upon an arm so as almost to conceal it. He never, therefore, for an instant, dreamt that she could be his Nelly; for besides that he had not yet seen her face fully, the figure of the sleeper seemed taller and more womanly than he supposed Nelly to have become during the year which had elapsed since he last saw her. The idea of *her* being in such a place, and such a plight, never once entered

into his imagination ; and even if such a thought *had* struck him, as a bare possibility, he would have scouted it as absurd. It happened, however, that as he was looking down upon the sleeper, and debating how to arouse without alarming her, she turned her head upwards, as if made conscious of his presence even in her sleep, opened her eyes, and looked straight towards him.

The instant their eyes met they recognized each other,—and then a scream of joy burst first from Nelly's lips.

“ Oh, dear Mark, is it you at last? However did you find me here? I thought we should not meet till night.”

She held up both her hands to him in a transport of joy, and in an instant he was on his knees by her side, supporting her poor head upon his arm, kissing her feverish brow, stroking back her long hair, and pressing her tenderly to his side. She was safe at last. Her wild adventure had come to a happy end. Touch her now, old Marquis, if you dare. No evil can come near her now, until it has first struck *him* down. *His* strong body—*his* young life—*his* manly courage—*his* loving heart, must first

be quenched before harm can come to *her*. Lay your head now, poor girl, upon *his* broad shoulder, and fear not. *He*, who loves you dearer than life, is at your side now, and you are safe.

For some minutes neither of them spoke many words; but Nelly sobbed in the first ecstasy of her joy, while a tear or two did not disdain to course each other down her lover's cheek, as he thought of finding her in such a plight, and of all the dangers and hardships which she seemed to have gone through in striving to reach him at Hennebon.

"Come now, darling," he said, at last, "You are ill and feverish. Let us leave this place at once. I have got a boat close by, and I will carry you to it, and we will go at once on board the yacht, and Cissy shall lay you in her own berth. We won't talk too much now, for you are ill, and it will do you harm. Never mind telling me anything about it now—you shall tell me how it all happened by-and-bye. Come, dearest, let me lift you up, and carry you in my arms to the boat. It is not far, and you need not walk a single step. It is a nice large boat, and Cissy is waiting in it, and I

will row you to the yacht, and you shall have my warm rough coat to wrap about your poor shoulders, and you shall put on my straw hat, and Ciss shall prop you up."

So saying, he lifted her up, and set her on her feet for an instant, and wound his strong arm round her for support.

"Why, how tall you've grown, my Nell," he added, as her head rested so much higher against his shoulder than it had done when he last parted from her in the lane in Sark. "Who could have believed it? Why you are taller than your Mamma now. I should hardly have known you, but for your sweet face; and even that is altered too, a wee bit. You look more serious, and less girlish now."

She smiled at this, and said

"I knew you first, Mark, didn't I? *You* are not altered in the least,—you are the same dear fellow who stole away my heart. But oh, how weak I am—I can hardly stand. You must carry me to the boat and protect me now, Mark, for I have done all I could to get to you—and all my strength is gone. If you hadn't found me here I think I must have died."

He took her up in his strong arms, and was

carrying her, like a feather, along the remainder of the path through the thicket, to the boat, when one of her bare feet scraped against a prickly bramble, and she started with the pain—but said, an instant after, with a smile

“ You have forgotten my dear old *sabots*, Mark. I couldn't part with *them*. We must keep all these funny old things by-and-bye in a glass case, and write the story about them, and call it by some queer name. Oh, I've got such strange things to tell you. Do you know I had to jump out of a high window into the river, and swim across, and walk all night, and sleep in the cabin of an old wrecked barge. You can't think what horrors I have gone through—and all because they told me *you* were dying, and gave me a forged note, to entice me away from”

“ Hush! Don't talk about it now. Lie still in my arms till I put you into the boat; and then I'll go back and fetch the dear old *sabots*; they sha'n't be left behind.”

“ No, no. You mustn't go away from me again.”

As he carried her along the remainder of the path between the bushes, he was going once

to ask about her poor Mamma, but he checked himself, and thought it better not perhaps, as she had not mentioned her herself. He would know all the strange news in time; and now it was important to keep her quiet, and not let her talk too much. Perhaps, he thought, her Mamma is dead.

They soon reached the boat, and found Cissy waiting in it, and anxious at being left so long alone. When she saw her companion returning with a young lady in his arms, you may be sure she stared at them not a little with her soft dark eyes; nor did her wonder cease when she saw him lay down his burden by her side on the stern seat, put his own hat upon her head, smooth her long curls, and wrap his handkerchief round her scratched foot. And all this done so tenderly and gently that the little slave girl did not doubt that he loved that poor lady better than any other earthly thing.

“Is this the little Cissy that you told me of?” Nelly whispered to him, as she looked at the timid child, with as much curiosity as she had herself excited. And when he smiled, and nodded “Yes,” she said to her

“Did this kind gentleman ever tell you about me, Cissy dear? Did you ever hear about poor Nelly May?”

“I am afraid not,” said Mark, with a comical look, and answering for her. “We men don’t talk about our lady-loves to other girls, do we Ciss?”

The poor child looked down half-frightened and abashed at being questioned by the strange lady; but while Mark was rowing them swiftly down the stream, Nelly put her arm kindly round her shoulder, and whispered “You are not frightened at me, Cissy, are you? I know all about you, and I am sure I should soon love you, and we should be such friends. I am so ill, and oh, so weary. Will you help me, Cissy; and lend me some of your nice clothes, and let me lie in your little cabin by-and-bye?”

Cissy looked up at these kind words, and her eyes beamed with pleasure at being asked, for the first time perhaps in her own sad life, to help a fellow-creature in distress; but although she answered not by words, yet her eyes said as plainly as kind eyes could say it, “Yes, *that* I will, dear lady—I will do anything you ask.”

The seat in the stern, upon which the two girls sat, had no back to it, and soon poor Nelly began to droop, and press heavily against Cissy's side. Her face was flushed with a hectic tinge, and there was a strange liquid lustre in her eyes which began to alarm her lover. He stopped rowing, after a time, and made her sit upon the platform of the boat, and lay her head on Cissy's lap; and then, as he rowed them swiftly on again towards the town, the tender-hearted child passed her little fingers over the strange lady's cheek, and stroked her soft white hand, and looked fondly in her face. She had been a slave; but her visits to the whipping house at New Orleans had not subdued her native kindness of heart. They had never lashed *that* out of her; and now that she was free, and amongst a civilized people, and that a gentler fate was beginning to smile upon her, her inherent kindness of nature was sprouting through the genial soil, and who could doubt that it would grow fast and strong to a goodly plant, in the warm sunshine of freedom and human sympathy.

The barge was already in the lock when they arrived, and the tide up on the other side. They passed the boat through along with it;

and then, with the consent of the bargee, Mark rowed his precious freight swiftly down to where the yacht was anchored, and lifted the two girls on board.

Nelly had fallen asleep again while resting her head on Cissy's knee, and Mark carried her in that state into the ladies' cabin, and laid her upon a couch. She had not once opened her eyes to look at the town as they passed by it, along the quays, and under the suspension bridge; and it was evident that she was very ill. As her lover bent anxiously over her, and watched the alarming symptoms of a fever which was coming on, he resolved to go ashore at once for a doctor, and at the same time engage rooms both for himself and her at the hotel upon the Quay, so that he might not only be near her in case of need, but be able also to watch the yacht from one of the windows.

A doctor was soon found, and taken on board to see the patient. He pronounced her illness to be a low fever, brought on by over-fatigue and anxiety of mind—but not dangerous. He advised her immediate removal to the hotel, he prescribed suitable treatment, and he sent a nurse to wait upon her, and watch by her

bedside. Cissy begged leave to be a kind little nurse too, and as it was half-ebb tide, and Xenosthes had not appeared that day, and the doctor had assured him that the fever was not infectious, Mark granted her request. At sunset, however, she was put on board the yacht again, in case the owner should arrive that night.

CHAPTER 12.

DREGS OF A DRAUGHT.

WE must now return to the Château Noir, and see what occurred there during the two days subsequent to Nelly's escape.

On the supposition that she was safely immured in the summer-house at the end of the terrace, the coercive measure of starvation, suggested by Giovanna, was put in force, and no one went near the place until about ten o'clock in the morning of the day subsequent to that on which she had been locked up. Had she therefore remained a captive in the room, she would not then have tasted food for twenty-four hours. But at ten o'clock, or thereabouts, all was ready for the exposure of the rapid

dry plates which had been prepared the night before; and Giovanna proceeded to the room, in order to lead the captive into the studio, and take the negatives. She withdrew the outer bolts of the door, and knocked for admission,—expecting, of course, to find her victim within, half-famished, and ready to submit to any indignity, on the promise of food, and a return to Paris as soon as the negatives were taken. But it was in vain that Giovanna knocked again and again, and louder and louder. No one answered the summons; and at length, wearied with her fruitless efforts to gain admission, she hunted up the Marquis, for an explanation of the mystery.

She found that worthy in his room, examining the contents of a parcel which he had just received, containing four complete suits of the dress and equipment of as many gens-d'armes, and overhauling them with close attention.

“Now, Giovanna,” he said, as she entered, “you must be quick with your posing, and finish with that English girl at once, for our other little plan is hatching fast. Xenosthes, I hear, has arrived at the Croix Rouge; and you know his fiery impatience. All the world, of course,

must give way for him. Very good, my dear friend, Adolphe is ready, and impatient too. He will not keep you long waiting. You wish to be shorn, dear lamb? Very good; Adolphe will shear you. You find your thick fleece uncomfortable this hot weather? Come then, pet lamb, to the shears of the obliging old cook, and he will clip you. You wish to try your wits once more, do you, dark Signor, against the old Marquis's, before you go abroad, and escape him altogether? Very well *bossu*; we will see whose wits are sharpest *this* time. *You* are ready and impatient; so am *I*."

"But Uncle," said Giovanna, in a low whisper, "suppose his draught, which I am to drink to please you, should *not* be mere coloured water, as he says. Suppose he really means to poison me. What then? A threat of revenge, which he has followed up to this point with so much tenacity, is not likely to end in a mere childish fright which he is to give me. He must surely meditate more than that. I tell you I dare not risk it. I know his vindictive nature too well. There is more malice in his present scheme than you suspect. He has always outwitted you before; and depend upon it he will outwit you

again. I tell you I shudder at the thought of being left alone in the same room with him for a single instant."

"Stuff, child. He is not the fool to meditate an act which would place him entirely at my mercy, and bring his neck under the guillotine. His revenge *is* to be a childish one. He does *not* mean more than he says. He only means to terrify you. He dares not attempt anything more than that in my château, and with all my people about. His own life is too precious to risk. You have only to feign the fright, and act the swoon for two minutes,—and then, in come the Marquis with his four gens-d'armes; we seize the vindictive traitor in the very act of murder—we drag him down to the dungeon below—and I bully him out of the ten million francs that are in his strong box on board the yacht. After which, the old Marquis and his Niece divide the spoil."

"Your eloquence, dear Uncle," said Giovanna, "gets quite pathetic at the thoughts of a strong box, or jewels, or deeds. But *I* am to be always your cat's-paw. At one time it is to be, Giovanna the thief—*she* poisoned the dog—*she* stole the jewels. At another time it is—do

darling Niece drink the coloured water, and feign the fit. But who knows what may be in that strong box, after all? Perhaps only rusty ballast. He is an incarnate fiend! You and I are angels of innocence compared with him! He is far-sighted, calculating, scheming as the old father of lies,—and sure to outwit us. I tell you I hate the thoughts of his coloured water,—and of the idea of being tied up by him, and made to drink it.”

“What,—with four gens-d’armes outside your door, and with your Uncle in a cupboard looking on, with his naked rapier in his hand, ready to rush in to help you at a moment’s notice,—and the deed to be done in the top room of a high turret, from which no man could escape without *my* leave?”

“I grant all that. It looks safe, and the stake is worth a venture,—but I have a strong presentiment of evil. Who knows what insidious poison that horrid draught may contain? It may not act for a week. Fancy *me* compelled to drain a cup from *his* hands. Put yourself, Uncle dear, for one instant in *my* position, and ask if *you* would consent.”

“But my eye will be upon you, silly child,

the whole time. Besides, why drink it at all? The instant he puts it to your lips, in we all rush upon him. Then, you sham the fainting fit, and off we drag him. You need not drink a single drop. Come girl, courage. Think of the strong box, and of all that it contains—the treasures which he was to take with him to Panama.”

“A box of rusty nails, or old lead pipes, more likely. No, Uncle. A cheque on his banker; and keep him down below until the cheque is cashed. Then”

“Then what?”

Giovanna made no reply, but looked straight before her, with eyes as cold and passionless as those of an Egyptian sphynx. Her Uncle took her hand, and pressed it significantly. They understood each other at last!

“But the posing of that girl,—and the negatives for the Pacha,” the Niece whispered, after the above ominous pause had lasted long enough. “We have not much time to spare, and she will not let me into her room; or perhaps she cannot. I came here for your help, Uncle, to break open the door.”

“*Mille tonnerres!* what childish nonsense is

this? Dead or alive make her sit, and then off with her. The *calèche* is to be here at twelve. *He* is waiting. There is no time to lose."

The two worthies went off together to the room at the end of the terrace; and the Marquis, after knocking once or twice at the door and receiving no answer, kicked a hole through one of the panels with his foot, and looked in. The room was empty! The bird had flown! He put his hand through the hole, turned the key of the lock inside, opened the door, and entered with his Niece. Sure enough their victim had escaped. The window, which went down to the floor, in the French style, was wide open; and it occurred to them that perhaps she had swung herself out of it, by means of a rope, into the boathouse beneath. They looked into the ottoman; but the cord, the whip, and the other lumber which had been shown her the night before, in order to frighten her by the idea of coercion, were still there. How could she possibly have got out, they asked themselves; and where could she be then?

"That young *coquin*, Blumeau, must have let her out," said the Marquis, "in order to rehearse the Apollo scene, ready for to-day. But I cannot

stop to hunt for her now ; the other affair is too pressing. Blumeau will take care of his pretty dove, no doubt. I will start at once for the Croix Rouge. Why keep the *calèche* ? Remember, Giovanna. Be ready in the turret chamber at nine to-morrow. Act your part well, and leave the rest to me."

"But suppose he should come armed for resistance?"

"The sight of the four gens-d'armes will take the pluck out of him. With four muskets, and my rapier levelled at his breast, he will not be the fool to resist. He is a coward at heart, and will yield at once. I know him well—the hunchbacked hound. 'Eyes of hound, but heart of deer,' as I read in my Homer once, when a boy."

The Marquis drove off to the Croix Rouge—that little auberge where they had stopped on the previous day ; and as soon as he had left, his Niece set on foot a strict search through every room, closet, and cellar of the old house, for the escaped English girl,—but she had gone, and left no trace. Even her bundle of clothes,

which had floated for a few minutes, had sunk at last, through the weight of the steel crinoline and the shoes. In the afternoon, however, a half-idiot boy went up to the château with a cock-and-bull story about a jacket, a petticoat, and some sabots, which had been stolen; and on further enquiry of the bedridden old woman, this afforded a clue to the daring means which the fugitive had employed to effect her escape.

The Marquis found Xenosthes in the road before the inn door, examining, with much attention, the points of a three-parts bred English racer—the property of a neighbouring sportsman, a M. Lecomte—and which he was about to hire for the next day or two.

“Will that fine animal suit your purpose, Signor?” enquired the Marquis, in Italian.

“Ah, Marquis,” said Xenosthes in the same language, “arrived so soon? Why I did not expect you till six. Is there time for our bit of mischief to-day? Why not? Let us have a stroll together out of hearing of this *canaille*, and talk it over.”

“No. To-morrow it must be,” said the little

Frenchman, taking the arm of his tall friend, and walking off with him down a retired lane. "To-morrow at nine; that is my arrangement. You must ride over then to the end of my avenue, and I will be waiting there for you, with another horse saddled for myself. When you have finished your bit of mischief, as you call it, with my Niece, you must come back to me, and we will ride together to the yacht, to say our last adieux, and *bon voyage*. It will be high water when we arrive at Hennebon, and you can weigh anchor at once."

"But the *bonne main*, dear friend; we must not forget that. You know you refused a first instalment, and bade me pay up all, in one sum, at parting."

"You are too kind, Signor, to think of it; and seriously I half repent of my bargain. Thirty thousand francs for a childish revenge, unworthy of your great self! It puzzles me to believe it of you. Pray have you got the coloured liquid about you? May I see it?"

"Ah, you begin to have your little doubts, dear friend. Is that it? But suspicion, they say, is the result of great self-knowledge. Never mind. I will for once condescend to coarse

means to reassure you. You shall see the actual stuff which I mean to pour down her throat. Here it is, sceptic. Smell it, touch it, drink it all if you like. I warrant you it is harmless."

So saying, he took from a side pocket a small vial containing a coloured liquid, which he handed to his companion. The latter uncorked the bottle, and held it cautiously to his nose.

"Would *you* mind drinking some of this, Signor, just to convince me?" he enquired.

Xenosthes laughed, as he answered

"Yes, man; the whole of it, if you like. I tell you it is only coloured water, and quite innocent. Look."

He put the bottle to his lips, and drank off the whole of its contents, adding

"Now refill it yourself, Marquis, with any liquid you choose, and give it me back to-night, and so let it remain. Are you convinced yet? Have I satisfied you, and removed your last fond scruple?"

"Perfectly, Signor. Forgive me. But we know each other's eccentricities; and you have outwitted me so often that sometimes I begin to distrust myself."

"Then you are easily satisfied, dear friend.

Suppose I tell you that I have also *another* little bottle in my pocket, containing the *right* stuff, namely, the dregs of that very same elixir which *she* tried to make *me* drink; and that I intend to give her either from one bottle or the other, just as the whim of the moment may suggest. What then? I ask."

"Why, then I shall run the risk of losing my beloved Niece, I suppose," said the Marquis, shrugging his shoulders with infinite expression. "But I would rather not lose her just yet, for she is useful to me in my profession. I could never replace Giovanna, as you know."

"Let me see," said Xenosthes, muttering to himself, and appearing not to heed his companion's remarks. "To-morrow at nine—five minutes with the Italian—a gallop to Hennebon with Adolphe—on board at ten thirty—another five minutes settling with him—high water at eleven—a quick drop down the river in tow of the steam tug—and then make all sail. Yes. To-morrow let it be,—not to-day. You are right, Adolphe. But you have dropped something. You whisked it out of your pocket with your handkerchief just now, as you pulled it out to wipe your eyes, at the thoughts of losing

your poor Niece. *Pardon*,—don't stoop—I will pick it up—I am younger than you."

So saying, he picked up from the ground a card portrait, which, sure enough the Marquis had dropped; adding, as he looked at it,

"Ha! what have we here, my friend? I know this young English face, do I not?"

It was one of the *cartes* which had been taken of Nelly, when she visited with Dr. Brownlow the studio on the Boulevards, where the Pacha had seen her, and become so smitten with her beauty.

"I know this young English face, do I not, Marquis?" said Xenosthes, as he looked admiringly at the *carte*, and then coolly put it into his own pocket. "Any of your dark schemes going on against *her*, dear friend? Eh? If so, please take a hint. She is a *protégée* of *mine*, I would have you know,—so keep your hands off her."

The Marquis knew better—or thought he did;—so he laughed, and told his 'dear friend' the whole story of the forged note, the journey, the summer-house, and the escape; together with the part which he supposed the youth Blumeau to have had in it. As Xenosthes

listened, his face reddened with anger, and he felt for that other vial, which he had hinted he possessed.

The morrow came; and at an early hour four men were admitted into the château, attired in the uniform of gens-d'armes, and were quickly instructed by Giovanna in the part which they would have to play. It is hardly necessary to say that these men were not really gens-d'armes, but got up for the occasion. Still, they had all been conscripts, and looked like soldiers, every inch. They were equipped with the accoutrements which the Marquis had received the morning before.

At nine o'clock, as agreed on with her Uncle, Giovanna was at her post, seated before a table near the window of the upper room in a turret, and engaged in touching cartes, a number of which were before her. There was also a small mirror upon the table, placed so as to command the reflexion of the door at her back. Punctual also to the time appointed, a dark figure noiselessly opened the door; and, by means of the mirror, the lady saw it advance stealthily towards

her. It was the Jew,—the man whose life she had once attempted by poison, and whom she knew had vowed to be revenged! She knew, moreover, that his supposed forgiveness of her in Paris, a few days before, was a mere ruse and a myth. As he crept stealthily up to her from behind, she instinctively crouched forward over her work, her heart beat violently with terror, and she uttered a faint scream for help,—for there was that in his look and manner which confirmed her worst suspicions of foul play. But although she could not repress a scream, she did not compromise her Uncle in the cupboard by appealing to him by name; she preserved just enough presence of mind to avoid that mistake. Xenosthes crept up to her behind—leant over her as she crouched forward,—seized both her wrists with his long powerful hands—and bound them tightly together, (“Oh pray not so tight,” she cried), with a thong. He next fastened a gag across her mouth, and then secured her ankles by a cord lashed as tightly round them as his whole strength could draw it. She was now utterly helpless either to move or scream, and at the mercy of a man, of whose savage intentions there could no longer be any

doubt. It was a frightful predicament to be in, but she still relied upon her Uncle, and trusted that he was a witness, through the keyhole of the cupboard door, of the cruel proceedings that were going on.

The Jew, now that he had secured his victim, and with more ease than he expected, flung off a dark cape which he wore, and unwound from his body a long coil of rope, one end of which he secured to the window-frame, while the other end he flung out, so as to hang down against the wall, and afford him the means of escape to the ground, in the possible event of the Marquis's treachery.

All was now ready for administering the draught ; and if it was true, as he had hinted, that he carried *two* bottles in his pocket, one containing the remains of the poisoned elixir, and the other a harmless coloured liquid, which was it to be ? Would he merely terrify her by making her drink of the latter,—or would he give her the other, and take her life, out of revenge for her attempt upon his own ? Such was the question which the Marquis put to himself ; but a single peep at the diabolical countenance of the chief actor in the coming

tragedy sufficed for a reply. The door of the cupboard was half opened, and its inmate rushing out to save his Niece,—when, in the very act of detection, the murderer tore off the gag, wrenched open the mouth of the Italian girl, and poured the dregs of the poisonous elixir down her throat—growling savagely in her ear, as he did so,

“You meant this for ME, you she-d — l. Finish it YOURSELF. I swore that you should ; and my vow shall be kept !”

“Villain ! Desist !” cried the Marquis, rushing up, and holding his sword’s point at his enemy’s breast. But the latter was prepared for this treachery, and instantly drew forth a revolver in his defence.

At that critical moment, however, the door was flung back, and the four gens-d’armes stalked in. At an apparition so utterly unexpected as this, the face of the Jew became blanched with fear, and the full horror of his situation flashed across his mind. He had been outwitted at last, and caught in the very act of committing a murder, by servants of the State, whose muskets, with their fixed bayonets, were already levelled at him. His dream too, of the year before,

started up in vivid recollection, and he called to mind the hooting of the mob, the strapping to the board, the head looking down into the basket, and the knife of the guillotine suspended above him. No dream now, but about to become a reality, which no power of his could avert. As these dreadful images passed quickly before his mind, he lowered the muzzle of his revolver, his knees knocked together, and he almost sank to the ground, powerless either to resist or speak. One of the gens-d'armes then advanced, and laying his hand upon the shoulder of his prisoner said

“I arrest you, Signor Xenosthes, having detected you in the act of committing a murder, before all these witnesses. Comrades, secure him, and pinion him,—remove his weapon,—and bring him down stairs to the apartment below.”

Xenosthes, terror-stricken, and bowed to the earth by this sudden reverse, permitted himself to be shackled, and led away. The Marquis followed, leaving his Niece to the care of some of the girls of the place, who had crept up to the scene of action. She had spat out most of the poison, but afterwards fainted through fear, excitement, and pain. In a few minutes, how-

ever, by the aid of stimulants, smelling salts, and a cold douche, they brought her to; and when, in the course of half an hour, or so, her Uncle returned, he found her sitting up, and ready to congratulate him on the success of his plot, thus far.

About an hour after the occurrence of the events just described, Xenosthes was seated in his shackles, before a table in a large room on the ground floor of the château, which was in general used for lumber, and which had been cleared out the day before for its present purpose. Opposite to him sat the Marquis; and upon a bench near the door the four gens-d'armes, with their loaded weapons. A dim light streamed in upon the group from a small barred window immediately under the ceiling, and the keen eyes of the Marquis followed attentively every motion of the silent and abject criminal before him.

“Murderous villain,” he said, at last, in the Italian tongue, “your days are numbered! What would you now give for liberty again? What is the use to you now of your vast wealth? It will all be confiscated; it cannot save you

from the knife of the guillotine! Would you not gladly give the whole of your hoarded francs to be tossing now in your yacht, a free man again, upon the broad sea?"

There was a peculiar meaning and expression in the way in which this question was put, which the person to whom it was addressed comprehended at once. He caught at the ray of hope which the query seemed to admit.

"Two millions of francs shall be yours," he whispered, "if you can save me from this strait. Arrange it as you will."

"Agreed. I *can* save you."

"How?"

"Listen. I will go instantly, and explode some ether and other combustibles in the house, and raise the alarm of fire. The smoke will soon enter this room, and then it will be *sauve qui peut*, and your guard will leave you to your fate—for some few minutes, at least. During that interval I will return, and lower you through a trap door into a cellar beneath. That concealment will be safe and inviolable. The red coats will never find you again. You and I can afterwards arrange the rest."

The features of the Jew worked fearfully,

and his face became flushed with anger, as he listened to the above impudent proposition for placing himself at the entire mercy of a man whom he knew to be capable of any crime. He said not a word in reply, but glared upon his companion with such contemptuous scorn as convinced him that he would face the guillotine itself rather than the scheme which had been suggested.

“You decline my offer, then?” said the Marquis. “Well; on your own head be it. The van in which you will be conveyed to jail is already entering the avenue. I can hear the whip of the driver. Listen. Do you not hear it too? In five minutes it will be too late for you either to accept or refuse *any* offer from mortal man. You have murdered my Niece. She lies now a corpse in the room above us. The evidence against you is conclusive, and your severed head will atone for the crime. Such is the law of France; and you know it. Hark! I hear the whip again. There are footsteps too, outside. My offer comes too late.”

“Oh, save me—save me!” cried the wretched man. “I agree. Anything for dear life. I

cannot die yet. Take all—but spare my life. Torture me if you will, but spare my life.”

But even as he spoke, a loud impatient knock was struck against the door of the room. The Marquis hastened to answer the summons. It was that of the aubergiste, François Duval; and he repeated, in breathless haste, the following bad news:

“It is all blown upon, Marquis. The Malay has peached. A troop of police are just behind me. I only got the start of them by mere luck, and had to gallop old Margo fit to break his neck. It is the English girl, they are after. You must hide her at once, and then put other things as straight as you can. You louts there, off with your red jackets, and bolt. Quick my friends—quick! The police were but half a kilo behind me.”

The Marquis was for a moment completely staggered by a piece of news which entirely subverted his plans at the very moment when they seemed to be on the eve of success. But he quickly recovered from the blow, collected his thoughts, and put himself in motion. “*S—mille tonnerres de Brest,*” he growled between his teeth, as he hurried along the corridor, and

up innumerable stairs to his own sanctum. The news had already flown like wild-fire through the house, and utter confusion prevailed amongst the inmates. A visit by the police to that den of iniquity could hardly fail to involve some of them in trouble, and it was *sauve qui peut* with all,—each looking after *his* own, or *her* own especial interests, whatever those might be. The Marquis well knew, that in the midst of the confusion, his own sanctum was not unlikely to be invaded, and his money box become an object of attraction to some; his instinct therefore took him in that direction at once. Nor was he mistaken. On entering the room, the very first object that met his eye was the lad Blumeau, whom he had lashed a day or two before, and fired at in the avenue. That bold young adventurer had broken open the door, and was coolly helping himself to his master's treasures, and stuffing his pockets freely with gold Napoleons and five-franc pieces.

It wanted but a sight like this to render the tortured, disappointed, and already furious old man, blind and reckless with rage. He seized the youth by the neck with both hands; and in another instant they were struggling together

for life or death, before a window which was wide open down to the floor, and which looked over the river at a great depth below. The Marquis, notwithstanding his sixty summers, was the stronger of the two ; and what was even more to the purpose, he knew, from a life-long experience in athletic sports, how to employ his strength to the best advantage. There was also another circumstance in his favour, namely, that the shock of combat, which in a novice produces excitement and loss of head, has the very opposite effect upon an old stager, and induces presence of mind. On the other hand the youth, though inferior in strength, skill, and coolness, had the advantage in bulk and weight ; and as they swayed to and fro, locked in each other's grasp, it seemed doubtful at first in whose favour the struggle would end. But that doubt did not last long. The old man never for one instant loosened his hold of his enemy's throat ; and the latter, half-suffocated, and nearly helpless, was impelled, inch by inch, and foot by foot, towards the open window, through which it was evidently the intention of his antagonist to hurl him headlong, as soon as he had the chance. But the youth, in his turn, kept fast hold of

his enemy's collar ; and it was clear that so long as he did so he could not be hurled into the river without dragging his foe in along with him.

And now they are writhing and swaying backwards and forwards upon the very sill—and the crisis has come—and the youth's back is to the water—and the old man is rocking him over it—but yet fully aware that he dares not heave his enemy too far outwards until he has first unclenched his fingers from their desperate grip upon his coat.

At this most critical juncture, the Marquis tightened his strain upon the youth's windpipe, and with the whole strength of his iron thumbs compressed it so forcibly, that in an agony of strangulation the lad was compelled to let go his hold of his adversary's collar, and try to clutch his wrists ; but in that instant of release the latter hurled the youth from him, and he fell backwards with a yell of terror into the stream ! The Marquis did not, however, survive to boast of his achievement,—for as the youth fell, his foot jerked up accidentally and caught the other under the knee, thus upsetting his balance as he leaned over the edge of the sill,

and precipitating him also into the river. The height from which they both fell was upwards of forty feet. The Marquis, in his descent, struck his head violently three or four times against some projecting ledges of stonework in the wall, and was so stunned on reaching the water that he sank to rise no more! The youth could not swim; and he, too, after a vain struggle, and many shrieks for help, which no one heeded, shared a similar fate!

Thus perished miserably the last scion of the noble house of De Lux! In the heat of passion, with malice in his heart, and curses on his lips, he was struck down, and drowned like a blind puppy in a ditch! And thus perished also an unprincipled youth, whose career had commenced in an infamous occupation, and who would doubtless have been a pest to society had he lived!

To return to Xenosthes. No sooner had the Marquis left the room in which he was confined, than the four pseudo gens-d'armes took to their heels, leaving François Duval alone with the prisoner.

THE FUTURE

The future is a vast and uncharted territory, full of possibilities and challenges. It is a time when the seeds we plant today will bear fruit, and the decisions we make now will shape the world we live in.

As we look ahead, we must embrace change and innovation. The world is moving at a rapid pace, and those who stand still will be left behind. We must be open to new ideas and technologies, and we must have the courage to try them. For it is in the face of adversity that our true strength is revealed.

In the end, the future is not something that happens to us; it is something that we create. We have the power to shape our destiny, and we have the responsibility to do so wisely. Let us strive for a future that is just, peaceful, and full of hope. For that is the future we all deserve.

and precipitating him also into the river. The height from which they both fell was upwards of forty feet. The Marquis, in his fall, struck his head violently three or four times against some projecting ledges of rockwork in the wall, and was so stunned or paralysed by the water that he sank to rise no more. The youth could not swim; and he, too, after a vain struggle, and many shrieks for help, which no one heeded, shared a similar fate!

Thus perished miserably the last male of the noble house of De Lux! In the fall of 1793, with malice in his heart, and courage on his lip he was struck down, and drowned like a wild puppy in a ditch! And thus perished also an unprincipled youth, whose career had commenced in an infamous occupation, and who would doubtless have been a peer of the Marquis had he lived!

To return to Xenostines. In the morning the Marquis left the room in which he was confined, than the four pseudo gendarmes took to their heels, leaving François Lève alone with the prisoner.

“Your friends have deserted you, Signor,” said the innkeeper, with an ironical grin, “and it remains for the poor landlord of a roadside cabaret to offer such help as he can to the man of wealth. For you to stay here, Signor, is death. May I have the honour of assisting your Excellency to escape?”

“For the love of God, dear friend, knock off these shackles, and help me either to hide or run. Rest assured I will reward those who prove my friends in this hour of need.”

The artful aubergiste lost no time in doing the bidding of his interesting *protégé*, who in the same breath had appealed to his love of his Maker and his love of gold. In a very few minutes Xenosthes was a free man once more.

“Now then, for a run,” said Duval, “Follow me.”

But the police had arrived; and escape by any of the outer doors was cut off. There were too many people jabbering in the hall and passages for anyone desirous of escape to dare to show himself in that direction.

“We must hide ourselves,” said Duval, returning at once, “in the cellar below this room,

for a few hours at least. There is a trap door in the floor through which we must jump. I know the place well. But the depth is great. Dare you venture, Signor, to take a leap in the dark?"

"I fear there is no option. Lead the way. Sooner or later it must come to that; but I care not how long it is deferred."

Duval opened the trap door, and let himself drop through. It was a fall of a dozen feet, and jolted him much. Xenosthes followed, taking the precaution to let the flap rest against his head, so as to shut when he had cast himself off. He too sustained a terrible jolt, and measured his length on the rough pavement beneath. The two were then in perfect darkness; and for mutual safety they took each other by the hand.

The cellar in which the luxurious, self-indulgent millionaire now found himself, hand in hand with the aubergiste, was a damp vault, dark as Erebus, and beneath the level of the river outside. A cool draught blew in upon them, every now and then, from some external opening; and after a time, as their eyes became accustomed to the darkness, and the pupils

expanded, they perceived a faint glimmer of light proceeding from an aperture in the external wall. After a time they heard two heavy splashes in the water outside—and then screams for help—which gradually died away in choking gurgling groans!

The Innkeeper shuddered, as he pressed his companion's hand, and said

“That is Blumeau, drowning. I know his voice well. There is one *fripon* less in the world now, to rob and wrong honest folks, like you and me.”

Xenosthes shivered; and thought of the corpse of the poisoned Italian girl, cooling and stiffening, as he supposed, in a room not many feet above his head.

“But drowning,” continued Duval, “is better than the guillotine—and we are not yet safe from that. Come now, Signor. If I am to put my own dear neck in jeopardy, for the sake of trying to keep *your* head upon your shoulders, suppose you tell me what you mean to stand. Suppose we strike the bargain *now*. It will warm our blood.”

“All I have about me,” he answered, “shall be yours, for a first instalment; and a second

shall follow as soon as you put me safe on board my yacht. I cannot part with you till then, for good folks are scarce. Here are my watch and purse, to begin with."

"Worth only a few paltry francs."

"But my second instalment! Think of that."

"Hush. I hear voices overhead. *Mon Dieu!* they are raising the trap door. Off with you, man, from below. Keep fast hold of me—gently—no noise—creep along as still as death."

They crawled gingerly to the wall of the vault; and then all round it, until they came to an opening into the next chamber. But they had only just passed through before they heard a ladder lowered into the vault which they had left, and saw the light from a lantern shining through the doorway on to the opposite wall of the second vault, in which they then were.

Xenosthes laid his hand against his beating heart, and—the first time for many a long year—muttered a craven's prayer to his Maker for pardon and help."

"This," whispered his companion, "is the second of a long suite of vaults; but where they lead to, or whether there is any hole through which we can escape into the outer

world, God only knows. I risk my life, Signor, in going on. The pursuers are behind us. Say, at what sum do you value my services? Shall it be ten thousand francs?"

"Double it. Treble it. Anything for dear life. On with you! On! We are only one of these vaults a-head; and they who follow us have got both ladders and lights."

Duval pressed his companion's hand significantly, and they hurried on again; groping always along the wall until they came to an opening, and then passing through it into the next vault. Frequently they heard the voices of the exploring party behind them, and sometimes could actually see the glimmer of their lights.

At last a current of air blew in strongly upon the cheeks of the fugitives,—and an opening into the outer world appeared, large enough for a man's body to pass through. This hole invited them to risk detection above ground, rather than be caught like rats in a trap below. Duval forced himself through first, and then helped to haul out his companion. The latter could hardly stand, when dragged forth into the light; and his face, which was pale as death, offered

a frightful spectacle of selfish and abject fear. But the aubergiste knew well enough that the pursuing party were not in search of the Jew, but of the English girl, who had been beguiled to that den of iniquity by a false report, and a forged letter; only he allowed his companion's fears to harrow up his mind, in hopes of extorting from him a larger reward. Nevertheless, a rumour of a girl having been poisoned on the premises that morning had reached the ears of the police, and for them to have discovered the two fugitives in the vaults might have led to serious consequences, if Giovanna's evidence, and that of the supposed gens-d'armes, had been given against the Jew.

The hole through which they escaped from the vaults was at the back of the building; and they found themselves in a field of waving corn.

"This is unlucky," said Duval, "for if we cross it we shall leave tracks. Keep close after me, Signor, along the wall,—and we will strike off for the river at the next hedge."

By dint of creeping along in the wide overgrown ditches, and an occasional run across a grass field, they at last reached the river, about

half a mile below the château, and there crossed it in an old punt which they found tied to a tree in the bank. Once on the towing-path Duval said he felt more at home. They hurried on for some distance without meeting a soul, and at length came up to a double barge, laden with hay. These sort of barges are common enough on the Blavet, the Vilaine, and the Oust; and they consist of two short ones lashed together end to end. When hay is their cargo, the bargees who navigate them leave a sort of open tunnel in the middle, through which they can bale out the bilge-water with wooden shovels,—and it was into the hay tunnel of the barge in question that Duval proposed to his companion to creep for concealment and escape.

“I know well,” he said, “the good fellows who work this craft, and if they find us here they will not peach. Just now they are having a bowl of soup and a *choppine* of cider in the *cabaret* yonder, and giving their horses a feed. They will be back soon, and towing down the river as fast as we could walk. We will jog along with them until they stop for the night; and then, when they are gone, creep out of the hay. A sharp walk will take us into Hennebon

by eleven. Cheer up, Signor. The worst is over now."

Xenosthes did not need much persuasion to step on board the barge, and bury himself over head and ears amongst the hay; and his companion followed his example. Presently they heard the voices of the bargees, and the neighing of horses on the towing-path, and the cracking of the driver's whip; and soon after the water began to gurgle by their side as the barge was dragged along. Thus they jogged on in their concealment during the rest of that fine summer's day, through reach after reach of lovely scenery which they could not see, until the setting sun tipped the rocky heights with vermillion, and the purple clouds with gold. But the bargees did not stop yet. On they went—on again—through lock after lock, and reach after reach of the winding river—until night cast its dark pall upon the landscape, and a drenching mist lay coiled in wreaths upon the surface of the tepid stream—penetrating through the loose hay which the Jew had piled upon his breast—and resting like the cold hand of a corpse upon it.

But the toiling bargemen stopped at last, and

went to a neighbouring village for their rest, after having made all fast for the remainder of the night, close to the last lock above the town. Then the fugitives crept out from their hiding places in the hay, and with rapid steps strode onwards towards the yacht.

The tide had just begun to ebb when they stopped before it. There was a light in Cissy's cabin, and another at the bow; and the boat was lying astern. They hailed, and a man on watch replied. In a very few minutes the owner and his guide stood on deck. Whatever may have been his crimes, Xenosthes was not mean; and after doubling the highest reward which he had promised to Duval, he parted from him with warm and hearty thanks. There was no Mark on board to receive him; but that he did not much regret, for he felt like a lashed hound. Cissy, however, was there, to welcome with her sweet smile the return of a master, who to her, at least, had always been lavish of his love.

The wind was light and fair; and as, during the absence of the owner, the captain had surveyed the few reaches of the river which they had to pass before arriving at the open sea, he

did not fear to venture down without a pilot. They weighed anchor, therefore, at once ; and the EIONE spread her peaked foresail above the sheet of mist, and dropped quietly down the narrow river with the ebb,—looking like some guilty thing veiling her beauty, and absquatulating in the dead of night.

CHAPTER 14.

TELEGRAMS.

As soon as Mark's first anxious thoughts about his Nelly's safety had been set at rest, and that everything was done that could be done to secure her comfort, and bring about her quick recovery, the serious doubts which had crossed his mind as to Mrs. May's condition, and the probable origin of her daughter's strange adventure, remained to be set at rest too. Before leaving Paris, Nelly had written to him every day since she knew where he was, and in one of her letters she had told him the address of the Doctor who attended her Mamma. This was fortunate; and Mark resolved to telegraph to him at once, and inform him of Miss May's

safety at Hennebon, at the same time requesting to know what was her mother's state.

In a couple of hours he received, by a messenger from the Telegraph Office, the following reply to the message which he had sent:—

“Mrs. May is still conscious, but sinking fast. The news of her daughter's safety has consoled her. Her husband has returned from abroad, and is now with her. Dr. Brownlow is with her too. When all is over you shall hear from me again.”

Here was news both sad and strange! Nelly's mother dying; and her father—who was supposed to have been drowned eleven years before—still alive, and returned from abroad in time to see his wife once more! This then was the clue to Angelina's strange hints, and mysterious advice! She must have known what the poor wife had not known! She must have corresponded with Mr. May, and have been informed by him of his movements, months before! It was passing strange; and Mark began to feel a sort of cold dread of a man who could act thus by a loving wife and daughter, and a fear that perhaps he might dislike him. But when he recalled to mind much that was so pleasing,

so gentle, and so affectionate in Angelina's character, he felt reassured.

Still, the news was both sad and strange; and Mark spent the rest of that eventful day in a state of bewilderment, sorrow, and anxiety, such as he had never known before; now sitting at the window of his own room, looking out listlessly upon the Quay,—and then creeping softly into the next chamber to ask the nurse whether all was going on well, and to gaze upon the sleeping face of the beloved patient, whom he knew was soon to lose one beloved parent, but to find another in her stead.

Thus the hours passed away until night; and then another telegram from Paris was put into his hand. It ran thus:—

“Mrs. May died calmly at half-past nine to-night, in her husband's arms. You will hear full particulars from me by to-morrow's post.”

Mark sat up watching all that night; but towards daybreak he fell into a doze. On waking, he looked out of window towards the yacht—which he had not been able to see clearly in the darkness—and, to his infinite surprise, found her gone! He hurried, at once, down

to the Quay, and was there told by one of the Douaniers on duty, that the owner had arrived at high water on the previous evening, soon after the little girl had been put on board, and that they had got under weigh at once. A man, whom the Douanier recognised as the landlord of a little country inn called the Croix Rouge, about a dozen miles from Hennebon, had accompanied him,—and after staying a few minutes on board, had been put ashore again. Where this man had since gone the Douanier did not know; but he told Mark the name of the village where he lived.

Thus Xenosthes had arrived as suddenly as he said he should, and had as suddenly left! The beautiful schooner was no longer at her anchorage beneath the viaduct, in the midst of that muddy stream. She had dropped down with the tide, in the darkness of the night, and was then, no doubt, spreading her broad canvas to the breeze, laying over to it gracefully, and cleaving through the green waves on her way back to the English coast. Cissy was gone too; and no message had been left for Mark. Should he ever see his tall dark friend again? Was he angry that he did not find him at his post?

Time might show. But to find the yacht gone, and her owner too, without a word or message to him, was like another blow. He returned to the hotel, deep in thought at the strange events which had occurred; but his spirits rose, as he reflected that he was then his Nelly's best and only protector in that strange town. After nearly a year of separation they had strangely met again, and he vowed, with all a lover's fervour, that they would part no more, —come what might.

CHAPTER 15.

A SICK ROOM.

MARK returned to the hotel; but as he passed the door of Nelly's room to go to his own, which was next to it, the Nurse, who had been listening to his returning footsteps, opened it and beckoned him in. In answer to his anxious inquiry how the young lady had passed the night, the good dame informed him that she had slept well, and was decidedly much better; "but," she added, "the dear child is distressed, and wishes to speak to you, *Monsieur*."

Mark stepped softly up to the bedside, and found Nelly lying with her face upon the pillow, sobbing as if her little heart would break.

"What is the matter, dearest?" he said, in his gentlest tones, as he laid his hand upon her

shoulder. "Don't fret. We are both together now, and nothing shall ever part us again. Don't cry. It does you harm."

She turned partly round—laid her hand upon his—and looked at him fondly through her tears, saying,

"Will you do me a kindness, Mark? Will you grant me a favour—the first I ever asked of you?"

"A million favours, darling," he replied, "even to laying down my life for you, if that were required. Say but the word, and I obey."

"You will promise, then, to do what I ask?"

"Ah, unkind one—do you want me to leave you? No. I cannot promise that. A troop of wild horses should not drag me from your side now. Ask anything but *that*."

"But listen, Mark. Poor Mamma is dead! I know it. I have seen her spirit as it fled away from earth. The night before you found me, she appeared to me in the cabin of a barge, where I lay hid. She is dead, I know, and you must go to Paris. I shall be quite safe here. Oh, that I could go myself—but that I know I must not attempt. I feel much better, but not strong enough for that yet."

“You must not dream of such a thing,” he replied, “nor need I leave you, as you seem to wish. A kind friend was with your dear Mamma, and he will arrange all the rest. I heard from the Doctor last night.”

“Oh tell me all you heard,” she said, raising herself up in bed.

Mark shook his head. “Not now, darling. You must be kept calm, or you may be very ill. All is over indeed; but all was done that could be done. Your poor Mamma is dead indeed, but she had heard that you were safe. I telegraphed yesterday morning to tell her so; and she did not die until late last night. Your vision of the previous night was but an illusion of a feverish brain. What is past is past, and cannot be undone. Our anxiety now is for you. Don’t fret. There are kind friends in Paris who will do all that remains to be done for your poor Mamma. I need not leave you. Lie down again. Compose yourself, and try to sleep once more.”

“Where is Cissy?” she enquired.

“The yacht is gone. She left suddenly last night. We two are alone now. I am your sole protector—and we will never part again.

Think of that. Try to get well as soon as you can. It is only sleep and quiet that you want. Don't fret too much about the past."

"Oh, Mark, I feel so much better to-day. The pain across my brow is quite gone, and my hands are cool now. Do tell me what you heard."

"Hush. There is some one knocking at the door. It is the Doctor. Lie down, or he will scold us."

"*Mon Dieu ! Monsieur ! You here,*" said the bustling little Frenchman. "Very wrong—very wrong—and my patient in tears! Ah, *Mademoiselle*, this is not the thing. Pray, good Sir, leave the room. The danger is not past yet. She must be kept quiet for the next few days, or I cannot answer for the result."

With these unpleasant tidings Mark left the room at once, and awaited with anxious expectation the Doctor's report. He did not stay long with his patient; and there was a pleasant smile upon his face when he came out, and shook Mark by the hand.

"Your sweet Sister is much better, *Monsieur*; much better—much. I cannot tell you how

much. Oh, the fine pliant strength of youth! We old dried up branches break and snap, while the green sapling does but bend. But we must keep her quiet, dear Sir. My composing draughts will do no good, if *you* turn nurse."

"But is there still danger, Doctor, as you said just now?"

"None. None! All will be well soon. In a fortnight she will be herself again, I promise you; if you will only let sleep and quiet do their work."

"You shall be religiously obeyed. Come to see her often, Doctor. We two are alone here—and she is all in all to me,—not my Sister, as you said just now."

The good Doctor pressed the young man's hand kindly, and left—with a promise to come again soon, and often.

Mark threw himself upon his couch, and slept till nearly noon. He then got up much refreshed, and joined the party at the *déjeûner* below. In the midst of the meal, an English traveller arrived, flung off his cloak, and, after eyeing the guests attentively for an instant,

seated himself on a vacant chair next to Mark. His tall commanding figure, handsome sunburnt features, and grand white beard and curly locks, attracted everyone's attention. It was Mr. Winter. But his genial smile was gone, and his face looked careworn, and jaded with fatigue.

He addressed Mark at once in English.

"Pray, is this seat engaged?"

"No, Sir, I think not."

"Then I will take it, and seat myself next to a fellow-countryman. You see I knew you for one at once. I believe I could pick out an Englishman from a whole mob of foreigners. Do you like your quarters at this hotel?"

"In truth I hardly know. I am a stranger here, only arrived yesterday. But everyone seems to be kind and attentive; as, in fact, the French always are, so far as I can see."

"Your first impressions of them are not far wrong. The French *are* a thoroughly good-natured people; and I would almost rather, in case of need, trust to *their* humanity than to that of my own countrymen. Let me hope, however, that you have not yet had occasion to put their kindness to a severe test."

“I have indeed, I regret to say, for I am here as nurse to a sick friend. We only arrived yesterday; but the good people have done all they could for us, and things are going on well.”

“Are you *quite* sure? Are you morally certain? French doctors are kind and attentive, but they do not always speak the truth.”

“I think in this case our Doctor does. The young lady is certainly much better to-day, and her feverish symptoms are nearly gone. She is pronounced out of danger.”

“I thought as much. Your appetite is good, and your eye is bright and cheerful. Well; take care of your precious charge. Do you know that I have come many miles in order to enquire after that same young lady of yours—and to see that you are doing your duty by her?”

“*You, Sir?*”

“Yes. She and I are old friends. Give her my card, when she is willing to gossip,—and tell her that Mr. Winter called to see her. Her Mamma and I lodged in the same house together, in Paris.”

“Indeed! She never mentioned your name to me in her letters. Do you mean Miss May?”

“Yes. I mean Miss Nelly May. We met one day in the Louvre, and I became interested in her, from her strong resemblance to my own daughter. She and her poor Mamma were living alone in Paris; and I took a lodging in the same house with them, in order to be near them, for they needed help. It was well that I did so.”

“Do you know the sad news, then?”

“I know all; and I have come here now expressly to see Miss May. You won't say me nay, dear Sir, will you?”

“I fear I must. The Doctor's orders are that she must be kept perfectly quiet for some time; and he assures me positively that there would be risk in exciting her mind. Sleep and quiet were his last injunctions, very strongly enforced.”

The stranger turned away his head from his companion, for some minutes, in evident agitation. At length he said

“Levisne, I *must* have one peep at my dear child—only one—I can't go back without seeing her. Perhaps she is sleeping, and I won't awake her. I have travelled all these weary leagues to see her—and to thank you too—and in another hour I must return to Paris, for you know what sad duties await me there. Come, dear boy, you

and I will be staunch friends some day, and you must not deny my first request. Cannot you guess who I am? The Doctor has told you all about it, has he not?"

Mark scanned his companion's features more closely for an instant, and then perceived who he was. His likeness to Nelly became apparent, with the clue afforded by the above hints. "Come up stairs, dear Sir," he whispered. "We are amongst strangers here, and they are evidently watching us."

They left the table, and mounted to Mark's room. There, the tall handsome man, with the great white beard, confessed himself to be Nelly's father!

Mark took his hand at once, and pressed it warmly; but the pressure was not returned.

"Levisne," he said, "I dare not return your honest grasp, although my heart prompts me to do so. I am a miserable, guilty wretch, utterly unworthy of your regard. But years of agony have been the penalty of my crime, and Providence spared *her* until I could return, and be forgiven—oh, how nobly! But you and Nelly, alas, will both despise me, when you know all."

“Oh, do not talk so, dear Sir,” Mark said.

“But we can’t slur it over. The truth *must* be told. You must both know it, sooner or later.”

“Hush, dear Sir. I will go and see if your daughter sleeps.”

He returned in an instant, and beckoned to the long-lost father to come into his child’s sick room. She was sleeping calmly. Her father bent over her with profound emotion.

“Leave me for awhile, both of you,” he whispered to Mark and the nurse. “Go into the next room. I wish to be alone, a few instants, with my poor child. I won’t disturb her.”

They did so; and remained in the next room, listening. Presently they heard a faint scream from the sick girl. They ran in to her at once, and found her awake, and in her father’s arms. But he had not confessed himself; and still she thought it was her kind friend of the Louvre, come to see her, and tell her all about her poor Mamma.

Mark laid his hand upon the father’s shoulder, and implored him to remember the Doctor’s orders.

“ Good-bye then, Nell,” he said, crushing down with a strong effort feelings which were well nigh bursting from all control. “ I mustn’t stay any longer with you now, but I shall be coming this way again soon. You know we mustn’t talk about what has happened, now. It would excite you, and do you harm. Let me see. In a fortnight, at the furthest, I will be here again; and then you will be quite well. And do you know what I have brought to amuse you with, as you get better? Shall I tell you? But you mustn’t look at them just yet. Two big portfolios, full of my drawings, and a great many photographs which I collected in the East. Good-bye then, my little Nell. Mind you get well by when I come next. May I crave a kiss? You know I have come all these long miles expressly to see you—you naughty runaway.”

Nelly smiled, and did not resist, as the supposed Mr. Winter put back her hair from her forehead, and pressed a loving kiss upon it.

“ Strange,” he said to Mark, on their way down stairs, “ Strange that I should have known her at once amidst all the thousands in Paris—and stranger still, perhaps, that *I* should have crept so soon into a loving corner of *her* heart.

She quite screamed with joy just now when she woke at the bare touch of my lips, and saw me by her side. But tell me, Mark, where did you find her? Her being here with you was a puzzle to us all. Your telegram did much to console her poor mother's last hours, but it explained nothing."

Mark replied that he knew nothing yet beyond the bare fact of having found her in the plantation the morning before. She had been too ill since to bear questioning on the subject of her adventure.

They left the hotel together, and on their walk to the station talked over recent events—but with evident embarrassment on the part of Mr. May. Before starting for Paris, the latter put into Mark's hand a purse of Napoleons, saying

"Wait at Hennebon until I return. It may be longer than you expect perhaps, but don't leave this place until you hear from me again—and don't tell her who I am, for I wish to break that to her, myself, at the proper time. Take care of her, Mark,—and," he added, in a low whisper, "see that she gets suitable dress—you know what I mean. Adieu."

Mark pressed his hand warmly, and waited by the side of the carriage until it moved off,—but Mr. May heeded him not, and spoke no more. He threw himself back in a corner seat—drew a fold of his cloak across his face—and laid his aching head against the cushions. The train rolled off; and Mark was left alone once more with Nelly, in that remote town on the Brittany coast.

CHAPTER 16.

HOME AGAIN.

ABOUT a week after Mr. May's visit to Hennebon, recorded in the last chapter, the same gentleman, with a quantity of luggage, arrived in Jersey by the steamer from St. Malo, and at once engaged the services of a boatman to take him to the neighbouring island of Sark, about twenty miles distant. It was about nine o'clock on a fine summer's morning, when the boat—one of those large deep three-masted conger-fishing craft, so common amongst the Channel Islands—got under weigh. Both wind and tide were favourable—the sea looking like liquid steel, and the sky streaked with those long white feathery whisks which they call mare's-tails, and which generally accompany a wholesale

breeze. After a quick run of about four hours they neared the island, and Mr. May took the helm himself, and piloted the boat through some intricacies of which he had perfect knowledge, into the little bay beneath his own cottage, and which has been already described in the early chapters of this story. He put her safely alongside the natural slip, and then landed with his luggage,—two of the men being directed to convey it up to the house, while another remained in charge of the boat, and he followed at his leisure. Singularly enough, he landed at the very same spot where, eleven years before, he had left his clothes on that eventful morning of his sudden disappearance from the island; and the reader may imagine the feelings of the returned emigrant, as he looked round upon the well-remembered scene, and approached his former home, in which, for five years, he had lived in happiness and peace, with a loving wife and an infant daughter,—a home which was then lonely and desolate,—and himself a returned mourner from his wife's grave, and from the sick room of a daughter who did not know him, and who lay struck down by fever in a foreign land.

The stupendous features of the little bay seemed to their owner to have shrunk somewhat, and the granite rocks to have grown less majestic during his absence—an effect of a kind commonly observed after one has been years away from a place; but his wooden bathing house was still there, though green with age; and the study perched upon the bank; and the winding zigzag up the cliff, rough and rugged, as of yore. No ruthless inartistic hand had civilized that steep ascent, by hewing into trimmer shape the rustic steps—or by raking smooth the channelled grooves of many a winter's torrent which had coursed in fury down the path—or by docking the wild flowers which half choked the way. Neither had pick nor pruning hook been used upon the lane above; for the blackthorns which he had himself planted filled the gaps between the oaks that formed an arch above his head,—and the gorse and heather on the hill-side were of tall and sturdy growth. And now he is standing once more before his own gate, and his eye is wandering from the pretty cot, to the garden, orchard, and cōtil—all so little changed from what he knew, save by nature's own beautifying touch, unrestrained by art struggling

in daily contest with her decrees. Trees had grown and creepers climbed ; yellow thatch had turned to velvet black ; lichen and navel-wort had spread their greens and greys over the rough stone walls which he had left quite new, and fresh from the mason's hand ; and the red gravel, which he so well remembered having laid upon the garden walks, had been trodden down to a sober black. It was his own pretty home—consecrated to the memory of his own taste—respected for *his* sake—and, as he now knew, left to grow into a little wild Eden, for him who might return one day.

He opened the gate, and walked in. The men were there before him with the luggage, and he helped them to carry it to the front door. Then he knocked, but no one came ; and yet they had all heard the rustling of a woman's dress within. Never mind : he sent the men away, entered, and hung up his hat on the old-accustomed peg. Then he crept softly to the kitchen, but not a soul was there, although a stew was boiling in the pot, and a woman's half-finished cap lying upon the table, with black trimmings by its side. Next, he went into his daughter's school-room, then a photographic den, and

looked round upon her handy work, her baths and dishes, tripod and camera, and the prints which she had pinned against the edges of the shelves. Then he mounted to the upper rooms, and strolled from chamber to chamber—all so still, and clean, and neat—arrested now and then by some fresh evidence of his daughter's artistic tastes, or by samples of his poor wife's less ambitious knitting and crochet. At last he descended to the pretty drawing-room,—but not a soul could he find in any part of the dear old house to welcome the long-lost wanderer back. Nevertheless, in that room, as in the kitchen, there was evidence of some one having just been there,—for upon the table, (that same old oval with its ebony legs, that he knew so well) was lying an open writing-case, with a note upon broad, black-edged paper, just begun, and the pen lying by its side. He did not, of course, pry into another's secret, and look to see whose the writing was—although from a distance he knew it for a lady's hand—but after scanning with curious eye the various well-remembered objects in the room, he leant against the mantel-piece, and remained with his cheek resting upon his hand, lost in reverie and visions of the past.

Thus, minute after minute flew away,—minutes of precious time, for this visit of his to his old home was to be but a flying one, and in two hours he was to start again for France,—when at length, on looking round, he found that a lady had stolen softly in the room, and, without disturbing him, had seated herself again at her writing desk, and was finishing—or perhaps more truly *appearing* to finish—the note which she had begun.

That lady was Angelina, — and she had expected his visit, having been prepared for it by a line from him from Paris, received the day before. At the sight of her, a chaos of feelings, utterly indescribable, overcame him for a few seconds : but at length, summoning all his resolution to his aid, he stepped softly up to her, leant over her shoulder, and laying his hand upon one of hers, said

“My kindest of dear friends—behold me back again at last !”

The colour mounted to the lady’s face, and suffused every visible part of her neck and bosom, as she rose to return his greeting, with a confusion which, in spite of all her efforts, to prepare herself for this scene, she could not in the least control.

“ I thought to have found only my poor old Bridget here,” Mr. May continued, “ but I find my best of friends instead. This is kind— kinder than I deserve.”

“ We meet, at last, under sad and strange circumstances,” said Angelina, at length recovering her composure. “ We are *both* now alone in Sark. You will regret to find me, like yourself, in mourning robes. My Aunt has been compelled to break up a week sooner than usual, and go to England, never, I fear, to return here. Her brother, the clergyman, has just lost his wife; and she has arranged to live with him, and take charge of his large family. So the house in which we have lived together so many years will have to be given up, and I must seek for a humbler lodging in the island, for I cannot keep on the school by myself. Life is full of strange changes, and no one can foresee what a day may bring forth. Your own return, in time to see your wife once more, seems little short of a special providence, does it not ?”

The ice thus broken, they conversed together, with less restraint, about the past; until at length Mr. May changed the subject, by saying, in his most persuasive tones,

“But you must not stay here all alone. Join us on our proposed tour, and make us tenfold happier by your companionship. I think of taking my poor Nelly for a little trip, as soon as she is well enough to travel—perhaps to Switzerland, and on to Florence, the city of my birth. My plan was to leave the house in Bridget’s charge for a few months, and show Nelly a little of the great world. Change of scene is really necessary for her, after the late event. I must sacrifice my own feelings for the present, and keep on the move a little longer, for her sake,—though I confess to you, my heart is here, and ever will be.”

“You have anticipated what I meant to suggest,” replied the lady. “I am delighted to hear that you think of a Continental tour with her—particularly since you have now the means of carrying it out with comfort.”

“But *you* will go with us,—for *her* sake, if not for mine?”

The lady coloured a second time, as she shook her head, and answered

“No. Do not ask me. My home must be ever here, amongst these wave-worn rocks. I shall never leave Sark, unless compelled to do

so. I cannot face the world again. It may be morbid feeling, but so it is."

Mr. May smiled sadly, as he replied

"I know of old your firm resolves, and how hopeless it used to be to try to shake them. Are you still the same?"

"Still the same," echoed Angelina.

"Then stay here till we come back. Make my house your home, and keep the dear little place in order for us. Don't say No, always. Say Yes, to me for once. It is for Nelly's sake that I ask it, not my own."

"Yes, then, for once; but on the condition that you give me timely notice of your return. Do you find the place much altered?"

"By time only. Time, and the great mother, Nature, have beautified it, and toned it down. Kind eyes have watched over it, and kind hands have tended it, for *me* this day. Her loving heart was constant to my image,—fiend, reprobate, villain as I have been!"

"Hush. Let us take a stroll round the garden," said Angelina, anxious that their conversation should not take *that* turn; and leading the way through the open window.

"Have you got long to stay?" she asked.

“Only two hours. The boat is anchored in the bay, ready, the instant the tide turns, to put me across to one of the French ports—St. Brieux, Morlaix, or Paimpol—from which I shall proceed to Hennebon as fast as the cross country diligences, or posting, will permit.”

They wandered over the old place together—round the garden—into the orchard—and up the cōtil—talking as they strolled, until at length, Nelly’s engagement and future prospects were brought upon the *tapis*.

“Do you like him personally?” Angelina asked, alluding to Mark Levisne.

“He is a fine young fellow,” replied Mr. May, “but we men require time to form a correct estimate of each other. With us the external endowments which so captivate your sex go for little. He is a gentleman, doubtless; and my first impressions of him are most favourable. We shall get on well together, I dare say. I hope we shall—but what am *I* that I should presume to sit in judgement on my fellow man? Alas! alas! When they know all, will they ever forgive me? for I cannot forgive myself.”

“Hush. Let that be buried and forgotten—

for *my* sake if not for your own. Let that sad secret remain with *us*."

"And yet if *you* forgave me, why should not *they*?"

"Hush. Think no more of that. You erred, and have paid the penalty. Let it pass. And now we must part,—for I see your boatman beckoning to you to go. He is ready to start."

"And it will be months before we meet again,—and I have not yet thanked you for all that you have done for the poor exile. Your letters supported me when I must otherwise have sunk in despair, or have failed in my hard purpose. They were like rain upon the parched soil. You have saved a fellow creature from despair. And poor Nelly, too, how can she ever repay you for your kindness to her? You have overwhelmed us both with benefits, and have returned good for evil."

"Don't speak of it. I have been repaid for all by *your* friendship, and *her* love. And now we must part indeed. See, the man is beckoning to you again. Tell Nelly to write to me very often,—and say that her letters will be the greatest pleasure I shall have until I see her back again. Adieu, dear Sir—the men are waiting—you must go."

But still he stood before her irresolute—as if he had something more to say.

“Remember me also to Mark,” she added. “Give my love to *both* your children. And now, adieu.”

He took her hand between both of his, and looking wistfully in her face, said

“Not one look, or one word of comfort for poor me?”

“You have your daughter. You are not alone. In *her* love forget the past.”

“Forget it? Never.”

The lady hastily withdrew her hand, and turned from him in confusion. They walked together in silence to the gate,—and there, in much embarrassment, she let him take her hand again. Was there more than friendship in that last adieu? They alone could tell—for not a word was said. She hurried back into the house; and he went slowly down the dear old lane, and the zigzag foot-path, to the landing slip, and stepped on board the boat.

As they sailed quickly round the southern headland of the little bay, he saw that lady once more; she was standing on the heights above, watching them. He waved to her one more adieu.

CHAPTER 17.

A FATHER AND HIS CHILD.

JUST ten days after the events recorded in the chapter before the last, a lumbering diligence from Pontivy drove up to the door of the hotel at Hennebon, at which Mark and Nelly were staying, and the noise and bustle consequent on its arrival attracted that young lady to a window. She was then nearly recovered from her illness, and had left her bed, although not her room. It was a calm summer's evening; and before the diligence arrived she had been seated at a table, looking over, for the twentieth time, the drawings and photographs which her old friend of the Louvre had left for her amusement, on his former visit. The window of the

room was open down to the ground, and as she stood before it, watching with interest the descent of the passengers, and the various little excitements of the scene on the Quay below, she suddenly perceived her old friend himself waving his hand to her gaily from under the leathern hood of the *banquette*. To return his greeting with an equally joyous face,—and watch him descend the ladder, hand his portmanteau to the *garçon* of the hotel, and enter, were a matter of course; and then the affectionate girl ran to the door of her room, and there awaited his arrival. Nor was he long in mounting the stairs, and presenting himself before her.

“What, up and well, Nelly? I told you so, did I not? I told you I should come back soon, and find my little pet herself again.”

“How kind of you to come and see me; especially to-day—for I am left all alone.”

“Ah, how so?”

“My friend,” she said, colouring slightly, “was sent for this morning to go with some strange man to Lorient—and he has not yet returned. I am getting quite anxious about him. I am so glad you have come—for I felt

almost as if some new horror was hanging over me.”

“Nonsense, dear child. I have come to stay with you now, and be a protector to you both. Banish all thoughts of evil, for nothing but happiness is before you. You know I am a true fortune-teller—am I not?”

By this time the two had entered the young lady's room together, and had passed from the dark corridor into the light. They then scanned each other's appearance for an instant with more attention, but as they did so a cloud seemed to settle upon them both, for both were dressed in deep mourning,—added to which, a milliner was in the room, at work, with yards of black crape, and other black materials before her. Mr. May seated himself upon an ottoman, and for a few minutes was unable to speak, being overpowered by some deep emotion. The tears also started into Nelly's eyes, and she turned from him, and looked towards the window. At last her old friend roused himself from his painful reverie, and walked to the table upon which she had left his open portfolio of drawings.

“Have these amused you, Nelly?” he asked.

“Yes, dear Sir, they have, more than I can

express. You must tell me all about them. But may I ask you one question? You won't be angry? Have you come alone?"

"Ah, that other Nelly that I told you of? Is that it? You want to hear news of *her*? I think I can guess what you mean. But she is alive and well. I have lost a dear friend, it is true—but not *her*. That would be indeed a crushing blow. Fancy my losing *her*! *Can* you fancy such a thing?"

"Alas! I do not know. Life has many sad trials. Such things are possible, are they not?"

"But tell me all about yourself. Come; let us have a nice long talk together, before your friend the student returns. I am jealous, and I like to have you all to myself. Let us have a nice long chat, shall we?"

They sat down together before the portfolio, and turned over the pictures, one by one,—but in a sort of abstraction, and without the power of starting a topic, although both had so much to say,—Nelly burning to ask questions about her poor Mamma, but fearing to do so, because her friend had had a trouble too,—and he, with his great heart beating wildly, longing to tell her who he was, and yet not daring to approach

a subject so full of pathos, although time, and place, and circumstance, all seemed fitted for that confession. In situations of this sort a woman is generally the first to break the embarrassing silence. "Are these pictures views of Australian scenery?" Nelly asked, as she came to some water-colour drawings of the broad Murray, and the park-like scenery upon its banks.

The spell was now broken, and her companion regained his self-possession at once. She had given him, unconsciously, a clue to what he wished to say; and he caught at it, and followed it up.

"Yes, they are," he answered, "and amongst those solitudes—with savages for my companions—I passed the last ten years of my life—a voluntary exile from civilization—and with the full intent not to return to Europe until I could have it in my power to make reparation for a hideous crime."

"A crime? Oh, impossible!"

"Alas, yes! a crime! And that, not one which a self-torturing moralist would call so, but one which society punishes with a penalty only short of death. No man knows what he

may be guilty of until he is sorely tempted to evil; and oh, I *was* sorely tempted, and fell! I committed a crime; and ten years of agony, spent amongst those solitudes, were the self-inflicted penalty I paid. You see in these pictures my log hut, and my flocks and herds upon the hill-side. During those ten years I was striving to make money, in order to repair an act of fraud. After many reverses I succeeded; and you behold me back. My wife and child thought me dead, but I was not; and during all those years I only heard of them through a friend."

"And have you now seen them both again?"

"I have. I have seen them both."

"What happiness that must have been," said Nelly, looking down upon the pictures, and as she did so, brushing away a tear-drop from her eye.

"You think they both forgave me; and yet I am here, all alone again!"

"Forgave you? Oh, how could they *not* forgive you?"

"My wife—my poor long-suffering loving wife—who lived just long enough to see me back, and then to die in my arms—*she* forgave me; but my daughter—No!"

As he said this, he went on turning over the pictures hurriedly, until he came to a sketch which he had taken in Ceylon.

“Here is lovely scenery,” he said. “If I am doomed to be an exile once more, it is here that I will end my days. Nature is the great consoler—the healer of all heart-wounds.”

Nelly looked at the sketch; but the strange story of her companion had touched her heart, and some tears were beginning to trickle down her cheek. The idea of his daughter—that other Nelly, who was so like herself—not forgiving her poor lonely father, seemed too shocking for belief. That kind man, who had tended her Mamma in her last hours—and who had twice travelled so many miles to see herself, from her mere resemblance to his daughter—to have to exile himself again because that daughter would not forgive him! No—if the other Nelly had no affection for her parent, *she* would be a daughter to him herself. He should live with her and Mark. He should be one of them.

“Ceylon is very lovely, is it not?” he continued, turning over some more views of it. “Fancy the tropical moonlight nights—the

fire-flies — the waving palms — the delicious perfumes that fill the air — the genial warmth — the purple sea — the wild elephants — and the singing fish. One might live alone in such a spot, and wrench out from one's heart the last bitter thoughts of home and kin—might one not?"

The tenderness with which he spoke, and the sadness of his story, were too much for Nelly at last, and she fairly put her handkerchief to her eyes and wept. He went on turning over the views for some time, without appearing to notice her agitation, until he came to the last; and then he waited for her to speak—for speak again himself he could not. At length she wiped her eyes, and smiling through the last tear or two, said

"There is a sealed envelope in the pocket of the portfolio, which I did not like to open, of course, until you came. Does that contain pictures too?"

"Ah, yes. I must show you them too. They are pictures which were sent to me now and then by that kind friend whom I told you of, during the years that I was away. They are photographic views of my pretty home, which

she kindly took for me, as year by year the vines and creepers grew and were trained over it; and portraits of my daughter, with the hard heart, as she too grew up year by year; and portraits of my dear forgiving wife, now alas, no more. Look at them, Nelly—break the seal yourself—I cannot do it—and then we will see whether I must tear all those fond images from my heart, and dream no more of a daughter's love!”

“Must I really look at them? Do you really wish it?”

“Yes, Yes. Look at them,” he said in a hoarse voice, almost choked by the intensity of his emotion.

Nelly opened the packet, and spread out the photographs before her. There were about a dozen of them; and they all had the initials A. H. in one corner, with various dates, ranging within the ten years during which he had been an exile. Judge of her astonishment, when she recognised in the views their own pretty cottage at Sark,—in the portraits, those of herself and her Mamma which she well remembered being taken,—and in the initials those of Angelina! All was clear now; nor, strange to say, did the truth burst upon her with a

sudden conviction;—her mind had in some way become prepared to receive it, and the possibility of such a thing seemed already to have occurred to her. That kind friend, with his face now buried in his hands—her guide over the Louvre—her fortune-teller—her Mamma's fellow-lodger—the returned exile from the Australian wilds—was her long-lost father—he whom she had been taught to believe was drowned eleven years before! There he sat; bowed down in confusion; with his white locks drooping over his hidden face, and his broad chest heaving with the violence of his emotions! She understood it all now. She was *herself* that other Nelly—but not the hard-hearted one that he had described. She strove to rise from her seat—to throw her arms about his neck—and to whisper volumes of affection into his willing ear; but her limbs refused to move—the objects in the room seemed to swim before her eyes—and she sank back in her chair in a state of insensibility.

Minute after minute passed away—each one an age to the anxious listener, as he awaited recognition by his child—and the pictures had ceased to rustle one upon the other—but not a syllable fell from her lips to intimate that she

had discovered in him her long-lost parent. At length, after what seemed to be an eternity of suspense, he looked up—to find her senseless before him! At the same instant also, the milliner, who had not left the room during their interview, turned round and perceived that the young lady had fainted. They instantly procured the assistance of the females of the house, and the usual restoratives were applied; during which scene Mr. May, of course retired.

In about an hour, a message was brought to him that his daughter was well enough to see him again, and begged that he would go to her. He found her sitting up in bed. She had been listening for his approaching footsteps, and her face was flushed with excitement, and her eyes were beaming with affection. He bent over her; and she put her arms about his neck, saying, with a smile, “I am not that *other* Nelly, dear Father, but the one whom you have always known, and who will love you and cherish you as long as she has a heart to beat.”

There are scenes in life which seem to defy the power of the pen to portray, although an artist

may discover in them instantaneous effects, suitable either for the chisel or the brush. Such scenes are those in which the affections run riot in the first extravagance of joy. The present was one; and I must not attempt to describe it further. I must leave the child and her long-lost father in each other's arms. The reader who has a heart will not need my help in picturing to his imagination the rest of what occurred.

CHAPTER 18.

—
MATRIMONY, OR MATHEMATICS.

MR. MAY sat chatting with his daughter, by her bedside, until a late hour; and when he left, her last words to him were, "Try and find poor Mark." He promised that he would; but as he did so, added with a smile, "Tut, Nell,—what harm can come to *him*—great strapping fellow." Still it was odd that Mark should have left the hotel so suddenly that morning, in company of a stranger, and not have sent a message to Nelly informing her where he was going, and when he would be back; and Mr. May, not entirely without anxiety on his account, after the strange story which his daughter had told him, went off at once to the railway station, to see if he could hear

any tidings of him there. He had not, however, left the hotel many minutes, before a messenger arrived from Mark, with a few words written in pencil upon the back of a card, which he was instructed to deliver to the young *Anglaise*. You may be sure the eyes of that affectionate girl glistened with delight as she read on one side of the card the well-known words, *M. Levisne, Caius* (the Mr. being dropped by Undergraduates on their cards), and on the other side, "*I hope to be back to-morrow with good news.*" This assurance of his safety quieted her fears; and after giving the card to the servant to deliver into her father's hands as soon as he returned, she endeavoured to compose herself to sleep.

But after the strange tumult of feelings which the event of that evening had excited, and the long conversation which she had held with her father on deeply interesting topics, it is not wonderful that balmy sleep refused, for many hours, to visit her restless pillow: so that it was not until after the morning light had begun to stream into her room that she at last fell into a doze. When the attendant went to rouse her at her usual hour in the morning she found her still asleep; and she therefore,

obeying the Doctor's orders, refrained from waking her to take her strengthening draught, —for sleep he had said would do her more good than all his medicine. It was past noon, therefore, when she joined her father in the breakfast room. He was standing at the window, when she entered, with his back towards her, and was reconnoitering through a double opera glass, (which he had himself given her on the day of their meeting in the Louvre), a schooner yacht which had just dropped anchor near the viaduct, and which showed the English ensign at the peak. His daughter's light footstep approaching did not arouse him as he was thus engaged; and he started when she laid her hand upon his shoulder, and with a smile and a blush accosted him with the well-remembered words of his little prattling daughter of four years old, "Good morning, dear Papa." They were soon locked in each other's arms.

But the English yacht, whose unusual appearance in that narrow river had so much interested him—what could *she* be? Nelly, however, knew the vessel at once, and looked at her in blank amazement. She took the glass from her father's hand in order to scan the strange sight more

minutely; and kept it at her eye for a minute or two without speaking. At last she said, excitedly

“I declare it is the *EIONE* come back again; and I can see Mark on the deck waving his hand towards this window, as if he knew that we must now be looking out for him, poor fellow; and I can see the men lowering a small boat. He is coming ashore in her, I do believe.”

“I have been watching them for the last ten minutes,” said her father. “They towed her up with the flood tide, and have just cast anchor. What can it possibly mean? What have they come back for?”

“There’s Mark getting into the boat,” said Nelly, with the glass again at her eye. “He is coming ashore by himself, and with only one man to row him. It’s the dingy. I wonder whether his strange friend is on board. I hope he is. I do so want to know him,—and to thank him.”

The dingy was rowed quickly up to a slip in front of the hotel; and the lost Mark stepped out safe and sound. He waved his hand to them as they stood in the balcony watching him; and they welcomed his return with similar

greetings. He was not long in crossing the Quay, and mounting the stairs to the breakfast room, three at a time; and Nelly and her father met him at the door.

“Where *have* you been, dear Mark?” she said, as she let him steal a kiss, even in her Father’s presence.

“But you got my message, darling?” he whispered.

“Not till night.”

“But I sent the fellow with it in the morning.”

“Never mind,” said Mr. May, “It’s all right now. I came, and represented you. I have had her all to myself, Mark. We didn’t want you a bit—did we Nell?”

Mark looked at them both, and saw at a glance that the mighty secret had been let out at last. He held out his hand to Nelly’s father; and this time they exchanged a cordial shake.

“And you hav’ n’t breakfasted yet? Oh, how jolly,” said Mark. “I’m as hungry as a wild beast. I’ve been up since daylight, and on deck the whole time. We have worked her up with the flood tide, and without a pilot. The

captain is no end of a clever chap. I've got grand news for you, Nelly. Do you know that the *EIONE* is *mine*—my own. Xenosthes has made me a present of her. *There's* a fine piece of news for you."

"Is he on board?"

"No. Neither he nor Cissy. I don't know where they are; but the old Greek captain is going back to them with a letter, which I must write presently, because he is waiting to take it. We shall lose *him*. He is going off in the vessel to Panama. But it's a long story; and will keep till after breakfast."

"Oh, no; tell us all about it now?"

"Come, out with it," Mr. May added to his daughter's entreaty. "Make you a present of that yacht? Nonsense! Why what will you do with her, man? She is over a hundred tons. She'll cost the deuce and all to keep up. Where's the money to come from, my boy? I know a little of what yachting means. A present of a yacht of that size reminds me of the story of the Indian prince who used to make a fellow a present of an elephant when he wanted to ruin him."

"Yes; but my friend is not an Indian prince,

although he's a princely fellow. He does not do a generous thing by halves. He has given me the wherewith to keep her, as well; and there is a rather pleasing condition attached to my accepting her as a present from him, which we will talk about by-and-bye. He's a rum fellow; and I sometimes think him half-cracked."

"Quite cracked, I should say," Mr. May added. "But not a bad fellow to know, either? You must introduce me to him. He's a kind of madman I rather like,—the sort of maniac one would always patronize, if one had the chance,—decidedly a fellow to be encouraged. But go on, Mark, my boy,—I won't interrupt you."

"After breakfast, please. It's a long story. We'll all go on board, and talk it over in the cabin."

"You *won't* tell us, then?" said Nelly, holding up to him a letter from Cambridge, which had come the day before. "Then we won't give you this till you do."

"From Cambridge? Oh, do let me see it."

"May *I* open it?"

"Ah, do. The blow will not fall so heavily from *your* kind lips."

She opened it, and read as follows. It was a letter to him from the Tutor of Caius.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have much pleasure in enclosing you a copy of the list of the recent Mathematical Examination at our College; from which you will see that you are bracketed first with Smith, notwithstanding your unfortunate absence from the Trigonometry and Conic Section paper, by which you lost many marks. This is highly creditable to you; and considering the very fair place you took in Classics in March, we have not hesitated to award to you the first Scholarship of the year. Let me hope that this news may prove a source of gratification to you; and that you will return to College in October, resolved to persevere to the end, in a course which you have so nobly begun.

Yours very faithfully,

THE TUTOR OF CAIUS.

As Nelly finished reading the letter, her eyes met Mark's beaming with delight and pride at the good news; and a flush of joy suffused her own face too at the triumph which her "dear fellow," as she always called him to Angelina, had achieved—but which in fact, she knew he would achieve. How could Smith, or Brown, or Tomkins, or anyone beat *him* in anything to which he gave his mind? The idea was

ridiculous, to suppose that anybody could beat her Mark; and she looked forward to his being Senior Wrangler, and first Smith's Prizeman, as quite a matter of course. Had it not been for her father's presence, and the quizzical smile with which he regarded them both, she felt as if she must have put her arms round the dear fellow's neck, and have poured out her whole heart in kisses and congratulations—so fond and proud she felt of him. But her parent, with his broad shoulders, and great white beard, sat between them; and she could only blush with joy at the good news, and look unutterables with her glistening eyes at Mark.

But, strange to say, after the first brief moment of exultation at his unhoped-for success, Mark's eyes no longer flashed delight and love into his Nelly's opposite, but rather avoided her glance, while a shade almost of sadness crossed his face. He left the table, and walked to the window with the Tutor's letter, in marked embarrassment.

Nelly and her father went on with their breakfast; but hungry as the first scholar of his year had professed himself to be, it was some minutes before he rejoined them. During the meal they

only talked of indifferent matters, and when it was over, Mr. May, with kindness and tact, took up his hat for a stroll on the Quay, and left the lovers alone.

“You are dull about something, dear Mark. What can it be? Do tell me,” said Nelly, laying her hand upon his shoulder, and looking fondly in his face.

He put his arm round her waist, and drew her gently towards him, but did not raise his eyes to hers.

“I ought not to be dull this happy day—ought I, Nell?” he said. “But that look of yours, as you finished reading the Tutor’s letter, has upset many a gay dream. It seemed to echo the Tutor’s words ‘Return to College and persevere.’ Ah, Nell, I have been dreaming of pleasanter things than that—of our having a trip together—you and I, and your Papa, and Angelina—in the yacht—to Florence—and who knows where besides? Must I give it up, and go back to old Cambridge, to please you, and stick to a + b again? Oh, Nell, what am I to do? Read this letter from Xenosthes, which came yesterday, and decide for me—for you are the arbitress of my fate, and I only live for you.”

So saying, he put into her hand a letter from his Jewish friend, which had been given him the previous morning by the strange man who fetched him away,—and with a parting bribe to her to be kind to him, and comprehend his wish, he left the room, and joined Mr. May upon the quay. She was to wave her handkerchief to him as a signal from the balcony, as soon as she had read the letter, and thought over its contents.

That strange epistle was from a madman—neither more nor less. It ran thus:—

“I have sent you these few lines, Mark Levisne, by my Captain, in the yacht. He will deliver both safely into your hands, I hope; and will wait for your reply—which he is to bring back to me by the quickest route. Where I am now is of no consequence to you,—so I beg you will not enquire.

“In the first place I want you to ascertain what has become of G. C. Go at once to the Château and find out. I cannot leave Europe until I know her fate. I am wasted to a shadow, at the thoughts of what I did. Hideous dreams haunt me by night, and a load of care by day. See her, speak to her, assure me that she lives; and I will hail the news as a reprieve from ——. The Captain knows her well, and will go with you. The château is a few

leagues up the towing-path ; and I enclose her address at Paris as well. He will return to me. Never mind him. But what is to be done with the *EIONE* ? I have the fondest associations with the dear old ship ; and it would tear my heart to pieces either to sell her, or to scuttle her in the Channel, as we go down. I cannot take her with me to Panama—it is too far. Accept her then, Mark Levisne—and you shall have funds also, wherewith to keep her on the cruise, and always in good repair. Accept her—not as a gift from me for friendship’s sake—but to please me in a whim. But you must never part with her—swear that you never will—or never let her go to wrack. Marry that fair girl, and live with her on board. She was built in order that I might indulge in her my own fond dream of romance ; but the Fates decreed otherwise. It was for you, and not for your sister, that they meant her to be. I see it all now. Take her then, and draw on my Bankers for all that you will require to man her, and keep her up in the old style. I have set apart a sum for the express purpose. Draw on them without fear or scruple. You think me mad, perhaps ; but what are a few thousands more or less to me ? What is money good for, if we may not indulge our whims ?

“ Write to me every year ; and let your fair friend write to Cissy at the same time. I shall count on receiving these letters so long as we all live. Perhaps I may reply. Perhaps my own news may interest you. Cissy sends her love to ‘ that dear young English

lady,' and her 'kind regards' to you. I thank you, Mark Levisne, for your great kindness to my poor little Ciss—but what are thanks, or messages, or gifts, from *me*? And yet if your Nelly—(is that her name, or does Ciss pronounce it wrong?)—if your Nelly *should* ever know all, tell her that it was my anger at the cowardly wrong they perpetrated against *her*, that fortified me in my revenge. Tell her that; for I would not have her look on me with horror—fiend and madman as I was, no doubt.

“If that poor wretch G. C. still lives—as my dreams assure me that she does—I have provided for her as a compensation for the past. The Captain will see to this. Let him talk with her alone.

“And now I have done. If the news you send me should lift off the curse which now weighs heavily upon my soul, I will write a parting word to your sister. Otherwise I cannot. The Fates, I know, have happiness in store for *both of you*. Do not throw it away in chase of a mere chimæra. You know what I mean. Seize the good things which the Gods send you; and live but to enjoy. Accept the yacht—fulfil the conditions—and love that fair girl always. Farewell.”

Mark wandered for a considerable time upon the Quay, with Mr. May, expecting Nelly's signal from the balcony; but the little Doctor who had attended her so kindly came up to him

instead. "The dear young lady," he said, "has no further need of me. I commit her now into the custody of her friends. She is well, and only wants to gain strength by air and exercise. She will join you presently for a stroll—or a drive—or some boating—or what you like. She has my full permission to do so."

Mark thanked the good man a hundred times and shook him warmly by the hand; and soon after, Nelly appeared at the door of the hotel, equipped for a walk. She looked paler than when her father first saw her, with hat and shawl on, in the Louvre, a few days before; but the pallor produced by illness and confinement to her room was probably heightened by the contrast of her black dress with her brilliantly fair skin. There was a shade of care, too, upon her face, as well as the evidence of some present conflict of feeling. But how womanly she had grown in the year since Mark first met her as a schoolgirl of fifteen, returning home in the Sark cutter from her holiday in Guernsey. Two inches taller at least; and with a pretty girlish face developed into a more intellectual one, full of sentiment and gentleness. It seemed to have grown longer—the forehead

more compact—the eyebrows straighter—the eyes larger and more pensive—and the voice not quite so jubilant in its merry ring, but more silvery, and more subdued. Such was Nelly then; all that Angelina had promised her fond lover she should be, on that midnight walk which she had taken with him across the breezy common on the heights of Sark.

Mark drew her arm within his, and they strolled off slowly together towards the yacht; while her Papa followed, reading the letter which she had put into his hand.

“Well; and what is it to be?” whispered Mark, as he drew her arm closer within his. “Have you read that strange man’s letter?”

“Yes; but I can’t understand it, Mark, at all. He seems to hint at some dreadful crime which he has committed.”

“Nor can I altogether make him out. He assumes that I know of something which I do not.”

“But have you made enquiry yet about that horrid Italian girl, whom I suppose he means by G. C.? Do you know I always shudder when I think of her. She was a woman without a heart. Her eyes were like two black stones;

and her complexion was an opaque white, with no warm blood under the skin. She was a monstrosity of nature. Even now I sometimes fancy that she is upon my track, and will have me arrested for the robbery of that petticoat. Do, dear Mark, return the things to the old dame as soon as you can, or pay her handsomely for them."

"I would have done it, darling, long ago; but I could not leave you, even for half a day, without anxiety. But I have seen Jeannette at last, and made all straight now."

"Oh, be joyful. And have you seen G. C.?"

"Yes. I did not lose a moment in hunting her up. Your own adventure afforded me the clue to where she was. As soon as I had read Xenosthes' strange letter, I ordered a couple of saddle horses, for myself and the Captain, and we galloped off at once by the towing-path, towards the Château. It was easily found. The gates were open, and we rode up to the door. The place was in a state of utter confusion, and apparently in charge of the police. I enquired for Giovanna Cazzola, but no one had ever heard the name. Then I remembered that she had called herself Beatrice, at your lodgings in Paris; and by that name they knew her at once. We

were shown into a dreary room, the floor of which was spotted all over with silver stains, and the windows daubed with yellow paint; and in that sickly den we held a short conference with the phenomenon, as you call her—a woman without a heart. She came to us as bold as brass, and with a manner full of impudent assurance. As my business with her was simply to bear witness to her being still alive, I said not a word; but the Greek Captain held a few minutes' conversation with her apart, and we then bowed ourselves out. I next enquired after the fate of the Marquis, and learnt that his body had been discovered in the river under the open window of his study—from which it appeared that he had fallen in a scuffle with a youth, whose body was also found near the same spot. Having thus fulfilled our mission, we left the Château Noir, and proceeded to Lorient, in order to bring the yacht up here, that you might see her, and accept; and behold here she is. What are we to do, Nell? Keep her? The Greek is waiting to take my answer back."

"You must ask Papa," said Nelly, blushing. "You know, Mark, I can do nothing unless he approves. He talks of taking me with him to

Florence,—and says that I am to travel with him for some time, before we go back to Sark; and that Angelina is to take care of our house in the meantime. What a strange world it is! I feel quite bewildered.”

“But say, dearest, may I keep the yacht? or must I leave you soon—and go back to the little room over the kitchen—and read my dry books while you are enjoying yourself with your father, a thousand miles away? Are *you* a woman without a heart, too, Nell? Can you banish me again? And yet, why ask you?” he added proudly, “What am I, that I should dream of any other fate than hard work?”

She divined his meaning, and looked timidly into his face. Her hesitation had wounded his sensitive feelings—and he had misunderstood her quite. She hastened to make it up.

“I said, dear Mark, that I had better ask Papa, because women are not sent to you great strong he-creatures as councillors, but as gentle friends—to smile upon you in your triumphs—and to console you in your distress. We are but the little flower which twines itself about the oak. We have our feelings, which are sufficient guide for *us*, but not for *you* to trust

to. Do not ask the little flower to be strong, while you are weak. Choose your own path,—and your Nelly will cling to you wherever it may lead. Look to her for affection—but not for advice.”

“Dear girl,” he said. “Forgive my first impatient word; but a thousand gay dreams have centred round the yacht. And yet when I think of that Tutor’s letter But no. I cannot banish myself again. You at Florence, and I at Cambridge! Oh, Nell, it must not be. I cannot part with you again.”

“Let us ask Papa,” she whispered fondly. “See; he has read the letter, and we are now opposite the yacht.”

Mr. May folded the letter, and handed it back to Mark.

“That man,” he said, “is as mad as a March hare. He is not fit to run loose. Bedlam is the proper place for him. He hints at some dark crime which he has been about. Revenge—a girl still alive—hideous dreams—and God knows what! Upon my word we ought to catch him, and bottle him up, and wire him down.”

“And appoint ourselves Trustees of his vast estate,” added Mark, laughing.

“To be sure. But seriously—if he has any near relations to dispute his acts, I doubt whether they would hold good in law; I do indeed. This present of his yacht to you, with two thousand a year to keep her up, and all for a romantic whim, and instead of scuttling her in the Channel—do you suppose it would hold good in law? No, indeed.”

“Then, what are we to do?”

“Do? Why keep the yacht of course. We can but give her up, if need be. Enjoy life while you may, my boy. Never say No, to a handsome present, with fixings all complete.”

Mark pressed his Nelly's arm fondly to his side, and looked down triumphantly into her face. Her father had decided for them—even before he was asked. But she turned her head away to hide a blush, for her Papa had not risen in her esteem. He was a man of the world, after all—and not romantic a bit.

“But if I accept the yacht, I must give up Cambridge, you know,” said Mark to the off-hand arbiter of his fate.

“Not a bit of it. I don't see that. Do as the Bishop of Bath and Wells did, when he was asked which place he would be made Bishop

of—Bath or Wells. Take them both. Hold fast to both.”

“Impossible. Cambridge is a coy mistress, and will not endure a rival. Mathematics and yachting wouldn’t pull together a bit. Without two years’ hard work in my little room over the kitchen, my Degree would not be worth a rush—it would be only a disappointment and a reproach to me. *Aut Cæsar aut nihil* is my motto; and I’m afraid that *nihil* is what it will turn out.”

“It is a knotty point, I see,” said Mr. May, knitting his brows, and looking comically at them. “What is *your* notion, Nell? Mark in the first ten Wranglers—or Mark in his yacht with you, up the Dardanelles?”

“We have agreed that *you* shall decide for him, dear Papa.”

“Then suppose we all go on board, and have a look at her.”

They hailed,—and the gig was lowered, and manned. Five minutes after they stood upon the *EIONE*’s deck. There were seven English sailors to welcome them—rough fellows, who had been picked up on the spur of the moment—as well as a black cook. But they had scrubbed

the deck, and done all that their untrained instincts told them to do, in the Captain's absence, to make her look smart. As for him—he looked the very picture of woe; for he had loved the *EIONE* like a living thing—and in ten minutes he was to part with her, for ever!

Mr. May took his daughter's hand, and they walked all together round the deck. She looked up in wonder at the tall masts,—and she stroked the polished boom,—and tried to bend with her little fingers the rigid creases of the stout canvas sail, as it lay out loose upon the skylight, to dry off the morning dew. And then they dived down the companion into the cabin,—and she looked admiringly upon its mahogany and brass and mirrored fittings,—and sat down upon the well-stuffed velvet couch,—and pried into all the berths and cupboards. And then she peeped into the ladies' cabin,—and thought of the strange tale which her friend Giulia had related at the mouth of the great cave,—and of little Ciss who had been its last occupant,—and of the stony-eyed Italian,—but that was not a pleasant association. And then she took her Papa's hand again, and they went for'ard together,—peeping into the Captain's cabin, and

into two spare cabins, and into the steward's pantry, and into the fore-castle, where the men's hammocks were slung—and into the cooking department, with its stove and copper flue, and polished pans. How beautiful and orderly it all looked. And to think that it was to be her Mark's own ship, to cruise about in—up the blue Mediterranean—to Italy, and Greece, and Malta, and the East—or to the Western Islands where the oranges come from—or to the Baltic—or Iceland—or Heaven knows where! But what was funny, her Papa seemed to know all about a ship, and the name of everything, and what everything was for; and yet it was not funny either, for he had been to Australia and back. Still there was a mystery about that great man with the white beard, which remained to be cleared up; and if Mark took the yacht would *he* go with them? And who would go with *her* in the ladies' cabin? Why, Angelina would, of course. Her Papa had known Angelina for many years,—and they had written to each other while he was away,—and she had sent him photographs. Yes; Angelina and her Papa were old friends, and knew each other. Her governess would go with them. How nice

that would be. Nice indeed—poor unsuspecting child!

Thus the scamper round the pretty yacht, and all the thoughts which it excited, were to Nelly quite a wild and new sensation—loving, as she did, the sea, and everything connected with it, and being, as it were, a child of it—born within the sound of its breakers—and from her very cradle lulled to sleep nightly by the music of their roar. And then, this beautiful world was so new to her,—for she had spent her life on a little island, sighing latterly for a change, and for travel, and with a poet's fancy ever on the wing, and with a keen relish for all sorts of wild adventure. She asked a thousand questions,—and her father said a thousand funny things which made her colour come and go,—and her face brightened up as if with the roseate reflexion of some great happiness in store. Alas, for poor Cambridge, and Mark's degree.

But all this time he was seated up a quiet corner in the cabin, writing his reply to the tall dark madman, about G. C. and the fate of old Adolphe. It only remained to add the closing paragraph about the yacht. What was he to say to his mad friend's magnificent offer? Yea, or

Nay? One glance at Nelly's face was enough. The yacht was his.

Mr. May looked over his shoulder, and ran his eye over what he had written; and then he looked into his daughter's face, and that one glance was enough too.

"We are all agreed," he said. "That is clear. Endorse your yarn, Mark, with the word 'Accepted;' and then sign, seal, and deliver to the Greek, and start him off. Tell him to give my compliments to his mad master, and say that he's a brick. When he's gone I'll tell you what I've been thinking respecting our first cruise."

So the fatal word was written, and the Greek pocketed the letter, and bowed himself out. Mark walked with him to the station, and saw him off. As the train bore him quickly over the viaduct, he took a last look at the pretty vessel which had been his home for three years—which he had himself drafted, and seen built—and which he had come to love like a living thing. The old sailor looked his last on the beautiful *EIONE*,—and as he did so, brushed away a tear.

CHAPTER 19.

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THE END.

THE EIONE did not long lie idle at her anchorage, in the muddy stream at Hennebon, on her second visit to that place. She soon weighed, and was off again, with her new owner in command; for, with the help of Mr. May, Mark resolved to do without a regular captain, and take his chance of properly navigating his little vessel himself. A fore-and-aft schooner is but a big boat after all, and is handled in exactly the same way; while a Cambridge mathematician is supposed to understand the theoretical part of navigation, as a matter of course.

Their first trip was a run across to Weymouth; and an exciting run it was, for they fell in with

a stiff sou'-wester off Ushant, and bowled away before it, across the Channel, under close-reefed foresail, and storm jib. On passing through the Race of Portland, the sea ran high and cross, and they got a thundering good drenching, for more than one green monster broke right aboard of them, carrying away some yards of bulwark, and a lot of finery besides. So much for amateur seamanship; but a man must learn, and pay for his lesson too, sometimes. The Portland Race, however, is not to be grinned at, even by an experienced salt; and it was lucky they got off with both masts standing—for in the sudden jerks of that violent cross sea, the stoutest spar will sometimes snap off like a carrot, close above the deck.

“And how did Miss Nelly like that?” some timid fair one may perhaps enquire. Why, she liked it immensely of course. What a glorious sight it was, in the Race, to watch those great roaring crested mountains of water, tumbling over one another all ways at once. But not two pence did she care, either for waves or spray. She stood close by Mark's side as he steered—with her eye on the bow as it rose and fell, and buffeted with the foaming brine—and when the

clumsy fellow shipped in succession the two ugly green seas which did all the mischief that I described just now, she held her breath for the moment, and laid one hand upon his arm during the crash of bulwarks and the smash of crockery below, but actually laughed outright when it was all over, and said "What fun!"

"But had she no female companion with her on board? How very improper. Why did they not engage a lady's-maid in France?"

So they did, of course, I reply. That young milliner, of whom I spoke in a former chapter, was coaxed into going with her; and as the father of this damsel was cook at one of the hotels, he was coaxed to give up his berth there, and go too, as *chef de cuisine*, on board the yacht. His daughter, the young Josephine—(what folly of cooks to give their daughters such fine names)—was a good-natured girl—as all French girls are—and she had taken a mighty fancy to the young Anglaise; so, as they paid her well, there was no great amount of coaxing wanted, after all.

But before leaving Hennebon, our travellers put up a basket of eatables, one day, in the stern sheets of the yacht's gig, and hired a pony to tow them up the river as far as the old

château; and there they saw the window of the summer-house through which Nelly had jumped, and Didon, the mastiff, in a field hard by; while on their way back they went into the cabin of the old barge—and had their picnic in the oak copse, and found the dear old sabots which had been left behind. It was a lovely day, and a never-to-be-forgotten trip; but no consideration on earth could tempt Nelly into the cock-loft, to see the bedridden old woman—or into the château, to bid adieu to the Italian girl without a heart. Mr. May spent an hour in taking a sketch of the barge—and another of the weir which his daughter had crossed bare-foot—to be worked up, he said, into pictures for their drawing-room at Sark, when he got back.

At Weymouth the trio left the yacht, and went by train to Cambridge, where they spent a few days, while Mark packed up his books, and other things. His room over the kitchen—and the cupboard in which he had slept—and the gyp room, with its pots and pans—were all curiously examined, you may be sure, amidst much giggling, by one of the party. And yet it was not without a little dew-drop in her eye that she took her last look at poor Mark's

rooms, when the time came for him to sport the outer door for the last time, and leave the latch-key at the Porter's lodge.

Then they spent a week or two in London, at the Fanos' old house; for Mark had made friends with his Uncle's pupil, who had taken it, and that gentleman would have the trio for his guests. "It was such fun," he said, "to hear Miss Nelly talk at dinner time, over the wonders she had seen in London during the day. And truly it *was* a new idea to the young Channel-Islander! The great Babylon for the first time! Nothing could exceed her astonishment at the splendour of the shops—the grand display of wealth—the rows of palaces in Pimlico and Regent's Park—and the roaring traffic along the clean, paved, gas-lighted streets. It *was* fun really to hear her talk; and it must have been fun to her fond father, and to Mark, to take such a little innocent about to see the sights—the British Museum—the Crystal Palace—the National Gallery—the New Houses of Parliament—St. Paul's—and Heaven knows what.

"And which of all the sights did she like best?" some fair reader may enquire. "The Elgin Marbles, or the Greek Court?"

Please don't ask, for it is painful to me to reply. Alas that I should have to say it—but I am afraid the dear fat hippopotamus at the Zoological Gardens carried off the palm—and the Soho Bazaar came next—and then Professor Owen's queer monsters on the Island at the Crystal Palace—and then the tiger-hunt on the elephant inside."

"Did you see any wild elephants in Ceylon, Papa?" she asked.

"Yes, my pet, a whole drove; and one of them knocked me over, and would have pounded me into potted meat, but for a bullet from a certain John Smith, which felled him to the earth.

"I thought it took fifty bullets to kill an elephant," said Mark.

"Deuce a bit. One is enough, if you hit him in the right place."

"And where is that, Papa?" asked the young lady.

"In the brain, my child. Walk right up to him—don't be afraid—his sight is bad—but always keep to leeward of him, for his nose is good, and if he gets scent of you, off he goes. Walk right up to him, to within five yards—

take deliberate aim at the side of his head, with your smooth bore—pop the bullet into his brain—and down he drops.”

“And what do the other elephants do all the time, Papa?”

“Why, look on like a lot of cows in a field, until you fire—and then scamper off pell-mell—and the d—— take the hindermost.”

“But suppose you miss, Papa?”

“Why then you bolt yourself, and dodge the unwieldy brute round a tree, and get away from him as best you can.”

“But suppose he catches you?”

“Then it’s all up. You must sing *peccavi*.”

“What glorious fun it must be,” said Mark. “Let us go to Ceylon, Nell.”

London was a grand place, certainly. Paris, she said, would be nothing to it, if they could only puff away the nasty smoke, which spoilt all. But for that, it would be fairy-land. And yet it was July—and everybody out of town.

While in London, Mark packed up his photographic apparatus; but what to do with it led to a grand discussion.

“Take it with you on board the yacht,” said Mr. May. “You will be glad of it some day,

And lay in a good supply of chemicals while you are here. I have no idea of fellows being idle. Keep some object always steadily in view, and work up to it. You are going to travel. Well; take copious notes of every day's adventures,—take photo views of everything that interests you, and by-and-bye publish an illustrated log of the trip. Don't be idle. Have an object in life. Work is the healthy condition of things; idleness the root of all evil. No man should ever be idle—it is frightfully demoralizing. If you are independent, take up in earnest some branch either of art or science—so as to instruct or amuse your fellow creatures, in return for what they do for you. Your log might be made a work of literary merit—and the artistic part might be done well too, if I judge my Nelly's powers aright."

"Alas, for poor Cambridge," she said, heaving a sigh, but smiling at the same time. "That first evening's walk under the trees, that you told me of, Mark. Don't you half repent giving up your dream of a high degree?"

"Fudge," said her Father. "Do you think *I* would let him do a thing to be sorry for in after life? No, indeed, my child. Cambridge

is not the world,—neither is Mathematics the whole of science. It has been pushed the furthest branch of any, because it is abstract, and involves no work for the hands, or expensive apparatus, but only work for the brain. But how much further *can* it go? Why not stop, and look about a bit, and bring forward other branches of science until they are abreast of it, before you make a fresh move. Mathematics is not now a field for the ambitious man. It is the work of half a life-time to read up to what is known. Other sciences, and arts too, promise more glory than that abstract work. Let him travel,—it expands the mind; and when he is tired of that, ambition may hold out many prizes still.”

“And me, Papa,—what hobby shall *I* take up?”

Her father smiled. “What you like, Nell, until your own true woman’s mission is forced upon you,—and then you will need no other hobbies.”

During the first whirl of their London visit, and the fresh sights seen every day, the poor EIONE was well nigh forgotten; but the novelty of the great city wore off at last, and once

more Nelly sighed for the sea breezes, and the dancing waves. Nature claimed her child again. They returned to Weymouth; and there she found a letter from Angelina, with one enclosed for her Papa, to the following effect:—

DEAR SIR,—You will be surprised—and perhaps pleased—to hear that Dr. Brownlow has just come over to see me in my solitude, bringing with him an English gentleman, who wishes to rent your house, furnished as it is, for a year, or longer, if you choose. This proposal may be worthy of your consideration. If you could spare the time to run over to Guernsey in the Weymouth steamer, and see Dr. Brownlow about it, I think it would be as well. Candidly, the poor old lonely house makes me sad to look at; and although I promised you to take charge of it while you are away, yet if you *could* let it, I would much rather give up my charge, and lodge with some one of my good friends the cottagers here. Bridget, I am sorry to say, has left rather suddenly, in order to go and live with her niece, who has married lately a baker in Alderney; and I have been obliged to put a stranger into the cottage *pro tem*; but she seems a good, worthy creature. I am all in confusion myself, packing up my things, to leave the old school-house, which has been let again from Michaelmas for three years. I will do all I can to represent you while

you are away, and to get things ready for you, when you return ; but I quite expect to hear that your present love of the cottage will not last long, and that your beloved Florence, the city of your birth, will sustain successively its prior claim upon your heart.

But, be that as it may, do consider this gentleman's offer, and see Dr. Brownlow about it, if you can spare the time to come over, if only for one day.

Your sincere friend,

A. H.

P.S.—You will smile, I know, when I tell you that your old medical friend has, this morning, and for the *third* time in his life, offered me an asylum with him,—and that for the third time I was so hard-hearted as to refuse. Nevertheless, I respect him highly. His constancy deserves a better fate, does it not ?

There was a world of meaning in those few plain words. Three or four letters had passed between Mr. May and Angelina since they parted a few weeks before, and in all of them the poor lady had hinted artlessly at the loneliness of her lot. No Barbara—no Nelly—no dear kind Mrs. May—no scholars to teach—and a weary blank to look forward to ! She felt sad, and the truth could not be concealed. Gently this was hinted to *him*, who she knew was struggling with feelings corresponding to her own,—and

also with less reserve in her letters to her loving pupil, which she knew would be shown to *him*. The end of it was that the very next morning after their return to Weymouth, the yacht was got under weigh again, and her bow pointed towards Guernsey. That same night they anchored in the roadstead, under Castle Cornet; and the next morning the three travellers stowed themselves away in the stern sheets of Tom Hudson's boat for Sark.

The old skipper was the last to come on board, and you may imagine his delight on seeing his "little lassie," as he called her, back again; and her lover by her side.

"Why, Mr. Mark," said the worthy navigator, "I'm blow'd if it aint you back again—and my little lassie too, God bless her, poor thing. Well, this *is* a sight for sore eyes. Jim, don't you remember the young gen'l'man? What are you gaping at, you lubber? A ghost swinging on the main boom?"

"*Which* gen'l'man do you mean, Tom? I was a-thinkin' I ought to know *both* on 'em."

"Don't you remember me, Hudson?" said Mr. May.

"Lord, Sir, so I do. Why I'm blow'd if it

aint you back again too. Your hair 's got white, but blow me if you look a day older, only browner about the gills. But what's the good o' tellin' a lot of lies. I know'd you wasn't drowned. I always said you wasn't. My old woman will tell you that. Why afore last Christmas, when I tooked up that letter for the young Miss Hobbs, I said to her—I did, so help me——, I said depend upon it, Poll, he 's a comin' back soon. For I'd often carried your letters back'ards and for'ards, and I know'd the hand writin' well. But I wasn't a-goin' to split. It wasn't no affair o' mine."

"Hush, my good fellow," said Mr. May, nudging him. "Hold your tongue."

The three travellers landed at the "Creux," and walked together up the winding road to the heights above. There Mr. May turned off to the school-house, leaving Mark and Nelly to stroll alone to the deserted cottage, down the little winding foot-path which led to the garden gate. It was a silent and a sorrowful stroll for them. How cold and selfish seemed all their plans for the future, *then*; how terrible seemed the loss of that kind friend—that fond mother—who then lay beneath the sod in Père La Chaise!

How it would have gladdened her affectionate heart to have seen those two, once more, with their arms wound lovingly around each other. But Mark had not dreamt of this—that she could possibly die without his seeing her again. He had gone on—young, strong, and full of health himself—not caring enough about that kind friend, who was now no more. He had followed up his own plans, as if things were to go on for ever in their old groove, and just as it might happen to suit *his* book—as if there could be no such thing as death, or change, until *he* was ready and prepared. Fool—selfish fool that he had been to stay away so long. Why had he not given up Cambridge at once, with the first warning from Angelina, and Dr. Brownlow? It was Barbara's fault. What a mistaken notion of duty—that we are to go on, grinding for ever, along some hard weary path, and crush our best feelings down! How vividly he called to mind that last parting, when she had put her arms around his neck, and said, sobbing “Come back to us as soon as you can; and write to us often.” Poor thing! How kind she had always been to *him*—nothing *but* kindness—and he had repaid it by neglect—following up a crotchet of his own,

which had come to nothing, after all. But it was too late to repent then. The heart which his return would have gladdened had ceased to beat!

They stood for a full minute at the little gate, while Nelly tried to keep down the rising tears; but no one came to welcome them. A strange woman was at the kitchen window, staring at the *tourists*, as she thought them, looking in so impertinently; but there was no Bridget to lecture her young mistress—and no Nep to come bounding up to them with his rough gambols, and his deep-mouthed bark of joy at their return. The poor dog had survived his old mistress but a day or two. He was dead also! Nobody knew *why* he died, but he was found dead on the day of her funeral; and they had buried him near his kennel by the study. His young master and mistress walked up to the little mound which marked his grave, before they entered the house; and, as they stood before it, a man's bitter tear, and a woman's flood of them, were shed to the memory of a faithful dog.

The strange domestic who had charge of the house knew them then, and curtsied, and showed them in. Nelly's heart was full, and she could stay with Mark no longer, but ran up sobbing

to her own room. He wandered round the dear old place, and into the old study,—and there, with his face buried in his hands, he thought of all the past—but most of that last parting. “Come back to us as soon as you can, and write to us often!” How those words did haunt him then.

Mr. May brought Angelina back with him to tea; and it was late when they all returned together to the desolate school-house. Nelly slept with her governess that night, and added her pleadings to those of another, that she would accompany them to Florence in the yacht. Ere the two friends fell asleep in each other’s arms, the promise to do so was given, and sealed. There had been enough of loneliness, and horrid partings. The heart, for once, was allowed to have its own way. Those who have not got a heart may cavil, if they like.

Dr. Brownlow and his friend were sent for the next day; and the cottage was left in that friend’s charge for a year, but a year only.

“*My home is here,*” said May to the old Doctor, as they took a turn together, one evening, in the little bay. “*My home is here,* and I hope it ever will be. Away from this I feel like a wandering Zingari. The cruise we

are to take will be to me and Angelina only a short trip—just to teach the other lovers how to handle their yacht, and how to be happy by-and-bye without us, in their own way. Then *we* shall return, and end our days here. You can guess, my poor fellow, who I mean by *we*. Read this packet of manuscript. It is the story of my last twelve years of life. Much of it was written while the events were fresh in my memory; and the rest, all but the last few pages, in my log hut. It will explain the mystery which has puzzled you. Read it before we part again; and give it back to me, for *they* must read it too some day.”

The Doctor took the manuscript; and as he did so, looked with a strange expression into his companion's face.

“*You* will feel for me, Brownlow, when you read it,” said his friend, “for *you* will understand the force of that terrible temptation under which I fell.”

Late in the Autumn of that same year, the *EIONE* entered safely the harbour of Leghorn, where she was to be laid up for the winter;

and the travellers proceeded, first to Pisa, and then to Florence. There they were warmly welcomed by the Fanos, you may be sure,—and, to use a photographic phrase, a doublet of triplets was formed, which worked harmoniously in combination. The Sculptor and his Niece occupied a portion of an old palace, on the south side of the Arno, a little below the town; and the remainder of the building was rented for the winter by the rest of the party.

But so close an intimacy between “doublets” of turtle doves could not last long without the tying of still closer knots. Conventional usage was a little overruled,—and shortly after Christmas, a double wedding was celebrated in the English Chapel,—the younger pair proceeding, after the ceremony, to Rome, and the elder pair to Venice.

Some years have now elapsed since the above event. The cottage at Sark is tenanted again by its rightful owner; and a loving wife, and a prattling daughter—scarcely less beautiful in her father’s eyes than his first dear child—gladden the scene once more. It is a world

of changes, and old troubles are soon effaced—too soon, perhaps, for sentiment; but TIME is the great consoler, and with the full throb of healthy life in our veins we banish fond regrets, and bound on again to new duties, new hopes, and new joys. As for Mark and his loving partner—they are still a pair of turtle-doves; but the yachting has lost its first charm, and so has the pretty villa which they purchased on one of the Italian Lakes. Ambition is once more rousing him from a dream of pleasure, fit only for early youth; and domestic cares are thickening about *her*. They meditate a trip to Sark, in the still beautiful EIONE, with all the surroundings which now constitute their little circle—in order to have a long consultation about future plans, with the literary father and his accomplished wife. Nelly's seclusion during her childhood has been amply compensated by more travel and sight-seeing than usually falls to the lot of woman; but after all, her heart—just as her father's had done before—turns fondly towards the little isle. If its rocks are not quite so grand, or its sea so blue, or its sun so bright as those of Capri or Corfu, there is still about it a charm of association which no

other spot on earth can ever have for her ; and she has ventured to suggest to Mark to buy the old school-house. But that was his own idea, too ; for their minds were like mirrors, reflecting each other's wish, and their love was of that kind which can hide no secret thought.

A romance writer must obey in his compositions that inflexible law of art which governs the painter in his work, and which prescribes the necessity of breadth and unity in a design. The strange story of Lorenzo May, as related by himself in the manuscript which he put into his friend Brownlow's hands, forms in itself a separate romance, which ought not to be included with the present one. An artist must introduce no cross lights, or confusion in his work. Mr. May's adventures must have a separate frame, and be viewed apart. At some future time, possibly, his manuscript may be placed in the printer's hands,—but I make no rash promise. *That depends.*

THE END.

C. LE FEUVRE, Printer, Beresford Street, Jersey.

