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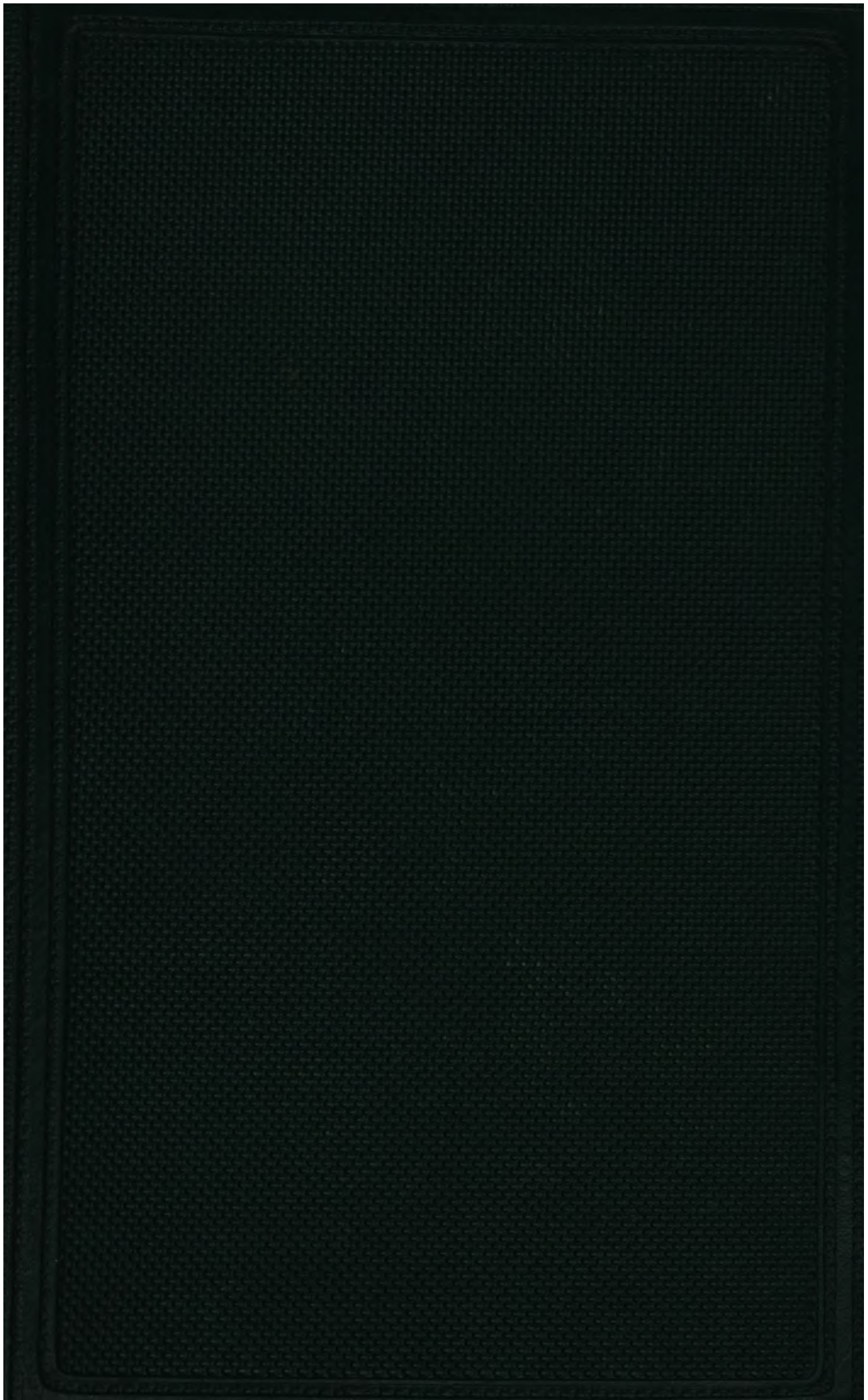
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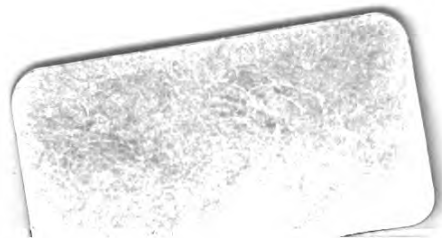


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# UNCONVENTIONAL.

A Nobel.

By THOMAS SUTTON, B.A.

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

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

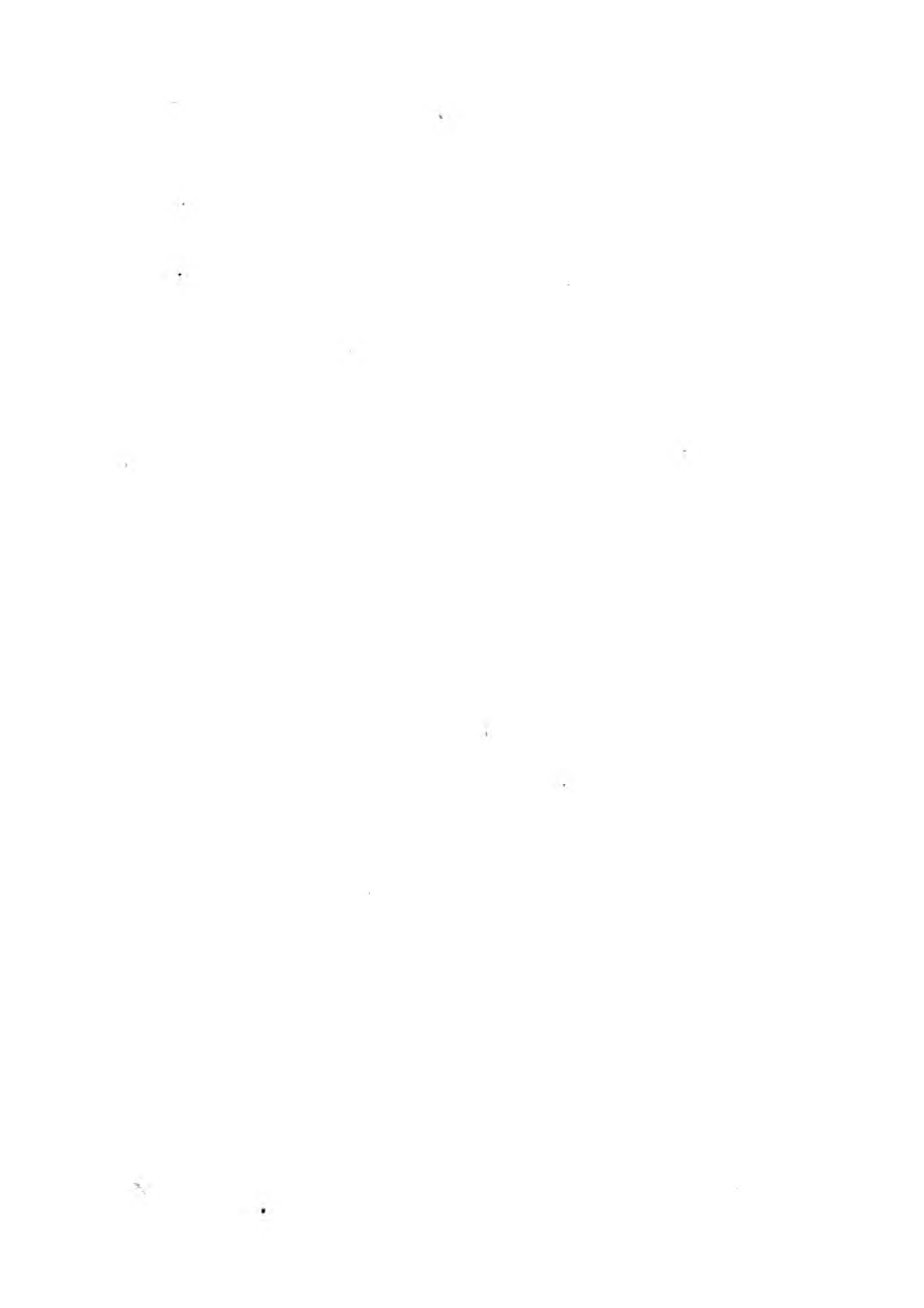


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# UNCONVENTIONAL.



## CHAPTER 1.



### THE MARQUIS AND HIS NIECE.

WHILE Levisne and his host were clenching their strange compact, recorded in the last chapter, events were occurring in another part of the house which are equally worthy of notice. We must go back an hour or two in our story, and return to the Italian girl, whom we left carrying the tray with the empty coffee cup upon it from the drawing-room to the kitchen. Her way lay along a corridor having rooms on one side, the doors of which opened into it. One of these was the old French Marquis's sanctum; and as the door was partly open when

Giovanna passed, she looked in and saw that worthy playing at double dummy with another estimable character, who went by the name of Mrs. Brown. Nor was she unobserved by them in her turn, and both remarked the strange expression of her features as she fixed her dark eyes upon them for an instant in passing the door. The Marquis looked significantly at his companion, and threw down his cards, saying

“Excuse me, *Madame*, but we must finish our game another time. *Mon Dieu!* Did you see how wicked that girl looked? I must be off and watch her, for there’s some mischief brewing, you may depend.”

*Madame* did not reply by words, but her eyes asked intelligibly enough whether things were really as bad as he supposed.

“There is mischief brewing,” he repeated, in an ominous whisper. “I saw it in her eyes. Those Italians I know well, and their summary way of winding up accounts. He has been using her badly of late, and I dare say they have had a quarrel about the dog. But take care, *gobba*—take care—you may go too far with *her*. *Mille tonnerres!* how wicked she looked.”

So saying, he crept stealthily out of the room, and followed his Niece—for such was really the relationship between them. There were three persons then engaged in that house in menial occupations—all foreigners of rank, and under a cloud. It was the singular caprice of the owner to shelter and make use of such people. His tastes were peculiar and unconventional; in his disposition there was a strange mixture of good and evil; and his wealth was enormous, inherited from one of the richest families in Europe. To live in seclusion, harbour infamous characters, expose himself voluntarily to their plots, defeat them by superior cunning, and amuse himself by acquiring a knowledge of their vicious practices, was with Xenosthes pleasureable excitement to a nature which had in it a singular love of dark romance and intrigue. Had he not inherited wealth which placed him beyond the reach of temptation to fraud, he might have been himself a dangerous villain; as it was, he made it a sort of hobby to excite the cupidity and watch the villany of others. But this was an amusement full of risk; and in too confident reliance upon his own superior sagacity, and with the recklessness

of a spoilt child, to whom the world seemed to bow in homage, he was now carrying his dangerous game to the verge of imminent peril, as events will show. Sensual, unprincipled, and disappointed in that which money cannot purchase, he had turned, without an opposing effort, towards evil; but the pleasures of vice—or perhaps I should rather say of that peculiar form of vice to which he had been a slave for the last three years—had begun to pall upon him, and he longed for a change. His arrangement with Mark Levisne was to have been followed almost immediately by the break-up of his present establishment, and the dispersion of his interesting *protégés*; but what was to have followed never transpired, for the march of events anticipated his calculations.

Giovanna passed along the passage into the kitchen, with her estimable Uncle creeping noiselessly after her in the dark. There he watched her seated for some minutes before the dying embers of the fire, rapt in thought. At last she lighted a candle and went to her own room. He procured a dark lantern and a pneumatic plate-holder, and followed at once. When she had entered her room, and locked the door, he

listened for a few minutes outside ; and then, carefully removing the bead which surrounded a small panel, applied the plate-holder to it, drew it softly from its place, and looked in. The young lady was seated before a table reading a note, again and again. At last she rose, and put on her hat and shawl so quickly that the Marquis had only time to restore the panel to its place, and remove himself out of her way, before she unbolted the door and came out, leaving her candle behind. They were now both in a long dark passage, one end of which communicated with the inhabited part of the house, and the other terminated on a landing of a spiral staircase in a turret, which led to the roof. Giovanna turned that way, and the Marquis crept after her. She mounted the stairs, and he followed ; but in doing so too incautiously he made a slight noise which caused her to stop and listen. He, however, continued to ascend in the dark, until in a few seconds he touched her accidentally with his hand. She gave a faint scream of terror ; but he silenced her instantly, by whispering, in a kindly tone,

“ Hush, *mon enfant*, it is I, your loving Uncle. Who else would dare to act the spy upon you

within these walls? And now, what are you after, child? Some pretty love adventure, Eh? But take care, he can clip your wanton wings, you know. Come, now, back with me, and tell me all. A little sweet revenge boiling over in that lily breast of yours, Eh? But you musn't think of such naughty things. Old Adolphe may, but not you, my pretty bird. Calm your little heart, *carissima*, and come back with me and tell me all. No secrets from old Adolphe. *We are friends, are we not?"*

He led her back to her own room; and there, when they had bolted the door, they stood face to face at a table before an image of the Virgin, fixing their eyes upon each other, and striving to read each other's dark and hidden thoughts. Giovanna was the first to speak; and as she did so her face became pale as death, and her bitter words of reproach were seasoned by such glances as brought an angry flush into the old man's cheek.

"I do not understand you, Sir," she said. "I, at least, have no secrets to confess or mysterious conduct to explain; but I wish I could say as much for you. Why are you constantly watching me, and getting me into

trouble? Why did you tell him I poisoned the dog, when you know I did *not* do it? A month ago I thought we were friends, but now it seems you are *both* against me. Does it please you, Sir, to see your Niece degraded and insulted by that tyrant—to see him strike her with his fiddlestick, or with anything else that may come to hand? Does it gratify a French nobleman, who can boast of his descent, and the gallantry of his nation towards the sex, to see his own sister's child, a poor helpless girl, insulted and abused by a hunchback Jew, whose gold has been inherited from wretches who have ground down the poor? Has your miserable Niece, who was once a prattling child upon your knee, not yet sunk low enough to please her affectionate Uncle but that he must act the spy upon her, and tell lies about her to her master? Do you wish, Sir, to see me driven out upon the streets? Do I stand in your light? Are *you* tired of me as well as he?"

"Hush, girl. Not so fast with that saucy tongue of yours. My temper is none of the best, and I have run men through the body with my rapier, before now, for milder words than yours. Listen to me, simpleton. I *will*



explain, if you choose to hear ; but first, swear by this blessed Virgin before us, to give up your own revenge, and leave him to me, or . . . .”

“ You are dreaming, Uncle. I have nothing to swear—nothing to give up—nothing to confess. If a dark thought ever crossed my mind it has passed away now. I know what you mean, but you wrong me—you do indeed. It is for *you* to explain, if you can, your changed manner towards me. Why have you become suddenly so cross and so suspicious ? If it *has* a motive, do make that motive clear to me at once. I have a woman’s curiosity, and my Uncle’s wickedness is original and piquant. Pray explain. I will listen to you as I would to some dark romance.”

“ You are a brave girl, Giovanna, and perhaps I ought to have confided in you before. Listen then. My plan is superb, and the news I have to tell you will send you into fits. The old Marquis, your Uncle, is free once more. Think of that, my pet. We can leave this accursed place any day, any hour, any minute we like. My arch-enemy is dead. He, who was hunting me from place to place, and who would have found me out in this miserable

disguise—in this loathsome pigsty—the slave of that detested Jew—is dead. I saw it in the ‘Times’ a month ago. While he was tying a little noose so nicely, as he thought, for my neck, grim death stepped in and cut him off his legs—the *bête*. I am free, Giovanna; and we can leave this pigsty when we like.”

“Oh, happiness. Then let us go at once. Why wait?”

“Because I am without a *sou*.”

“But I have saved a little; enough for us both for a few months.”

“Stuff, child.”

“Well?”

“Well? Why if I am short of *sous* I must find some, must I not? Who has got any, Giovanna? Can’t you tell?”

The lady shook her head.

“We must lighten *him*, of course, before we go,” the Marquis added, in a lower whisper. “Can’t you understand now, simpleton? What are your little trumpery savings and presents to put against all that you have done for him—the hideous *gobba*—during your three best years of youth? Do

you think I can ever forget that? And, besides, suppose we do lighten him a bit, what are a million francs more or less to *him*? I tell you there is spoil enough now in this old house to refit my château three times over, and make me happy for life. Am I delightfully piquant, Giovanna? Does the old man interest you, my lovely Niece?"

"You *amuse* me, Uncle, immensely. Pray go on."

"*Ecoutez donc.* The treasure I tell you of is in the *escritoir* which he guards so carefully, the idiot, with his spring carbine loaded night and day. Nevertheless I have had it all in these old hands—diamonds of immense value, and deeds worth a province, if lost. All these things I have handled—examined—and my old eyes have feasted upon them more than once. A month ago, as soon as I saw that man's death in the 'Times', I formed my plans and set to work. What was easier to me than to watch my opportunity whilst the ugly hunchback was posing my lovely Niece, and bore a hole in the wall of the empty room behind the *escritoir*, and pass my hand through, and clutch the treasures—even with the weapon pointed at my

head. What was an old clay wall, or a bolted door, against a strong will, and a cunning brain, with time and opportunity cut to fit? But now comes the rub. To escape with the treasures would be easy enough, but how to turn such monstrous sparklers into current coin without detection of the theft? The very grandeur of the spoil makes it safe. What is the use of diamonds like those, if buried in the earth? How am I to dispose of them, and transmute them safely into gold? Can *you* solve this riddle, *ma mignonette*? Try. See if the gay dream of our old château on the Blavet restored to its ancient glory will not quicken your young fancy, and sharpen your young wits. Help the old man's sluggish brain, my Niece."

"Alas, I am without invention, and without a knowledge of resources, save what I have gleaned from your wicked self."

"Well then, I must give you a hint. *You* must be a party to the scheme. *You* must help me. Don't you see now how easy it becomes."

"*Santa Maria*, No! I see nothing but a vast impossibility—a foiled attempt—a life-long disgrace. For you the galleys; and for me a jail, with hideous companions, hunger, labour,

stripes, cold and wretchedness—a life of hopeless agony to follow a wasted youth—and *his* mocking finger pointed scornfully at me. No! Your dreaded noose I *could* face for a satisfied revenge against a tyrant who has trampled upon me—but the *other* wretchedness, for money only, *never!* But tell me, Uncle, does the Signor know that your enemy is dead, and that you are now released from all fear of discovery, as well as from this hateful servitude and concealment? Are you certain also that the announcement of his death was not a mere *ruse* to mislead you?”

“I am certain of his death; and also that the Jew does not know it. The day I saw it announced he spent with you in the studio, and he never saw the paper, or asked for it. I burnt it with my own hands.”

“But you have not told me your plan yet. You smile, and I see some delicious wickedness in those dear old grey eyes. Pray go on. Say, how am I to help you?”

“You shall hear. The part to be played by my lovely Niece is simple enough. For her I meditate no crime. She is to be for ever the spotless, the innocent, and the beautiful in her

old Uncle's eyes. The crime and the risk are to lie wholly with him. He is to be the true sinner—his Niece only the suspected one. She is first to be dismissed from the pigsty—packed off—sent about her business in disgrace. Now you know, my darling, why your affectionate Uncle has been acting the spy, and telling tales of you to your fond master during the last month.”

“Admirable! I can guess the rest. *Oh, zio mio affezionato!*”

“But let me finish my sketch. Giovanna gone, peace reigns here once more, until some day, not very far hence, the Jew finds his treasures gone too. The loaded gun is still pointing its muzzle at the old escritoir, but the fortress has been taken in the rear, the empty room invaded *malgré* bolts and bars, and a breach made in the old clay wall. *Bête*, to suppose that a yard of clay and pebbles could keep my fingers from such charming curiosities. Then comes a grand explosion. “S—b—sse, she has stolen the treasures; who would have thought it?’ But no; that is not it. He is calm, and white. ‘Adolphe,’ says he, ‘that sweet Niece of yours has gone off with some deeds of mine, and some trinkets. The deeds are of no

use to her, or to anyone but me ; but the trinkets are worth a million francs. That sum I can spare ; but I must have the deeds back. Go, then, Adolphe, and recover the whole of these things, and the sum I name shall be yours.' Adolphe accepts the conditions, and you may imagine the rest. The farce is over, and we have had our revenge. The curtain rises upon a new scene—an old château restored, a smiling river, terraced gardens, chesnut avenues, rustling silks, piping music, coloured lamps, twinkling feet—and a hale old Marquis, lord of his own again, encircling with his arm a lovely Niece, the joy of his life, the staff of his old age, the heiress of his million francs, and the admired of all beholders !”

Giovanna laughed outright. “What !” she said ; “the old nobleman’s arm round a convicted thief—the poisoner of a faithful dog—the paramour of gownsmen—the model of a life Academy—the slave of a hunchback Jew ? You are romancing, Uncle dear. The old château will need no such ornament as that. The lovely Niece will have her little interests provided for in a far different way, and without the old Marquis’s help.”

“Simpleton, why *won't* you understand me? If I recover the lost property and give it up, do you suppose I would not bind him down to the secrecy of the grave? Besides, how *could* he open his lips on such a topic without proclaiming his own disgrace? Are you now convinced, little sceptic; and will you help me?”

“No, Uncle, never! It has amused me to listen to you—nothing more. I will be no willing party to such a plan. You have made me what I am, but my hands are clean as yet. If I have held myself too cheap, it was because I loved him once; and I will not wrong him now, tyrant though he be. I will not stoop to a paltry theft. Your plan has no charm for me, and you dare not mix up my name with it without my full consent. But listen to a plan of mine, instead. We will leave this odious place at once. I have saved a little money, enough for us both at first, and I will work honestly for more. I will support you, cherish you, and gladden your old age—but not as a suspected thief. We will go to Paris, and there rent a photographic studio, and take portraits; or I will go as assistant to a photographer at first. Thus I will redeem what is past in my



sad life, and it shall be forgotten by us both. Let us leave this place at once, and all its hateful associations, and put the sea between us and it. I left France an innocent child, and to dear France let me return, innocent as yet of all crimes save those against myself."

"Romantic absurdity," said the Marquis. But before he could finish the sentence a bell was rung for him by Mrs. Brown to answer a summons to the drawing-room. His master, the *gobba*, as he called him, wanted the Madeira.

He obeyed the summons in ill humour, as the reader is already aware, and returned as soon as he could to his Niece's room; but she was not there. He hastened to the turret, and on passing one of its narrow windows, saw amongst the trees in the garden two figures engaged in earnest conversation,—one of them the lady whom he sought—the other a lad scarcely taller than herself. They were pacing backwards and forwards along a path which the Marquis had cleared as a promenade for himself, and seemed to care but little for any observation they might excite from inmates of the house. As the old man watched them with his keen grey eyes he chuckled at the thought of the chance now

afforded him of furthering his scheme by betraying his niece to her master; and he longed for the moment when Xenosthes should retire to his room, that he might whisper the news to him through the tube, and guide him to that convenient post of observation. In about an hour the long expected moment arrived, and still the loving pair continued to pace the garden walk together. The information he then gave the Jew was such as caused him to take up his loaded rifle, and follow with it quickly to the turret.

## CHAPTER 2.

—  
STRANGE REPORTS.

THE crafty Adolphe only left his post of observation for a few minutes, in order to fetch the master of the house, and show him what was going on in the garden—with the view of course to the more speedy dismissal of the Italian girl; but when he returned to the turret in company with Xenosthes, the young lady was nowhere to be seen; and the only person visible in the garden was the youth who had been walking with her, and who was now, like a romantic young simpleton, gesticulating fond farewells towards one of the windows. Giovanna had, in fact, timed her retreat to her own room so nicely as to meet no one in

the hall or passages; but she had hardly been there a minute before her Uncle and Xenosthes passed her door on their way to the turret; and when she opened it and peeped after them, she perceived that the latter carried a rifle. The sight of that deadly weapon, and the certainty that it was loaded and would be discharged at the youth in the garden, should he unconsciously present his person as a target, sent her heart into her mouth; and regardless of any consequences to herself she followed them instantly, in order to prevent mischief. On reaching the landing before the narrow window which had been her Uncle's post of observation, she saw the Greek already crouching, with the rifle laid upon the sill, and taking deliberate aim at an object outside. To scream loudly, as a warning to the youth upon whose figure those sights were being brought to bear, was her first impulse; and she next tried to rush past her Uncle, who stood between herself and the marksman, and disturb his aim, by seizing the weapon; but the wary old man was too quick for her, and held her so firmly in his grasp that before she could extricate herself, or find breath for another scream, the rifle was discharged,

and the report followed by a cry of pain, which told that the bullet had too truly reached its mark.

“*That’s* a pill,” said Xenosthes, “which will cool your love fever, my young Adonis, and spoil your moonlight walks in my garden for the next few weeks, I fancy. But you need not look so grave, Marquis. I have only hit him in the leg, as a little reminder of the Jew—nothing worse. The youngster ought to feel honoured that I noticed him at all. As for *you* minion,” he added, turning his dark eyes full of fury upon Giovanna, “Out of my sight this instant—off with you—pack up your traps, for to-morrow morning you shall budge, and I hope never to see your deceitful face again.”

The lady thus savagely addressed returned the glance of the speaker with equal scorn and hatred. “Coward,” she said, “to fire upon a defenceless youth, without a warning, and from behind a wall! Coward and tyrant, I hate and despise you; and mark me, I will be revenged for this!”

They all left the turret together, and as Giovanna entered her room, Xenosthes replied:—  
“Remember, girl—ready or not ready, you

leave Cambridge to-morrow morning by the ten o'clock train ; and as for your dark threat, let me hear another word of that and I will lodge you in jail, and keep you there to rot for the rest of your life."

She made no reply, but entered her room and shut the door. Xenosthes whispered to his companion, as they passed on

"Don't leave her a minute to herself to-night, Adolphe. Stay with her until she is ready to start in the morning ; and then I will send that youngster off with her to Antonio, at Somers Town. He will take good care of her, and treat her daintily, I warrant you ; and she will soon get reconciled to her change of quarters. Do you understand me, Marquis?"

"Perfectly, Signor. I will watch her carefully to-night. She means what she said, no doubt. It was no idle threat. I know her well. *Mon Dieu!* to think of such ingratitude in one so fair."

They parted—Xenosthes returning to his own room, and the Marquis to his niece's. The old man tapped lightly at the lady's door, and after a time was admitted. Anxiously he scrutinized her face, but she turned it away from him in

embarrassment, and strove to avoid his glance, and recover her composure.

“Come here, Niece,” he whispered at last, “and listen to what I have to tell you. That youngster who dined with the hunchback to-day, and who is now sleeping in the dressing-room—who is he, do you know?”

The lady shook her head.

“Well; he is to take you to-morrow morning to Antonio, the photographer at Somers Town—you know who I mean—the man who does printing and albumenizing, and who keeps a lot of girls employed at it. You are to be one of them. No more dainty posing, and velvet robes, and trips to Genova la Superba, and the Golden Horn. You are to work now like the rest of us. No more Venus Anadyomene, and Phryne, and Hypatia; but you must tuck up your sleeves, and bathe your white hands in the alkaline gold toning; and if it brings pustules so much the worse for *you*. You are to change masters to-morrow, and Antonio is to keep you amused. Now tell me—have you considered how to evade any such plan as this, and escape from that youngster, and cross to our friends in Paris instead?”

“Alas, no. How can I think of anything but that poor lad’s horrid scream? Go to him, Uncle, at once, and help him home, I implore you. On my knees I ask you this last favour.”

“Of course I will, my darling,” replied the old man. “No begging and praying. It shall be done. It is enough for me that my Niece is interested in him. But one word first, and answer me. Have you thought of your plans for to-morrow? *That* is the question now, and there is not much time for us to decide. Look here, child. He must *not* take you to Antonio. Do you understand?”

“Yes, perfectly. I must go straight to Paris. I know that. But nothing will be easier. Leave it to me.”

“You exquisite little pet,” said the Marquis, rubbing his old hands with glee.

“And now, Uncle, go and do what I told you, at once. Until the poor lad is safe at home I can think of nothing else. After that you can go to bed yourself. I shall not want you here until I have done packing; and when that is finished I will call you. You must not lose your night’s rest; it knocks you up.”

The old man obeyed; and with the parting



salutation "*Felice notte,*" bowed himself out. He went straight to the turret window; but as he could see from thence no sign of the wounded youth he concluded there was no further need of his troubling himself about the matter; and so, coolly disregarding his promise to his niece, and with a ready-made lie for her in the morning, he adjourned quietly to his own room and threw himself upon his couch. A man with no sense of honour is generally cruel. The vices, like the virtues, go together hand in hand.

The hours of darkness rolled on at their usual pace, and all the inmates of that house were asleep at last, save one—the fair Italian. How *she* spent her last night under that roof will be discovered as the tale proceeds.

---

And now the "morn is up again, the dewy morn," and all the sleepers are awake and up again, save the Master, who still slept on. Mark was the first in the house to face the dawn with open eyes; but he woke with a heavy pain across the brow, and got up at once to bathe his temples in cold water, and let the fresh air into the room. The window opened upon a balcony, from which

you could descend by a flight of moss-covered and broken stone steps to the wilderness of a garden beneath. He dressed himself quickly and stepped out, for he seemed to gasp for breath. The elixir which he had taken on the previous night, in an immoderate dose, consisted of Madeira impregnated with one of those vegetable narcotics of which you may take a constantly increasing quantity without bad effect, while to a person unaccustomed to the drug the same large dose might be fatal. It had been given him in kindness, and to prevent a sleepless night after the strange conversation which he had had with his host; but the dose had been too strong, and his head now ached fit to split; so he stepped out upon the balcony, and went down the steps into the garden, in hopes that a walk in the fresh air might bring him to himself. Where was he? What was this strange place? What had chanced? Was it all a dream? He felt for the cheque, and read it over. No; it was no dream, but a real fact. He had actually sold himself for three years to a Jew! There were the words, "Pay to Mark Levisne, or Order, Ten Thousand Pounds." And for what? He did not precisely know. Something he remembered about a

promised room at the Clarendon, and a berth on board a yacht, and a pledge of *honourable* service only being required from him in return for a monstrous premium—but that was all. Full of these thoughts, and anxious for an unincumbered stroll in the fresh air, he forced his way through the weeds and brambles, and made for that cleared part of the garden in which Giovanna had walked with her lover on the previous night;—when presently he was startled from his reverie by a loud cry for help. He listened, and it was soon repeated—the cry proceeding from some person concealed under a bank which formed one boundary of the garden. He hurried to the spot, and there saw a youth, beckoning to him for assistance. He was a fair lad, scarcely seventeen, and was seated on the ground shivering with cold—his hands pressed against his right knee—his brow flushed with pain—and some tear drops in his eyes.

“What’s the matter my poor boy?” Mark enquired. “What has happened? Are you hurt? Can I help you?”

“Oh, yes; you can if you will. I have been shot in the knee last night by the rascally Jew who lives in that old house. He fired at me from

one of the windows, and I crawled as far as this for fear he should fire again, but I could go no further. I wish he *had* finished me off, for I've been in agony all night, and with no one near to help me."

"Poor boy; how sorry I am for you. Come; let me feel your wound. I'll touch it very gently. If it isn't bad, perhaps, I can carry you home in my arms. You're not very heavy. Is it far to go?"

"Only just across the field to the river; and then, if you could lay me down in a punt there is there, and push it up against the stream for about a quarter of a mile, we should be at the end of my own garden. But mind how you lift me, for the least jar is agony. The bones of my knee are all smashed."

"Oh, nonsense. It can't be so bad as that. Let me feel the place."

Mark passed his hand gently over the wounded knee, and added

"Come; it isn't so bad as you say. Cheer up, my poor boy; you'll soon be well again; and now put your arm round my neck while I carry you."

He lifted him up in his arms, and carried him

to the punt—hushing his moans by the way as tenderly as a nurse would soothe an infant—and then, laying him down carefully upon the bottom of the boat, poled her up the river to the place which the lad had pointed out. It was the end of the garden belonging to the veritable Mrs. Jones, to whose cottage Mark had been directed by the College porter the day before. A University man named Bertie, now in his third year, was lodging there during the vacation; as well as a young cousin, whom he was coaching—Julius Storr by name—the wounded lad in question.

Bertie saw them arrive, and went down to the river bank to meet them. With the help of this young man, Mark's senior by two or three years, the latter carried the sufferer up stairs, undressed him, and laid him in his bed; and the good woman of the house dispatched her husband at once to Cambridge for a Doctor.

In about an hour the Doctor arrived in his gig, with an assistant, and they examined the wound. The report was favourable. It was pronounced by no means a serious affair; but one which might however prove tedious. The lad was to be set upon his legs again, as well

as ever, some day. The bullet extracted was no bigger than a pea.

With this cheering news, and as soon as he could be of no further use, Mark left, and Bertie joined him to hear further particulars of how it all happened, as well as to vent his indignation against the author of the mischief. He said but little, however, as they passed through the village, and merely listened to Mark's account; but when they had left all the gossips behind, and got well out of hearing of certain little pitchers with long ears who strayed after them, he let loose his stifled wrath.

"Malicious scoundrel," he said, "to fire upon a mere lad like that. What if he *was* walking with the girl in the garden—is that any reason why the Jew should try to take his life? I should just like to know what the law says in such a matter, and by Jove if he had no *right* to fire, my governor will be down upon him pretty smart. But after all, who cares for law? It may be very well for old fogies, but I'm one to make a law for myself. Let me catch the snob down at Byron's Pool to-day—he often goes there to look at the fellows bathing—and if I don't shove him in, and duck him to within an ace of his

life, my name is not Bob Bertie. I'll do it the very first time I catch him there. I will, so help me ——."

"Oh, stuff," said Mark. "You musn't dream of such a thing. Why you'd be put in quod at once, and transported perhaps."

"Are you a friend of his? You say you were in the garden when you first heard my cousin shout."

Mark coloured, but answered firmly, "Yes."

"Oh, gammon," replied the other. "You don't mean to say you're one of *them*? What, a partner in the Firm of Xenosthes, De Lux, and Co., manufacturers of forged bank notes by photography?"

"I don't understand you. Forged bank notes! What do you mean? And who, pray, is De Lux?"

"You a friend of the Firm, and not know De Lux? Well, that is a good one! Why he's the grey-headed old scoundrel, Uncle to the girl who has so bewitched that poor fool; —— her."

"You seem to know a good deal about them. Is what you say mere village scandal, or has it really a foundation in truth?"

“It’s as true, Levisne, as that you and I stand here. You see I know you. I remember you by sight, as a youngster at King’s. Now, if you *are* mixing yourself up with those people ignorantly, and it’s no gammon of yours, then, I say back out of it, my good fellow, for they’re a bad lot.”

“You astonish me. I could not have believed it possible. Manufacturers of bank notes by photography! Are you serious? Have you good authority for what you say?”

“The very best. It is not scandal at all, but a mighty secret which that girl has told my cousin Storr—and which he has told me—and which I now tell you—and which I mean to tell the police, after I’ve ducked him; but I must do that first. If what that girl tells Storr on their moonlight walks is a mere fabrication, then all I can say is that her inventive powers are something marvellous, and her motive for humbugging him with such falsehoods perfectly inscrutable. You can’t imagine half the rum things she tells him; they’re enough to make one’s blood run cold. He’s a romantic young simpleton, and believes she is in love with him; and she crams him up to the eyes with stories of



her griefs, in order to excite his sympathy, and drive him half distracted. She describes herself as a young captive Countess, who has been sold to the Jew by her Uncle for an immense sum, and who is now caged up in that old house against her will, and made to take a part in their nefarious practices. For the slightest offence the Jew hands her over to the mercies of an Amazonian housekeeper, who comes it Elizabeth Brownrigg over her, and serves her out to within an ace of her life—at least so she says—and she has shown Storr the marks across her shoulders, as well as across her hands and arms, but I dare say they are only silver stains. Why she doesn't bolt and inform the police, if only half of what she says is true, I can't think. Nor can I discover what motive she has in inveigling a young lad to the garden to listen to such yarns, unless it is to induce him to elope with her and marry her—a thing which he was quite game to do, I know."

"Why it's really a dark romance. Pray go on. Have you anything more to tell me about them?"

"Oh, lots. I could amuse you for a week. The Jew and his fair captive only come here

during the summer months. In the autumn they flit away together in a yacht. Of course a man who manufactures bank notes by the gross can afford to keep his yacht. This vessel is a fore-and-aft schooner, just like those slavers that Tom Cringle talks about, and a regular clipper. I've seen a photograph of her. She is manned by blackamoors, Riffs from Morocco, who speak no lingo that any christian can understand; and her captain is a cut-throat looking rascal, whose "carte" I have seen too, and it reminds me of the Saracen's Head, Aldgate. Well; where do you think they go to in the winter? Why to a ruined castle in a desert island off the African coast somewhere, latitude and longitude not known to the young lady, but it's a deuced hot place. They have set up a lot of machinery there; and the whole crew of them work away at paper making till the spring; when they come back again to us. Of course it wouldn't do to make everything here. They only do the photographic part here, and the printing—as I dare say you know well enough."

Mark made no reply, and there was a pause for some minutes in the conversation. At last Bertie continued,

“You seem stumped, Levisne. I’ve told you some queer news, I reckon.”

“You have, by Jove; and I’m sorry to say it has a slight look of probability. But we are now within sight of the house, and I must wish you good morning. Let me hope that we may renew our acquaintance some other day.”

“But not up there, if you please. You won’t catch me going that way. They say there’s a ferocious dog runs loose, who is game to kill and eat as many christian men as you like to pitch to him. They keep a prize fighter too, to bully fellows who are not wanted; and De Lux was one of the best swordsmen in France, and has skewered I don’t know how many poor d——ls; and the Jew himself is a dead shot, both with pistol and rifle. You won’t catch me up there, Levisne; and if you value your own carcass you’d better take care how you get squabbling with any of those ugly jokers. But by all means BEWARE OF THE DOG, as the notice says. That girl told Storr that the brute once saved his master’s life by pitching into a whole troop of bandits near Terracina; mind he doesn’t chaw *you* up. But the rummest yarn of all is our parson’s here. He called on the Firm one

day, to try and convert the Jew; and the argument they had together was fine. The scoundrel believes neither in God nor Devil; and his reverence had to scuttle away with a flea in his ear. He has never tried to convert the Jews since: and he knocked off his guinea at once to the Society for propagating the blackguards. Well, good-bye, Levisne. Keep your weather-eye up. That's my advice."

Bertie turned his steps homewards; and Mark sauntered slowly across the fields towards the house, in a state of semi-stupefaction. We will leave him for the present to his reflections; for it was some time before he could analyse his feelings, or reason clearly upon the strange reports which he had heard.

### CHAPTER 3.

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#### ANOTHER PARTING.

WE left Mark in a brown study, pondering over the strange reports he had heard about the Firm of Xenosthes, De Lux & Co.; and sauntering slowly across the fields on his way back towards the queer old house which had now become his home. Suddenly he received a slap between the shoulders, which aroused him from his reverie; and on turning round perceived the head partner himself of the Firm standing before him, his dark and expressive features beaming with that glow of satisfaction which is supposed to accompany the intent to do something that is right and generous.

“Well, Mark, a penny for your thoughts. Why, man, I’ve been watching you from my window for the last ten minutes, dawdling home, and I thought you’d never come. What on earth are you dreaming about? I want you badly just now; and as patience is not one of my many virtues, I’ve been forced to knock off packing up some diamonds, in order to come and hurry you back. But what the deuce is the matter with you? You look as grave as the Lord Chief Baron passing sentence on the partners of some swindling Commercial Bank—with liability *unlimited*.”

“You are not far off in your surmise, Xenosthes. Oddly enough I *was* just then summing up in my own mind the evidence for and against a rather strange Firm. Shall I tell you candidly all about it?”

“Oh, by all means. Out with it.”

“Well then; I’ve been reading lately a rather queer serial story in one of the Magazines, and it broke off at an exciting point. The hero had just sold himself to a Jew for ten thousand pounds; but in consequence of some strange reports he had subsequently heard he was in a quondary as to whether he had not better return

the cheque, and cry off the bargain. I was wondering how I should have acted myself under the circumstances; and I was trying to anticipate the sequel of the tale.”

“Ha! Go on. You interest me. Explain the circumstances; and perhaps I can help you to a decision.”

Mark caught a glimpse of his companion's face as he said this, and observed that a cloud had already gathered over it. The good expression was gone; and in an instant those imperious features had begun to look hard, sardonic, and scornful. He continued, however, to develop his case.

“The circumstances are these: The hero of my tale is a young man who has just entered at Cambridge—with five hundred pounds left him to defray his College expenses—the world before him—but few friends—and an engagement just formed with a pretty school-girl of fifteen; with whom, however, he is bound, for a particular reason, not to communicate, except by letter, until her studies at school are completed. This youth, after entering himself on the College boards, in the midst of the summer vacation, seeks for lodgings; and, with a romantic love

of green fields and fresh air, in preference to brick walls and smoke, walks to Grantchester, one fine afternoon in July, in quest of country quarters until his College Lectures begin in October. And now comes the exciting part of the story. He loses his way to the cottage to which he has been directed—crosses to the wrong side of the river in a punt—and finds himself before a desolate-looking old house, standing in the midst of a wilderness of garden and shrubbery. He walks boldly up to the front door—rings the bell—and is answered by a young Italian girl, beautiful as a *houri*, with dishevelled hair, naked feet, bare arms, and her graceful form swathed in a gorgeous velvet robe tied loosely round her waist. By this fair vision the young hero of flesh and blood is conducted into a drawing-room, the magnificence of which utterly belies the external appearance of the place. They converse for a brief minute behind a screen, and the youth endeavours to explain to his companion in her own language the object of his visit, when suddenly their *tête-à-tête* is interrupted by the entrance of the Jew of whom I told you. This strange being, in an insane fit of jealousy, threatens the Italian girl with



personal violence, and is only deterred from actually striking her by suddenly recognizing in the undergraduate a former acquaintance—I had almost said a former friend. The intimacy of these two is at once renewed—they stroll together, and talk of old times—they dine together—confidences are exchanged—and the evening closes with the following strange compact entered into between them:—The Jew informs his companion that he is the possessor of enormous wealth, but that in a moment of disappointment he has plunged into a vicious course of life, which, however, he is about to change. He confides also to his companion the fact that he was once engaged, and is still devotedly attached to a young lady, the niece of a sculptor under whom he formerly studied, and bearing to his young friend the strange relationship of natural sister. In a fit of enthusiasm, which he professes is not likely to last, the Jew offers our hero a cheque for ten thousand pounds—a sum which he avers is no more to him than a crumb on the table of Dives—as a bribe to give up his University career, and serve *him* for the same time instead, in honourable ways; as well as to aid in promoting his suit with the sister, and

his return to virtuous courses. This strange offer is laid before the young friend with unexpected suddenness and without the slightest preparation ; and he is called on to decide at once, on the threat that so dazzling an offer, if declined then, may never be repeated. Further, his intellects are assisted in making the choice between Academic honours and an independent competency, by a couple of glasses of a drugged wine, called by the Jew an Elixir. Under the combined influences of a renewal of friendship with a man whom he had cause to love when a boy—of a brilliant prospect for his sister—and of a competency for himself—and all this aided no doubt by the fumes of the exhilarating liquid —on being compelled to decide at once, he clenches the bargain and accepts the cheque. The two then retire to rest, the guest sleeping in his host's dressing-room. And now comes a new feature in this strange story ; now follow events which compel the hero to reconsider carefully his compact of the previous night. In the grey of the following morning he awakes, with faculties bewildered, and brain reeling under the effects of the elixir, and gasping for fresh air. He gets up at once, dresses himself quickly,

and steps out through the window into the garden. There, after taking a few turns, he finds a poor lad crouching under a bank, wounded in the knee by a rifle bullet, moaning with pain, shivering with cold, and crying for help. He has been fired at by the 'rascally Jew,' as he calls him, during the night, from one of the windows of the old house, and cruelly left to his fate, in the darkness and cold, without help, to live or die, as the fates may decree. Our hero is touched with pity at the sight, and in his heart execrates the cruel author of it. He carries the lad in his arms, lays him in a punt, pushes it up the stream to the end of a garden appertaining to the cottage in which the lad lives; and then, with the help of another young man, the lad's cousin, carries him to the house. There they undress him, lay him in his bed, and a Doctor is at once sent for to examine the wound."

"And what report does the Doctor give of it?" asked Xenosthes, suddenly interrupting the narrative.

"Happily, a favourable one. The bullet was no larger than a pea, and the wound is not serious. Amputation is not necessary; and the

Doctor promises to set the patient upon his legs again in a few weeks, as well as ever. The hero of the tale then leaves the cottage in company with the cousin. They walk together towards the old house; and the Jew and his strange doings become naturally enough the subject of their conversation."

"And what does the hopeful cousin say about the Jew?" demanded Xenosthes—his features beginning to writhe with passion, and his dark eyes glaring defiance at his companion."

Mark reddened at the menacing stare; and returned with his own dark eyes challenge for challenge. They were now before a stile, and stood facing each other in expectation of the next angry word which should confirm the quarrel. With true Anglo-Saxon instinct Mark's fingers began to clench, and his eye took measure of the assailable points of his companion. He replied, with scornful coolness:

"Do you really care to know? Only say the word, and you shall hear it all. I will keep back nothing."

"Say on Sir," replied Xenosthes.

Mark folded his arms, and leant over the top bar of the stile—thus turning his back partly

on his companion, and contemptuously defying the possibility there might be of his taking him at an unfair advantage in the event of a scuffle. He looked straight before him, and went on coolly thus with the details of the story :

“The cousin has unfortunately no good report to give of the Jew. He describes him as head partner of a Firm who are engaged in the manufacture of bank notes by photography. The chief members of this delectable company of swindlers are said to be the Jew, who is a dead shot both with pistol and rifle ; an old French Marquis, the point of whose rapier it is death to face, and who has skewered many an honest compatriot in duels ; a prize-fighter ; an Amazonian housekeeper, whom practice has made skilful in the use of the knout ; and a persecuted young Italian Countess, who is frequently her victim. There is also a ferocious dog kept loose upon the premises, who can kill and eat a whole troop of christians, if need be, to defend his master’s life. Such are the chief members of the Firm. Moreover, the Jew is said to keep a yacht, manned by Riffs, and commanded by a Moor ; swift as a swallow and as trimly built ; in which he and his Italian

victim flit away, when winter comes, to an island on the African coast, where they make the paper required in their nefarious traffic. Such is an outline of the story which the cousin relates concerning the Jew and his companions in the old house; and he concludes by warning the hero of the tale to back out of any engagement he may have formed with them, inasmuch as the whole affair is to be blown upon, and the police put upon the scent. The young men then part company, and go their respective ways; and thus the tale breaks off."

As Mark finished his story he rose from his bending position over the stile, and looked into the face of his companion. A single glance told him that the passions of his former friend had been lashed into fury by the recital; and that they were friends no more. But there was only time for a single glance at those angry features, for Xenosthes turned away and walked off; but not towards his own house. He proceeded by the path which led towards the village. Mark followed slowly in the same direction, and after a time the other slackened his pace, and allowed him to come up with him.

“Have you got that cheque about you, Mark Levisne?” he enquired, as the latter joined him.

“Yes,” answered Mark. “Do you want it?”

“I do. Give it me back.”

Mark did so; and Xenosthes coolly placed it in his purse, which he returned to his pocket.

“Your difficulty is easily solved, Sir,” he added. “You are free. I release you from your compact. The remainder of your story you can fill up as you choose. Go. We part company here. Your road to Cambridge lies yonder—by the river side. I will return your things in the course of the morning. You are a fool; and it is a satisfaction to me to know that you will live to regret bitterly this unprovoked insult. I shall have my revenge; and revenge is sweet. Don’t attempt to apologise, for the thing is done now. I never forgive! *Your* road lies that way—*mine* is through the village. We separate here; never, I hope, to meet again. Adieu, Sir. I wish you joy of your future prospects.”

“So let it be then, with all my heart,” replied Mark.

And thus they parted; Levisne striding proudly off towards the University, with such

thoughts and feelings as the reader must endeavour to picture to himself.

Xenosthes, however, did not return towards his house. Onwards he went, and proudly too, without hat or coat, through the village, until he came to the cottage in which Storr and Bertie lodged. A knot of rustics were standing round the door; and as he pushed through them, many a stubborn shoulder was opposed to his own, and many an honest fist clenched in anger at the sight of the intruder, and many a scowling glance thrown upon his tall figure and haughty face. That little group of true-born Britons wanted but a leader to rise as one man and do instant violence upon the offender; but no leader was there—only the willing brute strength, without a master mind to put it in motion, and direct. Thus Xenosthes was allowed to force his way into the cottage, and to mount, without further impediment, to the room of the wounded lad.



## CHAPTER 4.

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GOOD INTENTIONS.

XENOSTHES tapped at the door of young Storr's room, and the summons was answered by the landlady, who started back with a scream of surprise, on seeing the tall figure of the Jew standing before her. It was indeed a striking apparition to encounter unexpectedly upon that low narrow landing place. In height he was some inches over six feet; his dark Eastern physiognomy, with his high narrow forehead, piercing black eyes, and aquiline nose, was set in a frame of curly locks and beard, black as jet and glossy as silk; and his unfinished toilette consisted of a loose scarlet red shirt, black knickerbockers of velveteen, and high boots.

His head and neck were bare; and the expression of his face was that of a proud irritable man, trying to stifle by force resentment at an indignity which has just been put upon him by the *profanum vulgus* of an inferior race. Is it wonderful that the good landlady should have started and screamed at such an apparition of the very man whom she certainly, the least of any in the world, expected to see in her house at that moment? In the midst of her surprise and dismay the gigantic figure strode past her into the room, to find himself at once confronted by Bertie,—a strong, thick-set, square-headed, ruddy-faced, red-whiskered young fellow of five-and twenty, the type of an Anglo-Saxon.

This young man obeyed his natural bull-dog instinct, by at once confronting the intruder, and demanding, in a haughty tone, to know the nature of his business in that house at that peculiar epoch of time; adding, by a polite insinuation, that the unwelcome visitor might at no very distant date discover himself to be in an inverted position, and making his involuntary exit from the room by a somewhat different aperture than the door through which he entered it.

“Hush, fair friend,” said Xenosthes, with perfect dignity and self-possession. “Let us have no angry words now. My errand here is one of peace and goodwill; and it is to *you* as well as to your unfortunate cousin that I have come—to atone in the first place, as far as I can, for an act of passion—and also to stop the circulation of calumnious reports, the origin of which is but too evident. I have forced my way through the mob of surly rustics below, and I stand before you alone, unarmed, and only half dressed, from a sudden necessity which has arisen for me to bear my own message in person. I beg of you to restrain your choler for the present, and hear patiently what I have to say. First I wish to speak a few words to yonder wounded lad, for whose misfortunes I am deeply concerned; and then I wish to discuss with yourself another matter in which you have been grossly deceived. Will you hear me patiently; or must I return as I came, thwarted in my attempt to do, for once in my life, a good action?”

The manner in which these conciliatory words were spoken, no less than the words themselves, had the desired effect upon the young Englishman addressed; and he held a short parley through

the window with the rustics below, and begged of them to disperse; after which he requested the landlady to withdraw with him from the room; and said civilly to Xenosthes, before he retired:—

“Excuse my rudeness after what has occurred; but how could I possibly divine the object of your visit? I have no objection to leave you for a few minutes alone with my cousin, and I will wait for you at the cottage door. What you have then to say to me can be said outside. I will walk part of the way back with you, if you choose, across the fields; and then you can say what you like without fear of interruption, or of listeners.”

This conduct of Bertie's was no more, under the circumstances, than good breeding required. The visitor thanked him, and closed the door. He was then alone with the wounded lad.

The sufferer was lying upon an iron bedstead in a corner of the room, with his face turned towards the wall, and averted from his dark companion, whom he had been taught to regard as the incarnation of evil; and who, above all his other crimes, was the tyrant of the Italian girl—that dark-eyed beauty whose strange

confessions had so excited the youth's fancy, and touched his heart. The author of his misery watched him for some time in silence; scanning with an artist's eye a face which in happier moments was one of singular and almost feminine attractiveness, being fair as a girl's, with delicate and refined features, high forehead, prominent blue eyes, (indicative of power for language, if there be any truth in phrenology,) and silky, auburn hair; a face which, but for its present unwonted expression of scorn and hate, might have reminded him somewhat of the portraits of Henry Kirke White. But such withering contempt and hate were then dominant in those youthful features, that Xenosthes, as he bent over them in kind intent, almost despaired of the success of his errand of peace. At last he said, with quite a woman's tenderness of manner,

“My poor boy, I have come here to beg your pardon—to acknowledge my cruel passionate haste in firing upon you last night—to express my deep regret and contrition—and to offer you all the reparation in my power. Only name your heart's dearest wish, and if I can gratify it, I will. Would to heaven that *I* could bear

all the pain and dreariness which *you* will have to bear, through my cruelty, for some weeks to come; but as I cannot do that, let me do all I can instead. Let me come and sit by your bedside, and read to you, and tell you stories of the East. Or, if you would prefer a gentler nurse, let me send the dark-eyed girl herself to tend you. And then, when you get well again—as the Doctor says you soon will—let me be your friend for life, and help you on in the world as I *can* do; and let me strive to make amends, by all an elder brother's care and tenderness, for one rash moment of cruel passion. Say, Julius—shall it be so? Will you forgive me? Will you speak one kind word to me—just one, to say that you do not utterly hate me, and despise me for what I did last night?"

But the youth would not reply. With fixed eyes, and still averted face, he continued to scan the papering upon the wall; and his features did not soften, but retained their scornful look. The proud suppliant waited minute after minute for an answer to his fond entreaties, but no answer came; and at last a dark cloud gathered again upon his

brow, and his evil nature returned upon him in full force.

“Be it so, then, Julius Storr,” he said at last, “I leave you to your fate, and will waste my pity upon you no longer. Walk with harlots in my garden at midnight, if such is your conceit; and believe in their foul lying tongues, if lies are more agreeable to your romantic fancy than truth; but take the consequences of your folly, and blame no one but yourself. I was deceived in you; and I now wish you good morning, with a lighter heart.”

So saying, he stalked proudly out of the room; and as he went down the narrow stairs, muttered to himself: “It is the same old tale, again and again—repulse! I seem to lie under a curse, and to repel from me the good, whilst evil clings to me like slime. It is my fate. Why struggle any more against it?”

He found Bertie waiting for him at the cottage door.

“My errand to you, Sir,” he said, “can now be briefly despatched. I came here to tell you to your face that I have discovered you to be a mischief-maker—a slanderer—a dishonoured

abuser of confidence—and a liar. What have you to say in reply?”

The young Saxon was for an instant thunder-struck at this sudden burst of fury from the Jew; but he was bold as a lion, and his instinct quickly prompted a retort.

“Simply this, dark bully,” he said; “That you are yourself a double d——d scoundrel—a thief—a forger—an abuser of women—a . . . .”

“Hush! I can imagine the rest. I wish you good morning, Sir. Let me pass.”

“Over my body, scoundrel; but in no other way,” rejoined Bertie, doubling his fists and planting himself before the other so as to oppose his exit.

At this threat of personal violence, the dark eyes of Xenosthes glared upon the youth who menaced him, with the malignity of a cobra about to strike its poisoned fang into its prey.

“Touch me, Sir, with but the tip of your little finger,” he replied slowly, in a low hissing tone, “and I will strangle you on the spot. Let me pass out quietly, or I will take you up by the nape of your neck and fling you over the house. I *can* do it, and I *will* do it, if you dare to stop my way. Let me pass, I say.”



It is no reproach to the young gownsman to say that he now quailed before the giant form and vindictive eye of the Greek. There is, in common pugilism—the English mode of attack and defence—no malicious intent against the life of your adversary; no more harm to him being meant than a few bumps and bruises, which are supposed to get well in a week. Besides which, pugilism assumes a sense of honour in *both* combatants; and the one worsted has but to confess his defeat, and there is at any moment an end of the encounter. But if, in a proposed duel with unarmed natural strength, the honour is a one-sided virtue, opposed to unscrupulous malice which seeks deadly harm—such as gouging, kicking, strangling, trampling under foot—then it is no reproach to the honourable party if he declines a fight on such unequal terms, and prefers to hand his enemy over to the police. So, at least, reasoned Bertie, as he saw the deadly malice in the dark eye of his antagonist. He had retorted upon the dark foreigner insult for insult, and he had pocketed the affront. It was enough. He stepped aside and let him pass.

Xenosthes strode through the cottage door, and walked swiftly home. As he passed through his own hall, the clock in it chimed the half hour past six. Preparations were already on foot for the departure of the Italian girl; and her luggage was at the door. But he heeded them not. He mounted to his own room, and without undressing threw himself upon his bed.

## CHAPTER 5.



## DREAMS.

It was not yet nine o'clock when Mark Levisne was seated at breakfast in the coffee-room of the — Inn at Cambridge, "chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancies," whilst the chops and eggs remained untasted upon the table before him. Within the last few hours he had become the sudden possessor of a sum of money sufficient, after the lapse of three years of servitude, to render him independent for life, according to his moderate and romantic tastes; but this slice of good luck he had, as it now seemed to him, thrown away in a moment of hasty and groundless suspicion. Love in a cottage, with all the surroundings that a poet could desire, had been

placed within his reach—and like an idiot, as he now thought, he had thrown it all overboard in a moment of reckless folly. The fierce struggle for life, with its rough and selfish competition, its rude disappointments, its grinding cares, its hopes deferred, its slavish toil, its temptations and trials, had been suddenly smoothed down for him by a present of that competency which he might, perhaps, have never been able to realise; and in a moment of silly pride he had handed back the present to its donor. For a brief and happy hour he had indulged in the gay dreams which a piece of marvellous good fortune had allowed his willing fancy to conjure up; but now that happy prospect before him had become no more than a gay dream; and the hard world, with its toils and cares, confronted him again, and would have to be faced by him as others have to face it. Still he had acted a proud and honest part in returning the cheque; and it was at least a consolation to him to reflect that the strange story of the adventure might be told to honest folks without a blush for any meanness of his.

In the midst of these ruminations,—and it must be confessed, in no very cheerful mood—

he was aroused from his reverie by the waiter bringing him a rather large and thick letter, and stating that the bearer of it was in a fly at the door, along with a young lady in black; and that he was to take back to the writer an immediate answer.

The address of this letter was in an unknown hand. Who could it possibly be from? He examined the wrapper, the seal, the writing, with that strange curiosity which hesitates for a moment to satisfy itself by breaking open the envelope and reading the contents; and then he thought of the fly, and the young lady in black. Who could *she* be? He went to the window to see; and there beheld, sure enough, the hired vehicle, with a lady's luggage upon the roof, and John, the prize-fighting footman, inside with the Italian girl.

He tore open the letter, and found that it was from Xenosthes, written in a sad scrawl, and in furious haste; and what made his heart beat quick with delight, he observed that *the cheque was enclosed with it.*

The letter ran thus:—

“Do not suppose, Mark Levisne, that because I return you the enclosed cheque I am one of

those fools who knock up a deadly quarrel with a man 'one minute, and hold out my hand to him in friendship the next. I never forgive! I never forget! But the Fates have decreed that your destiny and mine shall be strangely interwoven, and that you shall one day save my life. This is written in the book of Fate. Why else were you sent to me yesterday? To be dismissed this morning, and your shadow never thrown across my path again? Absurd! We were both fools to suppose such a thing. No! Our compact of last night must stand. We can neither of us kick against that which is predestined, and must be.

“Shall I tell you how I know this? By DREAMS. Did it never occur to you, under any singular circumstances of your life, that the position was not new to you, but that it composed a picture which you had at some former time seen in your sleep, but forgotten until then? Of course you must have experienced this, for everyone has at some time or other; and the unavoidable conclusion is that dreams are frequently prophetic. You cannot explain away that conclusion by saying that probability not only enables you to foresee the course of events

but also suggests the dream which precedes them; and hence the coincidence. It often happens in what I call prophetic dreams, that the picture seen in sleep is composed of unfamiliar images—of people and places never before seen or thought of—and it may be years before this strange vision receives its verification in a fact of which your mind could have had no conception at the time of the dream.

“Dreams are therefore sometimes—not always, but sometimes—prophetic; and these have peculiar characteristics which a little careful observation will enable you to detect. There is a vividness of colour, a precision of form, a complete elaboration of details in that strange picture of the future which I call a prophetic dream, that is wanting in the ordinary visions seen during sleep. Nor am I without a theory to explain this; for in the midst of the strange and lonely life which I have led there has been time for reflection on things metaphysical and spiritual. Of the ordinary fables which amuse women and children, I have been a sceptic; but in the infinitely greater wonders of the spiritual world—as supported by observation, and almost explicable by science—I believe.

“ My theory of what I call prophetic dreams is this :—All natural events, whether spiritual, vital, or mechanical, are the result of motion amongst matter and ether, controlled by inflexible and immutable laws. There is no such thing in nature as volition, for LAW determines all. All that *has* happened throughout past ages, as well as all that *must* happen in future æons of time, has been predestined from eternity ; and all future events will occur with the precision of a computed eclipse, or the next oscillation of a pendulum. LAW is the ruler of the universe, and there is no escape. It is an old Eastern theory, and as true as that the universe exists. The future, as much as the past, is already photographed, if I may so speak, upon the tablet of events, and there is no blank page to be filled up. There are no wanting links in the chain, depending upon the volition of free agents ; but an endless and a ready-made coil revolves through eternity in the hand of that inexorable despot—LAW. Past, present, and future are alike to him, and he knows them all. So far we are agreed I will suppose ; and now for a step further. The ether which fills space, and through which all motion of grosser



atoms is propagated, is elastic, and susceptible of a double set of undulations. By means of one of these sets we have our knowledge of the past and the present ; by means of the other, which I will call the reflex set, we may at times glean an insight into the future—that is to say, when the brain is in an abnormal state, and capable of appreciating these reflex undulations.

“But the chimes of the hall clock warn me that I must get on to the main subject of my letter. You must know then, that after we parted—under the fond delusion that we were free agents, and had our destiny in our own hands—I went through another disgusting and irritating scene in the village, and on returning home flung myself, half-dressed as I was, upon my bed, and, I cannot say how soon, fell into a doze. During this strange abnormal sleep, which followed much violent cerebral action, and occurred at an unusual time and under peculiar circumstances, I dreamt ; and out of four dreams which followed each other with scarcely a waking interval, and did not occupy more than as many minutes, much I know was prophetic. Now listen ; for you were yourself an actor in these visions.

“In my first dream, methought I was lying upon my bed in this very room where I am writing, and where I always sleep, with my limbs stiff and cold as those of a corpse, paralyzed and nearly lifeless, but still conscious. There was a glassy film over my eyes, but through it I could distinctly see *you* watching over me; and your face was kind and honest. I was dying apparently, and you were sincerely sorry for me. Presently, however, you vanished, and the little old Frenchman you saw last night entered the room, and went to the *escritoir*. He took from thence some trinkets and parchment deeds; and first looked at me with his cunning grey eyes to be sure I was asleep, and then at the things which he thought were treasures. I saw him take the baubles in his hands, toy with them, caress them; and even half dead as I was, I smiled at the success of the trick which I had played upon him, for the things were worthless, and I had put them there simply as a bait, and that I might amuse myself by his foiled rascality. Suddenly, in the midst of his exultation, a noise startled him, and he put them back into their place and left the room; but as

he passed my bed he shook his bony fist in my face, while I lay beneath him helpless and dying.

“Such was Dream the first. And now listen. I had not opened that escritoir for a month; but when I got up after my troubled nap I went straight to it, and found that a hole had been made in the panel at the back, as well as another in the wall behind it. I knew this would happen sooner or later. It has happened; and my sides ache yet with laughing.

“The second Dream was stranger still. Methought I was alone in a damp mouldy crypt, digging a grave, by the light of a dim lantern. It was a very long grave, but not wider than usual; and why it was so long you will discover presently. I dug deeper and deeper, with the frenzy of a maniac, until at last I could hardly reach the surface of the soil when standing at the bottom of the hole. Once, as I threw up a spadeful of mould, it knocked the lantern over; and in an agony of fear at being left in darkness in that dreadful place, I leapt out and saved the light in time. There was a ladder standing at the head of the grave, and resting against a beam in the low roof. When I had finished

digging, methought I mounted it, and passed through a trap door into a light and spacious room above—the studio of a photographer—with a slanting glazed roof, and a monstrous camera at one end, upon a heavy stand, pointed—at what do you suppose? My picture of Andromeda! At the sight of it I seemed to burn with the desire for vengeance upon the image which I had so vividly depicted on the canvas. Methought I went up to her—took from my pocket a half empty bottle of cyanide—poured the contents into her mouth—and then retired to the far end of the gallery to watch the result. The eyes of the figure soon began to roll frightfully, the mouth to foam, and the confined limbs to strain with agony at their iron fastenings. But this was soon over, for cyanide, unlike all other poisons, kills at once. Andromeda was dead. I went up to her again—cut her out of the picture with my pocket knife—lowered her, stark and rigid, into the grave which I had dug—heaped the damp mould upon her—and mounted again to the studio.

“ A thousand eyes seemed now to glare upon me. Eyes which peered at me through the glass roof—from behind the background, the

curtain, the pedestal, the bit of balustrade—and through every crack and cranny. I was discovered. My dark deed had been watched. There were witnesses innumerable of my murder of Andromeda. Presently the door opened, and a troop of French gens d'armes walked in and took me prisoner. They dragged me off at once to execution, without judge or jury, and amidst the hoots of an infuriated mob. I was led under the tall frame of a guillotine—strapped tightly to an upright board which revolved about an axle through its centre—turned over suddenly into a horizontal position, with my face downwards, and my eyes looking into the basket which was to receive in another instant my severed head—and left lying with my neck under the falling knife—when in the midst of that horror I awoke! Merciful powers, defend me from the agony of another such dream. Happily I may banish it from my mind, and think no more of it, for it was contradicted afterwards by one of happier omen which I will presently relate. Besides, we must not suppose that *all* dreams are prophetic; on the contrary, there are very few which are so. False prophecies and false dreams are infinitely more

common than true ones ; but the true ones, when they do occur, have marks of vivid reality about them which you cannot mistake. You remember them with all the force of facts which have become part of your real knowledge. Such dreams are photographed upon the retina of your mind in indelible ink—the others being a mere flashing impression, which has no chemical or graphic power, so to speak—the nature of the ethereal undulations being altogether different. My dream of the Andromeda, horrible as it was, is already fast fading from my mind, and in another week will be forgotten. It was, perhaps, after all, but the embodiment during sleep of a waking thought of vengeance.

“And now for Dream the third.

“Methought I was in my yacht's dingey, with one of my faithful Greeks rowing me on board. There lay my lovely EIONE, moored in the middle of a narrow French river, having lofty hills on each side. A little higher up the stream was a picturesque old town, with buildings piled one above the other in tiers upon the côtel; and a quay, lined with chasse-marées, barges, cutters, and brigs. There was also a boulevard, with fine old elms; and an

elegant suspension bridge; while below where she was lying was a tall railway viaduct thrown across the stream. So vividly are all these strange objects impressed upon my memory, that although I have never seen that town before, and do not know its name, yet I shall recognise every feature the moment I do see it—as I shall some day. Well; the dingey was rowed alongside, and I stepped on board the yacht in haste, dived into my cabin, and hunted here, there, everywhere, for a fair girl whom I had made my wife. But she was not there. She was nowhere to be found. Methought her name was Lurline, and that I had culled the fair flower in some tropical island of the West. I loved her, and she was gone. *You* had played me false. *You*, whom I had left in charge of that idol of my soul, had robbed me of her and eloped. *You*, whom I trusted, had robbed me of my wife. I foamed with rage, and could have killed you on the spot. The crew pleaded for you, but in vain. I returned to shore, to hunt you down, and find you out in the remotest corner of the earth, and wreak my vengeance upon you; and in that paroxysm of fury I awoke.

“But the spirit of evil forebodings which had tormented me in the three dreams which I have described now spread his dark wings and fled, leaving my brain free to the benign influences of happier undulations. I fell asleep once more, and my fourth dream was a vision of heaven itself—or better still, a vision of such a heaven as this earth becomes when love and goodness have their way. You were present again, Mark, in this dream; and I am certain it is prophetic.

“Methought I was hurrying through Paris streets in search of my lost Lurline. It was a bright summer's morn; and never did that gay city, with its lively crowd of holiday seekers, its smart shops, tall houses, broad boulevards, and mirrored cafés, look more real than it did in that dream. Not only were the sights a reality, but the sounds also, and even the very smells. The vision was perfect in all points. It was a photograph, as I said before, stamped upon the mental retina with the indelible impress of a real fact. The other dreams were but ghosts of a truth compared with this. Mark my words. What I am about to tell you will infallibly come true.

“Well; eagerly prying into every face I met,



peering into every vehicle, scanning closely every form that flitted past me, I hurried along in search of my lost Lurline—through the Rue St. Honoré, the Rue de Rivoli, the Palais Royal, the Place du Louvre, over the Pont Neuf, and on to the Quai de la Mégisserie. At last, oh happiness, I saw coming out of an open doorway on that Quai my lost treasure. She was leaning on the arm of a tall Englishman, of middle age, with an immense white beard, white curly hair, and a face bronzed with travel in sunnier climes. Behind them followed a pair of youthful lovers, also arm in arm, whose happy faces shed a radiance around. You, Mark, were one of them; and that fair girl, whose portrait I saw in the locket you gave me last night, was your companion. I will not tell you how you too were dressed; it is enough to say that you were happy. I rushed up to this most pleasing group; and my own beloved one, on seeing me, screamed with joy, and flew into my arms. Like Dante gazing into the eyes of his Beatrice, I gazed fondly into *her* eyes, and like the enraptured poet found myself at once in heaven. At last I had become the object of unselfish love; and in the ecstasy of that new feeling I awoke!

“ I cannot write more. Time presses. It is now past eight, and the train starts at ten. Go, Mark, at once to London with Giovanna ; and send John back with a line to me to say that you have got the cheque safe, and that you understand my letter of instructions with respect to her. Leave her with Anthony—deposit your money in safety at the Bank, and arrange that matter precisely according to my instructions—and come back here to-night. All will be ready for your reception ; and I shall expect you with the lively impatience with which one awaits a messenger of good.

“ One word more. That wretched girl has been attempting to rob me. Poor deluded fool ! She little thought those jewels are a sham—made from a soft mineral which I picked up in the East, and had polished and mounted, but of such high refractive power as to puzzle even good judges of a diamond. The setting, however, is of gold, and worth something. She has been boring through the wall to get at them from behind ; and I dare say Adolphe was her accomplice. But the joke was capital. I feigned a tender parting—spoke of her good nature and cleverness—and made her a present of the

coveted jewels, as a provision for life. I never saw a human being look so sheepish as she did when she took them, and bade me adieu. Watch her closely on the journey, and tell me all that occurs. I need not add, mind that she doesn't lose her small ebony box."

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The town clocks began to chime the half-hour as Mark finished reading the above wild effusion; and he called for writing materials at once, and answered it briefly as follows:—

"It is half-past nine, and I have only just time to thank you, my strange friend, most sincerely for your letter and its enclosure, and to say that the cheque is now safe in my own pocket again, and not likely, I think, to be transferred a second time to yours. To be candid, I was rather down in the mouth just now at having parted with it, and I am deuced glad to see it come back. I don't think I shall cry off our bargain again in a hurry; but try and do my part of it like a brick. As for your dreams they were stunning, and I blessed them from the bottom of my heart; but with respect to their prophetic character, that, as

well as your undulatory hypothesis, I am sceptical about; and inclined to think—forgive the word—bosh! My cutting away with your beautiful Lurline was a capital idea, and I will bear it in mind; but I don't think I shall be eloping to-day with Giovanna, for she is sitting there in the fly, looking as sulky as a bear with a sore head. I suppose you have been giving her a parting blessing. She shall go straight to Anthony, I promise you, under my escort; if rail, steam, and horseflesh permit. But please don't expect me to-night, for I want to run in and see the Fanos, as I hav' n't been near them for a couple of months. The story of *Xenosthes redivivus*, living in an old tumble-down house—with an Italian girl to help him in his photography—a prize-fighter for a footman—and a cunning old French cook, who can stick men with his rapier as neatly as he can spit a pullet—will amuse a certain fair lady immensely, I know; but I shall be careful to humour the story a little in parts, so as to make it sound proper to ears polite.

“Remember, my promised change of quarters to the Clarendon, and the berth on board the *EIONE* are to come next—and I don't care how

soon, for the atmosphere of your old place is none of the wholesomest to fellows with honest prejudices. *Au revoir*, then, till to-morrow, at noon, or thereabouts."

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This letter Mark entrusted to John to deliver to his master; and then drove off in the fly, with Giovanna, to the station. The young lady was, as he said, in an unamiable mood, and seemed determined to preserve strict reticence during their journey. They were in time for the ten o'clock train, and were soon rattling along towards the Metropolis; Giovanna seated on the same side of the carriage as Mark, but separated from him by an intervening passenger; so that conversation with her was impossible. She evidently wished to avoid him, and he resigned himself to his fate. He observed that she carried on her knee a small black ebony box, of which she seemed much enamoured.

## CHAPTER 6.

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T O O L A T E.

THE travellers reached London in due course, got into a cab, and drove to a hotel in the City. There it was Mark's intention to leave Giovanna for an hour whilst he went to the bank in Lombard Street, about his business of the cheque; then to return to her, have some refreshment, and take her on to Mr. Anthony, of Somers Town. The luggage was therefore taken into the hotel, the cab dismissed, and they were shown into a dining-room; but scarcely had the waiter retired, before the young lady uttered a scream of surprise, and said that she had been robbed. She affirmed that some one had stolen her purse containing three sovereigns and some silver.

But who could have done it? Surely not John, the footman, as he sat by her side in the fly; nor the respectable old gentleman in gold spectacles, who sat next to her in the first-class carriage? It must have been some rogue upon the platform. At any rate she affirmed stoutly that her money was gone; and burst into tears.

What lad of one-and-twenty could resist such an appeal as this from a dark-eyed beauty of nineteen, already apparently in deep distress, and just turned out of her home in disgrace? Certainly not our friend Mark. He at once handed the lady his own purse, containing more than the sum which she said she had lost; and retained only a loose half-crown for his own use until he could get more at the Bank. The purse itself, however, he did not mean to part with, as it had been made by his Nelly's fair fingers, and given to him the day before he left Sark; so he resolved to buy Giovanna another instead. Thus matters were as pleasantly settled as they well could be under the circumstances; and Mark started for the Bank, assuring himself beforehand that his own pocket book and cheque were safe.

But a doubt must not be allowed to hover for another instant over the fair fame of the old

gentleman in gold spectacles—who was in fact a College Don. The loss of the purse was an entire myth ; and the alleged theft a mere ruse, to get money out of Mark. The Italian girl had left Grantchester without enough money on her person to enable her to carry out a plan of escape from her companion, which she had been meditating during the whole of the journey ; and this story of the robbery of her purse was an artifice for getting more. Not that she would have descended to such paltry deception for the mere sake of the money ; for she was not naturally mean, but, on the contrary, lavish and liberal in the extreme ; but the money was necessary to her, in order that she might effect her escape to Paris, after an event which, it will be seen presently, had compromised her own safety.

The business which Mark had to transact at the bankers, although involving a large amount, was one of extreme simplicity. He presented the cheque, and also the letter to one of the partners—explained his wish that the money should be invested for him in the English funds—and that the Firm should receive the interest for him, under a power of an attorney,



which they were to make out. He wrote his signature upon a sheet of paper; and they took down his address, and entered his name upon their books. The whole affair was settled in five minutes; and he left the Bank, a *rentier* to the amount of that three hundred a year, the possibility of living upon which has been so amusingly discussed of late in the papers. Mark, however, had his own views and intentions on that subject, and looked forward in a pleasant attitude of expectancy to the termination of his three years of servitude, and the mode in which he should afterwards endeavour to solve the knotty problem. Full of these thoughts, and forgetful of all else, he returned to the hotel,—to find his fellow traveller *non est!* Whilst he was at the Bank, Giovanna, to use an elegant expression, had “mizzled,”—luggage and all!

But she had left a message for him, and that a considerate one. He was not to wait dinner for her; and on no account to leave the Inn, as she meant to return shortly. The latter part of the message the waiter delivered with an impudent twinkle of the eye, as much as to say, “You’ll not see *her* never no more, my young gent.”

“Where can she possibly be gone to?” enquired the crest-fallen Mark. “Have you any idea, waiter? Did she leave no other message for me but that?”

“P'r'aps, Sir, she as gone to that Hora-tory at Brompton, where the Fathers take in young gals as cut away from their friends, and try 'em for a week, to see if they 're hincorrigible, or not. If they turn up the right sort, they send 'em off to a 'ome, as they call it, by the hunder-ground railway; and then nobody ever sees no more of 'em, not even their own mothers, leave alone young gents like you. But she haint one of them out-and-out bad uns, Sir, depend upon it. If you put up 'ere, and keep right on waitin', she'll turn up again some day, I feel next to sure. If you hask my advice, Sir, I say, keep right on waitin' at this 'ere 'otel.”

Mark was too much annoyed to resent the fellow's impudence. Here was a pretty go. The artful Italian girl had outwitted him, and escaped. His orders were not to lose sight of her for a moment, but take her straight to Somers Town, and then manage his own affair afterwards; but he had presumed to depart

from the strict letter of his instructions, in order to transact his own business at the Bank before it closed; and now behold the result!—The bird had flown; with Nelly's purse too, which was worst of all. What should he ever say to her? What should he say to his friend? What should he do? Poor simpleton. You thought all young ladies were angels of innocence; and now, for the first time, you have discovered your mistake. They are not all Nellies and Angelinas. Models from a Life Academy, at any rate, are not all models of moral perfection—notwithstanding what Mr. Rejlander may say to the contrary.

There was no help for it, but to do as he was told, and have his dinner by himself, and face that impudent sniggering London waiter. What impudent fellows London waiters are, to be sure! Then he looked through all the newspapers in the house, but mechanically and without interest. How impertinent a newspaper seems when you are full of your own affairs, and don't care a fig for other peoples'. And lastly, as a desperate resource against *ennui* and dreariness, he seated himself at the window, and watched the bustle and traffic beneath. It was

that busy hour in the afternoon, when City men pour out of their offices in droves, and crowd the 'busses on their way to their suburban homes. How odious, he thought, such a life and such a home would be to him. No nature, no poetry, no freedom ; nothing but brick walls, coal smoke, worry, conventionality, and starch. All grubbing, and grinding, and wearing out of faculties in the scramble for money—which, when got, is only spent in senseless, vulgar, inartistic trifling. How he hated the idea of a driving, restless, ugly London life ; and longed for little Sark again, with its pure air, green lanes, and crystal sea.

But his chagrin at being thus detained amidst "the crowd, the hum, the shock of men," in smoky London, on a fine afternoon in July, was at length rudely displaced by other feelings. It was nearly six o'clock, and Giovanna had not returned ; but just as he was thinking of giving her up in despair, and proceeding without her to Somers Town, in the very faint hope of finding her, perhaps, already at Mr. Anthony's printing establishment, a note from the lady herself was put into his hand. It had come by post, and contained the following ominous message, written

in her own tongue, and of which the following is a translation :—

*“ He must not take his elixir to-night. Go back at once and stop him. There is a train at seven, and you will reach Grantchester in time. He does not generally take it till eleven, and you can be there at ten. Throw the stuff in the bottle down the sink.*

*“ I thank you for your kindness to Julius and to me ; but all that is past now. You will never see me again. No one will ever hear of me again. It will be useless to attempt to discover my retreat.”*

These ominous words were written in neat firm angular characters, full of expression. If the steel point which traced them had been that of a poignard instead of a pen, and the paper the bared breast of a foe, you might have fancied, without any stretch of imagination, that the hand which traced those letters could have driven in the steel point to the heart's core. There is expression in hand-writing, no doubt ; and there are female geniuses who advertise to tell your character in that way. I venture to say, that if a single line of that note had been forwarded to one of those ladies for analysis, she might in all sincerity have pronounced the

hand-writing to be that of a murderess—so hard, angular, and cruel did the letters appear—although their message was one of mercy, and penned in repentance.

But there is no need to make things look worse than they were. If those dreadful words had been traced in the most graceful of ladylike scrawls, their meaning would have been the same, and their tale no less one of horror. There had been murderous intent against the life of Xenosthes, on the part of the writer; but she relented at the last moment; and Mark was to hurry home, and stop him from drinking the poisoned draught. That was the plain English of the message, and so he understood it.

What he had to do did not admit of a momentary doubt; and he would have had plenty of time to do it in, but he found himself in an absurd dilemma. He had forgotten to replenish his purse at the Bank, and had only the half-crown left, with which to pay for his dinner, his cab to the Terminus, and his railway ticket back to Cambridge. What was to be done, for the Bank was now closed? He made up his mind to leave his watch with the landlord—take a cab to the Fanos—borrow a sovereign

from them—and then drive like mad to the Terminus. There would just be time; or if too late for the train he could still send a telegraphic message instead.

The landlord would not hear of taking the watch, but left it to his customer to pay another time; and Mark jumped into a cab, and soon found himself at his friends' door. The Fanos lived in one of those fine old houses in Dean Street, Soho; once a fashionable part of London, but now occupied chiefly by manufacturers, whose workshops are in the rear. He jumped out of the cab, told the driver to wait, and knocked loudly at the door. It was opened by a footman, who knew him.

“Is Signor Fano at home, George?”

“No, Sir.”

“Confound it. Is Miss Giulia in?”

“I think so, Sir; but I'll go and see. Please step in.”

“Quick, George, quick! I've no time to palaver. I must see her this instant. Tell her that life and death depend upon it.”

He did not wait long in that spacious hall. George had only time to look into the drawing-room upon the first floor, and announce the

name of the visitor, when a beautiful girl, the original of the portrait in the locket, caught the words "Mr. Mark Levisne, Miss, wishes to see you in the hall," flew past the man-servant down the broad staircase, and threw her arms about her brother's neck.

"Oh, Mark, I am so glad to see you! Where have you been all this time? You never write to us, and never come near us."

"Hush, Giulia, dear, I can't stop to talk now. I want you to lend me a sovereign. Be quick. Life and death hang upon it. Every minute is precious. I will come and see you again soon, and tell you all about it; but run now, and get me the sovereign. Be quick, there's a dear girl."

"A sovereign wanted, and in such haste! Oh, where on earth am I to find one? My Uncle is out, and I never have more than sixpence in my own purse. Who has got a sovereign? George have you one?"

"Yes, Miss. In my box upstairs," said George, grinning.

"Well, run, my good fellow, and get it," said Mark. "Quick—quick—a life hangs upon these seconds. If I lose the train he's lost."



“Are you mad, Mark dear?” said his sister.  
“*Whose* life? *What* train? Do tell me.”

“The life of the Greek! Do you remember him, Giulia?”

“Xenosthes? Poor fellow! Have you seen him lately?”

“A wretched girl has just confessed to me that she has poisoned a draught which he will take to-night; but if I can save the train I shall be in time to stop him. It leaves at seven, and it is now 6.20, and I have three miles to go to the Terminus. I gave the wretch all my money, like a fool, before she told me what she had done; and now I’ve only got half a crown left. But here comes George with the sovereign. Thank you, my good fellow. You shall have it back with interest. Addio, Giulia dear. I’ll write to you to-morrow for certain; and if I don’t come back here in an hour’s time, conclude it’s all right.”

The niece of the sculptor followed her brother to the door, and watched him depart, in speechless consternation. The driver turned his high-wheeled Hansom, pretty much as a Severn salmon fisher would turn his coracle upon its heel, and flogged away. The young lady watched the cab

to the end of the street; and then, in a half fainting state, sank upon a hall chair. She soon rallied, however, and returned with leaden steps and aching brain to the drawing-room—there to await further news of the fate of her strange lover. It was three years since she had seen him, or heard of his whereabouts; and they had parted under singular circumstances. What her feelings towards him were, will be discovered as the tale proceeds; but a woman rarely learns to regard with total indifference the object of a former attachment, however misplaced.

Mark saved the train; but it was half-past nine when he got to Cambridge, and nearly ten when he arrived at Grantchester, in a fly which he engaged at the station. He hurried into the drawing-room of the old house, but the first object that met his eye told that he had come too late! Xensthes, not expecting him back, and weary with loss of rest on the previous night and the exciting events of the morning, had resolved on going to bed earlier than usual, and had drunk of the poisoned elixir! There he lay upon the soft carpeted floor, in a state of insensibility; and alone in the room, for no one in the house knew of what had occurred. Upon the table was a

wine glass, partly emptied; and by its side the bottle containing the rest of the draught. The room was pervaded by that peculiar smell of cyanide of potassium, with which all who dabble in the art of photography are, unfortunately, but too familiar.

## CHAPTER 7.

## REVENGE.

XENOSTHES was lying on his back upon the floor, in a state of coma—his eyes fixed, and the pupils dilated—his mouth covered with foam—his limbs twitching convulsively—and his breast heaving at intervals with irregular breathing. Such are the symptoms of poisoning by cyanide of potassium, or prussic acid, if taken in insufficient quantity to destroy life at once; for there is no poison which acts so energetically and instantaneously as this, when a fatal dose is taken. To think of administering an antidote with any hope of good effect is absurd, for long before an antidote could act, even supposing the patient able to swallow it, the blood becomes

contaminated, and if the dose has been sufficient the patient drops down dead. If the poison has been taken in too small a dose to prove fatal at once, the treatment consists in sponging the head and spine with cold water, holding ammonia to the nostrils, and applying friction to the limbs. In the present case the dose taken had been small ; for the poisoned man had perceived, almost as soon as the liquor touched his lips, from its peculiar taste and smell, that it contained cyanide, and he had put down the glass before drinking one-fourth part of its contents. Still he had not had time to stagger to the door and shout for help, or to apply his mouth to the tube in the wall and call for his faithful Adolphe. On his way thither he reeled and fell ; and Mark found him in the condition which I have described. But he was still alive ; and whilst there is life there is hope.

When the fly drove up to the front door, the unusual sound of wheels at that hour disturbed the Marquis and Mrs. Brown from their rubber at double dummy ; and they hurried into the hall, to be met by Mark at the drawing-room door calling to them loudly for help. At the

sight of the master of the house lying upon his back, foaming, gasping, and insensible, Mrs. Brown wrung her fat hands in affected horror ; and the little Frenchman gazed at the prostrate body of the poisoned man with a singular expression of concern, in which, however, pity had no part. It was evident to Mark, at the first glance at this exquisite pair, that no real sympathy for the sufferer was felt by either of them, and that he could not himself rely upon any but lukewarm assistance of theirs. The bearing which their master's probable death might have on their own private interests was occupying their thoughts much more than the best means of restoring him to life ; and what had to be done Mark quickly perceived would devolve upon *him*. That wholesome sympathy which one fellow creature ought instinctively to feel for another in distress is deadened by a life of unscrupulous selfishness ; and a rogue is not to be trusted in any of the relations of life.

Mark despatched the flyman at once for a Doctor, and then proceeded to apply to the body of the poisoned man the treatment which I have described ; the other two inmates of the house, so far from offering any assistance, opposing

him all they could by ill-timed remarks on the impropriety and inutility of taking any such steps until the Doctor arrived. Happily, however, amongst the instruction which he had received at King's College, had been the modes of treatment of persons poisoned by any of the deadly substances which are so commonly and so carelessly used by photographers; and he distinctly remembered the course to be adopted on an occasion like the present.

The prize-fighting footman, as well as his wife, who lived on the premises and did the rough work of the house, assisted Mark with readiness and alacrity. On the very first application of the cold douche to the head, and curved spine of Xenosthes, consciousness was restored; and when the Doctor arrived, he not only approved highly of the treatment which had been employed, but expressed his confident opinion that it had saved the life of the patient—who was, in fact, so far recovered as to be then out of danger. They carried him up to bed, and in the course of a few minutes he fell into a doze. The Doctor then left, with a promise to return at six the next morning; and with an assurance that all immediate danger

from the effects of the poison was past. Mark then took his seat by the bedside of his friend, and watched through the hours of darkness, until the morning light streamed into the room ; and then he, too, overpowered by weariness, fell asleep across his chair.

But he had not been the only watcher of that helpless figure by his side. A pair of wicked old grey eyes had been peeping for some time through the half open door ; and the Marquis now perceived that his opportunity had come. He crept stealthily into the room, and went to the *escritoir*. The jewel case was gone, but the deeds were still there. That he had previously discovered ; and now his object was to solve the mystery of the disappearance of the jewels. Had their owner secreted them in some safer place ; and if so, where ? Or had his darling niece laid her little white thievish hands upon them and played her too confiding Uncle a trick ? What had become of the black ebony box, with its brilliant sparklers, by means of which the old *château* on the Blavet was to be restored, and its owner reinstated in his rights ? He crept noiselessly about the room, and hunted in every nook and corner, but the small black box was



nowhere to be found ; and what made matters worse, was the certainty that Xenosthes had now discovered the hole in the wall. At length, after a fruitless search, and satisfied that the box was not there, he left ; but in passing the bed he stooped over the sleeper and shook his bony fist in his face ! Thus, the first of the four dreams recorded in a previous chapter came true *in part*. A stress is laid upon the words *in part*, because the invariable want of *complete* coincidence between a dream and the truth, in all its details, sufficiently proves that these apparently prophetic visions in sleep, remarkable as they no doubt sometimes are, have *not* their origin in the supernatural. The writer of this tale, compelled, as every novelist must be at times, to put into the mouths of his characters opinions in which he does not himself agree, takes this opportunity of expressing his own entire scepticism in what is called the "Spiritual World," and the interference of spirits in mundane affairs. He is not a believer in the Davenport Brothers, or a subscriber to the "Spiritual Magazine."

The reader will almost have anticipated what has now to be told concerning the poisoned draught. During the night which preceded her

departure from the old house, Giovanna groped her way in the dark into the photographic room, —procured a lump of cyanide of potassium from a bottle containing a pound, or more, which stood on a shelf in a well-known place,—carried it gingerly between the tips of her thumb and finger into the drawing-room,—and, by the faint light of the embers of the fire, found the bottle of elixir, and dropped the lump in !

What the feelings of the wretched girl may have been after this foul deed who can attempt to pourtray ? Did her woman's heart beat at its usual pace as she crept back along the hall and passages to her own room ? Did her knees knock together ? Did her bosom heave and pant ? Did her feet tremble as they pressed the polished stairs ? I cannot say. But this much is certain, that when safe back in her own room again, she dipped her guilty hand in water,—washed and dried it well, in order that no poisonous contamination might hurt *herself*,—and then lay down to sleep. Nevertheless, the next morning, the unexpected present of jewels, which she supposed to be real and of great value, softened her heart ; and ignorant of the farce which had been played upon her, in the

present of things which were really of no value, she relented, and resolved to spare the life which she had intended to take. Hence the letter which she had written to Mark in the afternoon, in order to prevent mischief. For three years that wretched girl had been the associate of the wealthy Greek—the slave of his passions—his model in his artistic pursuits—and his assistant in his photographic experiments. He had picked her up at a Life Academy; and through her had become acquainted with that estimable couple, her Uncle and Mrs. Brown. But he never loved her, and latterly had taken no pains to conceal his contempt. In return she had conceived a woman's hatred of him—although submitting to his caprices for the sake of the presents which were the reward of her disgrace. The end of all this was precisely what might have been expected. He went at last a step too far in his scornful tyranny over her, and nearly paid by his life the penalty of the mistake.

But the first danger over, the recovery of the patient was an affair of only a very few days. If the effects produced by taking a *large* dose of cyanogen poison are almost instantly fatal, and leave no time for any act of volition after

swallowing the noxious substance, still, the recovery from the effects of a *small* dose is not by any means protracted, if proper treatment be applied. In the course of a week Xenosthes found himself well enough to reflect upon and discourse about what had occurred; as well as to take an interest in the means employed by his indefatigable friend for amusing his mind during the hours of confinement to his room. Nevertheless, Mark observed that all his efforts were at times unavailing to arrest the attention of the patient, and that his mind would relapse into a train of thought from which it made him irritable to be aroused. It was the eighth day after the accident, when, as they were playing a game of chess together, and Xenosthes resigned, after making a bad oversight, he added

“My thoughts were not in the game, Mark. Can you guess what I was dreaming about?”

“No. What?”

“REVENGE!”

“Revenge? Against whom?”

“Against *whom*? How can you ask such a silly question? Why against that girl, of course. I vowed with the first return of reason to hunt her up—to drag her from her secret lair—and

to be revenged upon her for all this. I can think of nothing else. I have resolved to consecrate to the luxury of my revenge all the rest of my days, if need be,—all the best of my faculties,—and the whole of my immense wealth, if required. I have risen from that couch, Mark, an altered man. My life hitherto has been but a dalliance with soft pleasures—a silly voluptuous effeminate career. But now a fierce passion has taken possession of me. It allures me on with its red finger to action—to invention—to consummate artifice to attain my end; and that end is revenge upon Giovanna! Her nerves shall one day crack and twist for all this agony which she has dealt upon me! I have sworn 'this oath to the infernal Gods—or better still, to my infernal self—and my revenge against that girl shall be full and deep."

As he said this, in a tone only a little raised above a whisper, his countenance, by its hard demoniac expression of hate and will, confirmed the dreadful resolve he had announced. Mark shuddered, as he replied

"But how *can* you be revenged upon her? You have no direct evidence of her guilt; nothing beyond a dark suspicion; and even if

she were convicted of an attempt upon your life, the attempt was not fatal, and her sentence would only be, at the worst, imprisonment for a term of years. How are her nerves to be made to crack and quiver as you say? You are dreaming, Xenosthes. You are not now living amongst Pachas and Oriental despots, but in a Christian land of law and mercy; and in a land where no crime calls down such deep indignation against the perpetrator as cruelty to a woman."

"You are a mere child, Mark—an innocent babe—a very greenhorn. Do you suppose I mean to track that girl over the four quarters of the earth to her concealment, in order that I may at last bring her before an English court of law, and accuse her of an attempt to poison me on what might be dismissed at once as a bare suspicion without any proof to back it? No, my amiable friend. My revenge will not take exactly *that* form. I shall require no police—no courts of law—no jails, or hulks, or hangman's cord. I intend to be my own police—my own judge and jury—and my own executioner of her doom. The devices of civilized life for obtaining justice will be no rule to me. And now answer

me, Mark. What brought you back so suddenly that night? Did she confess to you her meditated guilt; and if so, how, where, and when? Why did you not instantly give her in charge to the police? Why did you let her escape from your custody? Why did you not take her on to Anthony, as you promised me to do? All this you have never explained; and now I must insist upon knowing the truth."

"Excuse me, Xenosthes, if I positively refuse to answer your questions. If you want an accomplice in your dark scheme of revenge against a woman, do not ask *me*, for I tell you candidly I will have nothing to do with it; and what is more, now that I know your fell purpose, I will shield her from you if I possibly can."

A flush of anger crossed the Greek's pale brow at this reply; but it quickly passed off, and he answered, with a grim smile

"*You*, Mark, an accomplice in my dark scheme, as you politely call it! No, indeed. You are the very last man I should ask to help me in such a matter. The very sight of you now is a wet blanket upon me, and I don't care how soon we part. I shall choose

my accomplices elsewhere, if I want them ; and as for you, I intend to leave you in peace for the present, to prosecute your studies, or amuse yourself as you choose. As soon as I can get about with safety I shall bid you a long farewell. But we shall meet again ; and in the meantime let me assure you that the services which you have already rendered me make us more than quits."

Mark could not disguise from his companion the joy which this assurance produced, however uncomplimentary and ungracious the expression of that joy might be. But he ventured to ask, in reply, whether his services would no longer be required in the matter of his sister Giulia.

"Never mention her name to me again, Mark. She fooled and insulted me ; but I went on loving her still, because, like an idiot, I thought her an angel of purity, both in thought and deed. I was deceived, and there is an end to the matter. This very day I have received a letter from her, which has converted all my love for her into hatred and contempt."

It was now Mark's turn to redden and look vexed. "I don't understand you, Xenosthes,"



he replied. "Remember, if you please, that you are speaking to me of my Sister."

"I know it, Mark; but never mention her name to me again. I have had enough of foolery with women. They are all alike. All —. My master passion now is REVENGE. Come, set up the chess men again. It's *my* first move this time, and I mean to win. Mephistopheles for ever; and curses on all womankind."

He put his whole soul into the game, and played it brilliantly. It was an easy victory; and as he said "mate" to his opponent, he added

"I have played for this, as I mean soon to play a far deadlier game; and my victory now I feel to be prophetic."

Mark shuddered, and went out to breathe the fresh air upon the river bank. The atmosphere of that room seemed to reek of violence and blood, and the wails of the tortured Giovanna to ring in his ears. He had read, with half incredulous horror, of the cruelties of a Nero and Caligula, and now he regarded the Greek as one of *them*. How could he save the Italian girl from the fury of that remorseless man? She penniless, friendless, and unconscious that he was upon her track; he in chase of her, with

Oriental subtlety and vindictiveness, backed by enormous wealth ! Surely this must end in her easy capture ; and then for an Asiatic revenge. Her nerves were to “crack and twist” for what she had done. There was no mistake about the meaning of that threat. Guilty and contemptible as she was, Mark resolved to shield her from the threatened cruelty, if he could. That very day he sent an advertisement to the “Times,” to this effect :—“G. C. He meditates revenge, and will soon be upon your track.”

A day or two after the conversation just recorded, Xenosthes felt strong enough to leave his room, and take a stroll, as he said, in the fields. He did not wish for Mark’s company, but went alone. His real object was to meet the postman, and intercept any letters there might be for members of his household, and if necessary examine their contents ; for he suspected every one now of hating and deceiving him. Amongst the letters were two for Mark, both of which he read ; opening the envelopes carefully with a damped pad of blotting paper, and then gumming them up again. The first was in a school-girl’s hand-writing, and was dated from Sark. He smiled grimly as he read poor Nelly’s

kind effusion, complaining of the weary hours which had passed since her lover left, and that the promised long letter from him had not yet come to cheer her up, but only his card portrait in cap and gown. The other contained matter of far deeper interest, as it was from Giovanna to Mark. The writer, in a few courteous words, expressed gratitude for services rendered, and good intentions conveyed in print; but she would soon, she said, be placed beyond pursuit, having got the appointment of lady's-maid on board a fine yacht just about to start for the West Indies. The name of the vessel was the SWALLOW, and she would actually be on her way thither when her letter was being read by the person to whom it was addressed. Such was Giovanna's news; and Xenosthes hugged himself on becoming possessed so soon of the means of pursuing her. He kept her note; and at once wrote to the Captain of his own yacht to get all in readiness to start within a week, in pursuit of the fugitive. It so happened that the SWALLOW and the EIONE had been lying at Cowes, almost side by side; and the Captain of the latter replied by telegram that the SWALLOW had actually started on the day named,

and with an Italian girl on board, as companion, he believed, to the owner's wife. On receipt of this news Xenosthes could rest quiet no longer, but made arrangements to start in his own vessel at the earliest moment.

The hour for his departure was at length fixed. Ever since that last game of chess, and the conversation he had had with Mark, confessing his project of revenge, there had been coolness between them ; and when he was at length about to leave, he said to Mark with a malicious smile, as he looked out of the window of the cab,

“I need not remind you, Levisne, that although I am now leaving here with altered plans, in consequence of a late event, yet I still consider that your honour binds you to me for the remainder of the three years ; and any letters addressed to you here, by me, will be supposed to find you at your post.”

“Oh, of course. I quite understand that,” was the proud reply. “For the remainder of the three years I am to be at your orders—the months of June only excepted.”

“Ah, I remember. The holidays. The months of June, confound them. But the remaining months?”

“Are yours, of course, for all *honourable* service.”

“Good. I shall rely on finding you always at your post.”

Mark was too proud to remind him then of what he had said a day or two before, viz., that his services on the night of the poisoning were such as to render them more than quits. He had received a large sum of money in pre-payment of services to be rendered; and he resolved to work it out fairly, without flinching from his bargain, in all honourable duty which might be required from him.

Xenosthes drove off, without another word. There was no friendly farewell, or shake of the hand between them. They had begun to dislike each other. Mark made no secret of the horror with which he regarded the Greek's project of pursuit and revenge; nor did the latter affect to conceal his altered feelings towards Mark and his sister.

And thus they parted: Xenosthes off for a yachting trip to the West Indies, in chase of the SWALLOW; and Mark left in charge of the old house at Grantchester, and with funds to pay the current expenses of the place until the return of the owner.

## CHAPTER 8.

—  
OFF FOR A CHASE.

THE fly which conveyed Xenosthes to the station, on his way to Cowes, and thence by yacht to the West Indies, drove swiftly off; and Mark was left standing by the high gates in the narrow lane, sole representative of the departing owner, and *custode* of the old place until his return. How he acquitted himself of the trust that had been reposed in him will presently appear.

For a few minutes he stood in a profound reverie; and then turned to re-enter the house. As he did so, his eyes met those of the old Marquis, who was standing behind him, and who instantly, with the *politesse* of his nation, raised

his hat. Mark returned the compliment, and they were placed on an amicable footing at once. But let me not be misunderstood. He would have been equally civil, under the circumstances, to anyone; and did not, by an unprovoked act of rudeness, hurt the feelings of even such a worthy as Adolphe. He was one of those good-natured creatures who are instinctively kind to everybody, good or bad, high or low, on the woolsack or the drop. What a charm there is in manner; what a fascination in that courtesy which flows spontaneously from the heart. Talk of repulsive manners sometimes concealing a world of goodness beneath,—I deny the fact. It cannot be. As soon could I believe in a sun cased in ice. I have no faith in any quality which is not kept bright by constant use. Commend me rather to that perpetual good-nature which proves itself by a thousand little courtesies in everyday life. I will take my chance of its breaking down on grand occasions which may never occur. But apart from his kindness of disposition, Mark had a theory, and it was the creed of a bright and hopeful spirit. He believed in the inherent goodness of human nature, and maintained that crime is only

due to a process of heart-hardening by impact against hardened hearts. But the hardest hearts, he contended, could be softened by kindness; and if he had been condemned to the galleys to test his creed, chained by the leg to one of the worst malefactors, he would have relied on converting him, by his sympathy and example, into a perfect PYTHIAS of friendship, and a DAMON of honour. Such are the romantic dreams of sunny youth, when the warm blood throbs with generous emotion, and before the cold lessons of experience, and the keen promptings of temptation, have taught us a sterner truth. As we grow older we learn that men's natures differ widely from their birth; while the rubs of life compel us but too often to moderate our confidence in each other. Human nature, like all other nature, has its varieties and its contrasts, for picturesqueness sake.

I have said that Mark raised his hat to the Marquis in civil acknowledgment of the latter's courtesy; and the act was a preliminary to a conversation which I will now report. But I must not risk setting the reader's teeth on edge by recording literally the broken English of the Frenchman, or the equally ridiculous attempts



of the other to render himself at times more intelligible by recourse to the Gallic tongue. The Marquis, although he had resided some five or six years in England, had scorned to add to his more prized accomplishments a knowledge of the finest of all languages, and that which has now become the most important also to know; whilst Mark, although he could read and translate French with facility, yet found it often amusingly difficult to hit on the right idiom for what he wished to say. Here then, in the common vernacular, is the gist of their conversation.

After the first exchange of courtesies, the Frenchman opened fire:—

“So, we are to be companions, Sir,” he said, “for some time to come,—I as cook,—you as *custode*. Well; such are the master’s orders, and we must obey, I suppose. Fate has made *him* the despot, and *us* the slaves. Heigho! There will be plenty of time for *ennui*. But if you would like now and then to try and banish it with a little play with the foils, or the single stick, or the cue, hold me always at your service. Our billiard table here is pretty good, and in my young days I used to be a bit of

an adept at the game. Three wretched winters have I spent in this pigsty, as you may have heard perhaps, without my Niece; and dull enough they were."

"Dull *here*, Marquis?" was the reply. "You astonish me. Why, no place is dull to me, except a great city; *that* is dull, if you like. Give me fresh air to breathe—a clear stream to bathe myself in—green leaves to look at—and green grass to walk upon, and I warrant you I won't be dull. I won't even ask for books. When I have dug in the garden, and knocked about the billiard balls, and had enough of the foils with you, and the gloves with John, I shall turn to and teach the parish children. I mean to fit up one of the large empty rooms, and start a little school here, and go in at it with all my might. A man should never be idle, with so much to do in the world; it is demoralizing. When one's own wants have been provided for, one should think of the wants of others. I hold that there is a pleasure in all useful work, and that the word *ennui* should never be found in our vocabulary. What say you, Marquis? Will you bear a hand too?"

Fancy, fifty young ragamuffins taught good morals, and how to read and write?"

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders with infinite comicality at the idea; and a strange cachination was just rising in his throat, when a bright thought struck him, and the cunning old man actually tipped his companion the wink.

"There *is* a parish school here already," he said, "and young gownsmen like you teach in it on Sundays. The boys sit on one side of the room, and the girls on the other, with a green curtain between. The master takes the boys—the mistress the *little* girls—and the young men the *big* ones. Their mothers know of it, of course. The room is hot and nasty; a general buzz of voices prevails; there is giggling, yawning, sobbing, blubbering, slapping of faces, caning of hands, and prayers for mercy, all going on at once. The scene is sensational, very. It is a little hell. They are good young men those, with their sanctified white faces, and long black coats. People call them 'Sims.' It is good of them to walk so far, and go through so much; and their mode of teaching is sometimes natural and entertaining. But the little ones suffer badly. They do not like

their Sunday afternoons a bit. The stuff they are taught goes down like wormwood; and their pauper fingers tingle after it, and their shoulders ache. They would a deal rather be weeding amongst the clods, or screaming at the birds over the ripe corn. Their religion has not a pleasant start,—but they are poor, and that is some consolation. ‘Where do the rich go to, my little man?’ asks the chaplain. ‘Hell, Sir, if you please.’ ‘And where do the poor go to?’ ‘Heaven, Sir.’ ‘Which then would you rather be, rich or poor?’ ‘Poor, Sir.’ ‘Then, so you shall.’ Now *peste*, I say, on the hypocrisy and humbug of the world. Is *your* school, Mr. Levisne, to be like this?’

Mark laughed outright. It was very wrong, but the old scamp amused him. He had seen the world, and kept his eyes about him, of course. But the less Mark has to say to such queer fish, the better for his morals—that’s quite certain. Let him leave the foils, and the billiard balls, and the boxing gloves alone—and spend his spare time in the glass room. The school may be all very well in theory, but school-keeping is out of his line. Like all other arts, it has to be learnt. It was an amiable idea of his; but like many

other amiable ideas that good people get hold of, it would only end in failure. Neither the little boys, nor the big girls, could successfully be taught by him. He would only make a hash of it.

But he was prompt to explain his theories, and defend his charming project for enlightening clods.

“You have drawn a pleasing picture of a parish school,” he replied, “but mine is *not* going to be like that. I have some original ideas on the subject of schooling, which I should like to see carried out. *My* school is to be a heaven, and not a sensational little hell, such as you describe. There is to be no sobbing, caning, or praying for mercy there; but a set of happy merry little faces, with ears and eyes wide open to receive the good and pleasant things which I shall pop in. There will be the magic lantern, and the emulation, and the funny lecture, in which they will themselves take part—boys and girls all together, with no green curtain between—no ticketting of one ‘this is a female’ and of another ‘this is a male.’ Let them mix, I say, in their lessons and their sports; and shame one another in their struggle for prizes; and learn

from their childhood how to choose their friends, and their partners for life. As for the teacher, let him strive heartily to do his best; let his little flock see that he is in earnest, and that his heart is in his work; that he is patient, honest, and anxious to get them all on; and then their own good little hearts will love him, and it will grieve them to offend. He will want no cane or birch. It will be punishment enough for any pupil to be sent home. It will be sad enough for him to lose the hour of pleasant instruction. My school shall *not* be like the one which you describe; it shall be the opposite to it in every respect."

The Marquis smiled. "They may tell you," he said, "that I am a bad man; but once in my life, when I was your age, I thought as you do now, and sympathized with what people call the virtuous and the good. But as I grew older, I learnt that this world is not the place for such things as that. They are dreams of the *cold-blooded* philosopher, — theories of the hermit who lives in a cell, and knows nothing of mankind. All through nature, amongst all animated beings, it is a struggle for life, and everyone for himself. Why are laws made

by men of peace and property? For no other reason than in order that property may be protected and peace preserved, because it is to *their* interest that they should be. But why am *I* bound to obey such laws, not made to suit *my* book? Suppose I don't wish to be an honest pauper; what then? The laws of nature it is my *interest* to obey, because I inevitably smart for it if I do not obey them; but *human* laws are quite a different thing. There the penalty is *not* inevitable; and I may, if I like, weigh the risk of escaping it, and take my chance. Why not, I should like to know? Why is it not as great a moral crime to eat a tart which you know will disagree with you, as to steal a loaf of bread from a baker's shop to support an urgent want of nature? Answer me that, inconsistent moralist, if you can. I swear by *Nature's* laws, and bow the knee in humble obedience to them. Look at me now,—I am hale and hearty yet,—but I do not bow the knee to *Social* laws, unless it suits my book. Why should I, since they are only man-made? Life is short, and there are pleasures to be had if one can but grasp them. One set of selfish beings say, we have guarded those pleasures for

ourselves, and try to grasp them if you dare, Mr. Outsider ; and the outsider, who is another selfish being, says I *will* dare ; and he takes his chance. Your school would fall to the ground in a week, and why ? I will tell you. Because human passions and selfishness are much stronger than you think. The world could not go on if they were not. It is a struggle for life here, and the weak must go to the wall, because it is right they should. Goodness may come out of it some day, but not with the present race. There is too much of the animal in us yet. When that is developed out of us your school may answer, but not before. Experience teaches mournful truths ; and one of them is, that a man must live for himself. Fortune and human laws favour one man, but they oppress another ; and the oppressed ones hate, and watch their chance. Fifty years hence, young man, social oppression may make *you* think as *I* do now, and rightly."

"God forbid," responded Mark ; and they strolled on together in silence towards the house. He had never before heard a bad man defend badness on principle ; and he was endeavouring to organize a suitable defence of virtue in reply.



But the ice had been sufficiently broken. Mark's good-nature might be safely presumed upon; and the subject uppermost in the Frenchman's thoughts at length leaked out. He could repress it no longer.

"Ah, my poor Niece," he said, pathetically, as they stood before the hall door. "It was here that *you* first met her—and here that *I* parted from her six days ago—never perhaps to see her more! *Pauvre enfant!* She is in danger and distress. She dared not write to me, for her letters, she well knew, would have been seized and read by *him*. May I beg of you, dear Sir, to tell me where she is, and all about your journey together? I dared not ask you this favour until *he* had left."

Mark had no special reason for concealing the truth, and he had received no orders to do so. He, therefore, told the whole story of the journey, the escape, and the letter, precisely as the events occurred.

"But what became of the small black box which she took with her?" asked the Marquis.

The question was a feeler, for he did not know that Xenosthes had actually given the box to Giovanna. Mark replied quite innocently

“She carried it on her knee all the way, and never let it pass out of her own hands. It contained something valuable, evidently.

“Of course it did; stolen jewels. The Signor discovered the loss of them about an hour before he took the draught; and it was in order to prevent detection that she poisoned him. But her trick failed, and he is now in pursuit of her. He intercepted a letter from her to you, and is now upon her track. At least so he *supposes*. But why, I ask, should she write thus openly to *you*? No. She knew that *he* would see that letter, and she put him on the *wrong* scent. A wild goose chase to the West Indies! Clever, was it not? I would back that girl for cunning against the devil himself.”

“Then, you think she is still in London?”

“Yes; I think she is. A yacht was her abomination. Even *this* detestable place was better than that. Oh, that I could find her. Oh, that I knew where she was. But see; the postman is coming. He is very early to-day.”

In the foregoing conversation the Marquis had spoken boldly out. In the midst of his mean vices he had one admirable virtue, *courage*; for deceitful as he could be whenever deceit was a

necessary part and parcel of his plans, yet he was not a liar for the mere love of lying. He had the pluck to speak the truth, as a rule; and he liked it best. A bold spirit always prefers the truth; and habitual lying, from the mere love of it, is a coward's vice. In any story of personal adventure the Marquis never exaggerated, or suppressed details. You might believe every word he said. He never bragged of his own prowess, or depreciated that of an opponent. There was also a caustic humour about him, and a graphic power of description; together with an aptitude for attaining first-rate proficiency in any practical art which implied considerable natural talent. Such were his good points. With his bad ones the reader is already familiar.

The postman put a letter from Nelly into Mark's hand, and one from Giovanna into her Uncle's. On the receipt of them the conversation between the two ceased, of course; and they separated, in order to read at their leisure these interesting epistles. It so happened that the letter from the Italian girl had only missed being intercepted by Xenosthes on his way to Cambridge, by a sort of miracle—

the postman being inside one of the cottages at the time the fly passed. Had it been intercepted and read, the chase of the SWALLOW would have been given up, and Giovanna caught at once; for she was actually in London, and that letter contained her address. A mistake in a telegram from Southampton had misled her into the belief that the EIONE had already started on the chase.

The letter from Nelly was the first that Mark had received in reply to that from him in which he detailed the strange compact he had entered into with his Jewish friend, and the events of the two succeeding days. He went quickly with it into his own room, tore it open, and was soon deep in its contents.

But in recording this impetuous conduct, it must not be supposed that I recommend such, as an act of wisdom, to be followed on all occasions. I am quite aware that there is often more implied in the externals of a lady's letter than is expressed plainly by the words within. A fair correspondent of one of the other sex frequently studies the æsthetics of the outside of her epistle, and throws expression into trifles. The envelope, the seal, the address are often highly significant, — much more so than the

written contents. The one may even contradict the other; and when that is the case, always go by the externals,—the shape of the wrapper, the motto round the seal, the handwriting of your name. As a rule, it is unwise to ignore these delicate indications of feeling—so touching and so peculiar. I am bound, however, to record that Mark heeded none of these things, in his eagerness to learn what his Nelly thought of his new position and prospects; but tore her letter ruthlessly open, and cast his eyes rapidly over the contents. So eager was he to get at the gist of the epistle, that not only did he disregard all sentimental indications on the envelope, but with inconceivable profanity even stuffed into his waistcoat pocket a bit of seaweed which she had sent him, and also a sweet little flower from her own garden; and skimmed, with such haste as if he took them all for granted, the kind expressions with which her nice long letter commenced. Perhaps he knew full well the entire artlessness of her nature—her entire confidence in him—the depth of that love of hers which knew no fear of misconstruction—and her high tone of feeling, that was above all the arts of coquetry. He did know this; and

he was right, after all, to hurry on to those sentences on which one only strange doubt could hang. At length his eyes rested on them. He was not kept long in suspense. What was uppermost in *his* thoughts was uppermost in *hers* too; and she did not reserve for a postscript what she knew he would most ardently wish to see. Those sentences which, as he read them, sent the blood to his cheek, and made his heart quicken in its beat, I will now quote from the letter itself:—

“ You ask me, dear Mark, to tell you candidly how I like the thought of your compact with that strange man. Oh, it has made me very sad,—it has indeed. I cannot bear to think of it. I have not yet dared to tell Mamma, for I am sure she would be so grieved to hear it; and so would Angelina. I have told nobody yet. It is the first secret I ever had from dear Mamma, and it makes me so sad that I can think of nothing else. I long for your next letter; and I quite hope to hear that you have given the money back again. I am sure you do not tell me all. They must be very strange people that you are with. Do you know, dear Mark, why you gained so soon your Nelly’s

love? It was not your outward self that pleased my childish fancy,—but your generous courage, your high ambition, your nobleness, that won my heart. I looked up to you, and that was why I loved. Do you remember those stories you told me at the silver mine about Regulus, and Damon, and Harmodius, and Callicratidas? But are these great honest men not to be examples to all of *us*? Are their virtues to be no more than an exciting tale? I am sure you would not tell me that. Then, oh, Mark, be true to your noble self, and follow up your high career. Let your loving little school-girl look forward still in her dreams, by night and by day, to the honours which you will surely win among good people; and let her grow the flowers for a little wreath which she will one day place with her own hands upon your brow. Do not take that strange man's money, and sell yourself, and all your hopes. He must be a bad man to try to buy a friend. Your Sister too, what will *she* think? This is something we dare not talk about, dear Mark, and that is why I know it to be wrong. Oh, give it up. But don't be vexed with your little Nell. I will always love you, come what may."

Mark read the letter twenty times, and kissed it as often. Then he straightened the bit of seaweed, and the little flower which he had crumpled up, and put them all back together into the envelope, and that into the breast-pocket of his coat. Lastly, he put on his hat and gloves, added five sovereigns to the loose silver which was in his purse, grasped his stick, and hunted high and low over the house for the Marquis, to tell him he was suddenly called away, and might not be back again that night. But no one could he find about, and time was pressing. Xenosthes had left but a few minutes before, and there might still be time to catch him at the station,—or at any rate in London,—or on board the yacht. So he scribbled a short message,—left it on the hall table,—and hurried off in chase of his quondam friend.

The train had just gone when he arrived breathless at the station ; and he had therefore to wait three hours for the next. At Waterloo they told him that a very tall dark young man had left for Southampton at three ; so Mark followed him by the next train, at six. At nine he arrived at Southampton, and again heard news of the Jew. A waterman at the pier



had seen the yacht get under weigh. They had brought her up from Cowes, he said, in the morning ; and she had sailed again that afternoon at six, with a light wind from the North-East, fair round the Isle of Wight and down the Channel. But it had died away into a calm, and did not last above an hour.

“ How far off is she now, think you ? ” enquired Mark.

“ Maybe, Sir, not many mile. She won't have saved her tide through the Needles, I know ; and then there'll be the flood to bother her. But she's a right down clipper. There ain't a craft hereabouts can show the candle to her. She walks by 'em all like one o'clock ; but she's a rum 'un to look at as ever I see'd.”

Here another man joined them, as a listener. He was a tall, white-whiskered, resolute-looking fellow ; and the boatman soon posted him up with the news.

“ This here young gen'l'man, Cap'n, wants to be put aboard of the HIONE. Where do you think she be got to now ? ”

“ Let me see. She got under weigh at high water—and dropped down with the ebb—and a light air of wind from Nor'-East and by

Nor' half Nor'. That she kept for about an hour, and then it fell calm. Oh, she can't be far off. Are you *very* anxious to be put aboard of her, Sir?"

"Yes, very. Can you manage it for me anyhow?"

"If it keeps calm, I might; but if the wind freshens up again she'll get right away. I'll tell you how we might manage it. I am Captain of the Jersey mail boat, which leaves at twelve to-night, and if you engage this man's Ryde wherry I'll give you a tow astern. She could never get out of the Solent in a calm like this, against the flood, and it's ten to one that we shall find her at anchor somewhere; most likely in Yarmouth Roads."

Mark jumped at the offer, and heartily thanked his new friend. So the boat was engaged; and at twelve they started. Fancy towing behind the dear old Jersey boat, and snuffing the old sea again. What a story for Nelly when he next wrote. Oh, how dear she had become to him—his little school-girl guardian angel, who had coaxed him into doing what was right; and had made a Regulus, or a Callicratidas of him.

It kept on a flat calm; and sure enough they came up with the EIONE at last, with her sails drooping, and her crew of Greeks in the long gig trying to tow her against the young flood. The boatman cast off from the swift mail steamer, and in a few minutes they were alongside the yacht.

“Yacht a-hoy! EIONE a-hoy!” shouted Mark, as they neared the schooner.

The quick ear of her owner caught the well known voice.

“What’s up now, Levisne? What the d——I has brought you here?” he exclaimed.

Mark stepped on board through the opened gangway, and the boatman flung his painter over the taffrail, and the wherry was made fast.

“I’ve come,” said Mark, “to ask you a favour, Xenosthes; and I will conceal nothing from you. You shall know all. But we must have a light, because I have brought a letter for you to read.”

“News about *her*?” he asked, eagerly.

“No. It is all about myself.”

“Pshaw. You must look sharp then, for an air of wind is just springing up. Only give us a good wholesale breeze, and yonder fast steamer should be shown the way along, *I* can tell her.

It's a *fact*. You are now on board the fastest yacht afloat. The old AMERICA, and the ALARM, and the SYLVIA, and the JULIA, are mere snails to her. And yet she has got thundering beam, you see. You shall have a trip in her some day, Mark; but not now. I don't want *you* now. That's plain English, is it not? What the d——l have you come to me about?"

There was good humour in his manner, and Mark was glad. "Let us talk it over in the cabin," he said. So they both went below.

"I want you, Xenosthes, to let me cry off our bargain a second time, and give you the money back; that's all. But it shall make no difference to you. I'll look after your old place just the same, till you return. I'll see that things go on all right. I'll walk over there every day, I promise you. If you'll just kindly read this part of a letter which I received ten minutes after you left this morning, it will explain all."

Xenosthes took Nelly's letter, and ran his eye over the paragraph which we have quoted. As he did so, he smiled pleasantly at some inward thought.

“Well; with all my heart, Mark. If you want to cry off again, so let it be. I will just scribble a line to my bankers, and the thing will be done. You shall be a free man from this day forth. Steward, my writing case—quick.”

He wrote a hurried line, and enclosed it in an envelope, addressed to his bankers.

“You have only now,” he added, “to transfer your stock into their hands, and give them this letter, and the thing will be done. I congratulate you, Mark, from the bottom of my heart, if I have one, as I sometimes think I have. You are free; and you will bless me some day for having let you off thus. Stick to your books now, and deserve the love of that sweet girl. By Jove, it does one good to think of her. But if I let you off you must grant me a favour in return. Promise. It is not much. Look; I shall keep this letter till we meet again. It does me good. It is the one good thing on board. It will bring me luck.”

So saying, he folded up Nelly’s letter, and put it into his desk.

Mark smiled, and added, “I wish it *would* change your heart. Come, Xenosthes, tell your fellows to haul aft their sheets, and put her

bow up the stream. Knock off this infernal chase, and learn what it is to forgive your foe. Hear what Yorick says:—

‘The BRAVE only know how to FORGIVE. It is the most refined and generous pitch of virtue human nature can arrive at. Cowards have done good and kind actions. Cowards have even fought—nay sometimes conquered; but a coward never forgave. It is not in his nature. The power of doing it flows only from a strength and greatness of soul, conscious of its own force and security, and above the little temptations of resenting every fruitless attempt to disturb its happiness.’

Forgive that wretched girl, and give up this vindictive pursuit of her.”

“All very fine, Levisne; but Yorick let his mother die in a workhouse—the humbug. I could write a better sermon than that on forgiveness. But I won’t say that I’ll *not* forgive her. It is in my nature to do so. I *can* be a good fellow, Mark, can I not? *You*, at least, ought to know.”

“I ought indeed, and I *do* know. Although I have declined your generous gift, my friend, yet I shall never forget your kindness in offering it; and if I *can* ever be of use to you in any way, I will, just the same.”

The creaking of the main boom overhead, as the sailors paid out more sheet, warned those in the cabin that an air of wind had really sprung up, and was wafting them along against the rising flood.

“By Jove, she begins to talk,” said the Greek, with animation, as he listened to the ripple against the side. “Off with you, my boy. We can’t palaver now. You’ll understand me better some day. There *is* good in me, though it’s little enough, God knows; and that fair girl of yours has kindled a spark. Stick to your books, man. I won’t stand in your way. Be worthy of her, or I’ll never speak to you again. Good-bye, Mark. It’s a weight off my mind to part with you better friends. But remember—no more chopping and changing after this—things must stand as I have arranged. Promise me this, *rigoureusement*, as the French say.”

Mark promised solemnly that thus it should remain; and they mounted on deck. Sure enough an air of wind had risen. The sailors hauled the boat alongside the gangway—Mark jumped in—and they cast her off. Quickly they were dropped astern, as the *EIONE* felt the rising breeze, and began to slither along glibly

over the star-lit sea. Mark waved his hand for the last time to his strange friend, and then sat down and took an oar. His heart was lighter than he had known it for many days, for he had recovered his lost self-esteem. His Nelly had saved him from a mean act. Bless her—he *would* be worthy of her ; and nothing, he inwardly vowed, should ever come again between her wish and his degree.



## CHAPTER 9.

—  
AN EPISODE.

THE EIONE had been picked up in the Solent, about a dozen miles below Cowes; and Mark and the boatman rowed the wherry back to that place, with the tide in their favour. It was sunrise when they arrived, and they knocked up the people at one of the hotels, and there Mark turned in. A steamer left at eight for Southampton, and by that, and the first train he could catch, he proceeded to London; but with vastly different feelings from those under which he had first parted with the cheque on the morning after the affair with Julius Storr. He now felt not a shadow of regret for what he had given up, but looked forward with bright

hopes to his Cambridge course, and loved his Nelly ten times better than before. What a mistake he had made in her to suppose that she would indulge him in his dream of an idle life, involving the sacrifice of a noble career. What a glorious creature she seemed now to be; and he too had done that which he would be proud to tell her when he wrote. He was happy once more. He regretted nothing. What was the prospect before him, after all, but one of wholesome invigorating WORK, such as Nature's laws exact as a condition of the highest enjoyment of life?

And now behold him once more closeted with one of the partners of the banking Firm in Lombard Street. He was a bald-headed, benevolent-looking, little stout old gentleman, that banker; and he eyed his young visitor with the sort of curiosity with which a naturalist would regard a new and rare specimen of a genus with which he had before supposed himself to be perfectly familiar in all its varieties, but concerning which he finds he has still something new to learn; for he had read the few lines from Xenosthes, and heard about the change of plans.

“And so you have really come to give back all this money,” said the banker, “of your own free will and choice? There is no pride, or nonsense at the bottom of the matter—Eh? No wrong feelings which you will one day regret? You will not repent when it is too late? Remember, our friend has got enough and to spare; too much, possibly, by half. By *him* the gain or loss of that amount would scarce be felt; while to *you* it represents what people covet most—independence. Are you *quite* sure you are in *serious* earnest? Giving back all this money is not a joke.”

“I assure you, dear Sir, I *am* in earnest. There is a condition attached to my keeping that money which goes against the grain. If I keep it I must give up my dearest hopes in life, and grieve my friends. I cannot consent to that. The bargain has weighed upon my mind ever since I made it, and I am as happy again as a lark now that I am let off. The offer was dazzling, but it was a mistake to accept it. I know that now, but I did not know it at first. Proceed with the affair, if you please, and without delay.”

“You are a brave young fellow, then; and

I wish there were more like you in the world. We do not meet such in this office every day. And now let me tell you that I did but try your mettle. Read this note, which you have just put into my hand."

It was the hurried one which Xenosthes had scribbled to the banker, in the cabin of the yacht; and it ran thus:—

"My young friend Levisne repents of his bargain with me, and wishes to return me the money. Please arrange that with him; and then invest the money again in favour of his *fiancée*, whose name, &c., he will give you; and act as trustee for her until she marries, or comes of age; paying the interest in the meantime to her natural guardian, whoever that may be."

Mark read the letter with mixed feelings, in which predominated a sense of shame that he should ever have thought ill of his friend.

The banker shook him warmly by the hand. "I did but tempt you," he said, "and you have proved true as steel. Your friend is a strange man. He has the income of a prince; and to our knowledge he spends ten times more in acts of generosity than he does upon himself. Your fair friend is not the first young lady whom he has portioned with a similar amount this week.

We received similar instructions from him yesterday, on behalf of another. He is a noble fellow, Sir, that friend of yours; and I suspect that you do not know half his worth."

"May I ask the name of that other lady, to whom you allude?"

"Miss Giulia Fano," he replied, "Niece of Giulio Fano, the sculptor. She too is an artist; and that bronze statuette of Justice, upon the mantleshelf, is her doing. It belongs to our head partner, who is a great patron of the arts. He met Signor Xenosthes for the first time at her Uncle's house. The Signor was then much attached to her; but she is now engaged to another — a poor man, and a refugee. This money will be most acceptable to them. He has provided for *their* happiness, you see, as well as for *yours*. He is a noble fellow, Sir; and I hope you honour and respect him as he deserves."

"You astonish me," said Mark. "Miss Fano is my nearest relation; and I was not aware that she was engaged."

"And you will one day be proud of her, I am sure. She has both genius and perseverance, and is quickly rising into fame. But let us to business now, and gossip another time."

Before leaving the Bank, Mark wrote a long letter to Nelly, telling her the wonderful news. Nor did he fail to anticipate any possible objections she might have to becoming an heiress, by dwelling strongly on the promise which he had made his friend that this last arrangement between them should be final and without appeal. But many times, whilst penning the above letter, did he stop to meditate over the singular occurrences which have been described, as illustrative of the strange character of his Jewish friend. That a man, however wealthy, should *give* away thousands with as little ceremony as an ordinary mortal would display in *lending* a sovereign to a needy friend, was oddly opposed to all that experience teaches in the old proverb, which affirms that the love of money increases as the money itself does. In fact, Xenosthes was an unconventional being, and not to be judged by common rules. Nothing was known about his early life, save that he was of Jewish extraction,—born in Greece, and bearing a Greek name,—and the inheritor of immense wealth, as shown by occasional acts of reckless prodigality. That he had lived many years in England was, however, manifest from his

perfect mastery of the language ; and also that he had made a life's hobby of the Fine Arts. Such was the strange being who, within a few days, had given away Twenty Thousand Pounds ! And why not ? thought Mark. Is it not just the thing that I might have done myself under the circumstances ? The wonder to me is not that a wealthy man should be generous with his money, but that wealth and a generous enjoyment of it should not always go together. I wish I had a million of money, if only to show the world how unconventionally I would spend it.

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It was four o'clock on that eventful day, when Mark Levisne stood once more before the door of the Fanos' fine old house in Dean Street, Soho. George answered the bell ; and to the enquiry whether the sculptor was at home, replied, that both he and his niece had gone early that morning, on professional business, to Hampton Court Palace, and would not be back till the next afternoon. They were to put up at the hotel opposite the Park Gates, that night. Mark hurried off, therefore, to the Waterloo Station, and took the first train to Hampton

Court, in hopes of spending the evening with his Sister, and chatting with her over the strange things which had happened to them both.

She and her Uncle were at dinner when he reached the hotel; and they greeted him joyously, and made him sit down between them before a steaming dish of maccaroni, and a jug of claret, which constituted the staple of the meal. As he took his seat a glow of pleasure at his unexpected appearance was on his Sister's cheek, and her lips were ready to ask him a thousand questions; but she checked her curiosity for the moment, and reserved her queries for the moonlight stroll which she knew they would have together, under the chesnuts of Bushy, that night. Her Uncle, therefore, did most of the talking. He had lived thirty years in England, and spoke the language well, almost without a trace of foreign idiom; but a few Italian tastes and peculiarities still clung to him—so potent are impressions in early life.

“Why, Marco, boy, this *is* a treat to have you between us once more—a place you know you are always welcome to—and yet you seldom come near us, or write. But I won't tease you with



questions now. Finish up the macaroni. We have done; it's all your own, and there is nothing else to follow. You know my weakness—I never dine without it; but I am always forced to see it cooked myself. Meat gravy is what I have to teach the fools, and not grated cheese. But if you don't like it, or the thin wine, never mind us, but ring for a steak and some bottled beer."

"How well Giulia's looking," said Mark, as his eyes wandered for the twentieth time to his magnificent Sister, from the long savoury pipes which he was awkwardly stuffing into his mouth between beard and moustache. "I can't think how she manages to keep up that splendid colour of hers. Why if I stay in London only a week I look like a boiled fish about the gills. Coal smoke must agree with womankind. I never see such pretty girls anywhere as I do in London. It almost reconciles one to having to pass through the odious place once or twice a year, to see such darlings."

"Of course it does," said Giulia, laughing. "How could you expect to see pretty girls anywhere else? Dear London always for me. I could not exist in the country. You hermits,

who go dreaming about the fields till you get covered with moss and fungus, have no idea what life is. Women are social beings ; and when you marry one of us, you will be made to spend nine months out of the twelve in Park Lane."

"God forbid!" said Mark. "But *you* are not looking well, Uncle. What is the matter?"

"Oh, don't ask me. I have been about a nasty job to-day. Baldacci could have done it just as well, but they would have *me* down to superintend. One *must* lick the dust to those aristocrats—it's the English fashion, and I've caught the taint. You know what I mean. A mask after death, as a guide for a bust! A nasty job! and they set her up in bed, and put on some finery, and had her photographed as well! A *carte de visite* of a corpse! Only fancy, Marco! Pah! it makes me sick to think of it. I sha'n't sleep quietly, without a nightmare, for a week. I hate these jobs. But that is not all. I have much worse than that to tell you. Something sad, sad, sad."

"Oh, dear Uncle—please don't—not now, I beg," said Giulia, imploringly.

"Sad?" said Mark. "Why I heard such good news about you, only this very afternoon."

“Good news? Where, I pray?” asked the Uncle.

“At your old friends’, the bankers in Lombard Street. You *must* know what I mean.”

They both stared at him in astonishment.

“You *don’t* know? Is it possible? Then I mustn’t say a word about it, I suppose. But you’ll hear some day. It’s nothing. Never mind. Tell me what has occurred to make you sad.”

The sculptor shook his head, and pointed mournfully at his niece. “It is all *her* doing, Mark. I never knew such folly. She is stark mad, and obstinate. It will kill me—I know it will.”

“Oh, dear Uncle, don’t talk so,” said his niece, beseechingly. “I must leave the room if you do—I must indeed. I did hope you would not have introduced that horrid subject now. Let *me* tell him by-and-bye. Pray let the poor boy have his dinner in peace.”

“I can’t help it, Giulia. You must go, if you are ashamed to hear me speak out—but speak I must, or I shall choke. It haunts me night and day.”

The young lady left her seat, threw her arms affectionately round her Uncle's neck, kissed him, and walked towards the door.

"What is the matter?" Mark asked her in a whisper, as he opened the door for her, and showed her out. But she only brushed away a tear, and made no reply. He closed the door after her, and returned to his seat.

"It is a sad business, Mark, this, I can tell you," said the Uncle. "The saddest of all sad things that could have happened to us; and her obstinacy is beyond belief. She is going to throw herself away upon a scamp—that's all about it—a scamp—a pickpocket—and God knows what besides. No one would believe such folly. You would scout it if you read it in a romance. But it all comes of the cursed way in which she has been brought up—and that's *my* fault—making an artist of her, like an idiot—and shutting her up from the influences of her own sex."

"You must be mistaken, surely, Uncle. If my sister Giulia has not good sense and good taste enough to guide her in a matter of this kind, who has? You must surely be under some mistake—the victim of some prejudice. It

is impossible that *she* could ever engage herself to a *scamp!*”

“She has, though ; and cursed be the day on which I ever let him enter my house. He is worse than an ordinary poor devil without a pavolo, and without friends ; he is a common thief—that’s *my* impression. But she won’t hear a word against him ; and talks of maintaining him herself. A precious scheme, truly. But it all comes of teaching girls ART, and raising them above their proper sphere. My studio was not the place for *her* ; proud, sensible, and high-spirited as we all thought her, nevertheless. And this misery has come upon us within the last month.”

“You astonish me ! Where did she first see him ?”

“Why, shocking as the story is, I can hardly tell it you without laughing. She first met this wonderful Adonis, got up as a brigand, and sitting to ——. Some tender glances must have passed between them then, for the next day he was performing as an organ-grinder, in the street, under our windows. She threw him coins, and he doffed his cap ; and for some days this went on at the same hour. At last the

wretch sent her up a bouquet, *bought with her own money*, and with a note enclosed, stating that he was a poor penniless refugee from the Southern States—without a friend—without a hope—and with his bed upon the hard stones. Could she help him? So he was introduced to me. Impudent impostor! He came every day for a fortnight, and earned his eighteenpence an hour as a model.”

“Is he handsome?”

“Of course he is. A woman’s darling; or at any rate, her *beau idéal*. A broad massive overhanging brow—sunken eyes—shaggy black hair and beard—in fact, a Greek Jupiter; and it was a Jupiter that he sat for. There we both were modelling away from the scoundrel, while Cupid was busy with his darts. Put that into a novel, and see what the critics would say—and yet it is a fact. Your wonderful sister fell in love with a ragamuffin from the streets! *Cospetto*, I little dreamt what was passing in her thoughts.”

“Well; what next?”

“What next? Why for a week I missed my hero, and then where do you think he turned up? At one of our *conversazioni*—without invitation—without introduction—and dressed

in toggery that he had bought with money which had been supplied by her."

"Did he look, and behave like a gentleman?"

"Quite. The fellow passed muster well; I will say that for him; and made himself at home—as bold as brass. The next day came her confession to me. She loved; and her hopeful Jupiter is a refugee—son of a ruined planter in the Southern States—fit to knock down niggers, and nothing else. But he has a straight spine—and his physique is grand. He can sing a song too, and prate about Art. Who cannot now-a-days? Now I have summed him up. She supplies him with money, and he hangs about the place."

"Let me talk it over with her to-night," said Mark, thoughtfully. "If there's a screw loose about the fellow, I'll find it out, and physic him, you may depend. If not, why let her please herself. She is not a fool. I know no one whose good sense and good taste I would sooner trust."

"Fudge," said the sculptor. "She has no sense at all, or taste either. To think that it should come to this!"

Here the conversation dropped. The Uncle lighted a cigarette, paced the room for some time,

then flung himself upon a sofa, and became lost in thought. Mark sat at a window until it was nearly dark, expecting every instant his sister to return; and at length the waiter brought him a little note from her to say that she was ready for a stroll. He joined her at once, and they proceeded together to the Park.

The young sculptress was no ordinary girl, either in person or in mind, but beautiful as a Muse, and eccentric as a beauty and a genius may be. In figure she was about the middle height, and in complexion a brunette, with black hair and eyes, and that classic contour of face, and pride of glance, which you may still see amongst the Roman women in Trastevere, or amongst the females in the Island of Capri, where almost every one is a poet's dream. But her beauty was Italian, and not English; and a nice observer might already detect, even at nineteen, a tendency to that *embonpoint* which most Italian beauties acquire in after life. Her figure, however, was still graceful and elastic; and with those finely-turned extremities, and that luxuriant growth of soft curly hair, which indicate the highest present development towards that more perfect beauty which *we* shall never



see, but which *may* be realised in the time to come. Unlike her Uncle, who was brusque and blunt in manner, she was to strangers cold and self-possessed ; though proportionally cordial towards her esteemed friends, and warm and affectionate to those she loved. An enthusiast in matters of Art, and with the ambition as well as the talent and perseverance to excel, she had adopted that unusual branch for a lady, which her Uncle's profession had brought more immediately beneath her eye ; and the mechanical drudgery she had already overcome. But this devotion to sculpture had thrown her much into the society of artists of the other sex, while it had debarred her from the usual intercourse with her own ; and the result was, that a natural independence of spirit, and self-reliance in matters of taste had been allowed to develop themselves into eccentricities both of dress and manner, which some of her female friends regarded with regret. Still, her peculiarities were so artistic and unaffected, and so free from silly vanity, that you not only soon learned to reconcile yourself to them, but almost to approve ; and whilst actually in her society, you felt that she was one who might be trusted with the privilege

of doing as she liked, without any other guides than her own correctness of perception, and purity of taste. There is perhaps no higher test of fine qualities of mind than the power to be eccentric gracefully, and without giving offence; and this art the young sculptress most assuredly possessed.

Her Uncle was cast in a commoner mould, and was neither remarkable for good looks, nor for a high order of mind. He was thin and careworn in face, with a restless spirit, which was wearing out his frame; and his eminence in his profession had been reached more by dint of hard work and perseverance, than of innate genius, and aptitude for art. Still he had enough taste and common sense to avoid committing glaring mistakes; and the frank and fearless manner in which he dogmatized on matters of Art went down with many for a profundity of judgment, and an originality which he certainly did not possess. He had also been taken by the hand in early life, and pushed along; and being one of those who pull *with* the tide, and never against it—besides being conscientiously fastidious in the high finish of his works—he had got on. But he was not rich; having been

afflicted always by that inordinate greed of wealth, which impels a man to speculate and gamble in matters which he does not understand. Hence numerous heavy losses, which had pulled him back. The works of an artist of his calibre are necessarily mannered, and without the stamp of true genius—that heaven-born inspiration which appears to conceive and execute at a dash; and the labour which they had consumed was apparent in every feature and every fold; while it is in the *concealment* of labour that true art consists. The idea of laborious finish should never be suggested to the mind of the beholder. And yet, think not when you gaze upon a fine work of art, that there has been no mental toil, or that the execution has been rapid and precise. It is not always so—and most frequently *not* so. Those who know best assure you that it is not. The late Mr. J. W. M. Turner once told the writer of this tale that the profession of an artist was the most laborious on earth; and that some of his wildest and most sketchy productions were amongst his most deeply-studied works. To appear to have sprung spontaneously from a prodigality of thought and feeling, and to have been executed at a dash, is

what every true artist desires to realize in his works ; but he knows, to his cost, that much elaborate and patient study are involved in such a result. But although Signor Fano was not a genius by nature, and had bowed the knee to mammon, and sacrificed the high aspirations of his youth, yet his works were above mediocrity, and he bestowed on them that careful finish which his reputation demanded, as a matter of course.

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As handsome a pair, as you often see, were strolling together that night, arm in arm, by the light of the full moon, beneath the splendid avenue of limes and chesnuts which crosses Bushy Park in a straight line from the quiet village of Teddington at one end, to the entrance of the Palace Gardens at Hampton Court, at the other. They were engaged in earnest conversation ; and as they paced backwards and forwards along the whole length of that noble walk, they seemed equally regardless of fatigue, of the hour, and of a cold drenching mist that filled the air.

“I candidly admit, Mark,” said the lady, “that all which my Uncle has told you about my poor Herman is correct, because he had it

from myself; except that he is a scamp—which I *know* is false. How *can* you be so incredulous? Do you think me quite a goose? No. If *he* is not the soul of honour and of truth, then I will put no more faith in man. He is poor and unfortunate; and in this country, that alone is held to be a crime—as he rightly says.”

“We Britons *do* swear by success and respectability, true enough,” replied her brother; “but what else *can* we swear by, Giulia dear?”

“By our own judgment of character, as shown in the face, the voice, the gesture, the every external act. A scamp does not walk erect—he does not look you boldly in the face—he quails at the sound of his own voice—he is alarmed at every shadow. A scamp does not glow with generous emotion—he has no soul for the pure and great in Art—he shuns, with instinctive aversion, the honest and the good.”

“He is not ashamed,” continued Mark, interrupting her, “to tell you frankly of his antecedents—to explain to you fully his present mode of life—to show you his credentials—and to introduce you to his honest pals.”

“*Et tu Brute?* Cruel brother. Have I no friends? Not even *you?*”

“Oh, Giulia dear—Sister dear—don’t say so, for in truth you need a friend now. You are too rash—you know not the danger you are in—you know nothing of the world—you are an easy dupe. Good, glorious, high-spirited, sensible as you are, you may be deceived by the *appearance* of virtue. Think of my own poor——.”

“Hush!”

“Come, then—we have talked long enough—let us go in—the cold dew is settling upon your shoulders, and you have no cloak to cover them. Let me wrap my coat about you.”

“No, no. We will walk home quickly.”

As they crossed the grass by the Diana Fountain, near one end of the broad avenue, they saw Fano standing by the brink of the round pond, with his ample cloak thrown about him, after the manner of his countrymen, and smoking his twentieth cigarette.

“What a time you two have been dawdling about,” he said, as they joined him. “I am almost stiff with cold, waiting for you. Come Giulia, come, and finish your yarns another time. You ought to have been in bed two hours ago. And your back is dripping wet! *Cospetto!*”

But we mustn't have those pretty shoulders racked with rheumatic pains and aches. Calico and gauze on such a night! You *are* mad, and no mistake."

He threw his own warm cloak around her, and they hurried to the Inn. By the way, Mark asked him how he liked the pedestal, with its gilt statues of Diana and her nymphs.

"Who can tell," said Fano, "whether to like them or not, for who can *see* them without a boat? I had no telescope, and they might as well have been in the moon. Put up your fine statue in the middle of an immense pond, and then ask people how they like it! What fools there are in the world, to be sure."

"But this isn't worse than the fine statues at the top of the pinnacles of your Italian cathedral at Milan. Michael Angelo, and the rest of them, were quite as bad as our English Sir Christopher Wren."

Fano went on without heeding the remark.

"The public statues in this country make me sick; and the architecture is ten times worse. I wouldn't be an architect now-a-days. I wouldn't be known to belong to such a sorry crew. I would rather be a navy, or break

stones, or carry a hod. There *is* something gentlemanly in mere brute labour, because it makes no pretence; but to belong to a wretched profession which is nowhere in point of intelligence, and nowhere in taste, with a vast deal of bounce—that, I say, *is* to be a snob. Look at every public building they put up now—all atrocious mistakes—wretched soulless copies of things that have gone before—without any reference to present use, or present wants. Look at your New Houses of Parliament, down in a swamp, with no grandeur of outline, no good point of view, on the banks of a muddy sewer, and bunged up with piles of straw and squalid buildings at one end—and millions frittered away in niggling details which are already half choked with soot! Oh, it is a shame to see such foolery; and galling to have to pay for it out of one's own sweat and toil. And then look at that contemptible National Gallery, with its flat pediment, and its little dome and pepper boxes, and the portico approached by flights of steps at the sides! Steps at the *sides*! Only fancy. And the other follies perpetrated by your wonderful Caius man, Mark,—a blockhead named Wilkins, and a fine Classic forsooth! Shame on



your Classics, I say, if these are the practical results. Stick to your Greek particles, and your old tomes, and your dingy courts; and dream your life away in poring over other men's thoughts, if you have no brains of your own, and can't produce anything better than this. But Grecian or Gothic—it's all one. Look at the altar screen he put up at King's,—and that frightful screen on the Parade! Why don't they knock the whole affair down at once. And Corpus Christi—and the Pitt Press—and Great St. Mary's—and the Fitzwilliam Museum, with its lumbering attics, like water tanks over head! Oh, what horrors! How can you Cantabs endure to have such things always staring you in the face? A thousand of you up at once for months, and you don't tear them down with your finger nails? How is it you let them stand? And then the new Churches they build now! Better give it up. Stick to plain bricks and mortar, iron and glass. Bald utility is a thousand times better than the attempts you see now. Architecture has become extinct—it exists no more—it is a thing of the past—it is defunct. Bury it, and give it up."

“You used not to like Gothic,” said Mark, maliciously. “Do York, and Lincoln, and King’s College Chapel, and the old Abbey please you better than they did? Have cusps, and crockets, and flying buttresses, and flamboyant tracery, still no beauty in your eyes?”

“Not a bit. I hate Gothic. Sir Christopher was quite right. The old thing has a musty, fusty smell of priestcraft and feudalism about it. Nothing wholesome and above board. It stinks of a gloomy and cruel creed — with miracles, relics, purgatory, indulgences, saints, monks, penance, the confessional, and the stake. Gothic architecture is expressive, and it has an expression which I hate. Let us have no more such lumber of the past. Let the ivy grow over it. Let it crumble into dust. In ruin it is picturesque; but in newness, or restoration, it is an insult to the spirit of the age.”

“But you do not surely approve of the symmetry of the Greek, for a climate like this, and for modern uses?”

“No. I hate symmetry when it goes against utility. Utility first; and out of *it* let beauty spring. You can’t force a style against the requirements of the case. The judgment is

offended, and the effect is bad. Besides, too much symmetry is dreary and tiresome. Long terraces of houses all alike are a horror—they make one's head ache—I try to shut out the sight of them by relapsing into reverie. Let no two houses in a row be built alike—and let no two people be dressed alike. Let every man consult his own taste. Let there be no silly fashions to follow—no arbitrary custom for a rule to all. Let us do as we like, and vie with each other in the *good taste* of everything about us. It would be much better for trade. Fashions are a great mistake. Why shouldn't you and I go about dressed like the Two Gentlemen of Verona, if we like? What a pretty, cheerful, amusing world it would be, if every one followed his own taste in dress and colours. Look at nature,—how infinitely varied *she* is, and what gorgeous colouring! Find me a straight line, or a right angle, or a Quaker's mixture if you can in her. Show me two clouds, or two trees, or two rocks alike. And the animals do not spoil natural beauty by *their* nests, or hives, or dens, as man does with *his* hideous slates and plaster, his roads and canals. He, forsooth, must step in with his *intelligence*

and mar it all. To-day you enjoy the sight of a lovely bay, or a wooded hill-side, or a brawling stream; and next year you find man's hideous villas dotted all about, or a tall chimney puffing smoke into the fresh air, or a stiff mill, or, more odious than all, some grand military work. And that through an insane idea of neatness, and straightness, and rectangularity; and because we delight in printed calicoes at two-pence a yard—and French-polished veneered furniture—and vulgar tinsel—and Cockney gardens—and knocking each other about."

"Oh, dear Uncle, how cantankerous you are to-night," said Giulia. "Take him in, Mark, and see that he has his negus, and goes safe to bed. I fully expect that some day he will sacrifice himself, like Marcus Curtius, as a solemn warning on the follies of the age."

So saying, she offered her hand to her Uncle, and wished him good-night. He held it in his own for some seconds, and looked wistfully in her face, adding

"Would that any sacrifice *I* could make would save *you*, dear girl, from the gulf into which *you* are about to leap."

She made no reply, but withdrew her hand hastily, and entered the hotel.

Her Uncle and Mark adjourned to the coffee room. The former lighted a fresh cigarette, and then, over their glasses of mulled claret, the two resumed the subject which had shed such a gloom over what would otherwise have been a happy evening.

“Do you know anything about this Herman,” asked Mark, “more than you have already told me? Have you taken any steps to find out who he is? Might not the police know something about him? What an infatuation it seems, of hers, does it not?”

“Hush, boy. I *am* taking steps in the matter, and something important may turn up. I had him photographed through a hole in the wall, at his last sitting, when he little thought he came to me for that express purpose, and no other. I moved him into a dozen different positions, and we have got quite a gallery of portraits of the scamp. The police think they know him, but he is a new arrival from abroad. I told you he intruded himself one night into my house, at a *conversazione*. Well; that night one of my guests lost his purse. If he

comes again to-morrow night, he will be watched, I can tell him. The long and short of it is that women are fools, and easily duped by men. They are not judges of a man's character a bit. Read any fashionable novel by a lady, and ask yourself if you would like to be seen walking with her hero through London streets. It is impudence which goes down with them; and they can't instinctively detect a gentleman from a snob. I would rather trust a bull-terrier's instinct than a woman's for that. With Giulia, Art is everything, and the common world beneath contempt. With her, this fellow is a Jupiter, a Mars, a Gladiator, a Demi-God; and she takes the rest for granted. I know her order of mind. Romance, high spirit, self-will, and an artist's admiration of the physique. You can't convince her that she is wrong, and she thinks it mean to doubt. Oh, Mark, my dear boy, what *are* we to do? It is a grievous business. It will break my heart. Poor Giulia! What a vision to be thrown away upon a scamp."

Mark smiled at a whimsical idea which shot across his mind. Send her to Barbara for a year, he thought. But he did not broach the notion. His Uncle rose—paced the room for

some minutes in evident agitation—and then took up his candle, and wished his nephew good night.

As they parted, the latter enquired whether the dear Herman would really be at the *conversazione* the next night ; and the other assured him that he most probably would, as his impudence was beyond belief.

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The next morning, while the sculptor was finishing his job at the Palace, Mark rowed his sister down the Thames to Richmond, in a wherry, from which place they proceeded home by rail. During this pleasant little trip a world of confidences was exchanged between them ; and the brother, avoiding the one unpleasant subject all he could, enlarged upon his own adventures, omitting only one thing, viz., the news which the banker had confided to him the day before, and of which his sister was evidently ignorant. Thus they rowed and drifted down the stream, chatting as they went—through many a reach and round many a turn of the pretty river—past the village and islets of Ditton—the respectable old town of Kingston—through

Teddington Lock—past the Eel-pie House at Twickenham—and beneath the grassy slope of Richmond Hill. There, at a little ferry, they left their boat; and as the young lady stepped lightly out, declining her brother's proffered hand, and went tripping along the footpath across a field, while he remained behind a minute to pay the man (who had walked over to take charge of his boat again) he could not help admiring, as he followed her, the grace and precision of movement which seemed to spring in some way out of a style of dress that exerted no constraint upon any organ or set of muscles, but left the whole frame to its own normal action and free development. But although he could not help admiring the reasonableness and good taste of her attire, and the purity of its expression, yet he half regretted the independence and will of a girl of her age, who could thus brave the criticism of her own sex, and defy the odious fashions of the hour. Still, he thought, this might be ignorance on his part,—for his sister, who lived in the great world, surrounded by the leading men in art and literature, must know better than he did what was *comme il faut*. At any rate, her



dress became her ; and she was an artist, and knew that it did, of course.

“But *how* was she dressed ?” some fair reader may exclaim. “What is the use of describing the *effect*, if you do not also tell us the *means* by which it was produced ? Some of us may have as much will and independence as Miss Fano, and as good taste too, for aught you know—and we might like to take a lesson from her for imitation ; or, at any rate, we should like to quiz your ideas of how a young lady of nineteen ought to be dressed, Mr. Author.”

Well then, fair reader, although I have but little hope that any hint of mine may prove of service to you, I will nevertheless gratify your laudable curiosity. The following is an extract from one of Mark’s letters to Nelly, written at that time, in which he endeavoured to sketch his sister’s dress on the morning in question. See if you can make anything of it :—

“My sister dresses oddly but prettily, and I think her style of dress would do capitally for Sark ; but whether for London streets I really have my doubts. Still, at this season, people go their holiday trips, and it doesn’t perhaps much matter if they relax a little in their notions, and dress more for coolness and comfort. Remember, also, that I am describing her dress on one

of the three hot days which, with a thunderstorm to follow, constitute an English summer. She wore, that morning, a round Leghorn hat, exactly like one of yours which I used to like so much, with the brim bent *down*, and broad, throwing the whole face into shadow. No veil, because oculists tell you that it injures the sight; and so it must, to have a lot of network always out of focus close to the eye. If we had required veils, Nature would have given us something of the sort; that follows, I think, as a matter of course. Her dress was of the same material throughout; and very light and cool-looking, with a small neat pattern. A washing stuff, called calico, I believe—but I am not learned in these matters. It had a border in places, of a chocolate colour; and lace or net in other places. She wore a tippet or cape over her shoulders, which hung down a little below the waist; and underneath that a jacket, and a short skirt, with trousers like a school girl's (no offence Nelly dear), tied in round the ankles—which made her feet look smaller even than they are; and they are little ducks of feet too, and popped into shoes of the *same shape*, and not like other people's. You can't think how well shoes look cut to the natural shape of the foot. Try it, the next pair you have. She wears no stays—nor do you I fancy—and no odious crinoline—at which I saw some nursemaids stare, also a pork-butcher's wife—for all these creatures go to an extreme. You wear a *little*, if I remember right. Give that little up, to please me;

and never mind the fashions. Her jacket was quite loose round the waist, and tied in like a French peasant girl's. All this may read very funny, but you can't think how well it looked; and she is as light and graceful a little body as you are, Nell, and not much taller."

There. If my fair readers can't understand that description, it is no fault of mine; and if they laugh at such attire, more's the pity, I say.

"And you feel sure that he will come to the *conversazione* to-night, and that I shall see him, and be able to judge for myself?" asked Mark, as he handed his Sister out of the cab in which they had been driven to their own door.

"Yes. I am sure he will. Mind you come. We dine at six, and our friends drop in at eight. Don't be late. Are you really forced to leave me now? *Must* you go?"

"Yes—*absolument*. Tat-ta."

He jumped into the cab again—drove to his old friend the banker, of the day before—and was again closeted with him for a few minutes. Thence he went, with some precious documents he had obtained, to a lithographer in Walbrook; and after staying a couple of hours with him, to

an Inspector of Police, to whom the banker recommended him by a note of introduction. With this worthy he spent another hour, and then returned to the Fanos, in time for their dinner at six.

The Signor had come back from Hampton Court, but had gone out suddenly again; and there was only one cover laid,—for Mark. George put into his hand a note of apology from Miss Giulia, for her unavoidable absence, on the plea of headache; and also a long letter which she had received, and which she requested her brother to read at his leisure. He saw at a glance that it was from Xenosthes; so, after quickly dispatching his dinner, he adjourned to a quiet corner of the room, and was soon deep in its contents. George had also informed him that the letter was enclosed with a large packet of drawings that Miss Giulia had received that afternoon; and that another packet from the same person had been received at the same time by her Uncle.

The letter ran thus—

“As I lay upon my bed, half stunned with what had occurred, and struggling back again towards life and health, *your* kind congratu-

lations on my escape were put into my hand, and, dear Signorina, they touched me to the heart. Three years of mental agony to me have passed since that accursed evening, when I rushed from your presence, and, hurrying from your sight, hardened my broken heart, and gave myself up to folly and to vice. Like some foul thing flying from the light of day, I fled from you after you made that accursed discovery; and in the dark side of human nature strove to find relief. And thus have I since lived—with a harlot for my companion—knaves for my associates—no honest friend to lead me back to right—and following, after a strange fashion, what I thought was ART. Then, when the poetry of my nature was at length sealed up—and my fancy only rioted in sensuous dreams—and my vices grew into cancerous sores, a torment to myself, and an odious spectacle to others—I took up Photography as a resource. The poor tool whom I had bought—and who once seemed to love me, if such creatures can—still clung to me, and we made of this new and fascinating art a common hobby; and for a time it was a relief to us both. But that faded too at last; and in

returning despair, and in disgust with everything, I took another downward step. I became a tyrant—cruel, vindictive, morose. The stories which you and I have read together of Tiberius, or Caracalla, and which we doubted then, I now know *may* be true ; for there lurk in the dark abysses of the human heart germs of evil which may be fostered into God knows what. I have gone through . . . . But never mind ; let that pass.

“ You tell me you are now engaged, and that you love another ! For a brief hour, lately, when the Fates sent your Brother to me, I indulged a fond hope again of possessing you ; but *that* you have now yourself dispelled. My dreams too have shown me a young face, fair as yours ; and your letter tells me to despair of *you*. Adieu then, my once beloved, my once dear Miss Fano. But to you and yours my poor heart still clings at times. If there is aught I can ever do to make you happy in your new life, look on me as your best of friends. I have made your Uncle and your Brother Trustees for a trifle, which will be yours when you wed ; and what perhaps may touch your heart more, and remind you when you look at them of your poor artist-friend, is a little

present of drawings, which I enclose with this letter—gems of beauty, which I have collected with care, and which my eyes, in happier moments, have looked upon with delight. But Art is now over for me. Its associations are too painful. Another passion is hurrying me away. *Your* hand might possibly stay its course, but yours only ; and that another may be now pressing to his lips!

“ I shall be at sea when you get this, in my yacht, the same EIONE which you once named. Do you remember the day when we launched her together? Think of me sometimes. My own last thoughts will be of you.

“ XENOSTHES.”

“ Poor fellow !” Mark said to himself, as he finished reading the letter for the third time, and folded it up. “ But who knows what may come about yet? If I *can* help him, I will. How her cheek glowed this morning, when I told her, in the boat, my yarn of the last few days. She loves him still ; and I verily believe he has good in him which she could bring nobly out. Let me but unmask that Protean Jupiter to-night, and his coveted Antiope may be the Greek’s still.”

## CHAPTER 10.

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A CONVERSAZIONE.

THE sculptor returned in time to meet his guests; and at eight o'clock they began to assemble. Two large drawing-rooms, brilliantly lighted with gas, and the floors covered with crimson drugget, were thrown open; and long tables in the centre were strewn with portfolios of drawings, sketches in oil and water-colour, and photographs, both large and small. On some side tables, also, were exhibited models and casts; and in one of the rooms there were a harp and a grand pianoforte. Various designs, mostly architectural, and bold crayon drawings were hung against the walls; and in a smaller



room, coffee and other refreshments were served to the guests. The company included several of the celebrities of the day in art and literature. The guests soon fell into friendly groups, engaged in conversation, or in examining the various interesting objects in the rooms. Mark watched narrowly every new arrival, and at length the man whom he most of all wished to see came in. He was eminently handsome, and fastidiously got up; but there was a something about him which did not inspire confidence; and as his eyes wandered restlessly from one person to another, in search of some one whom he did not see, his glance fell upon them all alike with a sort of proud contempt. He was alone; no one knew him, no one had introduced him, and no one spoke to him, or he to them; but he passed amongst them with a sort of cold self-possession, and a disdainful smile; taking note of all things, but himself a stranger in the midst. As Mark recognized in this man, on his entrance, the lover of his sister (for his Uncle had shown him the photographic portraits which had been taken through the hole in the wall of the studio), he turned to a little fat rosy-cheeked parson, whom he had himself intro-

duced to Fano as a valued friend, and the two exchanged significant glances.

This same little parson was then seated before the identical portfolio of photographs which Mark had looked over after dinner, on the first evening he spent at the old house at Grantchester. Xenosthes had made them a present to Fano, and they had arrived that afternoon, along with the other portfolio of drawings which he had forwarded for Miss Giulia's acceptance. They were the photographic studies from the wretched Giovanna; and they quickly attracted a little knot of connoisseurs round the reverend gentleman. After a few of the prints had been turned over, and examined with lively interest, one of the group ventured to inquire of the parson whether the photographs were his own doing. The query excited a general smile amongst the lookers-on, in which his reverence joined; while, to the surprise of all, he replied, with infinite assurance, that they *were* his own productions.

“Then you must have had a patient and painstaking sitter—or I should rather say stander,” observed the querist; “for her part in the performance must have been at least as difficult as your own.”

“You are right, Sir,” rejoined the parson ; “I had. That young lady is my only daughter, and devoted to the fine arts. She has been my model from childhood ; and long training has made her perfect at her task.”

The bye-standers looked at each other, and tittered at this sudden check on all further facetious remarks ; but after a time the same interrogator of the reverend artist opened fire again.

“These studies are really wonderfully clever. They almost convert me to a belief in the fiction of photography being one of the fine arts. May I ask, Sir, whether you have been long a cultivator of these mechanical processes of picture making ?”

“For many years Photography has been a favourite hobby of mine,” replied the parson. “I took it up as soon as it came out in '39, and I have found it immensely amusing and useful, particularly in my parochial duties. But I have not always devoted myself to picture-making by these means. Other branches of the art have interested me quite as much ; and I can show you something more remarkable than these studies. Few persons are aware of the *dangerous*

purposes to which photography may be applied. If you will allow me, I will hand round, for your inspection, a specimen of a forgery of my own writing, which I have done myself this very day, —if you can comprehend such an expression.”

So saying, he pulled from the tail-pocket of his dress-coat a book, in which were folded two cheques.

“These cheques, you see,” he added, as he passed them round, “are drawn upon my bankers for the same amount, and are dated on the same day, and signed by myself. They are, as you perceive, fac-similes; and to-morrow afternoon I shall present one of them for payment. Now, I tell you that one of these cheques is genuine in every respect; and the other an exact photographic copy of it, in all but the printed portion. See if you can distinguish which of them contains my *bonâ-fide* hand-writing, and which the copy of it. You will have some difficulty, I fancy, in discriminating between the two. Indeed, were it not for a private mark, I should not myself know which is the genuine one, and which the copy. I have brought them here to-night to show my friends, as a photographic curiosity.”

The cheques were handed round from one guest to another, and in time they made the complete circuit of the room.

“One of them,” said the gentleman who at last returned them to their owner, “but I cannot say which, is certainly a marvel of photography. There is indeed vast danger in an art which can do such work as that.”

“To-night,” observed the parson who had exhibited them, “I am going a few miles out of town by the twelve o’clock train; but I shall return to London to-morrow afternoon, before the Bank shuts, and then present the forged cheque for payment. The next time we meet here I will tell you with what result.”

They all laughed heartily, and wished him joy of the proceeding, as he returned the cheques to his pocket-book, and that to the tail-pocket of his coat, from which he had taken them. The portfolio of studies was then passed on to the other side of the table, and the old clergyman got up, and was introduced by Fano to some of his friends, as an extremely talented original, who had a curious work then actually in the press. The little man laid himself out to be agreeable,—bustled about,—and now and then

told an amusing, but rather unclerical yarn, to a knot of youthful listeners, which provoked immense merriment.

The portfolio of studies soon fell into the hands of two or three artists, who were not long in bringing upon the *tapis* the claims of photography to be ranked as a Fine Art.

“Now look at these things,” said one of them to his companion. “People call them studies for artists; and photographers absurdly suppose they are of use to us. But what use, I ask, could you or I make of such things? Are we to fake up a picture from one or more of them, and give it a fine classical name? Or what? The fellows can’t suppose that we should give up drawing from the life in order to copy from such things as these instead? They can’t be such inconceivable blockheads as to suppose that. What then *do* they suppose can be the use to us of a photographic life-study? Is it as a help to a fellow in carrying out a work which he has already conceived in his own mind; or as training for his hand and eye in the mechanical part of his profession? In either case, I affirm that ready-made studies of this sort can be of no use to him whatever. And the same remark

applies to the bits of detail of landscape which they try to palm off upon us at sixpence a print. No. Let an artist learn photography himself, and use it himself as he may require, and I grant you he may sometimes find it handy in abridging his labour ; but to suppose that he can ever derive assistance from such ready-made studies as these, is absurd."

"But they *don't* suppose anything of the sort," replied another. "These photographic life-studies are got up in quantities for quite a different class of customers from artists ; and they have an immense sale. Everyone knows what photo-studies from nature are, and for whom they are intended. The fellows who do them make a scape-goat of *us* ; but people know well enough that *we* don't buy them, and who the kind of people are that do."

"Still," said a third, "these things are very beautiful, and that is enough for me. I don't care by what process they were done, or how. I, as an artist even, would gladly purchase the whole set, if I could. The man who did these had taste, and was something more than a mere mechanic. You get a clue to his order of mind from these photographs, for there is

sentiment and expression in them. When photography is taken up by a man like this, and employed with taste and judgment, I contend that it is entitled to rank as a fine art, because the manipulator puts mind into his work."

"What's all this about?" said Fano, joining them. "Photography a Fine Art; and photographers putting mind into their work! Humbug. Let them put their mind into something else, if they've got any mind to put. I never knew a real artist yet who could content himself with this mechanical drudgery. Knock their hat over their eyes, and let us hear no more about 'em."

"But I thought you tried it once yourself, Fano? Photo-Sculpture, I think they call it."

"Pazzie. Humbuggino! A miserable contemptible *little* humbug; the very worst of all. I could show you the first and last attempt I made at it, somewhere about the house; and it would make you laugh. Photo-Sculpture is the most paltry idea that ever entered into the mind of a fool. The artist has to do the best part, of course. These mechanical dodges don't help him a bit. You can't supersede brains, and study, and careful training, by any dodge of



this sort. The quacks who practise Photo-Sculpture, and the penny-a-liners who write it up, will be found out some day. I grant you that a photograph or two of the drapery, or subordinate parts, may be useful at times in reducing the number of sittings; but to suppose that the human face, or form, with its infinite delicacies of expression, can be modelled by such a process as that, with any semblance of art, is a sort of photo-mania, if I may so call it, for want of a better term."

"But you did that charming bust of your Niece that way, did you not, Fano?"

"No, I didn't! Don't exasperate me, Smith. She gave me that pose, I grant you, after a world of coaxing; and we took a dozen plates of her, which are somewhere about still. But when I came to work upon the clay block which we had cut out with the long rod against the enlarged pictures, the job proved so detestable that I shoved it on one side, and began again in my own way, and in a couple of mornings bowled it over from first to last. You see the very thing before you on that pedestal up the corner. I had it done in marble, for I regard it as one of my happiest works. The photo

nonsense put me on my mettle, I suppose ; and I worked with spirit against the machine."

"And you never used the twelve flat portraits a bit?"

"I never looked at them, I assure you."

"If they are still knocking about, and of no use, you might give them to me. I think I could make something of them."

"You be diddled. I have had enough trouble with her already ; as you may all hear some day."

"Is not the Signorina at home to-night, Fano?" asked a gallant old gentleman, who joined them, as the lady of the house became the subject of conversation. "I hav'n't seen her anywhere. We have had no music ; and without her fairy presence the meeting has quite lost its old charm. It isn't your cold statues that we come here to see, my good friend, but your lovely Niece. I am sure this is the general feeling, both with young and old."

"She is in her own room, ill, I regret to say."

"Ill? Impossible! Why, she is the very Goddess Hygeia herself."

Fano shook his head. "The poor child *is* ill, I assure you ; and she regrets deeply that she cannot appear."

The little parson had now a new part to play. *His* turn had come at last. He shook off the young fry who had been hovering about him, listening to his odd yarns,—and telegraphed to Mark. They left the room together.

That facetious little parson was a detective—the two cheques which he had exhibited were the bait—and the handsome stranger the trout who was to be tickled. The bait had been taken, and the trout was hooked. It only remained to land him safely, and prove the theft. But he had managed matters cleverly, nevertheless. He had first stolen the book from the old gentleman's coat pocket—then removed the cheques and transferred them to his own—and then put the book back again into its place. His hope was, that if the book were not missed, the loss of the cheques would not be discovered until the next afternoon; while in the interim he would present one of them for payment, and obtain the money without question or dispute. But his proceedings had been closely watched.

The pickpocket was already in the hall preparing for a bolt, and was throwing his new paletot artistically about his shoulders, when

Mark stepped up, and took him firmly by the collar round the neck.

“This old gentleman by my side,” he said ironically, “has requested me to ask you kindly to restore the two cheques which I saw you just now steal from his coat pocket, and transfer to your own. Have the kindness to give them back.”

“Sir!” replied the rascal, in a haughty tone, “I don’t know what you mean. *Me* steal cheques? How *dare* you insult me by such a charge, and in *this* house! Do you know, Sir, who I am? I am Miss Fano’s accepted suitor.”

As he said this he took measure of his opponent’s height and strength, and cast his eye hurriedly around the hall.

“Miss Fano’s accepted suitor, are you?” retorted Mark, grasping the scoundrel’s collar still tighter, and driving his knuckles with force into his neck. “Then let me tell you that I am her brother, and that I mean to serve you out for this. Come; give those cheques back at once, or I will force them from you on the spot.”

There was no hope. The scamp begged to be forgiven; and did as he was told. The

powerful youth who held him in his grip could have enforced his threat, had there *not* been fifty other men to back him, collected in the house. With trembling hands the pickpocket gave back the cheques, and was slinking out, when the little parson whispered in his ear, "Didn't you know me? Are you so green as that? You may go now; but the next time I catch you, you shall pay for both."

The fair Giulia's accepted suitor did not wait for another hint, but hurried off. Mark, however, followed closely on his heels, down Dean Street, and round the corner into the next. At length, when the coast was pretty clear, he seized the rogue's collar from behind, and gave him three tremendous kicks upon the rear; adding, as he flung him off, "Take that, miscreant, and think yourself well quit of me; but if ever I catch you hovering about these parts again, I'll knock every tooth in your body down your throat."

The scamp made no reply, but took to his heels, and ran for dear life.

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The above little episode occurred in less time than I have taken to describe it; and when

Mark returned to the drawing-room, the artists were still going it, hammer and tongs, against poor mechanical photography. Smith and Brown were plaintiffs in the case, and Robinson the sole defendant. Xenosthes' studies from the life had been passed on; and half-a-dozen parts of Turner's *England and Wales*, photographed from line engravings, as well as a few photographs direct from natural scenery, were before them. The wordy war was at its height, and the faces of the disputants were flushed with the excitement of debate.

"Now, look here, Robinson," said Smith, "Let these two pictures settle the dispute between us. They are both views of the same place—Carnarvon Castle. One is a photograph by —, the other is a view by Turner; each man, you will allow, a fair representative of his respective craft. Let, therefore, the comparison between these two pictures decide between us. Lay them side by side."

"Well," said Robinson. "What then?"

"What then, man? How can you ask me what then? Why one view bears on the very face of it the stamp of a machine; and the other the poetry fresh from an artist's brain. If you

can't see that, I really have nothing more to say."

"But the photographer has done the best he could. He has chosen the best spot, he has watched patiently for the best light, he has made use of the best means at his disposal in the present state of his art; and in all this he has shown *mind, feeling, taste*. Turner himself could have done no more."

"And, therefore," said Brown, interrupting the other, "the photographer, who has miserably failed in producing a *picture*, is to be accounted an artist, and photography a Fine Art! Because a man is able to make the best use of certain refractory mechanical means at his disposal—and which, through ignorance of better means, he is compelled to use—he is to be accounted an artist, and his mechanical drudgery is to be considered Fine Art. Now really . . . ."

"Stop," retorted Robinson. "Let me finish what I had to say. We are contending for a PRINCIPLE, and you attempt to put me down by an appeal to an imperfect work, done in the infancy of a new art. Let us suppose the art of photography very much advanced in its capabilities of rendering natural truth, in mono-

chrome, like these engravings. Well ; do you mean to say that a photographer, thoroughly imbued with artistic feeling, might not *then*, by a successful use of his improved appliances, and by patiently waiting for a happy effect of atmosphere and light, produce, by mechanical means only, but under the guidance of poetic taste, a *more* charming work even than this of Turner's? Might he not then—and I beg of you to think my question over carefully, and answer it candidly—produce a work compared with which all previous efforts of the human hand and brain should sink into mere puerilities, full of weaknesses and faults? Do you mean to say that the naked truth, in those most glorious aspects which it sometimes presents, is not *far* finer than any poet's vision, or any fiction of the human brain? The question turns upon this. Make it one of *principle* only, and assume the rest ; and then—if you agree with me that such photography as we may conceive to lie within the possibility of accomplishment *may* one day be realized—grant me, as you *must* do, I think, on that supposition, that a photographer *may* come to be justly reckoned an artist, and his craft a Fine Art."



“Exactly so,” said Smith. “You have now put the question fairly, and it amounts to this. Does an art of selection only, with a mechanical means of reproduction, constitute a Fine Art? Or, does the term ‘Fine Art’ necessarily involve the exercise of the Imaginative faculty?”

“In other words,” retorted Robinson, “is an ugly stupid picture, ill-conceived and ill-executed, to be considered a work of Fine Art, merely because it is a work of imagination; while a good photograph, exhibiting an artist’s eye in the selection of the subject, is to be classed with mechanical products? Let us be more reasonable, and not talk like this. Don’t bully the poor photographers. They have a hard battle to fight with the difficulties of their art, and they are getting on manfully. There are amongst them fellows of fine taste, high aspirations, and high feeling for the beauties of nature,—men who have already proved themselves, I think, not unworthy to sit by the side of Gerard Dow, Gainsborough, and Cuyp. Let us help them all we can. Who knows what may come of their indefatigable perseverance?”

The Turner drawings were then passed on; and Jones and Johnson got hold of them.

“Some of these views are dreams of Paradise,” said Jones; “others mere nightmare atrocities.”

“Separate them, please,” said Johnson. “Convince me, if you can, that they are not *all* puerile conceits. I am not joking. I will tell you what I think of Turner. He had an eye for pretty effects of light and shade—nothing more. Chiar'-oscuro was his forte, and he worked it to death. No true poet, or man of sense—and I hold that *good* poetry never does outrage common sense—Byron's poetry for instance—no true poet, I say, would have introduced such silly figures as he did into his pictures, or have given them such silly names. There is an incongruity in all this, which proves him to have been a mere child in all but just that one idea of chiar'-oscuro. But even as mere effects his pictures often want breadth, and are all wrong, because opposed to the known laws of optics. Wherever Turner fancied a light was wanting to look pretty, he put it in, and his darks the same. He knew nothing of that wondrous magic which is based on Truth, and which Rembrandt understood so well, which consists in carrying conscientiously all through your work the idea of one dominant light, and

one dominant source of reflex light. Turner's works are a novelty, like *Pickwick*, or *Vanity Fair*, and people are pleased at first, but after a little repetition the trick is discovered, and the humbug bores you to death. They will not live. Posterity will laugh at them. They are only a new phase of error. The truth will come at last. Creswick, and Stanfield, and some of the water-colour men, are much nearer to it than this jackanapes, who was always too vain to take a hint."

"You are much too sweeping," said Jones. "There may be *some* truth in what you say, but it is not *all* true. There are exceptions. Look at these. St. Agatha's Bay—Simmer Lake—Beaumaris—Hardrow Falls—Vale Crucis—Tamerton Castle—Prudoe—Powis—Blenheim—Dunstanborough—Upnor—Cary—Barnard—Flint—and Windermere and Ulswater Lakes. These are pictures which could scarcely be surpassed. Their beauty steals upon you like glimpses of a lovelier world. Not a word, if you please, against the artist who did such work as this."

## CHAPTER 11.

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THE LAST OF AN OLD HOUSE.

MISS FANO was not present at the breakfast table the next morning ; and I regret to say that in her absence the sculptor and his nephew made merry at her expense. And yet their mirth was not without a vein of sadness, for they knew what a frightful shock her pride must have sustained. For a beautiful and high-spirited girl to have made such a mistake as she had done, at the commencement of her career, and just as she was rising into fame as an artist, was not more ludicrous than it was sad. Still, there were elements of nobility in her conduct which redeemed it from all blame, save that of an inconceivably childish credulity—the

clue to which might, however, be found in the kind of life which she had led with her Uncle from infancy—secluded from the society of her own sex, and an enthusiastic devotee of a somewhat unfeminine branch of art. She had, in fact, been trained to view the world with an artist's eye only, and from a point which commanded only the classically beautiful, and ignored the rest. Hence the mistake into which she fell.

But the sculptor's great delight was to talk about the money matter—that glorious windfall which, by a singular chance, had just tumbled at his feet.

“Ten thousand pounds, Mark! Think of that, my boy! Isn't he a glorious fellow? There's a romance for you in real life! Put a fact like that into a novel, and see how the critics would let out. And yet it *is* a fact, and a most jolly fact for me. Catch me grinding away any more, like a drudge, after this. No, indeed. I shall retire now, and give up. ‘Have the fear of the Lord before your eyes, Fano, and don't work so hard,’ said one of my friends to me last night; and by Hercules he was right.”

“ But you forget the conditions, I am afraid, Signor,” said Mark. “ That money is Giulia’s marriage portion, not yours. Suppose she never marries—what then ? ”

“ Fiddlesticks ! Suppose the sun never shines. You may suppose what you like. I don’t care what you suppose. You and I are appointed Trustees. The money is to be invested in the Three per Cents, and the interest is to be paid to her half-yearly, until she marries ; after which it is to be settled upon herself. So you see she is provided for ; and therefore the little that I have saved will suffice for us both.”

“ You were not aware of this yesterday, when I left you at Hampton Court. Pray when did you hear the particulars ? ”

“ A letter from Xenosthes, which was enclosed with the portfolio of photographs that came last night, explained all. The affair is as simple as A B C. A glorious fellow, isn’t he ? And my belief is that she will marry him yet. He will turn up again soon—you’ll see.”

“ But what do you intend to do yourself ? Are you really in earnest about giving up this place ? ”

“ In earnest ? Of course I am. Why should I go on working like a nigger any longer, at everybody’s beck and call. Thirty of my best years of life have been buried in this dull hole ; and now I mean to give up, and sell off, and end my days in the dear little city of my birth—Florence, loveliest of flowers ! Firenze la bellissima ! Already I see rising up before me thy grandest of domes—thy most exquisite of Campaniles—thy Boboli Gardens—thy sunny Lung’ Arno—thy Pitti Palace—thy Tribune Chamber—and thy Cascine. To Florence, Mark, will I return. Giulia is provided for, and that is enough. My wants are few and simple. For thirty years I have lived for others, and now I mean to live for myself. Good-bye, dull old Dean Street. Off for the sunny land—Hurrah ! ”

Having thus given vent to his feelings, he leaped from his chair—snapped his fingers in ecstasy—cut a frantic caper—and paced the room, whistling an air from the last of Verdi’s Operas. But suddenly a new idea struck him ; and slapping Mark between the shoulders, and looking into his face, with eyebrows knit into a comical expression of doubt and suspicion, he asked

“Is there anything underhand about this, think you? What can the fellow mean by such unheard-of generosity? To portion a girl to whom he was once engaged, and who herself told him that she now loves another! I can't make it out. Is there anything behind the scenes, eh?”

“No, I think not,” said Mark. “It's all simple enough to me. What are a few thousand pounds more or less to *him*? He has cut all his relations—he has no friends—his habits are not extravagant—his mode of life is solitary and unconventional—he does not spend a fourth of his income—and those few thousands were lying at his bankers unemployed. What more natural than that, in a sudden fit of generosity, he should bestow them upon your Niece, from an old sentiment of regard? If a poor man will share his last crust with his fellow, why should not a rich man give away a crumb, in order to make happy a girl whom he has loved?”

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They left the breakfast table, and Mark followed his Uncle into the studios and workshops in the rear of the house.



“What in the world is this?” he asked, pointing to an inverted figure, the lower part of which was encased in what looked like a block of green glass.

“You may well ask,” said Fano, “for it has puzzled wiser heads than yours. This is the first of a set of studies I am making for the decorations of a new bathing establishment. There are to be twelve of them; and they are to illustrate the various attitudes in diving, floating, swimming, and other antics. It is a capital idea; but confoundedly troublesome to carry out, because the model has to be hung up by straps from the ceiling, and can't remain long in one position. The man who won the cup in a swimming race a year or two ago superintends the posing, so that part is all right of course.”

“Photography would help you in this kind of work, I should think,” said Mark.

His Uncle replied by a knowing wink, and admitted that it did.

Mark examined the strange piece of sculpture attentively, and approved of it highly. They passed on to the next.

“Here we have the first of another set of

studies," said the sculptor, "illustrative of attitudes in skating. The Duke of — has ordered a skating quadrille to be put up in one of his parks, life-size, and on a flat area of asphalte. Giulia is designing the ladies' dresses for it—no two alike—and all to be gorgeously painted. It will be a wonderful affair, of course. Muscular Christianity is all the rage now; and Calisthenics. We sculptors highly approve. The old Pagan Gods and Goddesses are going out of fashion, and new ideas are pouring in. Instead of Apollo and the Muses we are to have Boxers, Divers, Cricketers, and Dancers upon the tight rope. People are getting sick of the old story, and originality is all the go. But it is only a revival of the good old classic spirit. I wish I was ten years younger; but my energy begins to fail now, and I can't bear fag so well as I did. But here we are, at Giulia's room—let us see what she was upon last. A bust of Jupiter, I'll be bound."

So saying, he pushed open the door briskly, and walked in, little expecting to find the young lady there—as it turned out she was.

"*Cospetto!* You here, Giulia! Why I thought you were ill in bed."

“ Oh, no. I have been at work ever since five o'clock this morning.”

“ And pray what at, you mad girl? What's all this about?”

“ An order from the Potteries. It came last night. Designs for common things.”

“ A revolution in cups and saucers, plates and dishes, jugs and basons, eh? Well, I thought it would come to that. And what is this wonderful bouquet for?”

“ Some wild flowers I gathered yesterday near Teddington Lock. They will be useful. Read my letter of instructions. Here it is.”

Her Uncle took it, and read :—

“ Let form and ornament flow directly out of utility, and be consistent with reason and with use. Do not copy servilely anything that has gone before, but still let the approved classic models *guide* your taste. Avoid all tendency to Gothic forms, and keep clear of Gothic notions. Let all ornaments be derived from natural objects, and be quite free from conventionality. Be neither too bald nor too exuberant, but steer a middle course.”

“ Very good—very good,” said Fano. “ All very fine in theory, but difficult to carry out. And so you began at once, my precious Niece, and never said a word to me about it?”

“ I wanted occupation to distract my horrid thoughts.”

“ Show Mark your gallery of costumes. It will make him laugh.”

She complied at once ; and as she rose from her seat, and shook back a stray curl or two, which had escaped upon her shoulders, her eye caught her brother's, and a half smile stole over her face. She opened a cupboard door, and a row of small coloured statuettes upon a shelf within were exposed to view. They were designs for improvements in ladies' dress.

“ There's a new idea for you,” said her Uncle. “ What do you think of that, Mark ? Suggestions for a complete change in the attire of the fair sex, based upon sound principles of modesty, utility, and grace. No two alike ; and all pretty and picturesque. Every Signora to dress as she chooses, and fashions to be sent adrift. A graceful rivalry amongst the sex in æsthetics—no more pork pies, and crinolines—art to be triumphant—and we men to pay the piper. Well, why not ? ”

But in spite of this jocularly of her Uncle's, it was an awkward scene, and Mark felt that either he or his Uncle were *de trop*. He, there-

fore, resolved to back out himself, before any unpleasantness occurred.

“ I have come to say good-bye, Giulia dear,” he said, offering her his hand ; “ but I hope to be in town again soon. You know I have got the old house at Grantchester to look after, as well as to stick to my books.”

“ Well, I’ll leave you then,” said Fano, with tact. “ You’ll find me, Mark, in my study, with the ‘Times,’ when you’ve done with her.”

He left the room, and closed the door. The young lady seated herself again at her work—a design in low relief, from the leaves and stalk of a wild flower before her—and for some time neither she nor her brother spoke a word. But the silence was embarrassing ; and as she bent over her modelling, the colour mounted slowly to her face, and by degrees spread over her neck and shoulders. In distress she turned more away from her companion, and bent lower over her work,—while he, with instinctive delicacy, took up, and examined nearer the window, a sketch which lay upon the table.

At length his Sister recovered her composure ; and he broke the ice by returning her Xenosthes’ letter, which she had sent down for him to read

the afternoon before. To his infinite surprise she glanced once more over its contents, with a haughty smile; and then tore it into fragments, which she threw upon the floor.

“Of course I shall not keep that man’s money,” she said. “How am I to return it, Mark?”

The question dispelled at once any illusions he might be under respecting the possibility of her union with the Jew. He evaded it by enquiring, “Have you heard what occurred last night, dear sister?” And as he said so, he leant over her, and put his arm affectionately round her neck.

“Yes,” she replied, “I have indeed. My Uncle told me all about it before he went to bed; and he added, what it grieved me very much to hear, that you went out after the poor fellow, and knocked him down in the street. I hope that is not true. I hope you did no such foolish thing. It was not *his* fault in the least, but mine. But that affair is all over now. I want to talk to you about this money. How am I to give it back? His letter is disgusting. It is an insult which I can never forgive.”

“I don’t see that *you* have anything to do with the money,” replied Mark, as soon as he had

recovered his surprise, and collected his thoughts. "It is to be your marriage portion when you wed. Before that happy time arrives, it will remain in the hands of your Trustees; and when it arrives, your lord and master will solve all riddles himself. Leave that to him, and banish all thoughts of the money from your mind. Xenosthes has left the country, and may never return."

"My lord and master! and when I wed!" said the young lady, with a whimsical expression of face. "Pray what do you suppose my poor silly heart is made of, Mark?"

"Look, here," said her brother, taking up a dozen small pellets of clay, and kneading them together in his hands. "Such as those fragments *were*, you fancy your poor silly heart is *now*; but see what I will make of them." He quickly moulded them into one lump, shaped like a heart, and added, "This is more like what it *will* be soon—plump and sound as ever."

"Now, may holy Mary forbid," replied the lady, laughing, "that my heart should ever be as cold as clay."

"But even the cold clay can be warmed by the potter's fire."

“True. But the fire which warms it hardens as well.”

“Then we must find some other simile for our Giulia’s heart.”

“Suppose we let her heart alone. Time heals every wound, they say; and mine are neither wide nor deep. Perhaps my heart is tougher than you think.”

“Wait till the true Adonis comes. But let us be serious now, if we can. I’ll tell you what I have been thinking. You want a change, and the sea would do you a world of good. Fano never takes a holiday trip, and he keeps you here cooped up too much. Go and see my Nelly for a month. It would delight her little heart, I know. And take your modelling sticks with you, and give her a lesson or two, just to start her off. Do, dear girl, for *my* sake. I want you to know each other. I ask it as a favour to myself—the first, I think, I ever asked of you. Don’t say no. You ought to mix more with womankind. You live here all alone with men. It is time you had a change. Make a friend of Nell.”

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“Zounds and zookers, Mark,” said Fano,



bursting into the room with the 'Times' paper in his hand. "Here's a precious go for you. Read this."

He pointed first to the top of the second column of advertisements, where the following short one appeared:—

*Mark Levisne, Undergraduate of Caius College, Cambridge. You are wanted. Please send your address to the Porter at once.*

He next pointed to the following paragraph, in another part of the paper:—

EXTRAORDINARY FIRE AT GRANTCHESTER.

*A destructive fire broke out, under suspicious circumstances, at the village of Grantchester, near Cambridge, the night before last, on the premises belonging to Signor Xenosthes, which were quickly and entirely consumed, together with the whole of their contents. These premises consisted of a remarkable old mansion, with extensive offices attached, the whole of which are now a smouldering heap of ruins. They were happily detached, and remote from other buildings, so that the fire did not spread. None of the inhabitants of the village were aware of the conflagration in its early stage, and it was not until the flames had half done their work of destruction that anyone in the neighbourhood knew of the havoc which was going on. This, however, is to be accounted*

*for, as it does not appear that the fire broke out until past midnight, when most of the people in the village were in bed and asleep. The first alarm was given by a violent explosion which occurred. A variety of strange rumours are afloat. According to some, the owner of the house was an eccentric man, and a millionaire, leading a secluded life during the summer months in this old solitude. According to others, his name and supposed wealth are an entire myth, and the premises were, in fact, occupied by a swindling Firm, engaged in the nefarious practice of manufacturing bank notes by photography. The old place was not insured, and the most remarkable feature of the fire is, that not a soul appears to have been on the premises at the time when it occurred; or any persons connected with it to have visited it since. The occupants, whoever they may have been, have fled. Some strange mystery hangs over the affair, which the public will expect to see cleared up, and the police are already looking closely into the matter.*

What Mark's feelings were, as he read the above paragraph more than once, may be easily conceived; and he put down the paper with pretty much of a Frenchman's expression of face, when he exclaims, at the news of something wonderful, "*Mon Dieu!*"

"You had better not show yourself *there*, my boy, just yet," said Fano. "Take my advice and

lie *perdu* with us. Don't go near Cambridge until the affair has quite blown over—that's my advice."

But Mark shook his head doubtfully.

"Well, you'll only get yourself into trouble by going, I can tell you. That advertisement was put in as a trap. If you answer it, the police will pounce upon you at once, and there'll be no end of cross-questionings and botheration. Take my advice. Stay here with us."

At that instant, George, the man-servant, tapped at the door, and announced the arrival of Mr. —, the photographer.

"He is early this morning," said Fano. "I must leave you, Mark; but you'll find me somewhere about, when you want me. I shall be at home till three."

The Uncle left; and once more the brother and sister were alone. The latter was the first to speak.

"Oh, go, Mark," she said. "Never mind my Uncle's advice. Be a brave boy, and go."

"Of course I shall," said Mark, reddening at the reflection upon his own hesitation. "I never dreamt of not going—I didn't indeed. There are all my own things to look after—books,

clothes, and what not; besides which, there were three blank cheques in my desk, which Xenosthes left for me to fill up, as I wanted money for the housekeeping, &c. Of course I must go; and I am glad I thought of those cheques, for they have been stolen, no doubt. I must stop the payment of them at the Bank as I pass by to the Station. And, by Jove, I must be off at once. Good-bye, Giulia dear. You'll think over what I was saying about a visit to Sark. The change would do you a world of good, and it would cheer up poor Nell."

His Sister smiled, as she replied "But what will your friend Barbara say? If *you* horrified her so much, what will she think of *me*, with all my Popish superstitions, and queer artistic ways?"

"I'll manage all that. Leave it to me. I'll smooth her down. She's a brick at the bottom, as you'll see. I'll write to them all directly. You get ready to start, and in ten days from this I warrant you it will be all arranged. And now I must say 'Tat-ta,' for I *must* be off, I must indeed."

They parted affectionately; and Mark joined his Uncle in the studio. As soon as he had left

the room, his sister picked up the fragments of the note from her former lover—re-arranged them, to be sure there were none lost—and put them carefully away.

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The photographer had come to take a set of negatives from a statue of *ATALANTA* which the sculptor had just finished. He was a patriarchal looking man, that photographer—with a high bald forehead, a long beard, and benevolent blue eyes. He had only brought with him a single dark slide, and a box of dry plates, as there was a camera on the premises, and a room in which the plates could be changed, as required, by pinning up yellow calico before the window. The statue was life-size, and it stood at one end of a very long gallery, upon a pedestal covered with crimson baize, which itself stood upon a circular wooden platform, so contrived as to be easily turned round upon its centre. Thus all parts of the figure could be exposed successively to the light, by means of mechanism worked by a handle, which caused the platform to revolve.

The gallery had been put up expressly for the purpose of copying from models and figures

by photography. It consisted of two parts; one in which the object to be copied was placed; the other a long dark passage for the camera. This passage was only six feet wide and seven feet high; but its length was as much as fifty feet; and the walls, floor, and ceiling were all painted dead black. The other part of the gallery was simply a room, having a large window facing the north, and occupying that entire side like a shop-front; the aforesaid passage butting against it in the middle and opening into it; and of course cutting off a small portion of the front light. This arrangement left therefore one top and two side lights, any one or more of which could be screened by blinds.

The above plan of room was found to answer perfectly the object for which it was intended; and Mark examined it with much interest, and got a useful hint on a matter which interested him. Singularly enough the glass room at Grantchester had been built on much the same plan; but in addition to the passage, which I have described, there was another at right angles to it, from the end of which the model was seen half in shadow and half in light, so as

to vary the effects, and produce at times very artistic results.

In expressing to his Uncle the pleasure it gave him to see so excellent a plan of studio coming into use, Mark could not help admitting his surprise at the worthy sculptor availing himself so extensively of photography in his profession, after the bitter things which he had said against it the night before.

"These are secrets," replied Fano, with a wink. "Although *Photo-Sculpture*, properly so-called, and carried out as it is *said* to be carried out, is a humbug—yet Photography proper is an immense help to us artists at times, although we don't like the public to hear of it. Look, for instance, at this statue of *Atalanta*, representing a girl running. Of course you could not keep a model long in that position; but with the help of photography you get a copy in a second or two, and that assists you greatly. It is in copying your model in an instantaneous position like that, where photography is so useful.

Mark examined the statue attentively, while his Uncle caused the pedestal to revolve; and when it had been turned through the entire

circle, the latter asked his opinion of the work. It was a spirited representation of the youthful goddess pursuing her lover with a dart; and the whole figure, as well as the face, was full of life and action in the excitement of the race. Mark observed that the features were those of his sister, although much idealized; and as he made this discovery, he replied to his Uncle's enquiry as to how he liked the work, with a significant shake of the head,—

“If I remember right,” he said, “the goddess did not always win the race. She became too confident—Hippomenes escaped—and the temple of Cybele was the next step.”

“You are wrong, my boy, for once. *Pazzie!* Nonsense! Get along.”

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Mark was soon closeted, for the third time, with the old banker in Lombard Street. The cheques had been presented and cashed the morning before; but they had not been filled up for a large amount, as that might have provoked enquiry. A short French gentleman, about sixty years of age, of *distingué* appearance, with pale grey eyes, curly grey hair, and a grey



moustache, had presented them for payment. It was, of course, the old Marquis de Lux.

Mark felt much humbled and annoyed at this intelligence. In every trust that had been confided to him by Xenosthes he had broken down. Giovanna he had allowed to escape—the old house he had allowed to be burnt—and the blank cheques he had allowed to be stolen, filled up, and cashed; while in all these mishaps the mischief had occurred through his attending more to his own business than to that of his friend.

Such were his thoughts as the train conveyed him towards Cambridge once more. On arriving, he went first to the porter's lodge of his College; and there, to his great joy, found his boxes of clothes and books. A man had brought them from Grantchester, in a cart, two days before, and left them for him, along with the following strange note, which I translate literally from the French:

“SIR,—I have spared your effects, but not without trouble and risk to myself. Remember this, if need be, and tell no tales.

“Accept my most distinguished salutations.

“A. DE L.”

“What am I to do with them, Sir, if you please?” asked the burly Porter, rousing Mark from the brown study into which the note had thrown him, and pointing to the aforesaid trunks.

“I don’t know, I am sure,” was the answer. “I must find some other lodgings, I suppose, and have them taken there.”

“Tell the young gentleman, he can have them rooms over the kitchen now, if he likes,” said the porter’s wife.

“Well, if I *could* come into College, I should like it best, after all,” said Mark. “That is, if I am not to be turned out of the rooms again in October, when the men come up.”

“No, Sir; you can keep those rooms if you like. The Tutor has written to say so. The gen’l’mán who had them last has taken his name off the boards.”

So they went to see the rooms. There were only three sets on that staircase, and as they were quiet ones, reading men were generally put there. Mark agreed to take the vacant set, and to keep them during his College course.

“Shall you dine in Hall, Sir, to-day;” asked the Porter.

“No, not to-day; but I will sleep in College to-night.”

“Very good, Sir; then Mrs. Brown shall have all ready. Shall she order in some groceries for you, Sir,—and your commons from the Butteries?”

“Yes, of course. Tell her to order in everything I shall want,” he replied, in that feeling of utter helplessness which sometimes comes over a man about his domestic affairs, when entering upon a new course of life.

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It was late in the afternoon when Mark arrived at the scene of the conflagration—and a melancholy sight it was—one on which I do not care to dwell. The reader can easily picture to himself the smouldering ruins of an old house—the tottering fragments of blackened wall—the charred beams—the half-vitrified lumps of brick—the relics of iron implements kicking about—the scamps groping amongst the rubbish—the children tearing down the shrubs and trees, and devouring the unripe fruit—and the strangers sauntering about, and speculating, with a wise shake of the head, on the origin

of the fire, and the singular non-appearance of any of the former inmates of the place.

Amongst these strangers were two men on horseback, apparently country gentlemen, or farmers, attended by their dogs. Mark had not been long on the scene, and was conversing with an artist who was making a sketch of it for an Illustrated paper, when one of these persons rode up to him, and raised his hat in friendly recognition. He wore a green tail-coat with gilt buttons, white corduroy breeches, and top boots; while in face he appeared to be not only much sunburnt, but a man addicted to good cheer—his cheeks being fiery red, and his nose a deep mulberry hue, and much swollen at the tip.

“What, don’t you know me, Sir?” said the stranger, laughing goodnaturedly, as Levisne returned his courtesy with a blank stare. “Is the old parson of last night so soon forgotten? Permit me to renew my acquaintance with you in a somewhat different guise; and to inform you at the same time, with much regret, that I have orders to put a constraint upon your freedom. You are my prisoner.”

“Indeed, Sir! How so? I have had no

more to do with this business than you have yourself."

The detective shook his head. "You must return to Cambridge with me at once, and answer all my questions. My companion will get off his horse and walk, and you can take his seat; it will save time. Come; mount if you please, and let us go."

And now behold them seated in a private room of one of the Inns in the town; and the little red-faced man with writing materials and paper before him.

"Now, answer, if you please, Sir," he said, "fully and truthfully all the questions which I shall put to you relative to this strange business; and suppress nothing. There is a rumour, as of course you know, that the late occupants of those premises were engaged in the nefarious practice of manufacturing bank-notes by photography. It is also pretty certain that a young Italian girl, who went by the name of Giovanna Cazzola, and who lived in the house in a menial capacity, attempted, some few days ago, to take her master's life by poison. At any rate the fact of his having taken poison rests on medical evidence, and there is strong suspicion against

her. It is also certain that a young man, named Julius Storr, living in the village, received a bullet in his leg the other night, whilst courting the aforesaid young girl in the garden. To this youth may also be traced the reports to which I allude, and which are based on information received by him from the Italian girl, and communicated by him to his cousin. While to all this must be added the suspicions which naturally arise from the flight of the girl herself, the subsequent flight of the owner, and lastly the fire, and the sudden disappearance of the rest of the inmates—of whom, Sir, you yourself were one. Now, I request of you, as the principal witness in this case, at present, to tell me all you know of the matter, fully and faithfully, and to suppress nothing. It is your duty, as an innocent man—which I am fully persuaded you are—to further to the uttermost of your power the ends of justice.”

In answer to this harangue, Mark told plainly all that he knew about the matter; and the detective took notes, and then summed up to the following effect:—

“It resolves itself,” he said, “into this:—A charge against the Italian girl Giovanna Cazzola,

for the attempted murder of her master, by the addition of poison to medicine which she knew he would take at bed-time ; and a charge against her Uncle, Adolphe, Marquis de Lux, for the robbery of certain cheques. These two are the persons whom we must endeavour to capture ; but I much fear they have both escaped to France. If I had but a photographic portrait of them, it would assist me greatly in the search. I have found photography extremely useful in my profession, and it is a great safeguard to the public."

Mark thought of the portfolio of portraits of Giovanna, which that very man had looked over the night before, and which he had affirmed he had taken himself ; but he said not a word about them, for he thought also of the Marquis's letter. They had never wronged *him*. Why should *he* tell tales. Why should *he* aid in the capture of that wretched girl ? So he held his tongue. How could he foresee that his own Nelly would one day be entangled in the meshes of that guilty pair ? Through a weakness which most persons will excuse, he shirked a duty which he owed to society ; and after a time society had its revenge.

“And now, I suppose, Sir, you have done with me?” he asked, rather nervously, of the Detective.

“Yes, Mr. Levisne, I have, for the present ; and I am much obliged to you for so frankly giving me information. Of *your* innocence I have not a shadow of doubt ; nor have I any grounds for detaining you on suspicion. I wish you good evening, Sir ; and I think I may promise that you will not be troubled again in this matter, until we want you as a witness for the prosecution.”

So saying, the old gentleman packed up his papers ; and Mark returned to his College, with a feeling of infinite relief.



## CHAPTER 12.

## GROVES OF ACADEMUS.

At last, then, Mark Levisne had entered on his Cambridge life. There he sat, alone in his College rooms, waiting the arrival of the dinner which he had ordered up from the kitchen below. It was a calm summer's evening, and the setting sun was tipping with golden light the dingy brick walls and ruddy chimney pots which he could see from his station on the hard chintz-covered sofa, which was drawn up by the side of the empty grate. The room was clean, but only half furnished, the former occupant having taken away with him much that gave it a cheerful aspect; and the articles which remained looked disconsolate, and on bad terms

with each other, and with all the world. There was the bookcase without books—there were the drab-coloured painted walls without pictures or prints—and the mantle-shelf and tables without their accustomed ornaments or litter; while the window sill was disfigured by a row of plants in pots of parched soil, only one of which, a prickly euphorbia, showed any sign of life. It was enough to make a poor fellow melancholy to look round on such a scene, and attempt to realise the fact that for the next three years it was to be his home. Think it not extraordinary then, if I am compelled to relate that as he sat thus, with his elbows upon his knees, and his face between his hands—eyeing first the dead flowers, with their background of brick walls, and then the dismal interior of his room, and thinking of the kind friends from whom he had parted that morning, and of the fair girl in pretty Sark, from whose side he had wrenched himself away scarce a fortnight before—he heaved from the bottom of his deep chest such a sigh as you may hear sometimes at the Zoological Gardens, from a caged wild beast. It was a sigh which happily College rooms but seldom echo, for Cambridge life is on the whole a jolly

one, and Alma Mater an indulgent mother to her sons. And yet, on first going up to one's lonely rooms, after bidding adieu to home scenes, and the silvery voice and beaming smiles of woman, a feeling of dejection will sometimes creep over a fellow, such as has no parallel amidst the stir of the great world outside.

But this dejected mood of our hungry and forlorn youth did not last long. In due time his old bed-maker let herself in with her privileged latch-key, and spread a nice clean table-cloth before him, and laid the things for dinner—which things be it understood she had borrowed from the next rooms ; and then the College cook's deputy's helper's assistant, in his white paper cap, brought up a grand dish of rump steaks, and another of fine mealy potatoes ; and the butler's representative followed, bearing from the Butteries a tankard of foaming ale, and a jolly brown loaf, and three little short cylinders of delicious butter, and a slice of Cottenham cheese, better than any Stilton, and some cool celery to help it all down, and give a final zest to the repast. So to it Mark buckled, like a muscular christian as he was, who had fasted since breakfast, and travelled

some sixty miles by rail and cab, on horseback and on foot ; and under the influence of the good cheer his melancholy in due time evaporated, and he felt, like King Richard, himself again, and equal to anything that might turn up.

And now our young Cantab could stow away no more ; so—as a digestive to the good things—he did what older and wiser heads would as carefully *not* have done, viz., set off for a stroll—leaving his bed-maker to clear away, and light his fire, and put on his kettle for tea. I am precise in recording all these little matters, because a man's first day in College rooms is an event.

The shades of evening had crept over the scene—that is to say, over the brick walls and chimney pots, which no longer glowed with ruddy light—and the moon had risen when he started ; while the tops of the tall elms in the College grounds, which he could just see obliquely from his window, tempted him in the direction of those classic groves. So, after passing through the three College courts—first the Fellows' Court, then the Middle Court, and then the Tree Court—and under the two gates of

VIRTUE and HUMILITY (which, with the third, that of HONOUR, are among the curiosities of Cambridge, having been erected by John Caius, Physician to Queen Mary, of sanguinary memory) —and thence through the Porter's lodge, where that functionary informed him that unless he was back again before ten, he would be fined, and gated, and reported to the Tutor—he emerged into Trinity Street, and turning sharp round down Trinity Lane (over which the trumpeting geniuses have their rooms), and so across the little iron bridge which spans the sluggish Cam at that point—he quickly found himself amongst the fine avenues of trees which skirt the western side of the town.

It was about nine o'clock ; the moon was up, as I said before, and just peeping over the turrets of King's ; and the tall elms at the back of the Colleges were beginning to cast their faint shadows across the gravelled footpath beneath—that classic promenade, along which so many of England's greatest men have in their day paced backwards and forwards, dreaming of their glorious future, and thirsting for knowledge or renown. Along this same walk, paced Mark Levisne, on that, the first evening of his

University life. He was alone, of course, nor did he need other company than his own thoughts. And what were they? At one time, when no other step was near, and all was still save the rustling of the leaves overhead, stirred by the evening breeze, the sound suggested another pleasant one—the rippling of the smooth sea upon the sand of a little bay in Sark—and his thoughts flew thither, to where his heart was, far away. But that sweet reverie was soon disturbed; a step approached—that of a young student like himself, solitary, and dreaming perhaps too of bright eyes, and soft hands, and girlish accents; and then he encountered a knot of young fellows, rollicking with the merry laugh of boys released from school; and after them another set eagerly disputing about some knotty point connected with their books; and then he met a group of townspeople refreshing themselves after business fag by a stroll in that pleasant avenue. This recalled him to the scene in which he was; and then came another train of thought,—and he strode out more manfully over the knotted roots which stretched across his path; and if those ancient elms could hear and speak, they might

tell one more tale of a young student's ardent vows and high resolves, recorded on that his first walk beneath their shade. But be not too confident, young freshman, on your first solitary ramble in that classic grove. Think how many vows like yours, then made, prove fragile as pie crust when temptation comes. Trust not to former successes; trust not to anything but WORK. Remember, a Cambridge Honour, so highly prized, is not to be lightly won. The reward is great—the competition strong—and the first of England's sons enter against you in the race; while all that training, coaching, pluck, and work can do will be done by some of them. The contest is one in which the resolute alone can win; and no outsider can ever dream what a desperate strife it is. Think of all this, and be not too confident, young friend, at first. But be not too faint-hearted either; for if a faint heart can never win fair lady, you may be sure it can never wrest the prize from *men*. Temper your enthusiasm with common sense; look your difficulties firmly in the face; and crush faint-heartedness beneath your heel. But especially remember that steady perseverance *all through*, from first to last,

without flinching or turning aside, will *alone* command success—or if it does not command will alone deserve it. The hare lost, and the tortoise won. Knowledge does not come by intuition. Do not believe in genius—do not work by fits and starts—but take example by any day-labourer upon the roads. Work—work—work—eternal work—there is nothing else will do. An Honour is a test of knowledge gained by work—of readiness in bringing out that knowledge when acquired—and of the pluck and self-denial which can bear a man all through an arduous task. A Cambridge Honour is a fine thing; and it proves much, because it is not an easy thing to win.

And now our friend is back again in his lonely room, and his fire is blazing away, and the kettle is singing upon the hob, and his neighbour's teapot and crockery are laid out ready for him, and there are a fresh loaf and two more little cylinders of butter upon the table—for those which he left untouched at dinner have become his bed-maker's perquisite. That good old dame, so clean and tidy in her ways—and who never steals your tea and sugar, oh no!—or gives your dirty shirts to be worn



for a week by her bargee husband or brother, oh no!—or reports *your* doings to the Tutor if you report *hers*, oh no!—that good old bed-maker will not come back again, but she has left the lamp ready trimmed, and the bed-room candle rigged out, and the bed made, with borrowed sheets, quilts, and towels from the next room. And thus he was left alone, on his first night of Cambridge life. I like to be particular about all these little points, for the reasons stated before.

He had to make his tea himself, and pour it out himself, and try to be as jolly as he could by himself,—but it was no go; for assuredly man was never meant to have his tea alone. Depend upon it there is something wrong about it when it comes to that. So thought Mark, as he satisfied himself of the above truism, so often proved before, and pushed aside the tray, hauled out his writing case, poked his fire, screwed up his moderator, and resolved on writing to his friends—an infallible resource against ennui, and one which I confidently recommend.

He wrote two letters,—the first to his old friend Barbara,—the second to his Nelly, to be

enclosed with the first. Suppose we look over his shoulder, and see what they are both about.

The first letter ran thus :—

“ MY DEAR MISS HOBBS,

“ I am writing to ask you a favour, in a few brief but earnest words. It is that you will kindly give Miss May a holiday for a month. I will tell you why presently; and if you agree to my request, you must please give her the enclosed letter; but if not, return it to me, and she will then never know of the project I have formed, and will not be disappointed if it should miscarry. I am writing to *you* first on this subject, because I mean to do nothing in the matter without your approval and consent.

“ And now for the why and wherefore of my request. I have just parted from my Sister—who is soon to leave England—and with a half-promise that I could arrange for her to pay a short visit to dear Mrs. May, before she starts. It may be the only chance she will have for years, or perhaps ever, of becoming acquainted with Nelly and her Mamma, and I should be very sorry for her to lose it. She is about nineteen, and a very affectionate girl, whom you will all like when you *know* her. I have

no doubt that kind, hospitable Mrs. May will at once open her pretty cottage to receive for a short time a guest so dear to *me*; and I am sure also that Nelly will be pleased to make a new acquaintance, from whom she will learn much that is new and interesting about the great world of London, and its distinguished people. It only, therefore, remains for you to say 'yea' or 'nay' to this little plan of mine; and if 'yea' be the word, to deliver the enclosed letter at once. But whatever you may decide, this will at least convince you that in submitting to the hard terms which you have imposed upon me, I shall always endeavour to act according to the *spirit* as well as the letter of your commands, and not try artfully to evade them.

"I may as well add, that my sister has been brought up in the religion of her parents, who were both Italians, and that she is a believer in his Holiness the Pope,—a creed which perhaps you may think less objectionable than my own 'Infidel notions,' as you once called them. But we may all live to be agreed on these points some day.

"Yours, dear Madam,

"With sentiments of affectionate regard,

"MARK LEVISNE."

The second letter was a long one to his "Nelly-bird," and more likely to edify that young lady than the reader; for love letters are not always entertaining to other persons than the one to whom they are addressed. I will, however, make an extract or two, as affording another glimpse of the character of the writer, and supplying a link or two in the chain of events:—

\* \* \* \* \*

"And now, try and fancy me, Nell, all alone in my little snugery, and quiet at last, after the perfect hail-storm of events which have been knocking me about ever since I left Sark. But I trust that all botheration is over now, and that this quiet may last, and let me get to work again in a day or two at my books. I wish you could just pop in, and see your poor Mark, like a caged 'panther' in his den—only half furnished yet, and that little of the commonest kind—for it is thought effeminate in a *young Cantab* to have anything costly and luxurious about him. All that he is supposed to leave to the Dons—or to his lady friends at *home*, in their pretty cottages by the sea-side. Heigho! But I mustn't think of the pretty cottages now,

or the dear girl I have left behind. I must try not to think of it, and must crush my poor heart down, and not let it beat a bit—or else *she* will scold me for not sticking to my books. So let me tell you all about my rooms. There is one in which I sit to work, a good-size one, but low; a little bed-room out of it, no bigger than a large cupboard; and another little room where the pots and pans are kept, and where my old dame washes up, called the ‘gyp room.’ To-day I am borrowing another man’s things, who has gone down for a fortnight in the middle of the vacation, as most of the fellows do; but to-morrow I shall be cruising about the town laying in all these things for myself. The other men’s rooms are just like mine; but although the furniture in all of them is of the plainest kind, mostly painted deal, yet there is a gentlemanly cut about them which you can’t mistake,—and about all the men too whom I have seen yet. They are plainly dressed, without any jewellery, or any foppish nonsense, but you may always know them from the cads, by their scrupulous cleanliness and neatness, and a something about the neck-tie which seems to defy a cad to imitate. Still, they

say, there are two of the Colleges which a lower class of men frequent—a pipe and beer set—of whom you will not care to hear, or I to write. I have got a famous large bookcase in my room, with cupboards for groceries, decanters, &c.—a good strong library table,—common strong chairs—a rocking chair—a sofa,—and a folding screen. In the gyp room there is a capacious wine bin, half full of empty bottles and saw-dust,—but that I sha' n't trouble much, for I prefer John Barleycorn to the villanous compounds sold here for Port and Sherry, and which are worse here than anywhere else, Epsom races not excepted. The broker is to come to-morrow with his valuation of the furniture; and the things I like to keep I shall pay for at his valuation, and those which I reject he will have to buy himself. So you buy cheap when you come, and sell cheap when you leave—which is not a bad regulation. My old bed-maker, (you shall have a portrait of her some day, when she picks up a bit, for they all get woefully thin during the vacation—like falcons who have no young ducks to pluck), is quite a character, and takes a sort of maternal interest in me

already. She hopes I am not going to kill myself over my books, like the poor fellow who had these rooms before, and who has just left in a 'deep decline,' as they call it. 'None of them hard-workers,' she says, 'ever does any good. It is the idle young gentlemen who gets on best.' So I am not to overwork myself, you see; and Giulia's advice was to the same tune. The women have all kind hearts, except one—and she cries out always, 'Work, Mark, work—to make *me* proud of you,' like a little tyrant as she is. Ah, my Nelly, you don't know what work it is—with my thoughts now always roving from *x* and *y* to your sweet face. Heigho, again! Well; about the old bed-maker, whose woman's-face is the only one I am allowed to look on now—and it's one which wouldn't make you jealous if you were to see her, which you may some day. She comes, first at seven, to light the fire for breakfast, and lay the things,—then at eleven to take away, and make the bed—and then at four, while one is at dinner in Hall (but I hav'n't dined there yet), to lay your tea things, trim your lamp, &c. My sitting-room opens into a long passage, and has a double door. If you

shut the outer one, no one can get in from the passage without a latch-key, and it's like a front door to a house. When this one is shut, you are supposed to be engaged, and it is bad manners of any one to knock and disturb you. Fellows must leave their card under your door, and go away. Shutting this outer door is called 'sporting' it; and you are said to be 'sported in.' But the bed-maker has a latch-key like your own, and she comes and goes when she pleases. Woe betide you if you leave your key inside, and sport *yourself* out; for that involves a hunt for your bed-maker, at her private residence, perhaps a mile off, in some back colony of the town. I hope soon to get settled, and feel at *home*, surrounded by a good litter of papers and books, and be at my old symbols again, which you remember on that happy morning, Nell, in the dear old study, puzzled you so much.

“And now I have told you all about my poor lonely self; but you have been wondering all this time why I sent you this scrawl through the hands of your beloved Barbara, instead of direct by post. Listen, then; for I have been planning a little surprise for you. If your kind



Mamma agrees, and *you* would like it too, my sister would, I think, enjoy a short visit to your pretty cot. Will you like to know her, for *my* sake? I am sure you will, and I am sure you will love each other. She is a very kind, good creature, and wishes much to know *you*. But her tastes are not like *ours* in many things. She is an artist who does not care for *our* nature, if you can understand such a thing, but likes London best. Still, she is very clever in her way—and will talk for the hour about her great sculptors, Phidias, Polignotus, and Michael Angelo—and will tell you that *form* is everything, and *colour* only fit for women and children; and that lower nature, as she calls it, the rocks, and clouds, and sea, is grotesque and gothic—while the organic world, comprising flowers, and animals, and man, is full of symmetry and classic grace. She and I have rare discussions on this point, but they always end as they began, because I am sure she does not *feel* the glorious charms of that lower nature which, without affectation, she really does *not* love. I dare say she will be tired of Sark in a week or two, unless you can get her to teach you modelling, and can

amuse her in her own way. Do try, for I should dearly value a bust of your sweet self. And make her tell you anecdotes of all the great people she meets at their *conversazioni* every week. She is a glorious creature in some things, and quite a queen amongst them—but self-willed and eccentric—as you know Barbara says *you* are sometimes. Tell me if you think her beautiful in face. It is the Italian, and not the English style; and you must make allowance for a little coldness and pride sometimes in her manner; it is only reserve and reverie. Her figure now is as graceful and faultless as your own; but it will not last. Ten years hence my Nelly will be still a lovely girl, while Giulia will be . . . . I won't say what, because you're sure to tell her. May you live to love each other always, and be firm friends.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Your last was a wee bit sad, about your dear Mamma. I am grieved to hear it. Your visitor will cheer her up, perhaps. You tell me you can keep your head above water now for six strokes! Brava! Persevere. It will come soon. There is nothing in the world so

easy as to swim ; it is much easier than walking or running ; and the young South Sea Islanders learn it first. But take care, and never go alone. Always have Nep with you, if you don't bathe with your schoolfellows and Angelina. My love to the dear old fellow ; pat his head for me, and whisper fifty kind things from me into his rough ear.

“ Think of that row I had on the old sea, and the tow behind the Jersey boat—half way back again to little Sark—and all that I might do as my Nelly wished, and become more worthy of her ! Wasn't it a strange adventure ? I long for your next letter. We must both thank him some day. And may the days roll quickly on — quickly — quickly — never quick enough for me.”

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If a stern critic should smile at these extracts from a fond epistle, let him bear in mind that it was not exactly written to please *him*.



## CHAPTER 13.

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LETTERS.

A STORY may often be advantageously carried on by means of letters which pass between certain of the characters that have been introduced to the reader. In this, and some of the subsequent chapters, I have largely employed that method, as it seemed to offer a better means of exhibiting the peculiar idiosyncrasies of the writers, than the ordinary mode of narration. It must be remembered, however, that most of the letters thus introduced, are from youthful pens, and the effusions of youthful hearts laid bare to each other, before the conflict of life has taught its cold lessons of prudence and restraint.

*From Nelly to Mark.*

*The following letter was the reply to that which Mark wrote at the bankers, after his return from the chase of the EIONE, off the Isle of Wight :—*

“ MY DEAR MARK,

“ I am sitting in the quiet study, trying to answer a long letter from you which Hudson’s boy has just brought me, with a message that his father will be returning to Guernsey in an hour—so he can take back my reply. But fancy—only an hour for me to read, and answer such a letter ! Oh, how strange I feel. I can’t collect my thoughts. Whilst *I* am so quiet here, *you* seem to be flying all over the world in boats and yachts—with all sorts of strange people, which it turns my poor head to think of. It almost makes me sad, dear Mark ; and yet I ought not to be sad after what you tell me. He must be a very kind man to make such handsome presents—to you when you were a boy at King’s College—and then, when he met you again so oddly—and then to me, whom he does not know a bit. I am sure he must be a very kind man ; and if he catches that wicked Italian girl I am certain he will not be revenged

upon her, but will forgive her nobly—you'll see. Think of his keeping my letter. It all seems like a strange story in a book, which people sit down and fancy, but which never can be true. That money, dear Mark, which you say is nothing to him, he is so rich, but which will be enough to make us happy, is very nice to think of—but is it right for us to take it? I am sure I never should be happy if I did not think it was. I must tell dear Mamma, and hear what she says; but I am sure she will hardly believe the news. You say the bankers are Trustees, and will pay Mamma the interest every year for me until I come of age, or—you know what I mean,—and that it will be more than Mamma has now, and will make us quite rich. No, dear Mark, that must not be. It is *your* money, not mine, and I am sure I shall never take one farthing of it.

“I am so sorry to tell you that poor Mamma is not well. She has never been well since you left; and now she hardly leaves her room, although the weather is so lovely. I cannot bear leaving her alone, and I sit with her all I can; but she won't let me be with her more than she can help, and always likes to hear that

I am in the garden amongst the flowers, or walking with Angelina. She often sits quite lost in thought, while I am reading to her; and I am sure does not hear a word I say. She must be thinking of old times—of dear Papa, perhaps. She has given me leave now to take down any of his books and read them. How clever he was. I am reading ‘Essays on Art; by Lorenzo May.’ Fancy—one’s own Papa writing a book. His ideas seem so clear and so correct, and his language is so beautiful—not made up of long words, but like simple music—and his thoughts are like pictures—and sometimes like photographs, so distinct and sharp. Oh, how I should have loved him! But I dare not talk about him to poor Mamma. She always bids me hush, when I mention his name; and once she said ‘you *may* know him Nelly, perhaps, when I am gone.’ What could she mean? After she said it, she turned her face away, and wept!

“And now, I hope, dear Mark, that all your worry has come to an end. Do go and live like the other young men in College rooms, quietly over your books. Never mind being in a town for a short time. It will soon be over. The

years will soon slip away. I shall never be happy about you until I hear that you are quietly at work over your books again, as you used to be in your Nelly's little study. Good-bye, dear dear Mark. I must finish now, for Hudson has come for the letter, and is waiting with Bridget in the kitchen.

“P.S.—I enclose you a portrait of my Papa, in lead pencil, which I found amongst his books. You must look at it, and return it directly, please. Angelina says it is just like him, and she has taken a negative from it. What a handsome beard he had. She says he was very tall and strong, with a noble face—and that your Nelly is like him about the eyes and forehead. Do you think so? We are afraid to show it to Mamma. Good-bye, once more.”

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*From Miss Hobbs to Mr. Levisne.*

“MY DEAR SIR,

“I should indeed be hard to please if I could not say, with sincerity, that your unexpected letter gave me pleasure; for it is always gratifying to see an honourable mind striving to do what is right. But you have mistaken me



greatly if you suppose that I could object for one instant to your Sister's visit to Mrs. May. I agree of course to your request about the holiday to my pupil, provided always that her Mamma consents too. I am quite aware of the very secluded life Miss May leads, and of the benefit which it must be to her to meet occasionally a stranger from the great world. So far, then, as I am concerned, we will consider your request granted; and at the same time I beg to express to you my approval of the step which you have taken in first consulting me on the subject. I have nothing to apprehend from your Sister's Popish doctrines; but forgive me, if I say, that I *have* much to apprehend from your own rationalism. May your mind be enlightened from above, and may you have grace to guide you in the right way.

“I grieve to have to tell you bad news of Mrs. May's health. Dr. Brownlow paid her a visit yesterday, and gives a bad report of her complaint. It is slowly but surely advancing; and he much wishes her to consult a Paris physician of great eminence, who has made a special study of her disease. He has even offered to escort her to Paris and back himself,

if she will go at once. But she positively declines; and all entreaties from her friends are vain. Thus the matter stands; and my Niece and I are much concerned about it. We have not told your little friend, as it would only make her anxious and low-spirited; and I grieve to say that she is dull enough already. The poor child has not smiled once since you left; and although she and I are pulling together now much more pleasantly than we have ever yet done in her studies, yet I am pained to see how very low-spirited she is. But time, I dare say, will soothe this little first trouble she has ever had; and she will recover her usual high spirits ere long, no doubt.

“ I fear this is but a melancholy letter; and really I *am* melancholy at the thoughts of my poor friend's condition. You shall hear from me from time to time, to say how things go on, as I know you will be anxious to do so.

“ I need not, I am sure, remind you, in conclusion, of the great value of your precious time now—time which, if lost, you can never redeem. We all hope and fully expect to see you one day take a high place; so remember the value of this precious opportunity, which

many young men foolishly throw away, and afterwards make of their folly a life-long regret.

“ With best wishes for success in your career—for continued health—and for that happiness which the virtuous only can ever know,

“ Believe me, my dear Sir,

“ Your very sincere friend,

“ BARBARA HOBBS.”

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*From Miss May to Miss Fano.*

“ MY DEAR MISS FANO,

“ Mamma has commissioned me to write to you, instead of writing herself, because, I am sorry to say, she is too unwell to-day to do so. She will be most delighted to see you, if you will come and stay with us in our humble little cottage, in this remote island ; and I shall be most delighted too ; and we will do all we can to make you happy, and show you everything there is to see in this romantic little spot. Your Brother, Mr. Mark Levisne, has told me how fond you are of wild flowers ; and I assure you there are plenty of them here—many which I am certain you do not often see in London. He tells me also that you are a great artist, and know many clever people, whom you meet at

your Uncle's house every week. I shall so much like to talk to you about them, for I know a few of them from the books which I read on my half holidays. He tells me also that you will teach me to model in clay, and take plaster casts ; and also improve me in my Italian. You see how selfish I am in wishing you to come ; but I will do all I can to make you happy in return. I am but a schoolgirl yet, but I am sure we shall be great friends. Stay as long as ever you can, and we shall never be tired of your company, and it will cheer up dear Mamma, and me too ; for I can't tell you how dull we are sometimes. My schoolmistress has agreed to give me a holiday all the time you are here, so we can go about and take walks every day. I will show you such beautiful caves ; and Mark's great dog will go with us. He is such a fine fellow, and fetches a stick out of the sea. The waves are sometimes so grand, when it blows a gale, and we hear them roaring all night. I miss them so when I go to stay in the town at Guernsey, and I am sure I should miss them still more in London—although I should dearly like to see a great city, too.

“And now you will be tired of reading this long scrawl. Do come soon. If you leave London as soon as you get this, you will be able to cross to Sark in an excursion steamer which leaves Guernsey the day the mail arrives—the QUEEN OF THE ISLES. Is it not a pretty name? An old friend of ours, Dr. Brownlow, is here now, and he says he will meet the arrival of the Southampton packet, and see you safe on board the steamer if you come when I say. You need not bring much luggage, for I can lend you plenty of things.

“I do so look forward to your visit. Mark has shown me your portrait, and I seem to know you already. I am sure we shall be great friends. I must finish now all in a hurry, for Dr. Brownlow is going.

“Believe me,

“Dear Miss Fano,

“Your affectionate friend,

“ELINOR MAY.”

“P.S.—I have forgotten to tell you something, and I can't think what it was. Excuse haste, and my bad writing.

“Oh, I remember. Could you bring some of those water - colour drawings which Signor

Xenosthes gave you? I do so love to see good pictures. They would not take much room."

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*From Miss Fano to Miss May,*

"MY DEAREST LITTLE NELLY,

"I seem to know you already, though I have only seen a portrait of you by my madcap Brother, and only received from you one letter as yet. But I know you already, and am quite sure we shall be friends. Still I must tell you candidly that the said madcap and I do not always agree in our tastes, and have grand discussions sometimes; but *you* and I will agree I know. I picture you to myself as a piquante little creature (though not so little either, for you are only an inch shorter than myself), unsymmetrical in your order of mind—not classical though graceful, if you can understand the difference, and forgive me for saying so—and a living type of that wild nature which our Mark loves so much. *Our* Mark, I say, for I will not yield him up to you until I am sure that *you* love him best. But I know you are all heart—I see it in every line of your letter—and wilful and wild as the waves on

your rough coast, which can both glitter in the sun, or dash themselves upon the beach. Am I not right, my Eleanor—my Leonora, I would rather say? If Mark and I do not agree sometimes, *you* and he will always, I know—and you will be a pair of loving madcaps. As for me, I am a staid old thing already, and I fear I shall not cheer you much—but at least I will go and try. We *will* know each other, and *try* to love each other, for *his* sake.

“We shall have much to talk about when we meet; but I cannot start till next week, as I want to finish all my packing, and get it off my mind, before I leave dear London. You have heard of what that strange generous creature has done for us both? Poor fellow, I *pity* him, though I can never love him again, as woman should the man of her free choice. I ought not to keep his generous gift, but perhaps it would wound his heart if I were to give it back. And you, dear Eleanor, have to thank him too—and I cannot help smiling when I think that it was all through me. Mark behaved well, did he not, poor boy? And his friend knew how to reward him. I love to think of such good and kind deeds, and would

emulate them if I could. Let those who prefer it make a study of lifeless rocks, and clouds, and sea ; but let MAN, in his great depth of feeling, and grandeur of heroic deed, be the theme for me. Living nature—and not inert blocks of stone, or clouds of vapour, or tossing waves. I leave the inanimate and the grotesque to those who love them best, and may their joy of them be great ; but the *living* world, with its symmetry of form, its feelings and its passions, its heart, sentiments, nobility, and courage, are the sculptor's choice.

“And so we are to meet soon—the sisters who *are* to be—and who are so already in heart. Dear girl, I long to know you, and to love you with a sister's love. Thank your kind Mamma for me, but I fear I shall be but a dull guest. I will not forget the water-colour drawings. Accept them all, Nelly, as a present from me ; and do not think me generous, for in truth it pains me to look at them. Do *you* keep them, for I cannot.

“We are all in a sad mess here, beginning to pack already. My excitable Uncle won't brook a day's delay. He has already parted with the old place, and all its fixtures, to a



former pupil, who is fast rising into fame. I should like to bring you back with me, and show you the wonders of this great City, and some of the leading men in various walks of art; but that will be impossible, as we shall be leaving in a few weeks. You must come and stay with us in pretty Florence, when Mark's horrid Cambridge course, which I can never bear to think of, is over. Why don't you let the poor fellow off? He was made for better things than that. I never knew a mathematician yet who had an idea that wasn't as crabbed and sour as his old books. Of the numbers who take honours every year, very few are heard of in after life. Not one in ten of the highest men do anything but live like pigs in their old rooms, and smoke. The system must be all wrong, I am sure. It *must* be a great mistake. *You*, Nelly, mustn't spoil your Mark. Think of that dear handsome creature, who loves you so much, banished from your side, and boxed up alone now in his dull room, poring over those dreariest of books. Does not his great human heart rebel against such folly—and does not your own little heart plead for him sometimes? We must have some long talks

about it one day; and I shall not be happy until you have let him off. I am not sure that I shall not bring him with me—so expect to see us both.

“Till then, Leonora mia—Addio.

“G. F.”

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*From Nelly to Mark.*

“MY DEAR MARK,

“Your sister has just come. I watched the boat for an hour or more rounding the ‘North Cape,’ and then went down to the ‘Creux’ to meet them. They had a fair wind and a quick run across in the boat, but a rough passage in the steamer. We knew each other the moment we met. How beautiful she is! Dr. Brownlow came with her, and says he has quite lost his heart. He is to go back to-morrow. How kind he is to us, is he not? He is to have your room to-night, and she is to sleep with me. How full of fun she is. You told me she was cold and proud—you naughty fellow—you are much more proud than she is. I wish you had seen our meeting at the ‘Creux.’ She had a good look at me from head to foot, before she

kissed me ; and I at her. How beautifully she was dressed. I do not mean handsome things, for they are quite plain, but so becoming. I am to have the pattern of them ; but Angelina says, No ! They are too 'stagey.' What does she mean ? She thinks your sister rather a madcap, and not to be copied, although very clever, and quite a lady. Barbara hasn't seen her yet, nor have any of my schoolfellows. Mamma is delighted with her, and so am I. We walked home together, down the lane, with our arms around each other's waist. She likes Sark so much. The 'Creux' she said reminded her of scenes in Homer's Odyssey ; and she calls me Haidée. Who is she ? I never heard. What splendid eyes she has. She has brought a box with her full of clay. The men couldn't think what it was, it was so heavy. She has given it to me ; and also two bags of white plaster. What fun it will be to make moulds. I have been so dull, dear Mark, ever since you left, and now I am quite happy again. I love your sister dearly. We are great friends. She says I am taller, and more like a little woman than she expected to find me, and that I ought to leave school now

—and other pretty things she said which I can't repeat. What beautiful hands she has. You used to call mine small, but hers are smaller still, and not so brown. But what do you think she has given me? Oh such a treat. A portfolio *full* of most exquisite water-colour drawings—enough to turn one wild. She says you have seen them all, and that makes them doubly dear to me, for now we can talk about them in our letters. You told me she was classical, and did not like *our* nature. What a naughty fellow you are to say such things of your sister. I am sure she does. She stopped an immense time looking up at the 'Creux'; and many times, as we walked home together, to admire the views. She says it all seems so strange after a great city—quite a new world to her. Angelina is spending the evening with us. They are laughing so now in the drawing-room, while I am here writing to you. The old Doctor is a dear creature, and so kind. He says he means to take a negative of us all three to-morrow, upon one of Angelina's dry plates. We are to be the three Graces, Aglaia, Thalia, and Euphrosyne. Can you guess which is

which? Oh, how I wish you were here, poor dear Mark. Giulia says it is a shame to have you banished; and that it makes her melancholy to think of you, shut up in that dull College by yourself. I am to write at once, and let you off, and you are to come and join us.

“Hark! she is playing. I must run off to hear.”

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*From Giulia to her Brother, greeting.*

“I am to finish Nelly’s letter, as she is off for a walk with her dear Doctor, (a gallant old fellow, I can tell you, Mark, and not to be trusted), and Angelina, whom they are escorting home by the light of the full moon. I am supposed to be gone to bed after the fatigue of my journey. Oh, that ‘Stygian cave forlorn’ of a lady’s cabin. Shall I ever forget it? And then the little boat, which bobbed about amongst the great waves! But you know, with all my faults, I am not timid, and I shared the old Doctor’s cloak with him, and his kind words reassured me. Your old Guernsey friend was most polite. But I

remember you do not know him personally ; and it is well for your peace of mind that you do not.

“And how do I like your Nelly? Why, you men are not judges of us a bit. You gave me quite a wrong impression of her. I was prepared to meet a little Vandal, wild and changeful as an April sky, and lo—a classic beauty! Yet not quite so, for there is some Vandalism about her too. She is all heart and impulse. Troubles which *I* could laugh off would kill *her*. You have found a treasure, Mark, in a heart like hers,—so guard it well. You are the hero of her worship—and one unkindness, or one ignoble act or thought would deeply wound—so take care. Hers is a choice and rare beauty—that of *expression*—quite a study—I can scarcely take my eyes off her—and what a figure too—a sculptor’s dream. We have already vowed eternal friendship. She calls me Myrrha—the only one of Byron’s poems she has read yet—and I call her Haidée, for fun, because the name is an enigma to her, as they have taken your book away. Her governess looks somewhat askance at me, and

has her doubts, I think—but I can read *her* through and through. There is some dark secret, and some deep sorrow there, which you may all find out one day. But she is very pleasing; and her music is quite professional. I could find her fifty lovers in a week—but her heart, I see, is not her own. She has loved, and loves still—but vainly, as she knows. This solitude is her grief's balm—and what a place it is—how grand, and how new to *me*—how bright and joyous are the dancing waves—how delicious the sea breeze. I am half a convert, Mark, to *your* nature, as we call it. Perhaps I have lived too much in towns, or I should be a convert quite. And this little cottage is a gem.

“I hear them coming, and must finish now. No; it is not the Doctor's voice, but the good boatman's. He leaves again at five to-morrow, and wants to take the letter. What a life! But just one word more. Wait a minute, worthy navigator. Bridget shall bribe you with an extra glass of fire water, to warm the tip of your red nose. One imploring word, dear Mark. Come to us. Leave those horrid books and come. I am going away. It may be years

before we meet again— we *three*. Who knows? Come then, and spend this last month here. 'Tis a Sister asks. On my knees I say to my only Brother, Come.

“One word more from Nelly. Come, dear Mark. Do.

“Your two affectionates,

“G. F. and E. M.”

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*From Dr. Brownlow to Mark Levisne.*

“MY DEAR SIR,

“I am most willing to answer your enquiries respecting my kind friend Mrs. May; but I regret to tell you that she has a rather dangerous internal complaint, of an organic character, which has stubbornly resisted all my treatment, and is steadily, although slowly, advancing. To alleviate her suffering, and if possible arrest the progress of this disease, is now my anxious care; and I have been most desirous to take her to Paris, before she gets too unwell to travel, in order that we may consult a distinguished friend of mine there, who has made her complaint his special study. I need not tell you that it is the duty of every general



medical practitioner to suggest this course to his patient, when his own knowledge is at fault, and his own line of treatment vain. She, however, declines attempting the journey now, but promises me that should she live till the spring, she will endeavour then to undertake it. The winter, happily, seems to suit her best; so it is quite possible that the disease may not make much advance between this, and say next May. Her reason for wishing to defer the journey is, I believe, an unselfish one. She does not like to alarm her daughter; but we must try and overcome that scruple. You suggest to me that you might be of use to them as an escort, in the event of their going to Paris at any time; and that is certainly worth bearing in mind. I will write to you now and then, and report how things go on. There is no immediate danger; nor do I apprehend anything serious for some time to come—possibly not for years. But I cannot disguise from you the fact that an internal complaint—which *must* end fatally, if it is not stopped in its slow and steady course—is there, to make us all anxious. I take a great interest in the poor lady, and her charming little daughter, having been in the old

time an intimate friend of Mr. May. Doubt not, therefore, that I will do all I can in the service of his amiable widow, for whom I have a high regard.

“ Very faithfully yours,

“ JOHN BROWNLOW, M.D.”

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*From Mark to his Sister.*

“ DEAR GIULIA,

“ I am tempted worse than St. Anthony, when beset by the devil, for I have *two* fair temptresses at me, while the dirty Saint, at the top of his pole, had only one. Excuse my alluding to the peculiarities of the holy man, but you know of old my opinion of such worthies; and the more I see of saintly persons, the less inclined I feel to honour them. Happily, in my case, the same mail which brings temptations from your two dear selves, brings also a fortifier against it in the form of a letter from another fair one—Miss Barbara Hobbs; and the good advice of that dear old soul, who is certainly *not* a beauty, outweighs the tempting words of the other two.

“ No, dear Giulia, I must not go to Sark now. I shall see *you* again in London, before you

leave; but indeed I must not go to Sark. I dare not risk it. You don't know the agonies of that last wrenching of myself away. The very thought of having to go through it all again would destroy the whole pleasure of my visit for the month. The only chance is to keep away now I am away—for it is certain, that if I were to leave here on such an errand, I should never get away again, and my hopes of a good degree would be all up. Don't tempt me, there's a dear girl. It is hard lines for a poor devil to keep away, after what has occurred; and don't you make it harder. You know I have set my heart on this degree—and ambitious as you are yourself, I don't think you can understand a *man's* ambition. A high degree amongst the Wranglers has been my dream of the last six years, and all seems now to smile upon me. No anxiety now about what is to come next—no yearnings of the heart for a vague something, for *they* are satisfied. The future looks bright—all but one little cloud which I sometimes think I see rising up like a man's hand upon the far horizon—and which *may* spread, and darken over us perhaps. You can guess what I mean. Poor dear Mrs. May! I have had a

bad account of her from Dr. Brownlow lately. Suppose she gets worse—or suppose anything should happen to her—that would *compel* me to give up, and fly to poor Nelly's side. But such a thing may be remote yet; and so long as affairs go on smoothly I must mind my own work. Don't think me selfish. It is for *others* that I am now at work, not for myself; for another, who will be proud of her Mark, if he succeeds, and who would despise him if he were now to yield, even to her own entreaty. My name is entered for a race—a prize will be a life-long joy to all who love me—and a source of pride to those who may come after. I have put my hand to the plough, and must not look back. My course lies right a-head, if fate permits.

“What you say about Angelina confirms a thought I had myself; but I liked her immensely, and so will you, I think. Is not Nelly's mother a kind creature? No one can help loving her. She has the remains of beauty still; but the daughter's intellect is from the father's side. I long to read some of his works. Once I saw an opinion of his quoted; but his magazine articles were mostly anonymous, which I always

think a pity such articles should be. Your Uncle met him once. He was, by all accounts, a tall, handsome man. He broke down in money matters, and became involved in the failure of a literary speculation in which he had a large share. This misfortune occurred shortly before his death. Angelina knew him intimately—but how, or when, she never says—it is a subject she never likes to talk about. The interest she takes in Nelly has some connexion with her poor father—of that I feel convinced.

“And so you like the sea at last. Of course you do. Even old Homer did, no doubt, although he would persist in dubbing it the “unfruitful brine.” The change will do you good. Not so much, perhaps, in body, as in mind. May you ever be as your pretty self is now—we want no change there—but we do want to see you love London less, and *our* nature more.

“My heart is with you, dear Sister, in the little isle, although I cannot go myself; and when you have left England—and me all alone, then in the ‘right little, tight little’ land of my birth, God bless it—my thoughts will often follow you to sunny Florence, and I shall look

forward till we meet again — perhaps *there* — who can say? Your kindness to me for so many years—so spontaneous and so undeserved—and now to my Nelly too—have bound my heart to you for ever. Adieu.”

## CHAPTER 14.

## GOSSIP AT A CAVE'S MOUTH.

THREE weeks of Miss Fano's visit to her kind hostesses in Sark had passed merrily away, and she was scarcely even beginning to think of leaving them, when a letter from her excitable Uncle recalled her peremptorily home. Her presence was needed in making the final arrangements for their leaving London, and she was ordered to return at once. Such was the command, and she must obey, however grievous. In tearful silence, therefore, her packing was at once commenced, and all the little hobbies in which she and Nelly had taken part were put away.

It happened that Nelly had not yet shown her new friend one of the grandest curiosities in the Island—a vast cave upon the coast; so on the last evening, the two girls wandered thither, for a farewell stroll. It is a singular place, that cave, besides being difficult and dangerous of access, the approach to it lying down a rugged foot-path hewn in the face of a nearly perpendicular cliff. But the entrance once gained, you are repaid for the risk and labour of the descent by the strange spectacle which meets your eye within. Right before you, and in the very centre of the first great chamber, stands an isolated natural column of granite, from the rude capital of which spring three separate and lofty arches, spanning the space above your head, and abutting against the sides; a column and arches, such as you may sometimes see in a Gothic chapter house, or crypt, and which Nature seems here to have imitated—or perhaps I ought rather to say, suggested—by a whimsical freak of the eternal rock-splitting and abrading waves. The floor of the cave is gently inclined upwards, and strewn with round pebbles and boulders of all sizes, interspersed with pools of water; and



carpeted on the most sheltered spots with long fronds of slippery vraic, which have been driven in by the latest gale, for a temporary resting place. Beware how you grope your way too incautiously in the darkness amongst those loose stones, and boulders, and pools of water, and slimy sea-weed, — for a broken limb in such a spot would be a very ugly accident. After passing the natural vaulted crypt, the sides of the cavern, always dripping with water which percolates through the soil above, gradually shut in, and meet at length in a spot from which no speck of daylight is any longer visible ; and here every sound is strangely echoed ; and the deep booming of the sea, as it comes in roaring and rattling over the loose stones, and surging over the rocky plateaux at the entrance, is a music never to be forgotten.

After a somewhat ticklish scramble down the zigzag foot-path which leads to the cave's mouth from the high table land above—and not without a few scratches from the prickly furze —the two girls entered, hand in hand. The little difficulties amongst which they had next to pass, and the pure fun of the thing too, induced the elder, and always the merrier one

on these wild trips, to propose that they should take off their shoes and stockings, and wade barefoot to the end. So behold the giggling pair, with an arm round each other's neck, and a lighted taper in the hand of the elder one, exploring the cavern to its innermost recess, where its rude sides meet and crush together in an angle within which even the form of a real fairy could scarce be squeezed. Here Miss Fano, with undaunted pluck, mounted to the highest ledge of rock that she could reach, and rested with one hand upon Nelly's head, while she held up the lighted taper with the other towards the roof; while Nelly wound an arm round her companion's knees, and with her other hand stroked her soft white foot, as she looked down admiringly upon it. At length the owner of the said little foot looked down too, and, smiling, stepped gaily off her rocky pedestal; and the pair started off again, with many a merry laugh, and now and then a humorous cry of pain and fear as they slipped about upon the loose stones and vrac, and retraced their steps towards the cave's mouth. On reaching the light of day, once more in safety, Nelly said

“What little ducks of feet you have, Lu. Is it because you wear such wide shoes?”

“Not half such little ducks as yours, Nell. Why don't *you* wear wide shoes too?”

As they sat together upon a great flat stone, and Lu (as Nelly called her friend) was drawing on her stockings, and putting on again those same wide shoes, *cut to the shape of the human foot*, she said:—

“I could tell you something funny about this little foot. Shall I, Nell?”

“Oh, do. You know all *my* secrets, but you hav' n't told me *one* of yours—and this is our last stroll together.”

“Well then, you shall hear. But don't look so sentimental, or you'll make me laugh. It is of the little God, with his bow and quivers, that I am about to speak; and what is fun to him, you know, is not always fun to us.”

“Ah, do. Tell me about that tall dark man who loves you so.”

Giulia wound her arm round Nelly's neck, and as they sat together on the flat stone, in the shade, at the cave's mouth—with the ripple of the summer sea upon the shingle near, for a break to the grand solitude of the place, then

so still and calm—she looked down half bashfully, and playing with her companion's hand upon her knee, went on thus with her tale of the little God:—

“What I am going to tell you, Nell, happened about four years ago—perhaps not quite so much—and I was then the same age as you are now, and about as tall—for I have grown very little since. You will be much taller than I am, by-and-bye; but in London, girls become young women sooner than they do in a place like this. I had never known a Mother's love—only an Uncle's—which is not the same, although he has been always very kind. So you must fancy me your own age now, and gay and happy as you were some few months ago—and just as free and wild—with a little heart as sound as a silver bell, but ready to make sweet music to the first fond swain who should tap gently against its side—a heart just like your own, Nell, before that wicked brother of mine ——.”

“Oh, never mind. Go on all about yourself.”

“Well then—a governess—a dear old soul—who had lived with me all my life, and taught me all I know of books and music, left; and

I became, too soon perhaps, sole mistress in my Uncle's house. He let me run wild about the studio; and then I began to long for ART—and to be an artist like him—and make beautiful statues in pure cold white marble—symmetrical and chaste—looking down upon you with their dignified pupilless eyes, and braided hair, and flowing robes, and heavenly calm, from pedestals covered with crimson baize, in cool shady galleries with a top light. So they taught me to model in clay, and make casts in plaster and in wax.

One day I went with him to an Exhibition of Paintings in Trafalgar Square. It was my first visit to a gallery of modern pictures, and I found myself in fairy land. Room after room of glorious works, as I thought then, we wandered through—landscapes, figures, portraits, historical scenes—a marvellous collection of a year's hard work by many hundreds of busy brains and hands. While there—and looking, I dare say, a very madcap of delight—a tall, dark young man, with a striking face, and oh, such eyes, seemed to be ever hovering round me, and always at my side. Many times our eyes met, and who could doubt what his were saying?

At last my Uncle observed him too, and nudging me, whispered, "That is Signor Xenosthes—a millionaire—I want to get introduced to him—he is a great patron of art, and paints himself—a very strange man, they say, and mighty clever." By-and-bye the chance for an introduction arrived. A friend of my Uncle's, who knew the other, introduced him to us, and we walked round the rooms together. It was a private view, and my Uncle knew most of the artists well. We had no catalogue because they were not printed yet, and the painters pointed out to each other their best works, and some of them were still touching up their pictures as they hung upon the walls. Presently we came to a very striking pair, in one immense frame, and hung so that they could be well seen. Quite a group stood around them, and were criticising; some for, others against. I was the only lady there, and the artists and newspaper people all made way for me to see—for at our age, Nelly, the men are always so polite. "Oh, what splendid pictures!" I exclaimed at once. "What, dear Uncle, do they represent?" "Andromeda, my child, is one," he answered, "and the other is called

the Pearl-Diver. They are by God knows **who**—and how they came to be hung there, upon the line of the eye, in the best place, is more than I can tell—for such things ought never to be admitted at all—it is an outrage against common sense.” “Why so?” asked the tall dark stranger at our back. Before my Uncle could reply, some one made a sign by which he knew that the querist was the artist himself; but he seemed to take no heed, and answered bluntly thus:—

“Why so, do you ask me, Sir? Then I will tell you. They are simply photographs from a model—and not works of art at all; any one can see that. I am certain they are nothing but enlarged photographs painted over. Too painfully true to nature by far. I don't call that ART. I call it acting, and photography. What has the Royal Academy to do with such work as that? What business have such things as that in here? What next, I should like to know? I suppose casts from Tom Sayers, and the nymphs of the Haymarket, down below, in *our* room.”

“That I think is an open question,” said the other, “and the experiment is worth trying.

If pictures can not only be copied, but actually manufactured by photography, it will be a great step gained."

But as he said this, I caught a glance of rich fun and satire in his eye. My Uncle replied with tact

"Forgive me, Signor, for speaking my mind so plainly. I knew by *whom* that experiment was tried, and that I ran little risk of giving offence. I only regret that so clever an artist as yourself should descend to eccentricities and practical jokes."

"And yet," he replied, "I could show you something of your own in the Sculpture Gallery — *your* room below, as you call it — which is quite as bad."

"Ha! What is that?"

"My name is already down as a purchaser for it. A cast of a lady's foot. A cast, I say — untouched by the modelling tool — for who could improve upon such nature as that? And I think I can point out the original."

As he said so, he cast his eye down upon my unconventional though sensible chaussure, —and I felt myself blush deeply.

After this he never left us until we got into



a cab at the door; and at parting he asked leave to call in Dean Street, and see over the studio—which was granted, of course. He came the next day, and stayed some time. His attentions to me were then more marked than they were the day before—his conversation was brilliant—his manner was enchanting—his criticism original—his self-reliance unbounded, but without vanity—and he was an artist too, and one of the lions of the Academy exhibitors. I admired him, of course; and became interested in him. Again and again he repeated his visits, and my Uncle encouraged our growing intimacy—from too worldly motives, I dare say. At last he begged to be admitted as a pupil in sculpture; and thus, in the pursuit of the same study, we were thrown much together, and were often seated side by side at the same bench. His attentions to me never relaxed, but became more and more vehement from day to day; his presents, often most splendid and costly, were embarrassing; and my Uncle's furtherance of his suit was most cordial—for, as I have told you, he was known to be immensely rich. What could a poor girl do? I had no time to think—no female friend

to advise me. At last he spent his time almost wholly with us; and in an evil hour, and in a moment rather, I believe, of pity for him than love, I let him kiss my hand—and with averted face consented to accept him as my lover. And thus we became engaged.”

“But did you *not* love him?” asked Nelly, in amazement. “You surely were not captivated by his wealth?”

“Not at *first*, I fear, did I love him as you love Mark. It was admiration, wonder, bedazzlement, gratitude, and I know not what. But after we were engaged, love came. Yes, I loved him deeply, at last.”

“And those pictures. Were they *really* painted photographs?”

“No, of course not. It was only my Uncle’s artful way of getting out of a scrape. He is quite a diplomatist—and his bluntness is very often all put on. But let me finish my strange tale. About that time, Mark, who lived in London then, often came to see us; and whenever my strange lover was not with me, he was at my brother’s side. They were inseparables—and many handsome presents he made him too. One day, we both went down the river

with him to see a grand iron yacht which he was building on a new plan—and which was just ready to be launched. The captain of her was an old weatherbeaten Greek, like the pirate Lambro—so calm, and resolute, and self-possessed. There were other Greek sailors about too, doing the rigging; and she was to be launched a few days after—all ready for sea. A splendid lady's cabin had been fitted up for *me*; and we were to be married soon, and I was to go with him to the “Isles of Greece, where burning Sappho loved and sung”—and drink Samian wine—and I know not what besides. When the day for launching came, I stood at the bow, and swung against her stem a bottle of Greek wine, suspended by a silken cord; and christened her by a name which he had let me choose—EIONE, one of the Oceanides—and as I did it they struck away a wedge, and she slid smoothly off the stocks, amidst great hurrahs. We all then went on board, and dined; and in the evening a crew of Greeks rowed us up the river in the yacht's gig, by moonlight, and starlight, and gaslight, and the light of each other's flashing eyes. Oh, it was a wild and a vivid scene, which I can

never forget—passing under those bridges, and amongst the shipping in the pool at night. We were landed at Hungerford, and walked home. Poor fellow! Poor fellow! To think of what followed next—that very night. He was good then, and loveable,—but he can be loved no more—he has fallen now—and yet my heart will sometimes plead for him, wicked as he is.”

Nelly looked up into her companion's face, as she said this, and saw her brush away a tear, but she smiled the instant after, and said gaily :

“If they were taking me, like the poor Cenci, to have my head chopped off, I think, Nell, I should smile through my tears if I had to tell what followed next that night—and yet it was very sad, and foolish too. He was kneeling before me in our drawing-room, and caressing me, when I put my arm fondly round his shoulder, for the first time I had ever done so, and felt on one side of it a hump, or deformity, of which I was not aware. One side of his loose velvet tunic was padded, the other side not,—an artifice which merely made his shoulders look round, and concealed the deformity. In the sudden shock of this discovery I fainted.

When I came to myself again, I was alone in the room. He had hurried off. Then, day after day passed on, and he came no more—and in a week or so, Mark learnt that he had started in his yacht, without me—no one knew whither; but a little grey-headed old Frenchman, and an Italian girl about my own age had gone with him—the same wretched creature of whom he is now in chase, and whom he has since learnt to hate—the model for his *Andromeda*—a wretch whom he had met at a Life Academy before he knew me. With her to occupy his lady's cabin—and with her infamous Uncle to make merry with him in his downward course of sin, he started—and until a few weeks since, no one knew what had become of him. My Uncle and Brother were both furious at his treatment of me, and never ceased to vilify him for his perfidy; but I kept my own counsel, for I knew more than they did about the reason of his conduct.”

“And did you never receive one line from him to tell you where he was? Did you wait on, year after year, cherishing the hope that he would return some day?”

“ You know all the rest, Nelly—except one little episode, which I am ashamed to tell you now—and about his last letter to me, written a few days ago, and which you shall see. When Mark accidentally found him again, living at Grantchester in that old house—and saved his life from the effects of the poisoned draught which that dreadful girl gave him—in just retribution, my Uncle says, for his perfidy towards *me*—I wrote to him, as in duty bound; and here is his reply—or, at least, a copy of it, for the letter itself I tore up.”

Nelly read the document over more than once; and as she returned it, strange to say, it happened that the shadow of the rock in which they had been sitting passed away, and a limb of the setting sun came suddenly into view from behind its edge, and shed its golden rays upon them. They looked into each other's ruddy faces, and smiled.

“ A ray of hope is beaming on you from the *west*,” said Nelly to her friend. “ To have loved him once must be to love him always—or I know nothing of a woman's heart.”

But Giulia shook her head. "The right man has not come yet, my Nell. Perhaps we shall see him some day. Who knows?"

They rose to go, for it was late; and the next morning Miss Fano bade adieu to Sark.

## CHAPTER 15.

## DAILY LIFE OF A READING MAN.

THE Fanos left England for Florence; and Mark, after seeing them depart, returned to his books in the little room over the College kitchen. There the days and weeks rolled calmly on, until the Summer gave place to Autumn, and the men came up again in droves from their long vacation, and the University was as busy as a bee-hive. The following extract from one of his letters to Nelly at that time may amuse the reader, from the insight it affords of the life of a reading man at Cambridge:—

\* \* \* \* \*

“The men are all up now, and our little College—the fourth in size in the University—



is as busy and crowded as a hive. I will try and give you an idea of the life we lead—I mean us reading fellows—for what the rowing men do I can't say, as they form a different set. For that side of College life, see Verdant Green, and various fashionable novels written by ladies; from which you will gather that the reading men are the muffs, and the rowing ones the swells of the University. But I can't aspire to describe *them*. I can only tell you about the class of men of whom your poor dull Mark is a type—and of the kind of life *we* lead.

“The first sound that greets my ears in the morning is the old bed-maker in the next room raking at my fire; and then comes the horrid Chapel bell at half-past seven—and a sonorous, dogmatical, impertinent summons it is. We are all bound to keep eight Chapels a week, two of them being on Sunday. Some fellows begin vigorously to keep them in the early part of the week, so as to be free men at the latter end of it; others pursue the opposite course, and take their holiday first. I generally go in the morning now, because there is a Euclid lecture at eight. Our Dean is sometimes a quarter of an hour late, and then

it is rich fun to hear him scramble over the prayer for the Parliament while the lecture bell is ringing. By long practice he has got the art of reading immensely fast, and at the same time well ; and fellows think him no end of a brick. One of the scholars reads the lessons, and woe betide him if he doesn't get over the ground ; but the sims turn up the whites of their eyes in disgust. Happily, however, we hav'n't many sims here ; they belong mostly to the little dull Colleges, which never turn out any high men. At evening Chapel most of the men take a doze. One unlucky poor fellow, last night, who has a rather bushy head of hair, well greased and curly, was leaning back in his stall asleep, when a lock caught fire against the taper behind him. In an instant his whole wig was in a blaze, with a wreath of smoke ascending to the ceiling. Everyone of us burst out laughing, Dean and all. On Saints' days and Saints' eves, we wear a white surplice—or one which should be white. The other morning—it was cold and raw—an old freshman, who has been a naval instructor, wore a red comforter over it, which infuriated the worthy Dean. The

apology that he had once caught a cold on the coast of Africa, through the want of his comforter, was not accepted, and the warm article was condemned. Most fellows wear their pilot coats under their surplice on cold mornings. Cap and gown must be worn in the morning until twelve, and in the evening after four. Between twelve and four you may wear what you like. At that time you see half the fellows cutting down to the riverside, through the streets of the town, in flannel jackets and trousers—with bare arms, and striped nightcaps. Noble fellows some of them, and some who will wear the ermine and sit on the woolsack one day; and then if you run along with them by the towing path, and follow the racing boats—(every College has one or two eight oars)—some such shouts as these salute your ear—‘Go it Jesus’—‘Well pulled Christ’s’—‘Bravo Emmanuel’—‘Into ’em. Trinity’—‘A bump, a bump, for St. John’s cannibals’—(cannot pull, abbreviated). I am a cannibal myself, and am really taking quite an interest in it. But they won’t catch me slaving as some fellows do. I pull third, and the coxswain is often quite personal at the

coolness with which third does his duty. 'Billy Whistle,' as they call him—(that is Dr. Whewell, Master of Trinity)—tried to put down the boating, but got nearly put down himself. Pigeon shooting and billiards he did contrive to knock on the head, but simply because every gentleman in the University supported him against the low set; but the boating was another matter. But all this is a digression. I must take you back to the eight o'clock lecture on Euclid. The first morning we went to it our names were called over, and one poor wretch was found by the lecturer without—not his wedding garment—but his purple gown with the velvet bands. 'Sir,' said the Don, in a tone of deep reproach, 'You have come here without your gown.' 'Indeed, Sir,' replied the unlucky freshman, 'I had it on when I came into the room. I had it on here a minute ago, I assure you.' 'But it's not on now.' He looked and found it under his feet. He was standing upon it. How it got there no one ever knew, but we all burst out laughing. His name was Adams. We then sat down at our tables; and the Lecturer took his seat amongst us, with the list of names in alpha-

betical order before him. 'Mr. Adams,' he said, looking round for some one to reply, 'will you have the kindness to define a circle.' Poor Adams again! He looked awfully nervous, and we all began to titter. 'A circle, Sir, did you say, if you please?' 'Yes, Sir, a circle. I want a definition of it.' 'A circle is a line—a straight line, I mean—bounded by a curve called circumference—(much excitement)—and is such that every point within it drawn to that straight line is called the center.'

"'That may be one way of defining a circle,' replied the Lecturer, with perfect gravity, as if the definition was by no means new to him, 'but I think it is better to regard it as a *plane figure*, bounded by a *curve* called the circumference. Perhaps Mr. Addison will kindly complete the definition.'

"And so we went on for an hour. Your humble servant got himself entangled a good deal with the theory of parallel lines; and ventured to improve upon Euclid's twelfth axiom by a new one of his own, thus:—

"Axiom 12. Through the same point there cannot be drawn more than one straight line parallel to a given straight line.

“ We had also some talk about Euclid’s definition of a square, and improved upon it by saying that it was a plane equilateral four-sided rectilineal figure, having *one* right angle.

“ I tell you all this, Nell, because you have learnt some Euclid with Barbara, and I am sure you would shine amongst us, particularly when they got you with the chalk before the black board. But you would prefer Euclid’s own method of drawing figures on the seashore, I dare say ; and so would I, if I had you to listen to my demonstrations, and if the shore were that of the dear little bay.

“ These Euclid lectures are very jolly. I quite look forward to them. Our tutor contrives to throw quite a new interest into the subject. Here is a little problem for you which he gave us to-day. ‘ Cut a long narrow strip of paper, and tie it into a knot in the middle ; squeeze the knot flat ; and prove that it is a regular pentagon.’ See, I send you one. Make Barbara solve it, if you cannot.

“ Well ; after this lecture I am as hungry as a hunter, and could eat any mortal thing that came in my way. And then for breakfast,

which I have to make for myself, and be sharp about it—for the Classical lecture comes on at ten. There are the eggs to boil, and the milk to boil, and the coffee to boil in a wonderful patent affair with an open bell-shaped top, and they all go on the fire together, for there is no time to lose. Presently, up comes the boiling water into the open bell where the coffee is; and while I am stirring it up with a spoon, over boils the milk, and I have to hurry off with that—and then the eggs are boiled hard—and I long for some kind little fairy to help me—and you may guess *who* that kind little fairy is.

“ And then the Classical lecture—Seneca’s Epistles one day, and Homer’s Odyssey the next—both charming. But it is rather dreary when one is not put on oneself, and I slyly try to do my geometrical deductions when the lecturer is not looking—which he never is—for he is a ‘stunning brick.’ Once they say a man, for fun, construed *ego* He, *sum* was, *stultus* a wise man; when he quietly put him right with “That may be one way of rendering the passage, but I think it would be better thus: *Ego* I, *sum* am, *stultus* a fool. The fellows

here are not treated as schoolboys, but as free-born Britons to whom courtsey is due.

“After Classical lecture comes an hour with one’s ‘coach’ (private tutor)—then a couple of hours’ work in your own room—and then a pull in the cannibal boat, or a sharp walk for an hour or two till Hall—or a gallop on a hired nag, if you hav’n’t the luck to keep one of your own. Thus between two and four the whole University turns out, and empties itself along all the roads near Cambridge,—or else on the river.

“At half-past three the warning bell rings for Hall, and at four dinner is served. The dining Hall is a large lofty room, in which the examinations are held as well, and we sit down about a hundred and twenty to dinner, or more. The fellows sit at a table athwartships, on a raised platform at one end; and the undergraduates at three long tables fore and aft—the freshmen at one, the second year men at another, and the third year men at the last. We dine in our gowns; and waiters called ‘Finders’ attend upon us. A joint is placed between every four men, and it looks very foolish when they have done with it, I



can tell you. If you take a second course it is charged extra, and they bring you a list called the 'sizing-list.' The puddings and pies, &c., are called sizings. What will your dear Mamma say when I tell you that it is only the muffs who 'size'—for here all sorts of pies and puddings are supposed to put the boating men out of training, and it is thought a childish folly to like sweets. There is a poor fellow of my year who has two or three warts on his face, and always 'sizes,' and they say that these warts come from eating too much pastry! As for me, I never cared much for goodies, and only ate them when I was with you to please your Mamma and Bridget.

“ After dinner one goes to some man's rooms to wine, or some man comes to yours, and you have a cosy chat till Chapel bell rings; and then you go for the snooze I told you of in one of the stalls; and after that refresher comes the tea; and then the dry symbols over the midnight oil—all alone.

Such is the daily life of a quiet reading man—varied only by a little speechifying at the Union now and then—and a wine party. The fellows you meet are many of them such as you

are proud to call your friends, and whom you hope to know in after life. It is worth going to College if only to make such friends as these.

“ Thank your dear Mamma for her kind note to me, about the money matter. It is simple enough. She is your natural guardian until you come of age, and the first half year’s interest due last month has been put to her account at the Guernsey banker’s. That is as it should be. Your kind presents arrived safely yesterday. Can you fancy my delight in opening a box from *you*. The model of old Nep’s rough head is capital. How well you are getting on. Some day I hope you will meet my sister again, in her own home at Florence, and take some more lessons from her. I think ART is your strong point. You ought to try to paint in oil colours now. Angelina can show you how to set your palette, and copy a sketch or two; and then you may go to Nature. I shall read with great interest your Papa’s Essays. Thank your Mamma for letting you send me his books. The views you have done with your own little hands are already framed and glazed, and hanging on my walls. It is cheering to look at them when I raise my

head from a + b. As for the delicious Chaumontels from Guernsey Market, they will be handy when I give a spread, as soon as a few of them are quite ripe. I have ordered a pretty bracket for Nep's head, painted oak colour and varnished. I sent off yesterday a box for you, containing views of the Colleges—two or three books—and some other matters. One of the books is a love story, and I want to know how you like it. I have enclosed some newspaper reviews of it which have just appeared. How funny it is to see how different people differ in their criticism on a pure matter of taste and feeling. One critic, evidently a gouty-legged old fellow who has outlived the feelings of his youth, writes, with his basin of gruel before him, that the love-making is too violent, and the young ladies too fast. He likes a lot of doubts and fears, and nice weighings of character, and advances, and retrogressions, until some happy accident brings the loving couple closer together, and their lips within kissing distance, and ties the knot at last. He does not like the hero (a young Cantab by the way) writing to his friend, and describing in passionate terms his lady-love's flowing hair,

and delicate limbs, &c., and calling her 'dearest,' and preferring her to the stars, (which is nature to a T). Nor does he like the allusions to a very elementary science which occur in *seven* pages out of *two hundred* of the work! He has a stereotyped idea on the subject of novels, and the book does not please him. It is not high art enough, and dreary enough, to satisfy his over-cultivated fastidious taste. Finish your gruel, my friend; you and I do not agree. The other critics have all been better pleased. They have still some warm blood in their veins; and one of them encourages the author to try again, and says some good-natured things about his first attempt.

"By-the-bye, our friend the knight of the red comforter 'keeps' in the next rooms to me. He is an awfully hard-working fellow, and always at it. He is over forty, I think; and has travelled a good deal—in the East—Algeria—&c. Some of his yarns are very amusing. One day, in the jungle in North Africa, with his gun only loaded with large shot, he let fly at a something that was moving in the bushes within a few yards of him, and the report was followed by a young whelp of a lion setting up a

hideous howl of pain. He bolted in double quick, for fear the mother of the interesting young cub might be in the neighbourhood and hear her darling's scream. A few nights after, they were camping out in their tent, and as he lay he heard something snuffing on the other side of the canvas, and poking its great head against his back. It turned out to be a lion, and very likely the father of the aforesaid cub. Fancy only a sheet of canvas between yourself and him. The knight of the sanguinary-hued comforter jumped up at once and seized his rifle, while the king of beasts followed round the outside of the tent to the entrance. There he found an Arab servant just rousing himself from a quiet nap. A crunch on the head settled the poor fellow before he was quite awake, and the brute bore him off in his mouth, as a cat would a mouse, followed by a bullet from the rifle, which it was afterwards found struck him in the hind leg—for a party of them tracked him the next day, and settled him. Stories of this kind, when told by a man who you know speaks the truth, are very exciting; but their interest depends entirely upon the veracity of the narrator. They might be idealized with a gain

in pictorial effect. But perhaps not, after all. Let a man tell a true story graphically, and fill up all the details, and the truth will want no adornment, but will be more picturesque even than any fiction. So, at least, writes your Papa; and I almost agree with him. Tomkins, (the hero of the lion adventure), and I take a long country walk together very often on Sunday mornings; generally to Hardwick—a village about six miles from Cambridge, standing on the highest knoll about. From this you command a view over a wide expanse of flat country, going off into grey all round, just like the sea in tint. When the passing shadows of clouds flit over it the effect is grander than one would believe. Tomkins says it reminds him of the Roman Campagna. The four turrets of King's College Chapel can just be seen above a dark line of trees, and in the very centre of a patch of dirty smoke which always hovers over the town—the only blemish in the landscape. Fancy going back out of the fresh air, and living in it! Pah!—towns make me sick. I hate breathing and living in such pollution, and being defiled by it. Happy girl, that you don't know yet what a town is. May you never learn to like one. I

really think that if in this matter of your liking a town life our tastes should prove to be discordant, it would make me seriously unhappy. To me towns are a horror. There *must* be such places perhaps, and tastes must differ, in order to make the world picturesque ; but my love for country scenes, and fresh air, and pure sunshine, is a passion—almost a ruling passion—which might determine my whole course of life ; and the more I live amongst brick walls the more I long to escape from them. I should be happier as keeper of a lighthouse on some wild coast, than here always. I think I have discovered in your idiosyncrasy some analogy to my own in this matter of hating towns. Is it not so Nell ?”

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