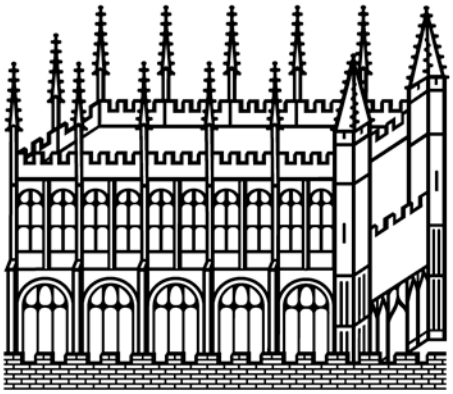

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GUILD COURT.

VOL. II.

GUILD COURT

BY

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"ALEC FORBES OF HOWGLEN,"

"DAVID ELGINBROD,"

ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

LONDON:

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1868.

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250 n 209

LONDON:
SAVILL, EDWARDS AND CO., PRINTERS, CHANDOS STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.

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GUILD COURT.

CHAPTER I.

How Tom Spent the Evening.

WHEN Tom left the office he walked into Mr. Kitely's shop, for he was afraid lest Mr. Stopper should see him turn up to Guild Court. He had almost forgotten Mr. Kitely's behaviour about the book he would not keep for him, and his resentment was gone quite. There was nobody in the shop but Mattie.

"Well, chick," said Thomas, kindly, but more condescendingly than suited Miss Matilda's tastes.

"Neither chick nor child," she answered promptly, though where she got the phrase is a mystery, as indeed is the case with almost all the sayings of such children.

"What are you, then? A fairy?"

"If I was, I know what I would do. Oh, wouldn't I just! I should think I would!"

"Well, what would you do, little Miss What's-your-name?"

"My name is Miss Kitely; but that's neither here nor there. Oh no! it's not me! Wouldn't I just!"

"Well, Miss Kitely, I want to know what you would do if you were a fairy?"

"I would turn your eyes into gooseberries, and your tongue into a bit of leather a foot long; and every time you tried to speak, your long tongue would slap your blind eyes and make you cry."

"What a terrible doom!" returned Thomas, offended at the child's dislike to him, but willing to carry it off. "Why?"

"Because you made Miss Burton's eyes red, you naughty man! *I* know you. It must be you. Nobody else could make her eyes red but you, and you go and do it."

Thomas's first movement was of anger; for he

felt, as all who have concealments are ready to feel, that he was being uncomfortably exposed. He turned his back on the child, and proceeded to examine the books on a level with his face. While he was thus engaged, Mr. Kitely entered.

"How do you do, Mr. Worboise?" he said. "I've got another copy of that book you and I fell out about some time ago. I can let you have this one at half the price."

It was evident that the bookseller wanted to be conciliatory. Thomas, in his present mood, was inclined to repel his advances, but he shrunk from contention, and therefore said,

"Thank you. I shall be glad to have it. How much is it?"

Mr. Kitely named the amount, and, ashamed to appear again unable, even at the reduced price, to pay for it, Thomas pulled out the last farthing of the money in his posession, which came to the exact sum required, and pocketed the volume.

"If you would excuse a man who has seen something of the world—more than was good for

him at one time of his life—Mr. Worboise," said Mr. Kitely, as he pocketed the money, "I would give you a hint about that German up the court. He's a clever fellow enough, I dare say—perhaps too clever. Don't you have anything to do with him beyond the German. Take my advice. I don't sit here all day at the mouth of the court for nothing. I can see what comes in my way as well as another man."

"What is there to say against him, Mr. Kitely? I haven't seen any harm in him."

"I'm not going to commit myself in warning you, Mr. Worboise. But I do warn you. Look out, and don't let him lead you into mischief."

"I hope I am able to take care of myself, Mr. Kitely," said Thomas, with a touch of offence.

"I hope you are, Mr. Worboise," returned the bookseller, drily; "but there's no offence meant in giving you the hint."

At this moment Mr. Stopper passed the window. Thomas listened for the echo of his steps up the archway, and as none came, he knew that he had gone along the street. He waited, there-

fore, till he thought he must be out of sight, and then sped uneasily from the shop, round the corner, and up to Mrs. Boxall's door, which the old lady herself opened for him, not looking so pleased as usual to see him. Mr. Molken was watching from the opposite ground-floor window. A few minutes after, Mr. Stopper repassed the window of Mr. Kitely's shop, and went into the counting-house.

Thomas left Mrs. Boxall to shut the door, and rushed eagerly up the stairs, and into the sitting-room. There he found the red eyes of which Mattie had spoken. Lucy rose and held out her hand, but her manner was constrained, and her lips trembled as if she were going to cry. Thomas would have put his arm round her and drawn her to him, but she gently pushed his arm away, and he felt as many a man has felt, and every man, perhaps, ought to feel, that in the gentlest repulse of the woman he loves there is something terribly imperative and absolute.

"Why, Lucy!" he said, in a tone of hurt; "what have I done?"

"If you can forget so soon, Thomas," answered Lucy, "I cannot. Since yesterday I see things in a different light altogether. I cannot, for your sake any more than my own, allow things to go on in this doubtful way."

"Oh! but, Lucy, I was taken unawares yesterday; and to-day, now I have slept upon it, I don't see there is any such danger. I ought to be a match for that brute Stopper, anyhow."

Yet the brute Stopper had outreached him, or, at least, "served him out," three or four times that very day, and he had refused to acknowledge it to himself, which was all his defence, poor wretch.

"But that is not all the question, Thomas. It is not right. At least, it seems to me that it is not right to go on like this. People's friends ought to know. I would not have done it if Grannie hadn't been to know. But then I ought to have thought of your friends as well as my own."

"But there would be no difficulty if I had only a grandmother," urged Thomas, "and one

as good as yours. I shouldn't have thought of not telling then."

"I don't think the difficulty of doing right makes it unnecessary to do it," said Lucy.

"I think you might trust that to me, Lucy," said Thomas, falling back upon his old attempted relation of religious instructor to his friend.

Lucy was silent for a moment; but after what she had gone through in the night, she knew that the time had come for altering their relative position if not the relation itself.

"No, Thomas," she said; "I must take my own duty into my own hands. I *will* not go on this way."

"Do you think then, Lucy, that in affairs of this kind a fellow ought to do just what his parents want?"

"No, Thomas. But I do think he ought not to keep such things secret from them."

"Not even if they are unreasonable and tyrannical?"

"No. A man who will not take the consequences of loving cannot be much of a lover."

"Lucy!" cried Thomas, now stung to the heart.

"I can't help it, Thomas," said Lucy, bursting into tears; "I *must* speak the truth, and if you cannot bear it, the worse for me—and for you, too, Thomas."

"Then you mean to give me up?" said Thomas, pathetically, without, however, any real fear of such an unthinkable catastrophe.

"If it be giving you up to say I will not marry a man who is too much afraid of his father and mother to let them know what he is about, then I do give you up. But it will be you who give me up if you refuse to acknowledge me as you ought."

Lucy could not have talked like this ever before in her life. She had gone through an eternity of suffering in the night. She was a woman now. She had been but a girl before. Now she stood high above Thomas. He was but a boy still, and not beautiful as such. She was all at once old enough to be his mother. There was no escape from the course she must take;

no *dodging* was possible. This *must* be. But she was and would be gentle with poor Thomas.

"You do not love me, Lucy," he cried.

"My poor Thomas, I do love you; love you so dearly that I trust and pray you may be worthy of my love. Go and do as you ought, and come back to me—like one of the old knights you talk about," she added, with the glimmer of a hopeful smile, "bringing victory to his lady."

"I will, I will," said Thomas, overcome by her solemn beauty and dignified words. It was as if she had cast the husk of the girl, and had come out a saving angel. But the perception of this was little more to him yet than a poetic sense of painful pleasure.

"I will, I will," he said. "But I cannot to-night, for my father and mother are both at Folkestone. But I will write to them—that will be best."

"Any way you like, Thomas. I don't care how you do it, so it is done."

All this time the old lady, having seen that

something was wrong, had discreetly kept out of the way, for she knew that the quarrels of lovers at least are most easily settled between themselves. Thomas now considered it all over and done with, and Lucy, overjoyed at her victory, leaned into his arms, and let him kiss her ten times. Such a man, she ought not, perhaps—only she did not know better—to have allowed to touch her till he had done what he had promised. To some people the promise is the difficult part, to others the performance. To Thomas, unhappily, the promising was easy.

They did not hear the door open. It was now getting dark, but the two were full in the light of the window, and visible enough to the person who entered. He stood still for one moment, during which the lovers unwound their arms. Only when parting, they became aware that a man was in the room. He came forward with hasty step. It was Richard Boxall. Thomas looked about for his hat. Lucy stood firm and quiet, waiting.

"Lucy, where is your grandmother?"

"Up-stairs, uncle, I believe," answered Lucy.

"Is she aware of that fellow's presence?"

"You are not very polite, uncle," said Lucy, with dignity. "This is my friend, Mr. Worboise, whom I believe you know. Of course I do not receive visitors without my grandmother's knowledge."

Mr. Boxall choked an oath in his throat, or rather the oath nearly choked him. He turned and went down the stair again; but neither of them heard the outer door close. Thomas and Lucy stared at each other in dismay.

The facts of the case were these, as near as I can guess. The *Ningpo* had dropped down to Gravesend, and the Boxalls had joined her there. But some delay had arisen, and she was not to sail till the next morning. Mr. Boxall had resolved to make use of the time thus gained or lost, and had come up to town. I cannot help believing that it was by contrivance of Mr. Stopper, who had watched Tom and seen him go up the court, that he went through the door from his private room, instead of going round,

which would have given warning to the lovers. Possibly he returned intending to see his mother; but after the discovery he made, avoided her partly because he was angry and would not quarrel with her the last thing before his voyage. Upon maturer consideration, he must have seen that he had no ground for quarrelling with her at all, for she could have known nothing about Tom in relation to Mary, except Tom had told her, which was not at all likely. But before he had had time to see this, he was on his way to Gravesend again. He was so touchy as well as obstinate about everything wherein his family was concerned, that the sight of Tom with his Mary's cousin was enough to drive all reflection out of him for an hour at least.

Thomas and Lucy stood and stared at each other. Thomas stared from consternation; Lucy only stared at Tom.

"Well, Thomas," she said at last, with a sweet watery smile; for she had her lover, and she had lost her idol. She had got behind the scenes, and could worship no more; but Dagon

was a fine idea, notwithstanding his fall, and if she could not set him up on his pedestal again, she would at least try to give him an arm-chair. Fish-tailed Dagon is an unfortunate choice for the simile, I know, critical reader; but let it pass, and, the idea it illustrates being by no means original, let the figure at least have some claim to the distinction.

"Now he'll go and tell my father," said Tom; "and I wish you knew what a row my mother and he will make between them."

"But why, Tom? Have they any prejudice against me? Do they know there is such a person?"

"I don't know. They may have heard of you at your uncle's."

"Then why should they be so very angry?"

"My father because you have no money, and my mother because you have no grace."

"No grace, Tom! Am I so very clumsy?"

Thomas burst out laughing.

"I forgot," he said. "You were not brought up to my mother's slang. She and her set

use Bible words till they make you hate them."

"But you shouldn't hate them. They are good in themselves, though they be wrong used."

"That's all very well. Only if you had been pestered with them as I have been, I am afraid you would have had to give in to hating them, as well as me, Lucy. I never did like that kind of slang. But what am I to do with old Boxall—I beg your pardon—with your uncle Richard? He'll be sure to write to my father before he sails. They're friends, you know."

"Well, but you will be beforehand with him, and then it wont matter. You were going to do it at any rate, and the thing now is to have the start of him," said Lucy, perhaps not sorry to have in the occurrence an additional spur to prick the sides of Thomas's intent.

"Yes, yes, that's all very well," returned Thomas, dubiously, as if there was a whole world behind it.

"Now, dear Tom, do go home at once, and write. You will save the last post if you do,"

said Lucy decidedly; for she saw more and more the necessity, for Thomas's own sake, of urging him to action.

"So, instead of giving me a happy evening, you are going to send me home to an empty house!"

"You see the thing must be done, or my uncle will be before you," said Lucy, beginning to be vexed with him for his utter want of decision, and with herself for pushing him towards such an act. Indeed, she felt all at once that perhaps she had been unmaidenly. But there was no choice except to do it, or break off the engagement.

Now whether it was that her irritation influenced her tone and infected Tom with like irritation, or that he could not bear being thus driven to do what he so much disliked, while on the whole he would have preferred that Mr. Boxall should tell his father and so save him from the immediate difficulty, the evil spirit in him arose once more in rebellion, and, like the mule that he was, he made an effort to unseat

the gentle power that would have urged him along the only safe path on the mountain-side.

"Lucy, I will not be badgered this way. If you can't trust me, you wont get anything out of me."

Lucy drew back a step and looked at him for one moment; then turned and left the room. Thomas waited for a minute; then, choosing to arouse a great sense of injury in his bosom, took his hat, and went out, banging the door behind him.

Just as he banged Lucy's door, out came Mr. Molken from his. It was as if the devil had told a hawk to wait, and he would fetch him a pigeon.

"Coming to have your lesson after all?" he asked, as Thomas, from very indecision, made a step or two towards him.

"No; I don't feel inclined for a lesson to-night."

"Where are you going, then?"

"Oh, I don't know," answered Tom, trying to look no-how in particular.

"Come along with me, then. I'll show you something of life after dark."

"But where are you going?"

"You'll see that when we get there. You're not afraid, are you?"

"Not I," answered Tom; "only a fellow likes to know where he's going. That's all."

"Well, where would you like to go? A young fellow like you really ought to know something of the world he lives in. You are clever enough, in all conscience, if you only knew a little more."

"Go on, then. I don't care. It's nothing to me where I go. Only," Tom added, "I have no money in my pocket. I spent my last shilling on this copy of Goethe's poems."

"Ah, you never spent your money better! There was a man, now, that never contented himself with hearsay! He would know all the ways of life for himself—else how was he to judge of them all? He would taste of everything, that he might know the taste of it. Why should a man be ignorant of anything that can be known?

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Come along. I will take care of you. See if I don't!"

"But you can't be going anywhere in London for nothing. And I tell you I haven't got a farthing in my purse."

"Never mind that. It shan't cost you anything.—Now I am going to make a clean breast of it, as you English call it; though why there should be anything dirty in keeping your own secrets I don't know. I want to make an experiment with you."

"Give me chloroform, and cut me up?" said Tom, reviving as his quarrel with Lucy withdrew a little into the background.

"Not quite that. You shall neither take chloroform, nor have your eyes bandaged, nor be tied to the table. You can go the moment you have had enough of it. It is merely for the sake of my theory. Entirely an experiment."

"Perhaps, if you told me your theory, I might judge of the nature of the experiment."

"I told you all about it the other day. You are one of those fortunate mortals doomed to be

lucky. Why, I knew one—not a gambler, I don't mean that—whose friends at last would have nothing to do with him where any chance was concerned. If it was only sixpenny points, they wouldn't play a single rubber of whist with him except he was their partner. In fact, the poor wretch was reduced to play only with strangers—comparative strangers, I mean, of course. He won everything."

"Then what do you want with me? Out with it."

"I only want to back you. You don't understand the thing. You shan't spend a farthing. I have plenty."—Here Molken pulled a few sovereigns from his pocket as he went on, and it never occurred to Tom to ask how he had them, seeing he was so hard-up at dinner-time.—"It's all for my theory of luck, I assure you. I have given up practical gambling, as I told you, long ago. It's not right. I *have* known enough about it, I confess to you—you know *we* understand each other; but I confess too—my theory—I *am* anxious about that."

All this time they had been walking along, Thomas paying no heed to the way they went. He would have known little about it, however, well as he thought he knew London, for they had entered a region entirely unknown to him.

"But you haven't told me, after all," he said, "where you are going."

"Here," answered Molken, pushing open the swing-door of a public-house.

* * * * *

The next morning Thomas made his appearance in the office at the usual hour, but his face was pale and his eyes were red. His shirt-front was tumbled and dirty, and he had nearly forty shillings in his pocket. He never looked up from his work, and now and then pressed his hand to his head. All this Mr. Stopper saw and enjoyed.

CHAPTER II.

How Lucy Spent the Night.

WHEN Lucy left the room, with her lover —if lover he could be called—alone in it, her throat felt as if it would burst with the swelling of something like bodily grief. She did not know what it was, for she had never felt anything like it before. She thought she was going to die. Her grandmother could have told her that she would be a happy woman if she did not have such a swelling in her throat a good many times without dying of it; but Lucy did not go to consult her grandmother. She went to her own room and threw herself on her bed, but started up again when she heard the door bang, flew to the window, and saw all that passed between Molken and Thomas till they left the court together. She had never seen Molken so

full in the face before; and whether it was from this full view, or that his face wore more of the spider expression upon this occasion I do not know—I incline to the latter, for I think that an on-looker can read the expression of a countenance better, sometimes, than the person engaged in conversation with its owner—however it was, she felt a dreadful repugnance to Molken from that moment, and became certain that he was trying in some way or other to make his own out of Thomas. With this new distress was mingled the kind, but mistaken self-reproach that she had driven him to it. Why should she not have borne with the poor boy, who was worried to death between his father and mother and Mr. Stopper and that demon down there? He would be all right if they would only leave him alone. He was but a poor boy, and, alas! she had driven him away from his only friend—for such she was sure she was. She threw herself on her bed, but she could not rest. All the things in the room seemed pressing upon her, as if they had staring eyes in their heads; and there was no heart anywhere.

Her grandmother heard the door bang, and came in search of her.

"What's the matter, my pet?" she asked, as she entered the room and found her lying on her bed.

"Oh, nothing, grannie," answered Lucy, hardly knowing what she said.

"You've quarrelled with that shilly-shally beau of yours, I suppose. Well, let him go!—*he*'s not much."

Lucy made no reply, but turned her face towards the wall, as mourners did ages before the birth of King Hezekiah. Grannie had learned a little wisdom in her long life, and left her. She would get a cup of tea ready, for she had great faith in bodily cures for mental aches. But before the tea was well in the tea-pot Lucy came down in her bonnet and shawl.

She could not rest. She tossed and turned. What could Thomas be about with that man? What mischief might he not take him into? Good women, in their supposed ignorance of men's wickedness, are not unfrequently like the angels, in that they understand it perfectly, with-

out the knowledge soiling one feather of their wings. They see it clearly—even from afar. Now, although Lucy could not know so much of it as many are compelled to know, she had some acquaintance with the lowest castes of humanity, and the vice of the highest is much the same as the vice of the lowest, only in general worse—more refined, and more detestable. So, by a natural process, without knowing how, she understood something of the kind of gulf into which a man like Molken might lead Thomas, and she could not bear the thoughts that sprung out of this understanding. Hardly knowing what she did, she got up and put on her bonnet and shawl, and went downstairs.

"Where on earth are you going, Lucy?" asked her grandmother, in some alarm.

Lucy did not know in the least what she meant to do. She had had a vague notion of setting out to find Thomas somewhere, and rescue him from the grasp of Moloch, but save for the restlessness with which her misery filled her, she could never have entertained the fancy. The

moment her grandmother asked her the question, she saw how absurd it would be. Still she could not rest. So she invented an answer, and ordered her way according to her word.

"I'm going to see little Mattie," she said. "The child is lonely, and so am I. I will take her out for a walk."

"Do then, my dear. It will do you both good," said the grandmother. "Only you must have a cup of tea first."

Lucy drank her cup of tea, then rose, and went to the bookshop. Mr. Kitely was there alone.

"How's Mattie to-night, Mr. Kitely? Is she any better, do you think?" she asked.

"She's in the back room there. I'll call her," said the bookseller, without answering either of Lucy's questions.

"Oh! I'll just go in to her. You wouldn't mind me taking her out for a little walk, would you?"

"Much obliged to you, miss," returned the bookseller, heartily. "It's not much amusement

the poor child has. I'm always meaning to do better for her, but I'm so tied with the shop that —*I* don't know hardly how it is, but somehow we go on the old way. She'll be delighted."

Lucy went into the back parlour, and there sat Mattie, with her legs curled up beneath her on the window-sill, reading a little book, thumbed and worn at the edges, and brown with dust and use.

"Well, Miss Burton," she cried, before Lucy had time to speak, "I've found something here. I think it's what people call poetry. I'm not sure; but I am sure it's good, whatever it is. Only I can't read it very well. Will you read it to me, please, miss? I do like to be read to."

"I want you to come out for a walk with me, Mattie," said Lucy, who was in no humour for reading.

Wise Mattie glanced up in her face. She had recognised the sadness in her tone.

"Well, read this first, please, Miss Burton," she said. "I think it will do you good. Things *will* go wrong. I'm sure it's very sad. And I

don't know what's to be done with the world. It's always going wrong. It's just like father's watch. He's always saying there's something out of order in its inside, and he's always a-taking of it to the doctor, as he calls the watchmaker to amuse me. Only I'm not very easy to amuse," reflected Mattie, with a sigh. "But," she resumed, "I wish I knew the doctor to set the world right. The clock o' St. Jacob's goes all right, but I'm sure Mr. Potter ain't the doctor to set the world right, any more than Mr. Derry is for Mr. Kitely's watch."

The associations in Mattie's mind were not always very clear either to herself or other people: they were generally just notwithstanding.

"But you have never been to Mr. Potter's church to know, Mattie."

"Oh! haven't I just? Times and times. Mr. Spelt has been a-taking of me. I do believe mother thinks I'm going to die, and wants to get me ready. I wonder what it all means."

"Nonsense, Mattie!" said Lucy, already turned a little aside from her own sorrow by the words

of the child. "You must put on your hat, and come out with me."

"My bonnet, miss. Hats are only fit for very little girls. And I wont go till you read this poetry to me—if it be poetry."

Lucy took the book, and read. The verses were as follows:—

As Jesus went into Jericho town,
'Twas darkness all, from toe to crown,
About blind Bartimeus.
He said, Our eyes are more than dim,
And so, of course, we don't see Him,
But David's Son can see us.

Cry out, cry out, blind brother, cry;
Let not salvation dear go by.
Have mercy, Son of David.
Though they were blind, they both could hear—
They heard, and cried, and He drew near;
And so the blind were saved.

O Jesus Christ, I am deaf and blind;
Nothing comes through into my mind;
I only am not dumb.
Although I see thee not, nor hear,
I cry because thou may'st be near:
O Son of Mary, come.

I feel a finger on mine ear;
A voice comes through the deafness drear:
  Be opened, senses dim.
A hand is laid upon mine eyes;
I hear and hearken, see and rise—
  'Tis He: I follow Him.

Before Lucy had finished reading the not very poetic lines, they had somehow or other reached her heart. For they had one quality belonging to most good poetry—that of directness or simplicity; and never does a mind like hers—like hers, I mean, in truthfulness—turn more readily towards the spiritual, which is the region after all out of which that which is natural comes, than when a cloud of mist enwraps and hides the world around it, leaving only the sky visible overhead. She closed the little book gently, laid it down, got Mattie's bonnet, and heedless of the remarks of the child upon the poem, put it on her, and led her out. Her heart was too full to speak. As they went through the shop—

"A pleasant walk to you, ladies," said the bookseller.

"Thank you, Mr. Kitely," returned his daughter, for Lucy could not yet speak.

They had left Bagot Street, and were in one of the principal thoroughfares, before Lucy had got the lump in her throat sufficiently swallowed to be able to say a word. She had not yet begun to consider where they should go. When they came out into the wider street, the sun, now near the going down, was shining golden through a rosy fog. Long shadows lay or flitted about over the level street. Lucy had never before taken any notice of the long shadows of evening. Although she was a town-girl, and had therefore had comparatively few chances, yet in such wide streets as she had sometimes to traverse they were not a rare sight. In the city, to be sure, they are much rarer. But the reason she saw them now was that her sorrowful heart saw the sorrowfulness of the long shadows out of the rosy mist, and made her mind observe them. The sight brought the tears again into her eyes, and yet soothed her. They looked so strange upon that wood-paved street, that they seemed to have wandered from

some heathy moor and lost themselves in the labyrinth of the city. Even more than the scent of the hay in the early morning, floating into the silent streets from the fields around London, are these long shadows to the lover of nature, convincing him that what seems the unnatural Babylon of artifice and untruth, is yet at least within the region of nature, contained in her bosom, and subjected to her lovely laws; is on the earth as truly as the grassy field upon which the child sees with delighted awe his very own shadow stretch out to such important, yea portentous length. Even hither come the marvels of Nature's magic. Not all the commonplaces of ugly dwellings, and cheating shops that look churches in the face and are not ashamed, can shut out that which gives mystery to the glen far withdrawn, and loveliness to the mountain-side. From this moment Lucy began to see and feel things as she had never seen or felt them before. Her weeping had made way for a deeper spring in her nature to flow—a gain far more than sufficient to repay the loss of

such a lover as Thomas, if indeed she must lose him.

But Mattie saw the shadows too.

"Well, miss, who'd ha' thought of such a place!" she said. "I declare it bewilders my poor brain. I feel every time a horse puts his foot on my shadow as if I must cry out. Isn't it silly? It's all my big head—it's not me, you know, miss."

Lucy could not yet make the remark, and therefore I make it for her—how often we cry out when something steps on our shadow, passing yards away from ourselves! There is not a phenomenon of disease—not even of insanity—that has not its counterpart in our moral miseries, all springing from want of faith in God. At least, so it seems to me. That will account for it all, or looks as if it would; and nothing else does.

It seems to me, also, that in thinking of the miseries and wretchedness in the world we too seldom think of the other side. We hear of an event in association with some certain individual, and we say—"How dreadful! How miserable!" And

perhaps we say—"Is there—can there be a God in the earth when such a thing can take place?" But we do not see into the region of actual suffering or conflict. We do not see the heart where the shock falls. We neither see the proud bracing of energies to meet the ruin that threatens, nor the gracious faint in which the weak escape from writhing. We do not see the abatement of pain which is paradise to the tortured; we do not see the gentle upholding in sorrow that comes even from the ministrations of nature—not to speak of human nature—to delicate souls. In a word, we do not see, and the sufferer himself does not understand, how God is present every moment, comforting, upholding, heeding that the pain shall not be more than can be borne, making the thing possible and not hideous. I say nothing of the peaceable fruits that are to spring therefrom; and who shall dare to say where they shall not follow upon such tearing up of the soil? Even those long shadows gave Lucy some unknown comfort, flowing from Nature's recognition of the loss of her lover; and she clasped

the little hand more tenderly, as if she would thus return her thanks to Nature for the kindness received.

To get out of the crowd on the pavement Lucy turned aside into a lane. She had got half-way down it before she discovered that it was one of those through which she had passed the night before when she went with Thomas to the river. She turned at once to leave it. As she turned, right before her stood an open church door. It was one of those sepulchral city churches, where the voice of the clergyman sounds ghostly, and it seems as if the dead below were more real in their presence than the half-dozen worshippers scattered among the pews.

On this occasion, however, there were seven present when Lucy and Mattie entered and changed the mystical number to the magical.

It was a church named outlandishly after a Scandinavian saint. Some worthy had endowed a week-evening sermon there after better fashion than another had endowed the poor of the parish. The name of the latter was recorded in golden

letters upon a black tablet in the vestibule, as the donor of 200*l.*, with the addition in letters equally golden, *None of which was ever paid by his trustees.*

I will tell you who the worshippers were. There was the housekeeper in a neighbouring warehouse, who had been in a tumult all the day, and at nightfall thought of the kine-browsed fields of her childhood, and went to church. There was an old man who had once been manager of a bank, and had managed it ill both for himself and his company; and having been dismissed in consequence, had first got weak in the brain, and then begun to lay up treasure in heaven. Then came a brother and two sisters, none of them under seventy. The former kept shifting his brown wig and taking snuff the whole of the service, and the latter two wiping, with yellow silk handkerchiefs, brown faces inlaid with coal-dust. They could not agree well enough to live together, for their father's will was the subject of constant quarrel. They therefore lived in three lodgings at considerable distances apart. But

every night in the week they met at this or that church similarly endowed, sat or knelt, or stood in holy silence or sacred speech for an hour and a half, walked together to the end of the lane discussing the sermon, and then separated till the following evening. Thus the better parts in them made a refuge of the house of God, where they came near to each other, and the destroyer kept a little aloof for the season. These, with the beadle and his wife, and Lucy and Mattie, made up the congregation.

Now when they left the lane there was no sun to be seen; but when they entered the church, there he was—his last rays pouring in through a richly-stained window, the only beauty of the building. This window—a memorial one—was placed in the northern side of the chancel, whence a passage through houses, chimneys, and churches led straight to the sunset, down which the last rays I speak of came speeding for one brief moment ere all was gone, and the memorial as faded and grey as the memory of the man to whom it was dedicated.

This change from the dark lane to the sun-lighted church, laid hold of Lucy's feelings. She did not know what it made her feel, but it aroused her with some vague sense of that sphere of glory which enwraps all our lower spheres, and she bowed her knees and her head, and her being worshipped, if her thoughts were too troubled to go upwards. The prayers had commenced; and as she kneeled, the words "He pardoneth and absolveth," were the first that found luminous entrance into her soul; and with them came the picture of Thomas, as he left the court with the man of the bad countenance. Of him, and what he might be about, her mind was full; but every now and then a flash of light, in the shape of words, broke through the mist of her troubled thoughts, and testified of the glory-sphere beyond; till at length her mind was so far calmed that she became capable of listening a little to the discourse of the preacher.

He was not a man of the type of Mr. Potter of St. Jacob's, who considered himself possessed of worldly privileges in virtue of a heavenly office

not one of whose duties he fulfilled in a heavenly fashion. Some people considered Mr. Fuller very silly for believing that he might do good in a church like this, and with a congregation like this, by speaking that which he knew, and testifying that which he had seen. But he did actually believe it. Somehow or other—I think because he was so much in the habit of looking up to the Father—the prayers took a hold of him once more every time he read them; and he so delighted in the truths he saw that he rejoiced to set them forth—was actually glad to *talk* about them to any one who would listen. When he confessed his feeling about congregations, he said that he preferred twelve people to a thousand. This he considered a weakness, however; except that he could more easily let his heart out to the twelve.

He took for his text the words of our Lord: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden." He could not see the faces of the strangers, for they sat behind a pillar, and therefore he had no means of discovering that

each of them had a heavy-laden heart: Lucy was not alone in trouble, for Syne had been hard upon Mattie that day. He addressed himself especially to the two old women before him, of whose story he knew nothing, though their faces were as well known to him as the pillars of the church. But the basin into which the fountain of his speech flowed was the heart of those girls.

No doubt presented itself as to the truth of what the preacher was saying; nor could either of them have given a single argument from history or criticism for the reality of the message upon which the preacher founded his exhortation. The truth is not dependent upon proof for its working. Its relation to the human being is essential, is in the nature of things; so that if it be but received in faith—that is, acted upon—it works its own work, and needs the buttressing of no arguments any more than the true operation of a healing plant is dependent upon a knowledge of Dioscorides. My reader must not, therefore, suppose that I consider

doubt an unholy thing; on the contrary, I consider spiritual doubt a far more precious thing than intellectual conviction, for it springs from the awaking of a deeper necessity than any that can be satisfied from the region of logic. But when the truth has begun to work its own influence in any heart, that heart has begun to rise out of the region of doubt.

When they came from the church, Lucy and Mattie walked hand-in-hand after the sisters and brother, and heard them talk.

"He's a young one, that!" said the old man. "He'll know a little better by the time he's as old as I am."

"Well, I did think he went a little too far when he said a body might be as happy in the work'us as with thousands of pounds in the Bank of England."

"I don't know," interposed the other sister. "He said it depended on what you'd got inside you. Now, if you've got a bad temper inside you, all you've got wont make you happy."

"Thank you, sister. You're very polite, *as*

usual. But, after all, where should we have been but for the trifle we've got in the Bank?"

"You two might ha' been living together like sisters, instead of quarrelling like two cats, if the money had gone as it ought to," said the old man, who considered that the whole property belonged of right to him.

By this time they had reached the end of the lane, and, without a word to each other, they separated.

"Syne," said Mattie, significantly. Syne was evidently her evil incarnation. Lucy did not reply, but hastened home with her, anxious to be alone. She did not leave the child, however, before she had put her to bed, and read again the hymn that had taken her fancy before they went out.

I will now show my reader how much of the sermon remained upon Lucy's mind. She sat a few minutes with her grandmother, and then told her that she felt better, but would like to go to bed. So she took her candle and went. As soon as she had closed her door, she knelt down

by her bedside, and said something like this—more broken, and with long pauses between—but like this:—

"O Jesus Christ, I come. I don't know any other way to come. I speak to thee. Oh, hear me. I am weary and heavy laden. Give me rest. Help me to put on the yoke of thy meekness and thy lowliness of heart, which thou sayest will give rest to our souls. I cannot do it without thy help. Thou couldst do it without help. I cannot. Teach me. Give me thy rest. How am I to begin? How am I to take thy yoke on me? I must be meek. I am very troubled and vexed. Am I angry? Am I unforgiving? Poor Thomas! Lord Jesus, have mercy upon Thomas. He does not know what he is doing. I will be very patient. I will sit with my hands folded, and bear all my sorrow, and not vex Grannie with it; and I wont say an angry word to Thomas. But, O Lord, have mercy upon him, and make him meek and lowly of heart. I have not been sitting at thy feet and learning of thee. Thou canst take all my trouble away by making

Thomas good. I ought to have tried hard to keep him in the way his mother taught him, and I have been idle and self-indulgent, and taken up with my music and dresses. I have not looked to my heart to see whether it was meek and lowly like thine. O Lord, thou hast given me everything, and I have not thought about thee. I thank thee that thou hast made me miserable, for now I shall be thy child. Thou canst bring Thomas home again to thee. Thou canst make him meek and lowly of heart, and give rest to his soul. Amen."

Is it any wonder that she should have risen from her knees comforted? I think not. She was already—gentle and good she had always been—more meek and lowly. She had begun to regard this meekness as the yoke of Jesus, and therefore to will it. Already, in a measure, she was a partaker of his peace.

Worn out by her suffering, and soothed by her prayer, she fell asleep the moment she laid her head upon the pillow. And thus Lucy passed the night.

CHAPTER III.

More Shuffling.

TOM went home the next night with a racking headache. Gladly would he have gone to Lucy to comfort him, but he was too much ashamed of his behaviour to her the night before, and too uneasy in his conscience. He was, indeed, in an abject condition of body, intellect, and morals. He went at once to his own room and to bed; fell asleep; woke in the middle of the night miserably gnawed by "Don Worm, the conscience;" tried to pray, and found it did him no good; turned his thoughts to Lucy, and burst into tears at the recollection of how he had treated her, imagining over and over twenty scenes in which he begged her forgiveness, till he fell asleep at last, dreamed that she turned her back upon him, and refused to hear

him, and woke in the morning with the resolution of going to see her that night, and confessing everything.

His father had come home after he went to bed, and it was with great trepidation that he went down to breakfast, almost expecting to find that he knew already of his relation to Lucy. But Richard Boxall was above that kind of thing, and Mr. Worboise was evidently free from any suspicion of the case. He greeted his son kindly, or rather frankly, and seemed to be in good spirits.

"Our friends are well down the channel by this time, with such a fair wind," he said. "Boxall's a lucky man to be able to get away from business like that. I wish you had taken a fancy to Mary, Tom. She's sure to get engaged before she comes back. Shipboard's a great place for getting engaged. Some hungry fellow, with a red coat and an empty breeches-pocket, is sure to pick her up. You might have had her if you had liked. However, you may do as well yet; and you needn't be in a hurry

now. It's not enough that there's as good fish in the sea: they must come to your net, you know."

Tom laughed it off, went to his office, worked the weary day through, and ran round to Guild Court the moment he left business.

Lucy had waked in the night as well as Tom; but she had waked to the hope that there was a power somewhere—a power working good, and upholding them that love it; to the hope that a thought lived all through the dark, and would one day make the darkness light about her; to the hope that a heart of love and help was at the heart of things, and would show itself for her need. When, therefore, Tom knocked—timidly almost—at the door, and opened it inquiringly, she met him with a strange light in her pale face, and a smile flickering about a lip that trembled in sympathy with her rain-clouded eyes. She held out her hand to him cordially, but neither offered to embrace—Thomas from shame, and Lucy from a feeling of something between that had to be removed before things could be as they

were—or rather before their outward behaviour to each other could be the same, for things could not to all eternity be the same again: they must be infinitely better and more beautiful, or cease altogether.

Thomas gave a look for one moment full in Lucy's eyes, and then dropped his own, holding her still by the consenting hand.

"Will you forgive me, Lucy?" he said, in a voice partly choked by feeling, and partly by the presence of Mrs. Boxall, who, however, could not hear what passed between them, for she sat knitting at the other end of the large room.

"Oh, Tom!" answered Lucy, with a gentle pressure of his hand.

Now, as all that Tom wanted was to be reinstated in her favour, he took the words as the seal of the desired reconciliation, and went no further with any confession. The words, however, meaning simply that she loved him and wanted to love him, ought to have made Tom the more anxious to confess all—not merely the rudeness of which he had been guilty and which

had driven her from the room, but the wrong he had done her in spending the evening in such company; for surely it was a grievous wrong to a pure girl like Lucy to spend the space between the last and the next pressure of her hand in an atmosphere of vice. But the cloud cleared from his brow, and, with a sudden reaction of spirits, he began to be merry. To this change, however, Lucy did not respond. The cloud seemed rather to fall more heavily over her countenance. She turned from him, and went to a chair opposite her grandmother. Tom followed, and sat down beside her. He was sympathetic enough to see that things were not right between them after all. But he referred it entirely to her uneasiness at his parents' ignorance of their engagement.

Some of my readers may think that Lucy too was to blame for want of decision; that she ought to have refused to see Thomas even once again, till he had made his parents aware of their relation to each other. But knowing how little sympathy and help he had from those parents, she felt that to be severe upon him thus would

be like turning him out into a snowstorm to find his way home across a desolate moor; and her success by persuasion would be a better thing for Thomas than her success by compulsion. No doubt, if her rights alone had to be considered, and not the necessities of Thomas's moral nature, the plan she did not adopt would have been the best. But no one liveth to himself—not even a woman whose dignity is in danger—and Lucy did not think of herself alone. Yet, for the sake of both, she remained perfectly firm in her purpose that Thomas should do something.

"Your uncle has said nothing about that unfortunate rencontre, Lucy," said Tom, hoping that what had relieved him would relieve her. "My father came home last night, and the paternal brow is all serene."

"Then I suppose you said something about it, Tom?" said Lucy, with a faint hope dawning in her heart.

"Oh! there's time enough for that. I've been thinking about it, you see, and I'll soon con-

vince you," he added, hurriedly, seeing the cloud grow deeper on Lucy's face. "I must tell you something which I would rather not have mentioned."

"Don't tell me, if you ought not to tell me, Tom," said Lucy, whose conscience had grown more delicate than ever, both from the turning of her own face towards the light, and from the growing feeling that Tom was not to be trusted as a guide.

"There's no reason why I shouldn't," returned Tom. "It's only this—that my father is vexed with me because I wouldn't make love to your cousin Mary, and that I have let her slip out of my reach now; for, as he says, somebody will be sure to snap her up before she comes back. So it's just the worst time possible to tell him anything unpleasant, you know. I really had far better wait till the poor girl is well out to sea, and off my father's mind; for I assure you, Lucy, it will be no joke when he does know. He's not in any mood for the news just now, I can tell you. And then my mother's away,

too, and there's nobody to stand between me and him."

Lucy made no reply to this speech, uttered in the eagerness with which a man, seeking to defend a bad position, sends one weak word after another, as if the accumulation of poor arguments would make up for the lack of a good one. She sat for a long minute looking down on a spot in the carpet—the sight of which ever after was the signal for a pain-throb; then, in a hopeless tone, said, with a great sigh—

"I've done all I can."

The indefiniteness of the words frightened Thomas, and he began again to make his position good.

"I tell you what, Lucy," he said; "I give you my promise, that before another month is over—that is to give my father time to get over his vexation—I will tell him all about it, and take the consequences."

Lucy sighed once more, and looked dissatisfied. But again it passed through her mind that if she were to insist farther and refuse to see Thomas

until he had complied with her just desire, she would, if not break, most likely so far weaken the bond between them, as to take from him the only influence that might yet work on him for good, and expose him entirely to such influences as she most feared. Therefore she said no more. But she could not throw the weight off her, or behave to Thomas as she had behaved hitherto. They sat silent for some time—Thomas troubled before Lucy, Lucy troubled about Thomas. Then with another sigh, Lucy rose and went to the piano. She had never done so before when Thomas was with her, for he did not care much about her music. Now she thought of it as the only way of breaking the silence. Strange it is how often silence is a thing that must be broken.

Then came into her memory a stately, sweet song her father used to sing. She did not know where he got either the words or the music of it. I know that the words are from Petrarch. Probably her father had translated them, for he had been much in Italy, and was a delicately gifted man. But whose was the music, except it was

his own, I do not know. And as she sang the words, Lucy perceived for the first time how much they meant, and how they belonged to her; for in singing them she prayed both for herself and for Thomas.

I am so weary with the burden old
  Of foregone faults, and power of custom base,
  That much I fear to perish from the ways,
And fall into my enemy's grim hold.
A mighty friend, to free me, though self-sold,
  Came, of his own ineffable high grace;
  Then went, and from my vision took his face.
Him now in vain I weary to behold.
  But still his voice comes echoing below:
Ho ye that labour! see, this is the gate!
  Come unto me—the way all open lies!
What heavenly grace will—what love—or what fate—
The glad wings of a dove on me bestow,
  That I may rest, and from the earth arise?*

Her sweet tones, the earnest music, and the few phrases he could catch here and there, all had their influence upon Tom. They made him feel. And with that, as usual, he was content. Lucy herself had felt as she had never felt before, and therefore sung as she had never sung before.

* Petrarch's sixtieth Sonnet.

And Tom was astonished to find that her voice had such power over him, and began to wonder how it was that he had not experienced this before. He went home more solemn and thoughtful than he had ever been.

Still he did nothing.

CHAPTER IV.

A Coming Event.

THUS things went on for the space of about three weeks. Tom went to see Lucy almost every night, and sometimes stayed late; for his mother was still from home, and his father was careless about his hours so long as they were decent. Lucy's face continued grave, but lost a little of its trouble; for Tom often asked her to sing to him now, and she thought she was gaining more of the influence over him which she so honestly wished to possess. As the month drew towards a close, however, the look of anxiety began to deepen upon her countenance.

One evening, still and sultry, they were together as usual. Lucy was sitting at the piano where she had just been singing, and Tom stood beside her. The evening, as the Italian poets

would say, had grown brown, and Mrs. Boxall was just going to light the candles, when Tom interposed a request for continued twilight.

"Please, grannie," he said—for he too called her grannie—"do not light the candles yet. It is so sweet and dusky!—just like Lucy here."

"All very well for you," said Mrs. Boxall; "but what is to become of me? My love-making was over long ago, and I want to see what I'm about now. Ah! young people, your time will come next. Make hay while the sun shines."

"While the candle's out, you mean, grannie," said Tom, stealing a kiss from Lucy.

"I hear more than you think for," said the cheery old woman. "I'll give you just five minutes' grace, and then I mean to have my own way. I am not so fond of darkness, I can tell you."

"How close it is!" said Lucy. "Will you open the window a little wider, Tom? Mind the flowers."

She came near the window, which looked down

on the little stony desert of Guild Court, and sank into a high-backed chair that stood beside it.

"I can hardly drag one foot after another," she said, "I feel so oppressed and weary."

"And I," said Tom, who had taken his place behind her, leaning on the back of her chair, "am as happy as if I were in Paradise."

"There must be thunder in the air," said Lucy. "I fancy I smell the lightning already. Oh dear!"

"Are you afraid of lightning, then?" asked Thomas.

"I do not think I am exactly; but it shakes me so! I cannot explain what I mean. It affects me like a false tone on the violin. No, that's not it. I can't tell what it is like."

A fierce flash broke in upon her words. Mrs. Boxall gave a scream.

"The Lord be about us from harm!" she cried.

Lucy sat trembling.

Thomas did not know how much she had to make her tremble. It is wonderful what can

be seen in a single moment under an intense light. In that one flash Lucy had seen Mr. Molken and another man seated at a table, casting dice, with the eagerness of hungry fiends upon both their faces.

A few moments after the first flash, the wind began to rise, and as flash followed flash, with less and less of an interval, the wind rose till it blew a hurricane, roaring in the chimney and through the archway as if it were a wild beast caged in Guild Court, and wanting to get out.

When the second flash came, Lucy saw that the blind of Mr. Molken's window was drawn down.

All night long the storm raved about London. Chimney-pots clashed on the opposite pavements. One crazy old house, and one yet more crazy new one, were blown down. Even the thieves and burglars retreated to their dens. But before it had reached its worst Thomas had gone home. He lay awake for some time listening to the tumult and rejoicing in it, for it roused his imagination and the delight that comes of be-

holding danger from a far-removed safety—a selfish pleasure, and ready to pass from a sense of our own comfort into a complacent satisfaction in the suffering of others.

Lucy lay awake for hours. There was no more lightning, but the howling of the wind tortured her—that is, drew discords from the slackened strings of the human instrument—her nerves; made "broken music in her sides." She reaped this benefit, however, that such winds always drove her to her prayers. On the wings of the wind itself, she hastened her escape "from the windy storm and tempest." When at last she fell asleep, it was to dream that another flash of lightning—when or where appearing she did not know—revealed Thomas casting dice with Molken, and then left them lapt in the darkness of a godless world. She woke weeping, fell asleep again, and dreamed that she stood in the darkness once more, and that somewhere near Thomas was casting dice with the devil for his soul, but she could neither see him nor cry to him, for the darkness choked both voice and eyes. Then a

hand was laid upon her head, and she heard the words—not in her ears, but in her heart—"Be of good cheer, my daughter." It was only a dream; but I doubt if even—I must not name names, lest I should be interpreted widely from my meaning—the greatest Positivist alive could have helped waking with some comfort from that dream, nay, could have helped deriving a faint satisfaction from it, if it happened to return upon him during the day. "But in no such man would such a dream arise," my reader may object. "Ah, well," I answer, because I have nothing more to say. And perhaps even in what I have written I may have been doing or hinting some wrong to some of the class. It is dreadfully difficult to be just. It is far easier to be kind than to be fair.

It was not in London or the empire only that that storm raged that night. From all points of the compass came reports of its havoc. Whether it was the same storm, however, or another on the same night, I cannot tell; but on the next morning save one, a vessel passing one of the

rocky islets belonging to the Cape Verde group, found the fragments of a wreck floating on the water. She had parted amidships, for, on sending a boat to the island, they found her stern lying on a reef, round which little innocent waves were talking to each other. On her stern they read her name, *Ningpo, London;* and on the narrow strand they found three bodies; one, that of a young woman, vestureless and broken. They buried them as they could.

CHAPTER V.

Mattie's Illness.

THE storm of that night beat furiously against poor Mattie's window, and made a dreadful tumult in her big head. When her father went into her little room, as was his custom every morning when she did not first appear in his, he found her lying awake, with wide eyes, seemingly unaware of what was before them. Her head and her hands were both hot; and when her father at length succeeded in gaining some notice from her, the words she spoke, although in themselves intelligible enough, had reference to what she had been going through in the night, in regions far withdrawn, and conveyed to him no understanding of her condition further than that she was *wandering*. In great alarm, he sent the charwoman (whose morning

visits were Mattie's sole assistance in the house, for they always had their dinner from a neighbouring cook-shop) to fetch the doctor, while he went up the court to ask Lucy to come and see her.

Lucy was tossing in a troubled dream when she woke to hear his knock at the door. Possibly the whole dream passed between the first and second summons of the bookseller, who was too anxious and eager to shrink from rousing the little household. She thought she was one of the ten virgins, but whether one of the wise or foolish she did not know. She had knocked at a door, and as it opened, her lamp went out in the wind it made. But a hand laid hold of hers in the dark, and would have drawn her into the house. Then she knew that she was holding another hand which at first she took to be that of one of her sisters, but found to be Thomas's. She clung to it, and would have drawn him into the house with her, but she could not move him. And still the other hand kept drawing her in. She woke in an agony just as she was losing her

hold of Thomas, and heard Mr. Kitely's knock. She was out of bed in a moment, put on her dressing-gown and her shoes, and ran downstairs.

On learning what was the matter, she made haste to dress, and in a few minutes stood by Mattie's bedside. But the child did not know her. When the doctor came, he shook his head, though he was one of the most undemonstrative of his profession; and after prescribing for her, said she must be watched with the greatest care, and gave Lucy urgent directions about her treatment. Lucy resolved that she would not leave her, and began at once to make what preparations were necessary for carrying out the doctor's instructions. Mattie took the medicine he sent; and in a little while the big eyes began to close, sunk and opened again, half closed and then started wide open, to settle their long lashes at last, after many slow flutterings, upon the pale cheek below them. Then Lucy wrote a note to Mrs. Morgenstern, and left her patient to run across to her grandmother to consult with her

how she should send it. But when she opened the door into the court, there was Poppie, who of course flitted the moment she saw her, but only a little way off, like a bold bird.

"Poppie, dear Poppie!" cried Lucy, earnestly, "do come here. I want you."

"Blowed if I go there again, lady!" said Poppie, without moving in either direction.

"Come here, Poppie. I wont touch you—I promise you. I wouldn't tell you a lie, Poppie," she added, seeing that she made no impression on the child.

To judge by the way Poppie came a yard nearer, she did not seem at all satisfied by the assurance.

"Look here, Poppie. There's a little girl—you know her—Mattie—she's lying very ill here, and I can't leave her. Will you take this letter for me—to that big house in Wyvil Place—to tell them I can't come to-day?"

"They'll wash me," said Poppie, decisively.

"Oh, no, they wont again, Poppie. They know now that you don't like it."

"They'll be giving me something I don't want, then. I know the sort of them."

"You needn't go into the house at all. Just ring the bell, and give the letter to the servant."

Poppie came close up to Lucy.

"I tell you what, lady: I'm not afraid of *him*. *He* wont touch me again. If he do, I'll bite worser next time. But I wont run errands for nothink. Nobody does, miss. You 'aint forgotten what you guv me last time? Do it again, and I'm off."

"A good wash, Poppie—that's what I gave you last time."

"No, miss," returned the child, looking up in her face beseechingly. "You knows as well as me." And she held up her pretty grimy mouth, so that her meaning could not be mistaken. "Old Mother Flanaghan gave me a kiss once. You remember her gin-bottle, don't you, miss?" she added, still holding up her mouth.

For a moment Lucy did hesitate, but from no yielding to the repugnance she naturally felt at dirt. She hesitated, thinking to make

a stipulation on her side, for the child's good.

"I tell you what, Poppie," she said; "I will kiss you every time you come to me with a clean face, as often as you like."

Poppie's dirty face fell. She put out her hand, took the letter, turned, and went away slowly. Lucy could not bear it. She darted after her, caught her, and kissed her. The child, without looking round, instantly scudded.

Lucy could hardly believe her eyes when, going down at Mr. Kitely's call, some time after, she found Poppie in the shop.

"She says she wants to see you, miss," said Kitely. "I don't know what she wants. Begging, I suppose."

And so she was. But all her begging lay in the cleanness and brightness of her countenance. She might have been a little saint but for the fact that her aureole was all in her face, and around it lay a border of darkness that might be felt.

"Back already!" said Lucy in astonishment.

"Yes, lady. I didn't bite him. I throwed the letter at him, and he throwed it out again, and says I, pickin' of it up, 'You'll hear o' this to-morrow, Plush.' And says he, 'Give me that letter, you wagabones.' And I throwed it at him again, and he took it up and looked at it, and took it in. And here I am, lady," added Poppie, making a display of her clean face.

Lucy kissed her once more, and she was gone in a moment.

While Mattie was asleep Lucy did all she could to change the aspect of the place.

"She shan't think of Syne the first thing when she comes to herself," she said.

With the bookseller's concurrence, who saw the reason for it the moment she uttered the wish, she removed all the old black volumes within sight of her bed, and replaced them with the brightest bindings to be found in the shop. She would rather have got rid of the books altogether; but there was no time for that now. Then she ventured, finding her sleep still endure, to take down the dingy old chintz curtains from her tent bed

and replace them with her own white dimity. These she drew close round the bed, and then set about cleaning the window, inside and out. Her fair hands were perfectly fit for such work, or any other labour that love chose to require of them. "Entire affection hateth nicer hands," is one of the profoundest lines in all Spenser's profound allegory. But she soon perceived that the light would in consequence be far too much for her little patient, especially as she had now only white curtains to screen her. So the next thing was to get a green blind for the window. Not before that was up did Mattie awake, and then only to stare about her, take her medicine, and fall asleep again, or, at least, into some state resembling sleep.

She was suffering from congestion of the brain. For a week she continued in nearly the same condition, during which time Lucy scarcely left her bedside. And it was a great help to her in her own trouble to have such a charge to fulfil.

At length one morning, when the sun was shining clear and dewy through a gap between

the houses of the court, and Lucy was rising early according to her custom—she lay on a sofa in Mattie's room—the child opened her eyes and saw. Then she closed them again, and Lucy heard her murmuring to herself—

"Yes, I thought so. I'm dead. And it *is* so nice! I've got white clouds to my bed. And there's Syne cutting away with all his men—just like a black cloud—away out of the world. Ah! I see you, Syne! You ought to be ashamed of yourself for worrying of me as you've been doing all this time. You see it's no use. You ought really to give it up. He's too much for you, anyhow."

This she said brokenly and at intervals. The whole week had been filled with visions of conflict with the enemy, and the Son of Man had been with her in those visions. The spiritual struggles of them that are whole are the same in kind as those of this brain-sick child. They are tempted and driven to faithlessness, to self-indulgence, to denial of God and of his Christ, to give in—for the sake of peace, as they think. And I,

believing that the very hairs of our heads are all numbered, and that not a sparrow can fall to the ground without our Father, believe that the Lord Christ—I know not how, because such knowledge is too wonderful for me—is present in the soul of such a child, as certainly as in his Church, or in the spirit of a saint who in his name stands against the world. There are two ways in which He can be present in the Church, one in the ordering of the confluence and working of men's deeds, the other in judgment; but he can be present in the weakest child's heart, in the heart of any of his disciples, in an infinitely deeper way than those, and without this deeper presence, he would not care for the outside presence of the other modes. It is in the individual soul that the Spirit works, and out of which he sends forth fresh influences. And I believe that the good fight may be fought amidst the wildest visions of a Saint Anthony, or even in the hardest confinement of Bedlam. It was such a fight, perhaps, that brought the maniacs of old time to the feet of the Saviour, who gave them back

their right mind. Let those be thankful who have it to fight amidst their brothers and sisters, who can return look for look, and word for word, and not among the awful visions of a tormented brain,

> "As thick and numberless
> As the gay motes that people the sunbeams."

Lucy did not venture to show herself for a little while, but at length she peeped within the curtain, and saw the child praying with folded hands. Ere she could withdraw, she opened her eyes and saw her.

"I thought I was in heaven!" she said; "but I don't mind, if you're there, miss. I've been seeing you all through it. But it's over now," she added, with a sigh of relief.

"You must be very still, dear Mattie," said Lucy. "You're not well enough to talk yet."

"I am quite well, miss; only sleepy, I think." And before Lucy could answer, she was indeed asleep once more.

It was quite another fortnight before Lucy ventured to give up her place to her grandmother.

During this time, she saw very little of Thomas —only for a few minutes every evening as he left the place—and somehow she found it a relief not to see more of him.

All the time of Mattie's illness, Mr. Spelt kept coming to inquire after her. He was in great concern about her, but he never asked to see her. He had a great gift in waiting, the little man. Possibly he fared the better, like Zaccheus, who wanted only to see, and *was seen.* But perhaps his quietness might be partly attributed to another cause—namely, that since Mattie's illness he had brooded more upon the suspicion that his wife had had a child. I cannot in the least determine whether this suspicion was a mere fancy or not; but I know that the tailor thought he had good grounds for it; and it does not require a very lawless imagination to presume the thing possible.

Every day of those three weeks, most days more than once or twice even, Poppie was to be seen at one hour or other in Guild Court, prowling about—with a clean face, the only part of

her, I am all but certain, that was clean—for the chance of seeing Lucy. From what I know of Poppie, I cannot think that it was anxiety about Mattie that brought her there. I do not doubt that she was selfish—prowling about after a kiss from Lucy. And as often as Lucy saw her, she had what she wanted.

But if Lucy did not see her sometimes, at least there was one who always did see her from his nest in the—rock, I was going to say, but it was only the wall. I mean, of course, Mr. Spelt. He saw her, and watched her, until at length, as he plied his needle, the fancy which already occupied his brain began to develop itself, and he wondered whether that Poppie might not be his very lost child. Nor had the supposition lasted more than five minutes before he passionately believed, or at least passionately desired to believe it, and began to devise how to prove it, or at least to act upon it.

CHAPTER VI.

Fishing for a Daughter.

MR. SPELT sat in his watch-tower, over the head of patiently cobbling Mr. Dolman, reflecting. He too was trying to cobble—things in general, in that active head of his beneath its covering of heathery hair. But he did not confine his efforts to things in general: one very particular thing had its share in the motions of his spirit—how to prove that Poppie was indeed his own child. He had missed his little Mattie much, and his child-like spirit was longing greatly after some child-like companionship. This, in Mattie's case, he had found did him good, cleared his inward sight, helped him to cobble things even when her questions showed him the need of fresh patching in many a place where he had not before perceived the rent or the thin-worn threads of the common argument

or belief. And the thought had come to him that perhaps Mattie was taken away from him to teach him that he ought not, as Mattie had said with regard to Mrs. Morgenstern, to cultivate friendship only where he got good from it. The very possibility that he had a child somewhere in London, seemed at length to make it his first duty to rescue some child or other from the abyss around him, and there were not a few swimming in the vast vortex.

Having found out that Mrs. Flanaghan knew more about Poppie than any one else, and that she crept oftener into the bottom of an empty cupboard in her room than anywhere else, he went one morning to see whether he could not learn something from the old Irishwoman. The place looked very different then from the appearance it presented to Lucy the day she found it inhabited by nobody, and furnished with nothing but the gin-bottle.

When the tailor opened the door, he found the room swarming with children. Though it was hot summer weather, a brisk fire burned in

the grate; and the place smelt strongly of *reesty* bacon. There were three different groups of children in three of the corners: one of them laying out the dead body of a terribly mutilated doll; another, the tangle-haired members of which had certainly had no share in the bacon but the smell of it, sitting listlessly on the floor, leaning their backs against the wall, apparently without hope and without God in the world; one of the third group searching for possible crumbs where she had just had her breakfast, the other two lying ill of the measles on a heap of rags. Mrs. Flanaghan was in the act of pouring a little gin into her tea. The tailor was quick-eyed, and took in the most of this at a glance. But he thought he saw something more, namely, the sharp eyes of Poppie peeping through the crack of the cupboard. He therefore thought of nothing more but a hasty retreat, for Poppie must not know he came after her.

"Good morning to you, Mrs. Flanaghan," he said, with almost Irish politeness. Then, at a loss for anything more, he ventured to add—

"Don't you think, ma'am, you'll have too much on your hands if all them children takes after the two in the corner? They've got the measles, 'aint they, ma'am?"

"True for you, sir," returned Mrs. Flanaghan, whom the gin had soothed after the night's abstinence. "But we'll soon get rid o' the varmints," she said, rising from her seat. "Praise God the Father! we'll soon get rid o' them. Get out wid ye!" she went on, stamping with her foot on the broken floor. "Get out! What are ye doin' i' the house when ye ought to be enjoyin' yerselves in the fresh air?—Glory be to God!—there they go, as I tould you. And now what'll I do for yerself this blessed marnin'?"

By this time the tailor had made up his mind to inquire after a certain Irishman for whom he had made a garment of fustian, but who had never appeared to claim it. He did not expect her to know anything of the man, for he was considerably above Mrs. Flanaghan's level, but it afforded a decent pretext. Mrs. Flanaghan, however, claimed acquaintance with him, and

begged that the garment in question might be delivered into her hands in order to reach him, which the tailor, having respect both to his word and his work, took care not to promise.

But as he went to his workshop, he thought what a gulf he had escaped. For suppose that Mrs. Flanaghan had been communicative, and had proved to his dissatisfaction that the girl was none of his! Why, the whole remaining romance of his life would have been gone. It was far better to think that she was or might be his child, than to know that she was not. And, after all, what did it matter whether she was or was not?—thus the process of thinking went on in the tailor's brain—was she not a child? What matter whether his own or some one's else? God must have made her all the same. And if he were to find his own child at last, neglected and ignorant and vicious, could he not pray better for her if he had helped the one he could help? Might he not then say, "O Lord, they took her from me, and I had no chance with *her*, but I did what I could—I caught a wild thing,

and I tried to make something of her, and she's none the worse for it: do thou help my poor child, for I could not, and thou canst. I give thee back thine, help mine." Before he had reached his perch, he had resolved that he would make no farther inquiry whatever about Poppie, but try to get a hold of her, and do for her what he could. For whether he was her father or not, neither case could alter the facts that she was worth helping, and that it would be very hard to get a hold of her. All that Poppie could know of fathers would only make her more unwilling to be caught if she had a suspicion that Mr. Spelt laid such a claim to her; and he would therefore scheme as if their nearest common relations were "the grand old gardener and his wife," and with the care which the shy *startling* nature of Poppie, to use a Chaucerian word, rendered necessary. Tailors have time to think about things; and no circumstances are more favourable to true thought than those of any work which, employing the hands, leaves the head free. Before another day had passed Mr. Spelt had devised his bait.

The next morning came—a lovely morning for such fishing as he contemplated. Poppie appeared in the court, prowling as usual in the hope of seeing Lucy. But the tailor appeared to take no notice of her. Poppie's keen eyes went roving about as usual, wide awake to the chance of finding something. Suddenly she darted at a small object lying near the gutter, picked it up, put it in her mouth, and sucked it with evident pleasure. The tailor was as one who seeing sees not. Only he plied his needle and thread more busily, casting down sidelong glances in the drawing of the same. And there was no little triumph, for it was the triumph of confidence for the future, as well as of success for the present, in each of those glances. Suddenly Poppie ran away.

The morning after she was there again. Half involuntarily, I suppose, her eyes returned to the spot where she had found the bull's-eye. There, to the astonishment even of Poppie, who was very seldom astonished at anything, lay another —a larger one, as she saw at a glance, than the

one she had found yesterday. It was in her mouth in a moment. But she gave a hurried glance round the court, and scudded at once. Like the cherub that sat aloft and saw what was going to come of it all, the little tailor drew his shortening thread, and smiled somewhere inside his impassive face, as he watched the little human butterfly, with its torn wings, lighting and flitting as in one and the same motion.

The next morning there again sat Mr. Spelt at his work—watching and watching. With the queerest look of inquiry and doubtful expectation, Poppie appeared from under the archway, with her head already turned towards El Dorado—namely, the flagstone upon which the gifts of Providence had been set forth on other mornings. There—could she, might she believe her eyes?—lay a splendid polyhedral lump of rock, white as snow, and veined with lovely red. It was not quartz and porphyry, reader, but the most melting compound of sugar and lemon-juice that the sweet-inventing Genius—why should she not have the name of a tenth muse?—Polyhedia, let us

call her—had ever hatched in her brooding brain, as she bent over melting sugar or dark treacle, "in linked sweetness long drawn out." This time Poppie hesitated a little, and glanced up and around. She saw nobody but the tailor, and he was too cunning even for her. Busy as a bee, he toiled away lightly and earnestly. Then, as if the sweetmeat had been a bird for which she was laying snares, as her would-be father was laying them for her, she took two steps nearer on tip-toe, then stopped and gazed again. It was not that she thought of stealing, any more than the birds who take what they find in the fields and on the hedges; it was only from a sort of fear that it was too good fortune for her, and that there must be something evanescent about it—wings somewhere. Or perhaps she vaguely fancied there must be some unfathomable design in it, awful and inscrutable, and therefore glanced around her once more—this time all but surprising the tailor, with uplifted head and the eager eyes of a fowler. But the temptation soon overcame any suspicion she might have. She

made one bound upon the prize, and scudded as she had never scudded before. Mr. Spelt ran his needle in under the nail of his left thumb, and so overcame his delight in time to save his senses.

And now came a part of the design which Mr. Spelt regarded as a very triumph of cunning invention. That evening he drove two tiny staples of wire—one into Mr. Dolman's door-post close to the ground; the other into his own. The next morning, as soon as he arrived, he chose a thread as near the colour of the flagstones that paved the passage as he could find, fastened one end with a plug of toffee into a hole he bored with his scissors in another splendour of rock, laid the bait in the usual place, drew the long thread through the two eyes of the staples, and sat down in his lair with the end attached to the little finger of his left hand.

The time arrived about which Poppie usually appeared. Mr. Spelt got anxious—nervously anxious. She was later than usual, and he almost despaired; but at length, there she was,

peeping cautiously round the corner towards the trap. She saw the bait—was now so accustomed to it, that she saw it almost without surprise. She had begun to regard it as most people regard the operations of nature—namely, as that which always was so and always will be so, and therefore has no reason in it at all. But this time a variety in the phenomenon shook the couch of habitude upon which her mind was settling itself in regard to the saccharine boulders; for just as she stooped to snatch it to herself and make it her own, away it went as if in terror of her approaching fingers—but only to the distance of half a yard or so. Eager as the tailor was—far more eager to catch Poppie than Poppie was to catch the lollypop—he could scarcely keep his countenance when he saw the blank astonishment that came over Poppie's pretty brown face. Certainly she had never seen a living lollypop, yet motion is a chief sign of life, and the lollypop certainly moved. Perhaps it would have been wiser to doubt her senses first, but Poppie had never yet found her senses in the wrong, and

therefore had not learned to doubt them. Had she been a child of weak nerves, she might have recoiled for a moment from a second attempt, but instead of that she pounced upon it again so suddenly that the Archimago of the plot was unprepared. He gave his string a tug only just as she seized it, and fortunately, the string came out of the plugged hole. Poppie held the bait, and the fisherman drew in his line as fast as possible, that his fish might not see it.

The motions of Poppie's mind were as impossible to analyse as those of a field-mouse or hedge-sparrow. This time she began at once to gnaw the sugar, staring about her as she did so, and apparently in no hurry to go. Possibly she was mentally stunned by the marvel of the phenomenon, but I do not think so. Poppie never could be much surprised at anything. Why should anything be surprising? To such a child everything was interesting—nothing overwhelming. She seemed constantly shielded by the divine buckler of her own exposure and helplessness. You could have thought that God had said to her

as to his people of old, "Fear not thou, O Poppie," and therefore Poppie did not fear, and found it answer. It is a terrible doctrine that would confine the tender care of the Father to those that know and acknowledge it. He carries the lambs in his bosom, and who shall say when they cease to be innocent lambs and become naughty sheep? Even then he goes into the mountains, and searches till he finds.

Not yet would the father aspirant show his craft. When he saw her stand there gnawing his innocent bait, he was sorely tempted to call, in the gentlest voice, "Poppie, dear;" but like a fearful and wise lover, who dreads startling the maiden he loves, he must yet dig his parallels and approach with guile. He would even refine upon his own cunning. The next morning his bait had only a moral hook inside, that is, there was no string attached. But now that happened which he had all along feared. A child of the court—in which there were not more than two, I think—whom Mr. Spelt regarded, of course, as a stray interloper, for had she not enough of the

good things already?—spied the sweetmeat, and, following the impulses of her depraved humanity, gobbled it up without ever saying, like heathen Cassius, "By your leave, gods." Presently after, Poppie appeared, looked, stared—actually astonished now—and, with fallen face, turned and went away. Whether she or her cunning enemy overhead was the more disappointed, I will not venture to determine, but Mr. Spelt could almost have cried. Four-and-twenty long tedious hours of needle and thread must pass before another chance would arrive—and the water so favourable, with the wind from the right quarter just clouding its surface, and the fly so taking!—it *was* hard to bear. He comforted himself, however, by falling back upon a kind of divine fatalism with which God had endowed him, saying to himself, "Well, it's all for the best,"—a phrase not by any means uncommon amongst people devoutly inclined; only there was this difference between most of us and Mr. Spelt, that we follow the special aphorism with a sigh, while he invariably smiled and brightened up for the

next thing he had to do. To say things are all right and yet gloom does seem rather illogical, in you and me, reader, does it not? Logical or illogical, it was not Spelt's way, anyhow. He began to whistle, which he never did save upon such occasions when the faithful part of him set itself to conquer the faithless.

But he would try the bait without the line once more. Am I wearying my reader with the process? I would not willingly do so, of course. But I fancy he would listen to this much about a salmon any day, so I will go on with my child. Poppie came the next morning, notwithstanding her last disappointment, found the bull's-eye, for such I think it was this time, took it, and sucked it to nothing upon the spot—did it leisurely, and kept looking about—let us hope for Lucy, and that Poppie considered a kiss a lovelier thing still than a lollypop.

The next morning Mr. Spelt tried the string again, watched it better, and by a succession of jerks, not slow movements, lest, notwithstanding the cunning of the colour, she should see the

string, drew her step by step in the eagerness of wonder, as well as of that appetite which is neither hunger nor thirst, and yet concerned with the same organs, but for which we have, as far as I am aware, no word, I mean the love of sweets, to the very foot of his eyrie. When she laid hold of the object desired at the door-post, he released it by a final tug against the eye of the staple. Before she could look up from securing it, another lump of rock fell at her feet. Then she did look up, and saw the smiling face of the tailor looking out (once more like an angel over a cloudy beam) over the threshold, if threshold it could properly be called, of his elevated and stairless door. She gave back a genuine whole-faced smile, and turned and scudded. The tailor's right hand shuttled with increased vigour all the rest of that day.

CHAPTER VII.

Mr. Fuller.

ONE evening Lucy was sitting as usual with Mattie, for the child had no friends but her and grannie: her only near relative was a widowed sister of her father, whom she did not like. She was scarcely so well as she had been for the last few days, and had therefore gone early to bed, and Lucy sat beside her to comfort her. By this time she had got the room quite transformed in appearance—all the books out of it, a nice clean paper upon the walls, a few coloured prints from the *Illustrated London News* here and there, and, in fact, the whole made fit for the abode of a delicate and sensitive child.

"What shall I read to-night, Mattie?" she asked. For Mattie must always have something read to her out of the New Testament before she

went to sleep: Mr. Spelt had inaugurated the custom.

"Oh, read about the man that sat in his Sunday clothes," said Mattie.

"I don't know that story," returned Lucy.

"I wish dear mother was here," said Mattie, with the pettishness of an invalid. "He would know what story I mean—that he would."

"Would you like to see Mr. Spelt?" suggested Lucy. "He was asking about you not an hour ago."

"Why didn't he come up, then? I wonder he never comes to see me."

"I was afraid you weren't strong enough for it, Mattie. But I will run and fetch him now, if he's not gone."

"Oh, yes; do, please. I know he's not gone, for I have not heard his step yet. I always watch him out of the court when I'm in bed. He goes right under me."

Lucy went, and Mr. Spelt came gladly.

"Well, mother," said Mattie, holding out a worn little cloud of a hand, "how do you do?"

Mr. Spelt could hardly answer for emotion. He took the little hand in his, and it seemed to melt away in his grasp, till he could hardly feel it.

"Don't cry, mother. I am very happy. I do believe I've seen the last of old Syne. I feel just like the man that had got his Sunday clothes on, you know. You see what a pretty room Miss Burton has made, instead of all those ugly books that Syne was so fond of: well, my poor head feels just like this room, and I'm ready to listen to anything about Somebody. Read about the man in his Sunday clothes."

But Mr. Spelt, no less than Lucy, was puzzled as to what the child meant.

"I wish that good clergyman that talked about Somebody's burden being easy to carry, would come to see me," she said. "I know he would tell me the story. He knows all about Somebody."

"Shall I ask Mr. Potter to come and see you?" said Spelt, who had never heard of Mr. Fuller by name, or indeed anything about him

but what Mattie had told him before she was taken ill.

"I don't mean Mr. Potter—you know well enough. He's always pottering," said the child, with a laugh.

She had not yet learned to give honour where honour is not due; or, rather, she had never been young enough to take seeming for being, or place for character. The consequence was that her manners and her modesty had suffered—not her reverence or her heart.

"I want to see the gentleman that really thinks it's all about something," she resumed. "Do you know where he lives, Miss Burton?"

"No," answered Lucy; "but I will find out to-morrow, and ask him to come and see you."

"Well, that will be nice," returned Mattie. "Read to me, Mr. Spelt—anything you like."

The little tailor was very shy of reading before Lucy, but Mattie would hear of nothing else, for she would neither allow Lucy to read nor yet to go away.

"Don't mind me, Mr. Spelt," said Lucy, beseechingly. "We are all friends, you know. If we belong to the Somebody Mattie speaks about, we needn't be shy of each other."

Thus encouraged, Mr. Spelt could refuse no longer. He read about the daughter of Jairus being made alive again.

"Oh, dear me!" said Mattie. "And if I had gone dead when Syne was tormenting of me, He could have come into the room, and taken me by the hand and said, 'Daughter, get up.' How strange it would be if He said, 'Daughter' to me, for then He would be my father, you know. And they say He's a king. I wonder if that's why Mr. Kitely calls me *princess*. To have Mr. Kitely and Somebody," she went on, musingly, "both for fathers is more than I can understand. There's something about godfathers and godmothers in the Catechism, ain't there, Miss Burton?" Then, without waiting for a reply, she went on, "I wish my father would go and hear what that nice gentleman—not Mr. Potter—has got to say about it. Miss Burton, read the hymn

about blind Bartimeus, and that'll do mother good, and then I'll go to sleep."

The next day, after she came from the Morgensterns', Lucy went to find Mr. Fuller. She had been to the week-evening service twice since Mattie began to recover, but she had no idea where Mr. Fuller lived, and the only way she could think of for finding him was to ask at the warehouses about the church. She tried one after another, but nobody even knew that there was any service there—not to say where the evening preacher lived. With its closed, tomb-like doors, and the utter ignorance of its concerns manifested by the people of the neighbourhood, the great ugly building stood like some mausoleum built in honour of a custom buried beneath it, a monument of the time when men could buy and sell and worship God. So Lucy put off farther inquiry till the next week-evening service, for she had found already that Mr. Fuller had nothing to do with the Sunday services in that church.

How she wished that she could take Thomas

with her the next time she went to receive Mr. Fuller's teaching! She had seen very little of her lover, as I have said, and had been so much occupied with Mattie, that she did not even know whether he had fulfilled his promise about telling his father. I suspect, however, that she had been afraid to ask him, foreboding the truth that he had in fact let his promise lapse in time, and was yet no nearer towards its half-redemption in act, which was all that remained possible now. And, alas! what likelihood was there of the good seed taking good root in a heart where there was so little earth?

Finding Mr. Kitely in his shop door, Lucy stopped to ask after Mattie, for she had not seen her that morning. And then she told him what she had been about, and her want of success.

"What does the child want a clergyman for?" asked Mr. Kitely, with some tone of dissatisfaction. "I'm sure you're better than the whole lot of them, miss. Now I could listen to you—"

"How do you know that?" retorted Lucy

smiling; for she wanted to stop the eulogium upon herself.

"Because I've listened to you outside the door, Miss Burton, when you was a talking to Mattie inside."

"That wasn't fair, Mr. Kitely."

"No more it wasn't, but it's done me no harm, nor you neither. But for them parsons! —they're neither men nor women. I beg their pardons—they *are* old wives."

"But are you sure that you know quite what you are talking about? I think there must be all sorts of them as well as of other people. I wish you would come and hear Mr. Fuller some evening with Mattie and me when she's better. You would allow that he talks sense, anyhow."

"I ain't over hopeful, miss. And to tell the truth, I don't much care. I don't think there can be much in it. It's all an affair of the priests. To get the upper hand of people they work on their fears and their superstitions. But I don't doubt some of them may succeed in taking themselves in, and so go on like the fox that

had lost his tail, trying to make others cut off theirs too."

Lucy did not reply, because she had nothing at hand to say. The bookseller feared he had hurt her.

"And so you couldn't find this Mr. Fuller? Well, you leave it to me. I'll find him, and let you know in the afternoon."

"Thank you, Mr. Kitely. Just tell Mattie, will you? I must run home now, but I'll come in in the afternoon to hear how you have succeeded."

About six o'clock Lucy re-entered Mr. Kitely's shop, received the necessary directions to find the "parson," ran up to tell Mattie that she was going, for the child had not come down stairs, and then set out.

To succeed she had to attend to Mr. Kitely's rather minute instructions; for although the parsonage lay upon the bank of one of the main torrents of city traffic, it was withdrawn and hidden behind shops, and amongst offices, taverns, and warehouses. After missing the most direct

way, she arrived at last, through lanes and courts, much to her surprise, at the border of a green lawn, on the opposite side of which rose a tree that spread fair branches across a blue sky filled with pearly light, and blotted here and there with spongy clouds that had filled themselves as full of light as they could hold. The other half of the branches of the same tree spread themselves across the inside of a gable, all that remained of a tavern that was being pulled down. The gable was variegated with the incongruous papers of many small rooms, and marked with the courses of stairs, and the holes for the joists of the floors: and this dreariness was the background for the leaves of the solitary tree. On the same side was the parsonage, a long, rather low, and country-looking house, from the door of which Lucy would not have been surprised to see a troop of children burst with shouts and laughter, to tumble each other about upon the lawn, as smooth, at least, if not as green, as any of the most velvety of its kind. One side of the square was formed by a vague commonplace mass of

dirty and expressionless London houses—what they might be used for no one could tell—one of them, probably, an eating-house—mere walls with holes to let in the little light that was to be had. The other side was of much the same character, only a little better; and the remaining side was formed by the long barn-like wall of the church, broken at regular intervals by the ugly windows, with their straight sides filled with parallelograms, and their half-circle heads filled with trapeziums—the ugliest window that can be made, except it be redeemed with stained glass, the window that makes the whole grand stretch of St. Paul's absolutely a pain. The church was built of brick nearly black below, but retaining in the upper part of the square tower something of its original red. All this Lucy took in at a glance as she went up to the door of the parsonage.

She was shown into a small study, where Mr. Fuller sat. She told him her name, that she had been to his week-evening service with Mattie, and that the child was ill and wanted to see him.

"Thank you very much," said Mr. Fuller. "Some of the city clergymen have so little opportunity of being useful! I am truly grateful to you for coming to me. A child in my parish is quite a godsend to me—I do not use the word irreverently—I mean it. You lighten my labour by the news. Perhaps I ought to say I am sorry she is ill. I daresay I shall be sorry when I see her. But meantime, I am very glad to be useful."

He promised to call the next day; and after a little more talk, Lucy took her leave.

Mr. Fuller was a middle-aged man, who all his conscious years had been trying to get nearer to his brethren, moved thereto by the love he bore to the Father. The more anxious he was to come near to God, the more he felt that the high-road to God lay through the forest of humanity. And he had learned that love is not a feeling to be called up at will in the heart, but the reward as the result of an active exercise of the privileges of a neighbour.

Like the poor parson loved of Chaucer, "he

waited after no pomp ne reverence;" and there was no chance of preferment coming in search of him. He was only a curate still. But the incumbent of St. Amos's, an old man, with a grown-up family, almost unfit for duty, and greatly preferring his little estate in Kent to the city parsonage, left everything to him, with much the same confidence he would have had if Mr. Fuller had been exactly the opposite of what he was, paying him enough to live upon—indeed paying him well for a curate. It was not enough to marry upon, as the phrase is, but Mr. Fuller did not mind that, for the only lady he had loved, or ever would love in that way, was dead; and all his thoughts for this life were bent upon such realizing of divine theory about human beings, and their relation to God and to each other, as might make life a truth and a gladness. It was therefore painful to him to think that he was but a *City* curate, a being whose thirst after the relations of his calling amongst his fellows reminded himself of that of the becalmed mariner, with "water, water, everywhere, but water none to

drink." He seemed to have nothing to do with them, nor they with him. Perhaps not one individual of the crowds that passed his church every hour in the week would be within miles of it on the Sunday; for even of those few who resided near it, most forsook the place on the day of rest, especially in the summer; and few indeed were the souls to whom he could offer the bread of life. He seemed to himself to be greatly overpaid for the work he had it in his power to do—in his own parish, that is. He had not even any poor to minister to. He made up for this by doing his best to help the clergyman of a neighbouring parish, who had none but poor; but his heart at times burned within him to speak the words he loved best to speak, to such as he could hope had the ears to hear them; for amongst the twelve people—a congregation he did not always have—that he said he preferred to the thousand, he could sometimes harldly believe that there was one who heard and understood. More of his reflections and resolutions in

regard to this state of affairs, we shall fall in with by and by. Meantime, my reader will believe that this visit of Lucy gave him pleasure, and hope of usefulness. The next morning he was in Mr. Kitely's shop as early as he thought the little invalid would be able to see him.

"Good morning, sir," said Mr. Kitely, brusquely as usual. "What can I do for you this morning?"

If Mr. Fuller had begun looking at his books, Kitely would have taken no notice of him. He might have stayed hours, and the bookseller would never have even put a book in his way; but he looked as if he wanted something in particular, and therefore Mr. Kitely spoke.

"You have a little girl that's not well, haven't you?" returned Mr. Fuller.

"Oh! you're the gentleman she wanted to see. She's been asking ever so often whether you wasn't come yet. She's quite impatient to see you, poor lamb!"

While he spoke, Kitely had drawn nearer to

the curate, regarding him with projecting and slightly flushed face, and eyes that had even something of eagerness in them.

"I would have come earlier, only I thought it would be better not," said Mr. Fuller.

Mr. Kitely drew yet a step nearer, with the same expression on his face.

"You wont put any nonsense into her head, will you, sir?" he said, almost pleadingly.

"Not if I know it," answered Mr. Fuller, with a smile of kind humour. "I would rather take some out of it."

"For you see," Kitely went on, "that child never committed a sin in her life. It's all nonsense; and I wont have her talked to as if she was a little hell-cat."

"But you see we must go partly by what she thinks herself; and I suspect she wont say she never did anything wrong. I don't think I ever knew a child that would. But, after all, suppose you are right, and she never did anything wrong——"

"I don't exactly say that, you know," inter-

posed Mr. Kitely, in a tone of mingled candour and defence. "I only said she hadn't committed any sins."

"And where's the difference?" asked Mr. Fuller quietly.

"Oh! you know quite well. Doing wrong, you know—why, we all do wrong sometimes. But to commit a sin, you know—I suppose that's something serious. That comes in the way of the Ten Commandments."

"I don't think your little girl would know the difference."

"But what's the use of referring to her always?"

"Just because I think she's very likely to know best. Children are wise in the affairs of their own kingdom."

"Well, I believe you're right; for she is the strangest child I ever saw. She knows more than any one would think for. Walk this way, sir. You'll find her in the back room."

"Wont you come too, and see that I don't put any nonsense into her head?"

"I must mind the shop, sir," objected Kitely, seeming a little ashamed of what he had said.

Mr. Fuller nodded content, and was passing on, when he bethought himself, and stopped.

"Oh, Mr. Kitely," he said, "there was just one thing I was going to say, but omitted. It was only this, that suppose you were right about your little girl, or suppose even that she had never done anything wrong at all, she would want God all the same. And we must help each other to find him."

If Mr. Kitely had any reply ready for this remark, which I doubt, Mr. Fuller did not give him time to make it, for he walked at once into the room, and found Mattie sitting alone in a half twilight, for the day was cloudy. Even the birds were oppressed, for not one of them was singing. A thrush hopped drearily about under his load of speckles, and a rose-ringed paroquet, with a very red nose, looked ashamed of the quantity of port wine he had drunk. The child was reading the same little old book mentioned

before. She laid it down, and rose from the window-sill to meet Mr. Fuller.

"Well, how do you do, sir?" she said. "I am glad you are come."

Any other child of her age Mr. Fuller would have kissed, but there was something about Mattie that made him feel it an unfit proceeding. He shook hands with her and offered her a white camellia.

"Thank you, sir," said Mattie, and laid the little transfiguration upon the table.

"Don't you like flowers?" asked Mr. Fuller, somewhat disappointed. "Isn't it beautiful now?"

"Well, where's the good?" answered and asked Mattie, as if she had been a Scotchwoman. "It will be ugly before to-morrow."

"Oh, no; not if you put it in water directly."

"Will it live for ever, then?" asked Mattie.

"No, only a few days."

"Well, where's the odds, then? To-morrow or next week—where's the difference? It *looks* dead now when you know it's dying."

"Ah!" thought Mr. Fuller, "I've got something here worth looking into." What he said was, "You dear child!"

"You don't know me yet," returned Mattie. "I'm not dear at all. I'm cross and ill-natured. And I wont be petted."

"You like the birds though, don't you?" said Mr. Fuller.

"Well, yes. Mr. Kitely likes them, and I always like what he likes. But they are not quite comfortable, you know. They wont last for ever, you know. One of them is dead since I was taken ill. And father meant it for Miss Burton."

"Do you like Miss Burton, then?"

"Yes, I *do*. But she'll live for ever, you know.—I'll tell you something else I like."

"What is that, my child?"

"Oh, I'm no such a child! But I'll tell you what I like. There."

And she held out the aged little volume, open at the hymn about blind Bartimeus.

"Will this last for ever, then?" he asked,

turning the volume over in his hand, so that its withered condition suggested itself at once to Mattie.

"Now you puzzle me," answered Mattie. "But let me think. You know it's not the book I mean; it's the poem. Now I have it. If I know that poem by heart, and I live for ever, then the poem will live for ever. There!"

"Then the book's the body, and the poem the soul," said Mr. Fuller.

"One of the souls; for some things have many souls. I have two, at least."

Mr. Fuller felt instinctively, with the big forehead and the tiny body of the child before him, that they were getting on rather dangerous ground. But he must answer.

"Two souls! That must be something like what King David felt, when he asked God to join his heart into one. But you do like this poem?" he hastened to add. "May I read it to you?"

"Oh yes; please do. I am never tired of

hearing it. It will sound quite new if you read it."

So Mr. Fuller read slowly—"As Jesus went into Jericho town." And from the way Mattie listened he knew what he must bring her next—not a camellia, but a poem. Still, how sad it was that a little child should not love flowers!

"When were you in the country last, Miss Kitely?"

"I never was in the country that I know of. My name's Mattie."

"Wouldn't you like to go, Mattie?"

"No, I shouldn't—not at all."

"Why?"

"Well, because—because—it's not in my way, you see."

"But surely you have some reason for not liking the country."

"Well, now, I will tell you. The country, by all I can hear, is full of things that die, and I don't like that. And I think people can't be nice that like the country."

Mr. Fuller resolved in his heart that he would make Mattie like the country before he had done with her. But he would say no more now, because he was not sure whether Mattie as yet regarded him with a friendly eye; and he must be a friend before he would speak about religion. He rose, therefore, and held out his hand.

Mattie looked at him with dismay.

"But I wanted you to tell me about the man that sat at Somebody's feet in his Sunday clothes."

Happily for his further influence with her, Mr. Fuller guessed at once what she meant, and taking a New Testament from his pocket, read to her about the demoniac, who sat at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind. He had not known her long before he discovered that all these stories of possession had an especial attraction for Mattie: she evidently associated them with her own visions of Syne and his men.

"Well, I was wrong. It wasn't his Sunday clothes," she said. "Or, perhaps, it was, and he had torn the rest all to pieces."

"Yes; I think that's very likely," responded Mr. Fuller.

"I know: it was Syne that told him, and he did it. But he wouldn't do it any more, would he, after he saw Somebody?"

"I don't think he would," answered Mr. Fuller, understanding her just enough to know the right answer to make.—"But I will come and see you again to-morrow," he added, "and try whether I can't bring something with me that you will like."

"Thank you," answered the old-fashioned creature. "But don't be putting yourself to any expense about it, for I am not easy to please." And she lifted her hand to her head and gave a deep sigh, as if it was a very sad fact indeed. "I wish I was easier to please," she added to herself—but Mr. Fuller heard her as he left the room.

"She's a very remarkable child that, Mr. Kitely—too much so, I fear," he said, re-entering the shop.

"I know that," returned the bookseller, curtly, almost angrily. "I wish she wasn't."

"I beg your pardon. I only wanted——"

"No occasion at all," interrupted Mr. Kitely.

"I only wanted," Mr. Fuller persisted, "to ask you whether you do not think she had better go out of town for a while."

"I daresay. But how am I to send her? The child has not a relation but me—and an aunt she can't a-bear; and that wouldn't do—would it, sir? She would fret herself to death without some one she cared about."

"Certainly it wouldn't do. But mightn't Miss —I forget her name——"

"Miss Burton, I daresay you mean."

"I mean Miss Burton. Couldn't she help you? Is she any relation of yours?"

"None whatever. Nor she's not like it. I believe she's a stray, myself."

"What *do* you mean, Mr. Kitely?" asked Mr. Fuller, quite bewildered now.

"Well, sir, I mean that she's a stray hangel," answered Mr. Kitely, smiling; "for she ain't like any one else I know of but that child's

mother, and she's gone back to where she came from—many's the long year."

"I don't wonder at your thinking that of her if she's as good as she looks," returned Mr. Fuller. And bidding the bookseller good morning, he left the shop and walked home, cogitating how the child could be got into the country.

Next morning he called—earlier, and saw Lucy leaving the court just as he was going into the shop. He turned and spoke to her.

"Fancy a child, Miss Burton," he said, "that does not care about flowers—and her heart full of religion too! How is she to consider the lilies of the field? She knows only birds in cages; she has no idea of the birds of the air. The poor child has to lift everything out of that deep soul of hers, and the buckets of her brain can't stand such hard work."

"I know, I know," answered Lucy. "But what can I do?"

"Besides," Mr. Fuller continued, "what notion of the simple grandeur of God can she have when she never had more than a peep of the sky

from between these wretched houses? How can the heavens declare the glory of God to her? You don't suppose David understood astronomy, and that it was from a scientific point of view that he spoke, when he said that the firmament showed His handiwork? That was all he could say about it, for the Jewish nation was not yet able to produce a Ruskin. But it was, nevertheless, the spiritual power of the sky upon his soul—not the stars in their courses, but the stars up there in their reposeful depth of blue, their 'shining nest'—which, whatever theory of their construction he might have, yet impressed him with an awe, an infinitude, a shrinking and yet aspiring—made his heart swell within him, and sent him down on his knees. This little darling knows nothing of such an experience. We must get her into the open. She must love the wind that bloweth where it listeth, and the clouds that change and pass. She can't even like anything that does not last for ever; and the mind needs a perishing bread sometimes as well as the body —though it never perishes when once made use

of, as Mattie told me yesterday. But I beg your pardon: I am preaching a sermon, I think. What a thing it is to have the faults of a profession in addition to those of humanity! It all comes to this—you must get that child, with her big head and her big conscience, out of London, and give her heart a chance."

"Indeed, I wish I could," answered Lucy. "I will do what I can, and let you know. Are you going to see her now, Mr. Fuller?"

"Yes, I am. I took her a flower yesterday, but I have brought her a poem to-day. I am afraid, however, that it is not quite the thing for her. I thought I could easily find her one till I began to try, and then I found it very difficult indeed."

They parted: Lucy to Mrs. Morgenstern's, Mr. Fuller to Mattie.

I will give the hymn—for the sake, in part, of what Mattie said, and then I will close the chapter.

"Come unto me," the Master says.
  But how? I am not good;
No thankful song my heart will raise,
  Nor even wish it could.

I am not sorry for the past,
  Nor able not to sin;
The weary strife would ever last
  If once I should begin.

Hast thou no burden then to bear?
  No action to repent?
Is all around so very fair?
  Is thy heart quite content?

Hast thou no sickness in thy soul?
  No labour to endure?
Then go in peace, for thou art whole,
  Thou needest not His cure.

Ah! mock me not. Sometimes I sigh;
  I have a nameless grief,
A faint sad pain—but such that I
  Can look for no relief.

Come then to him who made thy heart;
  Come in thyself distrest;
To come to Jesus is thy part,
  His part to give thee rest.

New grief, new hope, he will bestow,
  Thy grief and pain to quell;
Into thy heart Himself will go,
  And that will make thee well.

When Mr. Fuller had finished the hymn, he

closed the book and looked towards Mattie. She responded—with a sigh:

"Well, I think I know what it means. You see I have such a big head, and so many things come and go just as they please, that if it weren't for Somebody I don't know what I should do with them all. But as soon as I think about Him, they grow quieter and behave better. But I don't know all that it means. Will you lend me the book, Mr. Fuller?"

All the child's thoughts took shapes, and so she talked like a lunatic. Still, as all the forms to which she gave an objective existence were the embodiments of spiritual realities, she could not be said to have yet passed the narrow line that divides the poet from the maniac. But it was high time that the subjects of her thoughts should be supplied from without, and that the generating power should lie dormant for a while. And the opportunity for this arrived sooner than her friends had expected.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Ningpo is Lost.

LUCY was so full of Mattie and what Mr. Fuller had said that she told Mrs. Morgenstern all about it before Miriam had her lesson. After the lesson was over, Mrs. Morgenstern, who had, contrary to her custom, remained in the room all the time, said—

"Well, Lucy, I have been thinking about it, and I think I have arranged it all very nicely. It's clear to me that the child will go out of her mind if she goes on as she's doing. Now, I don't think Miriam has been quite so well as usual, and she has not been out of London since last August. Couldn't you take her down to St. Leonards—or I dare say you would like Hastings better? You can go on with your lessons there all the same, and take little Mattie with you."

"But what will become of my grandmother?" said Lucy.

"She can go with you, can't she? I could ask her to go and take care of you. It would be much better for you to have her, and it makes very little difference to me, you know."

"Thank you very much," returned Lucy, "but I fear my grandmother will not consent to it. I will try her, however, and see what can be done. Thank you a thousand times, dear Mrs. Morgenstern. Wouldn't you like to go to Hastings, Miriam?"

Miriam was delighted at the thought of it, and Lucy was not without hopes that if her grandmother would not consent to go herself, she would at least wish her to go. Leaving Mattie out of view, she would be glad to be away from Thomas for a while, for, until he had done as he ought, she could not be happy in his presence; and she made up her mind that she would write to him very plainly when she was away—perhaps tell him positively that if he would not end it, she must. I say *perhaps*, for

ever as she approached the resolution, the idea of the poor lad's helpless desertion arose before her, and she recoiled from abandoning him. Nothing more could be determined, however, until she saw her grandmother.

But as she was going out she met Mr. Sargent in the hall. He had come to see her.

This very morning the last breath of the crew and passengers of the *Ningpo* had bubbled up in the newspapers; and all the world who cared to know it knew the fact, that the vessel had been dashed to pieces upon a rock of the Cape Verde Islands; all hands and passengers supposed to be lost. This the underwriters knew a few hours before. Now it was known to Mr. Stopper and Mr. Worboise, both of whom it concerned even more than the underwriters. Mr. Stopper's first feeling was one of dismay, for the articles of partnership had not been completed before Mr. Boxall sailed. Still, as he was the only person who understood the business, he trusted in any case to make his position good, especially if he was right in imagining that old Mrs. Boxall

must now be nearest of kin—a supposition which he scarcely allowed himself to doubt. Here, however, occurred the thought of Thomas. He had influence there, and that influence would be against him, for had he not insulted him? This he could not help yet. He would wait for what might turn up.

What Mr. Worboise's feelings were when first he read the paragraph in the paper I do not know, nor whether he had not an emotion of justice, and an inclination to share the property with Mrs. Boxall. But I doubt whether he very clearly recognised the existence of his friend's mother. In his mind probably her subjective being was thinned by age, little regard, and dependence, into a thing of no account—a shadow of the non-Elysian sort, living only in the waste places of human disregard. He certainly knew nothing of her right to any property in the possession of her son. Of one of his feelings only am I sure: he became more ambitious for his son, in whom he had a considerable amount of the pride of paternity.

Mrs. Boxall was the last to hear anything of the matter. She did not read the newspapers, and, accustomed to have sons at sea, had not even begun to look for news of the *Ningpo*.

"Ah, Miss Burton," said Mr. Sargent, "I am just in time. I thought perhaps you would not be gone yet. Will you come into the garden with me for a few minutes? I wont keep you long."

Lucy hesitated. Mr. Sargent had of late, on several occasions, been more confidential in his manner than was quite pleasant to her, because, with the keenest dislike to false appearances, she yet could not take his intentions for granted, and tell him that she was engaged to Thomas. He saw her hesitation, and hastened to remove it.

"I only want to ask you about a matter of business," he said. "I assure you I wont detain you."

Mr. Sargent knew something of Mr. Wither, who had very "good connexions," and was indeed a favourite in several professional circles;

and from him he had learned all about Lucy's relations, without even alluding to Lucy herself, and that her uncle and whole family had sailed in the *Ningpo*. Anxious to do what he could for her, and fearful lest, in their unprotected condition, some advantage should be taken of the two women, he had made haste to offer his services to Lucy, not without a vague feeling that he ran great risk of putting himself in the false position of a fortune-hunter by doing so, and heartily abusing himself for not having made more definite advances before there was any danger of her becoming an heiress; for although a fortune was a most desirable thing in Mr. Sargent's position, especially if he wished to marry, he was above marrying for money alone, and in the case of Lucy, with whom he had fallen in love—just within his depth, it must be confessed—while she was as poor as himself, he was especially jealous of being unjustly supposed to be in pursuit of her prospects. Possibly the consciousness of what a help the fortune would be to him, made him even more sensitive

than he would otherwise have been. Still, he would not omit the opportunity of being useful to the girl, trusting that his honesty would, despite of appearances, manifest itself sufficiently to be believed in by so honest a nature as Lucy Burton.

"Have you heard the sad news?" he said, as soon as they were in the garden.

"No," answered Lucy, without much concern; for she did not expect to hear anything about Thomas.

"I thought not. It is very sad. The *Ningpo* is lost."

Lucy was perplexed. She knew the name of her uncle's vessel; but for a moment she did not associate the name with the thing. In a moment, however, something of the horror of the fact reached her. She did not cry, for her affections had no great part in any one on board of the vessel, but she turned very pale. And not a thought of the possible interest she might have in the matter crossed her mind. She had never associated good to herself with her uncle or any of his family.

"How dreadful!" she murmured. "My poor cousins! What they must all have gone through! Are they come home?"

"They are gone home," said Mr. Sargent, significantly. "There can be little doubt of that, I fear."

"You don't mean they're drowned?" she said, turning her white face on him, and opening her eyes wide.

"It is not absolutely certain; but there can be little doubt about it."

He did not show her the paragraph in the *Times*, though the paper was in his pocket: the particulars were too dreadful.

"Are there any other relations but your grandmother and yourself?" he asked, for Lucy remained silent.

"I don't know of any," she answered.

"Then you must come in for the property."

"Oh, no. He would never leave it to us. He didn't like me, for one thing. But that was my fault, perhaps. He was not over kind to my mother, and so I never liked him."

And here at length she burst into tears. She wept very quietly, however, and Mr. Sargent went on.

"But you must be his next of kin. Will you allow me to make inquiry—to do anything that may be necessary, for you? Don't misunderstand me," he added, pleadingly. "It is only as a friend—what I have been for a long time now, Lucy."

Lucy scarcely hesitated before she answered, with a restraint that appeared like coldness—.

"Thank you, Mr. Sargent. The business cannot in any case be mine. It is my grandmother's, and I can, and will, take no hand in it."

"Will you say to your grandmother that I am at her serviec?"

"If it were a business matter, there is no one I would more willingly——ask to help us; but as you say it is a matter of friendship, I must refuse your kindness."

Mr. Sargent was vexed with himself, and disappointed with her. He supposed that she had

misinterpreted his motives. Between the two, he was driven to a sudden unresolved action of appeal.

"Miss Burton," he said, "for God's sake, do not misunderstand me, and attribute to mercenary motives the offer I make only in the confidence that you will not do me such an injustice."

Lucy was greatly distressed. Her colour went and came for a few moments, and then she spoke.

"Mr. Sargent, I am just as anxious that you should understand me; but I am in a great difficulty, and have to throw myself on your generosity."

She paused again, astonished to find herself making a speech. But she did not pause long.

"I refuse your kindness," she said, "only because I am not free to lay myself under such obligation to you.—Do not ask me to say more," she added, finding that he made no reply.

But if she had looked in his face, she would have seen that he understood her perfectly. Honest disappointment and manly suffering were visible enough on his countenance. But he did

not grow ashy pale, as some lovers would at such an utterance. He would never have made, under any circumstances, a passionate lover, though an honest and true one; for he was one of those balanced natures which are never all in one thing at once. Hence the very moment he received a shock was the moment in which he began to struggle for victory. Something called to him, as Una to the Red-Cross Knight when face to face with the serpent Error—

"Strangle her, else she sure will strangle thee."

Before Lucy's eyes and his met, he had mastered his countenance at least.

"I understand you, Miss Burton," he said, in a calm voice which only trembled a little—and it was then that Lucy ventured to look at him—"and I thank you. Please to remember that if you ever need a friend, I am at your service."

Without another word, he lifted his hat and went away.

Lucy hastened home full of distress at the thought of her grandmother's grief, and thinking

all the way how she could convey the news with least of a shock; but when she entered the room, she found her already in tears, and Mr. Stopper seated by her side comforting her with common-places.

CHAPTER IX.

Of useful Odds and Ends.

DURING all this time, when his visits to Lucy were so much interrupted by her attendance upon Mattie, Thomas had not been doing well. In fact, he had been doing gradually worse. His mother had, of course, been at home for a long time now, and Mr. Simon's visits had been resumed. But neither of these circumstances tended to draw him homewards.

Mrs. Worboise's health was so much improved by her sojourn at Folkestone, that she now meditated more energetic measures for the conversion of her son. What these measures should be, however, she could not for some time determine. At length she resolved that, as he had been a good scholar when at school—proved in her eyes by his having brought home prizes

every year—she would ask him to bring his Greek Testament to her room, and help her to read through St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans with the fresh light which his scholarship would cast upon the page. It was not that she was in the least difficulty about the Apostle's meaning. She knew that as well at least as the Apostle himself; but she would invent an innocent trap to catch a soul with, and, if so it might be, put it in a safe cage, whose strong wires of exclusion should be wadded with the pleasant cotton of safety. Alas for St. Paul, his mighty soul, and his labouring speech, in the hands of two such! The very idea of such to read him, might have scared him from his epistle—if such readers there could have been in a time when the wild beasts of the amphitheatre kept the Christianity pure.

"Thomas," she said, one evening, "I want you to bring your Greek Testament, and help me out with something."

"O, mother, I can't. I have forgotten all about Greek. What is it you want to know?"

"I want you to read the Romans with me."

"Oh! really, mother, I can't. It's such bad Greek, you know!"

"Thomas!" said his mother, sepulchrally, as if his hasty assertion with regard to St. Paul's scholarship had been a sin against the truth St. Paul spoke.

"Well, really, mother, you must excuse me. I can't. The English is enough for me. Why don't you ask Mr. Simon? He's an Oxford man."

To this Mrs. Worboise had no answer immediately at hand.—From the way in which Thomas met her request, my reader will see that he was breaking loose from her authority—whether for the better or the worse does not at this point seem doubtful. And yet perhaps it was doubtful. Still he was not prepared to brave her and his father with a confession, for such it appeared to him to be, of his attachment to Lucy.

Since he could see so little of her, he had spent almost all the time that used to be devoted to her with Molken. In consequence, he

seldom reached home in anything like what he had been accustomed to consider decent time. When his mother spoke to him on the subject he shoved it aside with an "Ah! you were in bed, mother," prefacing some story, part true, part false, arranged for the occasion. So long as his father took no notice of the matter he did not much mind. He was afraid of him still; but so long as he was out of bed early enough in the morning, his father did not much care at what hour he went to it. He had had his own wild oats to sow in his time. The purity of his boy's mind and body did not trouble him much, provided that, when he came to take his position in the machine of things, he turned out a steady, respectable pinion, whose cogs did not miss, but held—the one till the other caught. He had, however, grown ambitious for him within the last few days—more of which by and by.

In the vacancy of mind occasioned by the loss of his visits to Lucy—for he had never entered heartily into any healthy pursuits in literature, art, or even amusement—Thomas had, as it were,

gradually sauntered more and more into the power of Mr. Molken; and although he had vowed to himself, after his first experience, that he would never play again, himself not being to himself a very awe-inspiring authority, he had easily broken that vow. It was not that he had any very strong inclination to play—the demon of play had not yet quite entered into him: it was only that whatever lord asserted dominion over Thomas, to him Thomas was ready to yield that which he claimed. Molken said, "Come along," and Thomas went along. Nor was it always to the gambling-house that he followed Molken; but although there was one most degrading species of vice from which his love to Lucy—for he loved Lucy with a real though not great love—did preserve him, there were several places to which his *friend* took him from which he could scarcely emerge as pure at he entered them. I suspect—thanks to what influence Lucy had with him, to what conscience he had left in him, to what good his mother and Mr. Simon had taught him, in a word, to the care of God over him—

Mr. Molken found him rather harder to corrupt than, from his shilly-shally ways, he had expected. Above all, the love of woman, next to the love of God, is the power of God to a young man's salvation; for all is of God, everything, from first to last—nature, providence, and grace—it is all of our Father in heaven; and what God hath joined let not man put asunder.

His gambling was a very trifle as far as money went: an affair of all but life and death as far as principle was concerned. There is nothing like the amount of in-door gambling that there used to be; but there is no great improvement in taking it to the downs and the open air, and making it librate on the muscles of horses instead of on the spinning power of a top or the turning up of cards. And whoever gambles, whether at *rouge-et-noir* or at Fly-away *versus* Stay-well, will find that the laws of gambling are, like those of the universe, unalterable. The laws of gambling are discontent, confusion, and loss upon every one who seeks to make money without giving money's worth. It will matter little to the gambler

whether the retribution comes in this world, he thinking, like Macbeth, to "skip the life to come," or in the next. He will find that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

But for Thomas, the worst thing in the gambling, besides the bad company it led him into, was that the whole affair fell in so with his natural weakness. Gambling is the employment fitted for the man without principles and without will, for his whole being is but, as far as he is concerned, the roulette-ball of chance. The wise, on the contrary, do not believe in Fortune, yield nothing to her sway, go on their own fixed path regardless "of her that turneth as a ball," as Chaucer says. They at least will be steady, come to them what may. Thomas got gradually weaker and weaker, and had it not been for Lucy, would soon have fallen utterly. But she, like the lady of an absent lord, still kept one fortress for him in a yielded and devastated country.

There was no newspaper taken in at Mr.

Worboise's, for he always left home for his office as soon as possible. So, when Thomas reached the counting-house, he had heard nothing of the sad news about his late master and his family. But the moment he entered the place he felt that the atmosphere was clouded. Mr. Wither, whose face was pale as death, rose from the desk where he had been sitting, caught up his hat, and went out. Thomas could not help suspecting that his entrance was the cause of Mr. Wither's departure, and his thoughts went back to last night, and he wondered whether his fellow-clerks would cut him because of the company he had been in. His conscience could be more easily pricked by the apprehension of overt disapprobation than by any other goad. None of them took any particular notice of him, however; only a gloom as of a funeral hung about all their faces, and radiated from them so as to make the whole place look sepulchral. Mr. Stopper was sitting within the glass partition, whence he called for Mr. Worboise, who obeyed with a bad grace, as anticipating something disagreeable.

"There!" said Mr. Stopper, handing him the newspaper, and watching him as he read.

Thomas read, returned the paper, murmured something, and went back with scared face to the outer room. There a conversation arose in a low voice, as if it had been in the presence of the dead. Various questions were asked and conjectures hazarded, but nobody knew anything. Thomas's place was opposite the glass, and before he had been long seated he saw Mr. Stopper take the key of the door of communication from a drawer, unlock the door, and with the *Times* in his hand walk into Mrs. Boxall's house, closing the door behind him. This movement was easy to understand, and set Thomas thinking. Then first the thought struck him that Lucy and her grandmother would come in for all the property. This sent a glow of pleasure through him, and he had enough ado to keep the funereal look which belonged to the occasion. Now he need not fear to tell his father the fact of his engagement—indeed he might delay the news as long as he liked, sure that it would be welcome when

it came. If his father were pleased, he did not care so much for his mother. But had he known how much she loved him, he could not have got so far away from her as to think so. If, on the other hand, he had fallen in with her way of things, she would have poured out upon him so much repressed affection that he would have known it. But till he saw as she saw, felt as she felt, and could talk as she talked, her motherhood beheld an impervious barrier between her and him—a barrier she laboured hard to remove, but with tools that could make no passage through an ever-closing mist.

I cannot help thinking that if he had told all now, the knowledge of his relation to Lucy would have been welcomed by his father, and would have set everything right. I cannot but believe that Mr. Worboise's mind was troubled about the property. With perfect law on his side, there was that yet against him which all his worldliness did not quite enable him to meet with coolness. But the longer the idea of the property rested upon his mind, the more, as if it

had been the red-hot coin of the devil's gift, it burned and burrowed out a nest for itself, till it lay there stone-cold and immovably fixed, and not to be got rid of. Before many weeks had passed he not only knew that it was his by law, but felt that it was his by right—his own by right of possession, and the clinging of his heart-strings around it—his own because it was so good that he could not part with it. Still, it was possible that something adverse might turn up, and there was no good in incurring odium until he was absolutely sure that the fortune as well as the odium would be his; therefore he was in no haste to propound the will.

At the same time, as I have said, he began to be more ambitious for his son, and the more he thought about the property, the more he desired to increase it by the advantageous alliance which he had now no doubt he could command. This persuasion was increased by the satisfaction which his son's handsome person and pleasing manners afforded him; and a confidence of manner which had of late shown itself, chiefly, it must be con-

fessed, from the experience of the world he had had in the company he had of late frequented, had raised in his father's mind a certain regard for him which he had not felt before. Therefore he began to look about him, and speculate. He had not the slightest suspicion of Thomas being in love; and, indeed, there was nothing in his conduct or appearance that could have aroused such a suspicion in his mind. Mr. Worboise believed, on the contrary, that his son was leading a rather wild life.

It may seem strange that Thomas should not by this time have sunk far deeper into the abyss of misery; but Molken had been careful in not trying to hook him while he was only nibbling; and, besides, until he happened to be able to lose something worth winning, Molken rather avoided running him into any scrape that might disgust him without bringing any considerable advantage to himself.

There was one adverse intelligence, of whom Mr. Worboise knew nothing, and who knew nothing of Mr. Worboise, ready to pounce upon

him the moment he showed his game. This was Mr. Sargent. Smarting, not under Lucy's refusal so much as from the lingering suspicion that she had altogether misinterpreted his motives, he watched for an opportunity of proving his disinterestedness: this was his only hope; for he saw that Lucy was lost to him. He well knew that in the position of her and her grandmother, it would not be surprising if something with a forked tongue or a cloven foot should put its head out of a hole before very long, and begin to creep towards them; and therefore, as I say, he kept an indefinite but wide watch, in the hope which I have mentioned. He had no great difficulty in discovering that Mr. Worboise had been Mr. Boxall's man of business, but he had no right to communicate with him on the subject. This indeed Mr. Stopper, who had taken the place of adviser in general to Mrs. Boxall, had already done, asking him whether Mr. Boxall had left no will, to which he had received a reply only to the effect that it was early days, that there was no proof of his death, and that he was

prepared to give what evidence he possessed at the proper time—an answer Mrs. Boxall naturally enough, with her fiery disposition, considered less than courteous. Of this Mr. Sargent of course was not aware, but as the only thing he could do at present, he entered a *caveat* in the Court of Probate.

Mr. Stopper did his best for the business in the hope of one day having not only the entire management as now, but an unquestionable as unquestioned right to the same. If he ever thought of anything further since he had now a free entrance to Mrs. Boxall's region, he could not think an inch in that direction without encountering the idea of Thomas.

It was very disagreeable to Thomas that Mr. Stopper, whom he detested, should have this free admission to what he had been accustomed to regard as his *peculium*. He felt as if the place were defiled by his presence, and to sit as he had sometimes to sit, knowing that Mr. Stopper was overhead, was absolutely hateful. But, as I shall have to set forth in the next chapter, Lucy was

not at home; and that mitigated the matter very considerably. For the rest Mr. Stopper was on the whole more civil to Thomas than he had hitherto been, and appeared even to put a little more confidence in him than formerly. The fact was that the insecurity of his position made him conscious of vulnerability, and he wished to be friendly on all sides, with a vague general feeling of strengthening his outworks.

Mr. Wither never opened his mouth to Thomas upon any occasion or necessity, and from several symptoms it appeared that his grief, or rather perhaps the antidotes to it, were dragging him down hill.

Amy Worboise was not at home. The mother had seen symptoms; and much as she valued Mr. Simon's ghostly ministrations, the old Adam in her rebelled too strongly against having a curate for her son-in-law. So Amy disappeared for a season, upon a convenient invitation. But if she had been at home, she could have influenced events in nothing, for, as often happens in families, there was no real communication between brother and sister.

CHAPTER X.

Mattie in the Country.

NOW return to resume the regular thread of my story.

I do not know if my reader is half as much interested in Mattie as I am. I doubt it very much. He will, most probably, like Poppie better. But big-headed, strange, and conceited as Mattie was, she was altogether a higher being than Poppie. She thought; Poppie only received impressions. If she had more serious faults than Poppie, they were faults that belonged to a more advanced stage of growth; diseased, my reader may say, but diseased with a disease that fell in with, almost belonged to, the untimely development. All Poppie's thoughts, to speak roughly, came from without; all Mattie's from within. To complete Mattie, she had to go back a little,

and learn to receive impressions; to complete Poppie, she had to work upon the impressions she received, and, so to speak, generate thoughts of her own. Mattie led the life of a human being; Poppie of a human animal. Mattie lived; Poppie was there. Poppie was the type of most people; Mattie of the elect.

Lucy did not intend, in the sad circumstances in which she now was, to say a word to her grandmother about Mrs. Morgenstern's proposal. But it was brought about very naturally. As she entered the court, she met Mattie. The child had been once more to visit Mr. Spelt, but had found the little nest so oppressive that she had begged to be put down again, that she might go to her own room. Mr. Spelt was leaning over his door and his crossed legs, for he could not stand up, looking anxiously after her; and the child's face was so pale and sad, and she held her little hand so pitifully to her big head, that Lucy could not help feeling that the first necessity amongst her duties was to get Mattie away.

After the first burst of her grandmother's grief at sight of her was over, after Mr. Stopper had gone back to the counting-house, and she had fallen into a silent rocking to and fro, Lucy ventured to speak.

"They're gone home, dear grannie," she said.

"And I shan't stay long behind them, my dear," grannie moaned.

"That's some comfort, isn't it, grannie?" said Lucy, for her own heart was heavy, not for the dead, but for the living; heavy for her own troubles, heavy for Thomas, about whom she felt very despondent, almost despairing.

"Ah! you young people would be glad enough to have the old ones out of the way," returned Mrs. Boxall, in the petulance of grief. "Have patience, Lucy; have patience, child; it wont be long, and then you can do as you like."

"Oh, grannie, grannie!" cried Lucy, bursting into tears. "I do everything I like now. I only wanted to comfort you," she sobbed. "I thought you would like to go too. *I* wish I was dead."

"*You,* child!" exclaimed Mrs. Boxall; "why should you wish you was dead? You don't know enough of life to wish for death." Then, as Lucy went on sobbing, her tone changed—for she began to be concerned at her distress. "What *is* the matter with my darling?" she said. "Are you ill, Lucy?"

Then Lucy went to her and kissed her, and knelt down, and laid her head in the old woman's lap. And her grannie stroked her hair, and spoke to her as if she had been one of her own babies, and, in seeking to comfort her, forgot her own troubles for the moment.

"You've been doing too much for other people, Lucy," she said. "We must think of you now. You must go to the sea-side for a while. You shan't go about giving lessons any more, my lamb. There is no need for that any more, for they say all the money will be ours now."

And the old woman wept again at the thought of the source of their coming prosperity.

"I should like to go to the country very much, if you would go too, grannie."

"No, no, child, I don't want to go. I don't want any doing good to."

"But I don't like to leave you, grannie," objected Lucy.

"Never mind me, my dear. I shall be better alone for a while. And I daresay there will be some business to attend to."

And so they went on talking, till Lucy told her all about Mrs. Morgenstern's plan, and how ill poor Mattie looked, and that she would be glad to go away for a little while herself. Mrs. Boxall would not consent to go, but she even urged Lucy to accept the proposed arrangement, and proceeded at once to inquire into her wardrobe, and talk about mourning.

Two days after, Lucy and Mattie met Mrs. Morgenstern and Miriam at the London Bridge railway station. Mattie looked quite dazed, almost stupid, with the noise and bustle; but when they were once in motion, she heaved a deep sigh, and looked comforted. She said nothing, however, for some time, and her countenance revealed no surprise. Whatever was out of the usual

way always oppressed Mattie—not excited her; and, therefore, the more surprising anything was, the less did it occasion any outward shape of surprise. But as they flashed—if I may use such an Erinism—as they flashed into the first tunnel, Lucy saw her start and shudder ere they vanished from each other in the darkness. She put out her hand and took hold of the child's. It was cold and trembling; but as she held it gently and warmly in her own, it grew quite still. By the time the light began to grow again, her face was peaceful, and when they emerged in the cutting beyond she was calm enough to speak the thought that had come to her in the dark. With another sigh—

"I knew the country wasn't nice," she said.

"But you don't know what the country is yet," answered Lucy.

"I know quite enough of it," returned Mattie. "I like London best. I wish I could see some shops."

Lucy did not proceed to argue the matter with her. She did not tell her how unfair she was to

judge the country by what lay between her and it. As well might she have argued with Thomas that the bitterness of the repentance from which he shrank was not the religion to which she wanted to lead him; that religion itself was to him inconceivable, and could but be known when he was in it. She had tried this plan with him in their last interview before she left. She had herself, under the earnest teaching of Mr. Fuller, and in the illumination of that Spirit for which she prayed, learned many a spiritual lesson, had sought eagerly, and therefore gained rapidly. For hers was one of the good soils, well prepared beforehand for the seed of the redeeming truth of God's love, and the sonship of Christ, and his present power in the human soul. And she had tried, I say, to make Thomas believe in the blessedness of the man whose iniquities are pardoned, whose sins are covered, to whom the Lord imputeth not his transgressions; but Thomas had replied only with some of the stock phrases of assent. A nature such as his could not think of law and obedience save as a re-

straint. While he would be glad enough to have the weight of conscious wrong-doing lifted off him, he could not see that in yielding his own way and taking God's, lay the only *freedom* of which the human being, made in the image of God, is capable.

Presently Mattie found another argument upon her side, that is, the town-side of the question. She had been sitting for half an hour watching the breath of the snorting engine, as it rushed out for a stormy flight over the meek fields, faltered, lingered, faded, melted, was gone.

"I told you so," said Mattie: "nothing lasts in the country."

"What are you looking at now?" asked Lucy, bending forward to see.

"Those white clouds," answered Mattie. "I've been expecting them to do something for ever so long. And they never do anything, though they begin in such a hurry. The green gets the better of them somehow. They melt away into it, and are all gone."

"But they do the grass some good, I dare-

say," returned Lucy—"in hot weather like this especially."

"Well, that's not what they set out for, anyhow," said Mattie. "They look always as if they were just going to take grand shapes, and make themselves up into an army, and go out and conquer the world."

"And then," suggested Lucy, yielding to the fancy of the child, "they think better of it, and give themselves up, and die into the world to do it good, instead of trampling it under their feet and hurting it."

"But how do they come to change their minds so soon?" asked Mattie, beginning to smile; for this was the sort of intellectual duel in which her little soul delighted.

"Oh, I don't think they do change their minds. I don't think they ever meant to trample down the world. That was your notion, you know, Mattie."

"Well, what do you think they set out for? Why do they rush out so fiercely all at once?"

"I will tell you what I think," answered

Lucy, without perceiving more than the faintest glimmering of the human reality of what she said. "I think they rush out of the hot place in which they are got ready to do the fields good, in so much pain, that they toss themselves about in strange ways, and people think they are fierce and angry when they are only suffering—shot out into the air from a boiling kettle, you know, Mattie."

"Ah! yes; I see," answered Mattie. "That's it, is it? Yes, I daresay. Out of a kettle?"

Miriam had drawn near, and was listening, but she could make little of all this, for her hour was not yet come to ask, or to understand such questions.

"Yes, that great round thing in front of us, is just a great kettle," said Lucy.

"Well, I will look at it when we get out. I thought there wasn't much in the country. I suppose we shall get out again though. This isn't all the country, is it?"

Before they reached Hastings, Mattie was fast asleep. It was the evening. She scarcely woke

when they stopped for the last time. Lucy carried her from the carriage to a cab, and when they arrived at the lodgings where they were expected, made all haste to get her to bed and asleep.

But she woke the earlier in the morning, and the first thing she was aware of was the crowing of a very clear-throated cock, such a cock as Henry Vaughan must have listened to in the morning of the day when he wrote

> "Father of lights! what sunnie seed,
> What glance of day hast thou confined
> Into this bird? To all the breed
> This busie Ray thou hast assigned;
> Their magnetisme works all night,
> And dreams of Paradise and light."

She could not collect her thoughts for some time. She was aware that a change had taken place, but what was it? Was she somebody else? What did they use to call her? Then she remembered Mr. Spelt's shop, and knew that she was Mattie Kitely. What then had happened to her? Something certainly had happened, else how could the cock crow like that? She was

now aware that her eyes were open, but she did not know that Lucy was in another bed in the same room watching her—whence afterwards, when she put Mattie's words and actions together, she was able to give this interpretation of her thoughts. The room was so different from anything she had been used to, that she could not understand it. She crept out of bed and went to the window. There was no blind to it, only curtains drawn close in front.

Now my reader must remember that when Mattie went to the window of her own room at home she saw into Guild Court. The house in which they now were was halfway up one of the hills on the sides of which great part of Hastings is built. The sun was not shining upon the window at this hour of the morning, and therefore did not obstruct the view. Hence when Mattie went between the curtains she saw nothing but that loveliest of English seas—the Hastings sea—lying away out into the sky, or rather, as it appeared to her unaccustomed gaze, piled up like a hill against the sky, which domed it over, vast

and blue, and triumphant in sunlight—just a few white sails below, and a few white clouds above, to show how blue the sea and the sky were in this glory of an autumn morning. She saw nothing of the earth on which she was upheld; only the sea and the sky. She started back with a feeling that she could never describe; there was terror, and loneliness, and helplessness in it. She turned and flew to her bed, but instead of getting into it, fell down on her knees by the side of it, clutched the bed-clothes, and sobbed and wept aloud. Lucy was by her side in a moment, took her in her arms, carried her into her own bed, and comforted her in her bosom.

Mattie had been all her life sitting in the camera-obscura of her own microcosm, watching the shadows that went and came, and now first she looked up and out upon the world beyond and above her. All her doings had gone on in the world of her own imaginings; and although that big brain of hers contained—no, I cannot say *contained,* but what else am I to say?—a being greater than all that is seen, heard, or

handled, yet the outward show of divine imagination which now met her eyes might well overpower that world within her. I fancy that, like the blind to whom sight is given, she did not at first recognise the difference between herself and it, but felt as if it was all inside her and she did not know what to do with it. She would not have cried at the sight of a rose, as Poppie did. I doubt whether Mattie's was altogether such a refined nature as Poppie's—to begin with: she would have rather patronized the rose-tree, and looked down upon it as a presuming and rather unpleasant thing because it bore dying children: and she needed, some time or other, and that was *now*, just such a sight as this to take the conceit out of her. Less of a vision of the eternal would not have been sufficient. Was it worth while? Yes. The whole show of the universe was well spent to take an atom of the self out of a child. God is at much trouble with us, but he never weighs material expense against spiritual gain to one of his creatures. The whole universe existed for Mattie. There is more than

that that the Father has not spared. And no human fault, the smallest, is overcome, save by the bringing in of true grand things. A sense of the infinite and the near, the far yet impending, rebuked the conceit of Mattie to the very core, and without her knowing why or how. She clung to Lucy as a child would cling, and as, all through her illness, she had never clung before.

"What is the matter with you, Mattie, dear?" asked Lucy, but asked in vain. Mattie only clung to her the closer, and began a fresh utterance of sobs. Lucy therefore held her peace for some time and waited. And in the silence of that waiting she became aware that a lark was singing somewhere out in the great blue vault.

"Listen to the lark singing so sweetly," she said at length. And Mattie moved her head enough to show that she would listen, and lay still a long while listening. At length she said with a sob,

"What is a lark? I never saw one, Miss Burton."

"A bird like a sparrow. You know what a sparrow is, don't you, dear?"

"Yes. I have seen sparrows often in the court. They pick up dirt."

"Well, a lark is like a sparrow; only it doesn't pick up dirt, and sings as you hear it. And it flies so far up into the sky that you can't see it—you can only hear the song it scatters down upon the earth."

"Oh, how dreadful!" said Mattie, burying her head again as if she would shut out hearing and sight and all.

"What is it that is dreadful? I don't understand you, Mattie."

"To fly up into that awful place up there. Shall we have to do that when we die?"

"It is not an awful place, dear. God is there, you know."

"But I am frightened. And if God is up there, I shall be frightened at him too. It is so dreadful! I used to think God could see me when I was in London. But how he is to see me in this great place, with so many things

about, cocks, and larks and all, I can't think. I'm so little! I'm hardly worth taking care of."

"But you remember, Mattie, what Somebody says—that God takes care of every sparrow."

"Yes, but that's the sparrows, and they're in the town, you know," said Mattie, with an access of her old fantastic perversity, flying for succour, as it always does, to false logic.

Lucy saw that it was time to stop. The child's fear was gone for the present, or she could not have talked such nonsense. It was just as good, however, as the logic of most of those who worship the letter and call it the word.

"Why don't you speak, Miss Burton?" asked Mattie at length, no doubt conscience-stricken by her silence.

"Because you are talking nonsense now, Mattie."

"I thought that was it. But why should that make you not speak? for I need the more to hear sense."

"No, Mattie. Mr. Fuller says that when

people begin to talk falsely, it is better to be quite silent, and let them say what they please, till the sound of their own nonsense makes them ashamed."

"As it did me, Miss Burton, as soon as you wouldn't speak any more."

"He says it does no good to contradict them then, for they are not only unworthy to hear the truth—that's not it—if they would hear it—but they are not fit to hear it. They are not in a mood to get any good from it; for they are holding the door open for the devil to come in, and truth can't get in at the same door with the devil."

"Oh, how dreadful! To think of me talking like Syne!" said Mattie. "I wont do it again, Miss Burton. Do tell me what Somebody said about God and the sparrows. Didn't he say something about counting their feathers? I think I remember Mr. Spelt reading that to me one night."

"He said something about counting your hairs, Mattie."

"*Mine?*"

"Well, he said it to all the people that would listen to him. I daresay there were some that could not believe it, because they did not care to be told it."

"That's me, Miss Burton. But I wont do it again. Well?—What more?"

"Only this, Mattie; that if God knows how many hairs you have got on your head——"

"My big head—" interrupted Mattie. "Well?"

"Yes, on your big head—if God knows that, you can't think you're too small for him to look after you."

"I will try not to be frightened at the big sky any more, dear Miss Burton; I will try."

In a few minutes she was fast asleep again.

Lucy's heart was none the less trustful that she had tried to increase Mattie's faith. He who cared for the sparrows would surely hear her cry for Thomas, nay, would surely look after Thomas himself. The father did not forget the prodigal son all the time that he was away; did not think of him only when he came back again,

worn and sorrowful. In teaching Mattie she had taught herself. She had been awake long before her, turning over and over her troubled thoughts till they were all in a ravelled sleave of care. Now she too fell fast asleep in her hope, and when she awoke, her thoughts were all knit up again in an even resolve to go on and do her duty, casting her care upon Him that cared for her.

And now Mattie's childhood commenced. She had had none as yet. Her disputatiousness began to vanish. She could not indulge it in the presence of the great sky, which grew upon her till she felt, as many children and some conscience-stricken men have felt—that it was the great eye of God looking at her; and although this feeling was chiefly associated with awe at first, she soon began to love the sky, and to be sorry and oppressed upon cloudy days when she could no longer look up into it.

The next day they went down to the beach, in a quiet place, amongst great stones, under the east cliff. Lucy sat down on one of them, and

began to read a book Mr. Fuller had lent her. Miriam was at a little distance, picking up shells, and Mattie on another stone nearer the sea. The tide was rising. Suddenly Mattie came scrambling in great haste over all that lay between her and Lucy. Her face was pale, scared, and eager.

"I'm so frightened again!" she said; "and I can't help it. The sea! What does it mean?"

"What do you mean, Mattie?" returned Lucy, smiling.

"Well, it's roaring at me, and coming nearer and nearer, as if it wanted to swallow me up. I don't like it."

"You must not be afraid of it. God made it, you know."

"Why does he let it roar at me, then?"

"I don't know. Perhaps to teach you not to be afraid."

Mattie said no more, stood a little while by Lucy, and then scrambled back to her former place.

The next day, they managed with some diffi-

culty to get up on the East Hill: Mattie was very easily worn out, especially with climbing. She gazed at the sea below her, the sky over her head, the smooth grass under her feet, and gave one of her great sighs. Then she looked troubled.

"I feel as if I hadn't any clothes on," she said.

"How is that, Mattie?"

"Well, I don't know. I feel as if I couldn't stand steady—as if I hadn't anything to keep me up. In London, you know, the houses were always beside to hold a body up, and keep them steady. But here, if it weren't for Somebody, I should be so frightened for falling down—I don't know where!"

Lucy smiled. She did not see then how exactly the child symbolized those who think they have faith in God, and yet when one of the swaddling bands of system or dogma to which they have been accustomed is removed, or even only slackened, immediately feel as if there were no God, as if the earth under their feet were a

cloud, and the sky over them a colour, and nothing to trust in anywhere. They rest in their swaddling bands, not in God. The loosening of these is God's gift to them that they may grow. But at first they are much afraid.

Still Mattie looked contemptuously on the flowers. Wandering along the cliff, they came to a patch that was full of daisies. Miriam's familiarity with the gorgeous productions of greenhouse and hothouse had not injured her capacity for enjoying these peasants of flowers. She rushed among them with a cry of pleasure, and began gathering them eagerly. Mattie stood by with a look of condescending contempt upon her pale face.

"Wouldn't you like to gather some daisies too, Mattie?" suggested Lucy.

"Where's the use?" said Mattie. "The poor things 'll be withered in no time. It's almost a shame to gather them, I do think."

"Well, you needn't gather them if you don't want to have them," returned Lucy. "But I wonder you don't like them, they are so pretty."

"But they don't last. I don't like things that die. I had a little talk with Mr. Fuller about that."

Now Mr. Fuller had told Lucy what the child had said, and this had resulted in a good deal of talk. Mr. Fuller was a great lover of Wordsworth, and the book Lucy was now reading, the one he had lent her, was Wordsworth's Poems. She had not found what she now answered, either in Wordsworth's poems or in Mr. Fuller's conversation, but it came from them both, mingling with her love to God, and her knowledge of the Saviour's words, with the question of the child to set her mind working with them all at once. She thought for a moment, and then said:

"Listen, Mattie. You don't dislike to hear me talk, do you?"

"No, indeed," answered Mattie.

"You like the words I say to you, then?"

"Yes, indeed," said Mattie, wondering what would come next.

"But my words die as soon as they are out of my mouth."

Mattie began to see a glimmering of something coming, and held her peace and listened. Lucy went on.

"Well, the flowers are some of God's words, and they last longer than mine."

"But I understand your words. I know what you want to say to me. And I don't know the meaning of *them*."

"That's because you haven't looked at them long enough. You must suppose them words in God's book, and try to read them and understand them."

"I will try," said Mattie, and walked soberly towards Miriam.

But she did not begin to gather the daisies as Miriam was doing. She lay down in the grass, just as Chaucer tells us he used to do in the mornings of May for the same purpose—to look at the daisy—"leaning on my elbow and my side;" and thus she continued for some time. Then she rose, and came slowly back to Lucy.

"I can't tell what they mean," she said. "I have been trying very hard too."

"I don't know whether I understand them or not, myself. But I fancy we get some good from what God shows us even when we don't understand it much."

"They are such little things!" said Mattie. "I can hardly fancy them worth making."

"God thinks them worth making though, or he would not make them. He wouldn't do anything that he did not care about doing. There's the lark again. Listen to him, how glad he is. He is so happy that he can't bear it without singing. If he couldn't sing it would break his heart, I fancy. Do you think God would have made his heart so glad if he did not care for his gladness, or given him such a song to sing—for he must have made the song and taught it to the lark—the song is just the lark's heart coming out in sounds—would he have made all the lark if he did not care for it? And he would not have made the daisies so pretty if their prettiness was not worth something in his eyes. And if God cares for them, surely it is worth our while to care for them too."

Mattie listened very earnestly, went back to the daisies, and lay down again beside a group of them. Miriam kept running about from one spot to another, gathering them. What Mattie said, or what Miriam replied, I do not know, but in a little while Mattie came to Lucy with a red face—a rare show in her.

"I don't like Miss Miriam," she said. "She's not nice at all."

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Lucy, in some surprise, for the children had got on very well together as yet. What has she been doing?"

"She doesn't care a bit for Somebody. I don't like her."

"But Somebody likes her."

To this Mattie returned no answer, but stood thoughtful. The blood withdrew from her face to its fountain, and she went back to the daisies once more.

The following day she began to gather flowers as other children do, even to search for them as for hidden treasures. And if she did not learn

their meaning with her understanding, she must have learned it with her heart, for she would gaze at some of them in a way that showed plainly enough that she felt their beauty; and in the beauty, the individual loveliness of such things, lies the dim lesson with which they faintly tincture our being. No man can be quite the same he was after having *loved* a new flower.

Thus, by degrees, Mattie's thought and feeling were drawn outwards. Her health improved. Body and mind reacted on each other. She grew younger and humbler. Every day her eyes were opened to some fresh beauty on the earth, some new shadowing of the sea, some passing loveliness in the heavens. She had hitherto refused the world as a thing she had not proved; now she began to feel herself at home in it, that is, to find that it was not a strange world to which she had come, but a home; not, indeed, the innermost, sacredest room of the house where the Father sat, but still a home, full of his presence, his thoughts, his designs. Is it any wonder

that a child should prosper better in such a world than in a catacomb filled with the coffined remains of thinking men?—I mean her father's bookshop. Here, God was ever before her in the living forms of his thought, a power and a blessing. Every wind that blew was his breath, and the type of his inner breathing upon the human soul. Every morning was filled with his light, and the type of the growing of that light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. And there are no natural types that do not dimly work their own spiritual reality upon the open heart of the human being.

Before she left Hastings, Mattie was almost a child.

CHAPTER XI.

Poppie in Town.

BETWEEN Mr. Spelt's roost and the house called No. 1 of Guild Court, there stood a narrow house, as tall as the rest, which showed, by the several bell-pulls ranged along the side of the door, that it was occupied by different households. Mr. Spelt had for some time had his eye upon it, in the hope of a vacancy occurring in its top chambers, occupying which he would be nearer his work, and have a more convenient home in case he should some day succeed in taming and capturing Poppie. Things had been going well in every way with the little tailor. He had had a good many more private customers for the last few months, began in consequence to look down from a growing height upon slop-work, though he was too pru-

dent to drop it all at once, and had three or four pounds in the post-office savings-bank. Likewise his fishing had prospered. Poppie came for her sweets as regularly as a robin for his crumbs in winter. Spelt, however, did not now confine his bait to sweets; a fresh roll, a currant bun, sometimes—when his longing for his daughter had been especially strong the night before, even a Bath bun—would hang suspended by a string from the aerial threshold, so that Poppie could easily reach it, and yet it should be under the protection of the tailor from chance marauders. And every morning as she took it, she sent a sweet smile of thanks to the upper regions whence came her aid. Though not very capable of conversation, she would occasionally answer a few questions about facts—as, for instance, where she had slept the last night, to which the answer would commonly be, "Mother Flanaghan's;" but once, to the tailor's no small discomposure, was "The Jug." She did not seem to know exactly, however, how it was that she got incarcerated: there had been a crowd, and somebody

had prigged something, and there was a scurry and a running, and she scudded as usual, and got took up. Mr. Spelt was more anxious than ever to take her home after this. But sometimes, the moment he began to talk to her she would run away, without the smallest appearance of rudeness, only of inexplicable oddity; and Mr. Spelt would fancy then that he was not a single step nearer to the desired result than when he first baited his hook. He regarded it as a good omen, however, when, by the death of an old woman and the removal of her daughter, the topmost floor of the house, consisting of two small rooms, became vacant, and he secured them at a weekly rental quite within the reach of his improved means. He did not imagine how soon he would be able to put them to the use he most desired.

One evening, just as the light was fading, and he proceeded to light a candle to enable him to go on with his work, he heard the patter of her bare feet on the slabs, for his ear was very keen for this most pleasant of sounds, and looking

down saw the child coming towards him, holding the bottom of her ragged frock up to her head. He had scarcely time to be alarmed before she stopped at the foot of his shop, looked up pale as death, with a dark streak of blood running through the paleness, and burst into a wail. The little man was down in a moment, but before his feet reached the ground Poppie had fallen upon it in a faint. He lifted the child in his arms with a strange mixture of pity and horror in his big heart, and sped up the three stairs to his own dwelling. There he laid her on his bed, struck a light, and proceeded to examine her. He found a large and deep cut in her head, from which the blood was still flowing. He rushed down again, and fortunately found Dolman on the point of leaving. Him he sent for a doctor, and returned like an arrow to his treasure. Having done all he could, with the aid of his best Sunday-shirt, to stop the bleeding, he waited impatiently for the doctor's arrival, which seemed long delayed. Before he came the child began to revive; and, taught by the motion of her lips,

he got some water and held it to them. Poppie drank and opened her eyes. When she saw who was bending over her, the faintest ghost of a smile glimmered about her mouth, and she closed her eyes again, murmuring something about Mother Flanaghan.

As far as he could gather from piecing together what the child said afterwards, Mr. Spelt came to the conclusion that Mrs. Flanaghan had come home a little the worse for "cream of the valley," and wanted more. Poppie happened to be alone in her room when she came, for we have seen that she sometimes forgot to lock the door, if, indeed, there was a lock on it. She had nothing to care for, however, but her gin-bottle; and that she thought she hid safely enough. Whether she had left it empty or not, I do not know, but she found it empty when she neither desired nor expected to find it so; and coming to the hasty and stupid conclusion that poor Poppie was the thief—just as an ill-trained child expends the rage of a hurt upon the first person within his reach—she broke the vile vessel

upon Poppie's head, with the result we have seen. But the child had forgotten everything between that and her waking upon Mr. Spelt's bed.

The doctor came and dressed her wound, and gave directions for her treatment.

And now Mr. Spelt was in the seventh heaven of delight: he had a little woman of his own to take care of. He was thirty-nine years of age; and now, for the first time in his life, saw a prospect of happiness opening before him. No: once before, when he led the splendid Mrs. Spelt home from church, he had looked into a rosy future; but the next morning the prospect closed, and had never opened again till now. He did not lie down all that night, but hovered about her bed, as if she had been a creature that might any moment spread out great wings and fly away from him for ever. Sometimes he had to soothe her with kind words, for she wandered a good deal, and would occasionally start up with wild looks, as if to fly once more from Mother Flanaghan with the gin-bottle bludgeon uplifted in her hand; then the sound of Mr. Spelt's

voice would instantly soothe her, and she would lie down again and sleep. But she scarcely spoke; for at no time was Poppie given to much speech.

When the light came, he hurried downstairs to his shop, got his work and all his implements out, carried them up, and sat with them on the floor where he could see Poppie's face. There he worked away busily at a pair of cords for a groom, every now and then lifting his eyes from his seam to look down into the court, and finding them always met by the floor. Then his look would go up to the bed, seeking Poppie's pale face. He found he could not get on so fast as usual. Still he made progress; and it was a comfort to think that by working thus early he was saving time for nursing his little white Poppie.

When at length she woke, she seemed a little better; but she soon grew more feverish, and he found that he must constantly watch her, for she was ready to spring out of bed any moment. The father-heart grew dreadfully

anxious before the doctor came; and all that day and the next he got very little work done, for the poor child was really in danger. Indeed it was more than a week before he began to feel a little easy about her; and ten days yet passed before she was at all able to leave her bed.

And herein lay the greatest blessing both for Spelt and Poppie. I doubt if anything else could have given him a reasonable chance, as we say, of taming the wild animal. Her illness compelled her into such a continuance of dependent association with him, that the idea of him had time to grow into her heart; while all her scudding propensities, which prevented her from making a quiet and thorough acquaintance with anybody, were not merely thwarted, but utterly gone while she remained weak. The humanity of the child had therefore an opportunity of developing itself; obstructions removed, the well of love belonging to her nature began to pulse and to flow, and she was, as it were, compelled to love Mr. Spelt; so that, by the time old impulses returned with returning health, he had a chance against them.

CHAPTER XII.

Mr. Fuller in his Church.

MR. FULLER'S main bent of practical thought was how to make his position in the church as far as possible from a sinecure. If the church was a reality at all, if it represented a vital body, every portion of it ought to be instinct with life. Yet here was one of its cells, to speak physiologically, all but inactive—a huge building of no use all the week, and on Sundays filled with organ sounds, a few responses from a sprinkling of most indifferent worshippers, and his own voice reading prayers, and trying—"with sick assay" sometimes—to move those few to be better men and women than they were. Now so far it was a centre of life, and as such well worthy of any amount of outlay of mere money. But even money itself is a holy

thing; and from the money point alone, low as that is, it might well be argued that this church was making no adequate return for the amount expended upon it. Not that one thought of honest comfort to a human soul is to be measured against millions of expense: but that what the money did, might well be measured against what the money might do. To the commercial mind such a church suggests immense futility, a judgment correct in so far as it falls short of its possibilities. To tell the truth, and a good truth it is to tell, Mr. Fuller was ashamed of St. Amos's, and was thinking day and night how to retrieve the character of his church.

And he reasoned thus with himself, in the way mostly of question and answer:

"What is Sunday?" he asked, answering himself—"A quiet hollow scooped out of the windy hill of the week." "Must a man then go for six days shelterless ere he comes to the repose of the seventh? Are there to be no great rocks to shadow him between?—no hiding-places from the wind to let him take breath and

heart for the next struggle? And if there ought to be, where are they to be found if not in our churches?—scattered like little hollows of sacred silence scooped out of the roar and bustle of our cities, dumb to the questions—What shall we eat? what shall we drink? and wherewithal shall we be clothed?—but, alas! equally dumb to the question—Where shall I find rest, for I am weary and heavy-laden? These churches stand absolute caverns of silence amidst the thunder of the busy city—with a silence which does not remind men of the eternal silence of truth, but of the carelessness of heart wherewith men regard that silence. Their work is nowhere till Sunday comes, and nowhere after that till the next Sunday or the next saint's day. How is this? Why should they not lift up the voice of silence against the tumult of care? against the dissonance of Comus and his crew? How is it that they do not—standing with their glittering silent cocks and their golden unopening keys high uplifted in sunny air? Why is it that their cocks do not crow, and their keys do not open? Because their cocks are busy about how the wind blows, and

their keys do not fit their own doors. They may be caverns of peace, but they are caverns without entrance—sealed fountains—a mockery of the thirst and confusion of men." "But men do not want entrance; what is the use of opening the doors of our churches so long as men do not care to go in? Times are changed now." "But does not the very word Revelation imply a something coming from heaven—not certainly before men were ready for it, for God cannot be precipitate—but before they had begun to pray for it?" Mr. Fuller remembered how his own father used always to compel his children to eat one mouthful of any dish he heard them say at table that they did not like—whereupon they generally chose to go on with it. "But they wont come in." "How can you tell till you try, till you fulfil the part of the *minister* (good old beautiful Christian word), and be 'the life o' the building?'" "Presumption! Are not the prayers everything?" "At least not till you get people to pray them." "You make too much of the priest." "Leave him for God, and the true

priest has all the seal of his priesthood that he wants." At least so thought Mr. Fuller. "What is the priest?" he asked, going on with the same catechism. "Just a man to be among men what the Sunday is among the work days of the week—a man to remind you that there is a life within this life, or beyond and about it, if you like that mode better—for extremes meet in the truest figures—that care is not of God, that faith and confidence are truer, simpler, more of common sense than balances at bankers or preference shares. He is a protest against the money-heaping tendencies of men, against the desire of rank or estimation or any kind of social distinction. With him all men are equal, as in the Church all have equal rights, and rank ceases on the threshold of the same, overpowered by the presence of the Son of Mary, who was married to a carpenter—overpowered by the presence of the God of the whole earth, who wrote the music for the great organ of the spheres, after he had created them to play the same." Such was the calling of the clergyman, as Mr. Fuller saw it. Rather a lofty

one, and simply a true one. If the clergyman cannot rouse men to seek his God and their God, if he can only rest in his office, which becomes false the moment he rests in it, being itself for a higher end; if he has no message from the infinite to quicken the thoughts that cleave to the dust, the sooner he takes to grave-digging or any other honest labour, the sooner will he get into the kingdom of heaven, and the higher will he stand in it. But now came the question—from the confluence of all these considerations,—"Why should the church be for Sundays only? And of all places in the world, what place wanted a week-day reminder of truth, of honesty, of the kingdom of heaven more than London? Why should the churches be closed all the week, to the exclusion of the passers-by, and open on the Sunday to the weariness of those who entered? Might there not be too much of a good thing on the Sunday, and too little of it on a week-day?" Again Mr. Fuller said to himself, "What is a parson?" and once more he answered himself, that he was a man to keep the

windows of heaven clean, that its light might shine through upon men below. What use, then, once more, could he make of the church of St. Amos?

And again, why should the use of any church be limited to the Sunday? Men needed religious help a great deal more on the week day than on the Sunday. On the Sunday, surrounded by his family, his flowers, his tame animals, his friends, a man necessarily, to say the least of it, thinks less of making great gains, is more inclined to the family view of things generally; whereas upon the week day, he is in the midst of the struggle and the fight; it is catch who can, then, through all the holes and corners, highways and lanes of the busy city: what would it not be then if he could strike a five minutes' —yea, even a one minute's—silence into the heart of the uproar? if he could entice one vessel to sail from the troubled sea of the streets, shops, counting-houses, into the quiet haven of the church, the doors of whose harbour stood ever open? There the wind of the world would

be quiet behind them. His heart swelled within him as he thought of sitting there keeping open door of refuge for the storm-tossed, the noise-deafened, the crushed, the hopeless. He would not trouble them with many words. There should be no long prayers. "But," thought he, "as often as one came in, I would read the collect for the day; I would soothe him with comfort out of Handel or Mendelssohn, I would speak words of healing for the space of three minutes. I would sit at the receipt of such custom. I would fish for men—not to make churchmen of them—not to get them under my thumb"—(for Mr. Fuller used such homely phrases sometimes that certain fledgeling divines feared he was vulgar)—"not to get them under the Church's thumb, but to get them out of the hold of the devil, to lead them into the presence of Him who is the Truth, and so can make them free."

Therefore he said to himself that his church, instead of accumulating a weary length of service on one day, should be open every day, and

that there he would be ready for any soul upon which a flash of silence had burst through the clouds that ever rise from the city life and envelope those that have their walk therein.

It was not long before his cogitations came to the point of action; for with men of Mr. Fuller's kind, all their meditations have action for their result: he opened his church—set the door to the wall, and got a youth to whom he had been of service, and who was an enthusiast in music, to play about one o'clock, when those who dined in the City began to go in search of their food, such music as might possibly waken the desire to see what was going on in the church. For he said to himself that the bell was of no use now, for no one would heed it; but that the organ might fulfil the spirit of the direction that "the curate that ministereth in every parish church shall say the morning and evening prayer—where he ministereth, and shall cause a bell to be tolled thereunto a convenient time before he begin, that the people may come to hear God's word, and to pray with him."

Over the crowded street, over the roar of omnibuses, carts, waggons, cabs, and all kinds of noises, rose the ordered sounds of consort. Day after day, day after day, arose the sounds of hope and prayer; and not a soul in the streets around took notice of the same. Why should they? The clergy had lost their hold of them. They believed that the clergy were given to gain and pleasure just as much as they were themselves. Those even of the passers-by who were ready to acknowledge worth where they saw it, were yet not ready to acknowledge the probability of finding it in the priesthood; for their experience, and possibly some of their prejudices, were against it. They were wrong; but who was to blame for it? The clergy of the eighteenth century, because so many of them were neither Christians nor gentlemen; and the clergy of the present century, because so many of them are nothing but gentlemen—men ignorant of life, ignorant of human needs, ignorant of human temptations, yea, ignorant of human aspirations; because in the city-pulpits their

voice is not uplifted against city vices—against speculation, against falsehood, against money-loving, against dishonesty, against selfishness; because elsewhere their voices are not uplifted against the worship of money, and rank, and equipage; against false shows in dress and economy; against buying and not paying; against envy and emulation; against effeminacy and mannishness; against a morality which consists in discretion. Oh! for the voice of a St. Paul, or a St. John! But it would be of little use: such men would have small chance of being heard. They would find the one half of Christendom so intent upon saving souls instead of doing its duty, that the other half thought it all humbug. The organ sounded on from day to day, and no one heeded.

But Mr. Fuller had the support of knowing that there were clergymen east and west who felt with him; men who, however much he might differ from them in the details of belief, yet worshipped the Lord Christ, and believed him to be the King of men, and the Saviour of men

whose sins were of the same sort as their own, though they had learned them in the slums and not at Oxford or Cambridge. He knew that there were greater men, and better workers than himself among the London clergy; and he knew that he must work like them, after his own measure and fashion, and not follow the multitude. And the organ went on playing—I had written *praying*—for I was thinking of what our Lord said, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.

At last one day, about a quarter past one o'clock, a man came into the church. Mr. Fuller, who sat in the reading desk, listening to the music and praying to God, lifted up his eyes and saw Mr. Kitely.

The bookseller had been passing, and, having heard the organ, thought he would just look in and see what was doing in the church. For this church was a sort of link between him and his daughter now that she was away.

The moment he entered Mr. Fuller rose, and knelt, and began to read the collect for the day,

in order that Mr. Kitely might pray with him. As soon as his voice arose, the organ, which was then playing very softly, ceased; Mr. Kitely knelt, partly, it must be allowed, out of regard for Mr. Fuller; the organist came down and knelt beside him; and Mr. Fuller went on with the second and third collects. After this he read the Epistle and the Gospel for the foregoing Sunday, and then he opened his mouth and spoke—for not more than three minutes, and only to enforce the lesson. Then he kneeled and let his *congregation* depart with a blessing. Mr. Kitely rose and left the chapel, and the organist went back to his organ.

Now all this was out of order. But was it as much out of order as the omission of prayer altogether, which the Church enjoins shall be daily? Times had changed: with them the order of prayer might possibly be changed without offence. At least Mr. Fuller was not such a slave to the letter as to believe that not to pray at all was better than to alter the form by choice of parts. And although in the use of

prayers the Church had made great changes upon what had been first instituted, he did not care to leave present custom for the sake merely of reverting to that which was older. He had no hope of getting business men to join in a full morning service—even such as it was at first—upon any week-day.

Mr. Kitely dropped in again before long, and again Mr. Fuller read the collect and went through the same form of worship. Thus he did every time any one appeared in the church, which was very seldom for the first month or so. But he had some friends scattered about the City, and when they knew of his custom they would think of it as they passed his church, until at length there were very few days indeed upon which two or three persons did not drop in and join in the collects, Epistle, and Gospel. To these he always spoke for a few minutes, and then dismissed them with the blessing.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Dreary One.

"COULDN'T you get a holiday on Saturday, Tom?" said Mr. Worboise. "I mean to have one, and I should like to take you with me."

"I don't know, father," answered Tom, who did not regard the proposal as involving any great probability of enjoyment; "my holiday is coming so soon that I should not like to ask for it, especially as Mr. Stopper——"

"What about Mr. Stopper? Not over friendly, eh? He is not a bad fellow, though, is Stopper. I'll ask for you, if you like that better."

"I would much rather you wouldn't, father."

"Pooh, pooh! nonsense, man! It's quite a different thing if I ask, you know."

Thomas made no further objection, for he had nothing at hand upon which to ground a fresh one; nor, indeed, could he well have persisted in opposing what seemed a kind wish of his father. It was not, however, merely because they had little to talk about, and that Thomas always felt a considerable restraint in his father's presence—a feeling not very uncommon to young men—but he lived in constant dread of something coming to light about Lucy. He feared his father much more than he loved him; not that he had ever been hardly treated by him; not that he had ever even seen him in a passion, for Mr. Worboise had a very fair command of his temper: it was the hardness and inflexibility read upon his face from earliest childhood, that caused fear thus to overlay love. If a father finds that from any cause such is the case, he ought at once to change his system, and to require very little of any sort from his child till a new crop has begun to appear on the ill-farmed ground of that child's heart.

Now the meaning of the holiday was this:

Mr. Worboise had a city-client—a carpet-knight—by name Sir Jonathan Hubbard, a decent man, as the Scotch would say, jolly, companionable, with a husky laugh, and friendly unfinished countenance in which the colour was of more weight than the drawing—for, to quote Chaucer of the Franklin, "a better envined man," either in regard of body or cellar, "was nowhere none:" upon Sir Jonathan's sociability Mr. Worboise had founded the scheme of the holiday. Not that he intended to risk any intrusion—Mr. Worboise was far too knowing a man for that. The fact was that he had appointed to wait upon his client at his house near Bickley on that day—at such an hour, however, as would afford cover to his pretence of having brought his son out with him for a holiday in the country. It was most probable that Sir Jonathan would invite them to stay to dinner, and so to spend their holiday with him. There was no Lady Hubbard alive, but there was a Miss Hubbard at the head of the house; and hence Mr. Worboise's strategy. Nor had he reckoned without

his host, for if Sir Jonathan was anything he was hospitable: things fell out as the lawyer had forehoped, if not foreseen. Sir Jonathan was pleased with the young fellow, would not allow him to wait companionless in the drawing-room till business was over—sent, on the contrary, for his daughter, and insisted on the two staying to dinner. He was one of those eaters and drinkers who have the redeeming merit of enjoying good things a great deal more in good company. Sir Jonathan's best port would seem to him to have something the matter with it if he had no one to share it. If, however, it had come to the question of a half-bottle or no companion, I would not answer for Sir Jonathan. But his cellar would stand a heavy siege.

Thomas was seated in the drawing-room, which looked cold and rather cheerless; for no company was expected, and I presume Miss Hubbard did not care for colour, save as reflected from her guests, seeing she had all her furniture in pinafores. How little some rich people know how to inherit the earth! The good things of it

they only uncover when they can *make*, not *receive* a show.

My dear reader,—No, I will not take a liberty to which I have no right; for perhaps were he to see me he would not like me, and possibly were I to meet him I should not like him: I will rather say *My reader*, without the impertinence or the pledge of an adjective—have a little patience while I paint Miss Hubbard just with the feather-end of my pen. I shall not be long about it.

Thomas sat in the drawing-room, I say, feeling vacant, for he was only waiting, not expecting, when the door opened, and in came a fashionable girl—rather tall, handsome, bright-eyed, well-dressed, and yet—— What was it that Thomas did not like about her? Was it that she dressed in the extreme of the fashion? I will not go on to say what the fashion was, for before I had finished writing it, it would have ceased to be the fashion; and I will not paint my picture *knowingly* with colours that must fade the moment they are laid on. To be sure she had ridden

the fashion till it was only fit for the knacker's yard; but she soon made him forget that, for she was clever, pleasant, fast—which means affectedly unrefined, only her affectation did no violence to fact—and altogether amusing. I believe what Thomas did not like about her at first was just all wherein she differed from Lucy. Yet he could not help being taken with her; and when his father and Sir Jonathan came into the room, the two were talking like a sewing-machine.

"Laura, my dear," said the knight, "I have prevailed on Mr. Worboise to spend the day with us. You have no engagement, I believe?"

"Fortunately, I have not, papa."

"Well, I'll just give orders about dinner, and then I'll take our friends about the place. I want to show them my new stable. You had better come with us."

Sir Jonathan always ordered the dinner himself. He thought no woman capable of that department of the household economy. Laura put on her hat—beautiful with a whole kingfisher—and they went out into the grounds; from the

grounds to the stable—trim as her drawing-room—where her favourite horse ate apples out of her pocket ; from the stable to the hot-houses and kitchen-garden ; then out at a back door into the lane—shadowy with trees—in which other colours than green were now very near carrying the vote of the leaves. Sweet scents of decay filled the air, waved about, swelling and sinking, on the flow of a west wind, gentle and soft, as if it had been fanned from the wings of spring when nearest to summer. Great white clouds in a brilliant sky tempered the heat of the sun. What with the pure air, the fine light, and the handsome girl by his side, Thomas was in a gayer mood than had been his for many a long day. Miss Hubbard talked plenteously—about balls and theatres and Mansion-house dinners, about Rotten Row and St. James's; and although of all these Thomas knew very little, yet, being quick and sympathetic, he was able to satisfy the lady sufficiently to keep her going. He was fortunate enough besides to say one or two clever things with which she was pleased, and to

make an excellent point once in a criticism upon a girl they both knew, which, slighting her, conveyed, by no very occult implication, a compliment to Miss Hubbard. By the time they had reached this stage of acquaintanceship, they had left stout Sir Jonathan and Mr. Worboise far behind; but Miss Hubbard was not in the least danger of being made uncomfortable by any squeamish notions of propriety; and, having nothing more amusing to do, and being out already, she proposed that they should go home by a rather longer road, which would lead them over a hill whence they could have a good view of the country.

"Do you like living in the country, Miss Hubbard?"

"Oh! dear no. London for me. I can't tell what made papa come to this dull place."

"The scenery is very lovely, though."

"People say so. I'm sure I don't know. Scenery wasn't taught when I went to school."

"Were you taught horses there?" asked Thomas, slily.

"No. That comes by nature. Do you know I won this bracelet in a handicap last Derby?" she said, showing a very fine arm as well as bracelet, though it was only the morning, so-called.

Miss Hubbard had no design upon Thomas. How could she have? She knew nothing about him. She would have done the same with any gentleman she liked well enough to chatter to. And if Thomas felt it, and thought that Laura Hubbard was more entertaining than sober Lucy Burton, he made up to Lucy for it in his own idea by asserting to himself that, after all, she was far handsomer than Miss Hubbard, handsome as she was. Yet I should never think of calling Lucy handsome. She was lovely—almost beautiful too. *Handsome* always indicates more or less vulgarity—no, I mean commonness—in my ears. And certainly, whatever she might be capable of, had she been blessed with poverty, Miss Hubbard was as common as she was handsome. Thomas was fool enough to revert to Byron to try his luck with that. She soon made him ashamed of

showing any liking for such a silly thing as poetry. That piqued him as well, however.

"You sing, I suppose?" he said.

"Oh yes, when I can't help it—after dinner, sometimes."

"Well, you sing poetry, don't you?"

"I don't know. One must have some words or other just to make her open her mouth. I never know what they're about. Why should I? Nobody ever pays the least attention to them or to the music either, except it be somebody that wants to marry you."

But why should I go further with the record of such talk? It is not interesting to me, and therefore can hardly be so to my reader. Even if I had the art to set it forth aright, I hope I should yet hold to my present belief, that nothing in which the art is uppermost is worth the art expended upon it.

Thomas was a little shocked at her coolness, certainly; but at the same time that very coolness seemed a challenge. Before they had reached the house again, he was vexed to

find that he had made no impression upon Miss Hubbard.

Farewell to such fencing. By the time he had heard her sing, and his father and he were on their way home again, I am glad to say that Thomas had had nearly enough of her. He thought her voice loud and harsh in speech, showy and distressing in song, and her whole being *bravura*. The contrasts in Lucy had come back upon him with a gush of memorial loveliness; for, as I have said, she still held the fortress of his heart, and held it for its lawful owner.

Scarcely were they seated in the railway carriage, of which they were the sole occupants, when the elder Worboise threw a shot across the bows of the younger.

"Well, Tom, my boy," he said, rubbing his lawyer palms, "how do you like Miss Hubbard?"

"Oh, very well, father," answered Thomas, indifferently. "She's a very jolly sort of girl."

"She is worth a hundred thousand," said his

father, in a tone that would have been dry but for a touch of slight resentment at the indifference, possibly in the father's view irreverence, with which he spoke of her.

"Girls?" asked Thomas.

"Pounds!" answered his father, clinchingly.

Tom was now convinced of his father's design in taking him out for a holiday. But even now he shrunk from confession. And how did he justify his sneaking now? By saying to himself, "Lucy can't have anything like that money; it wont do. I must wait a more fitting opportunity." But he thought he was very brave indeed, and actually seizing the bull of his father's will by the horns when he ventured to take his meaning for granted, and replied—

"Why, father, a fellow has no chance with a girl like that, except he could ride like Assheton Smith, and knew all the slang of the hunting-field as well as the race-course."

"A few children will cure her of that," said his father.

"What I say is," persisted Thomas, "that she would never look at a clerk."

"If I thought you had any chance, I would buy you a commission in the Blues."

"It wants blue blood for that," said Thomas, whose heart notwithstanding danced in his bosom at the sound of *commission.* Then, afraid lest he should lose the least feather of such a chance, he added hastily, "But any regiment would do."

"I dare say," returned his father, at right angles. "When you have made a little progress it will be time enough. She knows nothing about what you are now. Her father asked me, and I said I had not made up my mind yet what to do with you."

"But, as I said before," resumed Thomas, fighting somewhat feebly, "I haven't a chance with her. She likes better to talk about horses than anything else, and I never had my leg across a horse's back in my life—as you know, rather," he added in a tone of reproach.

"You mean, Tom, that I have neglected your

education. Well, it shall be so no longer. You shall go to the riding-school on Monday night. It wont be open to-morrow, I suppose."

I hope my reader is not so tired of this chapter as I am. It is bad enough to have to read such uninteresting things—but to have to write them! The history that is undertaken must be written, however, whether the writer weary sometimes of his task, or the interest of his labour carry him lightly through to the close.

Thomas, wretched creature, dallied with his father's proposal. He did not intend adopting the project, but the very idea of marrying a rich, fashionable girl like that, with a knight for a father, flattered him. Still more was he excited at the notion, the very possibility of wearing a uniform. And what might he not do with so much money? Then, when the thought of Lucy came, he soothed his conscience by saying to himself, "See how much I must love her when I am giving up all this for her sake!" Still his thoughts hovered about what he said he was giving up. He went

to bed on Sunday night, after a very pathetic sermon from Mr. Simon, with one resolution, and one only—namely, to go to the riding-school in Finsbury on Monday night.

But something very different was waiting him.

CHAPTER XIV.

An Explosion.

THE whole ground under Thomas's feet was honeycombed and filled with combustible matter. A spark dropped from any, even a loving hand, might send everything in the air. It did not need an enemy to do it.

Lucy Burton had been enjoying a delightful time of rest by the sea-side. She had just enough to do with and for the two children to gain healthy distraction to her thinking. But her thinking as well as her bodily condition grew healthier every day that she breathed the sea air. She saw more and more clearly than ever that things must not go on between her and Thomas as they were now going on. The very scent of the sea that came in at her bedroom window when first she opened it in the morning, pro-

tested against it; the wind said it was no longer endurable; and the clear, blue autumn sky said it was a shame for his sake, if not for her own. She must not do evil that good might come; she must not allow Thomas to go on thus for the sake even of keeping a hold of him for his good. She would give him one chance more, and if he did not accept it, she would not see him again, let come of it what would. In better mood still, she would say, "Let God take care of that for him and me." She had not written to him since she came: that was one thing she could avoid. Now she resolved that she would write to him just before her return, and tell him that the first thing she would say to him when she saw him would be—had he told his father? and upon his answer depended their future. But then the question arose, what address she was to put upon the letter; for she was not willing to write either to his home or to the counting-house, for evident reasons. Nor had she come to any conclusion, and had indeed resolved to encounter him once more without having written, when from something

incoherently expressed in her grandmother's last letter, which indeed referred to an expected absence of Mr. Stopper, who was now the old lady's main support, she concluded, hastily, I allow, that Mr. Worboise was from home, and that she might without danger direct a letter to Highbury.

I fancy that through some official at the Court of Probate, Mr. Worboise had heard of a caveat having been entered with reference to the will of Mr. Richard Boxall, deceased. I do not know that this was the case, but I think something must have occurred to irritate him against those whom he, with the law on his side, was so sorely tempted to wrong. I know that the very contemplation of wrong is sufficient to irritate, and that very grievously, against the object of the wrong; but though not equal to Miss Hubbard, Lucy would have been a very good match, even in Mr. Worboise's eyes. On the other hand, however, if he could but make up, not his mind, but his conscience, to take Boxall's money, his son would be so much the more likely to secure Miss Hubbard's; which, together with what he could

leave him, would amount to a fortune of over two hundred thousand—sufficient to make his son somebody. If Thomas had only spoken in time, that is, while his father's conscience still spoke, and before he had cast eyes of ambition towards Sir Jonathan's banker's! All that was wanted on the devil's side now was some personal quarrel with the rightful heirs. And if Mr. Worboise had not already secured that by means of Mr. Sargent's caveat, he must have got it from what happened on the Monday morning. Before Thomas came down to breakfast, the postman had delivered a letter addressed to him, with the Hastings postmark upon it.

When Thomas entered, and had taken his seat with the usual cool *Good morning*, his father tossed the letter to him across the table, saying, more carelessly than he felt,

"Who's your Hastings correspondent, Tom?"

The question, coming with the sight of Lucy's handwriting, made the eloquent blood surge into Tom's face. His father was not in the way of

missing anything that there was to see, and he saw Tom's face.

"A friend of mine," stammered Tom. "Gone down for a holiday."

"One of your fellow-clerks?" asked his father, with a dry significance that indicated the possible neighbourhood of annoyance, or worse. "I thought the writing of doubtful gender."

For Lucy's writing was not in the style of a field of corn in a hurricane: it had a few mistakable curves about it, though to the experienced eye it was nothing the less feminine that it did not affect feminity.

"No," faltered Tom, "he's not a clerk; he's a —well, he's a—teacher of music."

"Hm!" remarked Mr. Worboise. "How did you come to make his acquaintance, Tom?" And he looked at his son with awful eyes, lighted from behind with growing suspicion.

Tom felt his jaws growing paralysed. His mouth was as dry as his hand, and it seemed as if his tongue would rattle in it like the clapper of a cracked bell if he tried to speak. But he

had nothing to say. A strange tremor went through him from top to toe, making him conscious of every inch of his body at the very moment when his embarrassment might have been expected to make him forget it altogether. His father kept his eyes fixed on him, and Tom's perturbation increased every moment.

"I think, Tom, the best way out of your evident confusion will be to hand me over that letter," said his father, in a cool, determined tone, at the same time holding out his hand to receive it.

Tom had strength to obey only because he had not strength to resist. But he rose from his seat, and would have left the room.

"Sit down, sir," said Mr. Worboise, in a voice that revealed growing anger, though he could not yet have turned over the leaf to see the signature. In fact, he was more annoyed at his son's pusillanimity than at his attempted deception. "*You* make a soldier!" he added, in a tone of contempt that stung Tom—not to the heart, but to the back-bone. When he had

turned the leaf and seen the signature, he rose slowly from his chair, and walked to the window, folding the letter as he went. After communing with the garden for a while, he turned again to the table and sat down. It was not Mr. Worboise's way to go into a passion when he had anything like reasonable warning that his temper was in danger.

"Tom, you have been behaving like a fool. Thank heaven, it's not too late! How could you be such a fool? Believe me, it's not a safe amusement to go trifling with girls this way."

With a great effort, a little encouraged by the quietness of his father's manner, Tom managed to say, "I wasn't trifling."

"Do you mean to tell me," said his father, with more sternness than Tom had ever known him assume—"do you mean to tell me," he repeated, "that you have come under any obligation to this girl?"

"Yes, I have, father."

"You fool! A dressmaker is no fit match for you."

"She's not a dressmaker," said Tom, with some energy, for he was beginning to grow angry, and that alone could give a nature like his courage in such circumstances; "she's a lady, if ever there was one."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said his father. "Don't get on your high horse with me. She's a beggar, if ever there was one."

Tom smiled unbelievingly, or tried to smile; for now his tremor, under the influence of his wholesome anger, had abated, and his breath began to come and go more naturally. A little more, and he would feel himself a hero, stoutly defending his lady-love, fearless of consequences to himself. But he said nothing more just yet.

"You know better than I do, you think, you puppy! I tell you she's not worth a penny—no, nor her old witch of a grandmother either. A pretty mess you've made of it! You just sit down and tell the poor girl—it's really too bad of you, Tom!—that you're sorry you've been such a confounded fool, but there's no help for it."

"Why should I say that?"

"Because it's true. By all that's sacred!" said Mr. Worboise, with solemn fierceness, "you give up that girl, or you give up me. Not that your father is anything to you; but I swear, if you carry on with that girl, you shall not cross my door as long as you do; and not a penny you shall have out of my pocket. You'll have to live on your salary, my fine fellow, and perhaps that'll bring down your proud stomach a bit. By Jove! You may starve for me. Come, my boy," he added with sudden gentleness, "don't be a fool."

Whether Mr. Worboise meant all he said, I cannot tell, but at least he meant Thomas to believe that he did. And Thomas did believe it. All the terrible contrast between a miserable clerkship, with lodging as well as food to be provided, and a commission in the army with unlimited pocket-money, and the very name of business forgotten, rose before him. A conflict began within him which sent all the blood to the surface of his body, and made him as hot now as he had been cold just before. He again

rose from his seat, and this time his father, who saw that he had aimed well, did not prevent him from leaving the room. He only added as his son reached the door, "Mark what I say, Tom: *I mean it*; and when I mean a thing, it's not my fault if it's not done. You can go to the riding-school to-night, or you can look out for a lodging suitable to your means. I should recommend Wapping."

Thomas stood on the heel of one foot and the toes of the other, holding the handle of the door in his hand till his father had done speaking. He then left the room without reply, closed the door behind him, took his hat and went out. He was half-way to London before he remembered that he had left Lucy's letter in his father's hands and had not even read it. This crowned his misery. He dared not go back for it; but the thought of Lucy's words to him being at the mercy of his hard-hearted father moved him so, that he almost made up his mind never to enter the house again. And then how Lucy must love him when he had given up everything for her sake, knowing quite

well, too, that she was not to have any fortune after all! But he did not make up his mind; he never had made up his mind yet; or, if he had, he unmade it again upon meeting with the least difficulty. And now his "whole state of man" was in confusion. He went into the counting-house as if he had been walking in a dream, sat down to his desk mechanically, droned through the forenoon, had actually only a small appetite for his dinner, and when six o'clock arrived, and the place was closed, knew no more what he was going to do than when he started in the morning.

But he neither went to the riding-school in Finsbury, nor to look for a lodging in Wapping.

CHAPTER XV.

Down at Last.

IN the very absence of purpose, he strolled up Guild Court to call upon Molken, who was always at home at that hour.

Molken welcomed him even more heartily than usual. After a few minutes' conversation they went out together: having no plan of his own, Thomas was in the hands of any one who had a plan of which he formed a part. They betook themselves to one of their usual haunts. It was too early yet for play, so they called for some refreshment, and Thomas drank more than he had ever drunk before, not with any definite idea of drowning the trouble in his mind, but sipping and sipping from mere restlessness and the fluttering motions of a will unable to act.

It was a cold evening. An autumn wind

which had dropped in its way all the now mournful memories of nature, and was itself the more dreary therefore, tumbled a stray billow now and then through the eddies of its chimney-rocks, and housetop-shoals upon the dirty window of the small dreary den in which they sat, drinking their gin and water at a degraded card-table whose inlaid borders were not yet quite obscured by the filth caked upon it from greasy fingers and dusters dirtier than the smoke they would remove. They talked—not about gaming—no: they talked about politics and poetry; about Goethe and Heine; and Molken exerted all his wit and all his sympathy to make himself agreeable to his dejected friend, urging him to rise above his dejection by an effort of the will; using in fact much the same arguments as Lady Macbeth when she tried to persuade her husband that the whole significance of things depended on how he chose to regard them: "These things must not be thought after these ways." Thomas, however, had not made a confidant of Molken. He had only dropped many words that a man like him would not fail

to piece together into some theory regarding the condition and circumstances of one of whom he meant to make gain.

At length what between Molken's talk and the gin, a flame of excitement began to appear in Thomas's weary existence; and almost at the same instant a sound of voices and footsteps was heard below; they came up the stair; the door of the room opened; and several fellows entered, all eager for the excitement of play as a drunkard for his drink, all talking, laughing, chaffing. A blast of wind laden with rain from a labouring cloud which had crept up from the west and darkened the place, smote on the windows, and soft yet keen the drops pattered on the glass. All outside was a chaos of windy mist and falling rain. They called for lights, and each man ordered his favourite drink; the face of nature, who was doing her best to befriend them, was shut out by a blind of green and black stripes stained with yellow; two dirty packs of cards were produced—not from the pocket of any of the company, for none of the others would have

trusted such a derivation, but from the archives of the house; and drawing round the table, they began to offer their sacrifice to the dreary excitement for whose presence their souls had been thirsting all the day. Two of them besides Molken were foreigners, one of them apparently a German, a very quiet and rather gentlemanly man, between whom and Molken, however, if Thomas had been on the outlook, he might, I fancy, have seen certain looks of no good omen interchanged.

They began playing very gently—and fairly, no doubt; and Thomas for some time went on winning.

There was not even the pretence of much money amongst them. Probably a few gold pieces was the most any of them had. When one of them had made something at this sort of small private game, he would try his luck at one of the more public tables, I presume. As the game went on and they grew more excited, they increased their stakes a little. Still they seemed content to go on for little. Thomas and Molken

were partners, and still they won. Gradually the points were increased, and betting began. Thomas began to lose, and lost, of course, more rapidly than he had won. He had had two or three pounds in his pocket when he began, but all went now—the last of it in a bet on the odd trick. He borrowed of Molken—lost; borrowed and lost, still sipping his gin and water, till Molken declared he had himself lost everything. Thomas laid his watch on the table, for himself and Molken—it was not of great value—a gift of his mother only. He lost it. What was to be done? He had one thing left—a ring of some value which Lucy had given him to wear for her. It had belonged to her mother. He pulled it off his finger, showed that it was a rose diamond, and laid it on the table. It followed the rest. He rose, caught up his hat, and, as so many thousands of gamblers have done before, rushed out into the rain and the darkness.

Through all the fumes of the gin which had begun to render "the receipt of reason a limbeck only," the thought gleamed upon hi

cloudy mind that he ought to have received his quarter's salary that very day. If he had had that, what might he not have done? It was his, and yet he could not have it. His mind was all in a confused despair, ready to grasp at anything that offered him a chance of winning back what he had lost. If he had gone home and told his father—but he was not capable of reasoning out anything. Lucy's ring was his chief misery: so much must be said for him. Something—he did not know what—drove him toward Guild Court. I believe, though in his after reflections he could not identify the impulse, that it was the same which he obeyed at last. Before he knew where he was going, he was at Mrs. Boxall's door. He found it ajar, and walked up the stair to the sitting-room. That door too was open, and there was no one there. But he saw at a glance, from the box on the floor and the shawl on the table, that Lucy had returned, and he supposed that her grandmother had gone upstairs with her. The same moment his eyes sought the wall, and there hung two keys. They were the

keys of the door of communication, and of the safe.

Mr. Stopper, wise in his generation, sought, as we have seen, to stand as well as possible with the next of kin and supposed heir to Mr. Boxall, namely, his mother. He had, therefore, by degrees, made himself necessary to her, in her fancy at least, by giving her good advice till she thought she could not do without his wisdom. Nor that alone: he had pleased her by a hundred little acknowledgments of her suzerainty, especially grateful to one who loved power as Mrs. Boxall did. Amongst the rest, one evening, after locking up the counting-house, he went to her with those two keys in his hand, and kept playing with them till he was taking his leave—then, as if a sudden thought had struck him, said,

"But I don't see the use of troubling myself with these keys—I may as well hang them up somewhere," he added, looking about for a place.

"I don't know that it's wise to leave them here," objected Mrs. Boxall.

"Oh! don't be uneasy, ma'am," returned Mr. Stopper. "You mustn't suppose we leave a mint of money in the house at night. If we did, *you* wouldn't be safe either. It's only what comes in after banking hours—a matter of ten pounds, or thereabouts, sometimes more, sometimes less. The safe's more for the books—in case of fire, you know."

"I hope there's no danger of that, Mr. Stopper."

"Not as long as the neighbours don't take fire. I see every spark out when we have a fire before I turn my back on the premises. Indeed, I'm rather more careful over the fire than the cash-box."

In the meantime Mr. Stopper had discovered a brass-headed nail in the wall, and thereupon he had hung the keys, and there he had hung them every evening since, and there they hung at this moment when Thomas's eyes went in search of them.

When he considered the whole affair afterwards, Thomas thought he must have been driven

by a demon. He hardly knew whether he was thinking over or doing the thing that was present to him. No thought of resisting it as a temptation arose to meet it. He knew that there was eleven pounds odd shillings in the cash-box, for he had seen one of the other clerks count it; he knew that the cash-box was in the safe; he knew that that was the key of it; he knew that the firm owed him twenty-five pounds; he could replace it again before the morning; and while thinking all this he was "doing the effect of his thinking," almost without knowing it: he found himself standing before the safe with the key already in the lock, and the cold handle of the door in his hand. But it was dark all around and within him. In there alone lay light and hope. In another moment the door was open, and the contents of the cash-box —gold, silver, copper—in his pocket. It is possible that even then he might have restored the money if he had not heard the step of the policeman at the street-door. He left the safe open as it was, with the key in it, and sped from the house.

Nothing more marked itself on his memory till he reached the room where he had left his *friends*. It was dark. There was no one there. They had gone to try their luck in a more venturous manner, where rogue met rogue, and fortune was umpire rather than cunning. He knew their haunts, followed and found them. But his watch and ring were gone. They told him, however, where they were. He would go and seek them to-morrow. Meantime he would play. He staked and lost—lost, won, won again; doubled his stakes, won still; and when he left the house it was with a hundred pounds in his pocket and a gray dawn of wretchedness in his heart.

CHAPTER XVI.

Mrs. Boxall and Mr. Stopper.

LUCY was not upstairs with her grandmother when Thomas went into the room. She had arrived some time before, and had run across to the bookseller's to put Mattie to bed, according to promise, leaving the door just ajar that she might not trouble her grandmother to come down and open it for her. She had come home hoping against hope that Thomas must by this time have complied, in some way or other, with her request—must have written to his father, or, at least, so positively made up his mind to tell him on his return, that he would be at the station to meet her with the assurance, or would appear in Guild Court some time during the evening with a response to her earnest appeal. When she had put the child to bed, she lingered

a few moments with the bookseller in his back parlour, for the shop was shut up, telling him about Mattie, and listening to what little bits of news the worthy man had to impart in return. Their little chat ran something in this way.

"And how have you been, Mr. Kitely?"

"Oh, among the middlins, miss, thank you. How's yourself been?"

"Quite well, and no wonder."

"I don't know that, miss, with two young things a pullin' of you all ways at once. I hope Mattie wasn't over and above troublesome to you."

"She was no trouble at all. You must have missed her, though."

"I couldn't ha' believed how I'd miss her. Do you know the want of her to talk to made me do what I 'aint done for twenty year?"

"What's that, Mr. Kitely? Go to church of a Sunday?"

"More than that, miss," answered the bookseller, laughing—a little sheepishly. "Would you believe it of me?—I've been to church of a

week-day more than once. Ha! ha! But then it wasn't a long rigmarole, like—"

"You musn't talk about it like that—to me, you know, Mr. Kitely."

"I beg your pardon, miss. I only meant he didn't give us a Sundayful of it, you know. I never could ha' stood that. We had just a little prayer, and a little chapter, and a little sermon—good sense, too, upon my word. I know I altered a price or two in my next catalogue when I come home again. I don't know as I was right, but I did it, just to relieve my mind and make believe I was doin' as the minister told me. If they was all like Mr. Fuller, I don't know as I should ha' the heart to say much agen them."

"So it's Mr. Fuller's church you've been going to? I'm so glad! How often has he service, then?"

"Every day, miss. Think o' that. It don't take long though, as I tell you. But why should it? If there is any good in talking at all, it comes more of being the right thing than the

muchness of it, as my old father used to say—for he was in the business afore me, miss, though I saw a good deal more o' the world than ever he did afore I took to it myself—says he, 'It strikes me, Jacob, there's more for your money in some o' those eighteen-mos, if you could only read 'em, than in some o' them elephants. I ha' been a watchin',' says he, 'the sort o' man that buys the one and that buys the t'other. When a little man with a shabby coat brings in off the stall one o' them sixpenny books in Latin, that looks so barbarious to me, and pops it pleased like into the tail of his coat—as if he meant to have it out again the minute he was out of the shop—then I thinks there's something in that little book—and something in that little man,' says father, miss. And so I stick up for the little sermons and the little prayers, miss. I've been thinking about it since; and I think Mr. Fuller's right about the short prayers. They're much more after the manner of the Lord's Prayer, anyhow. I never heard of anybody getting tired before *that* was over. As you are fond of church,

miss, you'd better drop into Mr. Fuller's to-morrow mornin'. If you go once, you'll go again."

Long after, Lucy told Mr. Fuller what the bookseller had said, and it made him think yet again whether our long prayers—*services*, as we call them, forsooth—are not all a mistake, and closely allied to the worship of the Pagans, who think they shall be heard for their much speaking.

She went out by the side door into the archway. As she opened it, a figure sped past her, fleet and silent. She started back. Why should it remind her of Thomas? She had scarcely seen more in the darkness than a deeper darkness in motion, for she came straight from the light.

She found the door not as she left it.

"Has Thomas been here, grannie?" she asked, with an alarm she could not account for.

"No, indeed. He has favoured us with little of his company this many a day," answered grannie, speaking out of the feelings which had gradually grown from the seeds sown by Stopper.

"The sooner you're off with him, my dear, the better for you!" she continued. "He's no good, I doubt."

With a terrible sinking at the heart, Lucy heard her grandmother's words. But she would fight Thomas's battles to the last.

"If ever that man dares to say a word against Thomas in my hearing," she said, "I'll—I'll—I'll leave the room."

O most lame and impotent conclusion! But Lucy carried it farther than her words; for when Mr. Stopper entered the next morning, with a face scared into the ludicrous, she, without even waiting to hear what he had to say, though she foreboded evil, rose at once and left the room. Mr. Stopper stood and looked after her in dismayed admiration; for Lucy was one of those few whose anger even is of such an unselfish and unspiteful nature, that it gives a sort of piquancy to their beauty.

"I hope I haven't offended the young lady," said Mr. Stopper, with some concern.

"Never you mind, Mr. Stopper. I've been

giving her a hint about Thomas, and she's not got over it yet. Never you mind her. It's me you've got to do with, and I 'aint got no fancies."

"It's just as well, perhaps, that she did walk herself away," said Mr. Stopper.

"You've got some news, Mr. Stopper. Sit ye down. Will you have a cup o' tea?"

"No, thank you. Where's the keys, Mrs. Boxall?"

The old lady looked up at the wall, then back at Mr. Stopper.

"Why, go along! There they are in your own hand."

"Yes; but where do you think I found them? Hanging in the door of the safe, and all the money gone from the cash-box. I haven't got over the shock of it yet."

"Why, good heavens! Mr. Stopper," said the old lady, who was rather out of temper with both herself and Lucy, "you don't think *I*'ve been a robbing of your cash-box, do you?"

Mr. Stopper laughed aloud.

"Well, ma'am, that would be a roundabout way of coming by your own. I don't think we could make out a case against you, if you had. Not quite. But, seriously, who came into the house after I left it? I hung the keys on that wall with my own hands."

"And I saw them there when I went to bed," said Mrs. Boxall, making a general impression ground for an individual assertion.

"Then somebody must have come in after you had gone to bed—some one that knew the place. Did you find the street-door had been tampered with?"

"Lucy opened it this morning."

Mrs. Boxall went to the door and called her granddaughter. Lucy came, thinking Mr. Stopper must be gone. When she saw him there, she would have left the room again, but her grandmother interfered.

"Come here, child," she said, peremptorily. "Was the house-door open when you went down this morning?"

Lucy felt her face grow pale with the vaguest

foreboding—associated with the figure which had run through the archway and her finding the door open. But she kept her self-command.

"No, grannie. The door was shut as usual."

"Did nobody call last night?" asked Mr. Stopper, who had his suspicions, and longed to have them confirmed, in order to pay off old scores at once.

"Nobody; that I'll give my word for," answered Mrs. Boxall.

"A most unaccountable thing, ladies," said Stopper, rubbing his forehead as if he would fain rouse an idea in his baffled brain.

"Have you lost much money?" asked the old lady.

"Oh, it's not the money; that's a flea-bite. But justice, you know—that's the point," said Mr. Stopper, with his face full of meaning.

"Do you suspect any one, Mr. Stopper?"

"I do. I found something on the floor. If Mr. Worboise were come," he continued, looking hard at Lucy, "he might be able to help us out with it. Sharp fellow that! But it's an hour

past his time, and he's not made his appearance yet. I fear he's been taking to fast ways lately. I'll just go across the court to Mr. Molken, and see if he knows anything about him."

"You'll oblige *me*," said Lucy, who was cold to the very heart, but determined to keep up, "by doing nothing of the sort. I will not have his name mentioned in the matter. Does anyone but yourself know of the—the robbery, Mr. Stopper?"

"Not a soul, miss. I wouldn't do anything till I had been to you. I was here first, as I generally am."

"Then if I am to have anything to say at all," she returned with dignity, "let the matter rest in the meantime—at least till you have some certainty. If you don't, you will make suspicion fall on the innocent. It might have been grannie or myself, for anything you can tell yet."

"Highty-tighty, lass!" said her grandmother. "We're on our high horse, I believe."

Before she could say more, however, Lucy had

left the rom. She just managed to reach her bed, and fell fainting upon it.

Money had evidently, even in the shadow it cast before it, wrought no good effect upon old Mrs. Boxall. The bond between her and her granddaughter was already weakened. She had never spoken thus to her till now.

"Never you mind what the wench says," she went on to Stopper. "The money's none of hers, and shan't be except I please. You just do as you think proper, Mr. Stopper. If that young vagabond has taken the money, why you take him, and see what the law will say to it. The sooner our Lucy is shut of him the better for her—and may be for you too, Mr. Stopper," added the old lady, looking insinuatingly at him.

But whether the head clerk had any design upon Lucy or not, he seemed to think that her favour was of as much consequence as that of her grandmother. He might have reasoned in this way—that he could not expose Thomas without making Lucy his enemy, both from her regard to him and because of the disgrace that

would come upon her by having her name associated with his; and Mrs. Boxall was old, and Lucy might take her place any day in the course of nature. Whereas so long as he kept the secret and strengthened the conclusions against Thomas without divulging them, he had a hold over Lucy, even a claim upon her gratitude, he would say, which he might employ as he saw occasion, and as prudence should direct, holding his revenge still ready in his hands in case there should be nothing to be gained by foregoing it. Therefore, when the clerk in whose charge the money-box was, opened it, he found in it only a ticket with Mr. Stopper's initials and the sum abstracted in figures, by which it was implied that Mr. Stopper had taken the contents for his own use. So, although it seemed queer that he should have emptied it of the whole sum, even to the few coppers, there was nothing to be said, and hardly anything to be conjectured even.

As Thomas did not make his appearance all day, not a doubt remained upon Mr. Stopper's mind that he had committed the robbery. But

he was so well acquainted with the minutest details of the business that he knew very well that the firm was the gainer by Thomas's absconding as nearly as possible to the same amount that he had taken. This small alleviation of Thomas's crime, however, Mr. Stopper took no pains to communicate to Lucy, chuckling only over his own good fortune in getting rid of him so opportunely; for he would no longer stand in his way, even if he were to venture on making advances to Lucy: she could never have anything more to do with a fellow who could be tried for burglary if he chose to apply for a warrant for his apprehension.

Intending that his forbearance should have the full weight of obedience to her wishes, Mr. Stopper went up in the evening after the counting-house was closed. Lucy was not there. She had not left her room since the morning, and the old woman's tenderness had revived a little.

"Perhaps you'd better not hang them keys up there, Mr. Stopper. I don't care about the

blame of them. I've had enough of it. There's Lucy, poor dear, lying on her bed like a dead thing; and neither bit nor sup passed her lips all day. Take your keys away with you, Mr. Stopper. I'll have nothing more to do wi' them, I can tell you. And don't you go and take away that young man's character, Mr. Stopper."

"Indeed I should be very sorry, Mrs. Boxall. He hasn't been here all day, but I haven't even made a remark on his absence to any one about the place."

"That's very right, Mr. Stopper. The young gentleman may be at home with a headache."

"Very likely," answered Mr. Stopper, drily. "Good night, Mrs. Boxall. And as the keys must have an unpleasant look after what has happened, I'll just put them in my pocket and take them home with me."

"Do ye that, Mr. Stopper. And good night to you. And if the young man comes back to-morrow, don't ye take no notice of what's come

and gone. If you're sure he took it, you can keep it off his salary, with a wink for a warning, you know."

"All right, ma'am," said Mr. Stopper, taking his departure in less good humour than he showed.

I will not say much about Lucy's feelings. For some time she was so stunned by the blow as to be past conscious suffering. Then commenced a slow oscillation of feeling: for one half hour, unknown to her as time, she would be declaring him unworthy of occasioning her trouble; for the next she would be accusing his attachment to her, and her own want of decision in not absolutely refusing to occupy the questionable position in which she found herself, as the combined causes of his ruin; for as ruin she could not but regard such a fall as his. She had no answer to her letter—heard nothing of him all day, and in the evening her grandmother brought her the statement of Mr. Stopper that Thomas had not been there. She turned her face away towards

the wall, and her grandmother left her, grumbling at girls generally, and girls in love especially. Meantime a cherub was on its way towards her, bearing a little bottle of comfort under its wing.

CHAPTER XVII.

Mattie Falls and Rises again.

MATTIE had expected Lucy to call for her in the forenoon and take her out to Wyvil Place to see Miriam. Spending the morning with her father in the shop, amidst much talk, conducted with the most respectful docility on the part of her father, and a good deal of condescending assertion on the part of the child, she had run out twenty times to look at the clock of St. Jacob's; and at length, finding that Lucy did not come, had run up and knocked at her door, giving Mr. Spelt a promissory nod as she passed. Hearing from Mrs. Boxall, however, that Miss Burton was too tired to go out with her, she turned in some disappointment, and sought Mr. Spelt.

"Well, mother, how do *you* do?" she asked,

perking up her little gray face, over which there was now a slight wash of rose-colour, towards the watch-tower of the tailor.

"Quite well, Mattie. And you look well," answered Mr. Spelt.

"And I am well, I assure you; better than I ever expected to be in this world, mother. I mean to come up beside you a bit. I want to tell you something."

"I don't know, Mattie," answered Mr. Spelt with some embarrassment. "Is it anything in particular?"

"In particular! Well, I should think so," returned Mattie, with a triumph just dashed with displeasure, for she had not been accustomed to any hesitation in accepting her advances on the part of Mr. Spelt. "I should think so." Then lowering her voice to a keen whisper, she added, "I've been to see God in his own house."

"Been to church, have you?" said Mr. Spelt.

Now I am sorry to say that Spelt was behaving dishonestly—not from choice, but from embarrassment and fear springing from a false

conscientiousness. And Mattie felt at once that Mr. Spelt was not behaving like himself.

"No, Mr. Spelt," she answered with dignity —bridling indeed; "I've not been to church. You don't call that God's house, do you? *Them!* They're nothing but little shops like your own, Mr. Spelt. But God's house!—Take me up, I say. Don't make me shout such things in the open street."

Thus adjured, Mr. Spelt could stand out no longer. He stooped over his threshold and lifted Mattie towards him. But the moment her head reached the level of his floor, she understood it all. In *her* old place in the corner sat the little demoniac Poppie, clothed and in her right mind. A true observer, however, would have seen from her pale thin face, that possibly her quietude was owing more to weakness than to any revolution in her nature.

"Well!" said Mattie, with hauteur. "Will you set me down again, if you please, Mr. Spelt."

"I think, perhaps," said the tailor meekly,

holding the child still suspended in the air, "I could find room for you both. The corner opposite the door there, Mattie," he added, looking round suggestively in the direction of the spot signified.

"Put me down," insisted Mattie, in such a tone that Mr. Spelt dared not keep her in suspense any longer, but lowered her gently to the ground. All the time Poppie had been staring with great black eyes, which seemed to have grown much larger during her illness, and, of course, saying nothing.

As soon as the soles of Mattie's feet touched the ground, she seemed to gather strength like Antæus; for instead of turning and walking away, with her head as high, morally considered, as that of any giant, she began a parley with the offending Mr. Spelt.

"I have heard, mother—Mr. Spelt—that you should be off with the old love before you're on with the new. You never told me what you were about."

"But you was away from home, Mattie."

"You could have written. It would only have cost a penny. I shouldn't have minded paying it."

"Well, Mattie, shall I turn Poppie out?"

"Oh! *I* don't want you to turn her out. You would say I drove her to the streets again."

"Do you remember, Mattie, that you wouldn't go to that good lady's house because she didn't ask Poppie too? Do you?"

A moment's delay in the child's answer revealed shame. But she was ready in a moment.

"Here is a big house. That's my own very corner."

"Don't you see how ill Poppie is?"

"Well!" said the hard little thing, with a side nod of her head over the speaking corner of her mouth.

Mr. Spelt began to be a little vexed. He took the upper hand now and came home to her. She was turning to go away, when he spoke in a tone that stopped her. But she stood with her back half turned towards him.

"Mattie, do you remember the story Some-

body told us about the ragged boy that came home again, and how his brother, with the good clothes on, was offended, and wouldn't go in because he thought he was taking his place? You're behaving just the same as the brother with the good clothes."

"I don't know that. There's some difference, I'm sure. I don't think you're telling the story right. I don't think there's anything about taking his place. I'll just go and look. I can read it for myself, Mr. Spelt."

So saying, Mattie walked away to the house, with various backward tosses of the head. Mr. Spelt drew his head into his shell, troubled at Mattie's naughtiness. Poppie stared at him, but said nothing, for she had nothing to say.

When Mattie entered the shop, her father saw that something was amiss with her.

"What's the matter with my princess?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing much," answered Mattie, with tears in her eyes. "I shall get over it, I dare say.—Mr. Spelt has been very naughty," she

added, in a somewhat defiant tone; and before her father could say anything more she had reached the stairs, and went to her own room.

My reader must imagine her now taking hold of a huge family bible her father had given her for the sake of the large print. She lugs it along and heaves it upon her bed; then, by a process known only to herself, finds the place, and begins to spell out the story once more, to discover whether the tailor has not garbled it to her condemnation. But, as she reads, the story itself lays hold upon her little heart, and she finds a far deeper condemnation there than she had found in her friend's reproof. About half an hour after, she ran—Mattie seldom ran—past Mr. Spelt and Poppie, not venturing to look up, though, ere she came too near, the tailor could see the red eyes in the white face, and knocked at Mrs. Boxall's door.

Lucy was still lying on her bed when she heard little knuckles at her door, and having answered without looking round, felt, a moment

after, a tiny hand steal into hers. She opened her eyes, and saw Mattie by her bedside. Nor was she too much absorbed in her own griefs to note that the child had hers too.

"What is the matter with you, Mattie, my dear?" she asked in a faint voice.

Mattie burst into tears—a rare proceeding with the princess. It was some moments before she could sob out—

"I've been *so* naughty, Miss Burton—so *very* naughty!"

Lucy raised herself, sat on the side of the bed, and took the child's hand. Mattie could not look up.

"I'm sorry to hear that, Mattie. What have you done?"

"Such a shame!—Poppie! Far country. Elder brother."

These were almost the only words Lucy could hear for the sobs of the poor child. Hence she could only guess at the cause of her grief, and her advice must be general.

"If you have done wrong to Poppie, or

any one, you must go and tell her so, and try to make up for it."

"Yes, I will, for I can't bear it," answered Mattie, beginning to recover herself. "Think of doing the very same as the one I was so angry with when mother read the story! I couldn't bear to see Poppie in my place in mother's shop, and I was angry, and wouldn't go in. But I'll go now, as soon as I get my poor eyes dried."

Lucy was not able to say much to her, and Mattie was so taken up with her own repentance that she did not see that Lucy was in trouble too. In a few minutes the child announced her intention of going to Mr. Spelt at once, and left Lucy to her own thoughts. I will first tell how Mattie finished her repentance, and then return to Lucy.

She walked right under Mr. Spelt's door, and called aloud, but with a wavering voice—

"Mother, take me up directly. I'm very sorry."

Over the threshold came a pair of arms, and Mattie was hoisted into the heaven of her

repentant desire. As soon as she was in it she crawled on her hands and knees—even she could scarcely have stood in the place—towards Poppie.

"How do you do, prodigal?" she said, putting her arms round the bewildered Poppie, who had no more idea of what she meant than a child born in heaven would have had. "I'm very glad to see you home again. Put on this ring, and we'll both be good children to mother there."

So saying, she took a penny ring, with a bit of red and two bits of green glass in it, from her finger, and put it upon Poppie's, who submitted speechless, but was pleased with the glitter of the toy. She did not kiss in return, though: Poppie liked to be kissed, but she had not learned to kiss yet.

"Mother," Mattie went on, "I was behaving like—like—like—a wicked Pharisee and Sadducee. I beg your pardon, mother. I will be good. May I sit in the corner by the door?"

"I think," answered the little tailor, greatly moved, and believing in the wind that bloweth where it listeth more than ever he had believed

before—"I think if I were to move a little, you could sit in the corner by the window, and then you would see into the court better. Only," he said, as he drew his work about his new position, "you must not lean much against the sash, for it is not very sound, and you might tumble into the court, you know."

So Mattie and Poppie sat side by side, and the heart of the tailor had a foretaste of heaven.

Presently Mattie began to talk to Poppie. She could scarcely, however, draw a single response from her, for she had nothing to say. Interchange of thought was unknown to the elder child, and Mattie's words were considerably less intelligible to Poppie than the autumn wind that now blew round their nest. Mattie was annoyed. The romance of the reconciliation was dimmed. Instinctively she felt that the only way to restore it was to teach Poppie, and she took her in hand at once.

There was more hope for Poppie, and Spelt too, now that Mattie was in the work, for there is no teacher of a child like a child. All the

tutors of Oxford and Cambridge will not bring on a baby as a baby a year older will. The childlike is as essential an element in the teacher as in the scholar. And the train of my story is not going so fast but that I may pull up at this siding for a moment to say that those who believe they have found a higher truth, with its higher mode of conveyance, are very apt to err in undervaluing, even to the degree of wishing to remove the lower forms in which truth, if not embodied exactly, is at least wrapt up. Truth may be presented in the grandeur of a marble statue, or in a brown-paper parcel. I choose the sculpture; my last son prefers the parcel. The only question is whether there is truth—not in the abstract, but as assimilable by the recipient—present in the form. I cannot, however, resume without a word on the other side. To the man who sees and feels the higher and nobler form, it is given to teach *that*. Let those to whom the lower represents the sum of things, teach it with their whole hearts. *He* has nothing to do with it, for he cannot teach it without being false.

The snare of the devil holds men who, capable of teaching the higher, talk of the people not being ready to receive it, and therefore teach them in forms which are to their own souls an obstruction. There is cowardice and desertion therein. They leave their own harder and higher work to do the easier and clumsier work of their neighbour. It is wasteful of time, truth, and energy. The man who is most careful over the truth that lies in forms not his own, will be the man most careful to let no time-serving drag him down—not to the level of the lower teachers, for they are honest—but to the level of Job's friends, who lied for God; nay, lower still; for this will soon cease to be lying even for God, and become lying for himself.

When Mattie left her, Lucy again threw herself down and turned her face to the wall, and the story of which Mattie had been talking straightway began to mingle with all that filled her troubled mind. For who was a prodigal son but her lost Thomas? Lost indeed! But there was another word in the parable to balance that

—there was *found* as well. Thomas might be found again. And if the angels in heaven rejoiced over the finding of such a lost wanderer, why should she cut the cable of love, and let him go adrift from her heart? Might she not love him still? Ought she not to love him still? Was he not more likely to come back some day if she went on loving him? The recent awaking of Lucy's spiritual nature—what would be called by some, her conversion—had been so interpenetrated with the image, the feeling, the subjective presence of Thomas—she had thought so much of him while stooping her own shoulders to the easy yoke, that she could not leave him out now, and it seemed as if, were she to give him up, she would lose half the incentive to press forward herself. The fibres of her growth had so twined around him, that if the idea of his regeneration departed from her, the hope of her own would sicken at least, if not die. True, Pride hinted at the disgrace of being allied to such a man—a man who had stolen; but Faith replied, that if there were joy in heaven over him, she too might

rejoice over him when he came back; and if the Father received the prodigal with all his heart, she too might receive him with all hers. But she would have no right to receive him thus if she did nothing to restore him; nor would she have any right to put forth in full her reclaiming influence, except she meant thus to receive him. Her conscience began to reproach her that she had not before done all that she could to reclaim him, and if she only knew the way, she was now at least prepared to spend and be spent for him. But she had already done all that she was, at this juncture of his history, to be allowed to do for the wretched trifler. God had taken the affair out of her hands, and had put it into those of somewhat harder teachers.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Business.

WHEN Mr. Worboise found that Thomas did not return that night, he concluded at once that he had made up his mind to thwart him in his now cherished plan, to refuse the daughter of Sir Jonathan Hubbard, and marry the girl whom his father disliked. He determined at once, even supposing he might be premature as regarded the property, to have the satisfaction of causing the Boxalls sharp uneasiness at least. His son would not have dared to go against his wishes but for the enticements of "that minx," in the confidence that her uncle's property was about to be hers. He would teach her and him too a lesson. Either her uncle or some one or more of his family were not drowned, or they were all drowned: in neither case was the property hers. If one of the family was alive, the

property remained where it was; if they were all gone, the property was his. He thought himself into a rage over her interference with his plans, judged himself an injured person, and thereby freed of any trifling obligation that a fastidious conscience might have fancied to exist to the prejudice of his claims upon the property of his friend, supposed to be deceased. He was now ready to push his rights to the uttermost —to exact the pound of flesh that the law awarded him. He went the next morning but one after Thomas's disappearance and propounded the will.

In due time this came to the knowledge of Mr. Sargent. He wrote to Mrs. Boxall a stiff business letter acquainting her with the fact, and then called upon Mr. Worboise to see whether some arrangement could not be come to; for having learned the nature of the will, he saw that almost any decent division of the property, for which he could only appeal to the justice of the man, would be better than a contest. Mr. Worboise received him with a graciousness reach-

ing almost to kindness, talked lightly of the whole as a mere matter of business about which there was no room for disputing, smiled aside every attempt made by Mr. Sargent to approach the subject from another quarter, and made him understand, without saying a word to that effect, that he was prepared to push matters to the extreme of extremity. He even allowed him to see that he had reasons beyond the value of the money for setting about the matter in the coolest, most legal fashion in the world. Mr. Sargent went away baffled—to devise upon what grounds he could oppose the grant of probate.

While Mr. Sargent was having his interview, Mr. Stopper was awaiting his departure in the clerks' room. It must be remembered that Mr. Stopper was now between two stools; and while he came to plead the cause of the widow and fatherless, he must be especially careful for his own sake not to give offence. Him, too, Mr. Worboise received with the greatest good-humour; assured him that there was no mistake in the

matter, and he believed no flaw in the will; informed him that he had drawn it up himself, and had, at his friend's request, entered his own name as contingent reversioner. His friend might have done it in joke, he did not know; but he had not any intention of foregoing his rights, or turning out of Luck's way when she met him in the teeth. On the contrary, he meant to have the money and to use it; for, at all events, it could not have been in joke that his friend had omitted his mother and his niece. He must have had some good reason for so doing; and he was not one to treat a dead friend's feeling with disrespect—and so on, all in pleasant words and with smiling delivery, ended by a hearty, easy "good morning." For, ere he had finished, Mr. Stopper coming to the conclusion that nothing was to be done, rose to take his leave. At the door he turned, and said—

"I hope nothing is amiss with your son, Mr. Worboise. I hope he is not ill."

"Why do you ask?" returned Mr. Worboise,

just a little staggered; for he was not prepared to hear that Thomas was missing from Bagot Street as well as from home. When he heard the fact, however, he merely nodded his head, saying—

"Well, Mr. Stopper, he's too old for me to horsewhip him. I don't know what the young rascal is after. I leave him in your hands. That kind of thing wont do, of course. I don't know that it wouldn't be the best thing to discharge him. It's of no consequence to me, you know, and it would be a lesson to him, the young scapegrace! That's really going too far, though you and I can make allowances, eh, Stopper?"

Mr. Stopper was wise enough not to incur the odium of a Job's messenger by telling what even Mr. Worboise would have considered bad news; for he had a reverence for locks and money, and regarded any actionable tampering with either as disgraceful. "Besides," thought Stopper, "if it was only to spite the young jackanapes, I could almost marry that girl without a

farthing. But I shouldn't have a chance if I were to leak about Tom."

Mr. Worboise was uneasy, though. He told his wife the sum of what had passed between Tom and himself, but I fear enjoyed her discomfiture at the relation; for he said spitefully, as he left the room—

"Shall I call on Mr. Simon as I go to town, and send him up, Mrs. Worboise?"

His wife buried her face in her pillow, and made no reply. Perhaps the husband's heart smote him; but I doubt it, though he did call on Mr. Simon and send him to her.

All the result of Mr. Simon's inquiries was the discovery that Thomas had vanished from the counting-house too. Thereupon a more real grief than she had ever known seized the mother's heart; her conscience reproached her as often as Mr. Simon hinted that it was a judgment upon her for having been worldly in her views concerning her son's marriage; and she sent for Amy home, and allowed things to take their way.

All the comfort Mr. Worboise took was to say to himself over and over, "The young rascal's old enough to take care of himself. He knows what he's about too. He thinks to force me to a surrender by starving me of his precious self. We'll see. I've no doubt he's harboured in that old woman's house. Stay a bit, and if I don't fire him out—by Jove! She'll find I'm not one to take liberties with, the old hag!"

The best that Mr. Sargent could do at present was to resist probate on the ground of the uncertainty of the testator's death, delaying thus the execution of the will. He had little hope, however, of any ultimate success—except such as he might achieve by shaming Mr. Worboise into an arrangement.

Mrs. Boxall sent for him, and with many acknowledgments begged him to do his best for them, saying that, if he were successful, she would gladly pay him whatever he demanded. He repudiated all idea of payment, however, and indeed considered himself only too fortunate

to be permitted to call as often as he pleased, for then he generally saw Lucy. But he never made the smallest attempt to renew even the slight intimacy which had formerly existed between them.

CHAPTER XIX.

Mr. Sargent Labours.

THAT large room in Guild Court, once so full of aged cheerfulness and youthful hope, was now filled with an atmosphere of both moral and spiritual perturbation. The first effect of her son's will upon Mrs. Boxall was rage and indignation against Mr. Worboise, who, she declared, must have falsified it. She would not believe that Richard could have omitted her name, and put in that of his attorney. The moment she heard the evil tidings, she rose and went for her bonnet, with the full intention of giving the rascal a bit of her mind. It was all that her granddaughter and Mr. Stopper could do to prevent her. For some time she would yield no ear to their representations of the bad consequences of such a proceeding.

She did not care. If there was justice to be had on the earth she would have it, if she went to the Queen herself to get it. I half suspect that, though she gave in at last, she did carry out her intention afterwards without affording any one the chance of preventing her. However that may be, the paroxysm of her present rage passed off in tears, followed by gloomy fits, which were diversified by outbreaks of temper against Lucy, although she spoke of her as a poor dear orphan, reduced to beggary by the wickedness and greed of lawyers in general, who lived like cannibals upon the flesh and blood of innocents. In vain would Lucy try to persuade her that they were no worse now than they had been, reminding her that they were even happier together before the expectation of more than plenty came in to trouble them; beside her late imagination of wealth, her present feeling was that of poverty, and to feel poor is surely the larger half of being poor.

On Lucy my reader will easily believe that this change of prospect had little effect. Her

heart was too much occupied with a far more serious affair to be moved about money. Had everything been right with Thomas, I have no doubt she would have built many a castle of the things she would do; but till Thomas was restored to her by being brought to his right mind, no one thing seemed more worth doing than another. Sadness settled upon her face, her walk, her speech, her whole expression. But she went about her work as before, and did what she could to keep her sorrow from hurting others. The reality of the late growth of religious feeling in her was severely tested; but it stood the test; for she sought comfort in holding up her care to God; and what surer answer to such prayer could there be, than that she had strength to do her work? We are saved by hope, and Lucy's hope never died; or if it did wither away under the dry blasts of her human judgment, the prayers that went up for submission to His will, soon returned in such dews as caused the little flower once more to lift its head in the sun and wind. As often as she could—not every day, because

of her engagements with Miriam Morgenstern—she went to Mr. Fuller's church, and I think I may say that she never returned without what was worth going for. I do not say that she could always tell what she had learned, but she came away with fresh strength, and fresh resolution to do what might show itself to be right. And the strength came chiefly from this, that she believed more and more what the apostle Peter came to be so sure of before he died, that "He careth for us." She believed that the power that made her a living soul was not, could not be, indifferent to her sorrows, however much she might have deserved them, still less indifferent because they were for her good,—a ready excuse for indifference with men;—and if only he cared that she suffered, if he knew that it was sad and hard to bear, she could bear it without a word, almost without a thought of restlessness. And then, why should she not hope for Thomas as well as for herself? If we are to love our neighbour as ourself, surely we must hope and pray for him as for ourself; and if Lucy found that she could love

Thomas at least as herself, for him she was in that very love bound to pray and to hope as for herself.

Mr. Sargent was soon thoroughly acquainted with all Mrs. Boxall's affairs. And he had so little hope of success in regard to the will, that, when he found that she had no vouchers to produce for her own little property placed in her son's hands, he resolved, before going any farther in a course which must irritate Mr. Worboise, to see whether he could not secure that first. Indeed he was prepared, seeing how ill matters looked for his clients, to offer to withdraw from the contest, provided the old lady's rights were acknowledged. With this view he called once more upon Mr. Worboise, who received him just as graciously as before. A conversation something like this followed.

"Mrs. Boxall informs me, Mr. Worboise, that her son, at the time of his death, was, and had been for many years, in possession of some property of hers, amounting to somewhere between two and three thousand pounds. The old lady is a very simple woman——"

"Is she?" interjected, rather than interrupted, Mr. Worboise, in a cold parenthesis. Mr. Sargent went on.

"Indeed she does not know the amount exactly, but that could be easily calculated from the interest he was in the habit of paying her."

"But whatever acknowledgment she holds for the money will render the trouble unnecessary," said Mr. Worboise, who saw well enough to what Mr. Sargent was coming.

"Unfortunately—it was very wrong of a man of business, or anybody, indeed—her son never gave her any acknowledgment in writing."

"Oh!" said Mr. Worboise, with a smile, "then I don't exactly see what can be done. It is very awkward."

"You can be easily satisfied of the truth of the statement."

"I am afraid not, Mr. Sargent."

"She is a straightforward old lady, and——"

"I have reason to doubt it. At all events, seeing she considers the whole of the property

hers by right, an opinion in which you sympathize with her—as her legal adviser, I mean—it will not be very surprising if, from my point of view, I should be jealous of her making a statement for the sake of securing a part of those *rights*. With such a temptation, and such an excuse, it is just possible—I've heard of such a thing as evil that good might come, eh, Mr. Sargent?—even if she were as straightforward as you think her. Let her produce her vouchers, I say."

"I have no fear—at least I hope Mr. Stopper will be able to prove it. There will be evidence enough of the interest paid."

"As interest, Mr. Sargent? I suspect it will turn out to be only an annuity that the good fellow allowed her, notwithstanding the reasons he must have had for omitting her name from his will."

"I confess this much to you, Mr. Worboise—that our cause is so far from promising that I should advise Mrs. Boxall to be content with her own, and push the case no farther."

"Quite right, Mr. Sargent. The most prudent advice you can give her."

"You will then admit the debt, and let the good woman have her own?"

"Admit the debt by no means; but certainly let her have her own as soon as she proves what is her own," answered Mr. Worboise, smiling.

"But I give you my word, Mr. Worboise," said Mr. Sargent, doing his best to keep his temper, "that I believe the woman's statement to be perfectly true."

"I believe you, Mr. Sargent, but I do not believe the woman," returned Mr. Worboise, again smiling.

"But you know it will not matter much, because, coming into this property as you do, you can hardly avoid making some provision for those so nearly related to the testator, and who were dependent upon him during his lifetime. You cannot leave the old lady to starve."

"It will be time enough to talk about that when my rights are acknowledged. Till then I decline to entertain the question."

There was a something in Mr. Worboise's manner, and an irrepressible flash of his eye, that all but convinced Mr. Sargent that there was nothing not in the bond to be got from him. He therefore left him, and started a new objection in opposing the probate of the will. He argued the probability of all or one or other of the daughters surviving the father—that is, not of their being yet alive, but of their having outlived him. Now this question, though plain as the alphabet to those who are acquainted with law, requires some explanation to those who are not, numbering possibly the greater part of my readers.

The property would come to Mr. Worboise only in the case of all those mentioned in the will dying before Mr. Boxall. A man can only will that which is his own at the time of his death. If he died before any of his family, Mr. Worboise had nothing to do with it. It went after the survivor's death to *her* heirs. Hence if either of the daughters survived father and mother, if only for one provable moment, the

property would be hers, and would go to her heir, namely, her grandmother. So it would in any case, had not Mr. Worboise been mentioned, except Mrs. Richard Boxall had survived her husband and family, in which case the money would have gone to her nearest of kin. This alternative, however, was not started, for both sides had equal interest in opposing it—and indeed the probable decision upon probabilities would have been that the wife would die first. The whole affair then turned upon the question: whether it was more likely that Richard Boxall or every one of his daughters died first; in which question it must be remembered that there was nothing cumulative in the *three* daughters. He was as likely to die before or to survive all three as any one of them, except individual reasons could be shown in regard to one daughter which did not exist in regard to another.

One word more is necessary. Mr. Sargent was not in good practice, and would scarcely have been able—I do not use the word *afforded,*

because I do not know what it means—to meet the various expenses of the plea. But the very day he had become acquainted with the contents of the will, he told Mr. Morgenstern of the peculiar position in which his governess and her grandmother found themselves. Now Mr. Morgenstern was not only rich—that is common; nor was he only aware that he was rich; if that is not so common, it is not yet very uncommon; but he felt that he had something to spare. Lucy was a great favourite with him; so was Mr. Sargent. He could not but see that Sargent was fond of Lucy, and that he was suffering from some measure of repulse. He therefore hoped, if not to be of any material assistance to Lucy, for from Sargent's own representation he could not see that the matter was a promising one, at least to give the son of his old friend a chance of commending himself to the lady by putting it in his power to plead her cause. And conducted as Mr. Sargent conducted the affair, it did not put Mr. Morgen-

stern to an amount of expense that cost him two thoughts; while even if it had been serious, the pleasure with which his wife regarded his generosity would have been to him reward enough.

CHAPTER XX.

How Thomas did and fared.

I FLATTER myself that my reader is not very much interested in Thomas: I never meant that he should be yet. I confess, however, that I am now girding up my loins with the express intention of beginning to interest him if I can. For I have now almost reached the point of his history which I myself feel to verge on the interesting. When a worthless fellow begins to meet with his deserts, then we begin to be aware that after all he is our own flesh and blood. Our human heart begins to feel just the least possible yearning towards him. We hope he will be well trounced, but we become capable of hoping that it may not be lost upon him. At least we are content to hear something more about him.

When Thomas left the gambling-house that dreary morning, he must have felt very much as the devil must feel. For he had plenty of money and no home. He had actually, on this raw morning when nature seemed to be nothing but a drizzle diluted with grey fog, nowhere to go to. More, indeed: he had a good many places, including the principal thoroughfares of London, where he must not go. There was one other place which he did all he could to keep out of, and that was the place where the little thinking that was considered necessary in his establishment was carried on. He could not help peeping in at the window, however, and now and then putting his ear to the keyhole. And what did he hear? That he, Thomas Worboise, gentleman, was a thief, a coward, a sneak. Now, when Thomas heard this, for the first time in his life, his satisfaction with himself gave way utterly; nor could all his admiration for Lara or the Corsair—I really forget whether they are not one and the same phantom—reconcile him to becoming one of the fraternity. But the Corsair at

least would not have sold Medora's ring to save his life. Up to this point, he had never seen himself contemptible. Nor even now could he feel it much, for, weary and sick, all he wanted was some place to lay down his head and go to sleep in. After he had slept, he would begin to see things as they were, and, once admitted possible that he could do an ungentlemanly action, fresh accusations from quarters altogether unsuspected of unfriendliness would be lodged in that court of which I have already spoken. But for a time mere animal self-preservation would keep the upper hand. He was conscious of an inclination to dive into every court that he came near—of a proclivity towards the darkness. This was the same Thomas Worboise that used to face the sunshine in gay attire, but never let the sun further in than his brain; so the darkness within him had come at last to the outside and swathed all in its funereal folds. Till a man's indwelling darkness is destroyed by the deep-going light of truth, he walks in darkness, and the sooner this darkness comes out in action and shows itself to

be darkness, the better for the man. The presence of this darkness, however, is sooner recognised by one man than by another. To one the darkness within him is made manifest by a false compliment he has just paid to a pretty girl; to Thomas it could only be revealed by theft and the actual parting for money with the jewel given him by a girl whom he loved as much as he could love, which was not much—yet; to a third —not murder, perjury, hypocrisy, hanging, will reveal it: he will go into the other world from the end of a rope, not mistaking darkness for light, but knowing that it is what it is, and that it is his, and yet denying the possession of the one, and asserting the possession of the other.

Thomas forgot all about where he was, till suddenly he found himself far west in the Strand. The light of the world was coming nearer; no policeman was in sight; and the archway leading down under the Adelphi yawned like the mouth of hell at his side. He darted into it. But no sooner was he under the arches than he wished

himself out again. Strange forms of misery and vice were coming to life here and there in the darkness where they had slept away the night. He was of their sort, yet he did not like his own kin. Nay, some of them might be worthy compared to him, yet he shrunk from them. He rushed out. Heaven was full of lights and hell was full of horrors: where was his own place? He hurried back towards the city.

But as the light grew his terror increased. There was no ground for immediate alarm, for no one yet knew what he had done; but with the light discovery drew nearer. When he reached Farringdon Street he turned down towards Blackfriars Bridge, then eastward again by Earl Street into Thames Street. He felt safer where the streets were narrow, and the houses rose high to shut out the dayspring, which the Lord says to Job he had "caused to know his place, that it might take hold of the ends of the earth," like a napkin, "that the wicked might be shaken out of it." He hurried on, not yet

knowing what he was, only seeing revelation at hand clothed in terror. And the end of it was, that he buried his head in the public-house where the mischief of the preceding night had begun, and was glad to lie down in a filthy bed. The ways of transgressors are always hard in the end. Happy they who find them hard in the beginning.

Ill at ease as he was, both in body and mind, he was yet so worn out that he fell fast asleep; and still on the stream of sleep went drifting towards the vengeance that awaited him—the vengeance of seeing himself as he was.

When he woke, it was afternoon. He had to make several efforts before his recollection combined with his observation to tell him where he was. He felt, however, that a horror was coming, and when it came his whole being was crushed before it. It must be confessed, however, that it was the disgrace, and not the sin, that troubled him. But honour, although a poor substitute for honesty or religion, is yet something; and the fear of disgrace is a good sword

to hang over the heads of those who need such attendance. Thomas's heart burned like a hot coal with shame. In vain he tried to persuade himself, in vain he partially succeeded in persuading himself, that he was not himself when he took the money. Allowing whatever excuse might lie in the state to which he had first brought himself, he knew that no defence of that sort would have any influence in restoring him to the position he had lost. He was an outcast. He lay in moveless torture. He knew himself, and he knew his crime; and he knew that himself had committed that crime. Wide awake, he did not think of rising; for the whole world of activity lay beyond the impassable barrier of his shame. There was nothing for him to do, nowhere for him to go. At length he heard voices in the room below him: they were voices he knew; and he was lying over the scene of last night's temptation. He sprung from the bed, hurried on his clothes, crept down the stairs, paid for his lodging at the bar, and went out into the street. He felt sick at the thought

of joining them: he had had a surfeit of wickedness.

But he was too near his former haunts; and the officers of justice must be after him. He turned from one narrow street into another, and wandered on till he came where the bowsprit of a vessel projected over a wall across a narrow lane, and he knew by this that he must be near the Thames. The sun was going down, and the friendly darkness was at hand. But he could not rest. He knew nothing of the other side, and it seemed to him therefore that he would be safer there. He would take a boat and be put across. A passage between two houses led towards the river. Probably there were stairs at the end. He turned into the passage. Half-a-dozen bills were up on the walls. He stopped to look. They all described bodies found in the river. He turned away, and started at the sight of a police-man regarding him from a door three or four yards off. It was a police station. He had all but put his head into the lion's mouth. He had just presence of mind enough to prevent him

from running, but not enough to keep his legs steady under him. His very calves seemed to feel the eyes of the policeman burning upon them, and shrink away with a sense of unprotected misery. He passed several stairs before he ventured to look round. Then finding no reason to suppose he was watched, he turned down the next opening, found a boat, and telling the waterman to put him across to Rotherhithe, of which district he just knew the name, sat down in the stern.

The man rowed up the river. The sun was going down behind the dome of St. Paul's, which looked like the round shoulder of a little hill; and all the brown masts and spars of the vessels shone like a forest of gold-barked trees in winter. The dark river caught the light, and threw it shimmering up on the great black hulls, which shone again in the water below; and the Thames, with all its dirt and all its dead, looked radiant. But Thomas felt nothing of its beauty. If Nature had ever had a right of way in his heart, she was now shut out. What was it to him, despised in his own

eyes, that the sun shone? He looked up at the sky only to wish for the night. What was it to him that the world was for a moment gay, even into the heart of London? Its smile could not reach his heart: it needs an atmosphere as well as a sun to make light. The sun was in the heavens, yea, the central sun of truth shone upon the universe; but there was no atmosphere of truth in Thomas's world to be lighted up by it; or if there was, it was so filled with smoke and vapour that for the time the sun could not make it smile. As they passed under a towering hull, he envied a monkey that went scrambling out of one of the portholes and in at another. And yet the scene around was as strange as it was beautiful. The wide river, the many vessels, the multitudinous wilderness of gray houses on every side, all disorder to the eye, yet blended by the air and the light and the thin fog into a marvellous whole; the occasional vista of bridge-arches; the line of London Bridge lying parallel with the lines of green and gray and gold in the sky—its people, its horses, its carriages creeping like

insects athwart the sunset—one of the arches cut across near the top by the line of a new railway-bridge, and the segment filled with a moving train; all this light and life to the eye, while, save for the splash of the oars, and the general hum like an aroma of sound that filled the air, all was still to the ear—none of it reached the heart of outcast Thomas.

Soon, as if by magic, the scene changed. The boatman had been rowing up the river, keeping in the quiet water as the tide hurried out. Now he was crossing towards Cherry Garden Stairs. As they drew near the Surrey-side, all at once Thomas found himself in the midst of a multitude of boats, flitting about like waterflies on the surface of a quiet pool. What they were about he could not see. Now they would gather in dense masses, in every imaginable position to each other, the air filled with shouting, objurgation, expostulation, and good-humoured chaff, varied with abuse. Again they would part asunder and vanish over the wide space. Guns were firing, flags were flying, Thames liveries

gleaming here and there. The boats were full of men, women, and children; some in holiday garments, most of them dark with the darkness of an English mob. It was an aquatic crowd—a people exclusively living on and by the river—assembled to see a rowing-match between two of their own class for a boat, probably given by the publicans of the neighbourhood—who would reap ten times the advantage. But although there were thousands assembled, the uproar troubled such a small proportion of the river's surface, that one might have rowed up and down in the middle space between Rotherhithe and Wapping for hours and known nothing about it.

But Thomas did not see the race, not because he was in haste to get ashore, but because something happened. His waterman, anxious to see the sport, lingered in the crowd lining the whole of that side of the river. In a boat a little way further up was a large family party, and in it a woman who was more taken up with a baby in her arms than with all that was going on around

her. In consequence of her absorption in the merry child which was springing with all the newly discovered delight of feet and legs, she was so dreadfully startled when the bows of another boat struck the gunwale just at her back, that she sprung half up from her seat, and the baby, jerking itself forward, dropped from her arms into the river. Thomas was gazing listlessly at the water when he saw the child sweep past him a foot or so below the surface. His next remembered consciousness was in the water. He was a fair swimmer, though no rider. He caught the child, and let himself drift with the tide, till he came upon the cable of a vessel that lay a hundred yards below. Boats came rushing about him; in a moment the child was taken from him and handed across half a dozen of them to its mother; and in another moment he too was in a boat. When he came to himself a gin-faced, elderly woman, in a small threadbare tartan shawl, was wiping his face with a pocket-handkerchief, and murmuring some feminine words over him, while a coarse-looking, dough-faced

man was holding a broken cup with some spirit in it to his mouth.

"Go ashore with the gentleman, Jim," said the woman. "There's the Indiar Arms. That's a respectable place. You must go to bed, my dear, till you gets your clo'es dried."

"I haven't paid my man," said Tom, feebly. He was now shivering with cold; for after the night and day he had spent, he was in no condition to resist the effects of the water.

"Oh, we'll pay him. Here, Fluke," cried two or three: they seemed all to know each other.

"Come along, sir," cried twenty shrill voices over his head. He looked up and saw that they were alongside of a great barge which was crowded with little dirty creatures, row above row. "Come this way—solid barges, sir, all the way. Ketch hold of the gen'lm'n's hand, Sammy. There. Now, Bill."

They hauled and lifted Thomas on to the barge, then conducted him along the side and across to the next yawning wooden gulf, and so over about seven barges to a plank, which led from

the last on to a ladder ascending to the first floor of a public-house, the second floor of which, supported upon piles, projected over high water. There his conductors, two ragged little mudlarks, left him.

Through an empty kind of bar-room, he went into the bar, which communicated with the street. Here first he found that he had been followed by the same man who had given him the gin. He now passed before him to the counter, and said to the woman who was pumping a pot of beer:

"This gen'leman, Mrs. Cook, 's been and just took a child out o' the water, ma'am. He 'ain't got a change in his wescut-pocket, so if you'll do what ye can for 'im, there's many on us 'll be obliged to ye, ma'am."

"Lor'! whose child was it, Jim?"

"I don't know as you know her, ma'am. The man's name 's Potts. He keeps a public down about Lime'us, someveres."

Thomas stood shivering—glad, however, that the man should represent his case for him.

"The gentleman had better go to bed till we

get his clo'es dried for him," said the landlady. "I think that's the best we can do for him."

"Take a drop o' summat, sir," said the man, turning to Thomas. "They keeps good licker here. Put a name upon it, sir."

"Well, I'll have a small glass of pale brandy," said Thomas "—neat if you please. And what'll you have yourself? I'm much obliged to you for introducing me here, for I must look rather a queer customer."

"It's what *you'll* have, not what I'll have, sir, if you'll excuse *me*," returned the man.

"I beg your pardon," said Thomas, who had just received his brandy. He drank it, and proceeded to put his hand in his pocket—no easy matter in the state of his garments.

"*I'm* a goin' to pay for this," interposed the man, in a determined tone, and Thomas was hardly in a condition to dispute it.

At the same moment the landlady, who had left the bar after she had helped Thomas, returned, saying, "Will you walk this way, sir? Thomas followed, and found himself in a neat

enough little room, where he was only too glad to undress and go to bed. As he pulled off his coat, it occurred to him to see that his money was safe. He had put it, mostly in sovereigns, into a pocket-book of elaborate construction, which he generally carried in the breast-pocket of what the tailors call a lounging-coat. It was gone. His first conclusion was, that the man had taken it. He rushed back into the bar, but he was not there. It must be confessed that, in the midst of his despair, a fresh pang at the loss of his money shot through Thomas's soul. But he soon came to the conclusion that the man had not taken it. It was far more likely that, as he went overboard, the book slipped from his pocket into the water. In this loss an immediate reward of almost his first act of self-forgetfulness, had followed. The best thing that can happen to a man, sometimes, is to lose his money; and while people are compassionate over the loss, God may regard it as the first step of the stair by which the man shall rise above it and many things besides with which not only

his feet, but his hands and his head, are defiled. Then first he began to feel that he had no ground under his feet—the one necessity before such a man could find a true foundation. Until he lost it, he did not know how much, even in his misery, the paltry hundred pounds had been to him. Now it was gone, things looked black indeed. He emptied his pockets of two or three sovereigns and some silver, put his clothes out at the door, and got into bed. There he fell a thinking. Instead of telling what he thought, however, I will now turn to what my reader may be, and I have been, thinking about his act of rescue.

What made him, who has been shown all but incapable of originating a single action, thus at the one right moment do the one right thing? Here arises another question: Does a man *always* originate his own actions? Is it not possible, to say the least of it, that, just to give him a taste of what well-doing means, some moment, when selfishness is sick and faint, may be chosen by the Power in whom we live and move and have

our being, to inspire the man with a true impulse? We must think what an unspeakable comfort it must have been to Thomas, in these moments of hopeless degradation of which he felt all the bitterness, suddenly to find around him, as the result of a noble deed into which he had been unaccountably driven, a sympathetic, yes, admiring public. No matter that they were not of his class, nor yet that Thomas was not the man to do the human brotherhood justice; he could not help feeling the present power of humanity, the healing medicine of approbation, in the faces of the *common* people who had witnessed and applauded his deed. I say *medicine* of approbation; for what would have been to him in ordinary, a poison, was now a medicine. There was no fear of his thinking himself too much of a hero at present.

It may be objected that the deed originated only in a carelessness of life resulting from self-contempt. I answer that no doubt that had its share in making the deed possible, because it removed for the time all that was adverse to such

a deed; but self-despite, however real and well-grounded, cannot inspirit to true and noble action. I think it was the divine, the real self, aroused at the moment by the breath of that wind which bloweth where it listeth, that sprung thus into life and deed, shadowing, I say *shadowing* only, that wonderful saying of our Lord that he that loseth his life shall find it. It had come—been given to him—that a touch of light might streak the dark cloud of his fate, that he might not despise himself utterly, and act as unredeemable—kill himself or plunge into wickedness to drown his conscience. It was absolutely necessary that he should be brought to want; but here was just one little opening—not out of want, but into the light of a higher region altogether, the region of well-being—by which a glimmer of the strength of light could enter the chaos of his being. Any good deed partakes of the life whence it comes, and is a good to him who has done it. And this act might be a beginning.

Poor weak Thomas, when he got his head

down on the pillow, began to cry. He pitied himself for the helplessness to which he was now reduced, and a new phase of despair filled his soul. He felt without thinking it, that his ill-gotten gain had, like all the devil's money, turned to rubbish in his hands. What he was to do he could not tell. He was tolerably safe, however, for the night, and, worn and weary, soon fell into a sleep which not even a dream disturbed.

When he woke all was dark, and he welcomed the darkness as a friend. It soothed and comforted him a little. If it were only always dark! If he could find some cave to creep into where he might revel in—feed upon the friendly gloom! If he could get amongst the snowy people of the north, blessed with half-a-year of gentle sunlessness! Thomas had plenty of fancy. He leaned on his elbow and looked out. His clothes had been placed by him while he slept. He rose and put them on, opened the door of his room, saw light somewhere, approached it softly, and found himself in a small room, like a large oriel

window. The day had changed from gold to silver; the wide expanse of the great river lay before him, and up, and down, and across, it gleamed in the thoughtful radiance of the moon. Never was a picture of lovelier peace. It was like the reflex of the great city in the mind of a saint—all its vice, its crime, its oppression, money-loving, and ambition, all its fearfulness, grief, revenge, and remorse, gently covered with the silver mantle of faith and hope. But Thomas could not feel this. Its very repose was a reproach to him. There was no repose for him henceforth for ever. He was degraded to all eternity. And herewith the thought of Lucy which had been hovering about his mind all day, like a bird looking for an open window that it might enter, but which he had not dared to admit, darted into its own place, and he groaned aloud. For in her eyes, as well as in his own, he was utterly degraded. Not a thousand good actions, not the honour of a thousand crowds, could destroy the fact that he had done as he had done. The dingy, applauding multitude,

with its many voices, its kind faces, its outstretched hands, had vanished, as if the moon had melted it away from off the water. Never to all eternity would that praising people, his little consoling populace, exist again, again be gathered from the four corners whither they had vanished, to take his part, to speak for him that he was not all lost in badness, that they at least considered him fit company for them and their children.

Thoughts like these went to and fro in his mind as he looked out upon the scene before him. Then it struck him that all was strangely still. Not only was there no motion on the river, but there was no sound—only an occasional outcry in the streets behind. The houses across in Wapping showed rare lights, and looked sepulchral in the killing stare of the moon, which, high above, had not only the whole heavens but the earth as well to herself, and seemed to be taking her own way with it in the consciousness of irresistible power. What that way was, who can tell? The troubled brain of

the maniac and the troubled conscience of the malefactor know something about it; but neither can tell the way of the moon with the earth. Fear laid hold upon Thomas. He found himself all alone with that white thing in the sky; and he turned from the glorious window to go down to the bar. But all the house was dark, the household in bed, and he alone awake and wandering "in the dead waste and middle of the night." A horror seized him when he found that he was alone. Why should he fear? The night covered him. But there was God. I do not mean for a moment that he had a conscious fear of the Being he had been taught to call God. Never had that representation produced in him yet any sense of reality, any the least consciousness of presence—anything like the feeling of the child who placed two chairs behind the window-curtain, told God that that one was for him, and sat down to have a talk with him. It was fear of the unknown God, manifested in the face of a nature which was strange and unfriendly to the evil-doer. It is to God alone

that a man can flee from such terror of the unknown in the fierceness of the sea, in the ghastly eye of the moon, in the abysses of the glaciers, in the misty slopes of the awful mountain-side; but to God Thomas dared not or could not flee. Full of the horror of wakefulness in the midst of sleeping London, he felt his way back into the room he had just left, threw himself on a bench, and closed his eyes to shut out everything. His own room at Highbury, even that of his mother with Mr. Simon talking in it, rose before him like a haven of refuge. But between him and that haven lay an impassable gulf. No more returning thither. He must leave the country. And Lucy? He must vanish from her eyes, that she might forget him and marry some one else. Was not that the only justice left him to do her? But would Lucy forget him? Why should she not? Women could forget honourable men whom they had loved, let them only be out of their sight long enough; and why should not Lucy forget a ——? He dared not even think the word that belonged to him now. A

fresh billow of shame rushed over him. In the person of Lucy he condemned himself afresh to utter and ineffaceable shame, confusion, and hissing. Involuntarily he opened his eyes. A ghostly whiteness, the sails of a vessel hanging loose from their yards, gleamed upon him. The whole of the pale region of the moon, the spectral masts, the dead houses on the opposite shore, the glitter of the river as from eyes that would close no more, gleamed in upon him, and a fresh terror of loneliness in the presence of the incomprehensible and the unsympathetic overcame him. He fell on his knees and sought to pray; and doubtless in the ear that is keen with mercy it sounded as prayer, though to him who prayed it seemed that no winged thought arose to the Infinite from a "heart as dry as dust." Mechanically, at length, all feeling gone, both of fear and of hope, he went back to his room and his bed.

When he woke in the morning his landlady's voice was in his ears.

"Well, how do we find ourselves to-day, sir? None the worse, I hope?"

He opened his eyes. She stood by his bedside, with her short arms set like the handles of an urn. It was a common face that rose from between them, red, and with eyes that stood out with fatness. Yet Thomas was glad to see them looking at him, for there was kindness in them.

"I am all right, thank you," he said.

"Where will you have your breakfast?" she asked.

"Where you please," answered Thomas.

"Will you come down to the bar-parlour, then?"

"I shall be down in a few minutes."

"Jim Salter's inquirin' after ye."

"Who?" said Thomas, starting.

"Only Jim Salter, the man that brought you in last night, sir. I told him to wait till I came up."

"I shall be down in one minute," said Thomas, a hope of his money darting into his mind.

He had to pass through the bar to the little room at the back. Against the counter leaned Jim, smoking a short pipe, with his hand upon a

pot of beer. When Thomas entered, he touched his cap to him, saying,

"Glad to see you lookin' middlin', gov'nor. Is there anything I can do for you to-day?"

"Come into the room here," said Thomas, "and have something. I'm rather late, you see. I haven't had my breakfast yet."

Salter followed him with his pewter in his hand. Thomas disliked his appearance less than on the preceding evening. What was unpleasant in his face was chiefly owing to the small-pox. He was dirty and looked *beery*, but there seemed to be no harm in him. He sat down near the door which led to the ladder already mentioned, and put his pot on the window-sill. Thomas asked if he would have a cup of coffee, but he preferred his beer and his pipe.

"You wanted to see me," said Thomas, opening a conversation.

"Oh! nothin' perticlar, gov'nor. I only wanted to see if I could do anything for you," said Jim.

"I was in hopes you had heard of something

I lost, but I suppose it's at the bottom of the river," said Thomas.

"Not your watch?" asked Salter, with some appearance of anxious interest.

"A great deal worse," answered Thomas; "—a pocket-book."

"Much in it?" asked Jim, with a genuine look of sympathetic discomfiture.

"More than I like to think of. Look," said Thomas, turning out the contents of his pocket, "that is all I have in the world."

"More than ever I had," returned Salter. "Keep me a month."

Thomas relapsed into thought. This man was the only resemblance of a friend he had left. He did not like to let him go loose in the wilds of London, without the possibility of finding him again. If this man vanished, the only link, Thomas felt, between him and the world of men would be broken. I do not say Thomas *thought* this. He only felt that he would be absolutely alone when this man left him. Why should he not go away somewhere with him?

"Where do you live?" he asked.

"Stepney way," answered Jim.

"I want to see that part of London. What do you do now? I mean what do you work at?"

"Oh! nothin' perticlar, gov'nor. Take a day at the docks now and then. Any job that turns up. I'm not perticlar. Only I never could stick to one thing. I like to be moving. I had a month in Bermondsey last—in a tan-yard, you know. I knows a bit of everything."

"Well, where are you going now?"

"Nowheres—anywheres you like, gov'nor. If you want to see them parts, as you say, there's nobody knows 'em better than I do, Tiger-bay and all."

"Come then," said Thomas. But here a thought struck him. "Wouldn't it be better though," he added,—"they're queer places some of those, ain't they?—to put on a workman's clothes?"

Jim looked at him. Thomas felt himself wince under his gaze. But he was relieved when he said with a laugh:

"You wont look much like a workman, gov'-'nor, put on what you like."

"I can't wear these clothes, anyhow," said Thomas; "they look so wretchedly shabby after their ducking. Couldn't you take me somewhere, where they'd change them for a suit of fustian? I should like to try how they feel for a few days. We're about the same size—I could give them to you when I had done with them."

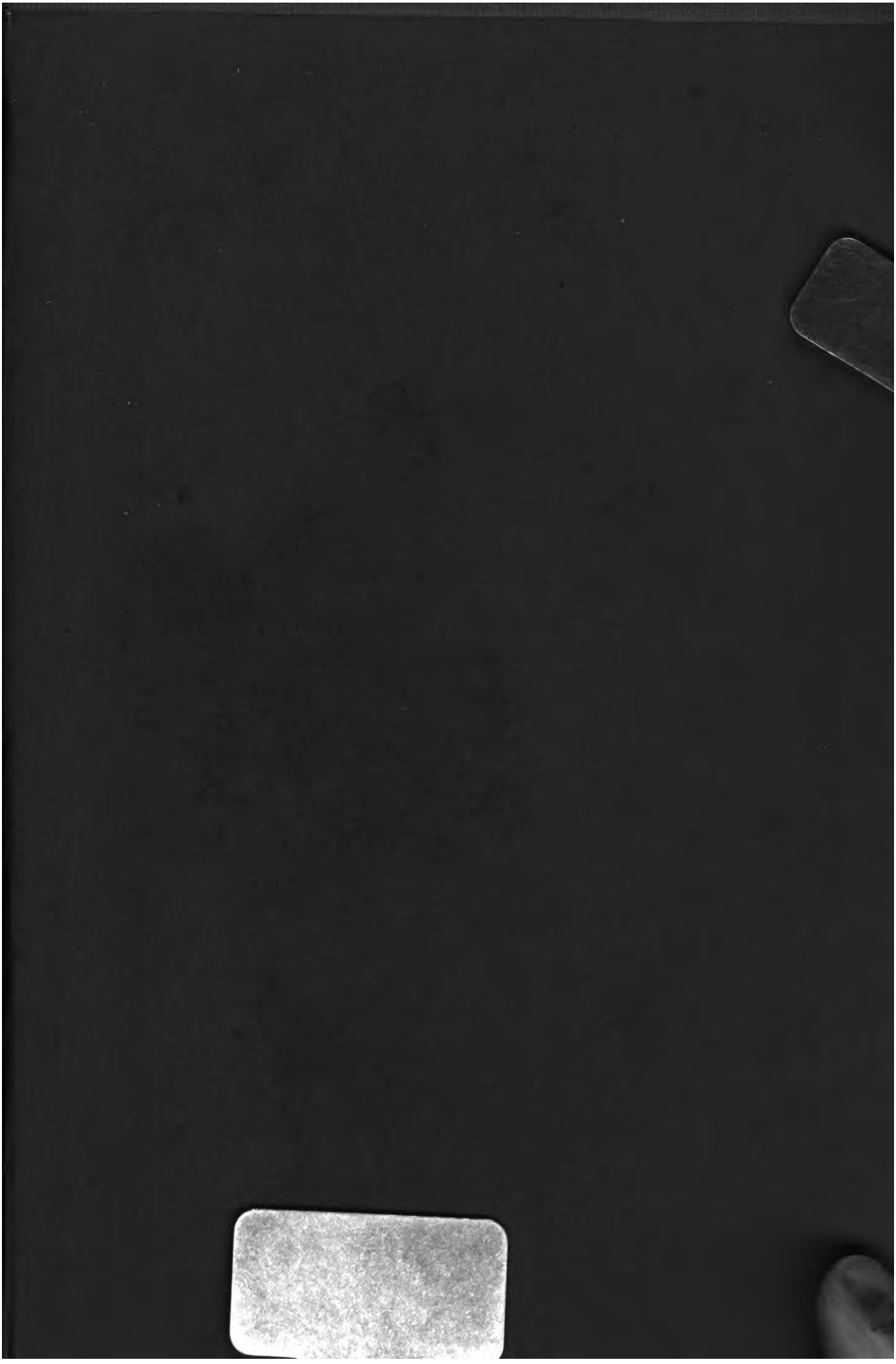
Jim had been observing him, and had associated this wish of Thomas's with the pocket-book, and his furtive troubled looks. But Jim was as little particular about his company as about anything else, and it was of no consequence to him whether Thomas had or had not deeper reasons than curiosity for seeking to disguise himself.

"I tell you what," he said, "if you want to keep quiet for a day or two, I'm your man. But if you put on a new suit of fustian, you'll be more looked at than in your own clo'es."

Thomas had by this time finished his breakfast: it was not much he could eat.

"Well," he said, rising, "if you've nothing particular to do, I'll give you a day's wages to go with me. Only let's get into Stepney, or away somewhere in that direction, as soon as possible."

He called the landlady, settled his very moderate bill, and then found that his hat must be somewhere about the Nore by this time. Jim ran to a neighbouring shop, and returned with a cloth cap. They then went out into a long narrow street—Rotherhithe Street, I think—very different in aspect from any he had seen in London before. Indeed it is more like a street in Cologne. Here we must leave him with his misery and Jim Salter, both better companions than Molken.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

LONDON:
SAVILL, EDWARDS AND CO., PRINTERS, CHANDOS STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.