



Bodleian Libraries

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

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

For more information see:

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



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

MRS DUBOSQ'S
BIBLE



WILLIAM GILBERT

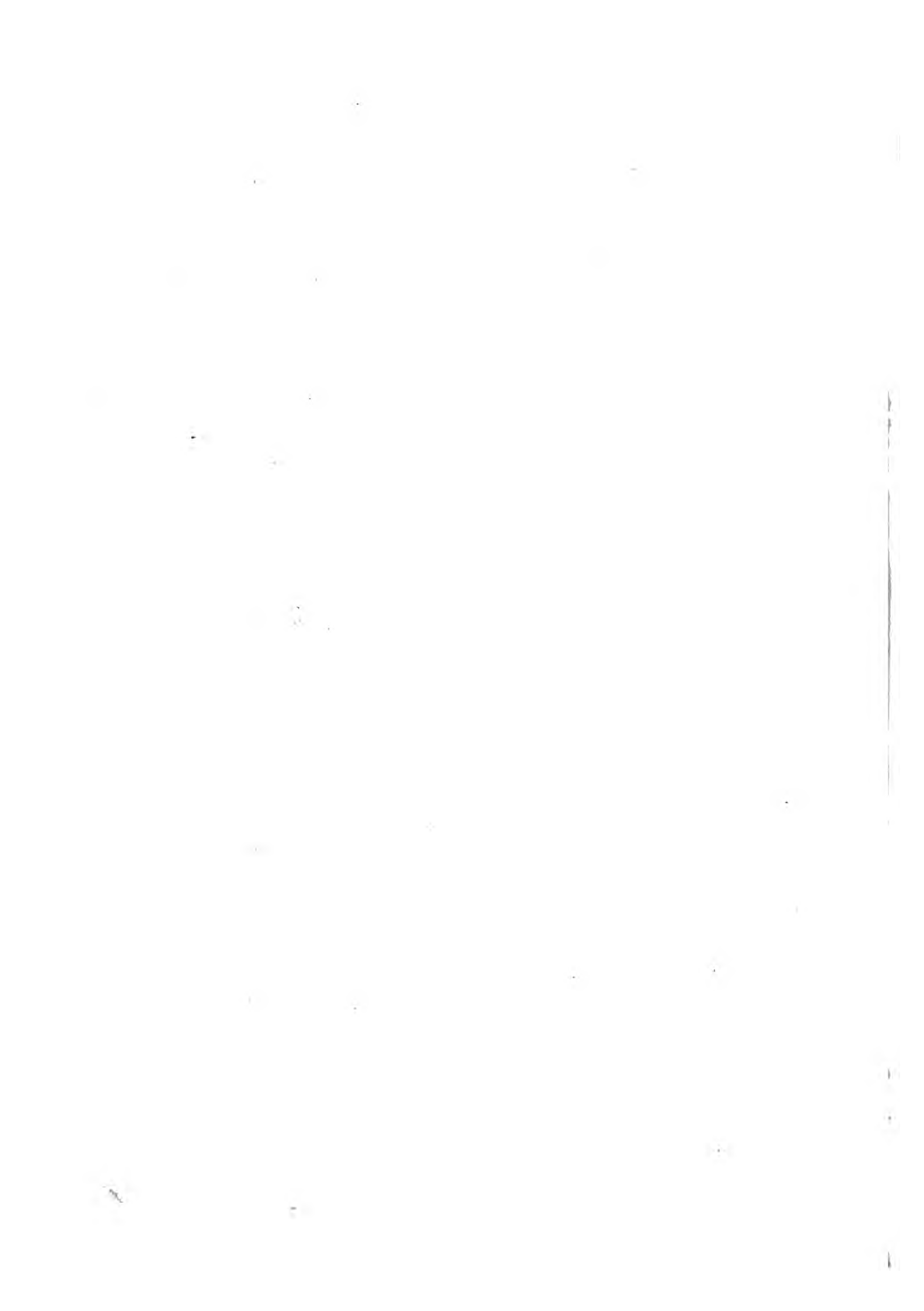


600061060J





MRS. DUBOSQ'S BIBLE



MRS. DUBOSQ'S BIBLE

By WILLIAM GILBERT

AUTHOR OF "JAMES DUKE THE COSTERMONGER," ETC. ETC.



STRAHAN AND COMPANY LIMITED
34, PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON

All rights reserved

251. c. 952.

**CHARLES DICKENS AND EVANS,
CRYSTAL PALACE PRESS.**

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.		PAGE
DR. GREGORY D'AUBIGNY		I
CHAPTER II.		
THE WALDRON FAMILY		21
CHAPTER III.		
MRS. DUBOSQ		42
CHAPTER IV.		
THE FUNERAL		59
CHAPTER V.		
A TRADE DISPUTE		73

CHAPTER VI.		PAGE
A TERRIBLE TEMPTATION		90
CHAPTER VII.		
BRIGHTER PROSPECTS		116
CHAPTER VIII.		
MRS. DUBOSQ'S LEGACY		134
CHAPTER IX.		
THE CAMELLIA		157
CHAPTER X.		
MRS. LE BRUMENT		174
CHAPTER XI.		
THE WEDDING		191
CHAPTER XII.		
DOUBTS AND FEARS		210

CONTENTS.

vii

CHAPTER XIII.

	PAGE
NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA	229

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BIBLE AGAIN	248
---------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XV.

THE CAMELLIA PLANT	266
------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CAMELLIA FADES	290
------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CURTAIN DROPS	308
-----------------------------	-----



CHAPTER I.

DR. GREGORY D'AUBIGNY.

AMONG the many localities in the metropolis the aspect of which has been greatly changed since the commencement of the present century, none has undergone a more complete metamorphosis than that of Bethnal Green ; and more particularly that portion of it which lies to the south of the parish church, abutting on the north-east angle of the neighbouring parish of Spitalfields, through which the viaduct of the Great Eastern Railway now runs. Then, instead of being densely crowded and closely built on, there were only three or four long streets with considerable plots of garden ground between them. Many of the houses, especially to the west of Brick Lane and the adjacent streets, have still the appearance of having been formerly occupied by persons of substance, in spite of the poverty and bustle now surrounding them ; and have, moreover, a quaint, foreign

look, hardly in keeping with our ideas of the domestic architecture of our manufacturing localities. To the eastward of Brick Lane, and between John Street and Bethnal Green Road, at the beginning of the century, rows of houses became fewer and garden grounds larger; while to the northward of the highway at present leading from Shoreditch to Victoria Park, the prospect was quite rural, strangely differing from the appearance the same locality presents in the present day.

The inhabitants of this district had also several characteristics of their own, which differed widely from those of the ordinary class of the London working people. There was less of the Anglo-Saxon type about them. They were, as a rule, more slightly built but active, and their features were delicate and well-marked. They had dark hair and dark eyes, and their complexion was of a somewhat olive tint. The names of a large majority of them were unmistakably French, and their foreign peculiarities of habit and deportment were frequently heightened by the fluent manner in which many of them could converse in the French language. Although they could speak English with the accent and manner of natives,—which indeed they certainly were,—the French language was, nevertheless, frequently used among them, when they conversed with friends or in their own family circles.

In the latter part of the last century, French was almost the only language in use in certain localities

in Bethnal Green and Spitalfields. A large proportion of the French emigrants, to escape from the religious persecutions in their own country, sought refuge in England; and those who had been occupied in the art of silk-weaving especially first settled in that portion of Bethnal Green of which the old goods station of the Great Eastern Railway might almost be regarded as the centre. Here they formed a colony of their own. With the little money they had been able to save from the wreck of their fortunes, the assistance they had received from their friends and relatives in France, and the sum granted by the English government for their relief, they commenced to erect their dwellings. In a short time they succeeded in establishing a small trade in manufactured silks, which gradually increased till their own little colony was not large enough to hold them. They spread out to the south and west, absorbing a considerable portion of Spitalfields, as well as of the neighbouring parish of Shoreditch; thus establishing in our midst that which afterwards became one of the most flourishing of our manufactures: too soon, alas! in all probability, to become extinct.

As a rule, the French emigrants and their descendants were remarkably well-conducted. They rarely mixed themselves up in the trade disturbances which so frequently arose among their fellow-workmen in the same handicraft, and which so often occurred about the commencement of the present century; and indeed they

conducted themselves in every respect as peaceable, well-regulated citizens. They assisted one another in times of distress in a most praiseworthy manner. They were among the first—if not the very first—in England to establish benefit societies ; and they also maintained, by their private contributions, several excellent schools for the young.

At the time our narrative opens there stood, at the further extremity of John Street, at an angle formed by a lane which led to Bethnal Green Church, a very modest, unpretending-looking apothecary's shop. The house itself contained only six rooms and a small kitchen. In front was the shop, for the modern term "Dispensary" was not then in use. It was in all respects in perfect keeping with the house, there being none of those showy-looking bottles, filled with coloured water, now so much in vogue among chemists. Nor were there sheets of plate-glass in the shop front. In the first place, luxuries of that kind were then unknown ; and in the second, one of the large panes of glass at present in use would have covered not only the shop, but the entrance-door as well. In fact, had it not been for one or two small bottles filled with drugs, somewhat ostentatiously placed in view of the passers-by, the window was in every respect similar to those of the private houses in the street, which, on the whole, were as unpretending as was possible for respectable windows to be.

The shop itself, though very small, was in good order and neatly arranged. On the shelves were, not "the beggarly account of empty boxes" which might have been expected from the external appearance of the house, but a well-assorted collection of drugs and chemicals. To these should be added a small counter, on which stood several of the implements used in making up medicines, such as two pestles and mortars, some scales and weights, and a glass graduate or two.

Behind the shop was a room, which communicated with it by a door, in which were inserted two small panes of glass, covered on the inside by a curtain. This curtain the doctor could draw aside if he wished to ascertain who had entered without being seen himself, and it also allowed him to attend on any patients who might call on him for advice without being intruded on by the curious.

The room, though small, was well furnished, but not perhaps altogether in accordance with our modern ideas of comfort. In the first place there were half-a-dozen elaborately-made broad-bottomed chairs, their seats covered with faded embroidery, although it was evident they were the work of some skilled artist who had formerly been in good repute. The chairs themselves were made of a sort of black wood, possibly ebony. The backs were so high that they rose to the height of the sitter's head, and the tops were even broader than the seats. The legs too were solid and

sturdy-looking, and ornamented with carving. Altogether there was a foreign appearance about them, strongly resembling that of the chairs we occasionally see in the old furniture and curiosity shops in Paris.

Although the chairs occupied at least one-third of the limited area of the room, there was in it another article of furniture equally cumbersome. This was a large cabinet, closing at the top, with folding doors, and having rows of drawers beneath, the whole made of the same dark wood as the chairs. The doors of the cabinet were ornamented with well-executed carved work, and, on being opened, exposed to view a number of books, some of them probably on medical subjects. The greater portion, however, evidently belonged to a different class of literature, and were in handsome foreign antique bindings, just sufficiently faded to increase their value in the eyes of the connoisseur. In the drawers below, were divers surgical instruments and other professional appliances.

There were two tables in the room, and both were quite as quaint-looking as the other articles of furniture. They were evidently well-made, and had obstinate-looking brass feet, which seemed as if they did not intend—unless great strength were brought to bear upon them—to be moved from the spot on which they stood. The smaller of the two was placed against the back window. On it was a solid-looking writing-desk, and this was again surmounted by a folio French Protestant

Bible, which was carefully covered with green baize to protect the binding. The other, and larger, stood in the centre of the room. The only other article of furniture was a large old-fashioned chintz-covered easy-chair, which, from its well-worn appearance, was evidently in constant use. The walls were destitute of ornaments, with two exceptions. Of these, one was a good portrait of some early professor of the French Calvinistic Church, which hung in the place of honour over the fireplace; the other was a carefully-drawn genealogical tree, which hung on a nail in the wall, beside the door opening into the shop. A side-door led into the small kitchen, which had evidently been erected after the house was built. And this again opened into a little patch of garden ground. The two rooms on the first floor were occupied, one by the doctor himself, the other by his old housekeeper, and were well furnished. Above were two small unfurnished garrets; the front used as a sort of lumber and store room, while that behind was occupied by a numerous family of pigeons, who were great pets of the doctor, and of whose welfare he took especial care; he had, moreover, made with his own hand certain ingenious openings and alterations in the window, so as to allow them free egress into the open air.

About eight o'clock, one stormy evening, in the early part of the month of February, in the year 1790, Bridget Mahoney, who combined in her person housekeeper,

cook, housemaid, and occasionally gardener to Dr. Gregory D'Aubigny, the occupier of the house, had just terminated her preparations for his supper, which consisted of a mutton-chop, garnished with potatoes, cooked in a manner which would have done no discredit to a first-rate eating-house in the City. Bridget placed another plate over the one which contained both chop and potatoes, and then put them in the fender before a good fire in the sitting-room that they might be kept warm till the doctor's return. Then, after casting a look on the table, which was covered with a cloth of snowy whiteness, to see that all was in order, she seated herself in the doctor's easy-chair, and remained there in a state of blissful contentment for about a quarter of an hour, when the cares of the outward world again intruded on her mind. Casting her eye on a small clock which stood on the mantelpiece, she began to feel some regret at the non-arrival of her master, less, in fact, from fear that her cooking should spoil by the delay, than that the worthy doctor (for whom, by the way, Bridget had really a great respect) should not enjoy his meal as much as he would have done had he arrived at the proper time.

Although somewhat annoyed at the delay, Bridget had no alternative but to wait with patience. She remained in the easy-chair for some time longer, in a tolerably tranquil state, when her eye again fell upon the clock, and she found the minute-hand just marking the half-hour. Bridget's patience now fairly gave way.

Starting up from her chair, and allowing the candle to remain burning on the table, she left the room, and, making her way through the shop, opened the street-door, with the intention of ascertaining whether her master was in sight. She had hardly placed her foot on the doorstep, when she was struck by so strong a gust of wind that it almost tore her cap off her head, and obliged her to turn back precipitately for shelter. Nothing daunted, however, Bridget determined on making a second attempt. This time she held her cap tightly on her head with her hand, and succeeding in reaching the pathway—for pavement there was none—she gazed anxiously in the direction of Brick Lane, peering into the obscurity as far as she could. Finding she could distinguish nothing, Bridget again entered the house, and, closing the shop-door, returned to the sitting-room, where she once more placed herself in the easy-chair. She looked for a moment with a despairing eye on the white plates in the fender, evidently persuaded, to use her own phraseology, “that the chop would be as dry as a brickbat before her master came home.”

Another ten minutes passed over, and then Bridget had the satisfaction of hearing the doctor enter the shop. Taking the candle from the table, she went hastily forward to meet him.

“A bad night, Bridget,” said the doctor, as he loosened his great-coat in the shop, while his servant placed his heavy umbrella in the corner. “I hope no

person has sent for me while I was out, for I want to have a quiet night's rest, if I can. I feel almost worn out."

"No one has called, sir," said Bridget. "Indeed I don't think anybody will in such a night as this, if they can possibly help it."

"True, Bridget, true," said the doctor. "And we ought to be thankful that we have a roof to shelter us, while so many of our fellow-creatures are without one. But I hope my supper is ready, for I am desperately hungry."

"Ready?" said Bridget, in a tone as nearly resembling reproach as her respect for her master would allow her to make use of. "Ready, did you say? Didn't you tell me to have it ready by eight o'clock? And see what time it is now! Why, it is past nine, and the chop will be quite spoilt," she continued, as she lifted the plates from before the fire. "At least it will be a miracle if it ain't."

Bridget then lifted up the top plate, and to her great satisfaction found that the chop had not suffered so much as she had imagined. At all events it had not in the eyes of her master, who, possessing at the moment an ample stock of that best of all sauces, hunger, was perhaps more easily pleased than he would otherwise have been. To him it appeared to have most appetizing qualities, for without further delay he drew one of the broad-seated, high-backed chairs to the table, and after

uttering devoutly, in the French language, a somewhat lengthy grace, he commenced a vigorous attack on the supper Bridget had set before him.

During the meal, little conversation passed between the doctor and his servant, who stood by the table attending on her master, occasionally filling his glass with water from a pitcher before her (for the doctor was almost a teetotaller, though the word had not then been invented), and handing him anything else he might require. His meal over, Bridget cleared away the things, while the doctor took off his boots and put on his slippers, evidently promising himself one whole night's rest in comfort. Bridget then opened the bottom drawer of the cabinet, in which, among the scientific apparatus, we regret to say, were a small, old-fashioned earthenware tobacco-jar and a pipe, both of which she placed on the table, and then, taking up a ball of worsted which she had brought from the kitchen, she seated herself on a chair,—which, as a mark of respect, she had drawn to as inconvenient a distance as possible from the centre table, so far, indeed, that the rays of the solitary candle seemed hardly to reach her,—and busily commenced her work.

The doctor, in the meantime, had settled himself in the easy-chair, which had been drawn near the fire. The unfilled pipe was in his right hand, which hung listlessly over the side of his chair, and he remained in this attitude for some time in a state of profound

meditation. Bridget, who knew her master's habits better than he did himself, easily saw that something had occurred during the day either to annoy him or hurt his feelings. She was well aware that as the doctor gave offence to no one, few offended him: Being a woman of shrewdness and tact, she maintained a perfect silence. She knew enough of medicine (as she herself would have expressed it) to be certain that few persons like to have a sore place rubbed. And if her master's feelings had received a wound in the course of the day, any remark she might make would rather vex him than otherwise.

Altogether Dr. Gregory D'Aubigny was rather a singular character, and as he will play a somewhat prominent part in our drama, we will describe him with somewhat more minuteness than most of the other of our *dramatis personæ*. In figure he was tall and well-formed, although rather slim. His complexion and eyes were dark, his features were handsome, especially his mouth, which was remarkably well-shaped, and when open displayed a beautiful set of teeth. His brow was broad and clear, and of that unembarrassed class on which "nature has stamped the word gentleman." He was certainly not less than fifty, and, judging from the extreme whiteness of his hair, which he wore in a long natural *queue* down his back, he might possibly have been nearer sixty years of age.

Dr. D'Aubigny was descended on both his father's

and his mother's side from highly respectable French emigrants, who were among the first to arrive in England after the religious war in the Cevennes. Gregory's grandfather, when young, had entered the ministry, and it was a portrait of him in his clerical dress which hung over the chimney-piece in the doctor's sitting-room. When obliged to leave France, his wife, who accompanied him in his exile, fortunately succeeded in concealing about her person some old family jewels, which on their arrival in England they turned into money, and with the proceeds managed not only to furnish a small house but to erect a loom in one of the bed-rooms. Madame D'Aubigny, by dint of constant application at this loom, acquired great proficiency in the art of silk-weaving, and she was thus of great use in maintaining their family, which consisted of a boy (Gregory's father), and a girl who died young. The pastor himself contributed something to the family exchequer. When the colony of emigrants became sufficiently numerous to form a congregation, Pastor D'Aubigny was invited, in conjunction with another minister, to organize a service according to the rules of the Calvinistic Church, for which they were each to receive a small stipend. This honourable position he held for several years, but was at length attacked by a fit of apoplexy, under which he succumbed. His son at the time was eighteen years of age; the daughter had died shortly after their arrival in England. At his father's death the young man,

although he had acquired great skill at the loom, much wished to join the ministry. From this, however, he was dissuaded by his mother, who reminded him of the great number of eminent ministers continually arriving from France, and how little opportunity he would have of making his way in the world in competition with men of such learning. The young man admitted the force of her reasoning. He still continued to work at the loom, but at the same time he took great interest in the affairs of the little chapel, as well as the schools attached to it.

When about twenty-two years of age, Gregory's father married a respectable young woman, whose father, like his own, was a French emigrant of good descent. By her he had but one child, Gregory ; and his parents determined, if possible, to bring him up to one of the learned professions. With this intent they gave him, while young, what in those days were considered the rudiments of a good education. They placed him in a school in the neighbourhood, which had lately been established by the French silk manufacturers for the children of the distressed French *noblesse et bourgeoisie* of Spitalfields.* It must not, however, be imagined that by so doing they wished to save expense to themselves by drawing on the funds of a charity, for the boy's father immediately trebled his subscription to the school. It was rather

* The walls of this school now enclose a large vat in Hanbury's brewhouse. "To what base uses we may return, Horatio!"—*Hamlet*.

with the intention that, with his aristocratical ideas, his boy should associate with those of respectable birth, no matter how poor their parents might be. Besides the ordinary elements of an English education, young Gregory was, in accordance with the rules of the school, taught to speak and write the French language with good accent and grammatically, though this, however, was by no means difficult for him to accomplish, inasmuch as French, as has been already stated, was at that time, with the majority of Spitalfields weavers, the ordinary language used in their homes.

In the year 1758, young Gregory lost his mother, and his father ever afterwards remained a widower. Gregory continued to reside with his father, passing his days at school, the father's earnings being sufficient, with economy, to support both himself and his son. They resided in the same house that the family had inhabited since their first arrival in England, the father working with great industry at his loom—in fact, to a degree that had a most prejudicial effect on his health.

It must not be imagined that this incessant labour on the part of Gregory's father arose from any avaricious motive, for he was always in the receipt of fair wages. His unceasing labour was caused by the wish to realize sufficient money to enable young Gregory to be educated for his intended profession during his own lifetime; and in case of his death that he might be able to leave enough for his son to continue his studies. Although

Gregory's father wished him to be brought up for the ministry, he himself hardly approved of this plan. His great ambition was to become a physician. His father, though somewhat disappointed at this, offered no objection ; and when young Gregory was seventeen years of age, he was placed in the shop of a medical practitioner in Spitalfields, to begin the study of medicine.

At this time Gregory's education was far in arrear of what in the present day would be considered requisite even for the matriculation examination of the London University, though much in advance of that of the average students of his own time. True, he was an excellent French scholar, but he knew little Latin and no Greek. The former accomplishment, however, was scarcely needed, and the latter would have been entirely useless to a general practitioner in the middle of the last century. It is but justice to Gregory, however, to state that he grew more intimate with the dead languages as he grew older, and this not from any professional necessity, but from his own innate love of study.

Gregory remained about six years in the apothecary's shop in Spitalfields. His father afterwards not only paid the fees for his son's admission as a pupil at St. Thomas's Hospital, but he also set apart the sum of one hundred and four pounds, equal to one pound per week for two years' board and lodging during the time of his studentship ; and even then a small balance was left in his hands to start him in his profession. The

aggregate sum represented the accumulated economies of ten years' hard labour. Yet so far from grudging the expenditure, the Sunday after he had drawn the money from the bank he returned thanks to the Almighty in the newly-erected temple in John Street for having given him health and strength to carry out that which since the death of his wife had been the great aim and end of his earthly ambition.

Nor was Gregory D'Aubigny unworthy of his father's care, solicitude, and expenditure. He went through the curriculum at the hospital with so much diligence as to call forth the approbation of his teachers. He then received his diploma, and started in practice as an apothecary on the ground-floor of the house in Brick Lane, his father occupying the two upper rooms.

Gregory was much liked by his patients both for his amiable manners and extensive knowledge, but there was still wanting one element necessary for his success—a wife. Although it would not have been easy to find in any profession—not even excepting the clerical—a better-conducted young man than Gregory, yet husbands hardly liked their wives to be attended by the handsome young bachelor doctor, as he was termed in the neighbourhood. To find a girl willing to become his wife was easy enough, but to find one he could really love was more difficult, and he had resolutely determined not to wed till he had done so. At last he met with a damsel possessing all the

qualifications he desired. She was graceful and pretty, rather above the middle height, and about twenty years of age. She was, moreover, of French descent both by the mother's and father's side, and that, too, from good old Norman families. She was further possessed of a little money—about three hundred pounds—which had been left her by her father, a manufacturer in a small way of business, employing perhaps half-a-dozen looms. To this damsel Gregory made an offer of marriage, which, after a little conventional demur, was accepted.

With the three hundred pounds of his wife's money, Gregory purchased the freehold of the house he was living in at the time of our narrative. His practice now rapidly increased, and he became a great favourite in the neighbourhood. His patients, it is true, were not very wealthy, yet his income not only sufficed to maintain himself and his wife, but enabled them to lay by something as well. Their home was a very happy one in every way, and there was but one drawback to their complete domestic felicity during the first two years, and that was the death of Gregory's father. The following year Gregory himself became a father, his wife having presented him with a fine healthy child—a daughter. And everything went on smoothly till the child was ten years old, when both mother and daughter were carried off by a fever which at that time raged in the neighbourhood with almost the intensity of a pestilence.

The death of his wife and child, as may easily be

imagined, was a terrible blow to the doctor. So severely did he feel it, that for some months he was unable to follow his profession, losing thereby no inconsiderable portion of his practice. Time, however, brought with it a certain amount of consolation, though he never completely recovered the loss of his wife and child. He again commenced his practice, and succeeded in regaining a certain number of his patients, though these unfortunately were mostly poor. But if his earnings were small, his wants were in proportion. His income was ample for the maintenance of his modest establishment, allowing him besides to indulge moderately in the luxury of both public and private benevolence. He subscribed regularly to the chapel and schools, and frequently gave pecuniary assistance to the poor patients whom he gratuitously attended. He had a curious habit, however, of always making them pay for their medicines, although he knew they did so with the money he had given to them in charity. This, it should be stated, however, he only did in order to put a restraint on their physic-consuming propensities; the poor of Bethnal Green, in common with the poorer classes all over London, being willing, when unwell, to swallow any amount of medicine they could obtain gratis. Dr. D'Aubigny was also honorary secretary to the Norman Benefit Society of Bethnal Green. Nor was he without his amusements. He had a fancy for buying old French works of a standard character, for which he occasionally paid somewhat

dearly. His leisure hours—which were few indeed—he beguiled in tracing the origin of those of the Spitalfields weavers who were descended from families of noble French extraction; and his memoranda, if they could now be recovered, would be invaluable as genealogical references. Two other amusements he also indulged in. He was passionately fond of flowers, and, as before stated, was a great pigeon-fancier. His little garden was kept in admirable order, and his Almagne-tumbler pigeons were the admiration of all the connoisseurs in the neighbourhood. In the practice of his profession he was patient and indefatigable, making no distinction between rich and poor. He was courteous, kind, and gentlemanly in his manners, and much respected by his patients.



CHAPTER II.

THE WALDRON FAMILY.

WE left Dr. D'Aubigny seated in his chintz-covered easy-chair, in a kind of melancholy brown study, his hand hanging listlessly by his side holding the unfilled pipe, his eyes the while fixed vacantly on the fire. The clock striking suddenly roused him, and without rising from his chair, he attempted to draw towards him the tobacco-jar which Bridget had placed on the table. Finding it was somewhat beyond her master's reach, she rose from her chair to put it nearer to him, then snuffing the wick of the candle, which had become rather long, she reseated herself, and, while the doctor was filling his pipe, prepared a subject of conversation. She had hardly broken ground, however, with a remark on the weather, when the bell fixed over the entrance-door rang violently, and immediately afterwards some one was heard to enter the shop. At the sound of the bell, a

look of vexation passed over the doctor's face. This did not escape the notice of Bridget, who said to him in a whisper, "Sit where you are, sir, and unless there is anything very serious, I'll soon send them off." Taking up the candle, she then went into the shop, where she found a short, slight-built, pale-faced man, drenched with rain, and breathless from the haste he had made to reach the doctor's house.

"Is the master in?" exclaimed the man, with a strong Irish accent, as soon as Bridget came into view.

"What is it you want him for?" inquired Bridget, without replying to his question, and hoping to judge from the man's answer whether it was really a case necessitating the doctor's leaving home.

"Sure, ain't it a poor woman that has got her baby dying? and it will be dead intirely if the doctor don't make haste," the man replied with much earnestness of tone.

Bridget was for the moment somewhat puzzled, for though she much wished that her master might remain comfortably at home, she easily perceived that the case was a serious one. She was, moreover, somewhat interested in the matter; not only because of the man's earnestness, but that his brogue told her that he was a countryman of her own. The doctor himself, however, put an end to her difficulty. Rising from his easy-chair, he went into the shop and asked the name of the woman whose child was sick.

"It's Mrs. Waldron," was the man's reply.

"Mrs. Waldron," said the doctor, thoughtfully. "I know no one of that name. She's no patient of mine."

"Sure, she says she knows yer honour ever since she was a baby."

The doctor reflected for a moment, but could not recall the name.

"Where does she live?" he at length inquired.

"Close by, yer honour," was the reply. "I'll take ye to her meself in a minute."

"But can't you tell me where she lives?" said the doctor, with some impatience.

"Just close by—in Fleur-de-lis Street."

"Fleur-de-lis Street," said the doctor, sharply. "Do you mean Fleur-de-lis Street in Norton Folgate?"

"I do," said the man.

"Why, it's a good half-hour's walk from here," said the doctor. "And you must have passed the houses of at least half-a-dozen medical men on your way. How could you tell me the woman lived close by?"

The Irishman, for the moment, seemed fairly puzzled, as if searching for an excuse. Then suddenly recovering himself, he said, "Railly, sir, I forgot how far it was intirely, and if yer honour could only see how ill the poor baby is, sure you would think the way is shorter than I did."

This cunning little bit of blarney on the man's part

terribly staggered the poor doctor's resolution. Still, unwilling to give way without one more effort, he again inquired the name of the woman.

"Mrs. Waldron, sir," said the man; "she's an old acquaintance of yer honour's. I'm sure you'd be pleased to see her, if you'll only come with me."

But the doctor was still unable to recall the name. The Irishman, noticing the puzzled expression on his countenance, went on to say :

"Yer honour surely cannot have forgotten 'er, when you know her mother so well. Old Mrs. Dubosq, who lives in one of the almshouses at the back of Elder Street."

"Mrs. Dubosq's daughter! Ah, now I think I know whom you mean; but which of the daughters is it?"

"Maria, sir," replied the man. "The other one's been dead more than a twelvemonth."

The doctor made no further answer, but leaving the man in darkness for a moment, he carried the candle into the sitting-room, and, taking off his slippers, he put on his boots again, and desired Bridget to bring him his many-caped great-coat, which she had hung up in the kitchen to dry, and in a few minutes he was ready to accompany the man to Fleur-de-lis Street. As he left the house, he told Bridget he would take the key of the street-door with him in case he should be detained, and that she could go to bed as soon as she pleased.

As soon as the two were in the street the doctor put up his heavy umbrella, which he held so as to cover as much as possible the face of the Irishman as well as his own. The latter, however, begged that he would only take care of himself, adding that he personally was strong and hearty, and did not mind the weather one bit—a statement which the doctor knew from the poor fellow's consumptive look to be simply an untruth. The Irishman himself evidently wished it to be so understood, for he commenced a very suspicious cough as soon as he had finished his sentence. Hardened as he had professed himself to be against the inclemencies of the weather, he nevertheless accepted the doctor's second invitation to come under the umbrella, and they now trudged along together.

“And how long has Maria Dubosq been married?” inquired the doctor.

“Sure it's gone eleven years,” said the Irishman, “and must have seemed twice as long to her, for she has had a hard time of it.”

“Whom did she marry?” asked the doctor.

“A great brute baste, that calls himself a weaver,” returned the Irishman; “and he's just one of the worst workmen in all Spitalfields, and that's even when he's doing his best.”

“Is he idle then?” inquired the doctor.

“Idle! 'deed an' you may well say that, an' a drunkard an' a bully into the bargain. Every farthing

he can scrape together, or stale from his poor wife, he spends in the public-house with blackguards like himself, none of 'em worth the snuff of a candle. They made him the president of a club they have, where they talk over the state of their trade; and they have determined that none of the Frenchmen that are coming over here in such heaps shall be allowed to weave silk in any house they work for, and all that. Faith! if every weaver was as lazy a blackguard as he is, sure either foreign weavers must come in, or ladies must make their silks and satins for themselves, that's certain. Then, in nine cases out of ten, when he does come out of the public-house he's drunk; and when he's drunk he gets mad, and a precious time his poor wife and family have of it then."

"Do you mean to say he ill-treats them?" inquired the doctor.

"Ill-treats them!" said the Irishman, in a tone of disgust; "sure, sir, that's not the word. He martyrs them quite. The way he behaves to that poor woman in his drunken fits is terrible to behold. Many a time he'd have killed her if it had not been for the other lodgers interfering. And except for the sake of her poor children, more's the pity perhaps he hasn't done it already, and then she'd have been happy, and he'd have got his reward on the gallows. I'd stay at the foot of the gibbet all night long with my cough twice as bad as it is now, and the weather ten times worse, to see that

fellow led out to be hung at eight o'clock in the morning."

"Your dislike to him seems great," said the doctor, "and possibly with reason; but you ought not to express yourself so strongly."

"Faith, your honour don't know him, or you'd say so too. If you was to see him in one of his fits it's more than likely you'd save the hangman the job. At any rate I would, and I would have done it before now if I had been strong enough."

"Have you ever had any quarrel with him?" asked the doctor.

"Indeed, then I have, and I shouldn't have been a man if I hadn't. I am flesh and blood anyhow, and I don't fear him a bit, for I'm under no obligations to him. Never a bit nor sup have I ever had in his house, and I'd starve rather than be beholden to him for either."

"What family has he?"

"He's got two children, a boy about ten years of age, and the baby that's so ill. They had another child that was burnt to death some time ago at Coventry, where they were then living, through his setting fire to the bed-curtains one night when he was drunk. I heard all about it from a countryman of mine who was living there at the time, so of course I know it to be true."

"How old is the sick baby?" inquired the doctor.

"About four months, sir."

"Does the mother nurse it herself?"

“Nurse it herself? Indeed no, she’s much too weak for that. She’s quite broken down, poor thing, in mind and body, and has no more strength than a child. It’s old bones she’ll never make anyhow.”

“Are you a weaver?” asked the doctor.

“No, yer honour. I’m a tailor by trade, and I’ve worked for the same house in Bishopsgate Street for a matter of six years without complaint of any kind.”

The Irishman now went into a long history, not only of his own affairs but of those of his family, which continued until they arrived at a narrow three-storied house at the farther extremity of the northern side of Fleur-de-lis Street. He now led the doctor up a dark narrow staircase to the first floor, on which his own family lived, and having procured a light, he conducted him to the second floor, where he left him in Mrs. Waldron’s room.

The doctor, although used to scenes of poverty, had scarcely ever witnessed a more touching sight than that which now presented itself to his eye. There were hardly half-a-dozen articles of furniture in the room. There were a bed and bedstead on which a shabby-looking bonnet and shawl had been carelessly thrown; also two smaller beds of sacking on the floor, evidently stuffed with shavings; a rickety table in the centre of the room, and two chairs, and a stool. There was also an empty loom by the window. A few articles of crockery were visible in a small cupboard, the door of which was partially open. A small saucepan was on the hob, and on

the table there was, besides a candle, a tea-cup, with a spoon in it.

When the doctor entered, he found Mrs. Waldron—an emaciated, sickly-looking woman, the remains of considerable beauty still on her countenance—seated by the fire with the sick infant on her lap. An intelligent, scantily-dressed boy, some ten years of age, stood beside her, watching her with great attention, his arm flung on her shoulder. On a stool by the side of the fire was a little girl six or seven years of age. Although the child's face was turned towards the doctor as he entered, no expression of surprise passed across her countenance; she remained as motionless as though she had been unaware of his presence. The little boy quitted his mother's side as the doctor advanced.

The scene which the doctor witnessed was characteristic and pathetic in the extreme. He looked at the infant, and his first glance told him that, unless by a miracle, there was not the slightest hope for it in this world. The mother, as soon as she was aware that the doctor was beside her, looked anxiously into his face to discover his opinion. Rapidly as the doctor had arrived at his conclusion, the poor mother as rapidly read it in his countenance. She turned her eyes from him, and still, without uttering a word, fixed them on her infant. Both the doctor and the woman remained for some moments silent and motionless. The woman's knee and foot, which rested on the fender, suddenly moved, as if she

were attempting to rock to sleep the child, which was already partially hushed in the fast-approaching sleep of death. Presently the lower lip of the mother moved convulsively, and her eyes began to fill with tears. The doctor noticed this, and, without saying a word, patted her on the shoulder. The touch seemed to act with all the rapidity of an electric shock. All attempt to restrain her tears now vanished, and they fell in abundance. The boy, seeing his mother's grief, advanced to her on the opposite side to where the doctor stood, and, again placing his arm round her neck, kissed her affectionately, but without speaking a word.

Dr. D'Aubigny watched the group for some moments, waiting for the ebullition of grief to subside, before he should enter into conversation with Mrs. Waldron. He turned his gaze for a moment on the little girl who still sat on the stool by the fire, motionless as a statue, her head erect, and her face towards the door of the room. The expression of intelligence on her features somewhat puzzled the doctor, and quitting Mrs. Waldron's side, he took up the candle and advanced towards the child. His first glance told him all—she was blind.

The doctor now returned to his patient, and began to converse with the mother. His examination of the infant, together with what he drew from her, led him at once to conclude what had been both the original and proximate causes of its present condition. The former had been starvation, or at any rate continued insufficiency

of food ; and the latter an attack on the lungs, from which, in its enfeebled condition, it had not strength to rally. The only chance of prolonging its life, even for a few hours, was to give it some food. Taking the teaspoon, he poured some milk from the saucepan which stood by the fire into the cup on the table, and then attempted to put some in the child's mouth, but without success. He was on the point of making a second attempt, when a heavy stumbling footstep was heard on the stairs, and the next moment a powerful, well-built man, of handsome features, but dissipated appearance, and evidently to some degree intoxicated, entered the room. Without taking the pipe which he was smoking from his mouth, he said to the doctor :

“ You've come to see the child, haven't you, sir ? ”

“ I have.”

“ And how do you find your patient ? ”

“ As ill as it is possible to be and yet to be alive,” was the doctor's reply.

“ I consider the last doctor didn't understand the case,” said Waldron, for he was the poor woman's husband. Then advancing towards the child, and pointing to it with his pipe, which he now held in his hand, he continued, “ I say that if that man had known his business, and done his duty by that child, it would never have been in the state it is. It has been shamefully treated, and no mistake.”

“You are right. The child has been shamefully treated,” the doctor quietly remarked.

Half intoxicated as Waldron was, he had still sense enough to perceive that there was a double meaning in the short answers given by the doctor, and he looked into his face in a somewhat inquiring and threatening manner.

“I don’t understand what you mean,” he said. “If you think you may insult me in my own house you are in the wrong, I can tell you. If you’re that child’s doctor,” he continued in a bullying manner, “I want to know what’s the matter with it.”

“The child’s dying,” replied the doctor, “from the effects of cold, acting on a constitution enfeebled by want of proper nourishment.”

“And whose fault is it if you’re right?” said Waldron. “Not mine, I suppose. If its mother hadn’t been a lazy woman, it wouldn’t have occurred. It’s been her duty to look after her child, not mine.”

The woman made him no answer, but continued to gaze at the fire as if she had not heard him, although the more rapid movement of her foot and knee showed that his words did not pass unheeded. Waldron, evidently annoyed at his wife’s silence, continued :

“If the child hasn’t had enough food, it’s her fault and not mine. Had I known it wanted it, I would have worked night and day sooner than it should have gone without. Did you ever tell me you wanted anything for it?”

The last remark was addressed to his wife, who, however, made no reply.

“Do you hear me, you hag?” he said. “Did you ever tell me you wanted anything for the child?”

But still the woman made no answer. She continued her gaze on the fire, and the mechanical movement of the foot and knee. Waldron, now thoroughly infuriated, rushed towards his wife, exclaiming,

“If you don’t answer me I’ll wring your head off your shoulders.”

Dr. D’Aubigny immediately stepped forward to protect the woman, who at first paid no more attention to her husband’s remark than she had hitherto done, when suddenly the movement of her foot ceased, and uttering a low cry, she let her arm fall listlessly by her side. The child on her lap was dead.

The doctor at once perceived that life was extinct, and, without attempting to offer the poor woman any consolation, he gently took the infant from her lap, and placed it reverentially on the bed. He then turned round to the poor mother, and found that she had followed him. He made way for her, and she stood for a moment gazing at the dead body of her infant; then, placing her hands on her face, she wept silently. The worthy doctor’s heart was quite touched to behold her, notwithstanding that he was accustomed to witness sorrow in its severest form. The boy stood by her side, and, seizing with both his hands his mother’s gown, buried

his face in it, and gave way to a childish burst of grief; while the blind girl, unconscious of what had taken place, sat still on the stool, an expression of alarm mixed with anxiety on her sightless face.

Waldron stood for some moments silently watching his wife. At last he said :

“It’s no use your crying in that manner ; that will do no good. It’s all over now, and crying won’t mend it. You should have paid more attention to the child, and then this would not have happened.”

His remark had a singular effect on the woman. Dropping her hands from her face, she turned upon him, and with her features distorted with passion, said to him :

“You villain ! How dare you say that I did not pay attention to my child ? It’s a lie, and you know it. I worked night and day to find my children in food, while you were drinking in a public-house. I have worked at those four posts,” she continued, pointing to the loom, “till my eyes were so tired that I did not know the warp from the woof, and could hardly feel the shuttle in my fingers. He says I’m lazy, sir,” she said in a lower tone, turning to the doctor. “Look at those hands. Are those the hands of a lazy woman ?”

“Well, if you’re not lazy,” said Waldron, “you’re careless, and that’s as bad. What right have you to take the bread from your own children’s mouths and give it to others ? What you have given to that blind thing would have kept your baby alive. You had no right to take

my child's food to give to her. What is she to you or me either? The workhouse is the proper place for her."

"It's false; her right place is here, and here she shall remain, in spite of you, you villain! When you had spent everything in drink, and I had not a roof to cover me and my children, my poor sister took us in, sheltered us, and gave us food, though she was poor enough, God knows. And do you think I will allow her child to go to the workhouse? Never, while I have a crust of bread to give her—never, though I work my fingers to the bone for it. My poor sister is now in heaven, where you need never expect to be, you villain!"

"A nice-tongued woman I've got for a wife, sir," said Waldron, turning to the doctor, who it was evident only with great difficulty restrained himself from making an angry reply.

"A nice-tongued woman, indeed!" said his wife; "and who is to blame for it if I am? A saint would not put up quietly with the treatment I have received. But I deserve it all. He said, sir," she continued, appealing to the doctor again, "that if he had known my children wanted food, he would have provided it. This morning I took some work home to the warehouse, and got the money for it. When I came back I put it into a cup in the cupboard, and then went out to buy some tea and bread with a shilling I took with me; for neither myself nor my children had put a morsel within our lips since yesterday afternoon. While I was gone he came home,

and seeing there was no silk on the loom, he asked my boy, whom I had left to mind the baby, what had become of it, and was told that I had taken it back. He then searched the room, and having found the money, took the whole of it away with him, and I have not a penny left in the house, nor anything worth pawning."

"It's false, sir," said Waldron to the doctor. "I never touched her money, and I don't believe she has lost it at all."

"Not taken it?" said the woman. "How can you stand there and tell such an audacious falsehood? I wonder you're not struck dead for it."

"I am not capable of anything of the kind, sir. She's mad, I believe, and don't know what she's saying."

"Mad?" said the woman; "and no wonder if I am. Not capable of stealing, indeed! Who cut the silk I was weaving from the loom, when we lived in Coventry, and sold it, but you? And didn't I tell a lie to serve you, and sell all my clothes to make up the loss to the house, and that before we had been married three months? Did you not——"

"But I want to know about the money you say you lost this morning," said Waldron, evidently becoming alarmed at the revelations his wife was making. "That shall be found, at any rate. I'll go and fetch a constable at once, and soon find out all about it."

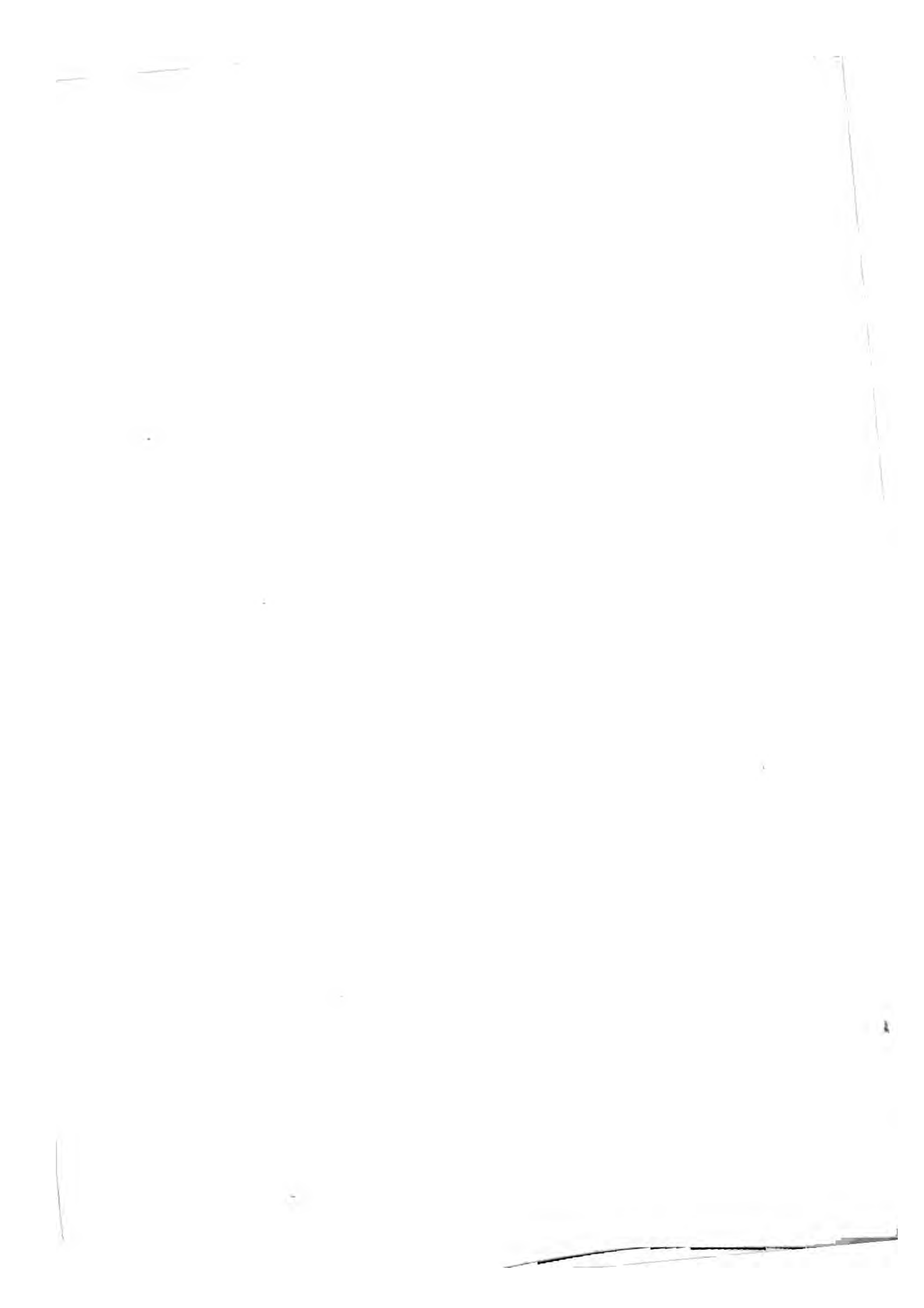
So saying, he hurriedly left the room. As soon as he had gone, Mrs. Waldron, in a gentle and sorrowful

voice, which strangely contrasted with the shrill tone she had used when upbraiding her husband, said to the doctor :

“ Don't think badly of me, sir, from what you have heard me say to-night. You don't know what I've suffered with that man. But it's all over now ; I'll live with him no longer. As soon as my poor baby is buried, I'll get mother to take me in till I can find some other place to go with my children. If it was not for them, I would kill myself, that I would !”

The passion which had hitherto supported her now vanished, and, throwing herself on the bed beside the corpse of her baby, she gave full vent to her sorrow. Some of the female lodgers in the house, who had evidently been listening on the staircase to the altercation between husband and wife, now came into the room, and offered her every consolation in their power. One of them took charge of the blind girl, another of the boy, while a third said she would watch with her beside the little dead body during the night. The doctor, seeing his advice and protection were no longer needed, left the house.

It was considerably past midnight before Dr. D'Aubigny reached home. Having opened the shop-door with his key, he was somewhat surprised at not finding the rushlight burning on the counter, as was usual when he returned late. His surprise was further increased by noticing, through the curtained panes of



me.

ing

her
into

pli-

the

me-

ving

the

the

ition

ched

h her

ected

rather

at his

idget,

n her

ver in

aving

each,

ight,

one,

251

glass in the door, that there was a good fire, if not a light, in the sitting-room. Having taken off his wet coat, and placed his umbrella in its proper corner, he entered the sitting-room, where he found Bridget so fast asleep in his easy-chair that even the ringing of the shop-door bell as he came in had failed to awaken her. The candle on the table had so long a snuff as to tell that she had been indulging in her nap for a considerable time. Moreover, there were on the table a china teapot and cup and saucer (the doctor, though habitually economical, occasionally indulged in the luxury of a cup of tea), some loaf-sugar in a basin, a small jug of milk, a pot of butter, and some slices of bread, evidently cut ready to be toasted. Nor was this all that gladdened the doctor's eye. Beside the tea-things were placed the somewhat incongruous appendages of his tobacco-jar and earthen pipe. The sight of these luxuries had a most grateful effect on the mind of the kind-hearted doctor. After glancing over the table, he tapped Bridget on the shoulder, and good-humouredly asked her why she had not obeyed his orders and gone to bed.

"Sure, sir," said Bridget, rubbing her eyes, "I thought you'd be cold and hungry when you came home, and would like some toast and a cup of tea, as well as your pipe, after all the bother and trouble of the day; and so I said I'd watch for you, so as to be able to make the toast when you came home."

"You've rather an Irish idea of watching, Bridget,"

said the doctor ; “ but I’m obliged to you all the same. One thing, however, I see you have forgotten.”

“ And what’s that, sir ? ” inquired Bridget, glancing over the table.

“ There’s another cup and saucer wanting,” said her master, taking off his boots, and thrusting his feet into his slippers.

Bridget was evidently much pleased at the compliment her master had offered her, for an invitation of the kind was but of rare occurrence with him. She immediately procured another cup and saucer, and having made tea, she dexterously commenced preparing the toast; and all being in readiness, she took her seat at the opposite side of the table in as uncomfortable a position as possible, that it might not be imagined she encroached too much on her master’s condescension.

During their meal, the doctor conversed with her frankly and fluently, but solely on subjects connected with the house. He even pushed the conversation rather than allowed it to go on naturally—possibly to divert his mind from other and more painful subjects. Bridget, habitually loquacious, kept up the conversation on her part as freely as her master, and the meal passed over in a very satisfactory manner.

Bridget now cleared away the things, and having placed the tobacco-jar and pipe within the doctor’s reach, she lighted her rushlight, and, bidding him good-night, sought her own room. As soon as the doctor was alone,

he filled his pipe, and then began to reflect on the chief events of the day just passed. He had attended two death-beds; one was that of a poor woman who had died of consumption, and the other that of the weaver's child. These events brought back to him episodes in his own family, of a very melancholy character, and the tears soon began to gather in his eyes. He attempted to restrain them by smoking energetically, but it was useless, and they fell down his cheeks in rapid succession. Finding that the tobacco—although a narcotic he was in the habit of using in fits of mental trouble—had no effect, he placed his pipe on the table, and wiping his eyes with his handkerchief, paced up and down his shop, the sitting-room being so completely blocked up with furniture that it was utterly impossible to take three consecutive strides in it. His spirits now became calmer; he again entered his sitting-room, and having refilled and lighted his pipe, his thoughts turned on the weaver's family. He had known the poor woman as a child, indeed up to the time of her marriage; but she had then left the neighbourhood, and he had since quite lost sight of her. The boy, too, had pleased him immensely from the affection he had shown to his mother.

But, perhaps, of all that had come under his notice during his visit to Mrs. Waldron, what interested him most was the case of the poor blind girl. As was stated in the last chapter, he had lost an only daughter, who was about the same age. Apart from the poor girl's

blindness, both in form and features she strongly resembled his child. Of all episodes in the doctor's life, there was certainly not one which had left a more painful impression on his memory than the loss of his daughter ; and the sight of this poor blind girl had now brought all the circumstances connected with her vividly before him. He then began to speculate on the future of the Waldron family, and on this subject his thoughts continued to dwell, till fatigue began to exercise its natural power over him. Then rising from his chair, he carefully replaced his pipe and tobacco-jar in the drawer of his cabinet, and, taking up the candle, retired for the night.



CHAPTER III.

MRS. DUBOSQ.

THE next morning at breakfast, Dr. D'Aubigny, with a far cooler brain than when he returned home the evening before, began to think over the events of the previous day. He had conceived a strong desire to assist the Waldron family ; but before finally resolving on doing so, he determined to make further inquiry into their history. He perfectly well knew how impolitic it was for a medical man to interfere in the private affairs of his patients. Although he believed that Mrs. Waldron was a very ill-used woman, yet he had seen enough of the domestic life of the working-classes to know that not unfrequently such appearances are deceptive and the wife is as much to blame as her husband. The doctor's cogitations resulted in a determination that before stirring further in the matter, he would make strict inquiries as to the cause of the present deplorable condition of the

Waldron family, and if he found the woman was at all to blame, he would interfere no further, much as he felt interested in the children.

His breakfast over, Dr. D'Aubigny, after a short discussion with Bridget on the day's housekeeping, looked over the names of the patients he had to visit, placing those who lived nearest to Fleur-de-lis Street at the top of the list, as there he could the more easily obtain information respecting the Waldron family, before commencing the regular duties of the day. He determined his first visit should be to Mrs. Waldron's mother, his former acquaintance, Mrs. Dubosq, who Terence had informed him now lived in an almshouse at the back of Elder Street. The doctor had not seen her for many years, and had lost all trace of her, though, when young, he was on intimate terms with her family, and had moreover been present at her wedding. The last he had heard of her was about ten years before, when she left London to reside with her daughter at Coventry, and he was not even aware that she had returned to London. The poor old lady was delighted to see her friend, and they conversed for some time together on different subjects, Mrs. Dubosq avoiding touching in any way on her family affairs. Nor was the doctor surprised at this, knowing full well the strong objection which respectable women of her class have to speak on any subject connected with their families not particularly creditable.

So resolutely did Mrs. Dubosq refrain from touching

on the matter, even when he attempted to draw her out by putting leading questions to her, that he resolved to play a deeper game. Knowing well the idiosyncrasies and peculiarities of old ladies resident in almshouses, and the best way of making himself agreeable to them, the doctor, with much interest in his tone, inquired into the state of her health. She took up the subject with great readiness, and gave him a history of her maladies for some years past, commencing with her first attack of rheumatism, and going on to the last, which had confined her to the house for several months. Having completed the account of her bodily infirmities, the old lady's mind seemed much relieved, and she conversed cheerfully on other subjects. Among other things she mentioned that the French language, when she was young, had been habitually spoken in her family, but she said she was afraid she had now almost forgotten it. The doctor reminded her that when they were boy and girl together they used always to converse in that tongue ; and though many years had elapsed since she was in the habit of speaking it, he was sure she had not forgotten it. He accordingly made some remark to her in that language, and she answered with the greatest facility. The old lady now seemed perfectly delighted, and told the doctor that it did her heart good to hear him, as it put her in mind of old times, and that she hoped he would occasionally call and see her, and they would talk together in French.

Although the doctor had hitherto conversed with the old lady principally for the purpose of smoothing the way to his making inquiries respecting her daughter's family, he now found himself as much interested in days long gone by as the old lady herself. Among other questions he asked her was, why he never saw her in the chapel in John Street. He hoped that she had not forgotten it.

“Indeed I have not, doctor,” she said, “and never shall. I have long wished to attend the service there on Sundays; but it is so far off, and my rheumatism is so bad that I have hardly been able to leave the house at all, and much to my sorrow, for I hear the service is still performed there in French. Whenever I am well enough to walk, I attend the service in Spitalfields Church, but it hardly seems the same to me, although the minister is a very godly man, and often calls on me, and is very kind to me. But even now, after having been for so many years accustomed to attend places of worship where the service is performed in English, I often detect myself, when the Psalms and Lessons of the day are read, in translating the clergyman's words into the language I had been accustomed to hear them read in when I was young. My poor father was very particular in reading to us every day a portion of the Scriptures out of an old family Bible, and these have become so impressed upon my memory that they will never fade from it. Although my eyesight is now getting very bad,

I every day make a point of reading a chapter out of the same Bible. There it is," she continued, pointing to an old-fashioned large quarto book, placed on a chest of drawers in the corner of her room. "Do you remember my poor father, doctor?"

"Remember him?" said the doctor; "indeed I do. Few, if any, of those who are alive now who knew Deacon Geaussent would be likely to forget him. Never shall I forget his persevering exertions in raising the funds to erect the temple I worship in. He has been dead now many years," said the doctor reflectively; "but the memory of few who have died since his death to the present time has been more respected."

"And his was a happy end, doctor," said the old lady. "Year after year had he struggled to collect money to rebuild the little old chapel that formerly stood on the ground the new one now occupies. My poor father was the first to propose that a collection should be made for the purpose. And he went from house to house to gather money from the weavers and other members of the congregation. At first the sums he received were trifling indeed. Still he was not cast down, and he went on collecting penny upon penny, and shilling upon shilling, until the little cloud, which at first had been no bigger than the palm of a man's hand, increased to a great size, and he and his brother-workers had collected the sum of one thousand eight hundred pounds necessary for rebuilding the temple. At length it was

finished, and its dedication was fixed to take place on the first day in December, 1765, which fell on a Sunday. My poor father, though he had been confined to his bed for some months, determined to be present, although my mother and I attempted to dissuade him from so doing, saying that he was too ill to support the fatigue. He would not, however, listen to our arguments, and leaning on our arms we supported him to the temple, for I cannot call it a chapel. I was always used in my girlhood to call it a temple, and the word continually comes to my tongue almost without my knowing it. But where were you on that day, doctor? I don't remember seeing you; yet when I close my eyes I can see everything as plainly before me as at the moment it occurred."

"For a very excellent reason," said the doctor. "I was in the gallery with the musicians, playing on my bassoon."

"Ah, now I remember all about it," said Mrs. Dubosq. "I had asked your father in a whisper why you were not present, and he pointed with his thumb over his shoulder to the gallery. Well, but to return to my poor father. We got him to his seat, and the service soon after commenced. After the prayer had been offered up, we sang Guillaume Frank's cantique, '*A celui qui nous a sauvés.*' The worthy pastor, Boudillon, then entered the pulpit. How all eyes were fixed upon the celebrated man, and with what expectation we listened for his text!"

“Do you remember what the text was?” inquired the doctor, fully persuaded that she did, but wishing for his own ends to give her an opportunity of exercising her memory, of which he knew her to be not a little proud.

“Remember it?” replied the old lady; “indeed I do. It was from the twentieth chapter of Exodus, and the twenty-fourth verse: ‘*En tout lieu où je mettrai la mémoire de mon nom, je viendrai à toi et je te bénirai.*’ And he then went on to explain how the Lord brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage; and how a century ago He had conducted in safety so many of His children out of the house of bondage into a land where they would be allowed to worship God with all humility and with perfect security.”

“Excellent,” said the doctor. “At any rate in your case it is evident that the seed did not fall upon stony ground. It must have been a happy day for you, Mrs. Dubosq, to have left so vivid an impression on your memory.”

“It was a happy and a sorrowful day for me, doctor,” said the widow.

“How so?”

“My poor old father, Deacon Geaussent, was so overcome by the length of the service, that it was with the greatest difficulty we could get him home. As soon as he had entered his room he asked us to lead him to the bedside, when, going down on his knees, and joining

his hands in prayer, he raised his eyes to heaven and said, '*Seigneur, tu laisses maintenant aller ton serviteur en paix, selon ta parole; car mes yeux ont vu ton salut.*'* His prayer was heard and answered. When we lifted him from his knees, he said to us, 'Help me into my bed, my dears.' We did so, and in a few minutes afterwards he fell asleep to awake an angel in heaven."

Here the poor old lady's emotion became very great, and she had evidently much difficulty in restraining her tears. Seeing the melancholy frame of mind she was in, the doctor resolved to change the conversation to some more pleasing subject.

"I think I remember, Mrs. Dubosq," he said, "another circumstance which took place in the new temple, and which doubtless is as fresh in your memory as those you have mentioned. About two years after the dedication, a certain lady of my acquaintance, immediately after she had been married in Bethnal Green Church, returned with her husband to the temple, where the pastor offered up prayers to heaven that a blessing might fall on their union. You were present on the occasion if I am not mistaken," said the doctor, noticing a smile gather on the old lady's countenance.

"I was indeed, doctor," she said: "much both of joy and sorrow have I seen since. Things went on smoothly enough with us during my poor husband's time, but after

* St. Luke ii. 29, 30.

his death they changed terribly with me for the worse. I was left a widow with two daughters, one sixteen and the other fourteen years of age. I gave them both as good an education as I could afford, and, knowing that idleness is the root of all evil, I taught them both to work at the loom. By industry and perseverance we managed to live in comfort and respectability. When Matilda, the eldest, was about eighteen years of age, she married a young man of the name of Lambert, the son of very respectable but proud parents, who were so disgusted at the idea of his having married a weaver's daughter (though if they had gone a little into her father's history they would have found that their daughter-in-law had as good blood in her veins as any they could boast of) that they refused to be acquainted with her, nor, although they were very wealthy, would they assist their own son in any way. He managed, however, to get an appointment in a merchant's house, where he received a salary sufficient to maintain them, and but a very trifle more. They took lodgings in the City Road, where I used from time to time to visit them. And then my youngest daughter fell in love with a weaver, and they went to live in Coventry, where I soon afterwards joined them; and," she continued, the tears coming into her eyes as she spoke, "an unhappy time she's had of it."

Finding that Mrs. Dubosq was inclined to be communicative, the doctor questioned her on her daughter

Maria's marriage. The old lady now talked on fluently enough. She told him that Waldron had not a single good quality, but that Maria was not altogether blameless in the affair. Before she married him she had been told by all her friends what a lazy dissipated character he was, but, fascinated by his good looks and winning tongue, she would have him, to the great sorrow of all who knew her. Mrs. Dubosq had remained with them in Coventry for some years ; but, although she had worked hard at the loom, and was no expense to him, the life he had led her was such that she had returned to London to live with her other daughter, Mrs. Lambert, then a widow with one child, who, unfortunately, was blind. She went on to say that Waldron was a drunkard and a thief, that to supply himself with drink he had on more than one occasion stolen the silk which had been given him to weave, the value of which his wife had to make up by her own extra labour. He had, moreover, often pawned the clothes both of his wife and children, leaving them with barely sufficient for decent covering. She also said that he had been the death of one of his children, a girl about five years old, by setting fire to the curtains of the bed in which she was sleeping—he being intoxicated at the time. Although a thief, he had always had sufficient cunning to escape from punishment, aided in no small degree by the exertions of his wife. She further added that on one occasion, about three months before Maria's arrival in London, he had been sentenced to

six months' imprisonment for being the ringleader in an attack on the house of a manufacturer in consequence of some trade dispute. His term of incarceration having expired, he joined his wife in London, and they took the room in Fleur-de-lis Street where they were then living.

Her daughter's conduct, according to the description given by Mrs. Dubosq, formed a singular contrast to that of her son-in-law. She described Maria as a patient, much-enduring wife, who, in spite of all the ill-treatment she had received, was tenderly attached to her husband and son. It is true that when suffering under the effects of his brutal conduct, she had frequently resolved to leave him ; but he had always had sufficient power over her to make her change her resolution, and she had suffered on, concealing as much as possible from the eyes of the world her miseries and misfortunes.

"Poor thing," said the doctor, "she seems indeed to have had a hard time of it ; but now that her boy is growing older, and will be able to make himself useful, he will soon be a relief to her ; and the death of the poor baby, although it must be a great sorrow to her for a time, will soon be lightened when she reflects on the state of happiness it is at present in, and the life of misery it would have endured under its brutal father."

Mrs. Dubosq for some moments gazed at the doctor with an expression of intense astonishment on her countenance. "Do I understand you to say that the

baby is dead," she said, "and that Maria has told me nothing about it? Perhaps, after all," she continued, "it was to spare my feelings till her first burst of sorrow was over that she has not called upon me this morning."

"Doubtless that was the case," said the doctor.

"But how did you know of it?" inquired Mrs. Dubosq.

The doctor then narrated to her all that had taken place the evening before, including the visit of Waldron, his having stolen the money from the teacup, his unfeeling conduct to his wife in her deep sorrow at the baby's death, and every other circumstance which took place on the occasion. "Do not imagine," he concluded, "that it is from any feeling of neglect towards you, that she has not visited you this morning. If you had seen the state of sorrow and desolation she was in when I parted from her at midnight, you might easily imagine she will hardly be in spirits to leave the house so soon afterwards."

"Oh, I acquit her of any feeling of the kind," said Mrs. Dubosq, crying. "But what will the poor thing do without a shilling in the house even to buy bread with, let alone sufficient to bury the poor baby? for Maria has that feeling of pride about her, that the idea of its being buried by the parish would, I am sure, break her heart."

"Well, well," said the doctor kindly, "let us see

what we can do for her. I will call on her at once and let her have a few shillings to go on with ; which," he continued, his habitual prudence getting the better of him for the moment, "she can pay me back again when circumstances are easier with her. About the funeral of the child I don't know what to say ; possibly something may turn up we don't calculate on at the present time. Now, before I go, I want you to let me see that old Bible of yours, for I have a great love for old books."

The doctor now went to the chest of drawers and opened the Bible, which proved to be one which had been printed in Geneva about the year 1680. The only things which appeared particularly interesting to him about it were the two fly leaves at the commencement and the end, which, as was common at that time, had been nearly filled with writing respecting the births, deaths, and marriages of the Geaussent family, not only while in France, but also since their arrival in England. Some of the latter entries were in the widow Dubosq's own handwriting.

"Mrs. Dubosq," said the doctor, "I envy you that Bible, especially for the memorials of your family to be found in it. As it is, perhaps I may ask you to lend it to me some day for the purpose of making extracts from it, to add to my collection of memorials of Huguenot families who had taken shelter in Bethnal Green."

"I will lend it to you with pleasure, doctor," she said, "when you want it ; but you must not keep it long,

as I should feel lost without it. I should be ungrateful indeed, if I did not love it," she continued, "for it has proved to me more valuable than anything I ever possessed in my life, and my father held it in as much respect before me. We brought it with us from Normandy, when we made our escape from France; and we had great difficulty in preserving it, I assure you; for I remember everything concerning it, child as I was at the time. We lived about six miles from Rouen, at Pont Brique. An order had been given by the Government that all houses should be searched, and that any Protestant Bibles that were found in them should be burnt. Fortunately, however, we always contrived to hide it. And then the persecution became hotter, till at length it was insupportable, and my father determined that we should emigrate to England. For this purpose he went to Dieppe to hire a boat, and told us to follow him there the ensuing week, giving us the address of a Huguenot fisherman, at whose house we should find him. He also gave us strict orders that we should bring the Bible with us. We obeyed him, and I fully believe, although my poor father was always silent on the subject when we mentioned it to him, it protected us on the road, for neither my mother nor myself experienced the slightest difficulty in finding my father. The following night, carrying the Bible with us, we went on board the boat, and after a somewhat stormy passage arrived safely in England.

“That Bible,” continued Mrs. Dubosq, “has always been a friend to me in my need. It taught me always to be thankful to God for the mercies and blessings He had bestowed upon me, and it has strengthened me in all my misfortunes. Sometimes it almost seems to speak to me, even when it is closed ; and often, when in doubt or difficulty I knew not what course to take, I have opened it at hazard, and placed my finger on some text, which generally on reading it gave me an answer to my inquiry, directing me in the right way. My two girls, when young, held it in as much respect as I did myself. When I suspected any attempt at prevarication in them, in excuse for some childish fault they had committed, I had but to direct their eyes to that book, and I was certain that the truth would be told me.

“A year ago, when I was living in the City Road with my poor daughter Matilda, who was then in a deep decline, we received intelligence that the villain Waldron had been imprisoned, and that poor Maria and her boy were left utterly destitute, without one shilling to put upon another. I then resolved with the little money I had—it was only three pounds—to go down to Coventry and bring her back with me. After I had packed up my bundle, and was on the point of leaving the house, my glance fell on that Bible, and it seemed to advise me not to go. I looked at it for some moments, and the impression became so strong, that I resolved to remain a

little longer and seek for guidance in the matter. I then opened the Bible, and placed my finger on a text, but it gave no answer to my inquiry. I now determined to pray for advice, and remained on my knees for some minutes, but without success; for when I arose I was as undecided as before. In this state of mind I continued for nearly an hour; and each time I thought of leaving the house that Bible seemed to be an impediment put in my way. And then I heard some one below entering the house, and my daughter's voice in loud conversation. I now hurried downstairs, and there I beheld my daughter Maria and her poor boy, both almost in rags, wearied, half-starved, and travel-stained. They had just arrived from Coventry, having made their journey to London on foot. Having but a few shillings with them when they quitted their home, they were unable to obtain any conveyance on the road. To this day, doctor, I am fully convinced it was that Bible which kept me from leaving the house, when I should have missed them, and taken my journey uselessly."

The doctor, without passing any remarks on Mrs. Dubosq's narrative, once more bade her good-bye for the purpose of visiting her daughter.

"Before you go, doctor," she said, "do me one little favour. Open the Bible and put your finger on a text, and let me hear what it says to you."

The doctor, to humour the old lady, opened the Bible, and his finger fell on Proverbs xix. 17: "*Celui*

qui a pitié du pauvre, prête à l'Eternel, et il lui rendra son bienfait."

"That is all very consoling, Mrs. Dubosq," said the doctor; "but in the present case it hardly applies to me, for I am only paying off a small instalment of many benefits I have received."

So saying, he left the house.



CHAPTER IV.

THE FUNERAL.

ALTHOUGH the doctor had as profound a reverence for the Holy Scriptures as Mrs. Dubosq herself, he did not believe that the fact of any particular text being in accordance with the reader's thoughts at the moment, showed that it was directly intended for their especial case. True, he did not object to the custom of placing the finger at hazard on any particular verse, and accepting its meaning as a special intervention of the Deity in behalf of the individual reading it; but, after all, the doctor's acquiescence in the practice might rather be attributed to the fact that, being of French Protestant descent,—the persecuted in the Cevennes and other districts in France using it as a solace in their troubles,—he respected the custom, as he did every other of Huguenot origin. At the same time it must be admitted that, unknown to himself, the text Mrs. Dubosq had brought

under his notice had a powerful effect upon him, and he was more than ever determined to act energetically in behalf of Mrs. Waldron and her family, provided he could do so without mixing himself up too much in the affairs of her husband.

On his arrival at her house he found her at home with the boy and the blind girl. The corpse of the baby had been laid out decently on the bed. Scraps of black silk and crape, which had evidently been contributed by the other lodgers, were spread out on the table, at which Mrs. Waldron was seated with her bonnet in her lap, endeavouring to fit a pair of black strings upon it. On seeing the doctor she rose to receive him.

"I have called," he said, with great kindness in his tone, "to see if I can be of any use to you this morning."

"Thank you, sir," said the poor woman, "I don't know of anything. It's very kind of you all the same. I shall never forget your behaviour to me last night. A feeling word goes a great way with me, sir, I can assure you."

Here she stopped, and the doctor, noticing that her lower lip trembled, easily foresaw that this prognosticated a flood of tears ; so to prevent it, he said :

"Not at all obliged to me. I merely did my duty as a medical man, nothing more." Then looking at her earnestly, he continued (the text which, at leaving, Mrs. Dubosq pointed out to him possibly crossing his mind at the time), "Are you quite sure I can do nothing more to assist you ?"

Mrs. Waldron glanced at him for a moment, and, noticing his benevolent expression of countenance, took courage. "There is but one thing I know of, sir," she said in a gentle tone. Then, after remaining a short time silent, she continued, with an earnestness which fully told that she was driven to despair, "I have not a penny in the house even to buy a morsel of bread."

"I feared as much," said the doctor, as he placed a few shillings in her hand. "At any rate there is enough there to last you for a day or two." Then rapidly breaking the thread of their conversation, he continued, "When and where do you intend to bury your baby?"

"I have hardly had time to think about it, sir. I suppose it will be in Shoreditch churchyard. I will make inquiries to-day."

The doctor now entered into some conversation with her about the blind girl, whose eyes he examined with great attention. Mrs. Waldron told him she was the daughter of her sister—a widow—who had died the year before. After conversing a short time longer about the poor girl, whom he regarded with great interest, evidently thinking the while on some other subject totally unconnected with Mrs. Waldron, he turned suddenly round, and calling the boy to him, looked at him attentively without uttering a word, possibly admiring his beauty, for he was a remarkably handsome child. Mrs. Waldron was evidently flattered at the notice the doctor had taken of Edgar, and drew her fingers through his hair, turning

it aside so as to allow his well-shaped brow to be seen to better advantage. She told the doctor that he was as good a boy as ever woman had ; she only hoped to live to see him grow up an honest and industrious man. The doctor inquired what school he went to, and heard with great regret that he had never even been taught his letters. " All that will be changed now, sir," she exclaimed with marked emphasis in her tone ; " as soon as I have had time to look about me, the first thing I shall do will be to find him a school."

The doctor complimented her upon her resolution, and after advising her to inform her mother without delay of the death of the baby, he left Mrs. Waldron to continue her occupation. On descending the staircase, he rapped at the door of the room occupied by the Irish tailor, with whose wife he left a message, requesting Terence, if he was not too tired when he returned home from work, to call on him in the evening.

Having now finished his charitable labour, the doctor proceeded to the ordinary duties of the day, during which nothing occurred worthy of the reader's notice. He returned home in the evening somewhat earlier than usual in order to receive the Irish tailor when he should call. Nor had he long to wait. No sooner had the Irishman reached home and heard that the doctor wished to see him, than he started off.

" I want you," said the doctor, " to assist me in getting Mrs. Waldron and her family out of trouble."

“I’ll do anything I can to help her,” said the Irishman ; “but that’s little enough, beyond my prayers and good wishes.”

“I’m not so certain about that,” said the doctor. “I think it’s possible that, if we both set our shoulders to the wheel, we may get her out of her difficulties after all. How is she this evening? Does she seem more resigned to her loss?”

“Sorrow a bit, your honour,” replied the tailor ; “the poor woman was taking on terribly when I came away. It’s not much to be wondered at, after all, for it’s a mighty indignity for the like of her.”

“To what indignity do you allude?” inquired the doctor, expecting, though without any good reason, that Waldron had put the blind girl in the workhouse, as he had threatened to do the night before.

“Sure, that her child should be buried by the parish. That’s indignity enough, I should think, for any respectable woman.”

The doctor possibly did not think so. But at the same time he could not help respecting the dislike the poor have that any of their relatives should be dishonoured by a pauper’s funeral.

The doctor remained for some moments silent, evidently undecided what to do. His heart told him to take upon himself the expenses of the funeral, while his rigid economy whispered in his ear that the ceremony might be performed in quite as decent a manner by the

parish undertaker. At last he asked Terence how much a child's funeral would cost.

"Well, yer honour, it might be done genteelly enough for two pounds," said Terence, "barring the wake."

"Barring the wake," said the doctor; "what do you mean?"

"Sure, yer honour, the liquor and refreshments for the mourners."

The doctor, although he had but little experience of the manners of the poor Irish residents in the metropolis (few of them in that day living in the district of Spitalfields), now understood the tailor's meaning, and expressed himself thoroughly averse to the idea of "a wake." In this he was not only actuated by his own strict notions of sobriety, but also by the remembrance that it was an Irish Roman Catholic custom. Indeed, so strongly did he express himself, that the Irishman, forgetting the respect due to the doctor, said somewhat angrily:

"Sure, yer honour, it would not be a dacent burryin' without a wake. Why it would be more respectable to have a parish burryin' with a wake, than a paid burryin' without one."

"Now tell me," asked the doctor, "if I were disposed to pay for the funeral, could you find me an undertaker who would perform it for two pounds?"

"Sure I would, and with great pleasure, and the blessing of the Holy Virgin be on you for your kindness.

At the same time——” and here Terence suddenly stopped short.

“Go on,” said the doctor.

“At the same time, if I could get it done for a trifle less, would you mind letting the money I save go for a wake?”

“Now listen, my good fellow,” said the doctor, his Huguenot blood firing up at the idea: “either get the funeral carried out without any idolatrous or Papist abominations of any kind, or let me find somebody else to do it; whichever you like best, only don’t speak to me again about a wake.”

“I beg yer honour’s pardon. I didn’t mean to anger you,” said the tailor. “Sure, if you pay for the burryin’, you’ve a right to see it done in the way you like best.”

“One word more,” said the doctor, seeing that the Irishman was preparing to go: “has Waldron been to see his wife to-day?”

“No, he hasn’t; and there’s small chance of his coming.”

“Why so?” inquired the doctor.

“For more reasons than one. In the first place, he knows his wife would be asking him for the money he stole from her; and, in the next, I suspect he’s laying a trap to get himself into trouble, and blessed be the Virgin if he succeeds.”

“What do you mean?”

“Them weavers is all in a fomentation about some French hands coming in, who they are afraid will under-work them, that is, for less wages; and they are threatening to attack some of the masters’ houses likely to employ them. Waldron is one of the chiefs among the English party, and so he’s most likely to get himself into trouble. The saints be praised if he’s caught, for his wife and children will be quit of him for some time, at any rate.”

Possibly the doctor’s thoughts were in harmony with the tailor’s. He made no remark, however, on the subject, but merely requested him to send the undertaker to him the next morning. Terence then left the house.

The doctor now entered the sitting-room, and, drawing his chair to the table, was about to partake of the supper which Bridget had prepared for him, when the shop-bell again rang, and some one entered. With a look of vexation, the doctor lifted the candle from the table, and went to see who it might be. To his great surprise he found that his friend Terence had come back. He said to him in a wheedling tone :

“Sure I hope your honour will not be angry with me for what I’m going to say, but if you don’t like paying towards the wake yourself, I would like to give something of my own towards it just to show a proper respect to the poor——”

“No !” roared the doctor, in a tone that perfectly

terrified Bridget, who was accustomed to his habitually placid temper. "A thousand times, No ! and if you say a word more about it I'll never speak to you again."

"Sure, if you must have your own way you must," said the Irishman sulkily, "so good-night.—He's a mighty ignorant brute, the doctor, after all," he continued, as soon as he was fairly out in the street again. "He's a mighty ignorant brute, and don't understand gentility at all. The disgrace, however, will be upon his own head and not on mine, that's one good thing."

The next morning, before Dr. D'Aubigny left the house, the undertaker called, and it was agreed between them that he (the doctor) should be answerable for the funeral expenses of the child, providing they did not exceed two pounds. As the undertaker was upon the point of leaving the shop, the doctor asked him if he had seen Mrs. Waldron.

"No, sir ; I intend to call on her on my way home."

"If you see her," said the doctor, "and if she should ask you who authorized you to call, tell her that I did, and that I will be security for the expenses. But mind you lay particular emphasis on the word 'security,' for although I should never think of making the poor woman repay me a shilling of the amount, yet I shall certainly get it from her husband if I can."

"Well, doctor, I will follow your instructions to the letter," the undertaker replied ; "but you will never get a shilling of the money if you apply for it yourself. I'll

tell you what I think will be the better plan. Unless you particularly wish the poor woman to know that you have made yourself answerable for the expenses, I will tell the Irishman to keep it a secret as well. I have a much better chance of getting the money from the husband than you have, as he will be much more afraid of me than of you."

The undertaker's suggestion fell in admirably with the doctor's views. He was one of those who, when they do good by stealth, "blush to find it fame." Besides, if such an act were talked about, it might be a bad precedent, as others, in equally impoverished circumstances, might expect him to be equally liberal. Now the whole transaction would be kept in the dark, and not only would he be safe from that danger, but he would be able to avoid what he somewhat dreaded—the thanks of the poor woman for the mark of respect he had paid to her child.

Two days afterwards the funeral took place. The body of the infant was followed to the grave by its mother and her son, who again were followed at a distance by the tailor, in order that he might be able to give a faithful report of the proceedings to the doctor, which he did in the evening. The next day the undertaker's bill was settled, he promising—though with but faint hopes of success—that he would apply to Waldron for the money as soon as he should be in work again. Whether Mrs. Waldron was ever aware of the doctor's

kindness is uncertain. But if it did reach her ears, she had sufficient tact not to mention it to him, and the doctor had the satisfaction of believing that his act of charity had remained, as he had wished, unknown to all but the undertaker and Terence Mulligan.

On the day after the funeral Dr. D'Aubigny called on Mrs. Waldron, his ostensible reason being again to examine the eyes of the blind girl, and ascertain if anything could be done to cure her ; but his object really was to find out what condition the poor woman was in, as well as to hear whether her husband had returned to his family since the child's death. On the latter point he skilfully drew from Mrs. Waldron that her husband had not made his appearance since that event, and also that it was her firm determination to separate from him. As soon as she could get a little money, she said, she should remove to another room and maintain herself and her children by her own industry. Of the present state of her finances Mrs. Waldron gave a most despairing account. She had only a few pence left of the trifle the doctor had given her, nor had she anything on which she could raise a shilling. Neither had she any prospect of work, as the firm in Spital Square by whom she was generally employed had been discontented with the piece she had last finished in consequence of a spot of grease having fallen on it. At first they had threatened to deduct something from the amount due to her in payment for

the damage she had done ; but on her assuring them that she had been obliged to work so late that she had almost fallen asleep, and that when she arose from the loom a drop of grease had accidentally fallen from the candle she held in her hand as she was spreading the cloth over the silk to keep it from the dust, the firm, Messrs. Barbet and Beuzeville, made no deduction, but, knowing the reputation of her husband, declined to give her any other work.

She was now fairly puzzled what to do. Fortunately the doctor was acquainted with the senior partner of the firm, and he kindly offered to act as mediator. He immediately went to the house of business, and finding Mr. Barbet at home he explained to him the object of his visit and begged he would give the poor woman some work.

“Well, doctor,” said Mr. Barbet, “I would do a great deal to oblige you ; but, to tell you the truth, she brought home her last work so much damaged that in all probability we shall sustain a considerable loss by it. Besides that, I have not the slightest faith in her husband. I believe him to be about as great a scoundrel as there is in the neighbourhood, and I am always in fear when we let them have any work that he will steal or pawn it. The poor woman is certainly very much to be pitied ; but still, you know, we must keep to the rules of business.”

“That I grant,” said the doctor, laughing ; “but it is

not a matter of business that I came to speak to you about, it is one of charity—it is to assist a poor woman and her child.”

“Charity begins at home, doctor,” said Mr. Barbet. “I must be just to my own children before I’m generous to others.”

“Mrs. Waldron hardly agrees with your philosophy,” said the doctor.

“How so?”

“Poor as she and her child are, she is reckless enough to indulge in the luxury of charity. She has taken under her protection a blind orphan girl, still poorer, if possible, than herself. She feeds and clothes her, and that to her own detriment and that of her son.”

Mr. Barbet looked puzzled for a moment, and then said, “Doctor, you have conquered. Send the poor woman here, and we will give her some work; but remember this, if we get into any trouble about it you must never ask us again to entrust her with even a bobbin of silk.”

“That I promise,” said the doctor.

“Well, then, good-bye,” said Mr. Barbet, shaking the doctor’s hand warmly. “I am very busy this morning. Send Mrs. Waldron here, and we will try her again.”

The doctor, without delay, called on his *protégée*, and told her to go to the manufacturers, when they would give her some work. This she gladly did, and when

the doctor called on her the next day, he had the satisfaction of seeing Mrs. Waldron seated at the loom busily at work, and evidently in much better spirits than he had found her on the day before.

Having now found occupation for Mrs. Waldron, he determined not to visit her again for some days, just to see if she would keep to her resolution not to live with her husband again. If so, he intended to take her son Edgar, in whom he felt much interested, under his personal protection.



CHAPTER V.

A TRADE DISPUTE.

THE next few days passed without anything occurring particularly worthy of remark. Mrs. Waldron kept steadily at her work, and her mind was far more at ease than it had been for some months past. Possibly she may have been puzzled at the non-appearance of her husband; but if so, she did not speak of it even to her mother, whom she now daily visited, if only for a few minutes. One morning, about a week after the funeral, the doctor called at the almshouse and had a long and friendly conversation with Mrs. Dubosq, who was evidently grateful for his visit, imagining that it was wholly and solely from the interest he took in her and her complaints, while, in fact, his principal object, on this occasion at least, was to draw from her some news respecting her daughter. In the course of conversation, Mrs. Dubosq mentioned that she had advised Maria not to

leave the house, much as she was pleased to see her, until the cold weather had subsided (there had been a long succession of easterly winds), as she was not strong and caught cold easily.

“I told her, sir,” the old lady continued, “that it was very wrong of her to expose either herself or her children to such weather as this, seeing that they have no clothes to protect themselves against it. That fellow has pawned or sold everything they have got except what they stand upright in. And then there’s that dear little boy,—why, she ought not to let him go out of the house, delicate as he is, till the warm weather comes on, for he’s very weakly. In November he had such a cough, I was afraid he would never get over it. If anything happened to that boy it would break my heart, for a kinder or more affectionate little fellow I never met with. It does one good to see how dutiful he is to his mother, and the care he takes of that blind girl. Why, my daughter can leave Mary under his care as safely, when she goes out on an errand, as if she were at home herself.”

The doctor listened with some pain to the condition of Mrs. Waldron’s wardrobe, but he entertained no thoughts of assisting her to supply the deficiencies. Possibly he considered that she was partly to blame in the matter, as respectable women of the poorer classes, who have drunken husbands, are generally very determined in keeping from them, if not their own clothes, certainly those belonging to their children; and he con-

sidered, and with good reason, that Mrs. Waldron had probably been wrong in not showing more determination. But if she could not herself claim his pity for her own want of clothes during the cold weather, the case was different with her boy. He at any rate had not been to blame. Again, there was the poor blind girl in whom he felt so much interest ; her case ought also to be considered. But here the remembrance of the pity Mrs. Waldron had shown her neutralized to a considerable extent the feeling he for the moment had conceived against her for allowing her husband to rob the children of their clothes.

On leaving Mrs. Dubosq, the doctor stood for some time at the corner of Fleur-de-lis Street, being fairly puzzled what to do. He wished to visit Mrs. Waldron. His heart yearned to assist her, but prudence whispered to him that it was folly in him to take the troubles of another man's family upon himself, and that he had better keep his money in his pocket. The thought then crossed his mind, that as he had no family of his own, and had some moderate means, why should he be debarred the pleasure of assisting a poor woman, and her children, when he could do so without feeling the loss of the money? He was still undecided, when Mrs. Dubosq's statement, that the boy had lately suffered from a severe cough, came to his mind, and he also remembered to have heard the child cough slightly during his last visit. At last he resolved to call on Mrs. Waldron,

if only to see in what state the children were, and in case he found they were as deficient in clothing as Mrs. Dubosq had stated, he would leave sufficient money with her daughter to purchase them flannel waistcoats, warm stockings, and a new pair of shoes for each.

Having decided upon this course of action, Dr. D'Aubigny at once directed his steps towards Mrs. Waldron's house. He found her seated at the loom, busily at work, but neither her son nor the blind girl was there. Mrs. Waldron rose when she saw the doctor enter, and placed a chair for him by the fire.

"Where is Edgar?" was his first question.

"I have sent him and Mary out on an errand into the High Street," said Mrs. Waldron, "but I expect them home in a few minutes."

"Are you not afraid of their catching cold in this severe weather?"

"Well, sir, I certainly am," was Mrs. Waldron's reply; "but what am I to do? If I were to leave the loom, I should only lose time, and that I can't afford. Besides, Edgar was very anxious to have a walk, and as Mary had not been outside the door since the day before the poor baby's funeral, I thought she might as well go with him."

"I hope they are both well wrapped up?" said the doctor, putting a leading question.

"I am sorry to say, sir, that with the exception of the bonnet and cap on their heads, they've nothing more

to wear when they go out than when they are in the house. But with the first money I receive it shall be otherwise. Before I lay out a penny on myself, I'll take good care that the children have what they want."

The doctor complimented her on her determination, and remained chatting with her for a few minutes, when the children entered the room. The first glance he cast on them told all: they were not adequately clad to resist the severity of the season. Edgar was in a still worse condition than the girl. The poor lad was very thinly and scantily dressed. His clothes, though well patched and mended, were miserably threadbare, his shoes out of repair, and his feet stockingless. His face was pale, and there was that bluish tinge over it which so clearly shows the want of sufficient vital stamina to resist the action of the cold. She had been able, from the scanty remains of her own dress, to make up some clothing for the poor girl; but with the exception of the shirt the boy wore, she had no material of which she could make clothes for him. His unworthy father, when his own clothes were of no further use to him, invariably disposed of them, even when no more could be got for them than a glass of gin.

The doctor called little Edgar to him, and while conversing kindly with him, took the opportunity of feeling the child's arms and shoulder-blades. The latter were very prominent, while the former seemed hardly to have sufficient flesh to cover the bones. He then opened the

boy's shirt-front, and, placing his hand over the region of the heart, carefully felt its pulsation. Then he steadily gazed into his face, which showed a lamentable deficiency in strength of constitution, while the brilliant clearness of his eye, and the general expression of his countenance, taught the man of science that if the seeds of consumption had not germinated, they were at least already sown. He saw full well that the only way to save the boy's life would be to give him good nourishment, and clothe him warmly. Rising from his chair, he advanced towards Mrs. Waldron, and told her that the boy ought to be better fed and clad.

"I am well aware of that, sir," she said; "but what am I to do? I promise you again that as soon as I have a little money—which, however, will not be till I have finished the work on the loom—I will take care that he has a warm suit, and that he shall be better fed; and I can say no more."

"Suppose," said the doctor, "that I were to advance you a guinea to buy the children good shoes, warm stockings, and flannel waistcoats, will you get these for them, and devote the remainder to find them in food?"

"Most certainly, and I should feel very grateful to you for your kindness."

"But understand me," said the doctor, his habitual prudence getting the better of his feelings, "I shall expect you to ask Mr. Barbet's cashier to deduct the

amount from your wages when you take home the work, for I cannot afford to lose it."

"I will not fail to tell him the first time I leave the house," said Mrs. Waldron. And then in a tone in which regret was discernible, and which the doctor noticed, she continued, "And even if I did not give him the order to do so, I hope you do not imagine that I am such a woman as to let you go without your money. I would starve sooner than not repay you, or not lay out the guinea as you require."

The doctor, although somewhat annoyed with himself at Mrs. Waldron's remark, made no observation on it; but after a little more conversation on general subjects he left her, and hurried off to see some patients who resided in a distant part of Bethnal Green. As soon as he had closed the door after him, Mrs. Waldron, when seating herself at the loom, muttered to herself somewhat angrily, "He's a kind-hearted man after all, but he spoils a good action by the way he does it. He had no right to doubt me. I would rather walk barefooted from here to his house every day, than that he should lose a farthing by me." She continued in this state of mind for some short time, when a stout, respectable-looking man suddenly, and without knocking, entered her room. Greatly surprised, she rose from the loom and asked him what he wanted.

"Oh, I only want to speak to my friend Waldron for

a moment," he said, looking inquisitively round the room. "Is he not at home?"

"No, he is not," said Mrs. Waldron, somewhat shortly, as she bore little love to any of her husband's friends — few of whom she even knew by sight.

"No matter," said the man, unbuttoning his great-coat, and showing beneath it a blue coat with metal buttons and a red waistcoat; "no matter, I'll wait till he comes back."

And he then seated himself in the chair by the fire lately vacated by the doctor. Stretching out his legs, he placed the oaken cudgel he carried between them with the point on the floor, and then, folding his hands on the top of it, leaned his chin upon them, evidently intending to show a dogged determination not to leave the room until he had seen his friend. Mrs. Waldron again seated herself at the loom, and continued her work, no conversation for some time passing between them. At last the idea crossed her mind that her visitor was not of the weaver class, though he was evidently no gentleman, and from time to time she glanced furtively at him. Although he remained in the same position, with his chin leaning on his hands, she could perceive that his eyes were minutely examining every corner of the room. Mrs. Waldron was the first to break silence.

"Unless you are certain my husband is coming

home," she said, "I think there is hardly any use in your waiting."

"But I saw him just now," said the man, "and he told me he'd be here almost as soon as I was; and if I'm not disturbing you I'd rather wait."

"Please yourself," she said, and continued her work.

The stranger now quitted his chair and advanced towards the children, with whom he entered freely into conversation. Mrs. Waldron, however, could not help entertaining a certain suspicion of the man; and from time to time watched him attentively. Presently, while joking and playing with the children, he caught up Edgar and threw him on the bed; but while pretending to prevent the boy from leaving it, Mrs. Waldron noticed him pressing his hand on different parts of the coverlid, as if searching for something. Presently, releasing Edgar, he advanced towards Mrs. Waldron, and said:

"Is this the only room you have? It's rather small for four people."

"It is," said Mrs. Waldron; "but we are too poor to rent any more."

"It's a convenient room after all," said the man, going to the cupboard, which he quietly opened, and examined its contents.

Mrs. Waldron's housewifely feelings fired up at this impertinence. In circumstances such as hers she wanted no stranger to spy out the poverty of the land. Rising from her seat, she said in a tone of strong indignation:

“You are no gentleman, sir, or you wouldn't behave in that manner.”

“Nobody ever said I was,” the man replied coolly ; “but I'll tell you what I am. I am a Bow Street officer, and I've come here with a search warrant for some goods which have been stolen from Barbet & Beuzeville. Now we know each other, so you may as well let me go on with my search quietly.”

Poor Mrs. Waldron, nearly fainting, sank on the chair near the loom, and offered no opposition, while the man went quietly on with his search. Presently somewhat recovering herself, she told him that she had never heard they had lost any goods, and if they had, why should they suspect her or her husband of having stolen them? The silk on the loom was theirs, and they had given it to her to work up. There was not a farthing's worth of their property besides in the place, and it was shameful of them to make a charge of the kind—and here she burst into a flood of tears.

“I didn't say, my good woman,” replied the man kindly, but continuing the search the while, “that they suspected you in the matter, but for all that I believe that your husband is in for it. There doesn't appear to be anything here belonging to them, I admit ; but I shall stop here till he comes home, sorry as I may be to put you to any trouble.”

“But you told me you saw him a few minutes ago.”

“That was all gammon,” said the officer. “If I’d seen him I should have collared him, that’s certain.”

“You may stay as long as you like,” said Mrs. Waldron; “though I don’t think you’ll see him. He’s not been home for some days past, and I don’t know where he is.”

The officer for a moment looked somewhat puzzled; however, he said he would sit down and take his chance. Mrs. Waldron was too much overcome at the intelligence to go on with her work at the loom, and she paced to and fro, crying bitterly. Presently the officer rose from his chair, and, taking up his hat, said he must leave her for a short time, but would probably be back in a few moments. He then left her, and, tapping at Terence Mulligan’s door, inquired of his wife how long it had been since she had seen Waldron; and he received for reply that she had seen nothing of him for some days past,—in fact, she believed he had deserted his wife. The officer now made inquiries of the lodger on the ground-floor, and received the same reply. He also inquired of two or three of the neighbours, who confirmed the statements he had already heard. He now gave up the idea of going back to Mrs. Waldron, and quitting the street, she saw him no more.

Dr. D’Aubigny, who of course had heard nothing of the scene at Mrs. Waldron’s, was quietly enjoying his pipe in the evening, seated on one side of the fire, with Bridget Mahoney, industriously employed with

her needle, on the other, when the bell at the shop-door rang, and some one entered. Bridget opened the door of communication to see who the visitor might be, and found it was no other than Terence Mulligan, who, in a state of great excitement, requested an interview with her master. Dr. D'Aubigny immediately rose from his chair, went into the shop, and there found the Irishman in so agitated a state that, for some time, the doctor had considerable difficulty in understanding him. At length, when somewhat calmer, he informed him that the evening before, in consequence of the foreman at Barbet & Beuzeville's having given out some work to a Frenchman lately arrived in England, a party of about a dozen English weavers, with a whole host of vagabonds who did not belong to the trade, had made an attack upon the warehouse, and had not only broken the windows, but had stolen a vast quantity of valuable goods as well. He further added that Waldron was among the ringleaders, and that a warrant had been issued for his apprehension.

The doctor then inquired if Mrs. Waldron were aware of the circumstance, and if so, what effect it had upon her.

“Faith, though she hates him as the devil hates holy water, she keeps on crying, and it's curious to see her too.”

“How so?”

“Because it's evidently against her will. She has a

proper respect for herself, and tries all she can to think nothing at all about it; but the *woman* always keeps breaking out, and she can't stop it, try as she likes. So I said to my wife, 'Leave her alone, and let her cry herself out;' for sorrow, after all, is something like the fire in your grate—the harder it blazes the sooner it burns away; that is to say, if you don't put any more coals on. And so it will be with her. When once the fellow's found guilty, there'll be an end of all her sorrow. So it don't matter if she cries a little more than is wanted now."

The doctor, although he tacitly admitted the force of the Irishman's metaphor, made no remark on it, but contented himself with requesting Terence to watch narrowly all that took place, and to inform him from time to time how matters proceeded. This the Irishman promised to do, and all the more readily from a conviction that the last message he should have to bring would contain the joyful intelligence that, through the interposition of the law, his particular enemy, Mr. Waldron, would at the least be transported for life.

It would be hypocritical to say that Dr. D'Aubigny felt much sorrow at the anticipated conviction and punishment of Waldron, at any rate if he escaped with his life. At the same time he saw that the crime which the fellow had committed might lead to some difficult complications between Mrs. Waldron and her employers. It was hardly to be expected that after the leading part her husband had taken in the attack upon the house of

business, the partners would be inclined to give his wife any more work ; and theirs was about the only firm with whom he had any interest. However, he resolved that if he could help Mrs. Waldron he would, and he determined at once to call on Barbet & Beuzeville to dispel, if he could, any idea that she was implicated in the matter.

When he came in sight of the house, however, his heart sank somewhat within him, for he could not disguise from himself that the provocation the firm had received was quite sufficient to set them against any person connected with those engaged in the attack. Not a whole pane of glass remained in the windows, and some carpenters were then employed in fixing a new street-door in place of the one which the mob had destroyed. On entering the house the doctor found everything in a state of the greatest disorder. Rolls of silk had been taken from the shelves, many of them had been stolen, and others were strewed on the floor. Ribbons had been wantonly damaged, and bobbins with coloured silk, masses of raw silk, and skeins of organzine were all heaped together in the greatest confusion, and the assistants were now endeavouring to put them into order. The furniture in the counting-house and dwelling-rooms had also suffered great damage from the fury of the mob. The doctor found Mr. Barbet and his partner in the warehouse, superintending the work of restoration which was then going on.

“ Good-morning, doctor,” said Mr. Barbet, as soon as

he perceived his visitor ; “ have you come to condole with us in our trouble ? You have the reputation of being the friend of the working-man, but you have hitherto seen him only in his brighter colours. Look around you now and judge of his darker. What provocation have we given that we should be subjected to such brutality ? We have done everything in our power to increase the comfort and well-being of our workmen, and you see the reward we have got.”

“ If it is not an impertinent question,” said the doctor, “ how many looms may you employ in Spital-fields, without counting warpers and winders ? ”

“ Possibly four hundred.”

“ And of the weavers, how many do you believe were engaged in the attack upon your house ? I will engage to say not one in fifty, while the rest of the scoundrels were the offscourings of Whitechapel and the riverside population. I believe the weavers to be naturally a very honourable body of men. True they may be led away, and frequently are so, by a set of loud-tongued lying scoundrels who mislead them ; but in the end I am fully convinced that the great mass of them only desire what is fair and honest. Again, no inconsiderable portion of those you employ are women, and I can say from positive experience—and I know a great deal more about them than you do—that a better or more respectable class in their private lives cannot be found in any community in England, no matter how

elevated. Infamous as may have been the behaviour of the few Spitalfields weavers who were engaged in the attack upon your house, do you think that you are the only losers by it? Ask in what condition are their wives and families likely to be placed through the misdeeds of their husbands and fathers?"

"Well, doctor, without disputing your statement, that the women in our employ are, as a rule, very respectable," said Mr. Barbet, "I very much doubt whether any of the wives of those weavers we have caught, and shall certainly prosecute, will be any great losers by their husbands' punishment. Take, for example, the case of that poor woman Mrs. Waldron, about whom you spoke to us a few days ago. Do you think that when her husband is transported,—as I have no doubt he will be (in fact, from what he told the constable who arrested him, he considers himself in danger of being hung),—she and her family will not be benefited by his absence?"

"Is he taken then?" inquired the doctor, with considerable interest in his tone.

"Yes; he was caught this morning, and I think the neighbourhood will soon be rid of one vagabond at any rate."

"Of course you have no reason to believe that his wife was directly or indirectly implicated in her husband's crime?" inquired the doctor.

"Not in the least," said Mr. Barbet, "nor will his behaviour in any way prejudice us against her; on the

contrary, if she continues to work steadily, we shall consider it almost a duty to supply her with work, if only from our having been instrumental in the punishment of her husband."

The doctor, having satisfied himself that Mrs. Waldron was not likely to be injured in any way by her husband's misdeeds, took his leave and proceeded homewards. Though he was curious to see in what manner she bore the news of her husband's capture, he resisted the powerful temptation to call on her, as his strong gentlemanly feeling told him it would be indiscreet to do so with such a motive. He accordingly resolved not to visit her till her husband's trial was over.



CHAPTER VI.

A TERRIBLE TEMPTATION.

THE preliminary proceedings at the police court against the rioters occupied but a short time. Although fourteen had been arrested, only five were committed for trial,—among whom was Mark Waldron,—the rest being sentenced to short terms of imprisonment. Of those sent for trial, three were notorious Whitechapel thieves, not in any way connected with the silk trade, but who had joined in the attack upon the house solely for the purpose of plunder. Waldron and two others were the only weavers the police could detect who were parties in the affair; but the evidence which could be brought forward against them was all of a very serious character; in fact, if they did not prove they were innocent of sharing the plunder, it was more than possible they would be sentenced to death.

Although but a few weeks would elapse before the

trial would come on, they appeared as many months to those interested in it—prisoners and all. The doctor had determined not to visit Mrs. Waldron again until the trial was over, nor was he a man accustomed to recede from a determination he had once formed; but his anxiety, great as it was to know how matters were going on with the poor woman the day after his last interview with her, had increased enormously as each succeeding day passed over, till at last it became almost irresistible. A week before the trial was expected to come on, in fact, the doctor's determination fairly broke down, and he resolved to call on Mrs. Waldron, even though he was unable to form any plausible excuse for his visit. He found her at her loom, still occupied on the same piece of silk on which she was at work when he last saw her, and which she had obtained through his intervention with Mr. Barbet. He, moreover, noticed that a comparatively smaller portion of work had been completed than might have been expected from the time it had been upon the loom, though many yards were already finished. Mrs. Waldron, when she saw him enter, rose from her work, and, after a glance at his face, turned her eyes from him. There was a singular expression on the woman's features—a mixture of shame, sorrow, and dogged obstinacy. Her eyes were red and swollen, plainly showing that her husband's expected punishment was deeply felt by her, and that, villain though he was, and brutal as had been his treatment of her, the affection which had induced

her to accept him in spite of the advice and remonstrances of her friends had even during his worst behaviour, though latent, remained strong within her, and had burst forth as fresh as ever now that she found him in serious trouble.

After a few commonplace remarks, the doctor said to her, "Is this the same piece of work I saw on the loom when I was here last?"

"Yes, sir, it is," she replied, her eyes still turned from him; "I have not been very well lately." After a moment's pause she continued, in a tremulous tone, "I have had a great deal of trouble lately." Then suddenly bursting into tears, "I am sure if it had not been for the kindness of the other people in the house I should have sunk under it. They at least were very good to me, that I will say. However, it's all over now. I won't stir from the loom, except for my meals, till I have finished this piece of work, that I promise you."

"Don't let me disturb you," said the doctor, with cool politeness, fancying, either with or without reason, that he distinguished, in the remark she made about the kindness her neighbours had shown her, an indirect reproach to himself. "Go on with your work, don't let me hinder you."

"I am very sorry, sir," said Mrs. Waldron, drying her eyes, and reseating herself at the loom, "that I have not told Mr. Hughes, the foreman, to retain the guinea for you when the work is finished. But you needn't doubt

me ; you shall have it without fail. I should have kept my word before this, only circumstances were against me." Here a spasmodic movement of the muscles of the throat told the doctor that it was with difficulty she was restraining her feelings from bursting out afresh, although she attempted to speak with great coolness, and as if it were some subject of ordinary importance which had prevented her from leaving the house to see the foreman.

"But pray do not trouble yourself so much about it," said the doctor, glad of an excuse to calm his own uneasy conscience. "It may be more convenient for you if you let the matter stand over. I am in no hurry for it whatever."

Although Mrs. Waldron said nothing, the tone of the doctor's voice and his kind manner did not pass unheeded. He looked around the room, and, not seeing the children, inquired after them.

"The morning was so fine, sir," said Mrs. Waldron (which was true), "that I thought it would do them good to get a little fresh air. So I told Edgar to take his cousin to Spital Square, and walk up and down in the sun."

"You did well in that," said the doctor. "In fine weather like this the children cannot have too much air. But I won't stop with you any longer just now, for I have many patients to see, so good-morning."

In descending the stairs the doctor stopped at Mrs. Mulligan's door, and told her he should much like

to see her husband, if he could spare half an hour some evening after his work was over. Mrs. Mulligan promised, though somewhat coolly as it appeared to him, that she would give him the message, and the doctor then commenced his round of visits.

The next evening the Irishman made his appearance at Dr. D'Aubigny's house, and was ushered into the back room by Bridget.

"Well, Mulligan," the doctor began, "what is the reason I have not seen anything of you for the last fortnight or three weeks? You promised to tell me all that was going on at the Waldrons', and I have never heard even a word from you."

For some moments Terence seemed greatly puzzled what reply to make. He was evidently preparing a lie, but found great difficulty in concocting it. At last he was attacked with a fit of coughing, which the quick eye and keen ear of the doctor told him so plainly was feigned, that he could hardly keep from laughing. Terence, noticing the twinkle in the doctor's eye, immediately put on a most mournful expression of countenance, and pressing his hand on his chest, as if suffering intense pain, said :

"Sure, your honour, it's desperately ill I've been with my cough since I saw you last."

"Not so much, I hope, as to have kept you from your work?" said the doctor.

"But it would, though," said Terence, "hadn't it

been for the wants of my wife and children. As it was, I should have been obliged to crawl morning and evening on my hands and knees to Bishopsgate Street and back, if it hadn't been for a proper pride that upheld me."

"That's very sad indeed, Terence," said the doctor. "I hope your cough did not keep you from occasionally visiting that poor woman, Mrs. Waldron, in her trouble."

Terence looked suspiciously for a minute at the doctor. "Sure it isn't to be believed that I, a Christian man, and an Irishman into the bargain, could have kept from comforting the poor sowl in her trouble; but that's a very different thing from coming all the way down here on a cold blake winter evening."

"So it is, Terence," said the doctor. "But now you are down here, tell me what poor Mrs. Waldron has been doing since I saw you last."

"What should she have been doing, but working hard at the loom?"

"She must be a very wicked woman," said the doctor; "and if she went like you to confession she would have to tell of a mortal sin she committed yesterday."

"How so?" asked the tailor.

"She told me that she had done very little work, for the trouble she had been in had prevented her; instead of, as you say, having been hard at work all the time. But now, Terence, don't you think you may as well tell me the whole truth at once? You must be perfectly well

aware that I only mean to help the poor woman if I can. But I won't do anything for her unless I see the way clear before me. I am sure you wish to befriend her, so let me know what she has been doing lately, and whether she has made it up with her husband since he was committed for trial. I don't want to apply to any one else on the subject, so tell me all about it, like a good fellow."

"Faith," said Terence, "I don't think it's much use my trying to hide the truth from you, for you will have it out of me by hook or by crook." And then giving a slight preliminary cough, he began the outline of the following narrative, which the doctor afterwards filled up by inquiries among the children and the neighbours.

When Mrs. Waldron heard of her husband's arrest, which was not until the day after his committal to Newgate, she fainted away. Recovering consciousness, she commenced to sob violently, utterly insensible to the well-meant attempts at consolation poured into her ears by her fellow-lodgers. At last, however, she became somewhat calmer, and then rising from her chair put on her bonnet and shawl. Requesting one of the neighbours to take charge of the blind girl, she took Edgar by the hand, and leaving the house, walked hurriedly in the direction of Newgate. With some difficulty she obtained an interview with her husband. If any remains of angry feeling had existed against him

before she saw him, they entirely vanished as soon as she was in his presence. Letting go her boy's hand, she threw her arms around her husband's neck, and embraced him tenderly. Waldron for some time appeared totally indifferent to his wife's caresses, and took no notice whatever of his son, who stood weeping by his side. On his wife's asking him whether he thought there was any probability of his escaping a conviction, he sullenly said :

“ There's not much chance of that, I'm afraid ; it isn't very likely I shall be able to get off. If I escape hanging I shall think myself very lucky. They have hired the greatest big-wigs they can find to prosecute me ; and, poor as I am, how can I get anybody to defend me ? Do you think any of your friends would lend me a trifle ? I daresay they would if you'd promise to pay them double if I escape the gallows. But if you do it at all, you must be quick about it ; there ain't any time to lose, I can tell you. The trial will come on in ten days or a fortnight.”

“ And how much should you want, dear ?” asked Mrs. Waldron.

“ As much as you can get, from a guinea upwards.”

“ But where am I to get it ?”

“ If you don't know, how should I ?” her husband sullenly replied.

For some moments Mrs. Waldron remained silent, and appeared in deep thought. She had not yet expended the guinea the doctor had given her to obtain

clothing and food for her children, for the reason that the weather had been finer and warmer, as well as that she had then a few shillings left to go on with. Still she did not like the idea of breaking her promise to the doctor. True, he had given her the money, and it was, so to speak, her own ; but then she remembered that it was on the condition she expended it on the boy and girl. For some moments she remained in doubt, wishing to present her husband with the guinea, while her natural feeling of honesty argued against the gift. The balance at last turned in his favour, and she asked him if he thought a guinea would be of any use to him.

“Certainly,” he said, “it would be of great use to me, but five would be more. With a guinea I could get an attorney to put things in order for me ; with five I could get a first-rate counsel to defend me, one who at any rate would save my life, if nothing more.”

“Then, my dear, I will give you this guinea,” she said ; “although it leaves me with only a shilling in the world. I’ll see if I can borrow any more for you, though to whom to apply I know not. Now good-bye. Keep up your spirits, and God bless you.”

So saying, she kissed her husband. This time he returned her affection with some appearance of cordiality, and even shook hands with his son when he bade him farewell.

Little spirit had Mrs. Waldron for work after her return from Newgate. True, she seated herself at the

loom, but a singular feeling came over her. It was one of dislike, almost repulsion, for the occupation she was employed in. The sensation became stronger and stronger, till at last it was almost insupportable. Rising from her seat, she descended to Mrs. Mulligan's room, to seek for Mary, the child having been left under her charge. Of course, the two women entered into conversation respecting Waldron's position, and the probability of his escaping a sentence of death. Mrs. Waldron mournfully told her friend that she feared the worst, as her husband had no money to engage lawyers to defend him, and the guinea which had been lent her by the doctor was all she had to give him, and it she ought to have spent upon clothing and food for the children. But she begged Mrs. Mulligan would not speak of it, for if the doctor heard of it, she was certain he would never do anything for the children again. If, she continued, she could only borrow a little money of her friends, she would be ever grateful for it; but to whom to apply she knew not. All those who could assist her hated Waldron. She hoped God would help her, for she hadn't a friend in this world who could do her any good. Mrs. Mulligan hoped she would succeed in finding money, and said she would willingly have lent her some herself, only, as Mrs. Waldron well knew, she had a hard fight to find even the necessary food and clothing for her own children. At that very moment she had only three shillings in the house, and

that was all they had to last them for the next two days, when Terence would get his week's wages. Mrs. Waldron, who knew full well the chronic poverty of her friend, thanked her for her good wishes, and assured her she knew her inability to help her. Some other neighbours then came in; all of them condoled with Mrs. Waldron on the trouble she was in, and each in her turn volunteered her personal assistance if she could be of any use, but none of them offered her money. After remaining with Mrs. Mulligan till evening had set in, Mrs. Waldron left her friend, and, accompanied by her children, sought her own room.

She had little sleep that night, her mind perpetually reverting to her husband, and the probabilities of his being acquitted. His remark that if he had five guineas, he would be able to secure the services of a lawyer, who might save him from a sentence of death, haunted her unceasingly, and perhaps the more so from her utter inability to procure the money. She attempted to drive the subject from her thoughts, and succeeded. Her mind was now occupied with her work on the loom, and how long it would be before it was completed; the amount she would then receive from the manufacturers, and the uses to which she should devote it. Suddenly, and without any assignable cause, she found herself calculating what was the value of the silk on the loom, and how much she would receive for it when finished. Then the idea flashed across her mind, how much more she

would be able to finish before the trial took place, and then unconsciously, and without any apparent reason for the thought, what would be the value of the silk if it could be sold. After a little consideration, she estimated that the quantity which had already been completed would be worth five pounds at the least. She did not make this calculation with the remotest thought of dishonesty; it was merely to occupy her mind, nothing more.

Next morning she arose at daybreak and seated herself at the loom. She had been at work only a few minutes, when the idea which had so strangely occupied her mind the evening before, as to the gross value of the silk she had completed, again returned to her. She even stopped to calculate the number of yards she had already finished, and found there were thirteen, which, at eight shillings a yard (for the silk was of the finest), would be five pounds four shillings—more than the sum required for her husband's defence.

As soon as she had finished her calculation, she commenced to work with great rapidity, her thoughts apparently concentrated on the silk before her. In fact, so completely was she absorbed in her occupation, she did not notice that Edgar had risen from his bed and was standing by her side, watching her attentively. At length, however, she became aware of his presence, and, turning from the loom, she kissed him affectionately.

“I suppose you want your breakfast, my dear,” she

said, as she rose from her seat. "You must put on your things and go out for a half-quartern loaf, for there is no bread in the house."

Mrs. Waldron then put her hand in her pocket to get the money, but alas! there were only a few halfpence in it.

"You must go round to your grandmother, my dear," she said, "and ask her if she can lend me a few pence for a day or two. Take the jug with you, and if she gives you anything, buy some milk and some bread. If she cannot, just get two penny loaves, and come back again as soon as you can."

Edgar went off on his errand, and Mrs. Waldron resumed her labours energetically. Her son in a very short time returned with some milk and the half-quartern loaf. Mrs. Dubosq had given him a few pence. Being joined by Mary, who had risen from her bed during her cousin's absence, the two children seated themselves at their breakfast-table, while Mrs. Waldron stood by their side, eating a piece of bread. As soon as she had finished, she again took her place at the loom, working as rapidly as possible, as if to drive all other thoughts out of her head. She continued thus for more than two hours, when, suddenly stopping, she placed her hand on her brow, and said aloud, "What am I thinking about? I must surely be mad!" Then hurriedly rising from the loom, she remained for some time inactive and silent, as if bewildered. At length recovering herself, she walked

calmly to the loom, and, carefully pinning the cloth over her work, she said, "No, I have hitherto been honest, whatever trouble I might be in, and I will not turn thief now, much as I love him."

The last thought had hardly passed through her brain, when her conscience reminded her that she had given to her husband the guinea which she had received from the doctor to purchase food and clothing for the children. Was she justified in so doing? Feeling annoyed with herself for being unable to answer the question, she abruptly rose from her chair and made preparations to visit her husband. This time she went alone, leaving Mary in Edgar's care.

He received her somewhat more affectionately than the day before, but appeared exceedingly low-spirited. He evidently felt there was but little chance of his escaping with his life. She endeavoured to encourage him, but he burst into tears. Her affection for him seemed to increase as they fell; never in her life had she loved him more than at that moment. He implored her, he even begged her, to use all means in her power to obtain the money, so that he might engage some skilful advocate to defend him; for without that there was no chance of his escaping the sentence of death. By way of consoling him, she promised she would do so, though at the time she felt she knew not a friend in the world who would advance her a guinea. She remained with him as long as the prison regulations

allowed, and then, with a sorrowful heart, bade him farewell.

On reaching home, she cast her eyes on the loom, and felt the same dangerous fascination come over her as she had experienced before she left the house. Still she resolved to keep strictly to the determination she had made. She now sat down on a chair, and turning her back to the loom, talked to the children with great volubility. She seemed as though afraid to allow the conversation to flag, lest her resolution should succumb to the loom's attractions. But in spite of all her efforts to keep her mind employed on the children, her thoughts incessantly turned to her husband in prison, the danger he was in, and the value of the silk on which she was at work. As evening advanced, the attraction of the loom became greater, and to escape from it, she went with the children into Mrs. Mulligan's room, and there remained till it was time for them to go to bed. Half an hour afterwards Edgar and his cousin were both fast asleep.

She now took down her work-bag, and seating herself at the table, attempted by the light of the candle to repair Mary's frock; but she did it so clumsily, that she was obliged to undo a great part of what she had done. She made a second attempt, and at first sewed neatly enough; but in a short time her work became as unsatisfactory as before. She now put down the frock, and, putting her thimble and needle back into the bag,

threw it and the dress she had been mending on the table; then folding her arms she remained for some time in a deep reverie, in which the remembrance of her husband as she had seen him in the morning came vividly before her. Presently her thoughts again turned to the loom, and the value of the silk upon it; and then the idea dwelt in her mind for a moment whether, with the means of saving her husband's life within her reach, she would be justified in allowing him to die. She remained as if bewildered for some few moments, then suddenly starting from her chair and clasping her hands together in an attitude of prayer, she exclaimed aloud, "Oh, my God, support me under this terrible temptation, for it is too much for me to bear!"

Her heartfelt supplication was immediately heard and answered. All thought of the silk and the loom vanished, and her mind remained fixed on her husband in prison. Next morning she seated herself at the loom, solely with the intention of finishing the work she was employed on; but she had hardly been occupied at it five minutes, when the temptation of the evening before again came over her. As soon as she distinctly felt it she arose, and, telling Edgar to dress himself, she left the house to procure the children some milk for their breakfast—if such it might be called. Their humble meal over, Mrs. Waldron occupied herself in putting the small room in order. Over this she lost some considerable time; not that it required so much care, but rather because it drove

her thoughts from the loom. When this was finished she knelt beside the bed, and, clasping her hands together and shutting her eyes, she offered up a short simple prayer that when she once more commenced work the temptation might not come over her.

Her prayer over, she seated herself at the loom, but felt no inclination to begin her work ; in fact, she experienced a sort of alarm in looking at it. She then suddenly left her chair, and with a promptitude difficult to account for, she resolved to visit her mother. Throwing on her bonnet and shawl, and leaving the room to the charge of the children, she went round to the almshouse. She found Mrs. Dubosq much out of temper, in consequence of having felt her rheumatism rather more severely than usual during the past night. Her daughter's appearance, however, put her into a better humour, and they conversed freely together.

Presently Mrs. Waldron, on looking round the room, saw lying on the chest of drawers the old French Bible, out of which her father or mother were accustomed to read a portion every Sunday to her and her sister when they were children. Acting under a sudden impulse she could hardly account for, she asked Mrs. Dubosq to lend her the Bible. The old lady answered somewhat fractiously :

“ You can have it if you like, Maria ; but why don't you ask Mrs. Jones in the room overhead for hers ? You've forgotten all your French which you used to

“speak so well when a child ; and she’s got two English Bibles, and I’m sure she’ll lend you one. I like to have my own always beside me, as it puts me in mind of old times.”

“And so it does me, mother,” said Mrs. Waldron, slowly and impressively ; “and for that reason I want it, although I may have forgotten my French.”

The idea of borrowing Mrs. Jones’s Bible was by no means acceptable to Mrs. Waldron. True, its contents were the same, and in a language she could thoroughly understand ; but at the same time she had a peculiar respect for the old French Bible, and she again implored her mother to let her have it, as it would be a great consolation to her in her trouble.

“Very well, Maria, you may have it,” replied the old lady reluctantly ; “but remember you send it back to me when you are out of your trouble, as I don’t like it to be out of my sight.”

Mrs. Waldron, fearing that her mother might change her mind, immediately wished her good-morning, and putting the Bible under her shawl returned home. As soon as she entered the room she looked at the loom, but it had now no fascination for her. Placing the Bible on the table, she carefully covered the silk with a cloth in such a manner that not a particle of dust could reach it. Having arranged it to her satisfaction, she placed the Bible on the loom, resolving not to return it to her mother until the trial was over.

She had now to decide on some plan by which to support herself and her children, for she had not a penny in the house, and she did not like to apply to her poor mother. The idea occurred to her to appeal to the doctor, but she rejected it, as she did not dare to meet him, not having expended the money he had given her on clothing for the children, as she had promised to do. The terrible and degrading certainty now presented itself to her, that she had no alternative but to apply to the parish for relief, though it was more than probable even that would be refused to her, as she was then in work. While deliberating what course to take, heavy footsteps were heard on the stairs, and immediately afterwards three weavers resident in the neighbourhood entered the room. One of them told her that having heard that she was in great distress a party of them had determined to do something for her relief. For that purpose they had held a meeting at the French King's Head, and one way and another the subscriptions had amounted to thirty-seven shillings. This sum they now placed on the table, hoping that it would do her good. So saying, and as if to avoid the poor woman's thanks, who for the moment was struck dumb with astonishment, they bade her good-morning, and hurried from the room.

Mrs. Waldron continued for some moments to gaze at the money in silent amazement. "I can see the finger of God in this," she said at length. She now resolved in the first place to fulfil her promise to the

doctor. With the money she purchased shoes for the children, and some flannel to make them waistcoats, as well as some good nourishing food. Here the innate conscientiousness of the woman showed itself in its own peculiar manner. Although she purchased excellent food for the children, she resolved to live herself on nothing but bread and water until the trial should be over, so that she could never blame herself for withholding money from her husband for her own comfort. And she kept her resolution to the letter.

“And now, sir,” said Terence Mulligan, after he had narrated the above details, the main points of which had come under his own knowledge, “I have made a clean breast of it, and you know all.”

“No, not quite, Terence,” said the doctor. “If at confession you had told no more, you would have committed a mortal sin in obtaining absolution.”

“What do you mane, doctor?”

“I mean that you have not explained to me why you never came near me for nearly a fortnight.”

“Why, doctor, you’re surely a witch,” said the Irishman, laughing. “Didn’t the poor woman herself ask me not to go near you, and was I the man to refuse her?”

“And why did she wish you not to come near me?”

“For fear that I might let out what I’ve just told

you," said the Irishman. "As if I was the feller to betray the secrets of any lady."

"You are no doubt the last man in the world to do anything of the kind," said the doctor, laughing. "And I compliment you on the delicacy you have shown in the matter."

As soon as Terence Mulligan had quitted the house the doctor lighted his pipe, and, leaving Bridget with the candle in the little sitting-room, went into the shop, as there he could meditate with more convenience. He was greatly pleased with the description Terence had given of Mrs. Waldron, who now stood higher in his favour than ever. If the doctor in the course of his practice had seen little or nothing of women of the middle or higher classes, he had gained immense experience among the poorer. With all the faults of his female patients—and they had many—in his opinion they had far more good qualities, though they often showed themselves in a quaint way. Had the doctor written down his experiences, he might have produced more thrilling anecdotes of long-suffering, forgiveness, charity, love, and filial piety, than could be found in a score of fashionable novels of the present day. But though not written down, they were indelibly fixed on his memory. The behaviour of Mrs. Waldron was another instance added to the list, and one which pleased him exceedingly. There was something of the thoroughly honourable working-woman about it. The episode of the Bible also

interested him greatly, although Terence, as a good Catholic, had somewhat slurred over that portion of his narrative. It was another proof that the good lessons received in childhood, though they may for the moment be forgotten, are never completely obliterated from the brain, even to the last hour of a man's existence. The sight of the old Bible had evidently brought back to Mrs. Waldron's mind, in all their freshness, the lessons she had received from it in her youth, although she had even forgotten the language in which it was written. It is more than probable that since her marriage with Waldron she had never had even an English Bible in her possession; and even if she had, it is almost certain that her husband would have turned it into money to procure gin.

The doctor now resolved to take the poor woman and her children under his protection, but he easily perceived that it was a case in which great delicacy and tact ought to be used, and he was somewhat puzzled how to set about it. Finding he could come to no definite conclusion, he determined to adopt the course usual with him in all difficult matters through which he wished to make his way in an honourable and satisfactory manner. Going into his little sitting-room, he told Bridget she might go to bed. As soon as she had left him, he humbly and earnestly offered up a supplication to the Almighty, for aid and guidance in the good work he was about to commence, in helping the poor woman,

her son, and the blind orphan girl. His prayer finished, he rose from his knees and retired to bed, resolving to think calmly over the matter the next morning, and then adopt the course that might be pointed out to him as the most advisable.

Next day, as soon as he had finished his breakfast, the morning, as occasionally happens in the latter end of February, being very mild, he went into his little garden, and inspected it minutely, noticing what work it would require before the spring was much further advanced. His pigeons too, which during the winter had been placed under Bridget's immediate care, flew around him, and seemed pleased to see their old friend. In fact so demonstrative did their affection become, that to recompense it he went into the house, and brought out a handful of bread to throw to them. While watching them feeding on the ground, a comparison arose in his mind between his amusement at the moment and the work of charity he was so soon about to commence; and then Mrs. Dubosq's Bible, and the text on which he had placed his finger, came vividly before him.

Having waited till the disappearance of the last crumb of bread which he had thrown to his feathered friends, he entered the house for the purpose of preparing to visit his patients. His first call was on Mrs. Waldron, whom he found busily engaged at the loom, on which was the Bible. She rose to receive him, with much more appearance of satisfaction in her manner than she had

exhibited on the occasion of his last visit. On looking round the room, he saw the children were again absent, and he asked if Edgar had taken his cousin out for a walk.

“Yes, he has, sir. As it was a fine morning I thought it would do them both good, but I’m sorry for it now, as I should like you to have seen the shoes and flannel waistcoats I have bought for them.”

“I have no doubt you have made the best use of your money,” said the doctor, and then he remained silent for some moments, as if he had some difficulty in continuing his remarks. Then suddenly recovering himself, he continued, “I have indirectly heard that you are much in want of money to obtain professional assistance for the defence of your husband at his approaching trial and that he will require at least five guineas for that purpose. Is that the case?”

“It is, sir.”

“Now, Mrs. Waldron, I am prepared to lend you the money, but upon this consideration, that you solemnly promise to return it to me as soon as you conveniently can. And remember, when I say conveniently, I mean a few shillings at a time till the whole is paid off, for I cannot afford to lose it;” and to her astonishment he placed on the table the five guineas. For some moments Mrs. Waldron remained silent, as if unable to express her gratitude. She then said :

“God bless you, sir, for your kindness, but——” she

then hesitated a moment, and pushing one of the guineas toward the doctor, she continued, her face colouring up the while, "I may as well confess the truth; the guinea you gave me to buy shoes and food for the children, I gave to my husband, and some friends have since advanced me sufficient to buy the clothing for them, and a trifle over. There is your guinea back again."

The doctor was immensely pleased at this mark of integrity, and he said kindly to her, "Keep the guinea by you, Mrs. Waldron, but don't change it unless you should require it for your own use or that of the children. Now, good-bye; I shall probably not see you again till the trial is over."

He then took up his hat as if to leave the room, but his eye again catching the Bible on the loom, he said, pointing to it:

"That is your mother's, is it not?"

"Yes it is, sir."

"Do you remember your French sufficiently to read it?"

"Well, sir, with very great difficulty, if at all."

"Let me try you; open it and choose some short verse, and let me see how you understand it."

Mrs. Waldron opened the book at hazard, and selecting a verse of two lines, possibly as being the shortest she could find, attempted to translate it, but did not succeed, and she was about to seek for another.

"Let me see the one you selected," said the doctor,

and he found it was the first verse of Psalm cxx.: "*J'ai invoqué l'Éternel dans ma grande détresse, et il m'a exaucé.*" "Well, it was somewhat difficult," said the doctor, "certainly. 'I called upon the Lord in my great distress, and he heard me.'"

Mrs. Waldron made no reply, but with an expression of mingled surprise and solemnity on her countenance, which did not escape the doctor, she reverentially closed the book and placed it on the loom.



CHAPTER VII.

BRIGHTER PROSPECTS.

THE trial of Waldron and the other rioters came on in due course; three of them, Waldron included, were sentenced to transportation for life, and the other two to long terms of imprisonment. Never was money more useful than that which had been left by the doctor for Waldron's defence, for never had a criminal a more narrow escape from death than he had at his trial. In fact, had it not been for the consummate ability of the barrister engaged to defend him, his life would not have been saved, inasmuch as he was not only proved to be the leader of the rioters, but very nearly also to have been concerned in the robbery.

Dr. D'Aubigny had certainly not kept to his determination not to call on Mrs. Waldron till the trial was over, but then he waited for nearly a fortnight, so as to let her mind somewhat recover from the shock it had

received. When he visited her, he found she was far more composed than even he had expected, knowing her affection for her unworthy husband. A moment's consideration, however, explained to him the cause: it was the natural subsidence of the state of excitement she had been in for so many weeks, added to the certainty that the worst was now known, which naturally produced a certain amount of resignation. Again, she was consoled by the knowledge that through the goodness of God and her own exertions, he had been saved from the ignominious death which otherwise awaited him. After they had talked together for a short time on her present prospects, which appeared brighter than they had been since the day of her marriage, he conversed a little with Edgar and the blind girl, with both of whom he was evidently a favourite. Then turning suddenly to Mrs. Waldron, he asked her what she intended doing with her son.

"I have no intentions respecting him at present, sir," said Mrs. Waldron. "He is too young, and his chest is too delicate, for him to begin work at present. I shall send him to school as soon as I have paid off some of the money I owe you, which will not be long, as I have now nearly completed the whole of the work on the loom, and to-morrow or the next day shall take it to the house of business, and get paid for it."

"But he is getting a great boy now," said the doctor. "You will soon find it very inconvenient for him to remain in the room with you and his cousin."

"I am sorry to say it is the case, sir," said Mrs. Waldron ; "but what am I to do? I can't afford to have two rooms."

"Well, I've been thinking of a plan, Mrs. Waldron," said the doctor. "I wish to propose to you that I take Edgar into my own house. I am willing to clothe him, and see that he is well and properly brought up ; more especially I will take care that he has a good education. Understand me, I do not wish to wean him from you ; on the contrary, I shall always endeavour to inculcate on him that he ought to treat you with love and respect. He may visit you whenever he has time, and you can come and see him as often as you please ; but remember you must always bring my pet Mary with you. Now, what do you say to my proposal?"

"I am very thankful for it, sir," said Mrs. Waldron ; "and I accept it most willingly. I am sure the boy cannot be in better hands than yours, and I am very grateful to Providence for having sent me such a friend."

"Very well, then," said the doctor, "there's no occasion to say any more on the subject. Now good-bye ; let Edgar come to me to-morrow night."

Mrs. Waldron promised she would bring him herself ; and the doctor, to avoid the thanks and blessings she was showering on him, then hastily left the house.

The following evening Edgar and his mother arrived some time before the doctor's return. It must be admitted that this was done purposely, as she first wished

to gain the goodwill of an official whom, with true feminine foresight, she held to be more difficult to please than the doctor himself; and that was no other than Bridget Mahoney. She had heard from Mrs. Mulligan a somewhat unfavourable report of her temper, as well as of her being very jealous of her ascendancy over the doctor, and therefore the less likely to be pleased with the introduction of a boy into the establishment in whose mother and her family her master had taken so much interest. It was therefore politic for Mrs. Waldron to conciliate Bridget by all means in her power; and for this reason, she, accompanied by Edgar, went to the house on the evening appointed somewhat earlier than the doctor had named, solely for the purpose of presenting the boy to Mrs. Mahoney, and saying a few words in his favour before her master's return. She had also calculated, and not without reason, that if she took with her little blind Mary, the sympathies of the Irish-woman would be enlisted in favour of a poor child suffering under such an affliction. When Mrs. Waldron arrived at the house, the doctor, as she expected, had not returned, and she had therefore time enough to introduce Edgar to the housekeeper, who at first received the party in a somewhat cold and dignified manner. Mrs. Waldron now broke ground with admirable tact. Utterly ignoring for a moment the doctor's existence, she made many apologies for the trouble her son was about to give to Mrs. Mahoney. "But she was sure,"

she said, "he would be dutiful and respectful to her, as she had taught him that he ought to be; and that he would do everything she told him without the slightest hesitation. At the same time," she continued, "I must say, to do him only justice, that a gentler or better-behaved boy, or one more respectful to his superiors, could not be found in Spitalfields or Bethnal Green; and that I will maintain, although he's my own son."

Mrs. Waldron's words evidently produced an excellent effect upon Mrs. Mahoney. Her severe dignity of manner and coldness of expression gradually diminished, until no more of either was to be seen than was necessary to maintain her position as the most important personage in the house. She patted Edgar's head, and said she had no doubt that they would be excellent friends. She then turned to the blind girl, of whose infirmity she had already heard. Whatever semblance of reserve towards Edgar had remained in the kind-hearted Irish-woman fairly melted away when her attention was called to his cousin. Mrs. Mahoney's sister also had had a little blind daughter, but both mother and child were long since dead. The sight of little Mary conjured up the memory of both, and Mrs. Mahoney's eyes began to fill, although she succeeded in restraining her tears.

The two women now talked together with greater freedom. Mrs. Mahoney even went so far as to express her great satisfaction at having Edgar with her. She

said he would be a little companion for her. "You know, my dear," she continued, "although the doctor is a kind man, and always behaves to me with proper respect, yet he is a great deal from home, and when he returns he is generally so tired that he is hardly able to talk; so that, good as he is, and much as he wishes me to be comfortable, we have very little conversation."

At this Mrs. Waldron expatiated on Edgar's conversational powers, and assured Mrs. Mahoney that sometimes he would talk in such a manner that if you did not see him you would think him twenty years old if a day. The two women then discussed the lad's medical history, Mrs. Waldron explaining what things agreed with him and what did not, and mentioning his great susceptibility to colds. Mrs. Mahoney said that the doctor had already mentioned that last circumstance to her, and that she had therefore taken all the care she could to see that he had plenty of bed-clothes; and she then showed Mrs. Waldron a bed which she had improvised for Edgar under the counter in the shop; but explained to her that, as soon as things were properly arranged, he would sleep in the top room, behind the pigeons, and be as comfortable as possible.

They had hardly completed the inspection of the bed when the doctor entered. He seemed very pleased to see Edgar, and shaking his hand, told him to be a good boy, and that he had no doubt that he would grow up to be an honourable man, and a credit to his mother. After

a few minutes' conversation, Mrs. Waldron rose to leave, and having taken an affectionate farewell of Edgar she asked the doctor if she could speak to him a word in private. He of course assented, and they went together into the shop. "Oh, sir," she said, "I only wanted to tell you that this morning I took the silk back to the firm; and I've brought you a guinea of the money you were kind enough to lend me. They also gave me some more silk to go on with; and I hope soon to bring you another."

The doctor thanked her, and Mrs. Waldron, taking Mary by the hand, left the house.

After his mother had gone Edgar at first seemed strongly disposed to burst into tears, but the doctor, well accustomed to the management of children, soon set him at ease by the kindly tone of his conversation. Mrs. Mahoney also took great pains to please him—less from the wish to follow out the doctor's instructions than from the impulse of her own heart. She spoke to him very endearingly, and when she gave him his supper, which consisted of a mug of milk and a thick slice of bread-and-butter, she took the opportunity of spreading a layer of moist sugar over it, winking at Edgar playfully as she did so. Dr. D'Aubigny, although by no means angry at Bridget's attempt to please the boy, considered this use of the sugar as wasteful, and asked her whether she did not think that Edgar's appetite was sufficiently good to eat bread-and-butter without it.

“That I’ll be bound,” said Bridget, watching the ravenous manner in which the boy was eating. “There’s no mistake about that.”

“Why did you waste the sugar then?” inquired the doctor.

“For the same reason, sir,” said Bridget, looking somewhat archly at the doctor, “that I would put grease on the paws of a cat that had been given me—to make him like the house, and stop quietly in it.”

The doctor smiled, thus tacitly admitting the truth of Bridget’s philosophy. Edgar having now finished his supper, she was on the point of conducting him to his little bed, when the doctor asked him what prayers he had been accustomed to say night and morning. Edgar answered, the Lord’s Prayer and four lines of a hymn, and these he said every night. The doctor, having heard him repeat them in a satisfactory manner, bade him good-night, and shortly afterwards the child was fast asleep.

Next morning Edgar sat down to breakfast with the doctor and Bridget. As soon as this meal was over the doctor took Edgar to a shop in Shoreditch, and purchased for him a respectable suit of ready-made clothes. He was told to put them on at once, and that the old ones would be sent home directly. After they had quitted the shop, the boy, evidently filled with pride at his new clothes, asked permission to go and see his mother. This however the doctor refused, though not unkindly,

telling him that he might possibly see her in the evening. They continued their road until they arrived at the French Protestant Schools, in Wilkes Street, and there the doctor asked to see Mr. Mousset, the master. That gentleman, an old friend of the doctor's, received him with great cordiality. They conversed together in French for some time, during which the doctor gave the schoolmaster a slight sketch of Edgar's history, and asked him if he could be admitted as a temporary pupil, till the required formalities of admission were gone through. To this Mr. Mousset willingly agreed, and Edgar was immediately taken into the schoolroom, and placed at a desk along with the other boys.

After mature deliberation the doctor laid down certain rules respecting Edgar's up-bringing, and these, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, were not to be departed from. The first subject to be attended to was religion, the next charity, and the third integrity, combined with self-reliance and courtesy. The method he employed to promote the first will be dwelt on afterwards; for the development of the last his plan was somewhat singular. Although he occasionally made Edgar a little present, such as a pocket-knife or a top, he never gave him, nor would he allow him to receive from others, a gift in money. He did not in the least attempt to ignore its value in the boy's eyes, but he wished to lead him to estimate it the more correctly by earning it himself. With this view he gave Edgar certain little duties to per-

form in the shop—such as cleaning the scales, washing out the glass graduates and stone mortars, dusting the bottles, and other occupations of a similar description. For this he was to pay the boy sixpence a week, giving him to understand that the money was not a gift, but the product of his own industry. At the same time, however, the doctor did not leave Edgar the sole control and disposal of the money he thus earned. By way of encouraging him to economize, he bought him a little money-box, in which every week he was obliged to place at least half the amount he had received. He insisted on one penny of the balance being set aside for the poor-box at the chapel, whilst the remaining twopence might be spent in any manner he pleased.

For some time things went on smoothly enough in the doctor's establishment, and Edgar had become a great favourite with him, and still more so with Bridget Mahoney. It might at first be imagined that the affection each bore the child would have established a stronger bond of good feeling than even that which had hitherto existed between Dr. D'Aubigny and his house-keeper. This, however, was far from being the case. Bridget loved the boy as much as if he had been her own grandson. In fact, if it had not been for the doctor's fixed resolution that no one should take any part in Edgar's training but himself, it is probable that Bridget's love for him might have spoilt him. As it was, on more than one occasion during the first few days of his resi-

dence, she thought fit to remonstrate with the doctor on the long lessons the schoolmaster had given Edgar to study in the evening. She argued that in addition to the labours imposed upon him by the doctor himself, it was too much for a child of his delicate constitution to stand. Dr. D'Aubigny, however, thought otherwise, and when Bridget attempted to speak to him on the subject, he answered her in a manner so unmistakable that she soon desisted.

But Bridget, although defeated, was not entirely subdued. She no longer attempted open opposition or remonstrance, but surreptitiously assisted the boy in dusting the bottles in the shop, and other little duties imposed on him by the doctor, in order that he (the doctor) might think Edgar earned the money, which in reality was given to him. In this she was one morning detected by Dr. D'Aubigny, and terrible indeed was his wrath at the discovery. Bridget afterwards acknowledged that during the many years she had lived in his house, she had never seen him in such a temper. Although she never mentioned the fact, the doctor even went so far as to order her immediately to pack up her things and leave the house. Bridget, however, had not lived so long with her master without having discovered some of his weak points, and among the most prominent of these was that he could never resist an old woman's tears. On receiving her notice of dismissal, Bridget immediately attacked him with such a copious flood of tears as to con-

siderably mollify his anger. The affair ended in his giving her a sound lecture, and all went on smoothly enough for a little while longer, Bridget's love for the boy appearing to increase in proportion as she was allowed the less means to display it.

But another matter started up which again roused Bridget's anger—namely, the manner in which the doctor was bringing up the boy, and which went sorely against her conscience. Edgar had in a few months acquired at school a considerable knowledge of the French language, and was able to read it with tolerable facility. By way not only of assisting the boy in perfecting his knowledge of the language, but also with the idea of making him well versed in the Scriptures, he adopted the system of making Edgar every evening read to him a chapter out of the French Bible. This proceeding Bridget viewed with intense aversion. Though a rigid Roman Catholic herself, she managed, possibly with a dispensation or the permission of a priest, to keep a good situation in the house of the heretic doctor, for whom she had in time acquired a genuine and profound respect. True, she disliked his Huguenot ideas of theology, which from her youth she had been taught to consider the doctrines of Satan disguised under the name of religion; but at the same time she could not altogether help thinking that the mercy of God might possibly be extended to a man who performed so many good works, and who had evidently been brought up in error. She argued that the

doctor was a man old enough to know the value of his own soul, and that his sins would rest upon his own head. Not so with the child, whom he was evidently training for eternal perdition.

At first the housekeeper's displeasure developed itself in an occasional sullen look when she saw the open Bible on the table in the evening, and she always took the opportunity of leaving the room, pretending that she had some occupation, either in the kitchen or in one of the bedrooms. By degrees, however, her inclination to interfere showed itself; but she had still so much dread of the doctor, that she had not the courage to begin. She would now, during the evening Bible-readings, go into her bedroom, making her footsteps to be heard overhead as she entered it; but as soon as she felt assured that her master believed she was quietly seated at work, she would cautiously steal to the head of the stairs, and listen to Edgar as he read. This she continued to do, evening after evening, her anxiety for the child's soul becoming greater each time. There was a mystery, too, about the transaction, which in her opinion increased the danger. Of French, Bridget did not understand one word. Had Edgar been reading in English, she might have judged whether the particular chapter he was engaged on was more or less dangerous to his soul; for Bridget was sufficiently liberal in theological matters to admit, that in the Protestant Bible there might occasionally be found

chapters which could be read without any particularly prejudicial effects.

But the very obscurity of the language in which the boy read seemed to Bridget to increase the danger his soul was in, and her own anxiety was increased in proportion. One evening, when she was listening from her seat on the little flight of stairs, Edgar suddenly stopped in his reading, to ask the doctor some question bearing on the New Testament doctrine of the forgiveness of sins. The doctor carefully explained it to him, taking the opportunity of expatiating on the erroneous doctrine held by the Roman Catholics on the subject, and what he termed the blasphemous pretensions of the Pope. Bridget, who had till then with difficulty controlled her anger, now gave full sway to it when she heard his Holiness spoken of in so disrespectful a manner. She burst into the little sitting-room, and asked the doctor what he meant by speaking of the head of the Catholic Church in the way he was doing, and whether he ought not to be ashamed of himself for doing so in the presence of that innocent child.

The doctor was so completely astonished at Bridget's behaviour, that it was some time before he could collect himself; and the woman profited by the circumstance. Possibly imagining herself inspired, she then commenced a violent tirade against the doctor for his wickedness in teaching Edgar to read the Scriptures in a heathen language, warning him of the punishment which awaited

him hereafter for an iniquity of the kind. She concluded by saying that she would stop no longer in a house where so much wickedness was perpetrated, even although she might be obliged for the future to beg her bread in the streets.

The doctor, who had now fully recovered himself, calmly told Bridget to pack up her things, so as to be ready to leave the house the next morning, for he would not allow her to stay longer. Bridget, with a spirit quite equal to his own, told him she would not stop another night in his house, but leave at once, and then suddenly turning round proceeded to her bedroom to prepare for her departure. As soon as she was ready to quit the house, the doctor paid her her wages, giving her a guinea in addition, telling her at the same time, that although he was sorry to lose her, it was impossible for him to allow her to remain longer in his service. Bridget, without uttering a word, and evidently afraid to trust herself to speak, left the room for the purpose of finding a man to carry her box. This was soon done, and the two started off together, leaving Edgar and the doctor by themselves.

It must not be supposed that Dr. D'Aubigny allowed his old servant to leave him in the manner she had done without regret. Had she given him any other cause of offence than the one for which he had dismissed her, it is more than possible he would have attempted to conciliate her, but in this case his interest in Edgar's

spiritual welfare outweighed every other consideration. Moreover the provocation came when he was endeavouring to fix in Edgar's mind a profound respect and admiration for the old French Protestant Bible, and his Huguenot blood had fired up at the indignity Bridget had offered to it. He had now, however, to get some one to fill her place, and as that was no easy matter at a moment's notice, he resolved to ask Mrs. Waldron to superintend his housekeeping for a few days until he could select a worthy and competent person. He started off immediately to her house to ask if she were willing to assist him. To this she agreed without a moment's hesitation, and they returned to the doctor's house together. So efficiently were her duties performed that the doctor at length determined on asking her to remain in the position of his housekeeper—a proposal which she joyfully accepted. Her lodging in Fleur-de-lis Street was now given up, her few housekeeping utensils and furniture disposed of, and the loom itself removed into the little front room behind the pigeons, in which Edgar slept, Mrs. Waldron and the blind girl occupying the chamber over the little sitting-room.

Time now passed on smoothly enough. Edgar continued to give the doctor the greatest satisfaction. At school he became conspicuous by his attention to his lessons, and the progress he made in his studies. Before he had been there three months he was not only a fair arithmetician, but could write a tolerably good hand, and

had acquired some rudimental knowledge of geography and the history of his own country. He was also a promising French scholar ; that language, according to the fundamental rules of the school, being considered a necessary portion of every boy's education. But the progress he had made in French was not altogether due to the instruction he received in school, but was rather owing to the great care bestowed upon him by Dr. D'Aubigny in the evenings. The worthy man was determined to spare no opportunity of making the boy a proficient in the language. In the evening, when they were employed in the garden, the doctor invariably carried on the conversation in French. Being an excellent botanist himself, he explained to the boy the names and uses of the different plants, their classes and orders, to which Edgar always listened with great respect, though perhaps with but little pleasure. Occasionally too, on fine evenings, when the doctor had to visit a patient, he would take Edgar with him, and converse on different subjects in French as they went ; by these means he contrived to teach Edgar a very extensive vocabulary. Nor was the doctor indifferent upon the subject of pronunciation, but paid the greatest attention to it, and with much success.

But great as the doctor's attention to the welfare of Edgar might be, his interest in the blind girl Mary far surpassed it. As before stated, she was about the same age as the little daughter he had lost, and, apart from the

affliction of blindness, bore a strong resemblance to her ; and by a common though rarely remarked psychological phenomenon, the more attentively he gazed at her, the stronger did the resemblance appear, his memory supplying those portions of her features and their expression which were really lacking in the child. He paid even greater attention to her religious education than he did to Edgar's ; he not only instructed her in the French language, but read daily to her portions of Scripture from the French Bible, till she had learnt them off by heart, and imprinted them well on her memory, as well as the translation and meaning of every word in the sentence.



CHAPTER VIII.

MRS. DUBOSQ'S LEGACY.

FOR the next eighteen months things went on in the doctor's establishment in a very satisfactory manner; the behaviour of his pupils was all he could have desired, and he was not a little proud of the progress they made. He would occasionally call with them in the evenings on Mrs. Dubosq, which wonderfully endeared them to her, especially as he allowed her to examine them in the French language. She pointed out to them her Bible, and told them of the marvellous power it had in answering questions put to it, especially in times of doubt, trouble, and distress. Edgar made several attempts to elicit from it this wonderful faculty, but it must be acknowledged almost always without success, notwithstanding Mrs. Dubosq's endeavours to draw from the answers conclusions applicable to the children. The doctor at length interfered, and requested that no further

experiments of the kind might be made. He feared that their want of success might tend to lower the Bible in their estimation, while he on his part was endeavouring to inculcate on their minds the most profound veneration for it. Another feeling possibly entered into his objections : he had unconsciously to himself begun to entertain a sort of superstitious reverence for Mrs. Dubosq's Bible, which possibly arose from the stimulus the text on which he had placed his finger on the occasion of his first visit to her had given him to assist her unfortunate family ; and he dreaded even the semblance of treating it in an irreverent or flippant manner.

The doctor now began to make Edgar more of a companion, taking care however that the lad always treated him with attention and respect. To his moral training he also paid great care, endeavouring to impress upon his mind high principles of honour, integrity, and independence, combined with courtesy of manner. He tried especially to prove to him that all honourable occupation tended to raise the dignity of man, and that no unmerited misfortune could reduce him so low as to make any handicraft or honest labour a reproach or degradation to him ; that a weaver, while working at his loom, might not only have in his veins the noblest blood in Europe, but that his principles of honour might remain as unsullied as when his ancestors were in the height of their prosperity ; and he quoted the example

of the Bouveries, the Houblons, the Thellusons, and the Romilies, and others, in support of his statement.

Dr. D'Aubigny, in his endeavours to instil into his pupil's mind the strictest adherence to the principles of the Protestant faith, would point out to him the examples set by the heroes of the Reformation in France. He taught him how the Huguenots had suffered every oppression and cruelty which the malice of the Jesuit fathers could suggest to the minds of those bigoted tyrants Louis XIV. and Louis XV.; and on the other hand held up for his especial admiration such men as Claude Brousson, Antoine Court, and other notables among the Protestants.

Here, however, in justice, should be pointed out a lamentable error into which the worthy doctor himself had fallen, while endeavouring to raise in Edgar's mind a love for the Huguenot principles. While justly deprecating the hateful cruelty practised on the Protestants of France, he was at the same time unconsciously endeavouring to inculcate on his pupil's mind an equally bigoted aversion to the Roman Catholic faith. A feeling of the kind might be excusable on the part of the doctor himself, seeing the persecutions which his family and co-religionists had suffered; but the sentiment he was raising in Edgar's breast was one which had all the elements of a vindictive nature about it, without the excuse of personal provocation. He would describe to Edgar at great length the atrocious system of perse-

cution practised by the dragonades, in which soldiers were billeted on the families of the Huguenots, who were deprived of all redress for any barbarities which might be perpetrated on them. He would dwell on how children were especially made the victims of their tyranny. He quoted, on the authority of Antoine Court, how "children of twelve or fourteen years of age, who refused to attend at the celebration of the mass, were dragged by the soldiers through the streets and obliged to be present in the churches, the priests the while indifferent to the cries of the poor victims. Many of the boys would, with the courage of lions, seize with their teeth the hands of those who held them ; others, when no better means of resistance were open to them, turned into ridicule the celebration of the mass, and other ceremonies at which they were obliged to be present ; others, when the white cloth was forcibly placed over their shoulders preparatory to their being baptized, and the holy water was being brought to the priest for that purpose, would cry out in mockery, '*Est-ce qu'on veut nous faire la barbe ?*'" The doctor would also relate how the priests and garrison at Laussen tormented the children of the village by dragging them to the church, and then locking the door on them, while they in defiance told the priest that they looked on him as the devil himself ; while others spat on him, and treated him with the greatest indignity. He further narrated how six hundred members of the noblest families in France were reduced to the condition of

galley-slaves, and whole villages razed to the ground and the inhabitants murdered, without eradicating from the minds of the Huguenots their love for the Bible, or their abhorrence of what they termed papistical superstition and ceremonies. The doctor would also take Edgar with him to Bethnal Green and Spitalfields churchyards, and point out to him the humble graves of the members of many of the most honourable families in France, driven from their country to seek an asylum among foreigners, who had shown them in their misery a kindness and hospitality to which they had been strangers in their own country.

On the other hand, had the doctor been an unprejudiced historian, he might, while admitting the fearful atrocities perpetrated by the soldiers and emissaries of the king under the advice of the Jesuit conspirators, have shown that it would have been impossible for the four hundred and fifty thousand Huguenots to have escaped from France during the reigns of Louis XIV. and Louis XV., had it not been for the connivance and assistance of their Catholic fellow-subjects, especially when those monarchs had issued stringent orders to the contrary. Nay more, that on many occasions there was a positive struggle between the magistracy and the higher order of priesthood on the subject, the former acting boldly and energetically in defence of Huguenot rights while the latter exerted themselves to prolong the persecution. He might also have stated that a vast proportion

of the clergy evidently remained neutral in the matter, unwilling to act contrary to the orders of their superiors, yet sympathizing with the miseries of their Protestant fellow-countrymen. The doctor might further, and with good reason, have pointed out to Edgar the condition of the Roman Catholics in the United Kingdom at the time, and especially in Ireland, and compared it, much to the disadvantage of our own country, with the condition of the French Protestants during the reign of Louis XVI.

Fortunately, however, the doctor's bigoted teaching in this respect had but little effect on the boy, and a circumstance at length occurred which made clear to his own mind the injustice as well as uselessness of forcing the subject to the extent that he did. One fine Sunday morning he with Edgar left the house immediately after they had finished their breakfast. They continued their way westward until they had reached Chelsea parish church,—which they did just as the service was about to commence,—and entering it took their places with the rest of the congregation. When the service was over, the doctor conducted Edgar to an unpretending-looking grave in the churchyard, and then said to him slowly and emphatically :

“ You are now, my boy, standing beside the tomb of Jacques Cavalier, one of the noblest heroes and bravest soldiers in defence of the Desert Church in the Cevennes.”

He then went on to explain how Jacques Cavalier,

the shepherd-boy, had become the leader of the insurgents. He told him that in childhood Cavalier had been obliged to attend mass and conform to the externals of the Roman Catholic faith, his mother from dread of losing her child permitting him to "bow his head in the house of Rimmon." After each service, however, she secretly instructed him in the principles of the Protestant faith, and implored him to keep true to them in his heart. As he grew older Cavalier threw off all disguise, and having been selected as the general of the Protestant army, he had on several occasions beaten the forces of Louis XIV., till at length overpowered by treachery and numbers he sought refuge in England, where he died.

Shrewd and cynical as the doctor generally was, he proved at this time to have another weak point in his own character. Holding, as he did, that the Roman Catholic idea of the sanctity of the shrines of saints was not only wrong but contemptible, and condemning the prayers offered up at them as idolatrous, it is much to be doubted whether any Romanist before the shrine of a favourite saint was inspired with stronger feelings of devotion than was Dr. D'Aubigny when he stood beside the tomb of Jacques Cavalier. However, like most other mortals, he was unconscious of his own weakness, and, after offering up a short mental prayer for the increase of the Protestant faith, he turned from the churchyard, and Edgar and he made the best of their way back to Bethnal Green, the doctor conversing the

whole of the way on the great and worthy deeds performed by the Huguenot leaders. Nor, when evening arrived, did he leave the subject. Mrs. Waldron and Mary having left the house to pay a visit to Mrs. Dubosq, the doctor determined to continue to Edgar the course of instruction he had begun in the morning. Notwithstanding that the poor boy could hardly keep his eyes open from fatigue, the doctor not only went over the different points in the history of Jacques Cavalier which he had omitted to notice in the morning, but he took from amongst the quaintly-bound books in his cabinet one which had pasted within the cover a coarsely-executed woodcut of a tall, powerful man, with a shock head of hair and uncombed beard, dressed in a coarse sort of uniform coat, with a huge sword by his side, holding in his right hand a pistol and in his left a thick volume, from which he was reading.

“That picture,” said the doctor, with much reverence in his tone and manner, “is the portrait of Jacques Cavalier, whose grave you stood beside this morning; and,” he continued, pointing with great solemnity to the book of sermons, in the cover of which it was pasted, “this was given to my father by François Bénézet, who for some time resided with my grandfather, in his house in Normandy. He afterwards returned to his native town, Montpellier, and was put to death there, about fifty years ago, for no other reason than his religion. He died like a true martyr. When importuned by the Jesuit

priest, who accompanied him to the gibbet, to change his religion, saying, '*Vous êtes damné, vous n'aurez que l'enfer pour partage, si vous n'abjurez pas,*' François Bénézet answered him, '*Si vous étiez persuadé qu'il y a un enfer, me persécuteriez-vous comme vous faites, et aurais-je été condamné à perdre la vie sur un gibet par cela seul que j'ai adressé quelques exhortations à mes frères ?*' Arrived at the place of execution, Bénézet attempted to address the multitude assembled to witness his death, but a number of drummers were ordered to drown his voice with their drums. Finding he was not allowed to be heard, he submitted himself to the hangman, and he then mounted the scaffold, singing the while the fifty-first psalm."

The doctor now with great reverence (totally unconscious of an irrepressible yawn which disfigured Edgar's countenance at the time) arose and placed the volume back in the cabinet, and, taking out another, returned to his seat. From his new volume he read a description of the execution of François Rochelle, a young Protestant minister who suffered at Toulouse, with three brothers by name Grenier, the youngest of whom was only twenty-two years of age. Rochelle and each of the brothers were offered pardon as they mounted the scaffold, if they would abjure the Protestant religion; and each in his turn refused it, and died in the true spirit of a martyr. The doctor then turned to the execution of Jean Calas, but before commencing he cast his eyes on

Edgar, and found that, utterly exhausted, he had fallen fast asleep. The doctor now, replacing the book, began to think over the boy's weariness. He justly attributed it in the first instance to the bodily fatigue he had undergone, and then, secondly, to his utter weariness of the subject. After a little consideration he came to the conclusion that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to inculcate on the boy's mind the principles so firmly stamped on his own. He further knew that to force anything on the minds of the young against their inclination only brought forth a dislike to the subject; and apart from a regular religious training he resolved for the future to allow Edgar to form his own opinions on the Huguenot persecutions in France.

The summer passed quietly over without anything occurring particularly worthy of notice, but as winter approached an evident change for the worse took place in the health of the doctor's old friend Mrs. Dubosq. One morning in the middle of November, when he paid her his visit, he saw unmistakable evidence that her death might soon be expected. The old lady herself was also aware of the fact, and she told him that she looked forward to her end with feelings of perfect resignation. She further informed the doctor that she had already received a warning to that effect; and on his inquiring further into the matter, she told him that she had received it from her Bible. She had been, she said, sensible for some time past that her health was

failing her, and she had on several occasions applied to her Bible to obtain, if possible, some certain indication whether her end might soon be expected, but without receiving any definite reply. Two days before his visit, however, on applying to her Bible, her finger fell upon the text, "*Car il faut que ce corps corruptible soit revêtu de l'incorruptibilité, et que ce corps mortel soit revêtu de l'immortalité*" (1 Cor. xv. 53). She had, she said, but one wish, and that she had prayed heartily might be accorded to her. It was that she might live till the 1st of December, the anniversary of the dedication of the Temple in John Street in the year 1765, which was also the day of her poor father's death. If that were granted her, there was nothing more she wished to live for in this world.

Whether Mrs. Dubosq was right in her conclusion that the notice she had received from the text was intended expressly for her, or whether her finger fell by chance on it among the many trials she had made, was a subject on which the doctor passed no opinion. Even if he had considered the application as accidental, his respect for the old Huguenot practice was so great that it kept him silent on the point. One thing was certain to him, that if she did live till the anniversary was completed, and it was not in answer to her prayer, it would be a singular proof of the power the mind could exercise over the body, a scientific point to which he had paid great attention. His thoughts were first called to the subject

by a work which had a great reputation at the time, and which was written by a French Protestant who had formerly held the appointment of surgeon in a regiment of the French Guards in Paris. He had been obliged to resign his post in consequence of a pamphlet he had written advocating the abolition of the punishment of death. He then left France, and first took up his abode in London, where the doctor made his acquaintance. Afterwards he went to Edinburgh, and the doctor, though he occasionally corresponded with him, never met him again. He had, however, received from him a copy of a work he had published both in English and in French. It was on "The Effect of the Soul upon the Body, and the Body upon the Soul." This book, the doctor considered, showed immense talent, and he studied it attentively. For some years it occupied an honourable place among the books in his little library. After a time, however, the book disappeared and was never more seen, nor was the author's name ever mentioned by the doctor. Nor was he without good reason for the silence he maintained, for on the breaking out of the French Revolution the writer had returned to Paris, and had there obtained possibly the most infamous reputation of the many sanguinary ruffians which the disturbances of the time had produced. Infamous as the reputation of Jean Paul Marat (the author) was to the world in general, it was perhaps more so to Dr. Gregory D'Aubigny, from the fact that he was not only a member of the medical pro-

fession, but also of a highly respectable Huguenot family.

To return to Mrs. Dubosq. The doctor watched with much curiosity what he considered, from a scientific point of view, the effect of this power of the mind over the body. The poor old woman, in spite of the rapid exhaustion of her vital powers, continued to live on till the anniversary was past. During the last days of her illness she was nursed with great attention by her daughter, Mrs. Waldron, to whom the doctor had given leave of absence until her mother's illness was over. On the second morning after the anniversary, she entered the house carrying something under her shawl. She had evidently been crying bitterly, and the tears were still wet on her cheeks. The doctor easily understood their cause. As soon as Mrs. Waldron had somewhat recovered herself, she told him that Mrs. Dubosq had died in the night, and that she had remained sensible to within a few hours of her death. Among the last words she had uttered was a request that her daughter should take her Bible, and present it to him as a mark of her respect for the many acts of kindness she had received at his hands.

Things went on smoothly till Edgar had reached his fifteenth year, and then the doctor considered it was time for him to decide what occupation in life Edgar was best fitted for. He would have liked him to be a member of the medical profession ; but he argued that the boy was yet too young to enter it ; and besides, he had not shown

any inclination towards it. True, when a few years older, he might view the affair in a different light, and respect it as it deserved; but of that there was no certainty. There was also another element in the doctor's consideration, and one of considerable importance. It was true that if he took Edgar as his own pupil, he might thereby save a considerable portion of the preliminary expense of his education. Still he was himself but a comparatively poor man, for although his practice yielded sufficient to maintain his house, yet, with the additional cost of Edgar and the blind girl (for he considered the board of Mrs. Waldron was equivalent to the wages of a servant, and therefore it did not enter into his calculation), he had not been able to set apart more than a very trifling sum of money from his earnings. Possibly all he had accumulated during his life for the necessities of his old age did not amount to more than three hundred pounds beyond the value of his little freehold house. Again the doctor reflected that he had now reached that time of life when, in the ordinary course of nature, there would be but little chance of his living till Edgar would be old enough to take his practice. "After all," the old man argued, "if I tried him for a few years in some other occupation, and it turned out that he was not likely to succeed in it, he would even then not be too old to be brought up to my own profession."

The question having been duly considered from all points, the doctor concluded that it would be better for

Edgar to enter into some trade, and resolved that he would use what little influence he had to get him employed in some respectable house of business. And here may be remarked another little inconsistency in the worthy doctor's mode of reasoning. Although he had attempted to instil into the boy's mind that no honest handicraft degraded an honourable man, he did not at all like the idea of Edgar's becoming a weaver. But he calmed his conscience by the thought that the present race of weavers were, in their manners and habits, a very different class from those he had known and associated with in his youth. He also considered—and in this he had indisputable reason on his side—that Edgar was better adapted for the counting-house and the shop than the loom and the shuttle. Though Edgar was a remarkably intelligent and handsome youth, he had at the same time an exceedingly delicate chest, and was therefore but ill-adapted to the labour of weaving. He had, moreover, a good address and manner, and wrote a beautiful hand, and was thus well adapted for the counting-house.

Having arrived at this conclusion, the doctor called the following morning on his old friends, Messrs. Barbet & Beuzeville, and asked them whether they had any vacancy in their counting-house for an intelligent lad, or were acquainted with any of the manufacturers in whose office there might be a vacancy. He further explained who Edgar was, and enumerated his various qualifications, dwelling particularly on his knowledge of

the French language. At first the firm seemed but little inclined to entertain the question, but at last agreed to take the boy into their office, if he really could speak and write the French language correctly.

Dr. D'Aubigny's ordinarily calm and kind eye now positively lighted up with pleasure.

"I defy you, Mr. Barbet," he said, with great pride in his tone, "to find in Spitalfields a better French scholar than Edgar, or a more thorough Protestant of true Huguenot principles. Let me bring him here, and judge for yourself."

"Agreed," said Mr. Barbet, smiling, possibly at the doctor's ideas of Huguenot principles being a counting-house qualification. "Bring him here, and we will see what he is worth."

The same afternoon the doctor conducted Edgar to Spital Square ; and having received a proof of his good handwriting and knowledge of figures, aided possibly by his pleasing appearance and address, the firm consented to take him for a few months on trial. "I cannot tell you," said Mr. Barbet, "what salary we shall offer him till we see what he can do ; but we will allow him five shillings a week till we decide positively on the matter. Does that meet your views, doctor ?"

"Perfectly ; and I am much obliged to you for your kindness."

Great indeed was Mrs. Waldron's joy at her son's being employed as a "clerk" (as she persisted in calling him)

in a good house of business. Indeed, so much was she elated, that the doctor began to fear that she might fall into the feminine weakness of regarding herself as thereby much elevated in society, and claiming a sort of precedence over other women in her own station. To avert the possibility of this danger, the doctor, to Mrs. Waldron's great disgust, invariably spoke of Edgar's occupation as that of an office-boy. Mrs. Waldron, who held the doctor in great fear and reverence, would on these occasions offer no remonstrance; but as soon as she was out of his presence, she, with a determination equal to that of Galileo, would stamp her foot and say, "He's a clerk, for all that!"

During the next two years Edgar continued in his situation, giving great satisfaction to his employers; so much, indeed, was this the case, that his salary had been raised from five to fifteen shillings a week. Nor was this sum in excess of his merits, for, very soon after his entrance into the firm, he was entrusted with the keeping of the book in which were inserted the copies of all letters forwarded to the French correspondents, and even with writing letters in that language for the partners' signatures. He still continued to reside with Dr. D'Aubigny, who refused to receive any payment for his board and lodging, but stipulated that he should place in his hands one-third of his earnings, so that, in case he ever changed his present occupation, or was in want of a sum of money, he would have his own economies to fall back upon.

All things, however, did not go on quite smoothly in the doctor's establishment, for Mrs. Waldron occasionally gave him some uneasiness. She was intensely proud of her son, though for this he could hardly blame her. Still, matters went on without anything particularly objectionable occurring till one Christmas-day, when Edgar's employers told him they were so pleased with his behaviour that they wished to make him a present of five pounds, which was not to be considered as part of his salary. Edgar, highly pleased, informed the doctor of the circumstance, who on this occasion told him that he might keep it in his own possession, and do what he liked with it. Edgar thanked the doctor for the permission, and in a very few moments determined to what use he would apply the gift he had received. On New Year's Day he presented his mother with a black silk dress which he had purchased with it ; and, it is almost needless to say, she was much delighted with this mark of her son's affection. Many were the consultations—all, by-the-way, unknown to the doctor—which were held with a milliner in the neighbourhood on the manner in which it was to be made up. The dress was at last completed, and to do her justice, Mrs. Waldron looked remarkably well in it, for, although no longer young, thanks to the quiet life she had lived for some years, she had recovered no inconsiderable portion of her former beauty. Edgar's eyes, when he saw his mother in her new attire, plainly expressed his admiration ; and it must be confessed she

felt not a little flattered by it. The idea then crossed her mind that she ought to dress well, if only as a mark of respect to her son, whose position she considered was now completely that of a gentleman; and as such, she argued, he ought to have no occasion to blush for the meanness of his mother's dress. The doctor perceived that if Mrs. Waldron—who, with all her good qualities, he knew well was a thorough woman at heart—allowed her taste for dress to run its course it might in time become a serious tax on her son's earnings. However, he had permitted Edgar to spend the five pounds as he pleased, and he therefore determined to make no further remark on the subject, resolving that if he saw her attempting to indulge her new taste further he would put a stop to it.

The doctor had not long to wait before Mrs. Waldron gave him the opportunity. One day, when she did not imagine he was within earshot, he overheard her telling a neighbour, who had been complimenting her on her new dress, that it was her intention, as soon as she could afford it, to purchase a handsome silk bonnet she had seen in a shop-window in Shoreditch. The same evening, when Edgar was absent from the house and Mary had gone to bed, the doctor took the opportunity of remonstrating with Mrs. Waldron on her love of dress. With a touch of sternness in his manner, he requested she would never speak on the subject either to her niece or Edgar, as the latter might possibly be induced to spend

more money in making presents to her than he could afford. Mrs. Waldron promised, though with a very bad grace, that she would obey him. "I have no wish," she said, "to be a tax on my boy. Thank God, I am able to earn my own living, and can dress as I please, without being indebted to any one." The doctor quietly remarked that trade at that moment was so very slack that many weavers were out of employment, and that if Mr. Beuzeville (he advisedly made use of this partner's name, knowing that Mrs. Waldron stood in especial dread of him) found out that she could afford to dress so well, he might consider it an act of kindness to give his work to some other woman, who stood in greater need of it. This argument completely silenced all opposition on Mrs. Waldron's part; and she had good sense enough for the future to keep her taste for dress within moderate bounds.

Although the amount of interest taken by the doctor in the welfare of the two children was certainly equal, a marked difference was perceptible in the manner in which it displayed itself. Towards Edgar it was that which an honourable guardian would take in his ward; with Mary, on the contrary, it was that of an affectionate father for a much-loved and only child. Apart from the absence of expression in her face, occasioned by the want of eyesight, Mary was now a very pretty girl, tall for her age, with a good figure, highly intelligent, and of an amiable disposition. Suffering under her terrible affliction,

her education, according to our modern views, might have been considered somewhat backward, yet hardly so much so as might have been expected. The doctor had taken her education under his especial care. From the first he had endeavoured to instruct her in the French language, making her learn daily by rote a certain number of words, and then forming them into sentences, till at length she was enabled to speak the language with tolerable facility. He then determined to push her education further; and to accomplish this he made a study of Huay's system of teaching the blind to read by embossed characters, and, at a considerable expense to himself, he obtained from France an embossed edition of the four Gospels; and to his great joy Mary was soon enabled to read them with tolerable facility. She had also a quick ear for music, and, for so young a girl, a fine sympathetic voice. Through the aid of the organist of the chapel he also taught her to sing several of the old French Protestant hymns, especially those composed by Guillaume Franc and Claude Gondimel; and he had no greater treat than to listen to the poor girl singing these hymns, as she was sitting by his side during the services in the Temple.

Nor was the love the doctor bore to Mary without its due return. The affection and esteem she held him in could not have been surpassed even if he had been her own father. Her behaviour to the doctor was very singular. She evidently felt great gratitude for his kind-

ness to her, but expressed it rather by little attentions than by words. She had under her care his dressing-gown and slippers as well as his tobacco-jar and pipe, and the latter she would regularly place on the table for him in the evening. She would always brush his hat before he left home in the morning, and previous to his starting she would go out into the little garden at the back of the house to ascertain what sort of weather it was, for although blind her nervous organization was so acute that she could easily distinguish any dampness in the atmosphere, and the consequent probability of rain. She would then re-enter the house, and present the doctor with his hat and his stick or umbrella, as the case might be. The doctor in his turn used jestingly to call her *Mary Barometer*, as he said he could be certain that her prognostications respecting the weather would be correct, and unhesitatingly took his stick or umbrella from her hand without troubling himself further in the matter.

But perhaps the most singular portion of *Mary's* other self-assigned duties was the superintendence of the pigeon-loft. Although of course the birds were at first frightened at the appearance of a stranger, they quickly became used to her, and seemed to treat her with greater confidence than they did either *Mrs. Waldron* or the doctor himself. When *Mary* arrived with the little basket which contained their food, they would pick the seeds from it, as if they quite understood the poor girl was blind, and therefore unable to detect them in their

dishonesty. When the pigeons saw her in the garden they would cluster about her with a familiarity totally different from what they exhibited even towards the doctor. Some would go so far as occasionally to settle on her shoulder, somewhat at first to Mary's alarm, but she soon became accustomed to them.

Although Mrs. Waldron assisted in teaching Mary the duties she had taken upon herself, the good woman did not altogether view with unmixed satisfaction the girl's endeavours to please the doctor. It certainly gave her pleasure to notice the influence Mary obtained over him, but at the same time she was not wholly without a feeling of jealousy lest she might supplant Edgar in his good graces. However, she had but little cause for alarm, as he continued to be as fond as ever of Edgar. There was also another matter which gave her some uneasiness, namely, whether an attachment might not in time spring up between Edgar and his cousin. They were both now young, she admitted; still they were both getting quite old enough to entertain thoughts of the kind. Edgar was now between seventeen and eighteen years of age, and Mary sixteen. True, up to the present time nothing but brotherly and sisterly affection had existed between them, but in another year or two that might assume a different form. However, for the moment there was nothing to alarm her, and so she determined for the future to watch them carefully, and then to act energetically should the matter require her interference.



CHAPTER IX.

THE CAMELLIA.

WHEN Edgar was about nineteen years of age, Mrs. Waldron was one morning greatly surprised by the receipt of a letter from Australia. It was from her husband, and the first that she had received from him since he left England, for although she had written to him several times, she had never received an answer, and, with possibly something like female vanity in her argument, she had begun to consider that he might be dead. But even when labouring under that supposition, it is but justice to her to say she never appeared to entertain the idea of marrying again, which she might easily have done, as she was still a woman of considerable personal attractions.

The letter from Waldron gave his wife immense satisfaction, for not only was it couched in most affectionate terms, but the reasons he gave for his long

silence, if not perfectly logical, were at least flattering to her womanly pride. He told her that a year after he had arrived in the colony, he had been assigned, in consequence of his good behaviour, to a farmer, whom he had served in the capacity of a shepherd for some time, preserving an excellent character the while. In consequence of some worthy action he had performed, he had been released by the Colonial Government from any unremunerative labour, and he had been allowed to earn what money he could, under the condition that he did not quit the colony. He had in consequence squatted on a tract of land with a few sheep, which under his care had vastly increased in numbers, so that he now had become a man of considerable property. At the same time, from his position as a registered convict, he was unable to obtain a legal title to the land on which he had squatted, and the idea had then occurred to him that if Edgar, who was then fast approaching manhood, were to join him, the land might be registered in his name, and so, if they continued sheep-farming together, they might in the end become persons of standing in the colony.

Another advantage would accrue, he said, from Edgar joining him. As he was then situated, at a distance from civilized society, he had no means of quitting his farm without the danger of losing his flock, which would not be the case were Edgar with him. He wished particularly to build himself something like a

decent sort of residence, for he now lived in a wretched hut, without any of the appliances of civilized life; and were Edgar there, his first action would be to build himself a commodious dwelling,—one, in fact, in which a woman could live,—and he would then wish her to join him. He concluded his letter by stating that he had sent over sufficient money for Edgar's passage and outfit, and named the bankers in London in whose hands it would be found. Although the letter had been addressed to Mrs. Waldron, at Dr. D'Aubigny's, the doctor's name was not mentioned in it, nor was a word said about Mary.

Mrs. Waldron, when she had read the letter, thought it only a proper compliment to pay to the doctor to inform him of its contents, and ask for his opinion on the subject. Although Dr. D'Aubigny loved Edgar almost as his own son, and naturally felt great sorrow at the idea of his leaving him, he was too conscientious a man to let his own affection stand in the way of the lad's preferment. With considerable sorrow in his tone he advised Mrs. Waldron to let Edgar go, as there was little doubt it would be greatly to his advantage. "At the same time," he continued, "Edgar should be consulted on the subject. This evening we will bring it under his notice, and then, without insisting on any definite reply from him, we will let him sleep over it, and obtain his decided answer to-morrow morning."

Mrs. Waldron agreed to the doctor's suggestion that

Edgar should be informed of the contents of his father's letter in the evening, and the conversation for the moment dropped, the doctor having to leave the house to visit a patient. As he was about starting, Mary as usual brought him his hat and umbrella, but when thanking the girl, he could not help remarking the singularly sad expression which was on her countenance at the moment.

"Has anything happened to annoy you, my dear?" he said, thinking perhaps some misunderstanding might have occurred between her and her aunt.

"Nothing whatever," she replied, forcing a smile, which instantly vanished, while a tear gathered in her eye. "Nothing has occurred to vex me, but I don't feel very well."

"Well, my dear, if you don't feel better when I come back, let me know what is the matter, and see if I can't remedy it." So saying, he kissed her and left the house.

The sad expression on Mary's face, as well as the tear in her eye, dwelt strongly in the mind of the doctor as he walked along. The idea that it could have been caused by any misunderstanding with her aunt soon vanished, as he knew well that that lady had been in a singularly good temper during the whole of the morning; and then it occurred to him, could it possibly have arisen from anything connected with the letter Mrs. Waldron had received from Australia? But then, he thought, how could Mary be interested in the matter? Suddenly the whole

truth flashed across his mind—she had conceived an affection for her cousin, and it was the thought of his being separated from her which had caused her sorrow. The conclusion he had now arrived at tended to confirm him in the idea that Edgar had better accept his father's invitation; not that he considered for a moment that his beloved Mary was not admirably adapted in every respect but one for Edgar's wife, but that one objection was insuperable. Edgar would have to work his way up in the world, and the doctor had no doubt he had full energy to succeed; but were he clogged with a blind helpmate, bitter misery would be the lot of both. So, all things considered, it was better that Edgar should leave; and, pained as he should be in parting from him, he would sacrifice his own feelings rather than throw any impediment in his way.

After Edgar had returned home that evening Mrs. Waldron informed him of the contents of his father's letter, dwelling especially upon his wish that he should join him in the colony. Edgar, as may easily be supposed, was overwhelmed with the intelligence, and remained speechless for some moments, gazing alternately at the faces of his mother and the doctor, as if waiting to hear their opinion on the matter. The doctor was the first to break silence.

“Edgar, my boy,” he said to him, “if you would take my advice, before you definitely decide, you will think carefully over the matter, and, having arrived at a con-

clusion, sleep on it ; then, before leaving your room to-morrow morning, pray that you may be wisely guided as to what steps you should take ; and if you find yourself confirmed in the plan you shall decide on this evening, determine to carry it out. For the present, we will say no more on the matter."

The conversation then turned languidly enough on the ordinary events of the day, the doctor, from time to time, casting scrutinizing glances at Mary, who sat, pale as marble, in a chair by the fireside, without uttering a word beyond pleading a violent headache as an excuse for her silence. The man of science, however, was not deceived by her pretext, but justly attributed her silence to its real cause—the possible departure of Edgar. Mrs. Waldron also occasionally looked at her niece, but with little expression of amiability in her countenance. She too, with the perception of women in matters of the kind, easily understood her feelings, and was angry with what she considered the poor girl's presumption in placing her affections on Edgar ; for his mother looked upon him with feelings of intense pride, and considered that no match, no matter how elevated, would be too high for him. At last the evening came to a close, and the doctor, on bidding Mary good-night, advised her not to get up to breakfast the next morning, as he considered a few hours' longer rest might be beneficial to her. It need hardly be said that the doctor's reason was not the genuine one. He knew the strong probability that

Edgar, with the buoyancy of the youthful mind, if from no other cause, would decide on leaving England ; and he thought it better that Mary should not be present when Edgar admitted that he wished to join his father.

The next morning, when they had assembled at breakfast, Edgar told the doctor that he had strictly followed his advice, and that he had resolved to leave England.

“ I think you are quite right, Edgar,” said the doctor ; “ for much as it will pain me to lose you, there appears to me to be a far better opening for you in Australia, than, without capital to back you, you are likely to find in England. To-day I will call on your employers, and inform them of the conclusion you have arrived at, and ask them how long it will be before they can dispense with your services ; for you must not put them to any inconvenience, as they have always behaved to you with great kindness and consideration. Before speaking to them, however, I will go into the city and find what ships are likely soon to leave for Sydney, and also see that the money for your outfit and passage is ready for you at the bankers’, so that all may be definitively settled to-day.”

This being decided on, and the doctor finding that a ship was likely to sail in a week or ten days, and that the money had been lodged at the bankers’, he called on Mr. Barbet, and informed him of all that had taken place. That gentleman, although he was sorry to lose

Edgar, gave him permission to leave that day week, expressing at the same time his high satisfaction at the manner in which he had conducted himself while in the service of the firm.

During the week which elapsed before Edgar was to leave the house of business, preparations were made for his departure. Although Edgar was not to leave home till the evening, he determined to take farewell of Mr. Barbet in the morning, so that he might have the rest of the day to himself. When he reached the counting-house he found in it both partners, who received him in a very friendly manner. They continued talking together very amicably, as to his prospects in the colony, when his mother was to join him, and whether his blind cousin would go with her, and other questions of the same description. While the conversation was going on, Mr. Barbet, noticing that Edgar's attention was attracted to a very beautiful *camellia japonica* flower which he had brought up with him from his country-house in the morning, and had placed in a tumbler of water on the desk before him, asked him whether he had ever seen a more beautiful flower of the kind.

"Never," said Edgar; "nor have I ever seen one of the sort before at all."

"They are certainly very rare in England," said Mr. Barbet. "But take it with you if you please; and you may give it to your poor blind cousin if you like. She is a great favourite of mine."

Edgar thanked Mr. Barbet for his kindness, and, taking the flower with him, he bade him adieu and left the house.

When Edgar reached home he found that the doctor had gone out on his rounds, and that his mother was engaged in some household work upstairs, Mary being at the time in the garden. He immediately went to her, sorely to the annoyance of the pigeons that had gathered round her, and which flew away discontentedly at his approach.

“Mary,” he said, “I have brought you a present. Try if you can tell me what it is.” And so saying he placed the camellia in her left hand.

Mary examined the flower attentively with the fingers of her right hand, and so delicate was her sense of touch that she soon arrived at a perfect appreciation of its form, though of course its colour was unknown to her.

“I have no idea,” she said to Edgar, “what flower it is, but it must be very beautiful to those who can see it. What colour is it?”

“It is a beautiful white,” he said. “Whiter than marble—whiter than your own hand, Mary; and no woman has a whiter.”

Mary seemed touched by the compliment, but said nothing; possibly hoping that something else might follow. Edgar, however, merely explained to her that the flower was a rare one in England, and then told her

from what country it came, and a few other circumstances connected with it, all of which he had heard from Mr. Barbet. Mary merely sighed, and was upon the point of returning the flower to Edgar, when he said, half jestingly, "No, Mary, keep it yourself; it will serve to remind you of me when I'm gone; at least till it fades away. But don't forget me after that," he continued, with something more of sympathy in his tone than he had hitherto displayed. "We have always been very good friends, Mary. I shall often think of you, and I hope you'll do the same of me, although there will be thousands of miles between us."

Mary's feelings at the moment were too much agitated to allow her to speak. What reply she might have made when she recovered her self-possession is somewhat difficult to say, but their conversation was brought abruptly to a close by Mrs. Waldron, who had, unseen by them, been watching the pair from the bedroom window, and, judging from appearances, thought it was better not to allow the interview to last longer. With something very like sharpness in her tone, she told Mary that as Edgar had not yet finished his packing it would be better if she allowed him to go on with it rather than detain him chatting with her; and she then asked Edgar to come indoors, and she would assist him in what he had yet to do. Edgar obeyed her, and Mary was left alone in the garden.

For some time the poor girl remained mechanically

examining the flower with her fingers, her thoughts the while evidently engaged on some other subject. Then suddenly she gently kissed the flower, and placing it in her bosom walked cautiously to the little side flower-beds in the garden, and feeling among the plants, plucked a few cowslips, one or two lilies of the valley, and some violets, using the while an amount of tact in the choice of the flowers which a person endowed with the keenest eyesight could hardly have exceeded. It is said that many sensitive blind girls, when their minds are not earnestly fixed on some particular subject, become aware when any person from a distance fixes the gaze intently upon them. If there be any truth in the idea, Mary's mind at the time must have been intently occupied on some particular subject, for her aunt's gaze was from time to time fixed upon her with singular keenness, not only watching her operations intently, but reading her thoughts the while. She said nothing however, for with a woman's tact she easily perceived that she might draw Edgar's attention to the subject, which was a result she was by no means anxious to arrive at; so she resolved to address Mary on her presumption after Edgar had quitted them. She did not, however, cease her espionage on Mary's movements till after the girl had entered the house with the flowers in her hand, little dreaming of the sneer which was impressed on Mrs. Waldron's features at the moment.

Mary now went to her room and made some little

alterations in her dress, prior to their meeting at the tea-table in the evening, as Edgar was not to quit them till the meal was over. Blind as she was, and unable to distinguish colour, or even shape without feeling it, the poor girl instinctively knew the value of female personal attractions. She not only arranged her dress with the greatest care and neatness, fixing the camellia, as if by way of ornament, in her breast, but she took particular care in dressing her hair. By way of making the last impression on the mind of Edgar a pleasing one, she had placed a bow of ribbons belonging to her aunt in her hair, totally unconscious at the time she did so that the colours were quite faded—so much so, that it had been cast aside by Mrs. Waldron as utterly worthless. She then tied neatly together with a piece of thread the flowers she had gathered, intending to place them in Edgar's hands the moment he bade her adieu, and put them aside, so that she might take them up again at a convenient moment.

The doctor now arrived at home, and, Edgar's luggage being in complete readiness, the family sat down to their evening meal. It was in every respect a sad one; little conversation—and that very forced—took place between Mrs. Waldron, the doctor, and Edgar; and if a smile arose on the features of either, it was so artificial that it rather made the expression of their countenances still more painful from its very falseness. Mary sat in her chair the whole time, pale as a marble statue, and

without uttering a word. The doctor's mind was too much occupied with the idea of parting with Edgar to pay the girl much attention, though, in fact, he perfectly understood the train of thought which occupied her brain at the time. Not so, however, Mrs. Waldron. Distressed as she was at the idea of parting with her son, she could not suppress a feeling of indignation at the thoughts she knew were at the moment occupying her niece's mind; still, however, she said nothing, reserving all explanation on the subject till Edgar had departed.

Their evening repast was now over, and the time had arrived for Edgar to join the ship. The doctor proposed to accompany him and see him safe on board. The man who had been engaged to carry his luggage had also arrived, and had already started on his way. The signal for departure having been given by the doctor, they all arose, and Mary, taking in her hand the little bouquet of flowers which she had hitherto concealed, prepared to place them in that of Edgar when bidding him good-bye. Mrs. Waldron, to do her justice, was overcome with emotion when parting from her son, so much so indeed as even for the moment to have forgotten Mary's presence. She clung round his neck, the tears pouring down her face the while, and sobbed convulsively on his breast, and this so forcibly as to create some alarm in the doctor's mind lest her sorrow might end in a fit of hysterics. He now again warned Edgar that it was time to depart, and he,

releasing himself from his mother's embrace, held out his hand to wish Mary farewell, who had hitherto stood by silently weeping. In consequence of her blindness, Mary somewhat maladroitly attempted to place the nosegay in her cousin's hand; but, he being unaware of her intention, the flowers dropped on the ground without his noticing them, and immediately the doctor and Edgar left the house.

For some moments after they had departed, Mrs. Waldron stood at the door watching them, and Mary, unaware of the fall of her flowers, had entered her bedroom, and seating herself, wept quietly. Mrs. Waldron, having gazed after her son till he was no longer to be seen, entered the house, and saw through her tears the little bouquet of flowers lying on the shop-floor, and in a moment understood all. Her sorrow now fairly gave way to anger. Picking up the flowers and calling the girl down into the little sitting-room, and fixing her eyes sternly upon her for some moments, she kept silent, though evidently with great difficulty. Mary, conscious that her aunt's gaze was upon her, again began crying.

"What are you crying about, Mary?" asked her aunt sternly.

Startled at the sound of her aunt's voice, Mary at first attempted to control herself, but finding it impossible to conjure up any answer, she instead burst into a still more violent flood of tears, without making

the slightest attempt to restrain or conceal them. Mrs. Waldron, now fairly in a passion, said :

“Don’t sit there, Mary, making a fool of yourself ; if you can’t behave with common sense you had better go upstairs again and hide yourself. You think perhaps I don’t understand you, but I do, and quite well too, I can assure you. The sooner you get all that sort of nonsense out of your head the better. Nice gratitude, indeed, for all the kindness I have shown you !”

“I am sure, aunt, I don’t know what you mean,” said Mary, sobbing. “I can’t help crying. I don’t know what’s the matter with me.”

“Of course not,” said Mrs. Waldron satirically ; “of course not, how should you ? I know well enough though. You had no particular reason, I suppose, for picking that nosegay, which you hid in the corner of the room to give to Edgar when he went away, and which he didn’t care about, but let fall down on the floor without paying any attention to it. There it is, if you want it,” she continued, throwing it into her lap ; “it possibly may do for somebody else when the time comes, for you may be sure Edgar don’t care about such as you. You had no particular purpose in wearing that flower in your breast all the afternoon ? There, take great care of it ; I suspect it’ll be a long time before you get another from him. You had no particular intention, I suppose, in putting that old worn-out bow of mine, with all its colour

gone, into your hair? Oh, if you only knew how ridiculous you looked !”

Mary could bear this no longer, and hurried upstairs into her bedroom ; leaning her back against the bed, she covered her face with her hands and wept bitterly. The act of the blind girl hiding her face, though knowing no one was in the room to see her, told how much shame was mixed up with her sorrow. One by one the taunts of her aunt then came back to her mind. They commenced with the poor little crushed nosegay, and ended with the bow of faded ribbon. The horrible idea then struck her that her aunt might have spoken the truth when she said that the worn-out bow had made her appear ridiculous in Edgar's eyes. In a fit of rage she snatched the ribbon from her hair, and throwing it on the ground stamped upon it, so strong was the indignation she felt against it at the moment. Suddenly she heard her aunt, who had remained in the room beneath, say at the foot of the stairs :

“ Do you want anything, Mary ? ”

“ Nothing, thank you, aunt,” said Mary.

“ Why did you stamp then ? ” said Mrs. Waldron, again resuming her occupation in the sitting-room.

Mary, greatly ashamed of her behaviour, now picked up the ribbon and placed it in her aunt's drawer. She then seated herself in a chair, and remained motionless till she heard the doctor enter the house. She now untied her little nosegay and threw it out of window,

and afterwards placed her camellia carefully away in her own drawer, determining she would never part with it. Afterwards, to escape from meeting the doctor, she commenced undressing herself, and went to bed, leaving her aunt to find some excuse for her non-appearance at the supper-table.



CHAPTER X.

MRS. LE BRUMENT.

THE morning after Edgar's departure the doctor, Mrs. Waldron, and Mary assembled as usual at the breakfast-table. A feeling of depression seemed to weigh upon the whole party, and little conversation passed between them, all apparently being occupied with their own thoughts. Before leaving the house, however, to visit his patients the doctor somewhat recovered himself, and he proposed to Mrs. Waldron that certain alterations in the domestic arrangements should be carried out. Edgar had hitherto occupied the front top-room, in which was the loom, and Mrs. Waldron and her niece the one behind the doctor's, on the first floor. As this was very small—no larger, in fact, than the little sitting-room already described—the doctor justly considered that, for sanitary reasons, it was hardly fit to be the sleeping apartment of two adults, and he now proposed to Mrs.

Waldron that for the future she should occupy the one Edgar had slept in, and Mary should continue in the room she and her aunt had hitherto occupied. She offered no objection to the arrangement; in fact, in her depressed state of mind at the absence of her son, she hardly possessed the energy to do so, even if she had not approved of it. Moreover she had still rankling in her mind an angry feeling towards Mary for what she considered the presumption she had shown in her love for Edgar, and therefore felt less objection to being separated from her.

Two or three days now passed over without the sensation of depression which hung over the family in any way clearing off. In Mary's case it was particularly visible. She was silent and reserved, and although she answered every question put to her in her habitual mild manner, she never asked any, nor did she offer a remark respecting any subject which the doctor or her aunt might be conversing on. Both Mrs. Waldron and the doctor understood perfectly the cause of the girl's silence, but the effect it produced on their minds was totally different. Although her aunt said nothing to Mary on the subject, her anger against her seemed rather to increase than diminish. She was in that abnormal state of mind, frequently to be found in persons when mentally suffering from any loss they may have sustained, which increases their natural irritability at any real or supposed subject of annoyance which may present itself

to their imagination. She seemed in fact to have conceived the absurd idea that for any one to love Edgar was infringing on her rights, and this feeling was the greater from the love she bore him herself.

The doctor, however, took a different view of the matter. He understood perfectly well the cause of the girl's mental depression, but he consoled himself with the idea that as time passed on it would die a natural death. But so far from this being the case, it not only continued, but was evidently beginning to prey upon her health, and he now began to turn over in his mind some plan which might relieve her from a portion at any rate of the sorrow she was feeling, which he well knew was the proximate cause of the extreme pallor visible on her features. With this design, he one fine morning proposed that she should accompany him on a visit to a patient whom she had occasionally met, and who in her way was as perfect a type of the old Spitalfields weaver as Mrs. Dubosq herself. The individual alluded to was a certain Widow Le Brument, who lived in a small four-roomed house about half-a-mile in an easterly direction from the doctor's. She and her husband were both descended from good French families, and had also preserved many of the characteristics of the better class of French emigrants. Their parents were among the first who had settled in Bethnal Green after the renewal of the persecution under Louis XV. Mrs. Le Brument, who had been a widow for some

sixteen years, was a remarkably neat, stately-looking old lady. Although during a considerable portion of her married life she had been a weaver, she had received before she left France what in those days was considered a good education. She moreover was proud of her family (a weakness common among the old French Spitalfields weavers towards the end of the last century), although she endeavoured to conceal it carefully from her Saxon neighbours. She nevertheless maintained a certain rigidity of deportment, as well as a slight peculiarity in her dress, which she considered as consistent with her foreign origin and good birth. She was among those who at that day still spoke French, and always conversed in that language when she could find an opportunity. It had been the language of her childhood; she had been all her life in the daily habit of reading a chapter from the French Bible; and morning and evening she offered up to Heaven her prayers in that language. Of her four children, one only remained alive, a girl, who had been apprenticed to a fashionable milliner, and, having completed her apprenticeship, had a few days before returned to her mother's home.

Mary willingly accepted the doctor's invitation, and they soon afterwards left home on the visit to Mrs. Le Brument. The fresh air of the morning and the warm sun had a most beneficial effect upon the poor girl, and she conversed with a readiness she had not shown since her cousin's departure. They continued to talk on

very agreeably together until they had reached Mrs. Le Brument's house. The old lady received them in a very friendly manner, and introduced them to her daughter, who was able to converse as fluently as her mother in the French language, in which the four now chatted together with great animation. After discoursing on various subjects, their intimacy increasing the while, Mrs. Le Brument confided the news to the doctor that her daughter Clara had now not only quitted the house of business in which she had served her apprenticeship, but was also on the eve of marriage with a young man of great respectability, who had for some time occupied a confidential post in the house of a silk merchant in the city. She further stated that the marriage ceremony was expected to take place in three weeks or a month at the latest.

Although the doctor congratulated Mrs. Le Brument on the event, his interest in it was trifling indeed when compared with that felt by Mary, who while she said nothing listened with the greatest attention to the conversation. Presently Mrs. Le Brument proposed that Clara should take Mary upstairs with her, so that she herself might have a little discussion with the doctor upon some trifling malady for which he at the moment was attending her. No sooner were Mary and Clara Le Brument alone in the bedroom overhead than they both found their tongues, and began to converse with each other with great fluency, the subject of course being the

approaching wedding. And then the trousseau was spoken of; the bridal dress and ornaments were especially dwelt upon; in fact they absorbed the principal portion of the conversation. The poor blind girl, although she was totally ignorant of colour, and had but an imperfect idea of form, possessed, in common with other girls suffering under a similar affliction, an innate love of personal adornment quite as strong as any sighted girl, if not stronger, and was as capable of forming an opinion as to what was becoming and attractive. With great animation she conversed with Clara on the form and taste of the different articles of dress which at the moment were under consideration. She examined each in its turn in a most minute manner, and yet with so much delicacy of touch as not to ruffle a frill or a bow, or the minutest ornament adorning it, expressing with great fluency her opinion the while on the quality and taste of the material and form. But of all the objects which came under her notice, the one which excited the greatest interest in Mary's mind was the bonnet. This she handled with even greater delicacy of touch than the other objects which had been submitted to her, and her pleasure was still further increased when Clara proposed to place it on her (Mary's) head to see how she would look in it. Mary willingly consented, and Clara told her that she looked remarkably well in it, and that it became her exceedingly. And then Mary drew herself up, and with her fingers gently touched the different parts of the

bonnet, evidently forming in her mind some tolerably accurate idea of its form, but a very vague one of how it became her. To describe the impression it made on her mind as to its relative appearance and effect would be a difficult task indeed. One fact is certain, that the poor blind girl had never before been so content with her own personal appearance as she was at that moment.

How long the conversation between Mary and her new friend would have lasted it would be difficult to say, but from the interest evidently felt by the two damsels in the subject under discussion, it is more than probable that it might have endured till nightfall. It was put a stop to, however, by the doctor—the professional part of whose visit was now over—calling to Mary, telling her it was time to return. Clara now took her by the hand and led her downstairs, where the leave-taking was somewhat of the longest. The two girls parted excellent friends, and Clara promised to pay Mary a visit the next morning.

True to her word, the next day, when Mrs. Waldron was away, possibly making some purchases for the household, Clara Le Brument called on Mary, who, after conversing with her friend for a short time, led her up to her bedroom, where they might converse together without fear of interruption. There was no possible reason why the conversation could not have taken place in the ordinary sitting-room, as there was at the time no other person in the house, with the

exception of a little boy in the shop, whom the doctor was in the habit of engaging to mind it while Mrs. Waldron was absent. Even he, however, could have been no impediment to their conversation, inasmuch as they talked together in French, of which language he did not understand even one word. A bedroom, however, seems to be the generally accepted place for confidential conversation between two young ladies, and Mary of course ushered her friend upstairs. The conversation first turned on the approaching marriage, and then on the doctor's establishment, and then the episode of Edgar having left them was also narrated by Mary. As may naturally be imagined, Clara closely cross-examined Mary as to the relationship between herself and Edgar, and little by little drew from the artless girl, not only an admission of the interest she felt in her cousin, but also an account of the gift of the *camellia japonica* which Edgar had made her prior to his departure. Mary went still further, and by way of proving that she was not making any vain boast, she opened one of her drawers and showed her the flower itself, which, although it had already begun to show strong symptoms of decay, had not altogether lost its form.

"But you should put that flower in a box or some other place," said Clara, "if you wish to preserve it."

"I do indeed," said Mary, and in a tone which left no doubt in her friend's mind of the truth of her

statement. As she made no further remark, however, on the subject, Clara continued :

“If left unprotected in that manner, it will get broken to pieces some day.”

“I am afraid it will,” said Mary, “but what am I to do? I have got no box, or I should have put it into it before this, and of course I don't like to ask either the doctor or my aunt for one, as they might ask me what I wanted it for, and I should not like to tell them.”

“That is likely enough,” said Clara. “But I'll tell you what I'll do. I have got at home an old pasteboard glove-box, which will be just large enough to hold it. I have no use for it myself, and if you like to have it I'll bring it to you when I call again, which will be in the course of a day or two.”

Mary thanked her for her offer, and willingly accepted it.

She now placed the camellia in the drawer, and closed it. Clara, seeing a quarto book on the top of the chest, opened it, and finding it was an old French Bible, said to her :

“Is that book yours?”

“No, it is not,” said Mary; “it is a Bible which belonged to my grandmother, Mrs. Dubosq, who at her death left it to Dr. D'Aubigny, as a token of gratitude for the great kindness he had at different times shown to her. As there is a much larger Bible below,” continued Mary, “the doctor asked me to take care of this in my own

room, as he has a great respect for it, and would not like it to be injured. He always uses it on Sunday nights when he reads to us. At other times he reads from the large one you may have seen downstairs."

At this moment a ring was heard at the bell, and Mary, recognizing Mrs. Waldron's footsteps, took Clara below and introduced her. Although Mrs. Waldron knew something of Mrs. Le Brument, not the slightest intimacy existed between them. She however received Clara in a very friendly manner, and the latter then took her leave, promising to call again in a few days.

During the interval which elapsed before Clara repeated her visit, the same coolness and harshness of demeanour was noticeable in the behaviour of Mrs. Waldron towards Mary, or if there was any change it had increased rather than diminished. Again, she could not understand what could have given rise to the intimacy between Clara and Mary. She suspected there was something concealed in it, and at length came to the conclusion that Mary might have made a confidante of her new acquaintance respecting the love she bore to Edgar; and then, probably stimulated by her guilty conscience, she began to fear that Clara knew also of the unkind treatment she had shown the girl. She made no remark, however, on the subject, but determined to watch her niece attentively, so that she might discover whether she had any foundation for her suspicion.

Mrs. Waldron had not long to wait before she became cognisant of all that had taken place between Mary and Clara. One morning when seated at her loom, on hearing the bell ring she stopped her work for a moment, to ascertain who the visitor might be, and a few moments afterwards she heard Mary conducting some female, who was speaking French with her, into her bedroom.

Mrs. Waldron's suspicions were now fully aroused. She slipped off her shoes, and advancing towards the head of the staircase leant over it in such a manner as to perceive what was going forward in Mary's room. She noticed Clara take from under her shawl a small paste-board box, into which Mary carefully put the camellia, and then placing it in her drawer, closed it.

It would be difficult to describe the indignation of Mrs. Waldron at what she considered this rebellious conduct on the part of her niece. Although she had not forgotten the gift of the flower, she had imagined that it had shared the fate of the little bouquet which Mary had prepared as a parting present to Edgar; but now, on the contrary, she found the girl had preserved it with the greatest care. She had also shrewdness enough to understand that as long as that flower, notwithstanding its faded condition, was in Mary's possession there was but little probability of the attachment the girl had formed for her cousin dying a natural death. After deliberating over the subject for some time, Mrs. Waldron

determined she would not speak to Mary about the flower, but instead secretly take it from the box and destroy it; arguing that although Mary might at first feel indignant at such a proceeding, in time her indignation and her love would subside together.

The next day the doctor, having to pay a professional visit to Mrs. Le Brument, took Mary with him; and Mrs. Waldron determined to profit by the opportunity, and put the plan she had conceived the previous day into execution. She now went into Mary's room, but no sooner had she placed herself in front of the chest of drawers, and was on the point of opening them, than suddenly she stopped short, and appeared undecided what to do. The fact was that her eye at the moment had fallen on her mother's Bible, which acted on her with a power of the same description, though not quite so great, as it did when it had protected her from stealing the silk from the loom prior to her husband's trial. It would be difficult to describe exactly the effect it now produced on her. It was not fear, nor that sensation which an individual about to commit an unworthy action feels when he imagines the possibility of his being overlooked; it was rather an appeal to her better feelings, and these Mrs. Waldron, with all her impulsiveness, possessed in abundance. Still the temptation to destroy the flower existed to a certain extent. Before fully deciding she quitted the drawers and seated herself on Mary's bed, and there remained

till her feeling of animosity against the girl had gradually but totally subsided. She then arose from her seat and approached the Bible, and after kissing it reverently she went again into her room, and calmly seating herself at her loom continued to work at it assiduously till the doctor and Mary returned home. Her animosity against Mary never again returned, and if the subject of the camellia ever entered her mind, it left it again without producing any ill effect whatever.

The intimacy between Mary and Clara Le Brument continued to increase, till at length a strong friendship had sprung up between them. This was probably induced by Clara, in common with most other girls similarly situated, feeling the necessity of a confidante about her own age, while Mary on her part had found some one to whom she could confide the attachment she had formed for her cousin, and who could sympathize with her and console her in her sorrows. It may be argued that Clara might have made a confidante of her mother; but Mrs. Le Brument, with all her good qualities and affection for her child, was not a person likely to be chosen for such a purpose—even by her own daughter. With poor Mary the case was infinitely more difficult; for while Mrs. Le Brument might possibly have listened with constrained patience to a description of her daughter's affection for her lover, Mary felt that she would excite nothing but impatience, if not anger, by making a

confession of her affection for Edgar to Mrs. Waldron ; while the doctor, with all his love for her, was not exactly the person a young girl would select as a confidant in circumstances of the kind.

The intimacy between the two girls increased to such an extent that scarcely a day passed without their meeting. About a fortnight before the marriage was to take place, George Le Breton, Clara's lover, was introduced to Mary. The reason for the delay arose from the fact that he had been for several weeks in Coventry on business for the firm by whom he was employed. Of course Mary was unable to form any idea of his personal appearance except from the description given of him by Clara ; and even though she had been able, it could hardly have been more incorrect than the one the poor blind girl had received from Clara's description. According to her, Adonis himself could hardly have surpassed her lover in beauty. To the eye of the ordinary observer he was a well-made young fellow, with a good-natured, amiable expression of countenance, mixed with considerable shrewdness. Highly, however, as she spoke of his integrity and honourable conduct, there was not the slightest taint of exaggeration in her description. He enjoyed the full confidence of the firm, in whose employment he had been for more than ten years, and who were so pleased with him that on his informing them that he was about, in consequence of his approaching marriage, to leave them, rather than part with him they offered him a

considerable increase of salary, enough, in fact, to enable him to meet with prudence the increased expenditure his marriage was likely to incur. Nor was this increase of salary the sole means on which the young couple had to rely. If Clara had no money of her own, she had sufficient ability, from her knowledge of dressmaking, to add considerably to the family exchequer.

It would be a curious study to speculate on the train of thought which must have arisen in the mind of the poor blind girl at the different consultations and discussions at which she was present, respecting the locality in which George and Clara were to live, the manner in which the new household was to be conducted, what furniture would be required, where it should be bought, and many other subjects of equal importance connected with the first start in life of a respectable young couple. With respect to the locality in which they would live, it was decided that they should take a small house near Spital Square, in fact not far distant from Fleur-de-lis Street, the locality in which Mrs. Waldron resided at the opening of our narrative. At first it was proposed that Mrs. Le Brument should reside with them; but that good lady without hesitation declined the offer. She knew too well how frequently an arrangement of the kind tended to diminish the good feeling which ought to exist between a mother and her son-in-law. And this was the only reason which made her decline the proposition. She was tenderly attached to her daughter, and had already

conceived a feeling scarcely less than positive affection for her son-in-law, while this was still further increased by some inquiries which had been made about the history of the young fellow's family, which had proved to demonstration that he was of honourable Norman descent. Again, another point which endeared him to her was the fact that he was a fluent French scholar ; indeed he had for some years conducted the correspondence of the firm with their different agents, as well as merchants residing in France. Altogether the old lady looked upon the marriage with feelings of so much satisfaction that she determined no undue intimacy should interfere with the happiness of the young couple, and this conclusion she arrived at the more readily as it was not more than a healthy walk from the house they had selected to her own.

And now arose the important subject of furnishing, and here Clara took Mary completely into her confidence. Nor was the blind girl as ignorant on a subject of the kind as might at first be imagined. Notwithstanding her infirmity she managed no inconsiderable portion of the domestic arrangements of the doctor's house, besides attending to his personal comforts. It was interesting to see the intelligent manner in which Mary made herself acquainted with the form and shape of the rooms in the new house her friend was to reside in, and the position in which the different articles of furniture about to be purchased were to be placed. In a short time she knew not only every part of the dwelling, but the form,

shape, and position of every article of furniture placed in it; nor was a new purchase made without Clara or George Le Breton consulting Mary on it, rather perhaps from the great pleasure they perceived it gave her than for any real necessity which existed for her opinion on the matter.



CHAPTER XI.

THE WEDDING.

AT last the happy day arrived for George Le Breton and Clara Le Brument to become man and wife. It was decided that the wedding, in order that it might be perfectly legal, should first take place in Bethnal Green Church, so that it might be duly registered, and that afterwards the party should repair to the John Street Temple, for the purpose of its being performed according to the old Huguenot service, and also to receive the pastor's benediction—a custom which, at the time we are speaking of, was still in vogue among the old French residents in the neighbourhood. It must be admitted, however, that the number of these ceremonies performed in the building had of late years considerably diminished, many of the old inhabitants having migrated westward, so as to reside as near as possible to the houses of the large silk manufacturers, who then resided

in or near Spital Square, while others again had risen considerably in social position, and had altogether quitted the neighbourhood. The first ceremony over, the party were to return to the doctor's house, where what is now termed the wedding-breakfast (though dinner, perhaps, would have been the more appropriate term at the time) was to be partaken of. Afterwards they were to repair to the Temple; and, both ceremonies finished, the young couple were to retire to their own dwelling, leaving the guests to amuse themselves as they best might.

There was a double reason for the festivities which were to take place after the wedding being held at the doctor's house. Several persons had been invited, and small as the accommodation afforded in his dwelling might be, it was spacious indeed when compared with that of Mrs. Le Brument's. Moreover, the worthy man took great interest in the whole affair. Not only was Mrs. Le Brument, with whom he was intimate in their childhood, a great favourite of his, but he also considered her an excellent example of the now fast diminishing old French aristocratical element in the neighbourhood. Again, there were to be present two or three other individuals with whom he was on excellent terms. There was a certain Mr. Du Val, a solicitor in good practice, with whom he had been on intimate terms for many years, in fact ever since his father had acted as solicitor in the purchase of the old John Street

Chapel, and who had always taken great interest in the new one. It should further be stated that Mr. Du Val had been the solicitor engaged in the defence of Waldron when on his trial for the robbery committed in the warehouse of Messrs. Barbet & Beuzeville, in Spital Square. There would also be the Rev. M. Pénon, the pastor of the chapel,—who was to perform the French service,—and his wife. Mr. Du Val would also bring with him an elderly French lady, a certain Countess Beauregard, a member of a very aristocratic family, but now, alas, utterly destitute, and an inmate of the Hospice in the City Road.

The whole affair was a gala-day not only to the guests, but to the doctor in particular; and he had made preparations for their entertainment on what, for a man of his economical principles, might be termed a scale of great liberality. He was also particularly flattered at the prospect of again seeing the old countess, whom formerly he had held in great consideration on account of her high aristocratic manners and amiable and graceful bearing. She had also been present at the dedication of the Temple, in December, 1765, and had accompanied the Rev. Pastor Boudillon, the celebrated minister of the French Church in Moorfields, who had preached the sermon. In fact, by way of doing honour to the occasion, as well as appearing in an interesting light in the eyes of the countess, the doctor had dressed himself with much care—his hair was powdered with great nicety,

and the queue plaited in a most artistic manner. He wore a claret-coloured coat, with bright steel buttons and large flaps—which had been, in fact, his own marriage garment, and which he only donned on extraordinary occasions. He also wore a handsome richly embroidered silk waistcoat, open in front to a great extent, so as to display in the most advantageous manner the *jabot* of his shirt, which was of fine old lace, as well as the end of the cravat which fell over it. The whole of these had probably done duty on his own wedding-day, and were certainly the only articles of the kind which now adorned his wardrobe. He bore, however, upon him another object worthy of remark; it was an old gold French snuff-box—the only article of luxury which he possessed, and which only saw the light on the same occasions as the coat and waistcoat. It may further be remarked that the doctor was not an habitual snuff-taker,—not so much because he disliked the practice, but rather that he considered it as a waste of money which might be better employed,—and it is more than probable that the small quantity of snuff which was to be found in it on the present occasion had remained there undisturbed for many years.

The doctor and Mary now proceeded to the parish church, Mrs. Waldron remaining at home busy in making preparations for the festival which was to take place after the religious ceremony was over. They were the first of the party to arrive, although Mrs. Le Brument and her

daughter shortly afterwards joined them, and then after an interval of a few moments George Le Breton made his appearance. All being in readiness, the party were led by the pew-opener to the altar, where the clergyman was waiting to receive them. Little took place during the ceremony worthy of particular notice, with the exception of the profound attention perceptible on Mary's sightless countenance as she drank in every word which the minister uttered, possibly attempting to realize in her own mind what her feelings would be when she and Edgar might hereafter be the principal actors in a ceremony of the kind, not for a moment taking into consideration the many difficulties and improbabilities which had to be surmounted before such a result could take place.

The marriage ceremony being over, and the registration in the vestry completed, the party left the church and returned to the doctor's house, there to partake of the refreshments that had been provided for them. The ceremony of the benediction in the Temple, as before stated, was to be performed in the afternoon. There is no record to say whether any bridecake was cut upon the occasion, or whether any of the commonplace, stereotyped speeches now in vogue were made by any of the guests. Certain however it is, that of the little party then present there was not one that did not sincerely wish the young couple every happiness and success in their career through life, and all passed off in the most

amicable manner till it was time for them to repair to the Temple. On their arrival they found not only the pastor awaiting them, but also Mr. Du Val, the countess, and a French Protestant gentleman, a friend of Mr. Du Val's, who had lately arrived in England, and, profiting by the opportunity, had accompanied him, as on a sort of pilgrimage, to a locality where so many of their French Protestant ancestors had found hospitable shelter and protection in England. A short conversation ensued between them before the ceremony began, during which the doctor renewed his acquaintance with the old countess. Nothing could exceed the courtly manner in which the recognition took place on both sides. It may here be remarked that the doctor's habitual manner was that simple unaffected address common to the English medical practitioner in a poor neighbourhood, but no sooner did he put on his claret-coloured coat and embroidered waistcoat, than he was immediately the courtly French gentleman of the middle of the last century. True, when he left France he was but an infant; but, as he grew older, he watched and admired the habitual courtesy shown towards each other, not only by the old French emigrants, but by the new arrivals as well; and the renewal of his acquaintance with the old countess—who, by the way, was some years his senior—had now developed his admiration to its fullest extent. Nor was his evident admiration thrown away upon her. She seemed to regard him with great, though strictly

proper interest, and scanned his appearance with much minuteness. Nor was either without good excuse, for they appeared perfect models of the old aristocratic school. Not only was the doctor, to her taste, dressed to perfection, but she, on her part, through all her misfortunes, had contrived to preserve intact some few becoming articles of dress, which she now wore, and which set off her really dignified manners and gray hair to great advantage. One article, however, which she possessed, and which she now made use of, although there was but little occasion for it, was a powerful rival to the doctor's gold snuff-box. It was a handsome Louis Quatorze fan, which she manœuvred with great grace, fully equal to, or probably surpassing, that of the doctor when he drew his snuff-box from his pocket, and on which, it may be here stated, the countess's eye fell with a considerable amount of envy perceptible in it.

We will not detain the reader with any account of the ceremony, which was simple but reverent in the extreme. As soon as it was over, the whole party returned to the doctor's house. It may possibly have already crossed the reader's mind that so numerous a body of guests must have been inconveniently crowded in the restricted space to be found in his humble dwelling. There was, however, as before stated in our description of the doctor's house, a very pretty garden at the back of it, kept with scrupulous care, and, fortunately, it was the middle of summer, and the weather warm and genial. In this garden

Mrs. Waldron, with considerable difficulty, had placed a table covered with refreshments, with chairs around it, so that the company might remain at their ease. It had been arranged that, after their arrival at the house, George Le Breton and his wife should depart to their own home, such a thing as a wedding-trip at that time, especially in their comparatively humble circumstances, being unknown. Of course the ladies had many things to speak of, as well as the bride some alteration to make in her costume before she quitted the house ; so they all went up into the doctor's bedroom, where they could converse together without interruption, the gentlemen remaining below in the garden. During a few moments' conversation between the doctor and Mr. Du Val, the latter, seeing Mrs. Waldron quit the house to speak for a minute to George Le Breton, casually remarked :

“Who is she? I know her face well.”

“She is the wife of your old client, the man Waldron, who was tried at Newgate some years ago for a robbery at Barbet & Beuzeville's, and had a very narrow escape of his life. In fact, had it not been for your exertions, and the talent of the barrister, Mr. Montgomery, who defended him, it is more than probable he would have been hung.”

“He had a very narrow escape indeed,” said Mr. Du Val ; “never man more so. Have you heard anything of the fellow since he was transported?”

“We heard nothing of him after he left England till

last year," said the doctor, "when his wife received a letter from him in which he described himself as quite a reformed character."

"The leopard must have changed his spots then, or the Ethiopian his skin," said Mr. Du Val; "for from what little experience I had of him he seemed to be about as irreclaimable a scoundrel as I ever met with."

"Well, I merely give you his own statement," said the doctor; "but I must own that there were one or two circumstances connected with his letter which induced me to believe that there might be some truth in his reformation." The doctor then went on to narrate the different items contained in Waldron's letter: how he had contrived to gain the confidence of the employer to whom he had been assigned, and that after the term was out he had squatted on a piece of land, and had commenced farming on his own account; also, that he wished his wife and son to join him in the colony, and that he had actually sent home sufficient money to pay for the young fellow's outfit and passage, promising to send some more for his wife as soon as he had contrived to build a house to receive her.

"Well, you fairly astonish me," said Mr. Du Val; "and I hope all may turn out in a satisfactory manner. But what did his wife and son say to the proposal?"

"Oh, they were delighted with it," said the doctor.

"Has the boy gone yet?" inquired Mr. Du Val.

“Oh yes, he left by the *Lowther Castle* last year, and in a few months I hope we shall hear from him.”

“By the *Lowther Castle*, did you say?” Mr. Du Val inquired. “Well, that is singular. Why, Mr. Montgomery, the barrister who defended Waldron, left with his wife and family by the same ship, having been appointed a judge in the colony. And he was quite right to do so,” continued Mr. Du Val; “for, although he had an excellent reputation for integrity and ability, his practice in England was not a lucrative one. I wonder whether he and the young fellow will become acquainted with each other during their passage out.”

Their conversation was now interrupted by George Le Breton and his wife taking leave of the guests, before departing for their own house. Of course the adieus were somewhat of the longest, and, as might naturally be expected, Mrs. Le Brument was much affected at parting with her daughter. At length, however, the leave-taking was over, and the whole party seated themselves in the garden, and the conversation became more general. The French gentleman and the doctor, who was now completely in his element, conversed together on the different localities inhabited by the descendants of the French Huguenots and episodes connected with their families. With these we will not trouble the reader, with one exception,—the building of the Temple in John Street, in which the ceremony had that day been performed. The doctor narrated at great length

how the Huguenots on their first arrival in the locality were unprovided with a place of worship, when a Non-conformist congregation, pitying their condition, kindly lent them for the Sunday afternoon service the very small chapel which stood on the site of the present Temple ; how they continued to worship in this little building till their numbers had increased to such an extent that it was unable to hold them ; how they then subscribed among themselves sufficient to purchase the site, and, that being completed, they immediately began the building of the Temple in which they had that day worshipped.

Others now began to join in the conversation. The countess described all that had come under her notice at the dedication, and that with a minuteness which proved how much her imagination had been impressed by the ceremony. The compliments paid to her by the doctor on the subject had evidently the effect of stimulating Mrs. Le Brument to obtain as high a standing in his admiration ; and she mentioned other circumstances connected with the dedication which proved that her memory was even more retentive than that of the countess herself. All the guests complimented her on it, at which she appeared highly delighted. She further said that she could repeat almost the whole of the pastor's address to them, at the same time modestly remarking that the fact was rather due to his extraordinary eloquence than to the strength of her memory alone. The doctor, supported by the others, pressed

her to give them some extracts from Pastor Boudillon's sermon. This for some time she modestly refused; but on being pressed she consented to recite to them the words the worthy man used when bidding them farewell. Then, rising from her chair, she began in an impressive manner, and, as if she were addressing a congregation from the pulpit, said :

“ Enfin ayons tous un soin particulier en sortant d'ici de nous conduire partout ailleurs, suivant les instructions que nous y aurons reçues, et comme les gens qui jouissent du précieux avantage et du privilège glorieux d'adorer Dieu de cette manière.

“ Mais il est temps, que des hommes nous nous tournions vers Dieu, et que nous finissions en lui adressant d'un commun accord nos bénédictions et prières les plus solennelles.

“ O Jehovah, seul Dieu vivant et vrai, et notre Dieu, nous célébrons la mémoire de ton saint, de ton grand nom, et nous le réclamons solennellement dans ce jour, et sur nous-mêmes, et sur ce lieu que nous consacrons à ton service. Daigne, ô Dieu, présider constamment au milieu de nous par ton Esprit, et par ce même Esprit sanctifier et nos personnes, et toutes nos oblations, et tous nos services, et les rendre par ce moyen dignes d'acceptation auprès de ta Majesté Souveraine. À ce Fils de ta dilection, comme à toi, Père d'Eternité, et à l'Esprit de grâce et de sanctification, soient rendues toutes sortes de louanges, de bénédictions, et d'actions de grâce, de service et d'hommage, de soumission

et d'obéissance, et par les hommes et par les anges, et sur la terre et dans le ciel, et pendant le reste du temps et pendant toute l'éternité ! Amen, oui, Amen."

When she had finished and had received the compliments of her audience, she told them that before separating, her husband and the doctor's father went round among the congregation with a box for contributions. "And how much do you think they collected?" she said, with great pride in her tone. "No less than fourteen pounds, and this the congregation determined should be offered to Dr. Walker, the Congregationalist minister in Bethnal Green, as a mark of gratitude for his having allowed us the use of his chapel each Sabbath afternoon, while our temple was being rebuilt; but that noble man refused to accept a farthing of the money, and it was then resolved that we should apply it to our own schools."

"And had you even at that time established a school in this neighbourhood?" inquired Mr. Du Val's friend.

"Not one school but three," answered the doctor with much pride in his tone. "One of the first great objects kept in view by our fellow-countrymen, when settling in these parts, was that their children should not only be brought up in the fear of the Lord, and be taught to address Him in the language of their forefathers, but that they should also receive the elements of a respectable education, such in fact as would enable

them, if ever they quitted their looms, to take those positions in society which many of their ancestors had filled."

The conversation now turned on different subjects; the political affairs of France were particularly dwelt upon by the gentlemen, while dress and other matters of a similar description occupied the attention of the ladies. Although on this point poor Mary could offer no opinion, she listened to the remarks of the others with great attention, especially when the conversation turned upon the bride's wedding-dress. Every word they uttered she heard with great interest. She was possibly actuated the while by the thought what costume would best become her when she herself should fill a similar position. Mrs. Waldron, who had now regained her French sufficiently to enable her to speak with considerable fluency, also entered into the discussion. She had as strong an innate love of dress as any lady in the most elevated rank of society, and considered herself capable of giving an artistic opinion on matters of the kind. She spoke highly of the good taste displayed in the dress of the bride, while the countess, although not absolutely contradicting her, considered that certain alterations might have been made with advantage. She also quoted many excellent authorities among Paris milliners on the subject, forgetting the while that more than half a century had passed since the opinion of the said authorities had any weight in the Parisian fashionable world;

and this forgetfulness was the more remarkable inasmuch as she dwelt at considerable length on the decadence visible in the modern French dress, which she attributed to the republican ideas which were then in vogue; and she drew a strong comparison between the head-dresses of the ladies of the court in the time of Louis XV., and the inelegant duck-bill bonnets which were fashionable at the time of the Directory, and which were simply *horrible*. Madame Pénon, the pastor's wife, although generally most eloquent in deprecating the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, entered into the conversation with as much interest as Mrs. Waldron or the countess herself.

The countess then, noticing the interest displayed in Mary's sightless countenance, spoke kindly to her, and at length succeeded in drawing her into conversation. At first she had some little difficulty in so doing, inasmuch as the blind girl, who was aware of the noble antecedents of the countess, appeared somewhat embarrassed when answering her. In a very short time, however, Mary's *naïveté*, combined with her natural good sense, as well as the fluent manner in which she spoke French, completely won the old countess's heart, who, kindly taking her by the hand, conversed with her in so amiable a manner as soon to set her at her ease. The gentlemen also, possibly considering that in their political discussions they were somewhat forgetting their duty to their fair friends, joined in the conversation, a perfect

good-breeding and courtesy being exhibited among them which it would be difficult indeed to find in a poor Bethnal Green locality at the present day.

But perhaps the most remarkable group of the whole was that formed by the doctor and the countess. As before stated, when in his claret-coloured coat the doctor habitually put on his courtly manner, but during his somewhat lengthy conversation with the countess he far exceeded it. In fact, his manner could hardly have been more graceful and dignified had he been an accomplished actor of the Théâtre Français, addressing, in a scene on the stage, a countess of the *ancien régime*; while she, on her side, entered fully into her part, and performed it to perfection. One little scene between them would have made an admirable subject for the pencil of an artist. The doctor, having concluded a somewhat lengthy remark to the countess, had taken his snuff-box from his waistcoat-pocket, and held a pinch of the snuff between his thumb and forefinger, which he was on the point of applying to his nostrils in a most graceful manner, when the countess, by way of claiming his close attention to some important remark she was obliged to make, placed the tip of her fan on the hand holding the snuff-box, while he, with his right half-way from the box, and his head on one side in an attitude of close attention, listened to her remark; and that concluded, he raised himself again into an erect position, and inhaled, with an appearance, possibly feigned, of

great satisfaction, the pinch of snuff he had held so motionless the while.

Nothing further particularly worthy of notice occurred till the arrival of the hackney-coach, which had been engaged by Mr. Du Val to convey the pastor, his wife, and his French friend, as well as the countess, back to their homes in the city. The leave-taking, though somewhat of the longest, was most friendly and courteous. The stranger expressed himself much satisfied with the description the doctor had given him of the manners and habits of the French emigrants who had settled in that part of London, while his host assured him, and with perfect truth, that he himself had experienced far greater pleasure in being able to converse with a person of his intelligence on a subject so interesting to them both, and the more so, as those who occasionally visited the locality became fewer and fewer every year. He also assured him that any day which might be convenient to him he should have much pleasure in pointing out to him many interesting spots which would afford him most interesting subjects for reflection, as well as the tombs of many members of the most illustrious French families, whose names might be found now decaying on the humbler tombstones in Bethnal Green and Spitalfields and Shoreditch churchyards ; names, in fact, which in point of antiquity and honourable antecedents, would match with those of the proudest families in Europe. The stranger on his part warmly thanked the

doctor for his offer, and hoped that he might soon be able to profit by it ; although, as the doctor never saw him again, it is more than probable that the opportunity never occurred, or that his interest in the matter faded away.

But as to the leave-taking, nothing could surpass in interest that which took place between the old countess and the doctor, each evidently attempting to show off their good breeding to the other in the most attractive light. From a faint smile visible on the countenances of the pastor, Mr. Du Val, and the stranger, when the doctor with great courtesy handed the countess into the hackney-coach, it is more than probable they were somewhat amused by the scene. All being at length ensconced, though in a somewhat inconvenient manner, in the coach, it drove off, and the doctor entered the house.

After a little further conversation with Mrs. Le Brument and Mary, evening came on, and the doctor, fearing that the night dews might act prejudicially on the widow's rheumatism, politely volunteered to escort her home. The offer was willingly accepted, and the pair quitted the house, leaving Mrs. Waldron and Mary at leisure to remove the furniture from the garden and place it in its proper position within doors. So interesting did the doctor's conversation appear to Mrs. Le Brument on her road home, that her rheumatism was as completely forgotten as if it had

never existed, and the only pain that the old lady felt was when the doctor quitted her to return home. On his arrival he found that Mrs. Waldron and Mary, fatigued with their day's exertions, had both retired to their rooms. After going through his accustomed evening prayer in a somewhat hurried and irreverent manner, he placed his claret-coloured coat, embroidered waistcoat, snuff-box, and other accessories in one of his drawers, and threw himself greatly fatigued on his bed, to rise from it the next morning shorn both in costume and manner of all his dignified attributes, to be again the same plain, unostentatious medical man in a poor locality that he was the day prior to George Le Breton's marriage.



CHAPTER XII.

DOUBTS AND FEARS.

THE excitement caused by the wedding ceremony and the festivities which took place on the occasion, soon subsided, and the doctor's home returned to its normal condition of quietude and regularity, which for some months nothing occurred to disturb. The intimacy between Mary and her friend Clara Le Breton still continued, and increased rather than diminished as time passed on. They had frequent opportunities of meeting, as the majority of the doctor's patients resided in a westward direction from his house, and he was thus enabled to conduct Mary to her friend, and to call for her on his return, unless indeed she remained till the evening, when George Le Breton saw her safely home. To this arrangement Mrs. Waldron offered no objection; on the contrary, she was rather pleased with it than otherwise. With all her faults she tenderly loved the girl. She had

proved it prior to the commencement of our narrative by taking her when a destitute orphan into her own home ; and although she had hardly sufficient to supply herself and her son with the bare necessaries of life, she even economized that to provide Mary with food and clothing, in spite of the brutal threats and harsh treatment of her husband for so doing. Her affection for the poor girl had also continued until the present time without abatement, with the solitary exception of her anger at what she considered Mary's presumption in endeavouring to engage the affections of Edgar.

After Clara Le Breton's marriage a considerable change was noticeable in Mary's behaviour and appearance. There was now less of the full-grown girl about her, and more of the dignity of the young woman. Before she became acquainted with Clara, apart from her affection for Edgar in particular, and for her aunt and the doctor, her principal thoughts were occupied on the little domestic comforts and attentions required by the latter, and the culture, somewhat clumsily performed it must be admitted, of some flowers in the garden ; for, although she was of course totally insensible to the beauty of their colour, and had but an imperfect idea of their form, the natural love for flowers, which as a rule generally exists in the breast of an amiable young girl, was still strong within her.

But while these objects received their usual attention, Mary's mind was now more fully occupied with the different details connected with her friend's home. She

was not only acquainted with every part of the house, but with every article of furniture contained in it, and was consulted by Clara on subjects connected with her domestic management, till she was as expert in matters of the kind as Mrs. Waldron herself. It must not, however, be imagined that in consequence of her more numerous occupations Mary's admiration for her cousin had in any way diminished; on the contrary, if any change had taken place in it, it had become stronger than ever. And here, in justice to the poor girl, some excuse or explanation should be offered to the reader for the intense love she bore her cousin. In ordinary cases it would appear absurd that his mere action of presenting her with the camellia on the day of his departure should have been accepted by her as a pledge of his unceasing love, when not a word on that subject had ever escaped his lips either at the time or on any former occasion. That he was very fond of her is true, and it was perfectly natural, for they had been brought up together as children; but the affection he bore her was that of a brother for a sister, nor had he ever entertained a thought beyond it.

With Mary, however, the case was very different. True, for many years her affection for Edgar had been that of a sister for a brother, nothing more. It would be a curious and delicate study to trace in what manner this affection changed in her breast to the intense affection of a young girl for her lover. As far as can be traced, its origin was of the purest description. As

before stated, Mary had a singularly fine soprano voice, and a very correct ear, as well as a clear and perfect enunciation in her singing, while Edgar, although he had no voice, was possessed of a passionate love for music. In the chapel, Mary's voice was heard to great advantage; and the member of the congregation (a professional musician) who generally superintended the singing, was particularly proud of the effect the girl produced, and he would occasionally give her such instructions as would show her singing off to the best advantage. On Sundays, of course, Edgar would, in common with the doctor, accompany his cousin to the Temple, and both would listen to her voice, as she sang the old Huguenot hymns, with feelings of intense admiration. When the service was over, the doctor, although much pleased, comparatively rarely spoke to the girl on the subject, while Edgar would compliment her on her performance in a very emphatic manner. Mary, as before said, although blind, had a perfect feminine consciousness of personal accomplishments and attractions, and it was through Edgar's compliments that she began to respect her own powers; and her first girlish love for her cousin was possibly elicited by an unconscious feeling of gratitude for the satisfaction his compliments had given her, and the grain of mustard-seed, thus sown, afterwards developed itself with remarkable rapidity. Still her maiden modesty concealed the feeling from all, with the exception of the jealous eyes of her aunt.

But there are other mitigating circumstances which may be brought forward in defence of the girl's unreasoning love for her cousin. It would be difficult indeed to describe what her ideas of Edgar's personal appearance may have been. She had heard him spoken of by the doctor, her aunt, and Mrs. Le Brument as a remarkably handsome young fellow, but in what manner poor Mary realized their description it would be difficult to say. Possibly, from the intense love she bore him, she might have considered that he strongly resembled one of the angels the doctor read of in the Scriptures; but then, again, what was an angel's form as she had conceived it? No other idea can be formed on the subject than that it was a vague conception of all that was beautiful in man, without any definite notion in what that beauty consisted. Again, the strength of her affection for Edgar might possibly have been greater from the fact that, unlike sighted girls, who daily see men whose beauty they may admire, or whose manners may attract their attention, there was no element of either kind in poor Mary's case to disturb her affection for Edgar. In the former case her natural infirmity precluded any comparison between his personal appearance and that of any other youth, while her secluded manner of life at the doctor's separated her almost as completely from the acquaintance of strangers as if she had been an inmate of a convent.

Sufficient time had now elapsed for Edgar to have

reached Sydney, and to have sent back news of his arrival; still however no tidings of him had reached his family. Two months further passed over, during which time the vague excuses which the doctor and the others endeavoured to make plausible were willingly accepted for the further delay; though, had they been rigidly examined, they would hardly have been considered satisfactory. And then by degrees an expression of anxiety began to be visible on the face of the doctor, and he would reply curtly, and occasionally almost uncourteously, to the questions put to him by Mary and her aunt for his opinion as to the cause of the delay. At last the subject seemed, as if by common consent, to drop amongst them, while an anxious expression was now discernible on the faces of all three. And this continued till one day when, a strict silence having been maintained by all during dinner, some one was heard entering the shop, who knocked impatiently on the counter, and Mrs. Waldron, rising from her seat to see who it might be, to her intense excitement found that it was none other than the postman, who had brought with him a ship letter addressed to herself.

Too much agitated to speak, Mrs. Waldron took the letter from the postman, and entering the sitting-room endeavoured to open it, but her hand trembled so violently she was obliged to desist. The doctor, seeing the perturbed state she was in, gently took the

letter from her hand, and having opened it returned it to her. Still she was so much agitated as to be unable to read it: all that she could understand from it was that it was in her husband's handwriting. Seeing the excited condition she was in, and although intensely anxious himself to know the contents of the letter, he kindly advised her to go up to her own room, and then, having at her leisure made herself mistress of its contents, to come down again and inform them what news it contained, both as related to herself and Edgar; and Mrs. Waldron without hesitation adopted the advice given her. A full half-hour now passed over before her return, during which time not a word was uttered either by the doctor or Mary. The poor girl sat pale and motionless as a marble statue. It is more than possible she might have given way to some expression of anxiety had she not felt, and with perfect reason, that the doctor's eye was fixed upon her, and that he was at the time reading her thoughts with perfect accuracy. Silent they sat, till they heard Mrs. Waldron's step descending the stairs, and then the rigidity they had maintained suddenly melted, and they waited with great anxiety for the news she was about to bring them. When she entered the room the letter was still in her hands, and that it had conveyed to her no agreeable intelligence was certain from the tears that were pouring down her face in a perfectly unrestrained manner. Placing the letter in the doctor's hand, she said:

“ I wish you would read the letter to me, sir, for I am so agitated I can hardly make out what it means. I really believe there is nothing but misery in store for me in this world.”

The doctor taking the letter from her asked her if she had any objection to Mary's remaining while he read it.

“ Not in the least, sir,” she said ; “ all the world may know it if they like, it is perfectly immaterial to me.”

The doctor now read the letter aloud. In it Waldron inquired what was the reason she had not obeyed his instructions in sending Edgar out to him. There had been, he said, time enough for him to have arrived and months to spare, and yet he had heard nothing of him. All the news he had heard was that she had obtained the money from the agents which he had sent for Edgar's passage and outfit. Was she at her old tricks again, spending her money on herself and that blind beggar-girl, whom, if she had acted honestly and properly to her own family, she would have sent to the workhouse? He wouldn't put up with her behaviour, she might depend upon it. She thought perhaps that because he could not leave the colony that he had no hold on her. If so, however, she would find herself mistaken, and that without much delay either. He had not the money by him at the time to send any more for Edgar, and when he had she might be certain that he would not be fool enough again to trust it in her hands. The only wish he now had with

respect to her was that he should never set his eyes on her again.

In fact, the letter was one continued tirade of abuse ; but apart from that, the doctor distinguished in it another element which caused him great uneasiness. It was written by the hand of an habitual drunkard, and one who was more or less intoxicated at the time. What remarks to make on it that might console the poor woman he knew not, beyond that in all probability Edgar had now arrived, and that Waldron himself was in a better state of mind.

As none of the party had any further appetite, the doctor left the house, ostensibly for the purpose of visiting some patients, but in reality to betake himself to the agents of the *Lowther Castle*, to know whether they had any intelligence of her arrival. "From the time she left England, sir," said the clerk, "to the present moment, we have not heard one word respecting her. Without wishing to make you uneasy, we are beginning to feel somewhat anxious about her ourselves, especially as we received notice some weeks ago of the safe arrival of one of our ships which left England two months after her. If you will leave me your address, however, as soon as we receive any intelligence of the *Lowther Castle*, I will inform you of it."

During the evening, although the doctor made no remark about his visit to the agents, Mrs. Waldron easily perceived that something had occurred to cause him

great anxiety, if not sorrow. As he was habitually careful to keep from others any painful or annoying facts which might have come under his notice during the day, she made no remark upon the subject, but quietly worked on with her needle, occasionally exchanging a word with Mary upon some indifferent subject. Even the poor girl began to be aware of the painful abstraction under which the doctor was labouring. She had as usual, after having given him his slippers, filled his pipe for him, which he took without even thanking her for it, and then held it in his hand for more than a quarter of an hour without attempting to light it. In this depressed state they continued till the evening was sufficiently advanced for them to join in family prayers, and then Mary arose from her seat to place the old folio Bible on the table.

“Stop, my dear,” said the doctor to her; “fetch me Mrs. Dubosq’s Bible; I prefer reading from that this evening.” Mary, somewhat surprised—for it was only on Sunday evenings that the doctor read from her grandmother’s Bible—obeyed him, and having placed it in his hands, resumed her seat opposite to him.

The doctor now opened the Bible, and, whether by chance or purposely it is impossible to say, he commenced the sixty-first psalm.

“*O Dieu ! écoute mon cri, et sois attentif à ma requête ;*” and then, having completed the remaining verses, he closed the book, and, with much earnestness

in his tone and manner, offered up a humble prayer to the Almighty for strength of mind to submit with resignation to His will, whatever it might be. On this subject he continued for some little time longer; he then rose from his knees, and the group separated for the night.

Day after day now passed without any intelligence of the ship's arrival in Sydney; and night after night the same psalm was read by the doctor. Another singular weakness may here be noticed in the worthy man. Notwithstanding his strength of mind on certain occasions, he, like others, had his weak points. While frequently denouncing with great energy what he considered the superstition of the Romanists, that a prayer offered up at one particular shrine was more effectual than at others, and indignantly scoffing at their faith in relics, he was himself as open to the charge of such a weakness, though from a Protestant point of view, as any Roman Catholic. Though possibly unconsciously to himself, there could not be the shadow of a doubt that the reason he preferred reading the psalm mentioned from Mrs. Dubosq's Bible, instead of the old folio which had formerly been in general use with him, was that he was really actuated by the conviction that his prayers were the more effectual. Nothing, however, could have raised his indignation to a higher point than for any one to infer that such was the fact. Night after night, however, the same Bible was used, though without any other apparent

- beneficial effect than a calmer resignation to the decrees of Providence than might otherwise have been the case.

About three months after the receipt of Waldron's letter, the doctor one day after dinner had strolled into his little garden, when, to his great surprise, Mr. Barbet, the silk manufacturer of Spital Square, entered it. After the first few sentences of recognition were over, Mr. Barbet said :

“ I have been wishing to call on you for some time past, doctor, as I much wish to have a little conversation with you.”

“ Certainly,” said the doctor ; “ come in and take a seat.”

“ Upon the whole,” said Mr. Barbet, “ I think we had better talk here, as there is less chance of our being overheard. The subject I wish to speak to you upon is to ask you if you have heard anything of Edgar Waldron since he left England. My reason for asking you the question is this : for some time after he had quitted us a suspicion was perpetually arising in my mind that his father's reformation was not so complete as he had described it in the letter. I have never any great faith in the perfect reformation of an habitual drunkard. He may, I admit, be for some time a reformed character, but still the love of drink remains latent in him, and may develop itself at any moment. Now, actuated by this conviction, and having a very great respect for the young fellow, I wrote over to a correspondent we

have in Sydney a letter of introduction for him, in which I spoke of him in very high terms, dwelling especially on his ability, integrity, and business-like habits, and begging of him, in case of need, to afford him every assistance in his power. I also gave him the father's name, and the reason of his transportation, so that with very little trouble he might find him. A few weeks ago I received a letter from my correspondent, telling me that although my letter had been in his possession for more than a couple of months, he had heard nothing whatever of the young fellow. He had found out the father, it is true, but his report of him was by no means reassuring. That he had shown great symptoms of amendment, and for some time had conducted himself with great propriety and integrity, all admitted ; but, meeting with some of his old associates, he had again taken to drinking, and had continued it till he was prostrated by an attack of delirium tremens, from which he had scarcely recovered when he was seized with paralysis, and he was now in the hospital, after having spent by far the greater part of what he had contrived to save."

"That is a lamentable state of things, certainly," said Dr. D'Aubigny. "At the same time I am not surprised at it. Some months ago we received a letter from him, written in a most abusive manner, and evidently when he was three parts intoxicated. As far as my experience goes, although I have met with

many men who have for a time cured themselves of their drinking habits, whenever a relapse takes place their sobriety can never again be depended upon. Of Edgar, I am sorry to say, we have heard nothing whatever, nor have the agents received any intelligence of the ship. However, while there is life there is hope, and I trust that God will give us the strength to hope on. I should be deeply grieved for the poor fellow myself, but I am afraid if any disaster happened to him, either by shipwreck or otherwise, so as to cause his death, his poor mother would break her heart. And I am also afraid," he continued in an undertone, "hers would not be the only one which would suffer in the same manner; but God's will be done,—may we all have the strength to submit to it with resignation!"

"Amen, with all my heart," said Mr. Barbet; "but at the same time do not let us take too gloomy a view of affairs. Possibly, in consequence of a storm at sea, the *Lowther Castle* may have put into some port from which there is no direct correspondence with England. Again, although it would certainly be a sad affair, the ship may have been captured by a French privateer. In either case there may be good hope of our hearing of him again, and if so, all may yet turn out well. Should he return to England I should be most happy to take him again into our office, for a better or more trustworthy young fellow we never had with us. If on the contrary he reaches Sydney, I am sure from the

strongly-worded letter we wrote to our correspondent, he will find in him a good and sincere friend. Now, like a good sensible man as I know you are, think for the best, less perhaps for your own sake than that of the poor woman his mother."

At that moment Mary entered the garden, and Mr. Barbet, who had not seen her for some months before Edgar's departure, was somewhat surprised at finding her so much more womanly and graceful in appearance than when they had last met.

"You don't mean to say," he said to her, "that you are Edgar Waldron's cousin?"

"She is indeed," said the doctor.

"I hope he was honest enough to give you the camellia I sent you the day of his departure," said Mr. Barbet.

"Yes he was," said Mary, blushing considerably as she spoke.

"Well, now tell me," said Mr. Barbet, smiling at the girl's agitation, "were you able to understand what it was like?"

"Oh yes, I knew perfectly well what it was like, with the exception of the colour, of course," said Mary.

"But how did you contrive to ascertain that without crushing the leaf?" asked Mr. Barbet.

"There was little fear of her doing that," said the doctor; "her touch is so delicate that she could have felt all the petals a dozen times over, without disturbing one

of them. Mary is very fond of flowers, as you may judge for yourself. She has a portion of the garden under her management. Come and see it." So saying he led Mr. Barbet to a small flower-plot, in which there were a rose-tree and one or two other plants of no particular beauty, nor, possibly, so well kept as would have been the case had they been cared for by a professed gardener. Mr. Barbet, however, complimented her highly on the skill she had displayed, and then said to her :

"I had no idea that you were so fond of flowers as you are. Now, I will make you a little present if you like to accept it. You said you thought the flower your cousin gave you was a beautiful one. If I am not mistaken I have in my greenhouse at home a little plant of the same description, from an offshoot of the one your flower came from. If I am right, I will bring it to you some day, and you must take it as a keepsake from me."

Mary thanked him warmly for his promise, and assured him she would take great care of the flower. And never were words of greater sincerity uttered than those contained in Mary's promise.

Winter had now come without any intelligence reaching them of Edgar having arrived at Sydney. One cold wet evening, just before the time for prayers, George Le Breton arrived at the house, and begged the doctor would accompany him home, as Clara, who was expecting her confinement, had been

taken very unwell; and if Mrs. Waldron would go with them he should consider it as a great favour. Mrs. Waldron, without any hesitation, made ready to leave the house, and, the lad who generally had charge of the shop in the doctor's absence being sent for, the three started off, leaving Mary in the sitting-room by herself. At length it was time for the house to be closed, and, the boy having left her to go to his own home, Mary placed herself in the doctor's chair, and attempted to pass the time by fixing her mind on her absent cousin, and endeavouring to form some excuse for his silence. She continued occupied in this manner for some time, till at length she began to consider whether she should go to bed or remain up longer for the doctor and her aunt; but before she had finally resolved on the subject a ring was heard at the door, and some one entered.

"Does any one live here of the name of Waldron?" said a man's voice.

"Yes she does," said Mary; "but she's not at home. Did you want to see her?"

"Not particularly," said the man, "if you will do as well. I want to get back again as fast as I can. I have brought her a letter from Northcote & Co., ship agents, in Fenchurch Street. It is from Australia. If you will promise to take charge of it, that will do for me."

"I will give it to Mrs. Waldron without fail as soon as ever she returns home," said Mary; and the man,

having placed the letter in her hand, quitted her, closing the door after him.

Slowly as the time seemed to pass before the messenger's arrival at the house, it was by comparison as rapid as lightning when compared with its progress after his departure. In Mary's intense anxiety to know the contents of the letter, every second seemed a minute and every minute an hour. Still neither the doctor nor Mrs. Waldron returned, and Mary sat there, in a fearful state of excitement, which seemed to increase as time passed on. She now began to speculate on what the contents of the letter might be. Her heart told her it was from Edgar, and she had never known her heart deceive her, why should it do so now? One thing was certain, he had arrived and was alive, or he could not have written the letter. His health was then the sole thing to be considered, but what cause had she for any alarm on that account. And then again, what message might he have sent her in the letter, or would there be one enclosed to her personally? On this point, however, she could come to no definite conclusion, and then she considered if there should be, who would read the letter to her? She would not like to ask her aunt to do so, and as for the doctor it would be absurd to think of him as a confidant in an affair of the kind. Fortunately she had now a friend in whom she could confide and who would sympathize with her—Clara Le Breton.

After having come to this satisfactory conclusion, she

remained somewhat more patiently, thinking of Edgar the while, when the thought suddenly crossed her mind, that perhaps the letter had not been written by him. What possibly could be its purport? She now remained for some time in an almost bewildered condition, as the only conclusion which presented itself to her mind was too terrible for her to entertain. And then again, the hope that the letter might contain an enclosure started up before her, which in its turn was neutralized by an undefined horrible impression, which weighed upon her imagination. And then the dreaded calamity became more defined, till at length the terrible idea presented itself to her mind that some fearful calamity had befallen Edgar.

She now endeavoured to remain patient till her aunt's return, but at length her anxiety became so intense as to be insupportable. And then a terrible sort of impression came over her that some form stood opposite to her, though not the slightest sound of movement or breathing could be heard. A solemn feeling now took possession of her, which seemed to make the presence of the phantom still more certain; and in this condition she continued, till the bell at the front door rang, and her aunt and the doctor—whose services Clara had not required—entered the house.



CHAPTER XIII.

NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA.

THE sound of the doctor's footstep as he entered the house acted like an electric shock on the nervous system of the poor girl, arousing her from the painful state of depression she was in to one of intense excitement. With the letter in her hand she arose to meet him, and endeavoured to explain from whence it had arrived, but her words crowded so rapidly on each other as to render her meaning incomprehensible. As soon as the doctor and her aunt had reached the sitting-room they perceived the letter in her hands, and their excitement became as irrepressible as that of Mary herself. The party now seated themselves round the solitary candle, and Mrs. Waldron attempted to open the letter; but, as on the former occasion, the state of anxiety she was in rendered it almost an impossibility. When at last she succeeded she found herself unable to read it, from the

trembling of her hand. All she could ascertain respecting it was that it was in her son's handwriting; and that being understood, she placed the letter in the doctor's hand and asked him to read it. As the letter was somewhat long, we will give the reader but a short abstract of its contents.

From Edgar's description it appeared that for some two months after the ship had left England the voyage had gone on pleasantly enough. There were many passengers on board, and some of these proved to be very agreeable people, whose acquaintance made the time pass away in a very satisfactory manner. Some of these he described as farmers, who, with a small capital, were proceeding to the colonies to embark in sheep-farming or other agricultural employments. There were also two doctors with their wives and families, who expected to find in the antipodes more patients than they were able to do in England, though from what data they derived their conclusions it would be difficult to say. There were also several men of business who intended to keep stores either in Sydney or the outlying districts. But of all his fellow-travellers Edgar particularly dwelt on the amiable qualities of the family of a certain Mr. Montgomery, who had lately received an appointment as judge in the colony. He had with him two sons and four daughters, varying in age from ten to nineteen years. With these Edgar soon established a great intimacy, and his principal occupation during the

voyage was teaching the younger children the French language, which gave Mr. Montgomery and his wife very great pleasure. At length, however, when about leaving the tropics, some two hundred leagues from America, the ship was struck by a tremendous hurricane. So fearful was the storm, that it not only carried away the foremast and maintopmast, but the greater portion of the spars which were on deck, as well as the boats. For some weeks after it subsided the ship remained an almost total wreck ; but at length, having managed to fit up something like a jury-mast, and the wind being favourable, they bore, but very slowly, towards the coast, and at length succeeded in reaching Rio Janeiro. Here they remained for more than two months before they could get a new mast placed in the ship, as well as other repairs completed, so as to enable them to continue their voyage to Australia. During their stay in port, however, they had written an account of the disaster which had overwhelmed them, and sent it by a ship which was sailing for England. They then continued their voyage to Sydney, but although nothing occurred to them in any way of a dangerous description, their passage was a lamentably slow one ; so that, in point of fact, the *Lowther Castle* did not reach her destination till many months after the time of her expected arrival. When in Sydney, they were informed by the agents that the ship which had carried the letters describing the hurricane had

been captured by a French privateer, so that, in all probability, the friends and relatives of the passengers, as well as the owners of the ship, must have remained for some time in a state of intense anxiety.

Edgar then went on to narrate his search for his father. He found that, having been struck by paralysis, he had given up his sheep-walk, after having lost two-thirds of its value. Being still nominally a convict, he was unable to make a will, so he had placed what little money he had in Edgar's hands, in the full assurance that he would do whatever he considered best for him. He further stated that his father much regretted a letter that he had written some months before to his wife, that he was now again an altered man, and deeply repented his former conduct. He much wished that his wife would join him in the colony, so that before his death he could make his peace with her; and he further commissioned Edgar to send over the money for her passage and outfit, which he (Edgar) had done by that post.

“And now, my dear mother,” continued Edgar, “I am about to give you some news which will not only interest you, but the doctor and Mary as well. I am about to be married to Ellen, the eldest daughter of Mr. Montgomery. The marriage will take place in about a month from the present time, for then I shall be fully established in a house of business in Sydney, in which I am to begin as manager, and at the end of three

years to be taken in as a partner. For this good fortune I have entirely to thank the kind offices of Mr. Barbet, who sent out for me to his agent in the colony a most complimentary letter of introduction, dwelling particularly on my integrity and business qualifications, as well as my ability for French correspondence. And now a few words respecting my future bride. A more amiable girl I believe never lived. She is very intelligent and well educated, and one in every way adapted to make a young fellow's home a happy one. In person she is tall and exceedingly graceful; her complexion is fair and her face beautifully formed. The best feature about it, and which first particularly attracted my attention, was the colour of her beautiful eyes, which are not only so pure that you can almost see her mind in them, but as transparent as the blue of heaven itself. It was in them that I first learned to read that she loved me."

The reading of the letter was here interrupted by a low, thrilling cry of distress from Mary, who at that moment covered her eyes with her hands. The doctor, in his alarm, let fall the letter, and started up to prevent the poor girl from falling, in which he was assisted by her aunt. Neither of them, be it understood, asked her what ailed her; both knew it perfectly well, although they had never spoken a word to each other on the subject. Mary's low moan of intense sorrow still continued till the grey dawn of the winter's morning began to appear in

the east; and they then contrived to lead her up into her room, where the doctor left her to the care of her aunt.

The whole of the next day Mary remained in her room, her aunt waiting on her occasionally. The following morning, however, she arose and joined the others at the breakfast-table. There was a quiet, subdued manner about the poor girl when she made her appearance which touched both her aunt and the doctor, though neither of them made any remark on the subject. During their meal Mary spoke not a word, unless indeed it were to answer some question put to her by her aunt or the doctor. In fact, the breakfast passed off sadly enough; not for lack of subjects of conversation, for both the doctor and Mrs. Waldron had much to talk about, especially respecting the invitation the latter had received to join her husband and son in Sydney, as well as the preparation which had to be made before her departure.

When their meal was nearly over, Mary inquired which way the doctor proposed to walk when he left the house; and when he replied that he had some visits to make in the neighbourhood of Spital Square, she asked him to take her with him as far as the house of Clara Le Breton. She would not trouble him, she said, to call for her on his return, as she would like to remain with Clara during the whole of the day, and George could see her home in the evening. The doctor imme-

diately and readily acquiesced, and the more so as he considered that possibly an interview with her friend would tend to relieve the poor girl's mind of some of the sorrow which he well knew was weighing on it. Mrs. Waldron also offered no objection, but was rather pleased than otherwise, partly from the fact that it would give her an opportunity of calmly thinking over what purchases and arrangements she should make for the voyage she was about to undertake, as she had already tacitly determined that she would leave England as soon as possible.

The doctor and Mary now left the house and proceeded to Clara Le Breton's, little conversation, and that on ordinary topics, passing between them on the way. When they arrived at the house they heard that Clara was not at home, but was expected to return in a few minutes. The doctor now continued his road, and Mary found her way into the sitting-room. On Clara's arrival she easily perceived, by the expression on her friend's countenance, that some terrible calamity had befallen her; for, although there was a calm resignation stamped upon it, there was little difficulty in perceiving that intense sorrow was concealed in it. She refrained, however, from asking any questions on the subject, and merely assisted in relieving Mary of her bonnet and shawl, as the latter had informed her she purposed remaining during the day with her. For some little time they remained conversing together on ordinary

topics, when Mary said rapidly, as under some painful influence, though in a trembling tone of voice :

“ Clara, we have received a letter from my cousin.”

“ I hope it contains good news,” replied Clara, “ and that he has arrived safely.”

“ He has,” said Mary.

“ Well, let me hear something about the voyage, my dear ; and tell me why he delayed writing for so long a time.”

Mary calmly related the events of the voyage till Edgar's arrival in Sydney, and also that he had found his father labouring under an attack of paralysis. She further stated that Edgar, instead of starting in sheep-farming, intended entering into business in Sydney, in a house to which he had been introduced by Mr. Barbet.

Mary here remained silent for some moments ; but her friend easily judged, from the expression of her countenance, that she had some further news to relate.

“ But had Edgar nothing more to tell you about ? ” inquired Clara.

“ Yes, he had,” said Mary ; “ he is going to be married.”

For some moments a dead silence remained between the two friends : Mary was apparently afraid to speak further on the subject, and Clara, who was perfectly aware of the intense love her friend bore towards the young

fellow, hardly liked to put any questions to her. And then the poor blind girl, in a voice trembling with emotion, said, the tears pouring down her face the while :

“ Oh Clara, you cannot imagine what a terrible blow I have received ! I shall never recover from it—never, never. I am as fully convinced that that letter contained my death-warrant, as that I am now in existence. Pity me I am sure you do, but no being can console me.” And here, flinging her arms around her friend’s neck, she wept unrestrainedly.

“ Come, come, my dear,” said Clara kindly ; “ don’t give way in that manner ; you should rather try to forgive him, than grieve for him as you do.”

“ Forgive him !” said Mary, raising her head from her friend’s shoulder ; “ what have I to forgive ? To me he never spoke one word of love, nor was he aware of the affection I bore him. From any claim I had over him he was as free as air. You may reasonably ask me how it is that I can love him as I do, and still more how I could have entertained the certainty that he would marry me. It must appear as absurd to you, I know, as at this moment it does to me. I am no more able to account for it than for a thought which might have occurred to me in a happy dream. And a happy dream it was—one for which I ought to be grateful, for it lasted without ceasing for more than two years. But I am awake again, fully awake, to the fact

that it was a dream ; and I now envy the delusion I was under during the time, but which can never return to me. No, Clara, it is now past. All I ask of you is not to laugh at me for my folly. I will love him still, with the love of a fond sister for her brother, and that shall remain in me unsullied to the last moment of my life."

Clara then asked her whether she had expressed any surprise when the doctor read the letter to her.

"Although it was a terrible shock to me," said Mary, "I managed to support it with something like firmness, or at least with silence, till Edgar spoke of 'her eyes of heaven's own blue, in which he read how truly she loved him,' and then I fairly gave way. Tell me, Clara dear," she continued, taking her friend's hand, "what he meant by 'heaven's own blue ;' what is it like, and how does it differ from my own poor sightless eyes?"

Clara remained silent for some moments, puzzled what answer to make her. Mary easily understood her, and she continued :

"Never mind, Clara ; be silent on the point. I can read your thoughts well enough, and I thank you for them. You do not wish to pain me, and I thank you for your kindness. But, oh Clara ! I never knew what it was to be blind, and the terrible misfortune I am labouring under, till I heard that he could read in her eyes how truthfully she loved him. And yet, while I loved him as tenderly and truthfully as ever girl loved man, my eyes

remained dumb and inexpressive. Could he have read my thoughts in my eyes as easily as he could those of the girl he has now married in hers, he would have been my own husband, and I a happy wife, instead of the wretched creature I now am. One thing only I have to beg of you, Clara. I daresay you have told George how fond I was of Edgar, and I can now understand how he must have laughed at me for behaving as I have done. Beg of him never to mention the subject to me, either in pity or in ridicule: the one would only make my sorrow the greater, the other would drive away from me the little excuse I can offer for my folly. And now let us talk of something else."

The conversation now turned to other subjects, on which we will not detain the reader, and as to which he may possibly have formed some vague guess, remembering the useless visit of Mrs. Waldron and the doctor on the night of the arrival of the letter.

The doctor, when he returned home to dinner, conversed freely on the subject of the journey Mrs. Waldron intended to take. "I have called on the agents," he said, "and they tell me that they have received sixty pounds on your account, which is to pay for your passage and outfit, and that one of their ships will start for Sydney in about a fortnight, if you would like to proceed in her."

"But I shall not require so much as sixty pounds for my passage and outfit, shall I?" said Mrs. Waldron.

“There may be some trifling balance over,” said the doctor, “but not beyond a few pounds.”

“But is there no difference in the price of the places?” said Mrs. Waldron; “are not some dearer than others?”

“Yes, certainly,” said the doctor; “but I do not think that Edgar would like you to go as a second-class passenger.”

“Oh,” said Mrs. Waldron, “I can rough it as well as most people. I have had a good deal of practice in that way during my life.”

“That is very likely,” said the doctor; “but that is no reason why you should subject yourself to an inconvenience when it is not necessary. Edgar has sent you the money for a particular purpose, and there is no reason why you should not enjoy it.”

“But, doctor, I should like to leave some money with you for Mary,” said Mrs. Waldron. “That you have always behaved most kindly to her is true, and I am most grateful to you for it; but with what little money I have to spare, I should like to do something for her myself, and therefore I wish to go as a second-class cabin passenger.”

“And I shall certainly refuse to receive one farthing of the money,” said the doctor. “I look upon Mary as my own child, and shall consider myself hurt if you speak further on the subject. You have yourself behaved remarkably well to the poor girl as it is, in having taken her into your own home when in distressed circumstances

yourself, and have always treated her with a kindness that could not have been exceeded by her own mother ; and God will bless you for it.”

“I am sure, sir, if His blessing is due to any one in the matter it is due to you, for the kindness you have shown to me and my children. I have always remembered a text which my poor mother showed to me in her Bible when I took Mary into my house, and which I always remembered even when I had forgotten so much of the language I read it in—‘*Celui qui a pitié du pauvre, prête à l’Eternel, et il lui rendra son bienfait.*’ And poorer creatures than we were when you took us by the hand did not live upon the face of the earth.”

The doctor made no remark on Mrs. Waldron’s words, but they brought to his mind the fact that the same text was pointed out to him by Mrs. Dubosq the morning he had determined to take the poor family under his protection.

The conversation now turned on matters connected with Mrs. Waldron’s departure, with which it is unnecessary to occupy the reader’s time. When it was ended, Mrs. Waldron left the house to make some purchases and the doctor to visit some patients in the immediate neighbourhood.

Mary continued till the evening with her friend Clara Le Breton. Although it was easy to perceive she had not recovered her habitual tone of mind, she contrived to enter, with more or less interest, into the

details of home management brought under her notice by her friend. And if occasionally she exhibited symptoms of despondency, they were not so profound as to occasion any remark or to ask consolation from Clara. George Le Breton then returned home, and his wife, recognizing his footsteps, quitted Mary, evidently for the purpose of informing him in private of the news which had arrived from Australia, as well as of requesting him not to allude to the subject during any conversation he might have with Mary. All this he readily promised, and kept his word to the letter. He addressed her with as much ease as if nothing of any interest had occurred since they last met, while Mary on her part attempted, though evidently with considerable difficulty, to reply to him in a similar manner. During their walk home nothing whatever occurred worthy of remark, the conversation turning on the most ordinary subjects. On her entrance into the house Mary found her aunt and the doctor seated at the tea-table waiting her arrival. For some moments the conversation rather flagged than otherwise. Mary hesitated to ask her aunt any questions bearing on her departure for Australia, while neither Mrs. Waldron nor the doctor liked to broach the subject. At length, however, the aunt, as if aware that it must sooner or later be brought forward, proposed to Mary that she should spend the following day with her friend Clara, as she (Mrs. Waldron) and the doctor purposed visiting

the ship in which she was to proceed to Sydney, to give directions in what manner things were to be arranged for her comfort in the cabin. Mary made no remark on the subject, beyond saying that she was sure Clara would be very happy to receive her.

It is more than probable that by this manner of introducing the subject of her departure, Mrs. Waldron intended to convey to Mary that she would be left in England. If, however, such was her intention, the precaution was needless, for Mary was already perfectly satisfied on that point. She well remembered that not a word had been said on the subject in Edgar's letter; nay more, had her own opinion been asked, the poor girl would herself have preferred remaining in England, as to reside in the neighbourhood in which Edgar dwelt with his wife would render her existence more painful to her than it already was.

The next day passed off tranquilly enough. Mrs. Waldron and the doctor visited the ship, and Mary, as was proposed, passed the day in her friend's house. When she returned home, she took little or no part in the conversation which ensued respecting her aunt's visit to the ship and the preparations which were being made for her long voyage. And then another subject was discussed, to which she listened more attentively, though without any very great interest, namely, what preparations were to be made to supply Mrs. Waldron's place in the doctor's house. Many persons were mentioned as

likely candidates for the appointment, though each in her turn was declared not to be altogether eligible. At length the doctor hit upon one who he thought was admirably adapted to fill the post, if indeed she would take it. She was an old woman of pure Norman descent, the widow of a weaver, and who had herself been accustomed to work at the loom, although she had done but little in that way for many years past. Her principal occupation at the moment was that of attending at the chapel for the purpose of cleaning it and such-like work ; in fact her duties strongly resembled those performed by pew-openers in our modern churches. The situation at the doctor's seemed perfectly adapted for her, as she would be enabled, with a little management, not only to act as his cook and housekeeper, but to perform her duties in the Temple as well. Nay more, she might occasionally resume her occupation at the loom, as the doctor would use his influence with Messrs. Barbet & Beuzeville that she might obtain employment in the weaving of common silks.

At length it was decided that the offer should be made to Mrs. Mangin, and the doctor, in order that no time might be lost, immediately quitted the house for the purpose of obtaining an interview with her ; and in a short time he returned with the information that Mrs. Mangin had readily accepted his offer, and would commence her duties the next day, although she would

not take up her residence at the doctor's till after Mrs. Waldron's departure.

The following day Mrs. Waldron, accompanied by the doctor, paid a visit to Mr. Barbet to thank him for the great kindness he had shown to Edgar, as well as to inform him of the great service his letter of introduction had been to him. Mr. Barbet said he was glad to hear so good an account of Edgar's prospects, which now seemed promising in the extreme. He was not, he said, well acquainted with the firm by whom Edgar was engaged, but he had no doubt they were of high respectability, or his correspondent would not have recommended him to them. He should also, he said, be happy to hear of any intelligence respecting him. "And now, Mrs. Waldron," he continued, "let me know something about your poor blind niece, for she is a great favourite of mine. I suppose you do not intend taking her with you?"

"I would willingly have done so, sir," said Mrs. Waldron; "but you may easily imagine that there are great difficulties in the way. In the first place, with her infirmity, she would be exposed to great danger from accidents during the voyage. In the next, my husband, as you may have heard, has been struck down by paralysis, and of course will require all my time and attention to nurse him, and it would therefore be impossible to give to Mary the care she requires."

"All that I can easily imagine," said Mr. Barbet;

“and I think you do wisely to let her remain here. One thing is certain, in better or kinder hands she couldn't be. Tell her from me that my gardener says he has a young healthy plant, which he will reserve for her, and as soon as it is sufficiently strong I will not fail to bring it to her. Tell her also that she must keep it for my sake as well as her cousin Edgar's; for, as I told her before, it is an offshoot from the same plant from which the camellia was taken which he presented to her the day he left England.”

The doctor, who was not so well acquainted with the episode of the camellia as Mrs. Waldron, merely thanked Mr. Barbet for his kindness. She on the other hand appeared somewhat confused, as if wishing to make a remark, and yet not having the courage to do so. She also coloured slightly, somewhat to the surprise of the doctor, who was not able to divine the cause. Fortunately, however, Mr. Barbet's attention was at the moment called off by some one entering the office; so nothing more was said on the subject, and Mrs. Waldron returned home to go on with the preparations she was making for her voyage.

We will not detain the reader by detailing the leave-taking, as it was both a long and painful one, especially between Mary and her aunt. Mrs. Waldron exhibited considerable emotion on the occasion. She embraced the girl with as much affection as if she had been her own daughter, and told her that she would always hear

with great interest any intelligence which the doctor might send respecting her. Dr. D'Aubigny accompanied Mrs. Waldron to the ship, and then bidding her adieu, left her to pursue her voyage.



CHAPTER XIV.

THE BIBLE AGAIN.

WE will pass rapidly over the events which occurred during the following two years. In the doctor's house everything went on with quietude, order, and regularity. Mrs. Mangin, though somewhat infirm in health, fulfilled in a very satisfactory manner the duties formerly performed by Mrs. Waldron. Beyond that, she had sufficient time left on her hands to continue her ordinary work at the Temple, and, through the kind intercession of the doctor, her leisure time was fully occupied at the loom. In fact, all would have gone on in a very satisfactory manner had it not been for certain symptoms of a somewhat alarming character which began to develop themselves in the state of Mary's health. Prior to the receipt of Edgar's letter no symptoms of the kind had been noticed, but now serious indications of a tendency to consumption appeared in the girl's constitution, and as time passed on

these became more and more apparent. At length the doctor could no longer close his eyes to the fact, much and earnestly as he had struggled against arriving at such a conclusion. He had but little trouble in tracing these premonitory symptoms to their source, but how to divert her mind from the painful subject surpassed all the medical ingenuity he was possessed of. In her case he easily perceived that her mind was preying on her body; but to counteract the evil influence was a far more difficult task than he was able to accomplish. And now his thoughts reverted to the work published by his countryman, Jean Paul Marat (whom he held in so much detestation), in which it was maintained that the soul or mind might prey upon the body till life itself was extinct; while on the other hand the health of the body might exert a most beneficial influence on the mind. In poor Mary's case the doctor easily saw it was the mind that was diseased, and to such an extent that neither medicine nor kind treatment was likely to cure it.

Mr. Barbet, a few months after Mrs. Waldron's departure, presented Mary with the *camellia japonica* which he had promised her. Mary received the plant with warm expressions of gratitude, and promised to take great care of it. She was evidently much pleased with the gift. Not so, however, the doctor. While admitting the kind intentions of Mr. Barbet, the man of science easily perceived that the care and attention

Mary would bestow upon the plant would tend rather to increase her malady than cure it. Each time she touched it, or thought of it, it would certainly bring back to her recollection the events which had occurred when the flower, fresh cut from the parent plant, had been presented to her by Edgar on the day of his departure which was now lying as faded and dead in her little cardboard box in her chest of drawers as was the hope it had created in her breast at the time when she had received it.

What little care and attention the doctor could give to her by way of leading her mind to dwell upon other subjects he conscientiously bestowed. He would frequently take her to pass the day with her friend Clara Le Breton, and call for her in the evening; though it is much to be doubted whether the conversations Mary had with her on these occasions tended much to relieve her mind from the sorrow which oppressed it. He would also take her for long walks into the country,—which at the time we are writing of was in close vicinity to his house,—though with little beneficial effect, for the beauties of nature, which might have attracted the attention of a sighted girl, were entirely lost upon her. In the evenings, when at prayers, the poor doctor attempted by every means in his power to select those portions for his Bible-reading that would be more likely to raise her spirits than to depress them; and the extemporaneous prayer which he

was accustomed to offer up after it was also composed for a similar effect. Neither, alas ! appeared to have any beneficial effect upon his patient ; her malady seemed rather to increase than diminish. And here it may be remarked that the doctor continued to read from Mrs. Dubosq's Bible, evidently believing, though unconsciously to himself, that the lesson read from it was more efficacious than it would have been from any other copy of the Holy Scriptures.

The doctor, finding all his plans fail, tried another method of diverting Mary's mind, but with scarcely better effect. He would frequently in the afternoon, when not occupied with his patients, conduct her to the Temple ; and, having procured the kind assistance of the member of the congregation who generally conducted the singing, he would persuade Mary to sing some of the old Huguenot hymns then in vogue among the French descendants of the Spitalfields weavers, and which she sang to perfection.

And now a circumstance occurred which occasioned no little excitement in the family. The doctor received a letter from Mrs. Waldron. In it she described the events of her voyage to Australia ; but as the subject would have but little interest for the reader, we will pass it over. She then told him that Edgar had met her on her arrival, and had conducted her to her husband, whom she found in a state of utter and hopeless paralysis. He recognized her, however, and

was much affected at the meeting. Edgar had then introduced her to his wife, whom she found not only a remarkably handsome, well-made girl, but of most pleasing manners, and evidently of great amiability. In fact she had never been more favourably impressed by any person she had met with in her life; and as far as Edgar's home comforts were concerned, he had every prospect of leading a very happy life with her. Of his business prospects she said she could form no opinion, as they were beyond her comprehension. She hoped they might turn out satisfactorily, but it had struck her that Edgar, in speaking of them, did not appear over sanguine on the subject. Still she might be mistaken, she said, and she hoped for the best. She concluded her letter to the doctor by sending many affectionate remembrances to Mary, whom she assured that she held her in as much affection as if she had been her own daughter.

The doctor had some fear that the effect of this letter would be to increase Mary's malady, but in this he was mistaken, for no bad symptoms whatever presented themselves. A circumstance, however, afterwards occurred, which changed matters considerably for the worse. One evening, the doctor having to visit a patient in the further part of Bethnal Green,—which, though now crowded with houses, was then an almost rural locality,—he took Mary with him, and left her seated on a bank while he entered the house, promising

to rejoin her in a few minutes. The doctor, however, found his patient in a much worse condition than he had imagined she was in, and he was obliged to remain with her for some considerable time, being almost afraid she would expire under his hands. In fact, so great was his anxiety that for the moment he had totally forgotten that Mary was waiting for him.

During the time the doctor was with his patient, a violent shower of rain came on, and Mary, rising from her seat, attempted to find her way to the house. This, however, she was unable to accomplish, and she wandered about for some time, occasionally stopping to listen whether any one was near her, so that she might ask for assistance. At length she wandered into a locality which was covered with large furze bushes, the rain pouring down heavily the while, till at length her clothes became thoroughly saturated. The doctor, whose attention had now been called to the state of the weather, hurriedly left his patient for the purpose of finding Mary; but to his great terror he discovered that she had quitted the bank on which he had left her, nor was he able to find her. Night came on rapidly, and the difficulty of distinguishing objects around him became proportionately greater. He then requested some of the inhabitants of the house to assist him, which they willingly did, and by calling loudly for her they at length succeeded in finding her,—not, however, till every article of clothing she had on her was wet through. The

doctor and Mary had now to get home the best way they could, and at length succeeded in reaching the house. Mrs. Mangin showed every possible care and attention to Mary, and in a very short time after her arrival the poor girl was safe in her bed, though lamentably chilled by her exposure to the weather, as well as exhausted by the fatigue she had undergone.

The following evening the doctor discovered that Mary was exceedingly unwell, and the next day symptoms of inflammation of the lungs began to show themselves, which increased to such an extent as to induce him to fear that the attack might end fatally ; as it was, the great care and skill which were bestowed upon her hardly succeeded in saving her. And then only for a time, for when the acute symptoms disappeared they left behind them a very severe cough, which nothing seemed capable of alleviating. It increased in severity during the ensuing winter, and the doctor looked forward to the spring in the hope that the warmer weather might somewhat soothe the distressing symptoms. But all in vain. The best report that could be given of the malady was, that during the summer her cough was no worse ; and that in the later autumn and winter it increased in intensity. During her illness she not only received great kindness and attention from Mrs. Mangin and the doctor, but from her friend Clara Le Breton as well, who visited her frequently. The termination of her malady was now patent to all, and Mary, so far from

dreading the end, rather looked forward to it with feelings of pleasurable anticipation.

One morning Mr. Barbet, who was a frequent visitor at the house, in conversation with the doctor suggested that change of air might do the poor girl good, and he asked the doctor to allow her to pass some time at his country-house in Hackney, to which after a little persuasion he gave his consent. The following day Mrs. Mangin and Mary, who carried with her not only her camellia but the poor dead flower in the cardboard-box, left their home. At Mr. Barbet's house Mary remained for more than a month, without any beneficial effects arising from her visit. Every evening the doctor visited her in the hope that he might find her somewhat better, and invariably returned home, not only with his hope utterly destroyed, but with the most gloomy anticipations for the future.

At length, perceiving that not the slightest beneficial effect was likely to accrue by any longer residence at Mr. Barbet's, the doctor resolved on removing Mary to his own home. This, however, was accomplished with no little difficulty, so great was her state of prostration at the time. Fortunately, she appeared to suffer no ill effects from her journey, the surroundings of her old home evidently for a time acting beneficially on her; in fact, her health showed one of those singular changes for the better so frequently to be remarked in consumptive cases, where the patient improves so rapidly as to

offer a strong promise of eventual recovery, cruelly to fade again at the moment when the hope appears most likely to be realized. In this manner Mary hung on for some months, the termination of her malady becoming each day more apparent.

About the end of the second year after Mrs. Waldron's departure the doctor received another letter from her. In this she informed him of many events which had taken place since she had last written to him. The most important of these was the death of her husband in somewhat distressed circumstances. Since that time she had resided with Edgar and his wife, and had fulfilled in their house many of the duties she had been accustomed to perform when residing with the doctor. Both her son and his wife had treated her with the greatest kindness, although she could not disguise from herself that she must be a heavy burden on their hands, especially as her age and debilitated constitution rendered her far less active than she had formerly been. A few months before the letter was written, Ellen had presented her husband with a little daughter—a remarkably pretty and fine child—to whom, it was almost needless to say, both parents were tenderly attached. Of Edgar's affairs she knew but little, but that little caused her great anxiety. Not that she was in any way acquainted with business matters, but principally from the state of anxiety he appeared continually to be in. She had also, she said, frequently heard very unfavourable reports concerning the firm by whom he was

engaged. One time Edgar himself went so far as to say that, had it not been for his good fortune in finding his wife, he should certainly deplore that he had ever left England.

Mrs. Waldron then went on at considerable length to express her regret at the last news they had received respecting Mary's state of health; still, while there was life there was hope, she said, and with the poor girl's naturally good constitution and youth, she trusted, with the blessing of God, that she would recover. She begged the doctor would give Mary her best wishes, and love as well, coupled with the assurance, as before, that she should ever remain as tenderly attached to her as if she had been her own daughter.

The letter also contained an enclosure which the doctor was requested to read to Mary. It was from Edgar's wife, who, after expressing her great sorrow at the girl's illness, told her how much she regretted she was unable to make her acquaintance. From what she had heard of her, both from Mrs. Waldron and Edgar, she was already sincerely attached to her, and had she been personally acquainted with her she was fully convinced she would have been as fond of her as if she had been her own sister. She had arrived, she said, at this conclusion, not only from the description she had heard of her, but from the love that both Edgar and her aunt Mrs. Waldron seemed to entertain for her, the latter considering her more as a daughter than a niece,

and the former as a sister rather than a cousin. She further informed her that as a mark of the esteem that both she and her husband held Mary in, they had baptized their little daughter in both her mother's name and Mary's, and they trusted she would accept the news in proof of the love they bore her.

The receipt of these two letters gave the doctor another opportunity of noticing in Mary the extraordinary effect the soul occasionally has on the body. As might naturally be expected, the letter at first caused in her considerable excitement, and when this subsided it left a marked improvement visible in the state of her bodily health. She now became far more conversable, and would enter with considerable animation into any conversation in which she took the slightest interest. Even when silent and absorbed in thought, there was now visible on her countenance an expression of placid happiness and contentment, to which it had been a stranger for the past two years. The affection borne for her by Edgar and his wife pleased her immensely, and she frequently spoke of it when in conversation with the doctor. Edgar's brotherly remembrance of her also delighted her, not only from the fact that it was known to his wife, but that she (Mary) could now continue to love him with a pure sisterly affection, without fear or concealment. Other singular circumstances might also be noticed in her. Hitherto she had paid but little more attention to the *camellia japonica* than to other plants in

whose growth she was interested ; now, on the contrary, it absorbed by far the greater portion of her care. In fact, the improvement in her health and spirits was so great that the doctor, when he replied to Mrs. Waldron's letter, admitted that it was more than probable he had, when he last wrote, over-estimated the danger she was in.

And now another subject of considerable importance began to claim the doctor's attention. The congregation at the Temple had lately fallen off so greatly in numbers, in consequence of so many of its members moving westward, that the receipts were insufficient to maintain it in a proper and efficient manner, and it had now to be determined in what way money could be raised to put its affairs on a better footing. Before, however, taking any steps in the matter, the doctor, with his habitual prudence, wrote to his friend and solicitor, Mr. Du Val, saying he much wished to consult him on the subject, and if at any time he happened to be in the neighbourhood and would favour him with a call, he would be greatly obliged, adding that he would generally find him at home between one and two o'clock, as that was his dinner-hour. A few days afterwards Mr. Du Val called just as the meal was over, and he and the doctor soon entered into conversation respecting the affairs at the chapel, leaving Mary comfortably seated in the easy-chair by the fireside. The conversation, which was a somewhat long one, was for some time without any interest to

any but the two parties concerned in it. At length some question was asked by Mr. Du Val which the doctor for the moment was unable to answer without referring to some old memoranda he had in his book-case. This having been found, Mr. Du Val took a note from it, and then said to the doctor :

“ You seem to have there a very curious collection of old books. I should much like some day, when I have time, to inspect them.”

Here the solicitor unconsciously touched upon one of the doctor's weak points, and he pulled out one volume after another from the book-case, opening and exhibiting them with great pride, and in all he said Mr. Du Val appeared to take a great (possibly feigned) interest. This temporary inspection over, the book-case was again closed, and Mr. Du Val took up his hat for the purpose of taking his leave, when his eye fell on Mrs. Dubosq's Bible on the little table by the window.

“ You have there another old book, I perceive. What is it ? ”

“ Oh, it is merely a family Bible,” said the doctor, “ out of which I am in the habit of reading every evening. Although it is not very old, not much more than a century perhaps, I have a great respect for it. Indeed, there is not another book in my whole collection that I love so well, for none has afforded to myself and those dear to me so much happiness and satisfaction.”

Mr. Du Val now mechanically opened the Bible, and turned over the leaves without any apparent interest; when suddenly his eye fell on the fly-leaf at the commencement, on which were written many memoranda concerning births, deaths, and marriages in the Dubosq family, not only since they had been in England, but prior to their emigration from Normandy. Suddenly his eyes seemed to dwell with particular interest upon the last insertion, which ran somewhat in the following manner :

“ Married, Feb. 24, 1782, at the church of St. Botolph, Bishopsgate, Matilda Dubosq, daughter of the above Sophia Dubosq, of the City Road, to Mark Theodore Lambert, only child of Theodore Lambert, formerly merchant in Leadenhall Street.”

For some moments Mr. Du Val remained silent, and then inserted a memorandum at the foot of the notes he had taken respecting the affairs of the chapel. When he had finished, he asked the doctor, seeing that he was preparing to leave the house, which way he was going, as he should like to have a little further conversation with him; and a few minutes afterwards the two quitted the house together.

“ I wanted to ask you,” said Mr. Du Val, “ what you know of the Mark Theodore Lambert mentioned in the last entry in the old Bible you showed me.”

“Of him personally I knew nothing whatever, for I never saw him in my life. All I have heard of him is that he was the husband of Matilda Dubosq. I understand that he offended his mother, the only parent he had living, by marrying beneath him, as she called it; though possibly, if the matter were inquired into, the girl’s family was better than her own. At Lambert’s death (he had been a junior clerk in some house in the City), he left his widow in very distressed circumstances, and she afterwards died at the house of her mother, who was herself very badly off.”

“Did she leave any children?” inquired Mr. Du Val.

“Only one, and that a daughter.”

“And is she alive?”

“Yes,” said the doctor; “she is that poor blind girl you just now saw in my house.”

“Her infirmity is a very lamentable one, I admit,” said Mr. Du Val, “but at the same time I think I can prove that she is hardly as much to be pitied as you think. For some years past I have been endeavouring to find out what became of the descendants of Theodore Lambert, the merchant, but without success. The fact is that he left his wife a life interest in about thirty thousand pounds, which after her death was to descend to her son absolutely. Now, if I can only prove that that poor girl is the rightful heiress, as they say in comedies on the stage, it will be a very fortunate thing for her, or any of those

in whom she may feel interested. However, as there is proverbially many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip, let me advise you not to say anything to her about it until I have been able to inquire further into the matter."

The doctor, greatly astonished at the news he had heard, promised to follow his advice; and the friends soon afterwards separated.

Although in the end Mr. Du Val's opinion turned out to be a perfectly correct one, the proceedings occupied fully another year before they were brought to a termination and Mary, now of age, placed in possession of her fortune. She was kept in the dark, however, on the subject till Mr. Du Val was able to prove that she was indisputably entitled to the money; and the doctor then broke the news to her with great care and caution. The poor girl received the intelligence with much joy, arising from perfectly unselfish motives, her satisfaction being based on several considerations, each in its turn implying the design of benefiting others who were dear to her. One point, and one alone, caused her some embarrassment, and that was how she could prove her gratitude to the doctor for the great kindness and attention she had always received at his hands. At length, having summoned up sufficient courage, she explained to him the great debt of gratitude she knew was due to him, and as she wished to prove to him they were not merely idle words she was speaking,

she requested him to accept some material proof of their reality. The doctor, however, not only declined the offer unhesitatingly, but he also appeared so pained at the bare suggestion, that she much regretted ever having mentioned the subject to him ; nor was it again ever spoken of.

And then again arrived another letter from Australia, containing news of a very different character from that which Mary expected to hear. In her letter Mrs. Waldron informed the doctor that everything had turned out unfortunately with the house of business in which Edgar was employed—in fact, it was bankrupt, and Edgar himself was left to find some other occupation, with only about two hundred pounds in his possession, arising from the money which had been given to him by his father and the small economies he had been able to make out of his earnings. She further stated that Mr. Barbet, having heard of the desperate state of the affairs of the firm in which Edgar was engaged, had written a letter to him, telling him that, if matters proved hopeless, and he chose to return to England, his firm would endeavour to employ him again in their office and further his views in any manner they could. They also advised him if possible to obtain some agencies in England from Australian firms, as they might add considerably to his income.

Mrs. Waldron then went on to state that Edgar had finally determined to follow Mr. Barbet's advice, and

that they had taken their passage in a ship which was to leave Sydney in about six weeks after the date of her letter. And she then concluded by expressing the great happiness it would afford her to be once more in England, and be again with those who had been so kind to her.



CHAPTER XV.

THE CAMELLIA PLANT.

THE receipt of the last letter from Australia caused no little embarrassment to Dr. D'Aubigny. In the first place it proved to him that Edgar on his arrival in England would be but badly provided with funds, so that, with the greatest economy, he could have hardly sufficient to maintain him till he would be able to obtain some remunerative employment, and that, if Mr. Barbet were unable to engage him himself, might not be found without considerable delay. And then again, although as matters now stood economy was not a matter of as much importance as it had formerly been, some provision ought to be made for the family on their arrival ; and he had to consider whether a house should be taken for them, or they should go to an inn. It struck both the doctor and Mary that the latter would appear inhospitable, and yet the idea of accommodating them all in

the doctor's humble abode would be an absurdity. As a great deal would depend upon what Edgar's plans and movements would be after his arrival in England, and as neither the doctor nor Mary could arrive at any satisfactory conclusion on the subject, it was at last resolved that they should consult Mr. Barbet, and what he proposed, if found practicable, they would carry out.

Having arrived at this decision, the doctor at once left home to call on Mr. Barbet. He it appeared had already received the news of Edgar's approaching arrival in England, and there was therefore less necessity for any lengthened explanation from the doctor than might otherwise have been the case. As to Edgar's being able soon to find remunerative employment, Mr. Barbet had little doubt. Indeed, he was convinced, from the time Edgar had been in the colony, that he must have acquired considerable information as to the mode of doing business, and also as to what firms might be trusted. "In fact," he continued, "my firm will be glad to employ him, always providing that he is not able to make a better arrangement with some other house. Where will he reside when he arrives in England?"

"On that point," said the doctor, "we have not yet come to any definite conclusion. My house, as you may believe, is much too small to hold them all. Again, I am undecided as to my own plans. Of course Mary, with her large fortune, must have some better

residence than the one I can offer her, and yet I hardly know where I could move to, for it would break my heart to be separated from her, although of course I would never allow her to incur any expense for me. Thank God, humble as my circumstances may be, I have economized sufficiently to be a burden to no one. Altogether I am puzzled what to do. If I had two or three months to consider the matter, I might possibly arrive at a conclusion which would benefit all. But as Edgar will be here in a month or six weeks, unless I can find some friend with a clear head to advise me, I hardly know what steps to take."

"Well, doctor," said Mr. Barbet, "I think your difficulty may be got over in a much easier manner than you may imagine. In about a week from this time I intend visiting Lyons and some other towns in the south of France, for the purpose of carrying out some objects connected with our business. As my wife, who you know is a Frenchwoman, wishes to visit her sister, whom she has not seen for many years, I purpose taking her with me, and we shall remain there for at least six months. Now if you or Mary would like to take my house ready furnished for the time, there would be little danger of our differing about terms. She has already been there, and knows the place well, which, poor girl, with her infirmity, will be an advantage to her. Now what say you? The servants would be left, and you know they are all trustworthy and respectable, and, what is more,

Mary is a great favourite of theirs, so she would be well looked after. There would be also plenty of room in the house for Edgar and his family, and, in fact, I think you would find some difficulty in discovering any other place that would suit you better."

"I think so too," said the doctor; "and I am much obliged to you for the offer. At the same time, as Mary will really be your tenant, I must first consult her on the subject, though I need hardly say it will be a mere matter of form, nothing more."

"If she does accept my offer," said Mr. Barbet, as the doctor was about to leave the office, "advise her from me to take her camellia with her. My gardener will take much better care of it in the greenhouse than she can do in her bedroom."

It need hardly be said that Mary willingly accepted Mr. Barbet's offer; in fact, nothing could have better suited her views. Though fully aware of the impossibility of her recovery, she had hoped that she would meet her aunt and her cousin and his wife before she died; but now, should her life be so long spared, she would have the happiness not only of again residing under the same roof with her aunt and cousin, but also of returning to the former a like hearty welcome and shelter to that she had afforded to her when a helpless, destitute, and afflicted child.

A few lines may not be out of place here, in order to explain to some extent the character of the love the

poor blind girl now bore to her cousin. It had undergone a total change since the intelligence had reached her of Edgar's marriage, and yet was as intense as ever. Prior to that event, the love she bore him was that which a fond girl might entertain for a lover who she hoped would one day be her husband. When she found he had married another, the love she had hitherto borne him slowly, but with the keenest suffering, died away ; and yet, before it was absolutely extinct, another affection, but of a totally different character, sprung up in its place. It now resembled the intensified affection of a sister for a much-loved brother, and that of a description so pure that an angel might have indulged in it without danger to her heavenly nature. He was now no longer "the god of her idolatry," but the soul of her soul ; and this was to a certain degree proved by the affection she bore to his wife, whom, without knowing, she loved as a sister, and that solely from the affectionate manner in which Edgar had always spoken of her. Her love for her cousin, however, was, she believed, unknown to all, with the exception of her friend Clara Le Breton. She never even hinted of it to the doctor, and was unconscious that he even suspected it.

During the week before Mr. Barbet gave up the possession of his house at Hackney to Mary as his tenant, the doctor from time to time despatched to it boxes containing his books and other valuables which he intended to keep under his immediate care,

so that he and Mary should have nothing to carry with them which should cause them any embarrassment. At length the day arrived for their final departure, and the hackney-coach was in readiness which was to convey Mary and the doctor to their new home. Their journey, short as it was, proved a source of great anxiety to the doctor. Mary had not been able to leave her room for the previous fortnight ; and, the day before quitting the house, the doctor almost imagined she would be unable to bear the fatigue of the journey, short as it was. When, however, the time arrived for her departure, as if by a miracle she appeared to possess sufficient strength to bear the journey without difficulty. Possibly another of those astonishing instances of the power of the soul or mind upon the body—a subject which had formerly possessed so much interest for the doctor—might have been mixed up with it. She descended the stairs which led from her bedroom with so little difficulty as to cause him much surprise ; but his satisfaction, alas ! subsided as he took her by the hand to lead her to the coach, for he could then distinguish in her fingers the throbbing of the arteries, which told him how little strength of body she at that moment possessed, and that it was her courage alone which at that moment sustained her.

At length the doctor and Mary were both seated in the coach ; Mrs. Mangin, who, till further orders, was left in charge of the house, had taken her farewell of

them, and the coachman drove on. Little conversation took place between them on the road, both possibly being occupied with their own thoughts. On the doctor's knees was placed Mrs. Dubosq's Bible, while Mary held on hers the camellia, looking as feeble and delicate as its owner. Onward they went, the same silence being maintained between them—the doctor occasionally casting an anxious look on his companion, to mark how she bore the fatigue of her journey; and they continued in this manner till they had reached their destination. Mary then, having placed the camellia under the special charge of the gardener, was conducted by a female servant into her bedroom.

A month now passed in their new home without anything occurring particularly worthy of record, beyond the fact that Mary's health during the time showed no change for the worse. No doubt this happy state of things might be attributed to more than one cause. In the first place, everything that science and kind treatment could effect was brought to bear upon her case. An excellent nurse was engaged to attend her, and the doctor was unceasing in his care. At the same time it was easy to perceive that there was another power which supported her in her lamentably weak condition, and without which all the skill that the science of man could show would have been of no avail.

With Mary the time passed off calmly and happily. True she was aware that the hour of her death was not

far distant, but she also felt an equally certain conviction that it would not occur till after Edgar and his wife's arrival in England. For this she had earnestly prayed, and she felt a positive conviction that her prayer had been granted. But apart from this there was another subject, which also appeared to give her strength. The gardener would frequently visit her—for she was now too weak to walk to the greenhouse without causing her great fatigue—and report to her on the condition of the camellia. “He had never,” he said, “seen a plant get on so well in his life. He had had many hundred weak plants under his management that had recovered their strength, but never one which had done it so fast as that camellia. Why, when it was first placed in his hands he thought no mortal man could have saved it, and now, if it went on for another fortnight as well as it had done the last, there would not be a healthier plant in the whole greenhouse.”

During her residence in Hackney, Mary of course formed no new acquaintances, nor had she any desire to do so; and even had she expressed such a wish, it is certain that the doctor would have advised her to the contrary. Her one and only confidante, Clara Le Breton, visited her frequently. Her husband had met with considerable advancement in the house in which he was employed, and Clara in consequence had relinquished the dressmaking business. Nor was that the only reason. She was now a mother, having presented

her husband with a fine healthy child (a girl), to which Mary by proxy had stood godmother, and which had been baptized in her name. The care of the infant, as may readily be imagined, took up no inconsiderable portion of Clara's time, and the profits of her business were not sufficient to allow her to engage an efficient assistant. To Clara, Mary confided her thoughts more truthfully than many a pious Romanist would have done to a father confessor, and with as full a conviction that her confession would be kept a secret. The general tenor of their conversation was the approaching arrival of Edgar and his wife, and her aunt Mrs. Waldron, and what arrangements she intended to make for their reception, and other matters of a similar commonplace description; or if the conversation changed, it generally dwelt on Mrs. Le Breton's domestic affairs, and her husband and child. One fact should especially be noted. Neither Clara nor Mary ever alluded to the conversation, already quoted, which had taken place between them on the receipt of Edgar's first letter from Sydney announcing his approaching marriage.

And now the time had arrived when the ship in which Edgar and his family had sailed might be daily expected to reach England. Dr. D'Aubigny had arranged with the shipping agents to send him the first intelligence, so as to enable him to start off at a moment's notice, and reach the ship at Gravesend. The news at last arrived, and the doctor immediately posted off to meet the ship, and found that

she had entered the Thames but a few hours before. When he got on board, the doctor inquired of the other passengers, who were waiting for boats to take them on shore, where he could find Mr. Waldron and his family. None of them were acquainted with any passenger of that name, but they advised him to inquire of the captain, who was then in his cabin. The doctor, greatly alarmed, did so, and was informed by the captain that Mr. Waldron and his family were not on board ; that he had been detained in Sydney from some cause, but he did not know what. " But may I ask what your name is, sir ? " said the captain ; " I have a letter for some friend of Mr. Waldron's, which I was requested to deliver personally as soon as I could after my arrival."

The doctor gave the captain his name and address at Bethnal Green, and as this corresponded with the address on the letter, it was at once placed in his hands. He then quitted the cabin and endeavoured—no easy task—to find some quiet spot on deck where he could read his letter undisturbed ; and when he had succeeded, it was some moments before he could summon up sufficient nerve to break the seal. At length, however, he accomplished it, and was much pained at the contents of the letter. It was from Edgar, and related almost entirely to the cause of his being obliged to postpone his journey. He informed the doctor that the cabins had been secured on board the ship, and all other arrangements nearly completed ;

but that a fortnight before the date of the ship's sailing, his dear wife was prostrated by an attack of typhus fever, and that of so severe a character that her life was even then in great danger. Still, while there was life there was hope, and he trusted that he should be spared the terrible misfortune of losing her, which he said would break his heart. The owners of the ship, he concluded, had behaved very handsomely to him, in allowing him to go by their next ship, which would leave in about a month or five weeks. And he fervently prayed that about that length of time after the doctor had received his letter, they should meet again in England.

The doctor was naturally much shocked at the news contained in Edgar's letter. Perhaps he might have been even more so, had not another anxiety, still greater, arisen in his mind at the moment—namely, in what manner he should break the news to Mary. Although she had never spoken to him on the subject, he could easily perceive that the courage which had supported her life up to the present moment had been obtained with the greatest difficulty, and that, should a relapse occur, it would almost be a certainty that she would never recover; and yet on him was thrown the onus of communicating to her the intelligence that would cause her death, him to whom her life was dearer than to all others combined.

Painfully indeed did the time pass during the doctor's homeward journey. It was principally occupied in devising in what manner he should impart to Mary the

news he was the bearer of. Again and again did he consider the subject, and often did he arrive at a conclusion, but each in its turn was cast aside as too dangerous to be acted upon. In this unhappy state of mind he continued till he reached home, and even then he was as undecided as when he quitted the ship at Gravesend. Before entering the house he hesitated for some moments, during which time the mental torture he endured became insupportable ; and then, offering up a short prayer to Heaven that the intelligence he was about to convey to the poor girl might be deprived of all danger, he rang the bell and immediately afterwards entered the parlour, where he found Mary awaiting him. The first glance he cast upon her told him in a moment how perilous was the task he had to accomplish. She was seated, or rather she reclined in an easy-chair, supported by pillows ; her face was of a deadly pallor, and yet the expression marked upon it was one of intense but sad anxiety, showing that while the body was oscillating between life and death, the soul was still in it and as full of life as ever. Although she easily recognized the sound of his footsteps, she said nothing. It almost appeared as if she had received some undefined intimation that a terrible misfortune was hanging over her. Painful as it would be for the doctor to witness the effect of the communication he had to make, the expression of combined terror and anxiety on Mary's countenance was far more so ; and with a sudden effort he said :

“Mary, my dear, I am sorry to be the bearer of very disappointing news. Edgar and his family have been detained in Sydney. They purpose, however, coming by the next ship, which is expected to reach England in a month or six weeks.”

For some moments Mary made no verbal reply; and then raising her hands and letting them fall again, she said in a low, mournful tone of voice :

“Then we shall never meet again in this world; my life cannot hold out so long. I had but one hope, and that is denied me. God’s will be done; we must all submit. I prayed to Him to let me live to this day, and He heard my prayer and granted it. May He now take me to Himself, and release me from my misery, for I feel it will be impossible for me to live so long.”

And here she wept silently, but so sadly that it went to the doctor’s heart to witness it.

“Come, come, Mary,” he said, “don’t give way in that manner; let us rather pray to the Almighty that He may spare your life. He has already heard your prayer and granted it. He is omnipotent, and can be equally merciful to you again, should it be for your benefit. Take courage, my dear.”

Mary made no remark, but shook her head doubtfully; then after a few moments’ silence she asked what had detained them. The doctor in reply took Edgar’s letter from his pocket and read it to her from beginning

to end. Mary listened to it attentively, and expressed great sorrow at the cause of their delay.

“I pray God,” she said, “that Ellen may recover, and that He will allow me to lay down my life as a sacrifice for hers.”

“I hope that you and Ellen will meet,” said the doctor; “and in that case my earnest prayer will be granted. But now, my dear, let us resign ourselves to the will of Heaven, at the same time earnestly praying that our wishes may be granted. As I said before, God has kindly heard us and granted our supplications; let us hope He will now also incline His ear to our wishes.”

For more than a week Mary's health continued in a state of almost absolute prostration; all that could be said was that it was no worse. The doctor and her nurse tended her with unceasing care; still, without super-human aid, it would have been impossible in her exhausted condition to have continued alive.

About ten days after the receipt of Edgar's letter a circumstance occurred, apparently trifling in itself, which indirectly contributed a considerable addition to the poor girl's power of sustaining life under her deplorable physical weakness. One morning when she felt somewhat better, and had been placed by her nurse on the easy-chair in the drawing-room, a housemaid entered and told her that Watkins the gardener wished to speak to her about the camellia.

“There is nothing wrong with it, I hope,” said Mary.

"He sent me word yesterday that it was strong and healthy."

"I don't know that there is, miss," the girl replied; "but that was all the message he sent by me."

"Show him in then," said Mary.

"I hope, miss, I have not disturbed you," said Watkins when he entered; "but I wanted to tell you something about your camellia. I have known it myself for some days past, but I thought I would say nothing about it till I was certain there would be no danger of your being disappointed. There is a beautiful large flower-bud formed on it, and it is now so healthy there is not the slightest chance of its dying off. I never saw a finer bud in my life. I only wish you were able to see it."

"Bring the camellia here then," said Mary, "if you think it will not injure the flower."

"Not a bit, miss; I am sure of that."

The gardener now left the room, and a few moments afterwards returned with the plant.

"Here it is, miss," he said. "Shall I place it on the table near you?"

"Do so," said Mary. "Now take my hand," she continued, as soon as he had placed the plant on the table, "and let me feel the bud."

"Yes, miss; but you must touch it very gently, or you may hurt it."

There was no danger of any injury occurring to the

bud from Mary's touch ; it was so light and gentle that it would not have disturbed the pollen on the most delicate flower ; and yet so minutely did she examine the bud, that its form and size were as perfectly understood by her as by the gardener himself. When fully satisfied with her examination, she said to him :

“ Would it injure the flower if the plant remained in this room ? ”

“ Well, miss, I think it would be safer if you allowed me to take it back again to the greenhouse. Besides, as there is more light there, the flower may be whiter. ”

“ How long do you think it will be before the flower blossoms ? ”

“ I should give it, miss, a fortnight or three weeks at the latest, ” said Watkins, taking the flower with him as he left the room, as well as Mary's instructions to report to her every morning what progress the bud was making.

The next day the doctor, who had heard nothing of Mary's interview with the gardener, found her somewhat stronger, as well as in better spirits, nor did she, although continuing very weak, show any alteration for the worse during the next fortnight. He attributed this happy state of things to her intense wish to meet her cousin and his family, based on the earnest prayers they both offered up morning and evening for their safe arrival. He was also now aware that a flower-bud had appeared on the camellia, and that day by day Mary received a report of its progress from the gardener, occa-

sionally ascertaining its truth from her own touch. This anxiety on her part, inasmuch as he was ignorant of any other ideas she entertained respecting it, he attributed merely to the natural interest a young girl so frequently takes in the growth of a favourite plant. With Mary, however, the case was very different. In some eccentric, inexplicable manner, or probably on the principle of a drowning man catching at a straw, she had conceived the idea that the progress the bud made towards maturity was an indication to her of the nearer approach of Edgar and his family towards England. Nor was this all. Perhaps unconsciously to herself, she was also convinced that as long as the bud continued to increase, so long her life and strength would last. She never calculated on the possibility of its death before the ship's arrival, though she felt certain that her life would last no longer than the flower. How soon her death might occur after her meeting with her cousin and his wife (for she loved Ellen by anticipation only second to Edgar himself) she cared not. A few days after their arrival would suffice, till, with the aid of Mr. Du Val to put her testamentary wishes into proper form, she would not only be able to leave the world without regret, but with a grateful heart to God for the mercy and kindness He had bestowed on her.

One morning, when Watkins entered the room to deliver his report, he, unasked, brought with him the camellia. "I have come to tell you, miss," he said, "that the bud is beginning to open, and I have brought

the plant with me, in case you should like to judge for yourself. You can easily feel it, although you had better do so very gently."

Mary, lightly as she touched the bud, was able to distinguish the interstices between the outside leaves of the bud and the petals beneath.

"How long will it be before it blossoms?" inquired Mary.

"In a very few days, miss, it will be in full bloom," said Watkins, "and a very fine large flower it will be, of that I am certain."

By a singular coincidence—for the reader will hardly be inclined to attribute it to any other cause—a clerk from the shipping agents called the same afternoon upon the doctor, and informed him that they had that morning received a letter from Falmouth, saying that the ship had touched there to take in a Channel pilot. The captain also, among other matters, had sent them a list of the passengers, and among these were Mr. and Mrs. Waldron, and two children, and Mr. Waldron's mother, all well. The clerk further stated that the ship was to leave Falmouth the same morning, and that it was very probable they would hear of her again when she was in the Downs. The state of pleasurable excitement into which the above intelligence threw Mary, caused the doctor some alarm, but fortunately no ill effects followed it. The next morning Watkins brought Mary the news that the camellia was in full bloom, "and a more

beautiful flower I never saw in my life, miss," he continued, "nor one larger. It is whiter than snow, nor is there a speck or blemish on any of its leaves. I will bring it to you if you like, but I would not advise you to touch the blossom. Lightly as you may do it, there may be a danger of mischief from it. I will bring it in, however, if you like."

"Yes, bring it in, Watkins," said Mary; "I should like now to have it always with me. Do not be afraid; I will not injure the flower."

Watkins shortly afterwards brought in the plant, and, having placed it on the table, left the room.

The doctor, who had been absent the greater part of the day, then returned home to spend the afternoon with Mary. Of course one of the first subjects of conversation touched upon between them was the camellia, which the doctor greatly praised, saying that he never saw a more beautiful flower in his life, nor one of a purer white.

"Is white as beautiful a colour as blue?" inquired Mary.

"Quite, in my opinion," said the doctor; "that is, when it is as beautiful a white as that flower is."

"Then why do people speak of 'heaven's own blue?'" inquired Mary.

"Well," said the doctor, little dreaming that Mary was quoting from Edgar's letter the passage in which he described the colour of his betrothed's eyes, "I don't think I ever heard the term, 'heaven's own blue.' If

used at all, it must have been in a poetic sense, nothing more. Some enthusiast, perhaps, speaking of a clear sky, as it is of that colour."

"Are there not colours in heaven, then?" said Mary.

"No doubt there are," said the doctor. "White, for example, is often mentioned. In the last chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, and the third verse, when speaking of the angel that had rolled the stone from the door of the sepulchre, he says: '*Son visage était comme un éclair, et son vêtement était blanc comme la neige.*' Again, in the sixteenth chapter of St. Mark, and the fifth verse: '*Puis, étant entrées dans le sépulcre, elles virent un jeune homme assis du côté droit, vêtu d'une robe blanche; et elles en furent épouvantées.*' St. John also, in the twentieth chapter of his Gospel and the twelfth verse, when speaking of Mary, said: '*Et elle vit deux anges vêtus de blanc, assis l'un à la tête et l'autre aux pieds, au lieu où le corps de Jésus avait été couché.*' Evidently white is considered in heaven to be the emblem of purity; and when looking at that flower I can easily understand it. Nothing can be more beautiful than its colour, or more perfectly emblematical of truthfulness or purity of thought."

Mary made no remark, and the doctor afterwards quitted the house for the purpose of seeing an old patient in Bethnal Green, and also of paying Mrs. Mangin a visit. On his way it occurred to him that there was a danger of his missing Edgar, who might leave the ship

before it arrived at its destination at Gravesend ; and in that case, being unaware of the change of circumstances that had occurred in the family since he (Edgar) had last heard from England, he would naturally go to the doctor's house. To obviate any difficulty on the subject, he now determined to leave a letter with Mrs. Mangin, explanatory of what had taken place, as well as naming his address. After the doctor had left all necessary instructions with Mrs. Mangin, she said to him :

“ Oh, if you please, sir, I should be sorry to cause you any inconvenience, but I should wish to leave you as soon as you can find some one else to take my place.”

“ Certainly, if you wish it ; but what is wrong, Mrs. Mangin ? ”

“ Nothing whatever, sir ; on the contrary, no one could have been more considerate than you have been. But my son, who lives in Coventry, has lately lost his wife, and he has written to ask me to manage his house and take care of his children.”

“ That is all reasonable enough, Mrs. Mangin,” said the doctor ; “ and as soon as I am able to make other arrangements I will release you, which shall be in less than a fortnight's time, at the latest.”

The doctor then left the house and proceeded to Hackney ; and on his arrival found a clerk from the shipping agents awaiting him, with the intelligence that, in all probability, the ship would reach Gravesend the next day, and that if he wished to meet her

there, he had better start off without delay, as it was possible the captain might only remain there one tide, and then come up the river. The doctor determined to follow the clerk's advice ; and, after breaking the news to Mary as carefully as he could, he at once left the house and posted to Gravesend, where he arrived about midnight. About eleven o'clock the next night he received the intelligence that the ship was in sight, and would soon be at anchor ; so he hired a boat, in order that he might be among the first to board her. At length she arrived, and the doctor had no difficulty in distinguishing on the poop Edgar Waldron, and his mother standing beside him with a child in her arms. Mrs. Waldron was the first to recognize the doctor, whom she pointed out to Edgar. The next moment a young and apparently very handsome woman joined them, and all beckoned in a friendly manner for him to come on board. He was by no means slow in answering the invitation, and in a few moments afterwards Dr. D'Aubigny stood upon the deck of the ship, surrounded by the new-comers.

It need hardly be said they were all delighted to see him, but their joy was shortly afterwards sadly diminished by the painful intelligence of poor Mary's state of health ; for although he somewhat mollified his description of her present condition, he left them no hopes of her ultimate recovery ; and then, to their intense surprise, he narrated to them how Mr. Du Val had discovered, by means

of the fly-leaf in Mrs. Dubosq's Bible, that Mary was heiress to a considerable fortune; and that they had rented, ready-furnished, Mr. Barbet's country-house for six months; as well as other circumstances already known to the reader.

When their interest in the doctor's recital had a little abated, it was proposed by him that, taking with them what little luggage they might absolutely require for the next few days, they should leave the ship and post up to London,—a proposition which was most readily accepted by them all. When on shore, and while the horses were being harnessed, the doctor had a better opportunity of making the acquaintance of Edgar's wife. In speech, manner, and appearance she interested him greatly; her language was well chosen, and in person she might almost be called beautiful; her figure was good, and her movements graceful. Her complexion was naturally very fair, though at the moment somewhat bronzed by the effects of the voyage. Her mouth was well-formed, and when open displayed a beautiful set of teeth. She had a Grecian nose, a clear forehead, and lovely auburn hair; but perhaps the finest feature in her face was her eyes, of which Edgar had spoken in such rapturous terms in his first letter. His praises were certainly fully merited, for a more beautiful blue than their colour it would be difficult to imagine and impossible to paint. It was perhaps no exaggeration of his to say you could read her thoughts in them, so transparent were they; and if so, no woman ever had a purer

or more honest soul. Altogether she made a most pleasing impression on the worthy doctor; and he, with his immense experience of human nature, was a person as little likely to be imposed upon in a matter of the kind as could easily be met with.

When all was in readiness the doctor seated himself in the same post-chaise (for there were two) with Edgar, that he might have a little conversation with him on the state of his affairs and his prospects for the future. From Edgar's description they seemed in a very gloomy condition. He assured the doctor that at that moment he had not more than a hundred and fifty pounds in the world, and the only chance he saw of advancement was the patronage that Mr. Barbet might be able to afford him; and he was now in France. "Things seem gloomy indeed for me in the future," he said. The doctor thought otherwise, but he said nothing. He was fully aware of Mary's intentions towards her cousin and his family; but as he had received them almost in the form of a confession, he remained silent. During the remainder of the journey they conversed together on subjects connected with Edgar's sojourn in Australia, the manner of his father's death, and other subjects, interesting enough in themselves but unconnected with our narrative; and in this manner they continued their journey till about ten o'clock in the evening, when the whole party arrived safely at their temporary dwelling in Hackney.



CHAPTER XVI.

THE CAMELLIA FADES.



ON the arrival of the Waldron family at their temporary home, the doctor considered that, before introducing them to Mary, it would be better for him to have an interview with her, in order to ascertain whether she could without inconvenience or danger to her health be able to meet them. It was as well he did so, for he found her to be in such a state of nervous agitation as to cause him some alarm. He therefore contented himself with telling her that they had all reached home safely and in good health; at the same time he thought it would be better if she postponed her interview with them till the next morning. And, to his great satisfaction, Mary readily fell in with his views.

About noon the next day, Mary having been placed by her nurse in her easy-chair in the drawing-room, the

camellia as usual being by her side, the Waldron family were ushered in by the doctor. It would be a difficult task to describe correctly the scene which then took place. Edgar and his mother seemed especially shocked at the appearance Mary presented. The state of excitement in which she had been the previous evening had totally subsided, and a calm and languor and immobility almost statuesque supplied its place. Neither Edgar nor his mother could restrain their tears. They advanced towards Mary and, taking her by the hand, kissed her affectionately, but neither spoke a word, possibly fearing lest, by the tone of their voices, they might betray to her the anguish they felt at the condition she was in. The previous day they had hoped that the love the doctor felt for her had caused him somewhat to exaggerate the danger she was in ; but now, unskilled on the subject as they were, they were both able to perceive that but a few days were left for her in this world. Mary received them most affectionately, and calmly expressed her joy at meeting them again. Ellen then advanced and, taking her by the hand, kissed her with great warmth, the tears pouring from her eyes and falling on Mary's face the while, telling her how much her new relative grieved at the condition she was in. Ellen's sympathy went to the poor blind girl's heart, and she returned her salutation with much greater warmth than she had shown either to her cousin or her aunt. She told Ellen how pleased she was to meet her, and how earnestly she had

prayed that she might live to make her acquaintance, and that among the few regrets she felt at being about to quit this world, was that of losing the love she felt that Ellen bore to her. Yet she hoped that when she had passed away, Ellen would still bear her in mind. Ellen on her part vainly attempted to assure her that she would always love her, but her words were so mixed with sobs as to be almost inarticulate. And then Edgar's children were introduced to Mary, but although she kissed them affectionately, they were much alarmed at her appearance, and seemed almost frightened at the caresses the poor girl attempted to lavish on them.

The first excitement of the interview being over, the doctor endeavoured to change the conversation to comparatively indifferent subjects, and in this to a considerable extent he succeeded. Family affairs were now brought under consideration, and were dilated on at some length. On the subject Mary spoke comparatively but little, acting possibly under the doctor's advice not to exert herself too much, although she listened earnestly to every word which fell from the others. One circumstance in her behaviour, however, was particularly worthy of remark, that of requesting Ellen to take a seat on a chair by her side, and holding her hand in hers during the whole of the conversation. And then they began to talk on other subjects of still less importance. Among other things Ellen made a remark upon the extraordinary beauty of the camellia. Edgar also said he had never seen a more

beautiful flower. He remembered having presented Mary with one which he had received from Mr. Barbet, the morning of his (Edgar's) departure for Australia, but beautiful as that was, it sunk into insignificance when compared with the one Mary had beside her.

"It is from an offshoot of the same plant, and it is the only one I possess," said Mary; "the other plants in the greenhouse all belong to Mr. Barbet. But as very possibly, Ellen, you may soon have a greenhouse of your own, I will present this one to you as the first to place in it. That is to say," she continued after a momentary pause, "as soon as the flower now on it fades away. I should like you also to promise me that every fresh flower it bears you will think of the love the donor bore to you."

Ellen promised that she would do so; and then the doctor, thinking that if the conversation lasted longer it might cause Mary too much fatigue, proposed they should separate till the evening, when they could all meet again; and this being agreed to, the party broke up.

In the afternoon, however, unknown to the doctor, Mary sent her nurse to request an interview with Ellen. On entering the room Mary requested her as before to take a seat by her side, and then dismissing the nurse she continued:

"Let us now have a little quiet chat together, but you must excuse me if I talk very softly, as the doctor

has warned me not to exert myself too much. First tell me how you liked Australia."

"I liked it very much," said Ellen, "and should have liked it still more had I been born there ; but the remembrance of dear old England so frequently came before me that I often thought of it with regret. However, I have no right to complain of it, for through its means I gained Edgar's love, and a happier wife than I have been with him never existed. With one exception—the death of my dear father, which took place some eighteen months after our arrival in the colony—the only real sorrow I have felt during the whole of my married life was when noticing the anxiety Edgar's affairs frequently caused him. But greatly as this pained me, it made me in the end love him still more, from the manner in which he attempted to hide it from me, evidently not wishing to hurt me by allowing me to know the truth."

Mary remained for some moments silent and abstracted, and then said calmly :

"I can easily imagine it of him. Did you know his father?"

"Yes I did," said Ellen, somewhat coolly.

"Tell me candidly what you thought of him."

"Well, dear, I hardly like to say," said Ellen.

"And why not?"

"Because I should not like to say anything uncomplimentary of a relative of yours," said Ellen.

"Be under no restraint on that point," said Mary.

“I bear him but little love, I can assure you. Although I can now forgive the cruel treatment I received from him when I was a child, I cannot forgive him for his behaviour to my poor aunt. She may have her faults, but a better or more kind-hearted woman never lived; and an excellent wife she made him, bad as he was.”

“Well, then,” said Ellen, “I will tell you candidly I bore him as little love as you do. It was through the great ability of my poor father that his life was spared after the robbery at Mr. Barbet’s, and yet he never spoke a good word of him. They say he behaved very well on his first arrival in the colony, and was, in consequence, allowed considerable indulgence. He managed, I am told, to make some little money, but he took to drinking. He was then seized with paralysis. When your aunt came out she lived in the same house with him, and nursed him tenderly. No one could be more kind to a sick person, or more patient, than she was to him; and no one could have received greater ingratitude in return. The language he was in the habit of using to her was horrible to hear; nor did he treat Edgar with much more consideration. In fact, his death was a release to us all. Your aunt grieved bitterly for him.” Ellen then stopped suddenly for a moment. “You told me, dear, to tell you the whole truth, and I have done so. I hope I have not offended you, but I could not help it.”

“I know you could not,” said Mary. “That is the

reason I asked you your opinion respecting him instead of asking my aunt."

"What makes you think I cannot tell other than the truth?" said Ellen, laughing.

"From a description I heard of you when you were first engaged to Edgar."

"From Edgar? And what might he have said of me?"

"Well," said Mary, smiling, "he said you had such beautiful blue eyes—'of heaven's own blue,' was his expression—that any one could read the truth in them."

"Oh, he was in love then," said Ellen. "You must not think anything of what a young fellow says at such a time as that."

"I have no doubt he read them truly," said Mary; "and I am very sorry I cannot see them myself; though I need not that to confirm me in the conclusion I have arrived at. There is nothing though that has pained me more in the infirmity under which I am suffering than not being able to understand and judge of colour. Of form I can arrive at some idea. By passing my hand over your face I could judge for myself whether it reaches my idea of the beautiful. I could tell to a nicety the shape of the nose, the forehead, and chin, and even the manner in which you dress your hair. Every feature I could form a perfect idea of but one, and that the one of all others I should most like to appreciate—

your eyes. Not only am I unable to understand their colour, but even their form is unknown to me, as my touch would be painful to them. However, in heaven I hope my eyesight will be perfect, and then I shall be able to judge for myself."

A silence of a few moments now ensued, which was at length broken by Mary, who still retained her interest in personal appearance and adornment. She said to Ellen :

"Do you think with the doctor—and he refers to Scripture in support of his opinion—that in heaven white is chosen for the attire of angels, as emblematical of purity?"

"I have no doubt that he is quite right," said Ellen, "and that not only from Scripture, but from my own personal conviction. For example," she continued, almost, though unconsciously, quoting the words of the doctor, "I cannot imagine a more perfect emblem of purity than the colour of that flower."

"Dressed in a robe of that same colour," said Mary smiling, "and with your eyes of 'heaven's own blue,' Edgar might have been perfectly excused in mistaking you for an angel."

"Don't talk such nonsense," said Ellen laughing. "Besides," she continued seriously, "St. Paul tells us that it is only after death we shall be aware of the forms we are to wear."

"We may arrive at a good idea, though," said Mary

quietly, "from the description given us of the angel at the tomb."

The doctor was absent during the whole of the afternoon, on a visit to Mr. Du Val respecting the drawing-up of Mary's will, as they were both to act as her executors. They had already had more than one interview on the subject with her, and the outline of the document had been drawn out in rough, on the assumption that the family would arrive in safety in England. As long as there was a doubt upon the subject, it had been considered more prudent not to complete the testament until after their arrival; but as that had now occurred, it was arranged that the last formality should be performed the next morning. It may here be stated, without any breach of confidence, that with the exception of five thousand pounds which she left to her cousin absolutely, five hundred pounds to each of her god-children, and two hundred pounds to Mr. Du Val, Mary bequeathed all her money to Edgar and his wife jointly, and on their death to their children. She had also wished to leave a handsome legacy to the doctor, but he had resolutely determined not to accept a shilling from her, and she had reluctantly complied with his wishes.

The family met again in the evening, and the short time they were together was one of calm happiness to them all, somewhat repressed, perhaps, by the anticipa-

tion of the sorrow which was soon to overshadow them. Still, all passed off tranquilly. The family joined in the evening prayers with genuine earnestness ; and never did Mrs. Dubosq's Bible afford more comfort to those that it addressed than it did that evening.

The following morning Mr. Du Val, the doctor, and two other persons had an interview with Mary, which lasted but a short time. About an hour afterwards, Dr. D'Aubigny, meeting Mrs. Waldron in the parlour, said to her :

“ Do you remember, a few days prior to your departure for Sydney, some conversation I had with you respecting the great kindness you had shown to poor Mary, and also quoting the text that he who giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord ? ”

“ Perfectly well, sir,” said Mrs. Waldron ; “ but I trust you do not imagine that I thought of it at the time when I took the poor girl under my care, or that I then hoped for any reward, either in this world or the next.”

“ I hold you to be one of the last persons in the world,” said the doctor, “ to have entertained such an idea, no matter how profoundly you may respect the Scriptures, as I am sure you do. I am certain that you were actuated by no other feeling on the occasion than that of pure charity and kindness. Do not do me so great an injustice as to imagine anything else. All I wish to prove to you is that the promise has been fully carried out in your own case. For taking that poor destitute

orphan under your care, when possessing scarcely the bare means of existence yourself, you will not only receive your reward in the next world, but in this as well. Mary yesterday commissioned Mr. Du Val and myself to purchase for you an annuity of two hundred pounds a year for your life ; and she has, moreover, requested me to present you, on her behalf, with a gift of fifty guineas in hand, so that you may have something to go on with till the first quarter is due. There it is," he continued, presenting to her a purse with the money in it ; "make what use of it you please."

"May God bless her for her kindness," said Mrs. Waldron, "for I can never be sufficiently grateful to her for it. Anything I can say to her will not half express my feelings."

"But stop, Mrs. Waldron," said the doctor ; "there is one condition that Mary has attached to the gift. As she says it would be painful indeed for her to hear you express one word of thanks for it, after all the kindness she has received at your hands, she requests that you will not speak to her on the subject ; and you will further oblige me by obeying her, my reason for it being my knowledge that any excitement might tend to her injury. Now, like a good soul as you are, I expect you will carry out my instructions to the letter."

The next two days passed over without anything

occurring particularly worthy of notice. On the morning of the third day, Ellen, as usual, paid Mary a visit before she had quitted her bed. After a little conversation on ordinary subjects, Ellen said to her, looking the while at the camellia, which, at night as well as by day, was always in Mary's room :

“ I think that plant requires some water. The flower seems rather drooping this morning, and one of its leaves has fallen down. Shall I give it some ? ”

“ Pray do so, ” said Mary.

While Ellen was occupied in giving the plant some water, Mary pressed her hands together in an attitude of prayer, and said, so softly that her companion did not hear her :

“ Thy will be done. ”

Ellen, having completed her task, again took her place beside Mary's bed, but the conversation, which had hitherto been of a somewhat lively description, suddenly on Mary's part changed its tone. True, she calmly answered every remark made by Ellen ; but there was a sort of abstractedness about her, which the other could hardly understand, as if her thoughts were occupied with some totally different subject. Ellen at length remarked it, and somewhat erroneously concluding that it arose from fatigue, she got up from her chair and told Mary that she would leave her for a little while and see her again in the afternoon. As she was leaving the room Mary said to her :

"I wish, my dear, you would tell my aunt I want to speak to her."

"Certainly, Mary," she replied, "if you wish it; but had you not better take a nap now, and wait till the afternoon, when you will be stronger?"

"No, I should prefer seeing her at once," said Mary. "Ask her to come."

Ellen made no further objection, and a few minutes afterwards Mrs. Waldron entered the room. As soon as Mary was aware of her presence, she asked her to take a seat beside her bed.

"And now, aunt," she began, "I have a very great favour to ask of you, and one you must faithfully promise me you will grant. Remember, I earnestly wish it, and it is perhaps the last earthly wish I have formed which is not yet accomplished: will you promise to oblige me?"

"I faithfully promise I will do anything you may require," said Mrs. Waldron; and then she continued, forgetting the promise she had made to the doctor not in any manner to allude to Mary's gift, "I must be ungrateful indeed if I did not faithfully carry out any wish you might express, after your great kindness to me."

"Well then, aunt, if you open the first long drawer of the chest in my room, you will find in it a small cardboard-box, which was sealed up for me by Clara Le Breton. What I want you to do for me is, that without even whispering a word on the subject to any one, you

will place that little box in my coffin, as I wish it to be buried with me."

Had Mary been blessed with eyesight it would then have been a terrible moment for Mrs. Waldron. The remembrance of her being withheld some years before from destroying that cardboard-box by the sight of Mrs. Dubosq's Bible on the chest of drawers, came vividly before her, and the result was, that a deep and painful blush in a moment became visible on her face. Composing herself, she however promised faithfully to carry out Mary's wish ; and it may be added she afterwards as faithfully performed her promise.

It would be too painful a task to describe at any length the termination of poor Mary's malady. Day by day she gradually became weaker, and that too in a manner which was painfully visible to them all. As she faded away, the flower on the camellia kept pace with her, till one evening, when half its petals had fallen off, the family were suddenly summoned round her bed. Unmistakable symptoms of immediate dissolution were then clearly apparent. All were greatly afflicted, but none more so than the poor doctor, although his grief was displayed in a less demonstrative way than that of the others. As he stood by her bedside, he attempted by every means in his power to repress his feelings, but in spite of his resolve he found it impossible. He bit his lips to conceal his emotion, till the blood seemed

almost ready to start from them ; but strong as his will might be, his emotion was still stronger. At length, covering his face with his hands, he burst into an uncontrollable flood of tears. Over the rest of the melancholy scene let us draw a veil. Suffice it to say, that poor Mary passed away, carrying with her the love and regret of all those who had gathered around her bed, and were so dear to her.

The following morning the doctor, having somewhat regained his self-possession, took upon himself to make the arrangements for the funeral. He had previously determined with Mr. Du Val that Mary should be buried in his own grave, which was situated in a corner of Bethnal Green churchyard. Instructions to that effect were given to the undertaker, and a few days afterwards the poor old man determined to see in what manner the work was progressing. On his arrival he found the gravediggers at their work, conversing together upon some ordinary subject, while a few idlers stood around them. Among them two old women, one evidently of the poorest class, the other even wearing a workhouse dress. The doctor, after having watched the gravediggers for some time without speaking to them, turned round to quit the yard, when a female voice, in a sorrowful tone, said to him :

“Sure now, doctor, have you forgotten me quite?”

The doctor looked at the speaker earnestly for a

moment, and then said, "Why, Bridget Mahoney, is that you?"

"And it's no other," said Bridget. "I heard the poor child was dead, and so I came to see where she was to be buried. You were mighty kind, doctor, to her during all her life," continued Bridget; "and God will bless you for it."

"How do you know that I have been kind to her, Bridget?" said the doctor. "But tell me what you have been doing all the time since you left my house."

Bridget then told him that, after having quitted his service, she had gone into another situation, where she was badly paid, hard-worked, and half-starved, and that her health gave way under it. Having no friends to whom she could apply, she sought relief of the poor-law guardians. They had received her into the workhouse, where for many years past she had acted as nurse.

"And what is the reason I have seen nothing of you, and you living so near me, Bridget?"

"And do you think I would degrade myself and you by calling at your house in a workhouse dress?" said Bridget. "I have too much of a woman's pride about me for that, at any rate."

Suddenly the doctor remembered that Mrs. Mangin was about to leave him, and he asked Bridget whether she was comfortable in the workhouse, or if she wished to leave it.

“Do you think I'd stay another day in the work-house, if I could find work out of it?” said Bridget, indignantly. “You don't know me, doctor, clever as you are, or you'd never say that. Why, I'd work my fingers to the bone in any decent place, rather than stop there, even if I got nothing but food and clothing for it.”

“Well, Bridget, my housekeeper is about to leave me,” said the doctor; “and if you would like to come back again you can.”

“I'd be thankful to do that,” said Bridget; “but look at this gown—wouldn't you be ashamed to see me in it? I should be ashamed to be seen in it by any of your friends anyhow.”

“That I can believe,” said the doctor. “There's a guinea for you, Bridget, to get yourself a new gown and a bonnet. Come next Monday to my house, and I will tell Mrs. Mangin to give it up to you; but do not forget that your new gown is to be a black one.”

The doctor then called on Mrs. Mangin, and told her the arrangement he had made with Bridget; and then, after paying her the money due to her, he returned home.

During the few days which had to elapse before the funeral, the doctor employed himself in packing up the books and valuables (including Mrs. Dubosq's Bible) which he had taken with him to Hackney, and in forwarding them to his own house. The funeral ceremony

itself was conducted in the simplest possible manner. There were but four mourners—the doctor, Mr. Du Val, Edgar, and George Le Breton. As may naturally be imagined, the doctor showed considerable emotion, especially when beside the grave; and, the ceremony over, he returned alone to his own house, where he found Bridget awaiting him.



CHAPTER XVII.

THE CURTAIN DROPS.



OUR drama is all but played out, and the actors will soon quit the stage. Edgar, after Mr. Barbet's return to England, was received as a partner in the firm. He took a handsome country-house not far from the one he had first occupied on his return to England. It may be mentioned that there was a greenhouse in the grounds, and the first plant placed within it was poor Mary's camellia. It continued to flourish, and was a great favourite in the family; and they all thought of her as each fresh blossom made its appearance. Mrs. Waldron continued to live with her son till the day of her death, and Edgar succeeded in almost every enterprise he undertook.

Although during the time which had elapsed from the day of Mary's death till that of her funeral the doctor exhibited something like his usual energy, no

sooner was the ceremony over, and he had returned again to his own house, than a singular change came over him. From the energetic man of science he formerly was, he became apparently apathetic—or perhaps bewildered would be the better word. True, he continued to attend to his old patients with all the skill and interest he had formerly exhibited, but he neither sought nor desired any accession to their numbers, and they by degrees gradually passed away. Poor Mrs. Le Brument, who had for some years past been bedridden, was the first to leave him, and then others of his old friends one by one followed her, till at length he was left almost entirely alone.

Even in his house, too, the same fatality seemed to hang over him. His little flower-garden, to which in his spare moments he had formerly paid so much attention, was now utterly neglected, and that space of ground, which had formerly been kept in such beautiful order, was overrun with weeds. Then, unless he had some urgent case on hand, he was accustomed every morning to visit it, before commencing his rounds: now he very rarely set foot in it. And even on these few occasions the first glance he cast on its neglected state seemed merely to draw from him a sigh, and he would return indoors. His pigeons, too, which in earlier days were to him (as was the case with most of the inhabitants of Huguenot descent in the locality) objects of solicitude, had gradually forsaken him. It should be mentioned.

however, that this fact was far less due to any want of attention on his part than to circumstances over which he had little or no control. The French emigrants who had formerly resided in the neighbourhood were almost to a man pigeon-breeders to a greater or less degree. They, as a point of honour, held the birds of their neighbours in great respect; now, on the contrary, there were a number of persons of different occupations who resided near him, whose ideas of integrity were of a far looser description. Many among these had erected pigeon-traps on the roofs of their houses, into which they would ensnare the birds of their neighbours. These pigeons were never returned; the greater proportion finding their way into Leadenhall Market, or else being sold at poulterers' shops. The loss of many of the doctor's birds was due, however, to the neglect shown towards them by Mrs. Mangin, who, being somewhat lazily disposed, forgot to feed them. Their numbers continued to dwindle, till at length there was not one left. The doctor now never set foot in the garret which he had set apart for their nests, the silence and desolation of the place raising in his mind too many painful reminiscences.

Two years after Mary's death a circumstance occurred which caused Dr. D'Aubigny great pain. The congregation of the Temple in John Street had for many years been falling off in point of numbers, either by the death of the original members or by their migration

westward, till at length the subscriptions became inadequate to the cost of its maintenance. For some years the doctor had contributed to its support quite to the extent of his means. At length he and one or two others—these last being in somewhat poor circumstances—were all that remained, and he then began to perceive the futility of his attempting to go on longer with his subscriptions. In the end, at a meeting of the trustees, of whom Mr. Du Val was one, it was finally determined to close the doors till it should be resolved what should be done with the building. During the time it was closed the key was kept in the doctor's possession, and he would frequently in the afternoon visit it; and then, seated on one of its solitary benches, conjure up before him the different scenes which had occurred in it from the time when Deacon Geaussent, Mrs. Dubosq's father, had succeeded, through the energy given by the family Bible, in raising a sufficient sum for its rebuilding, till the day when he had last attended the service in it shortly after Mary's funeral. Occasionally he would attempt to console himself by fancying the poor blind girl was sitting by him, and with her beautiful voice singing the old hymns of Gondimel and other Huguenot composers; but the attempt, alas! was generally a failure. Still he made it a point on each Sabbath Day to enter the building, and there alone to offer up his prayers in it. By-and-by, however, he was deprived of even this consolation. A debt for taxes and other matters had accrued upon it,

and as it was also rapidly falling out of repair, its sale was at last decided on. It was purchased by the incumbent and churchwardens of the parish for a charity-school for the poor children in the neighbourhood.*

The poor doctor lingered on for two years longer ; Bridget meanwhile attending on him in a most exemplary manner. Edgar visited him frequently, and implored him to take up his residence in his house ; an offer which was always firmly but gratefully declined. Mrs. Waldron also never allowed a week to pass without paying him a visit ; but, although she was most cordially received by the doctor, she could not disguise from herself the fact that Bridget cast on her looks both of jealousy and apprehension. George Le Breton, too, frequently called on the old man ; and, in fact, the few friends who still remained of the old circle showed him great kindness, as well as every willingness to assist him should he require it. The old Huguenot spirit, however, remained in him as staunch as ever, and he determined to pass the short remainder of his life without being a burden on any one.

And here a curious point remains to be noticed, as it seemed to a great extent, if not entirely, to set aside his theory of the effect of the soul upon the body. No man ever prayed more earnestly than he to be released from the sorrows and troubles of this world, and thereby be

* The building has since undergone considerable alteration, and it is now used as a factory.

enabled to join again those he had lost, and who had been so dear to him, but all in vain. Anxious and heartfelt as his prayers were, they appeared to meet with no response; and he lived on for two years more, gradually, though he himself did not perceive it, becoming weaker and weaker. This continued till one fine summer's evening, when, being seated, as usual, in his easy-chair, with Mrs. Dubosq's Bible open on his knees, Bridget entered the room to ask if he required anything else, as if not she would go to bed, pleading as an excuse that she was greatly fatigued. Finding, however, that he had fallen asleep, she refrained from awakening him, and, after lighting the candle, and putting it on the table beside him, quietly sought her own room. The next morning when she descended to make preparations for his breakfast, to her intense surprise she found him, with the candle burnt out and his eyes closed, in the same position as she had left him the evening before. In a moment Bridget understood all—her old master was dead.

As soon as Bridget had somewhat recovered from the shock, she put on her bonnet and shawl and hurried off to the house of George Le Breton. Fortunately she found him at home, and he returned with her. On his arrival, he saw that the description Bridget had given him was a perfectly truthful one. The old doctor reclined in his easy-chair as if fast asleep; the fingers of his right hand resting on Mrs. Dubosq's Bible, and

pointing to the first two verses of the forty-second psalm :

“Comme un cerf brame après des eaux courantes, ainsi mon âme soupire après toi, ô Dieu !

“Mon âme a soif de Dieu, du Dieu fort et vivant. Quand entrerais-je et me présenterais-je devant la face de Dieu ?”

George Le Breton, calling in the aid of a neighbour, removed the doctor's remains to his bedroom, and messengers were despatched to Edgar Waldron and Mr. Du Val, both of whom arrived in the course of the day at the house.

Arrangements were now made for the funeral ; and a few days afterwards Dr. Gregory D'Aubigny reposed in the grave in which his wife and daughter had been interred many years before, and his coffin was placed near that of his dearly-loved adopted child, Mary. The funeral over, Edgar Waldron and Mr. Du Val returned to the doctor's house, and after some little search they succeeded in finding his will. The value of all he possessed, apart from his little freehold house, amounted to no more than three or four hundred pounds. Of this sum he left two hundred pounds to Bridget ; his gold snuff-box and fifty pounds he bequeathed to Mr. Du Val ; and another fifty pounds and his books, including Mrs. Dubosq's Bible, and also the furniture, etc., in his house, he left to Edgar Waldron. The remainder of his property he had willed in equal portions to the Norman

Benefit Society, established in the neighbourhood, and to the school for the distressed *Noblesse et Bourgeoisie* of Spitalfields.

No further records of Mrs. Dubosq's Bible than those which have been placed before the reader can be found ; but judging even from the various beneficial effects we have described as arising from its use, it is more than probable its subsequent history was equally interesting. It had supported and consoled the family of Deacon Geaussent through the fatigues and dangers of their emigration to England. It had encouraged the worthy man in his efforts to raise the money for the purchase of the ground and for the building of the Temple. After his death it had consoled his widowed daughter and her two children through many long and anxious years. Through its means, or rather by one text in it, it had obtained a staunch friend for her daughter and her family when in terrible affliction. It had shielded Mrs. Waldron from the terrible temptation which had hung over her—that of robbing her employer of the silk on the loom, for the purpose of finding funds for her worthless husband's defence. It had been a great source of consolation to the family when residing under the doctor's roof. The mere sight of it had rescued Mrs. Waldron from the commission of a most dishonourable act—that of destroying the camellia flower so highly prized by her poor niece, Mary. It had also, though indirectly, been the means of proving that the poor girl was heiress to a

considerable fortune, whereby she had been able to raise those who had been kind to her to a position of affluence; and lastly it had after her death solaced and supported kind-hearted Dr. D'Aubigny to the last moment of his existence. Altogether few have been blessed with a greater treasure than the Waldron family possessed in

Mrs. Dubosq's Bible.

