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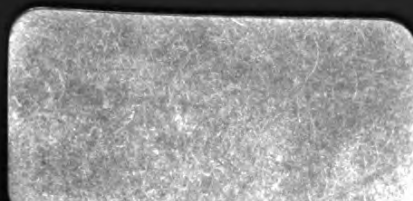


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DOCTOR AUSTIN'S GUESTS

IN TWO VOLUMES

ALEXANDER STRAHAN, PUBLISHER

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# DOCTOR AUSTIN'S GUESTS

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*I. —INTRODUCTORY.*

A FEW years since I brought under the notice of the public—it must be confessed not without fear and trembling—a description of some cases which had come under my observation during a temporary sojourn in an asylum. I had retired there from the world, to avoid, if possible, yielding to a terrible temptation. I was in danger of committing an action so wicked that I am certain it had never before entered into the imagination of man, and I doubt if even the arch-fiend himself would have had the courage to attempt it in his own person. I promised then that if those memoirs were favourably received, I would on some future occasion



publish a sequel to them ; and this I now offer to the public, trusting it may be received with the same kindness and indulgence as were extended to my earlier venture.

In my former publication I went somewhat minutely into detail as to the origin of the fearful temptation—(which, through the malice of Satan, is even still continually presenting itself to my imagination)—that induced me to seek protection in an asylum. It would, therefore, be useless to detain the reader by describing it again at any length ; but it is absolutely necessary to refresh his memory on the subject. Along with my son, then a mere lad, I was making some experiments with an air-gun, when I discovered that the expansive force of the condensed air was greater than the amount of physical power required to charge the gun. Somewhat surprised that so simple a conclusion had never been reached before, I began to doubt whether I might not have made some great mistake in the matter, and I at once determined to test the truth of my discovery by every plan my ingenuity could suggest. I calculated as correctly as I could the amount of

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muscular force needed to charge the gun, and then the amount of momentum requisite to carry the balls the distance they were sent. I tried how far I could throw the balls by the force of my arm, but of course the distance was not a fiftieth part of that they were propelled by the expansion of the condensed air. I made every allowance for loss of power in the arm, and all other contingencies which could present themselves, but still the increase of force over the amount used to obtain it appeared inexplicable.

At last, without being able to explain the phenomenon to myself in a quite satisfactory manner, I admitted it to be wholly indisputable. I then began to study how I could utilize the discovery I had made. The idea of developing some grand motive power—of producing some magnificent invention which might benefit mankind, instead of using it solely as an instrument of destruction—took possession of my mind. At last I resolved to apply it to the purposes of navigation as a substitute for steam power, which was expensive in comparison, and the machinery required bulky and cumbrous. I took

out a patent to protect my invention, and having purchased a small boat I erected my engine in it. But the boat proved too small for carrying out the experiment in an efficient manner, and I was obliged to relinquish the scheme, as the expense I had already incurred had consumed a very considerable amount of my available means.

I now gave over experiments, and for some time attempted to devote myself to my profession as a member of the Bar. But I found it impossible to continue: the knowledge of the awful discovery I had made perpetually haunted me; I upbraided myself with folly in not having given it to the world, whereby I might have increased both my reputation and fortune. I could now look calmly on my former efforts, and could easily understand the cause of my failure. At the same time I perceived that to carry out my experiments in applying my invention as a motive power for propelling ships, on such a scale as to insure success, would very far exceed my pecuniary means. I therefore resolved on using it for locomotive engines. I commenced

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experimenting on a very moderate scale. So promising did my endeavours appear, that I entertained no doubt I should soon realize my most sanguine hopes. One difficulty only presented itself to me ; that was how I should stop my engine when it had acquired any considerable velocity. As its momentum would naturally be greater in proportion as the atmospheric pressure against it increased, this difficulty grew as I pondered. It startled me to such a degree that I gave orders to stop the completion of my working model till I had devised some means to counteract it. While studying the subject, the remark of Archimedes, that if he had but a fulcrum for his lever he could move the world, perpetually presented itself to my mind. It appeared to me that I had both fulcrum and lever—indeed, far more than both—combined in my invention. By using the force at my command, instead of wasting, it would be constantly increasing. I could easily quadruple it, and if this again were used and a similar result obtained, which would to a certainty be the case, and that again increased in like proportion, what would it

arrive at in the end? The result would be too vast for human imagination to grasp.

Would to heaven such a conclusion had been a correct one! Not liking to be thwarted in what I had taken an interest in, I continued my studies. Suddenly the whole matter appeared to me in so clear a light, and all its tremendous combinations were placed so perfectly before me, that I almost trembled at the power which seemed to be deposited in my hands. In the plainest manner I saw how these forces might be accumulated till they actually reached the infinite, and some occult voice whispered in my ear that I could place myself in a position antagonistic to Deity himself, and that if I pleased I could destroy the universe He had made. I need hardly say that this terrible blasphemy caused me the greatest pain. I prayed most earnestly that I might be relieved from the possession of this terrible power; but Satan seemed secretly to possess me, and mingled his temptation with every prayer I uttered. My dear wife and my friends perceived the distress of mind I was labouring under, but they wrongly attributed it to a disturbed brain, and took steps



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to place me under restraint. At first I thought of explaining the whole matter to them, and thus prove that I was not insane ; but on consideration I thought it would be more noble to sacrifice myself for the good of the universe. So, submitting quietly to their wishes, I became an inmate of a lunatic asylum.

Being of an active turn of mind, my time did not pass without occupation, though secluded from the world. I took pleasure in marking the different peculiarities of my companions, and gave a good deal of attention to psychological studies generally. The result was that I gained a considerable insight into the morbid tendencies of the brain. I remained in the asylum for some years, enjoying comparative comfort and security, not having the means for making working models, and otherwise carrying out my designs as to invention. I had no reason to fear the ultimate result, and I was thus relieved from a heavy weight of anxiety. My reasons for quitting it at the last arose from strong doubts I had as to the sanity of Dr. Meadows, the resident physician ; and considering it derogatory for a perfectly sane man like

me, to remain under the care of a possible lunatic, I watched my opportunity, and succeeded in effecting my escape, though not without great difficulty, and still greater annoyance, arising from the absurd behaviour of an elderly lady patient who accompanied me, and who laboured under the strange impression that she was the Persian despot, Xerxes.

I did not long enjoy my liberty. A few weeks had only elapsed, when I began to think of again commencing my locomotive model. At the same time I strove by every means in my power not to let my thoughts wander beyond the subject I was employed upon. Still I could not divest myself of the notion that if the arch-fiend should be aware of my escape, he would again tempt me to rebel against Deity. One day I read in the *Times* newspaper a description of some experiments of Mr. Home, the spiritualist, and was especially struck by the fact of his rising in his chair and floating in the air round the ceiling. There were several other movements equally startling, and the descriptions given were borne out by statements of other journals and magazines of the highest respectability. Mr. Home, I thought, surely

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could not be mortal, and if he were not so, he must either be a good or an evil spirit. I obtained as many notes of incidents in his life as I could collect, but I was not able to discover one act of immorality or want of integrity, nor did I find one action of so pure a nature as to lead me for one moment to imagine him a good spirit. It therefore remained for me to discover whether he was an evil spirit. Here, I regret to say, proof was not wanting, and that too of the clearest description, showing that he was either an emissary from the evil one, or possibly Satan himself. It would occupy too much time to detail the many arguments which have induced me to come to this conclusion, and the reader must therefore content himself with one. Mr. Home (I prefer calling him by that name) could at his will rise through the atmospheric air. The lighter the atmosphere, owing to its distance from the earth, the swifter would be Mr. Home's passage through it ; and when he had at length emerged beyond it, his velocity would be as swift as that of thought itself. And if, inhabiting the ponderable human form, he could rise through the lighter atmospheric fluid, by resuming

his imponderable spirit-nature, he would naturally descend through the air with equal rapidity, his flight becoming the more rapid as the atmosphere near the earth became denser. This, of course, no mortal man could do ; Mr. Home could accomplish it at his will ; and therefore he must be a spirit. As there was not one single grain of evidence to show that he had been sent on a mission from heaven, there was no reason to imagine him a good angel ; and as all his experiments were contrary to the law of the earth's attraction—the basis of the Almighty's work when He formed the world,—as well as to every law of natural philosophy, it was clearly impossible for me to come to any other conclusion than that he was of infernal origin.

I now began to reflect as to what could be Mr. Home's mission on earth, and the longer I dwelt on the subject the more fully did I become convinced that it was to make me the instrument in his plot for the destruction of the universe. This horrible idea so preyed upon my mind ultimately, that I became thoroughly miserable. My dear wife, perceiving my unhappy condition, pitied me from her heart, and again proposed that I should

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seclude myself from the world. Without hesitation I acted on her suggestion, but under the positive condition that I should not go back to my old quarters. This was agreed to, and I became a resident in an asylum near Salisbury, special instructions having been given to the superintending physician that Mr. Home should never be allowed to visit the house during my stay in it; which agreement, I am bound to say, was rigidly adhered to by the doctor.

For more than a year the time passed agreeably enough in my new abode. The medical men in charge were learned and gentlemanly, and there was a marked difference in the manner in which they behaved to me, and that which they observed to the other patients. They conversed rationally with me, for instance, on divers subjects of interest, and admitted me into companionship with them, thus completely showing their perfect faith in my sanity. Among the patients also were many who had moved in excellent society, whose malady was either so slight as to be hardly perceptible, or who suffered only from occasional attacks. But this agreeable sort of life was not to

continue. A thin, dried-up, dapper little man joined us, by profession a naval officer. For some years he had been in command of a ship on the coast of Africa, in the slave-blockading squadron, I think it was called. He had received a sun-stroke, and had suffered so severely that his life was despaired of. Although restored to comparatively good bodily health, its effects had left a deep impression on his mind. He became irritable, tyrannical, and capricious ; some of his acts indeed were so preposterous, that he received a hint to retire from the service, or be tried by court-martial. This notice had such an effect upon him that he actually became insane. A medical committee came to the conclusion that he would never again be fit to command one of her Majesty's ships, and so he was invalided on a pension. For some time he remained in London, having his fling, as he called it, where his conduct soon became so eccentric that his relatives found themselves called upon to interfere, and he became an inmate of our asylum. Here his health rapidly improved, principally owing to his being unable to obtain ardent spirits, from indulgence in which his malady chiefly



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arose. But he was never a very agreeable companion ; he contradicted in a very rude, off-hand manner any one who happened to utter an opinion which did not coincide with his own.

The captain had hardly been a month among us before he contrived to quarrel with all the inmates except myself. He managed to keep on tolerably amicable terms with me, in great part perhaps owing to my scrupulously avoiding every subject likely to yield matter of dispute with him, and letting him have entirely his own way in every conversation. But, peaceable as I was, the captain had apparently determined I should form no exception. One day, after dinner, when I was conversing with a gentleman on the possibility of applying the expansive power of condensed atmospheric air to propelling ships of war in place of steam, the captain suddenly stopped me by saying,—

“Did I clearly understand you, sir? Do you propose abolishing steam power in her Majesty’s navy, and substituting engines worked by condensed atmospheric air?”

“I did not propose it professionally,” I said, mildly ; “I merely suggested the practicability of

an application of the kind ; and I am certain that with your great experience, if you only went a little deeper into the matter you would arrive at the same conclusion."

"Then, sir," he exclaimed, using an oath which I forbear repeating, "you do me a gross injustice to imagine I am capable for one moment of admitting anything of the kind. I am not the man, sir, to allow an insult of this sort to pass without punishment, I assure you. You have, by your proposition, insulted the British flag, and, as an officer in her Majesty's service, and a gentleman, I shall take upon myself the task of redressing it, and severely too, I assure you."

"You can take any steps you think proper," I replied, quite calmly ; "but at the same time allow me to say you are taking offence where none was intended. It was merely a scientific suggestion I put forth, without any ulterior motive, I assure you."

"No matter," he said ; "I consider your proposition to abolish our steam-engines in the navy an insult to the British flag, and as an officer in the service I shall take upon myself to redress it."



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“Do as you please,” I answered ; “I shall hold no further conversation with you.”

He then left the room in a towering passion, which I treated with utter contempt.

The next morning, as I was taking my accustomed walk in the grounds, a friend came up and warned me that the captain was waiting for me ; and as the temper of the silly man was such as might lead him to assault me, he seriously advised me to go into the house. But I treated the matter with complete indifference, as I was by far the stronger man of the two. Still, I confess the idea of a personal altercation annoyed me exceedingly, and I was somewhat at a loss what to do. While deliberating what course I should adopt, the captain advanced towards me, accompanied by three or four of the patients whom he had invited to be present. I saw by his countenance that he was prepared for some energetic procedure, which was further confirmed by his waving in a threatening manner a switch he held in his hand. I stood still to receive him ; and as soon as he had reached me he said,—

“You thought fit last night, sir, grossly to

insult the service in which I have the honour to hold a commission. I must now request you to apologize for your behaviour in an ample and humble manner."

"I will do nothing of the kind," I replied, now thoroughly angry. "I offered you no affront, and I will make no apology."

"Then, sir," said he, inflicting a rather sharp cut across my shoulders with the switch, "I beg you will consider yourself horsewhipped."

I did as he requested, and by way of reply immediately knocked him down. As we were standing on a somewhat steep incline his fall was a very severe one. Though evidently surprised at the manner in which his insult had been received, he rose for the purpose of again attacking me ; but his ankle was so severely sprained that he could not move. His friends immediately assisted in leading him away, while he uttered the most terrific threats of vengeance against me. I was very much annoyed at the whole affair, and not a little ashamed of it also. I endeavoured, however, to continue my walk as though my temper had not been at all ruffled by the assault

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to which I had been so unjustly subjected ; but feeling I did not perform my part very well, I left the garden and retired to my room, where I stayed for the rest of the day.

Next morning after breakfast I received a message from the doctor, saying that he wished particularly to speak to me in his study. I obeyed his summons, and he received me in the most friendly manner. "I have just had a very singular epistle brought to me from the captain," he said. "Here it is—read it." I cast my eye over it rapidly, and could not repress a smile. The captain had written it in the style of a naval despatch, commencing with, "I have the honour to report ;" and he went on to say that, as I had grossly insulted the British flag, he had considered it necessary to demand a humble apology ; and this being insolently refused, he had commenced an attack which he regretted to state did not terminate so successfully as her Majesty's naval operations usually did, owing entirely to the very superior force opposed to him. He closed it by requesting the doctor to give him assistance in making another assault,

which he doubted not would fully efface the unpleasant effect his defeat might have tended to create.

“I think,” said I, smiling, “you had better put him under arrest, and order him to be tried by a court-martial.”

“It would certainly serve him right,” said the doctor; “but as I have not the power to put my threat into execution the ridicule might fall upon me. But, seriously, you would greatly oblige me by avoiding any further dispute with the poor fellow. He is an object for your sympathy rather than your anger.”

“But,” I said, “could anything be more ridiculous than his accusation?”

“Certainly not, I admit; at the same time it is a part of his malady to consider that every one he meets, especially if he be a foreigner, is actuated by a desire to insult the British flag, and that it is his duty as an officer in her Majesty’s service to resent it. It is annoying, I confess, but he is after all a gallant, worthy little fellow, and you must have some consideration for the misfortune under which he is labouring. Now promise me

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you will take no notice of his absurdity for the future, but allow his remarks to pass without answer."

I readily made him the promise he required, and we parted.

Bad weather now came on, and as I could not take exercise out of doors, I occupied myself with writing up some memoranda of various obscure cases of mental diseases I had met with. These were now very voluminous, and, I may add without affectation, very valuable. I had an escritoire of my own in the sitting-room in which I kept the whole of these documents. For some days I had seen nothing of the captain, as he had been confined to his room from the effects of his fall. When he made his appearance among us again he scowled fiercely at me, but said nothing, so I concluded that he had received a lecture from the doctor. But although he said nothing to me, he annoyed me exceedingly by watching me incessantly, and had it not been for the promise I had given I should certainly have explained to him most clearly the opinion I had formed of his conduct. One evening he irritated me so

much by his behaviour that I locked up my escritoire, at which I had been writing, and went to my bedroom, where I remained till it was time for me to retire for the night. About midnight I was awakened by a strong glare of light outside my windows. For some time I was puzzled as to what it could be, and at last to gratify my curiosity I rose, but the light abated before I was able to distinguish anything, nor did it again appear.

The next morning the doctor sent for me into his study. When I entered I could easily perceive that something had occurred to annoy him greatly.

"Sit down," he said to me, "and look over that paper. It is another communication I have received from your amiable friend the captain."

"Does it in any way relate to me?" I inquired, considerably puzzled at his tone and manner.

"I am exceedingly sorry to say that it does," he answered.

I opened the captain's letter, which was written on foolscap paper. It began, like the former, with, "I have the honour to report;" and then



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went on to say that he had received information that various documents and despatches of considerable importance, and tending greatly to the dishonour of her Majesty's service, had been concealed in a desk in the sitting-room; and believing that their destruction was most desirable, he had the previous night, when all were asleep, taken the opportunity of seizing them and consigning them to the flames. He concluded by expressing a hope that the doctor would approve of his proceedings, as the operations had been attended with perfect success.

I was for some moments so surprised that I hardly knew what remark to make. At last I said to the doctor, "I hope he does not allude to my papers in the escritoire."

"I am sorry to say that he does," replied the doctor; "I ascertained the fact before troubling you about it."

I was utterly aghast at the intelligence. Here was the accumulated labour of years of profound study destroyed by the act of an execrable little madman in the course of a few minutes.

"Pray might I ask," I said, as soon as I could

find words, "what you intend to do with the miscreant."

"My dear fellow," he answered, "what can I do? I am as much annoyed at the circumstance as you are; still there is no help for it."

"Let us clearly understand each other," I said, now greatly enraged; "if you do not punish him severely, I will."

"Nonsense!" said the doctor; "as soon as you are a little cooler I am persuaded you will take the same view of his behaviour as I do. I admit it is a most vexatious affair, but like a man of sound sense, as I know you are, you must be aware that it would be an act of gross cruelty to punish a man who is not legally responsible for his actions. Now do think better of it."

I was so annoyed at the doctor's behaviour that I could restrain myself no longer, but rushed ~~from~~ the room to chastise personally the man who had so wantonly injured me. Fortunately as I now view the matter, I was not allowed to carry out my wishes, for the doctor rung his bell and immediately two assistants made their appearance. They were ordered not to allow me to



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speak to or go near the captain. I was deaf to all reason, however, and attempted to push past them, but they were far too strong for me. Still I persisted, and so violently, that at last they forcibly conducted me to my room, and there kept me a prisoner till my anger had somewhat abated. I remained but a short time in the asylum afterwards. The injury I had suffered from the captain, and the indignity put on me by the doctor in ordering me to be forcibly confined, and this again aggravated by the conduct of the captain, who seemed to consider my incarceration as a triumph for him, so preyed on my spirits, that I became thoroughly miserable. The doctor, I allow, did all in his power to alleviate the chagrin I felt, but without effect ; I became more and more depressed in spirits, and in the end my dear wife was sent for, and I left the establishment.

I sincerely trust that the reader will not judge me too harshly for my violent behaviour prior to my leaving the Salisbury Asylum. When I think over the matter I candidly admit I am greatly annoyed at it myself, and would most

willingly have concealed the whole affair ; but my great respect for truth, and my firm determination that not a statement with the slightest taint of unverity shall appear in this volume, compelled me to speak of it. Still it must be admitted by every right-minded man, that I was suffering at the time under great and wanton provocation. I had not only acquired an intense love for psychological science, but its study seemed to divert my mind from dwelling on the almost insupportable temptation so often presented to it. Nor did I follow the study with any selfish intention whatever ; on the contrary, I was stimulated by a strong wish to benefit my fellow-creatures, and for that purpose I had committed to paper many of the most interesting and valuable results of my observation of peculiar cases, especially those which had been treated successfully. And then to find the whole destroyed in a moment by the vindictive act of an insane little wretch ! I admit that it nearly threw my mind off its equilibrium. At all events, if these reasons do not exonerate me completely from the charge of rude and violent conduct, to

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which no person can be more naturally opposed than myself, I do sincerely hope they may be accepted as mitigatory circumstances in my case when judgment is passed upon me.

After I left Salisbury, and before I became one of Dr. Austin's guests, I resided for a short time in two other asylums. Both of these I was obliged to leave on account of certain objectionable circumstances in them, which tended to make my dwelling in either impossible. Although these circumstances are not altogether devoid of interest, I fear little pleasure or profit would be derived from their narration. Besides, I was so disgusted with the loss of my manuscripts at Salisbury, that I took no notes of any of the cases I met with in either of them.

At last I had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of Dr. Austin, a physician of eminence and great experience in the treatment of mental diseases, who resided in the vicinity of one of the principal towns in Suffolk. And here let me remark on a singular coincidence in the perfectly accidental manner in which I made Dr. Austin's acquaintance, and that of the other medical men in whose establishments I have resided. Not in a

single instance was my introduction to either sought or contemplated. Dr. Austin had called on my wife merely to inquire after the character of a page he wished to engage; but as she was from home at the time I saw him in her stead, and was so much pleased with his great intelligence and gentlemanly manners, that a lengthened conversation ensued between us. But though, to all human foresight, my introduction to these physicians was unpremeditated, I have nevertheless often thought that the finger of Providence was discernible in the matter, as they always occurred when I was labouring under great distress of mind. It almost seemed to me as if Heaven, knowing the strong exertions I made to subdue the rebellious thoughts with which the fiend inspired me, had mercifully thrown open a path by which I might escape, and to a certain extent atone for my fault by assisting the doctors in their labours to mitigate the sorrows and misfortunes of my fellow-creatures. And it was this feeling chiefly, I might almost say alone, which induced me—a perfectly sane man—to submit so often and so long to the restraint of an asylum.

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In consequence of my wife being from home, Dr. Austin proposed to call again in the evening to see her, to which I gladly acceded, so much was I pleased with his conversation. Shortly after he left the house my dear wife entered, and I informed her of the doctor's visit, telling her how much I was pleased with him; and mentioning his promise to call in the evening. I was afraid she might be annoyed at the arrangement, as she had a special dislike to strangers calling in the evening; but, to my surprise and satisfaction, she said she should be delighted to see him.

In the evening the doctor called on us, and as the tea-things were on the table, I requested him to join us. Without any hesitation he accepted my offer, and we passed a couple of hours very agreeably together. After he had fully satisfied himself as to the character of the page, the conversation turned on other subjects, and I found him to be a well-read scientific man, and a great enthusiast in his profession. He seemed much pleased to find I took so much interest in psychological subjects.

“I have rarely met,” he said, “with any man not in the profession who was so well versed in matters of the kind as yourself. I am very sorry we do not live nearer to each other, as it would give me great pleasure to conduct you over my establishment, and to receive from you any hints as to its arrangements which you might be able to give. You should clearly understand that it is not what is usually termed a lunatic asylum. I receive only twelve ladies or gentlemen whose cases are of the lightest description; so much so, in fact, that no one who has not gone so deeply as yourself into the subject could detect that there was anything abnormal about them. I do not even call them my patients, I consider them solely as my guests, and treat them as such; and I assure you a happier little community than we form it would be difficult to meet with.”

“You strongly pique my curiosity,” I replied. “I should much like to pay you a visit, and any assistance or advice I could give you would be gladly at your service.”

“But, my dear,” said my wife, who had hitherto taken no part in the conversation, “why do you



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not accept the doctor's invitation? You have been far from well lately, and a change of scene and air, I am persuaded, would do you a great deal of good."

"I should like it above all things," I said; "but, in the first place, I do not like leaving you; and, in the next, I fear it might be inconvenient to the doctor."

"As far as I am concerned," said he, "I assure you that instead of being inconvenient to me, it will give me very great pleasure, and if your good lady will accompany you that pleasure will be enhanced. And remember, too—for I may as well state it candidly,—my invitation is not given solely from courtesy: I am also actuated by a selfish motive, that of obtaining from you any suggestions which you might think could be applied for the advantage of my guests."

I was so pleased with his frank and engaging manner, that I promised him I would talk the matter over with my wife, and give him an answer the next morning. We then conversed for some time on the subject of my invention, which I explained to him at considerable length. He seemed

highly pleased with it, and said that he hoped on some future day I would go deeper with him into the subject, as it interested him greatly. In fact, I have generally noticed that all the physicians I have been acquainted with appeared to entertain a far better appreciation of its powers than any other class I have met with.

After the doctor had left us for the night I talked the matter over with my wife, who kindly promised to accompany me in my visit to his house. This removed my only objection, and when he called the next morning I told him that the following week he would certainly see us,—a piece of information which appeared to give him great satisfaction ; and after describing to us the best manner of making the journey, he left us. I may state that he did not engage the page, as on consideration he did not think him quite strong enough for his purpose.

A few days after the doctor's visit I left home, accompanied by my wife, and we arrived without difficulty or danger at our journey's end. We took up our quarters for the night in a small roadside inn near Everton House, the doctor's resi-



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dence, and paid him a visit next day. He seemed delighted to see us, but not in the least surprised, although our arrival had anticipated the time fixed on. While my wife remained in the parlour, conversing with Mrs. Austin, whom she found a most amiable, lady-like woman, the doctor conducted me over the house and grounds. I was certainly much pleased with the arrangements, for nothing appeared to be wanting which could add to the comfort or safety of the inmates. There was a total absence of that gloomy, decayed look about the house which creates so disagreeable an effect on the beholder in most of our private lunatic asylums. The mansion—for a mansion it was—was of modern date, having been built for a rich merchant, who had died soon after its completion, and whose widow had refused to reside in it. The rooms were lofty, spacious, and well ventilated ; indeed, every real improvement in modern house-building had been taken advantage of by the architect when he drew out the design. Beside the drawing and dining rooms—both of ample dimensions—there was an excellent library

and a good reception-room. I complimented him on there being neither table, cues, nor balls in what was somewhat inaptly called the billiard-room.

“Well,” he replied, “I wish you could invent some other name for this room, for many of my guests, with great justice, say that it is an absurdity to call a room a billiard-room without a table in it, and they frequently insist on my providing them with one. But you will, I am sure, agree with me, that if I complied with their wishes it might possibly be attended with grave consequences; for although none of my guests are what are ordinarily termed lunatics, yet they occasionally betray somewhat of an excitable temperament, and it would be imprudent not to guard against any sudden fit of anger which billiards might encourage. Now turn it over in your mind, and tell me what other name I can give the room.”

I promised to do as he desired, and he then conducted me round the grounds. They were very extensive, and planned with great taste, the whole being surrounded by a high wall. We

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dined at the guests' table that day, and found it was as the doctor had said. Not the slightest appearance of mental aberration betrayed itself, except, perhaps, to an experienced eye. Indeed, my wife said, when we met in the drawing-room in the evening, that she did not remember ever having dined in more agreeable society. The guests numbered altogether about a dozen, the majority being evidently well-educated gentlemen. Everything had been conducted during the meal with the most perfect order; the dinner was admirably cooked, and the attendance excellent. When we parted from the company at night, my wife and myself were so pleased with our visit that we requested permission of the doctor to visit the establishment again the next day, so that we might go more minutely into details,—a favour he granted us without the slightest hesitation.

I slept little that night, so strong had been the impression my visit to the doctor's had made upon me. No sooner had I entered within his gates, and noticed the high walls surrounding the

grounds, than the feeling of security I had experienced in other establishments of the same description again came over me, and the fear of my being impelled to carry out my dreadful secret vanished. It proved to me once more how great was the mercy of Heaven in thus pointing out to me a way in which I could be delivered from the temptation which oppressed me. A violent desire now came over me to enrol myself as one of Dr. Austin's guests; but how to break the matter to my dear wife puzzled me. Two or three times I was on the point of mentioning my wish to her, but was afraid to begin, lest the intimation would distress her. At last I prayed for courage to make the attempt, and that she might receive my resolution with resignation. My prayer in both instances was answered. I calmly explained to her my wish, and she received it with meekness and submission. I expressed to her the really profound sorrow it caused me to be separated from her, and I begged that out of the strong love I knew she bore me she would allow

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me to reside where I should, to a great extent, be safe from the dreadful persecution to which I was exposed. Her eyes filled with tears as she told me in reply how deeply she regretted the cause which required my separation from her; but as it was her duty to assist me, and to act for both my temporal and spiritual welfare, she would offer no objection to my residing with the doctor. I pressed her to my heart, and thanked her warmly for her kindness, to which she attempted a reply, but sobs choked her utterance. At breakfast no conversation passed between us, for our hearts were too full. We afterwards visited the doctor, and he kindly consented to admit me into his establishment without further delay. Thinking it better, now that I had broken my wish to my wife, to come to a fixed resolution on the subject, it was agreed that I should remain, and that she should proceed home alone. Sad indeed was our leave-taking, and bitterly did we both weep at parting; but, thank Heaven, we had sufficient courage to submit to the trial.

During my residence at Dr. Austin's I met with many most interesting cases, my notes on some six or seven of which I now offer to the public.

*II.—MR. GURDON'S PLIGHT.*

THE first case I propose bringing under the notice of the reader not only possesses some interest in itself, but was marked by this peculiarity, that it was possible to distinguish the exact moment the attack commenced, as well as that of its perfect termination. The malady had the effect of turning a man of much learning and most cynical temperament into an object of ridicule even to the most ignorant, while at the same time he was fully aware of the absurd appearance he made, and used every effort in his power to conceal it.

The hero of my narrative is a certain Mr. Felix Gurdon, a barrister of considerable celebrity



in criminal practice. At the time the malady attacked him he was about forty years of age, and a confirmed bachelor. He was tall, well-made, and would have been good-looking had it not been for an habitual sneer which seemed to be stamped upon his countenance, giving it a most disagreeable expression. This, I am sorry to say, was a too truthful index to his mind and character. To this failing I must also add another,—he was most selfish and uncharitable. Although his income was considerable, and his expenses small, no one could mention a benevolent institution to which he contributed, nor a single instance in which he had assisted the unfortunate with anything like liberality. Whether this unhappy indifference to the woes of others arose from natural disposition, or sprang from his continually witnessing the worst side of human nature in the practice of his profession, it is impossible to say; but whatever was its cause, it would have been difficult to find a more uncharitable man, alike with respect to benevolence in his own person, and that distrust of the existence of such a virtue



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in others which is too often met with in worldly men. At the same time I must admit that he possessed one most estimable quality—that of family affection. Unfortunately, however, all his relations had dropped off, with one solitary exception. This was a niece, the only daughter of an only sister some years deceased, so that he had but little opportunity of practising the one real virtue he had. For this niece he certainly had a great liking. Her father had died when she was an infant, and she generally resided with a paternal relative. She was a fine-grown, handsome girl, about twenty years of age, and on her part entertained a very great regard for her uncle; perhaps she was the only being in the world who was really fond of him. The family she resided with lived in a house in the country, where there were but few neighbours, and even with those she had little sympathy. She had few indulgences consequently; but one of them was to pay her uncle a visit for a month or so in the spring of each year. He would then throw aside his usual secluded and unsociable manners, and, accompanied by her, make the

round of the different theatres and places of amusement in London, besides indulging her in other little gratifications when opportunities presented themselves.

Mr. Gurdon resided in Chelsea, and had chambers in the Temple. On one occasion when his niece was on a visit to him, he received, for the day previous to her departure from town, an invitation for her to join a picnic excursion down the river. The steamboat was to start from London Bridge at eleven o'clock precisely, and all the guests were particularly reminded that, as time and tide wait for no man, it was absolutely necessary for them to be punctual, under the penalty of being left behind. The morning of the day was bright and warm, and Mr. Gurdon proposed they should take one of the small steamboats plying between Chelsea and the City, as likely to prove a more agreeable mode of transit than going by land. To this of course his niece Alice had no objection, and all being in readiness, they left the house and took the steamer at the pier.

At first there were but few passengers, but as the boat touched at the different piers many persons came on board, until at last the vessel was so densely crowded, that she lay deep in the water. This and a strong adverse tide, it being at the time almost high water, considerably impeded her progress. They had nearly passed under one of the arches of Blackfriars Bridge, when suddenly the vessel lurched, as under some sharp strain, and immediately the paddle-wheels ceased to move. Gurdon, who with his niece was seated near the stern, not only felt the shock, but was also made aware that some accident had occurred by the terrified screaming of the women near the centre of the vessel. But of what nature the accident was, he could not divine. He attempted to make his way forward to ascertain, but from the crowded state of the steamer, and the confusion and alarm which prevailed among the passengers, he could neither get forward nor elicit an intelligible answer. He cast a glance over the side of the vessel, and saw that she had lost all steerage

way, and was fast drifting back with the tide. He reflected for a moment what course to adopt, and as he was a man of considerable nerve—though, as I shall presently show, not to the extent he imagined—he soon made up his mind. He returned to his niece, who had obeyed his injunctions to remain in her seat till his return, and grasping her firmly by the arm, told her not to be frightened.

“I do not know what kind of accident it may be,” he said; “possibly it is not a serious one after all, but we must be prepared for the worst. When I tell you, leap with me boldly into the water, and I will save you, only remember you must be very careful not to lose your presence of mind, but to do exactly as I direct you. I can swim well, but if you get frightened you will drown us both. Now do you clearly understand me?”

“I do, uncle,” was her reply; “I have full confidence in you, and will follow your directions. You need not be afraid of me.”

“Very well, my dear, be ready to take a good leap, should it be necessary.”

He then remained quite silent, continuing to hold her tightly by the arm above the wrist, while he watched what might next occur.

The steamer had now drifted till halfway between Blackfriars and Waterloo Bridges. Her crippled state had been observed from the shore, and many wherries had put off to her assistance, into which the passengers were crowding. Gurdon was now more at ease. Although the boat rocked considerably, owing to the alarmed state of the passengers, who hurried from side to side, he noticed she was no lower in the water than before the accident, which clearly proved that she had not sprung a leak, or only a trifling one. Presently he succeeded in attracting the attention of one of the sailors, who informed him that the piston-rod of the steam engine had broken, but that there was no more mischief done. Gurdon's mind was now at rest; and withdrawing his hand from his niece's arm he waited patiently till the more terrified of the passengers had disembarked; and then beckoning to a waterman who was making for the boat, he entered his wherry with Alice, and in a few

minutes afterwards they were landed ; and taking a cab, they drove to London Bridge wharf. They arrived just in the nick of time, for scarcely were they on board, when the order was given to cast off the ropes, and the next minute they were under weigh, steaming rapidly down the river with the tide, which had now turned.

Both Gurdon and his niece were scolded for the disappointment their late appearance had threatened to occasion, and many inquiries were made as to its cause, the answers to which of course drew forth many exclamations and regrets. These, however, soon subsided, and other subjects of conversation were brought forward. There is no reason why I should go into the details of the day's pleasures, but suffice it to say they were without alloy ; and late in the evening the party returned to London in safety, highly pleased with their excursion.

The next morning Alice and her uncle met at the breakfast-table early, as the train by which she was to leave London started from the Euston Square station at ten o'clock. During their meal a considerable portion of their con-



versation ran on the events of the previous day, but those connected with the accident on board the river steamer were especially dwelt upon.

“Tell me, uncle,” said Alice, “how you managed to preserve your coolness so admirably yesterday. For my part, I own I was dreadfully frightened at first; but when I noticed the calm expression of your face, my fright soon vanished, and I was no more alarmed than I am at this minute. I am certain that if I had been obliged to jump into the water I should have quite preserved my presence of mind.”

“My dear,” replied Mr. Gurdon, “the experience I have had in the world—which, as you may imagine, has been very considerable—has taught me that nothing is ever gained by being frightened. At first, perhaps, it was more a matter of prudence with me to keep myself perfectly cool and collected in whatever position I might be placed; but use has now become a second nature with me. Yesterday, for example, I had my wits as much about me at the time of the accident as I had before it occurred. I must also compliment you on your nerve, which was surprising, mar-



vellous indeed, when compared with that of the other women on board."

"Yesterday, somehow," said Alice, drawing up the sleeve of her dress and exposing four small marks above the wrist, "I hurt my arm, and I cannot think in what way I did it."

Gurdon blushed slightly, and remained for the moment silent. The cause of the four small bruises occurred to him readily enough. At the time of the accident he had grasped his niece's arm so tightly that he had left the marks of his finger-tips upon it. He was more vexed at the discovery than might have been imagined, but less from the injury his niece had sustained than from the wound it inflicted on his own vanity. He was sufficiently acquainted with psychology to know that the hand oftener expresses the mind than is generally believed. He had frequently seen persons, when under trial, manage to preserve on their countenances an expression of the most placid innocence, even while everything seemed adverse to their cause, while yet they would show by the tremulous and uncontrolled movements of the hand their terrible

anxiety of mind. In fact, this was a favourite method with him when he wished to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion as to the guilt or innocence of a criminal ; and he had often felt considerable contempt for their want of nerve and prudence. But now here was a proof that he himself had been as weak and oblivious on this point as the most timid, trembling pickpocket that ever entered the dock.

He was aroused from his abstraction by Alice reminding him that the time had almost arrived for them to send for a cab ; and she then left the room to make her preparations for the journey. At last all was in readiness, the cab arrived, and Gurdon escorted his niece to the station, from whence, after a most affectionate leave-taking, he bent his steps to his chambers in the Temple.

On his arrival, Mr. Gurdon immediately sent a messenger with his wig and gown to await him in the Sessions House in the Borough (it was the first day of term, and he had a case which was expected to come on in the afternoon) Having occupied himself for an hour or so in

looking over a brief he had that day received, he left his chambers to proceed on foot to the Court-house. He was strolling leisurely along, for he was aware that some time must elapse before his cause could be called. Nothing occurred to arrest his attention till he was crossing Blackfriars Bridge. While ascending the rise from the Middlesex side he accidentally turned his eyes on the river. He presently saw a steamer leaving the Temple pier, and he watched it as it approached him. As it came nearer the bridge he perceived that it was crowded with passengers, many of whom were evidently of the holiday-making class; and it brought vividly to his mind the adventure of the day before. The boat arrived at the bridge, and Gurdon stood and looked. The stone parapet had been removed, as being too heavy for the arches to support in their decayed condition, and a wooden framework had been erected instead. He leant on this to watch the steamer as she passed beneath, and he noticed that she went through the same arch as the accident had occurred under the previous day.

The steamer was now out of sight, and Gurdon had resumed his walk, when he felt a considerable vibration in the pavement beneath him. He looked round, and found it was caused by a heavily laden brewer's dray drawn by six horses, which was passing at the moment. Contenting himself with inwardly directing an invective against the City authorities for leaving the bridge so long in such a dangerous condition, he continued his walk, and occupied his mind with subjects connected with the cause he had in hand.

When he arrived at the Court-house, he found that his cause would not be called for some time, if indeed at all that day, as the court was then engaged with a very grave case, which could hardly be finished before the evening. It was one of murder; and although he had been too much accustomed to cases of the kind to feel deeply interested in them, he resolved on stopping till this one was finished, in order to hear the result. The prisoner was a slight-looking man of about thirty years of age, without anything really bad in the expression of his countenance.

He was accused of having murdered his wife. The evidence was dead against him, and his counsel could find no better plea in his defence than that he had committed the crime under great excitement. His wife, it appeared, had been a notorious drunkard, habitually neglecting the children, and spending the money he gave her for food upon drink. Unfortunately for the man, at the time he had made the assault which caused her death she was not only not drunk, but had not been so for several days, nor had the children during that time been in want of food.

But beyond the fact that Gurdon had little business of importance to occupy him that day, he had another reason for remaining. He had noticed a circumstance in the demeanour of the prisoner which closely attracted and riveted his attention. During the trial he preserved the utmost placidity of expression, though without stolidity. Judging from his countenance, a casual observer would have come to the conclusion that the man's consciousness of his innocence was supporting him during the trial, and that he felt

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no fear for the result. But the prisoner's right hand told a very different tale. With it he clasped the bar in front of the dock as firmly as Gurdon had grasped his niece's arm the day before, and did not release his hold till the jury returned into court with their verdict, which was "Guilty," with a recommendation to mercy. When the judge, before passing sentence, addressed some remarks to the man on his crime, he maintained the same serenity of expression; but Gurdon could see under the short ragged sleeve of his jacket, that the muscles of the arm and hand started out in full relief with a tension that threatened their rupture.

The judge said that the recommendation of the jury would be transmitted to the proper quarter, and that although in all probability his life would be spared, still he ought not to imagine that the lenity shown him lessened the abhorrence all good men must feel for the crime he had committed.

As soon as the prisoner fully understood that his life would be spared, his hand relaxed its long tenacious grasp, and fell languidly by his side,



while a cold perspiration came out on his brow, and he was removed from the dock in a fainting condition. The danger of death he had been in dread of so long had vanished, and exhausted nature had given way as soon as the stimulus which had upheld him was withdrawn.

The trial over, Mr. Gurdon proceeded homewards without returning to his chambers. His dinner finished, he sat for some time in deep meditation. The events of the last two days had produced a deep but by no means satisfactory impression on his mind. He had hitherto prided himself on his impassibility, and had claimed for himself great superiority over his fellows in that doubtful quality. But now he perceived that he was no more free from powerful emotions than others when circumstances occurred to develop them. He could not help drawing a comparison between his feelings at the time of the accident on the steamboat with those of the culprit he had seen undergoing his trial in the dock. He had not been aware of the severity of his hold on his niece's arm; nor had the felon any idea he was so rigidly clasping the bar before



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him. Altogether, the comparison was most humiliating to his vanity. He attempted during the evening to shake off the impression it had made on him, but did not succeed, and relief only came with slumber.

Next morning the sensation had wholly passed away. He left home at an early hour for his chambers; and after waiting there a few minutes, he proceeded by the same route as on the previous day to the Sessions-house. On the road he was deeply absorbed in thinking out the bearing of the cause he was to plead, and he paid no attention whatever to the objects that lay around him. But suddenly a very singular sensation came over him. He felt a slight tremor, as though his footing had not been firm. He looked round him and perceived that he had just crossed the arch under which the accident had happened, and from which he had watched the steamer the day before. He was somewhat annoyed at this, but he shook off the feeling and proceeded onwards, thinking on other matters.

About an hour after he had arrived in court,

his cause was called. He had to defend two men who had committed a daring garotte robbery. Although they were notoriously bad characters, the partial intoxication of the prosecutor at the time of the assault, and the obscurity of the locality in which it was committed, rendered it an exceedingly difficult matter to identify them. At first sight there appeared every probability they would escape the punishment they justly merited. Mr. Gurdon was very acute, and easily discovered the weak points of his opponents. He did not much profit by this, however, for his attention was so completely drawn from his brief, that, more from his fault than from want of materials for defence, they were both found guilty. The cause of his abstraction was this: the behaviour of the criminal the day before was still fresh in his memory, and he kept continually watching the demeanour of the two culprits before him. One was a stolid, almost idiotic ruffian, whom the proceedings seemed to stupify, for he showed no sort of feeling or anxiety whatever. The other, who had been the principal actor in the affair, was an active, shrewd,

cunning-looking miscreant. He was evidently keenly alive to the danger of his position ; but he contrived, like most of his class, to command his features to a great degree. He occasionally looked at the witnesses with considerable anxiety, but with no more than might have been shown by an innocent person under such a charge. But his hand spoke differently, and more faithfully. It was never still, but moved or twitched continually ; either it grasped at something, or trembled violently. From this fact, apart from the evidence against the man, Mr. Gurdon easily concluded that he was guilty. Still, his duty compelled him to go on with the defence ; but it occurred to him that others who were watching the prisoners had come to the same conclusion about their guilt as himself, and that they regarded him as merely uttering a string of parrot-like phrases, not one of which he himself believed. From Mr. Gurdon's manner more than from the behaviour of the criminals themselves, their cause was materially injured, and he felt it. The result was that, perhaps for the first time in his life, he got exceedingly nervous, and his defence was altogether

most unsatisfactory. When he heard the sentence he felt greatly annoyed, and his annoyance was increased by the glance of reproach which the chief culprit cast on him as he was being removed from the dock.

Vexed at the whole affair, Mr. Gurdon was just on the point of quitting the court, when he was accosted by a friend—an attorney,—who placed a brief in his hand for the next day. This, however, was for the prosecution, and the charge was one of forgery. Mr. Gurdon took the brief, promising to take it home with him and read it carefully; but he wanted to find out what impression the defence he had just conducted had made on his friend, and he asked him if he thought he could have done more for the prisoners than he had done.

“To speak candidly,” was the reply, “I have heard you plead far better than you did to-day.”

“I thought so myself,” said Mr. Gurdon, “and I am rather annoyed at the affair. I do not feel at all well, or it would not have happened; but I will take care you shall have no fault to find with me to-morrow.”

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“Of that I am persuaded,” said the attorney. “I have to apologize for putting the brief in your hands at so late an hour, but the fact is, the prosecutor wished it to be given to Mr. X——, with whom he is acquainted; so I sent it to him, and it was only this morning he returned it to me. However, the case is somewhat low down in the list, and is certain not to be called till late in the afternoon, or more probably not till the morning after; so with your rapid reading you will have ample time to get instructed on all the points.”

Mr. Gurdon again promised to give the brief his best attention, and the friends parted.

The next morning, after breakfast, Mr. Gurdon occupied himself with reading his brief, and resolving on his mode of conducting the case. His partial failure on the previous day somewhat vexed him; certainly not from the slightest feeling of sympathy with the prisoners,—he was far too just a man for that,—but because his own *amour propre* had been injured by his inability to procure their acquittal. When he had made himself well acquainted with the merits of

his new case he drove to his chambers, where he remained for a short time answering letters, and then started off on foot for the court.

He had scarcely reached the arch already mentioned when the sensation experienced the previous day, but stronger and more defined, came over him. He detected himself actually giving way to a feeling strangely akin to fear. He had almost reached the commencement of the arch when he saw, at some hundred yards distance, a very heavy waggon approaching. It was laden to such a height with sacks of flour, that four powerful horses seemed hardly capable of drawing it. The vibratory movement which Mr. Gurdon had felt when the brewer's dray passed him came vividly before him again, as well as the conclusion which forced itself on his mind as to the dangerous condition of the bridge. He started off almost at a run, that he might arrive at the further buttress of the arch before the waggon had passed it. When halfway across he suddenly stopped. He was naturally a bold man, though hardly so much so as he himself believed, and he felt ashamed of this feeling exercising such power



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over him ; so he resolved to stop till the waggon had passed. When it neared him, as he stood on the middle of the arch, the vibration was very great, and, in spite of himself, and to his great annoyance, he experienced an unmistakable sensation of fear.

When the waggon had passed him, Mr. Gurdon was greatly out of humour with himself, but he continued his road onwards, and in due time arrived in court. His case, however, was not called on that day, but was tolerably certain to be the first called on the morrow. Finding that he would not be wanted, he proceeded by the Surrey side of the river to Westminster Hall, to meet a brother barrister on some business in which they were both interested.

The next day, in passing the bridge, Mr. Gurdon experienced the same sensation ; but, beyond the extreme annoyance it gave him at the moment, he took no further notice of it. When he reached the court he found he was just in time for his case. He was perfectly successful, but it was far easier to manage than his defence of the two garotters. The culprit in this



instance was a married man, with a large family of children. He had been employed as book-keeper at a tradesman's in the City, on a salary of twenty-five shillings a week, his office hours being from nine in the morning till nine at night. He had a sickly wife, and his children were all too young to add anything to the family exchequer. To meet the doctor's bill which had been incurred by his wife's illness, he had to defer the payment of his rent to his landlord, and the result was that an execution was placed in his house. In order to pay it out he forged his employer's name to a cheque for ten pounds, stilling his conscience meanwhile by promising to himself that he would repay the money before his dishonesty could be detected. In this, of course, he failed. The forged cheque came into his employer's hands, and suspicion at once fell upon the prisoner, who unhesitatingly acknowledged his guilt, and earnestly implored forgiveness. But his employer, acting, as he stated, solely on conscientious principles, and not for the gratification of any personal feeling whatever, gave him in charge to a policeman. The prisoner again ac-

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knowledged his guilt before a magistrate, but, at the earnest solicitation of his wife, he withdrew his plea, and was then committed for trial. But the humanity which had actuated the magistrate in permitting him to withdraw his plea of guilty acted prejudicially for him in another way. The etiquette of the Bar (strangely differing in this from the sister profession of medicine) prohibits the rendering of unpaid services, no matter how poverty-stricken the individual may be. The poor wife was thus obliged to sell the few articles of furniture she possessed, as well as to pawn the greater portion of her own and her children's scanty wardrobe, to provide for her husband's defence. With perfect satisfaction she paid the whole proceeds into the hands of the attorney whom she had employed, and congratulated herself on the largeness of the amount, calculating that the probabilities of her husband's release would be greater in proportion to the money paid for his defence. The prisoner, when he heard of the sum his wife had paid, tried to persuade himself that the prosecution would break down in their proof, and that he would again be set

at liberty; but it was impossible for him to succeed for any time in this attempt at self-delusion. The dull, heavy consciousness of his own guilt weighed upon him with a giant's hand, and he entered the dock on the day of his trial with the perfect certainty that he should leave it a convicted felon.

Mr. Gurdon prosecuted with an amount of ability which the case hardly required, for the self-condemned look of the prisoner assisted him. The jury found a verdict of "Guilty," and the judge, after repeating the stereotyped observations used in cases of fraud about the relative position of employer and employed, sentenced the poor man to two years' imprisonment.

As he left the dock, pallid and woe-stricken, he cast a reproachful glance on Mr. Gurdon, less for having prosecuted him than for the gratuitous fabrications he had used in the course of his arguments. But Mr. Gurdon felt it not; he was satisfied that on this occasion he had fully performed the duty he had undertaken. As he left the court, the sound of bitter lamentations caught his ear. He looked round and saw a shabbily

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dressed, sickly-looking woman, with several young children about her, apparently in the greatest distress, and weeping bitterly. The usher of the court, seeing that Mr. Gurdon's attention had been drawn to the group, told him they were the wife and children of the forger who had just been convicted. Mr. Gurdon merely shrugged his shoulders and passed on. He had done his duty, and he had nothing to reproach himself with.

That day, without any assignable reason, Mr. Gurdon had no appetite for his dinner, and it was carried away almost untasted. During the evening, he felt considerable nervous excitement. He was anxious and fretful, as if under the impression that something had occurred to annoy him, without being able to discover anything which really justified a feeling of the kind. On the contrary, his vanity had been much flattered by his success that day, not only as regarded the verdict, but he had been complimented by several brother barristers on his conduct of the case. He continued in this nervous state till it was considerably past midnight, and he then

sought his bed. It was almost daybreak before he fell asleep, and his slumbers were so broken and disturbed by dreams that they contributed but little to his rest. Among other objects which flitted before his disordered brain were the wife and children of the man against whom he had obtained the verdict. They incessantly presented themselves to his imagination. He felt great annoyance at this, but no sorrow or sympathy for their misfortunes. The trial of the day also came before his memory, but without bringing with it any satisfaction.

As soon as the sun had fully risen he got up, and, throwing his dressing-gown over him, snatched up a book from the table and attempted to read. But he could not fix his mind on the work, although it was of a most interesting description; and in a short time he threw it aside and began to turn his ideas to a trial of some importance in the country on which he was engaged. Even here, however, he met with no success; his thoughts incessantly wandered to some other subject, and at last he again sought his bed, and remained in it wide awake till the

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servant tapped at his door to inform him that it was eight o'clock, his usual hour for rising.

He dressed himself without care, which was a somewhat unusual circumstance with him, being generally very scrupulous about his toilet. He went down to the breakfast-room, where he found his breakfast in readiness, as well as his morning newspaper lying on the table. He could not eat, all appetite had vanished; indeed, it was with difficulty he swallowed a single cup of tea. He then applied himself to his paper, and the first thing which caught his eye was a lengthy report of the trial in which he had pleaded the previous day. He naturally felt interested, and commenced to read, but he could not fix his attention upon the subject, his mind incessantly wandering to other matters. He laid down the paper, again took it up, and again laid it down several times, but before he had got halfway through the report he had lost the connection, and in a fit of anger he threw the paper from him, and prepared to set out for his chambers.

When he arrived at the Temple he was told by his clerk that several letters lay waiting him. He



opened them one by one, and found that some were of importance, one in particular. To it he attempted to give his attention ; but though he tried hard he found it was impossible. Suddenly he was seized with a severe fit of shivering, and as the day was warm and genial he began to suspect that he was not well. He placed his finger on his pulse, and found it was beating rapidly. He now determined to return home, and told his clerk, in case any person called for him, that he should not be back that day, but that he would positively be at his chambers on the morrow. He was grievously mistaken in this. On arriving at his house he sent for a medical man who resided in the neighbourhood. He at once pronounced his patient to be in a high fever, and stated that it was necessary for him immediately to seek his bed, and to remain in it. With not a little grudging Mr. Gurdon obeyed these instructions, and did not leave his bed again for several weeks. Typhus in its most severe form set in, and for some days he hung between life and death. At last, thanks to a good constitution, a clever medical adviser, and good nursing, he recovered from the fever ; but so weak did it leave



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him that it was more than a fortnight before he could stand erect. When he was so far convalescent as to be able to be removed, he was taken to Brighton, and remained there for more than a month ; he then returned to town restored to comparative health, though still but the shadow of his former self.

When Mr. Gurdon arrived in town from Brighton he drove direct from the station to his house in Chelsea. His housekeeper, when she saw him, could not help expressing her surprise at the change that had come over her master. Before his attack of fever he was stout, hale, and active, with a somewhat florid complexion ; but now he was pale, his eyes were sunken, and in person he was miserably attenuated. His medical man called in the evening, and was scarcely less astonished at the change in Mr. Gurdon's appearance than the housekeeper had been. He, however, concealed his thoughts on this subject, contenting himself with simply advising his patient not to apply himself to business for a few days, until he had somewhat recovered from the fatigues of his journey. Mr. Gurdon promised to do this, but

the next morning he found himself so much refreshed by his night's rest, that he yielded to the strong temptation he felt to recommence his professional duties. He sent for a cab and drove to his chambers. Here he found not only a vast accumulation of letters and papers awaiting him, but also a brief to defend a man that day at the Surrey Sessions.

He at once resolved to attend to the latter, and proceeded on foot to the court. When he had arrived at Blackfriars Bridge, the sensation he had before experienced recurred with intense force. It continued to increase till he reached the northern buttress of the arch, when it became almost insupportable. Although he attempted to run that he might cross the more rapidly, his legs seemed almost to rock under him, and he soon became unable to move. He felt as though some influence beneath him were attracting him to the water. A heavy vehicle passed at the moment, and the vibration it caused actually terrified him. He caught hold of the woodwork which had replaced the stone balustrade, and he clung to it with the tenacity of desperation. All the time the idea was

in his mind that the danger was not real, but nevertheless he could not overcome it. He stared helplessly at the crowd which had gathered round him, but said nothing, for he knew only too well that the appearance he presented was absurd and ridiculous. He remained rooted to the spot. Presently it seemed to strike the crowd that he was in a state of intoxication, and he heard the conductor of an omnibus which was passing call out to the driver that "it was rather early for that sort of thing." All this, of course, vexed Mr. Gurdon terribly, but still he was unable to move. At last a policeman thrust himself through the tittering mob, and, seizing him roughly by the arm, insisted that he should move on. As soon as Mr. Gurdon felt the policeman's support, he walked along rapidly; and the instant he had passed the further buttress the sensation vanished, and he told the astonished policeman that he could now continue on his road without his help.

"Very well," said the policeman, "you may go; but if I find you collecting a crowd again with your tomfoolery, I will lock you up, as sure as I'm alive."

Mr. Gurdon made no reply ; but hailing an empty cab, he got into it, and thus released himself from the jeering crowd which had followed him.

When he arrived in court, his sickly appearance, which had been increased by his adventure on the bridge, struck all his friends, and they earnestly inquired after his health, and expressed their sympathy with him. Their anxiety on his account only added to his nervousness, and after shortly answering them, he ran his eye down the list of cases for the one he had to defend.

“Looking for your case, Gurdon?” said a friend to him. “There it is, so low down in the list that I do not think there is the remotest probability of its coming on to-day. If I were you, I would go quietly home and save myself for to-morrow ; you do not look at all well.”

Mr. Gurdon took his advice, and, getting into a cab, proceeded homewards.

In the evening, finding himself recruited, he began to turn over in his mind the adventure of the morning. He now perceived that the

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feeling under which he had laboured was a false one, the danger being imaginary and unreal. He put the case clearly before himself, and came to the conclusion that without some powerful action of his own brain, some settled resolution to overcome it, it might terminate unhappily. Like most men of ability, there was nothing he dreaded more than disease of the brain; and he was keenly alive to the certainty of such a disaster if he did not conquer this extraordinary nervousness, under which he had been so long and so painfully suffering.

This conclusion arrived at, Mr. Gurdon resolved to commence operations next day, and by a powerful effort of the will, conquer the infatuation which had now taken such a grievous hold upon him. Fully armed with this resolution he sought his bed. Sound and refreshing sleep during the night, and a good appetite for breakfast next morning, gave him sufficient stamina and courage for the task he was about to undertake.

As soon as he had arrived at his chambers, he threw himself into a chair, and calmly reflected as to what would be the best course to

adopt in making the experiment. To speak truth, although he had braced up his courage to the highest possible point, he still felt a certain misgiving for which he could not account. The more he thought over the matter the more annoying became this misgiving, and he remained in his chair, undecided what to do, till the clock warned him that it was time for him to proceed to the court. He now hurriedly determined to take his clerk with him. Having invented some excuse for this necessity, he expressed his wish to the clerk, and the pair started off together. They proceeded along Fleet Street, and arrived at the foot of the bridge, without a word being spoken by either. On ascending it, however, Mr. Gurdon suddenly became loquacious ; a circumstance which greatly surprised the clerk, as ordinarily his master was extremely taciturn in his intercourse with him. As they advanced, Mr. Gurdon not only got more fluent, but took the clerk's arm in a puzzling fit of friendliness, and chatted with him the while very affably. Of course the reason for this sudden change in Mr. Gurdon's behaviour was, that they had no sooner



reached the bridge than the sensation he had formerly experienced came over him, and the nearer he got to the arch it became more and more oppressive. When they had arrived at the buttress of the arch the clerk felt Mr. Gurdon's grasp tighten on his arm. His conversation had also suddenly ceased. Presently he became motionless, and almost sank down on his knees. The idea that he was once more about to make a spectacle of himself, coupled with dread that his clerk should guess the real state of the case, acted as a momentary stimulus to his imagination, and he whispered that he felt very giddy and faint, but that the feeling would go off in a moment. Leaning heavily on the clerk's arm, he managed, not without considerable difficulty, to get beyond the second buttress, when he rapidly recovered himself and proceeded onwards, explaining that he had lately been subject to similar fits of giddiness. The clerk naturally enough attributed this to Mr. Gurdon's recent severe illness.

It would occupy too much space to go further into detail as to the progress of Mr. Gurdon's



malady. Suffice it to say, that by no effort could he conquer it. Sometimes he would stand on the buttress of the arch by the hour, without power to go on, and would after all give up the attempt and return. He abstained from crossing the bridge for some time, but as soon as he tried it again, the feeling returned as powerfully as ever. He now resolved on avoiding the bridge altogether, but a new feeling came over him. He fancied that he felt an incessant attraction towards the fatal spot, which attraction diminished in power the farther he was away from it. This feeling at last increased to such a degree, that he would not even go from Fleet Street to Ludgate Hill on foot when business called him into the City, but would always ride in an omnibus, as it gave a greater sense of security. The incessant irritation and nervous excitement consequent on all this, had so severe an effect upon his mind, that his friends began to be alarmed lest he might commit suicide, and they proposed introducing him to Dr. Austin. It required some little courage to make the proposal to him, but at last one of the more intimate of his acquaint-

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ances undertook to do so. To his great surprise his advice was accepted with gratitude by Mr. Gurdon, and a few days afterwards he took up his residence among us.

During his stay, which lasted about eighteen months, he made no intimacies, and was disliked by all of us. He never spoke of the bridge, nor did any one mention the subject to him, though we frequently laughed among ourselves at his absurd delusion. At length he was considered to be cured of his monomania, and left us to return home. But although he seemed cured at the time, the germs of the disease were not wholly eradicated. He had hardly arrived at his house when the wish, or rather the attraction, to visit the bridge was again felt. The next morning he left home and proceeded to the Temple. He attempted to occupy himself with business matters, but the old influence became so strong that he could withstand it no longer. He arose from his chair, and, without saying anything to his clerk, left the Temple. His pace became the more rapid the nearer he approached the centre of the strange

attraction. Suddenly he stopped at the foot of the bridge, and saw an immense hoarding, on which was written in large letters, "No admittance except on business." He saw also that a further notice had been put up, to the effect that no waggons drawn by more than four horses were allowed to pass over the temporary bridge. During his retirement at the doctor's, the municipal authorities had not only resolved on building a new bridge, but had already commenced destroying the old one. Mr. Gurdon perceiving this, now proceeded over the temporary bridge, feeling no abnormal sensation whatever. Presently he found himself beside the arch which had caused him so much uneasiness, and he stood still to look at it. Workmen in crowds were engaged in removing the masonry, and he noticed that the key-stone had already been taken away. He felt at once that his delusion had entirely fled; and it has never for a single instant returned. His health is now re-established, and he enjoys a high and deserved reputation in his profession.

### *III.—PATENT MANIA.*

#### PART I.

ONE of the guests at Dr. Austin's was a Mr. Cochrane, who had reduced himself from comparative affluence to positive poverty by indulging a passion for patenting his own inventions. He was between fifty and sixty years of age, and a well read and gentlemanly man; and, apart from his malady, which rarely so obtruded itself as to be offensive, he was a most agreeable companion. In disposition he was exceedingly amiable, and of a decidedly religious temperament. On no point did his insanity manifest itself till the subject of his particular delusion was touched on. His infirmity was of an exceedingly ludicrous description. He

imagined that he had discovered the means of burning water as fuel, and the absurdity of his behaviour in carrying on his experiments had been the cause of his coming to stay at Dr. Austin's. I had at first conceived a liking for him, which grew into great friendship ; but, in consequence of a dispute we had one day on some philosophical matters, an estrangement took place which kept us for some months pretty much apart. Thanks to the good offices of the doctor, a reconciliation was at the end of that time effected ; but we were never again altogether the warm friends we had been before the rupture. The cause of our disagreement was as follows.

One fine sunshiny morning we were walking together in the garden conversing very amicably on divers topics unconnected with my narrative, when our talk chanced to turn upon religion. At last the general deluge was spoken of, and Mr. Cochrane dwelt on that for some time, speaking so lucidly and rationally, that it gave me great pleasure to listen to him.

“It has been a source of great interest to many,” I remarked, “to speculate as to the manner in

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which the second destruction of the world will take place. By water it cannot be, as we have the authority and promise of the Deity himself that this mode will not be repeated."

"It surprises me much," he said, "to find mankind generally so obtuse on that point, and more especially men of education, yourself among the rest, when the means by which this will be accomplished are so easily to be discovered."

"In what way, then, do you hold it will take place?" I inquired.

"By fire, of course. The plan for the ultimate destruction of the world was formed at its creation, and from that moment to this all has been in readiness for the Divine fiat to go forth."

"I cannot imagine," I said, "what data authorizes you to come to such a conclusion. That vast subterranean fires exist there can be but little doubt, but that fact itself scarcely establishes the direct and certain conclusion you seem to have drawn. To settle the point satisfactorily is, I fear, above human ingenuity."

"The theory of subterranean fires being used in the combustion of the world," he said, "I hold

to be as great an absurdity as the idea that the infernal regions themselves are at this moment beneath our feet—a fallacy which obtained considerable credence in the middle ages, but is now, I am happy to say, generally exploded. I have great doubt even as to the existence of these subterranean fires.”

“Then upon what theory can you account for volcanoes?” I inquired.

“I believe them to be originated by the escape of gases which are formed in the earth. These inflame when they come into contact with the oxygen of the atmospheric air. Without oxygen, as you know, combustion cannot take place.”

“From what source do you suppose the fire will arise which shall destroy the world—from the sun?”

“I hold that theory to be even more absurd than that of the subterranean fires. My dear sir, the great mass of combustible matter which has for ages been, and is at present ready for the destruction of the world, is the ocean itself.”

“But you cannot surely mean that the ocean will undergo spontaneous combustion?”



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“Certainly not; the idea that the world will be consumed at the last day by any chance or accident of the kind, I hold to be utterly blasphemous. At the same time I maintain that the ocean is one vast receptacle of inflammable matter.”

“I should much like to hear the arguments on which you found your theory,” I said, scarcely able to restrain a laugh at such a palpably ridiculous idea. “I should have thought, that as water is generally regarded as antagonistic to fire, it would have quite a contrary effect to the one you imagine.”

“It perfectly surprises me to hear you utter an opinion of the kind,” he said. “Why, the simplest lesson in natural philosophy might have taught you that water contains two distinct elements of combustion; and from experiments I have made, nothing is easier than to ignite them.”

“Here,” I said, pointing to a small tank in the garden, in which Mrs. Austin kept some gold and silver fish, “here is an opportunity for you to prove your assertion. Let me see you burn some

of the water in that tank, and then I will believe in your theory."

"Pardon me," he replied, "ridicule is not argument; and your remark is anything but a courteous one. That the gases composing water may be separated from each other by a galvanic battery, or by a dozen other means, it would be very uncomplimentary to you to suppose you ignorant of. At the same time, the water in that tank would not serve for illustration. Remember, I spoke of the ocean, and not of fresh water."

"And pray what may the difference be?" I inquired.

"Simply this,—that the ocean, being of salt water, contains many more elements to assist in the decomposition of the gases than are to be found in fresh water. You seem incredulous, but I know that I am right. At the last day the ocean will ignite by the decomposition of the two gases composing it, through the agency of the salt which it contains."

I could no longer restrain my merriment at the poor man's absurdity, but fairly burst into a

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fit of laughter, which seemed to give him considerable annoyance, for he said angrily,—

“Laugh as much as you please, sir; I can very readily take my satisfaction for the impertinence you have offered me. The idea of an individual labouring under such a ridiculous delusion as you are, and laughing at a simple philosophical fact, has something in it so exceedingly ludicrous that it is impossible to be angry with you.”

“My ridiculous delusion!” I replied, my anger now fast rising, “my ridiculous delusion! and pray, sir, to what may you allude? I believe that any one, even slightly acquainted with the elements of natural philosophy, and not absolutely insane or an idiot, will admit that my researches may be rightly ranked among the most remarkable of the day. At any rate it is admitted, even by the doctor himself, that I am indisputably the person who discovered that the force produced by the expansion of condensed atmospheric air is greater than the amount of power used in its compression, as you may perceive in the action of the common air-gun. The application of that extra or plus force may be

again applied to the condensation of more air, acquiring a still greater amount of force, which may be again applied, again increasing in power *ad infinitum*. Of that theory, and its application as a motive power to ships and land locomotives, I am the sole and only author, as my different patents will show."

"My dear sir," said Mr. Cochrane, "how can you talk such arrant nonsense? If you have taken out patents for anything of the kind (and I do not doubt your word, for I have seen patents taken out by others for inventions quite as absurd as your own), your patent agent ought to be prosecuted as a common swindler. Why, if you but think for a moment you will see, that if you can make force of itself beget force, and can accumulate it in the manner you say, you might in time obtain a power equal to that required for the destruction of the world, or even of the universe itself."

"Madman," I said, by this time highly indignant, "you little know the ground you are treading on. You are perfectly right in your conclusion, that force may accumulate under my

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process till it reaches the infinite, and that it might be used for the destruction of the world, ay, even of the universe itself! Know also, that it is to deprive myself of the possibility of succumbing to a temptation of the kind that I have consented to become an inmate of this house; where, not having the means of making my working models, I cannot carry out the idea, however strongly I may be tempted by the powers of darkness to do so."

Instead of being awe-struck at my candid avowal, as I expected, he burst into a loud, rude laugh.

"I had no idea," he said, "of the sacrifice you were making, no idea that you had consented to be shut up in a lunatic asylum solely to save the universe from destruction. Upon my word, that is most charitable and self-denying on your part."

"After all," I replied, greatly enraged, "I have in one respect certainly acted with gross indiscretion, and that is in conversing on a philosophical subject with a man so ignorant as you are."

"Excuse me," he said, still laughing; "I did

not mean to offend you. But when you advance such palpable absurdities as arguments you cannot wonder at my being surprised. Now let us talk rationally for a moment. You told me that if I would set fire to Mrs. Austin's water-tank you would begin to believe that there was something in my theory of the ultimate destruction of the world ; and I gave you my reason why an experiment of the kind would not be conclusive. I, in turn, invite you to give me a proof of the correctness of your theory, and I will admit it to be true on due cause shown. The gardener's little boy there is playing with his pop-gun, and you will admit that the principle on which the child's toy acts is identical with that of the air-gun. So you may make your experiment without any difficulty."

"I admit," said I, "that the principle on which the child's pop-gun acts is very similar to that of the air-gun ; but I must decline making any experiment with it. I see perfectly well that you wish to prove my invention ridiculous by the comparison of these two objects—one the very grandest imaginable, and the other the very



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meanest—the universe and the pop-gun ; but I decline to fall into your trap. It is a matter of the utmost indifference to me in what light you regard my invention ; you cannot think it more absurd than I do yours. I will now wish you good morning, and must compliment you on your humanity in refusing to set fire to Mrs. Austin's water-tank, for I am persuaded it was because of your dislike to destroy the gold and silver fish in it that you refused my request, and for no other reason."

"Laugh at my discoveries as you please," he replied, "you cannot think them more ridiculous than I do your theory of the destruction of the world on the principle of the pop-gun."

We now separated in high dudgeon, and I bent my steps to another part of the garden, where I met the doctor. He noticed my agitation, and asked me what had occurred to annoy me. I informed him of the gross insults I had received from that wild theorist, Cochrane.

"You must forgive him, my dear sir," said the doctor ; "I assure you the poor man is far more worthy of your sympathy than your anger."



“That may all be true enough,” I replied ; “but it was coarse and insulting in him to turn my inventions into ridicule, and I sincerely hope you will tell him how highly you think of them, as that might induce him to show more politeness another time, when he understands that you hold my theory to be perfect.”

“Pardon me,” said the doctor, “I do not remember ever to have told you that I consider it perfect. I admit that as far as it has gone your invention is wonderful, but at the same time it is far from complete.”

“In what way ?” I inquired.

“In the first place, I do not fully comprehend, for example, how, when you have started a locomotive on a line of rails, and its velocity has increased in proportion with the distance it has run, you will stop it after it has acquired a rapidity of, say, two hundred miles an hour.”

“I assure you my machinery for this purpose is perfect.”

“Perfect as your machinery may be, there are contingencies against which you cannot guard ; the carelessness of engineers and drivers, for instance.

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If a driver in a drunken fit should forget to put the drag on, and the velocity of the train should increase from fifty to a hundred miles an hour, from one hundred to two hundred, from two hundred to four, and so on, no one can imagine what would be the result."

"My dear doctor," I said, "it is impossible for me to explain my system to you in full detail. Only let me have my tools to make my working models, and I will prove all I say to demonstration. Now pray accede to my request. I care little about the opinion of that silly fellow, Cochrane, but I wish to stand high in your estimation."

The doctor paused for a moment, evidently at a loss what answer to make. At last he said,—

"My dear friend, I would willingly oblige you, but I beg you to consider what might be the result. If you had your tools, your old desire of destroying the universe might come over you again. Now take my advice and remain as you are. The world is safe now ; let it continue so."

I reflected for a moment, and then the whole force of his argument rushed upon me. "Yes," I said, "you are right, doctor. I will be content as

I am. Perish wealth, perish family aggrandizement, perish every worldly consideration, rather than that I should be tempted to commit a sin of the kind. Doctor, you are the best friend I have in this world. But answer me one question candidly, and do not hesitate to tell me the truth if you find my reasoning at fault. Can you see any error in my system that should impede force accumulating from the elasticity of the atmospheric air till it could destroy the universe?"

"Frankly," said the doctor, "I see but one. We have no proof that atmospheric air exists beyond a few miles above the surface of the earth. Now when you have consumed that, is it not possible you might fall short of the quantity required for a work of such immense magnitude as the destruction of the universe?"

"I have gone into the calculation to a nicety," I replied, "and the amount is exactly sufficient for the purpose."

"Then in Heaven's name keep quiet," said the doctor, "and never again ask for your tools; for if you have gone as far as that into the matter, there is little more that remains to be done."

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“Doctor, I will take your advice, and be content as I am. But now tell me something about that man Cochrane. What is his history?”

“He is a poor fellow who has been attacked by a fit of patent mania, which has ruined him.”

“Patent mania!” I remarked, with an expression of surprise.

“Yes, patent mania. Understand me, I do not mean to say that there is a phase of insanity known to the profession under that name, still less that a malady of the kind is recognized by law; but I maintain not the less that it exists, and is widely spread in this country. Poor Cochrane’s case is a good example.”

“In what way does it show itself?”

“In an unconquerable passion for taking out patents, even at a ruinous expense, for schemes which can never return a shilling, and sometimes even for the most preposterous absurdities. These persons, while ruining themselves, lead far from unhappy lives, great as may be the misery they inflict on their families and friends. They are perpetually in search of the philosopher’s stone; it is always before their eyes, and appears

almost within their grasp. In one week's time they flatter themselves they will certainly be in the possession of an enormous fortune, the realization of which is, however, delayed from week to week, till they have not a shilling left. Even then they are not convinced, but attribute their want of success to jealousy and opposition, or the parsimony of their friends, who had actually refused to advance them two or three hundred pounds, although they had the promise of a return, in a few months, of as many thousands. I have met with a good number of cases of the kind in the course of my experience. Some time ago I had a patient, a lawyer, who was suffering from a very severe cold. I told him it was necessary he should confine himself to the house for a short time, or the result might be disastrous.

“‘I will follow your advice to-morrow, doctor,’ said he; ‘to-day I cannot.’

“‘Why not?’ I inquired; ‘remember, you are the person who will suffer by any imprudence, not your adviser.’

“‘I have no choice,’ he replied; ‘I have an

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appointment this morning at my office, and I cannot put it off. A friend of mine has sold an estate in Kent for twenty-five thousand pounds, and the agreement is to be signed to-day. If I am not true to the appointment I may offend one excellent client, and probably lose another.'

“‘I wonder,’ I said, laughing, ‘if you ever met with a doctor able to offer a similar amount of money for an estate?’

“‘Singularly enough, the purchaser of this estate was formerly in the medical profession; he has quitted it, however, for some time.’

“‘That sufficiently accounts for his being in possession of so large a sum of ready money. What may his name be?’

“‘He mentioned the name of a gentleman I knew intimately.

“‘Why,’ I replied, ‘there must be some mistake in the matter; that poor fellow, to my certain knowledge, is not worth five hundred pounds in the world. All he has to live on is a small sum of money settled on him by a deceased relative.’

“‘You quite surprise me,’ said the solicitor. ‘I



know nothing of him myself, but my client spoke of him as a man of great wealth. It is a most fortunate circumstance that I saw you, otherwise the affair might have occasioned us some trouble.'

"The solicitor found on inquiry that my statement was correct, and of course the agreement remained unsigned. A few days afterwards the would-be purchaser called on me in a great passion, and not only accused me of hindering him from making an excellent bargain, but of slandering him grossly as well. I inquired in what way.

"'By informing the solicitor that I had not the money to complete the purchase.'

"'If you have,' I said, 'I should certainly be obliged to you for the hundred pounds I advanced you some time since, and which I did at great inconvenience to myself.'

"'In a fortnight you shall have it without fail. Still my owing a trifle of the kind to you does not excuse you for your interfering in my affairs as you have done.'

"'If I have done you any injustice,' I replied, 'I am sorry for it. Show me that you have the means, or even the probability of getting them,



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to complete the purchase, and I will give you all the redress in my power.'

"'In less than a fortnight,' he said, 'my patent for the double-handled bellows will be completed, and then I shall have ample funds.'

"'How so?'

"'Simply by granting licences to bellows-makers. I intend keeping a royalty of one shilling on every pair made. If they sell only eight hundred thousand, or even two-thirds of that number, it will yield more than sufficient for the purpose.'

"'Well,' I replied, 'call on me in a month's time, and if you are in possession of only half the amount you anticipate, I will immediately write to the solicitor, expressing my regret for the statement I made.'

"He then left me, and a fortnight afterwards his patent was sealed. He ordered five hundred pairs of bellows to be made at his own cost, but he could not sell them. Of course he then discovered that if a slight alteration were made in them the objections offered to their use would vanish, and their success would be complete. He again applied

to the Patent Office in order to secure to himself the improvements he had made, which he did at a considerable expense. Still his bellows would not sell. He made further improvements, but without any better fortune. At last he spent every farthing he had, and he is now living on a trifling allowance granted him by his friends. Fortunately, he was an old bachelor, and his failure was of comparatively little importance; but in other cases, where the patent monomaniacs are married and have families, the results are frequently very deplorable.

“In Italy, some years since, when I was travelling physician to a nobleman, I met with two very droll cases. The first was that of an Italian Count, whose circumstances were at the time greatly embarrassed in consequence of the expenses he had incurred in carrying out an invention he had secured by patent. He had made a vast machine, in shape something like the hull of a ship, but with expanding ribs, and much lighter in weight. This he covered with thick silk, made impervious to the air by some composition or other being spread over it. The

ribs were to contract or expand by means of machinery in the inside. His idea was that two or three persons should seat themselves in it when the ribs were contracted together as closely as possible without positively inconveniencing the passengers. The ribs were then to be expanded till the specific gravity of the machine should be lighter than that of the atmospheric air, so that it could rise without difficulty to any altitude they might desire. It may be readily supposed, that by no ingenuity could he make his invention so light of construction that it could leave the ground. But this was not the point which caused him the greatest anxiety. It was to provide for the respiration of the crew. It had struck him that the more rarified the air became inside the machine the more difficult would it be to breathe in it; and when I knew him he was studying in what manner he could overcome that difficulty. At first he thought of placing the passengers in a car beneath the machine; but on consideration he found it would not only increase the weight, which was already too great, but that it would be impossible to work the

machinery in a satisfactory manner from the outside.

“The other case was that of a hairdresser who resided near the Duomo, at Milan. He had a pretty good business, and had made some little money, and this had been again increased by the death of a relation, who had left him about eight hundred pounds English. One morning, when I was having my hair cut, he asked me if I were not an Englishman. On my replying in the affirmative, he said he had a great favour to ask of me. He had made a discovery of immense importance, which he had patented, and which of course would yield him a large fortune, if he could only carry it out. But in Italy there was little chance of his succeeding; the people being too dull, and having too little enterprise to appreciate it. In England he was certain it would be taken up, as it would be of the greatest possible value to a maritime nation. Could I tell him who were the authorities who had the chief care of the British navy? and whether it would be difficult for him to obtain an introduction to them? I told him that the care of the British navy was en-

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trusted to the Lords of the Admiralty; that I thought there would be very little difficulty in getting an introduction to them, if his invention was of such importance as he said. His eye immediately brightened, and he continued, 'Did it ever strike you what a vast amount of useful material is yearly thrown away in our business alone? Consider the millions of people who annually have their hair cut six, seven, or even eight times. Why should the hair which is cut off not be applied to the manufacture of cordage? I maintain it has many advantages over hemp. In the first place the filaments are much stronger and infinitely finer. It will not, like hemp, absorb the water, and consequently the inconvenience which is at present felt in the contraction and expansion of ropes when wet or dry would be wholly got rid of. Lastly, the material itself would be totally inexpensive. What I would propose is, that no one should receive a licence to practise as a hairdresser until he had bound himself, under a severe fine, to send all the hair cut from his customers to the Lords of the Admiralty. Taking into consideration the vast

population of the British colonies, as well as that of the mother country, there would thus be an unlimited supply. I have been occupied,' he went on, 'in making a calculation of the amount London alone would yield ; but before I bring it to a close I wish to find out, if I can, the proportionate number of bald persons in it, so that I might deduct that loss from the grand total. Perhaps you could give me some information on this point?'

"I told him that I could not, but that I believed the number to be very considerable.

"'Well, of course,' he said, 'I must satisfy myself on that point before I make any positive statement, as I wish to be correct in every respect.'

"Unfortunately, this conversation with me had the effect of stimulating the poor fellow to greater exertion. He made machine after machine for his cordage, and then improved upon them, thus neglecting his business, which of course gradually fell into other hands. He went on expending his money on this object till, at last, he was left utterly destitute.

"I consider that patent mania may be divided



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into two distinct species," continued the doctor. "In the first, the patient's mind, as in the case of my friend the double-handled bellows maker, is so intensely fixed on one subject that it never diverges. He carries on his invention till he has not a shilling left. After each improvement he finds it as valueless as before in a pecuniary point of view, and still goes on adopting some other modification of his original plan. Thus he continues till he has not a halfpenny of his capital left, and he either dies, or enters a lunatic asylum, under the conviction that if he could only have raised another hundred pounds he would have been able to place his family in affluence. The other class are those who, having secured their patent at a heavy expense, throw it aside even when there is a prospect of its being successful. They dart at some other idea ; take up some other invention, which appears to them at the moment to be more attractive."

"In which of the two classes," I inquired, "do you place Mr. Cochrane?"

"Decidedly in the former."

"And what may be the form of his delusion?"



Does he not imagine he has invented a plan for burning sea-water for fuel?"

"Yes," said the doctor, "and he has ruined himself in attempting to carry out an idea so utterly impracticable. He commenced his experiments sanely enough, but by indulging his hobby in a reckless and thoughtless manner, he has ended them in the singular delusion under which he now labours. But I have no time at my disposal to talk longer with you this morning. If you wish to learn anything more about him, come to my room this evening, and take a cup of tea with me, and I will give you a sketch of his history."

I accepted the doctor's invitation, and we parted.

*IV.—PATENT MANIA.*

PART II.

I WAS punctual to my engagement with the doctor, and as soon as the tea-things were removed he began to relate Mr. Cochrane's history.

“When very young, Mr. Cochrane obtained an appointment in a public office. He was of retired habits, perfectly gentlemanly in his deportment, economical without being mean, and steady in his method of living. When about thirty years of age he fell desperately in love, or at least as much so as his prudent nature would allow, with a young lady about five years his junior. She had some little property of her own, which she had inherited from an aunt, and she had also consider-

able expectations from her widowed father, who was reputed to possess great wealth, but who was at the same time exceedingly parsimonious. He had two other daughters, who, unlike their sister, had no independent property of their own; and, pretending to be under the necessity of giving them dowries when they should marry, he excused himself from settling anything on their sister, telling Mr. Cochrane, by way of excuse and also to console him, that when he, the father, should die, the daughters should inherit equally.

“Mr. Cochrane, although he placed but slight faith in the old gentleman’s excuses, satisfied himself with the certainty of the sum he should be entitled to in reversion at his decease, and the interest of his intended wife’s two thousand five hundred pounds, which had been placed in the funds. He therefore stated that his great happiness in possessing the lady would have been complete even had she had no property of her own. This avowal naturally gave unqualified gratification to the old gentleman, who without further demur bestowed on the young couple his blessing, and they were shortly afterwards married.

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“It would be very difficult to imagine a more happy *ménage* than Mr. and Mrs. Cochrane’s. They had taken a house in the neighbourhood of Clapham Common, and in it they remained till the death of her father. In the meantime Mrs. Cochrane had borne her husband four children—all girls, somewhat to the parents’ disappointment. This, however, was considerably neutralized by the fact that they were fine healthy children, extremely intelligent, and possessed of considerable personal beauty as well.

“The death of Mrs. Cochrane’s father occurred when her eldest daughter was about sixteen years of age. If the old gentleman had been avaricious during his lifetime, his children now reaped the benefit of his parsimony. His will was proved under twenty-two thousand pounds ; five thousand of which were left to Mrs. Cochrane, without any restriction or settlement whatever ; and the remainder he directed should be divided equally between the other two daughters, neither of whom was married ; and who might now, without demur or dispute on their parts, be considered as old maids. They were, however, exceedingly amiable

women, and fondly attached to their sister and her children ; in fact, the only little disagreements which took place between them and their married sister, and which very rarely lasted above a few minutes, arose from the excessive indulgence the two aunts were in the habit of lavishing on their nieces.

“ Mr. Cochrane had now been a sufficient number of years in his office to entitle him to a good pension, and being also possessed of the moneys he had received with his wife, he resolved on quitting the Government service. To this arrangement not only did his wife offer no objection, but it was received with perfect satisfaction by the maiden aunts, who proposed taking a cottage near them, in whatever locality they might decide upon. It was some time before Mr. Cochrane fixed on his new residence, as the matter was attended with difficulty. Had he and his wife followed the bent of their own inclinations they would have preferred some secluded spot in the country, but then they had also to take into consideration the future of the young ladies. They could hardly be expected

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when a few years older to take the same delight in a rural life as their parents and their aunts were likely to do. After careful deliberation, Mr. Cochrane and his wife decided on a handsome house in the vicinity of Hastings, and to it soon afterwards the family removed, while the maiden aunts contented themselves with a pretty cottage in the town.

“Although the country had great charms for Mr. Cochrane in summer-time, he found it by no means so agreeable in winter, and especially in such weather as confined him within doors. As he naturally possessed a very active mind, and as there were no out-of-door occupations to employ it, he, like many others similarly situated, made for himself what is commonly termed a hobby. For some time he remained undetermined what particular subject he should devote himself to. He touched upon many, but one after the other were thrown aside. Accident at last brought one under his notice, which in the end he definitely adopted. One dull, wet morning, when he was engaged in reading his newspaper, his eye fell upon a long and distressing account of an accident which

had occurred in a coal mine, by which many of the unfortunate miners had lost their lives, and their wives and families been plunged into the deepest distress. Mr. Cochrane was much touched by the description, and he began to consider what plan could be adopted to prevent for the future the recurrence of such deplorable accidents. As he knew nothing whatever of mining operations it was little to be wondered at if he came to no very satisfactory conclusion on the point. After pondering over the subject he threw it aside, and contented himself with blaming not only mine-owners in general for their habitual negligence of their workmen's lives, but also the Government for their apathy in matters of the kind.

“Although Mr. Cochrane gave up the idea of suggesting any plan for preventing accidents in mines, the description of the catastrophe which he had read had so aroused his sympathy that the subject perpetually recurred to him in an indefinite sort of way. At last the idea struck him that it might be possible to obtain a sufficient supply of fuel for general use without having



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recourse to the dangerous operations of mining. He argued, that as coal was after all but a vegetable deposit, there was certainly as much fuel on the surface of the earth as there was below it, and that coal was but a clumsy material to manage when compared with charcoal. True, there was the cost of production and manufacture to be taken into consideration ; but although wood was scarce and valuable in England, it was abundant in other parts of the world, and might be had in any quantity for the mere trouble of cutting down. As for the expense, he found that in Sweden charcoal was made for as little as half a crown a chaldron, the original cost of the wood not being taken into consideration. It was quite true that its use in private houses, under our present system of warming them, might be dangerous, but for all smelting and manufacturing purposes he felt assured that it would in every respect be far more advantageous than coal.

“He was now fairly interested in the subject, and began to study it with great assiduity, being stimulated more by zeal for the welfare of humanity than any direct pecuniary advantage he

might derive from it. He bought several works on the manufacture of charcoal, and having read them carefully, he at last arrived at the conclusion that it might be made in many parts of the world at a far less cost than it was even in Sweden. He proved that the manufacture of charcoal might be profitably carried on in many of the British colonies. There were, for example, those on the coasts of Africa, where labour was cheap and abundant, and where there were large forests still untouched. He held that its manufacture in these districts would not only supply the natives with industrial occupation, and tend to their ultimate civilization, but would at the same time be the means of increasing the salubrity of the climate by the immense destruction of vegetable matter. There now only remained the question of freight to be got over, and this at first sight offered terrible obstacles to the making of charcoal in Africa as a profitable mercantile speculation; for in no way, owing to the light specific gravity of the charcoal, could as much fuel be carried as would compensate for the cost of freight.

“Although Mr. Cochrane now gave up the idea

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of importing charcoal as fuel for manufacturing purposes, he by no means gave up his notion of the practicability of utilizing it to a far greater extent than at present. He reflected on the possibility of establishing stations, for example, at Sierra Leone and Cape Coast Castle, where the African steamers could take charcoal on board at a fourth of the cost of coal. But the difficulty of burning it in the engine-rooms without its being dangerous to human life occurred to him, and for some time put a stop to his speculations. Presently he remembered that it could be burnt in the open air, and even in factories where there was good ventilation, without any injurious effects arising from its use ; and it followed that if good ventilation could be provided in the engine-room, it might safely be used there also without any danger to the engineers and stokers employed. He now set about studying by what means this might be accomplished. He at first thought of pumping atmospheric air into the engine-room, but he soon relinquished that idea as impracticable. He next proposed to drive a current of steam through his furnaces, so as to supply the

burning fuel with sufficient oxygen. He at last hit upon a plan for carrying this theory into execution, so simple and so economical that he was struck with admiration at his own ingenuity, while wondering that an adaptation of the kind had never been thought of before.

“After well considering his project, to assure himself that there could be no flaw in it, he thought of submitting his invention to a friend, a mechanical engineer, to ascertain his opinion of its merits ; but he reflected that if his plan succeeded, as in all probability it would, the profits would be enormous, and he asked himself why he and his family should not enjoy the benefits arising from it, instead of running the risk of his idea, or some modification of it, being put forward by others. He therefore abandoned his original intention, and, instead, got his friend to introduce him to a patent agent of well-known ability and integrity. To this gentleman Mr. Cochrane confided his invention, and requested his candid opinion as to its practicability. The patent agent examined the plan minutely, and then declined to give a decided opinion on the subject.

“‘That your invention promises well I admit,’ he said ; ‘and I confess that, even with all my experience to back me, I cannot prove you to be in error in your theory ; but I have seen so many schemes turn out utter failures in the end which at first sight promised as well as this, that I should be deeply grieved if you should have it in your power to say that any want of success you might experience had been caused by my advice to take out a patent. There is also a matter which at the same time I should impress upon you. All experiments with marine engines are exceedingly costly, and yours will be particularly so, as it will be impossible to prove your plan to be perfect by a miniature model. You must have a model sufficiently large to contain an engine and furnace, and there must also be room enough in it for a couple of men to attend to them, or you will be incapable of proving that the burning charcoal will not be dangerous to human life. At the same time I allow that, if your invention succeeds, you will without doubt realize an enormous fortune.’

“Mr. Cochrane left the agent after having paid

great attention to his remarks, but it was the concluding one which specially dwelt on his memory. He afterwards paid several visits to this gentleman, and the end of it was that he took out a patent for an apparatus to burn charcoal in marine engines without danger to life. Of course he experienced the usual amount of anxiety while his patent was being taken out; but at last all was accomplished, and his satisfaction was so great that he paid the whole of the heavy expenses without a murmur, fully convinced by this he was purchasing the reversion to a magnificent fortune.

“He now determined, before bringing his patent fully under the notice of the public, to make his working model such as to enable him to prove to the most sceptical the perfect capabilities of his patent. He did so; but engineering experiments of the kind are proverbially expensive, and almost as frequently unsuccessful. Mr. Cochrane's experiments proved no exception. When he had completed his working model on board an old river steamboat, at the cost of many hundred pounds, it turned out a complete failure.



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From the rapid development of carbonic acid gas it was found impossible for the engineer and stoker to remain in the engine-room; and so glaring were other defects in the invention, that Mr. Cochrane was even obliged to acknowledge them himself. The machinery of the boat was, at a heavy cost, reinstated in its original form, and then returned to the owners.

“For some time after the failure of his scheme Mr. Cochrane remained inactive, but the subject of his invention was perpetually floating in his mind. He also grieved over the heavy expenses he had incurred, which had considerably diminished his income. He now wisely resolved to let the loss be a lesson to him, and to drop the affair altogether. He kept to his resolution for about a year, but his desire to become rich by an invention of the kind had never in reality left him for a moment; and instead of decreasing by lapse of time, it appeared rather to augment in intensity. At last he could support the temptation no longer, and again took up the subject. This time, however, he resolved to be more moderate in his expenditure, and he determined to invent a kind of



fuel—a combination of charcoal and some other substances—which should carry with it its own oxygen in a latent state, and which could only be developed by the heat of the furnace. If this could be accomplished, it would then be perfectly possible for the engineers to work in the engine-rooms without danger or inconvenience.

“Mr. Cochrane, on the score of economy, now performed his experiments at home, greatly to the annoyance of his family and the servants, as the powdered charcoal, with which he principally worked, in spite of all his precautions, pervaded every room in the house. Still, with the obstinacy of an enthusiast, he went on until he considered his invention perfect. So certain was he of success this time, that, without hesitation, he took out another patent to secure his new invention. All was now in readiness, and he collected a sufficient supply of fuel for an experiment on board another small river steamboat, which he hired for the purpose. The steam was got up by common coal, which was then raked out of the furnaces, and the patent fuel put in its place. Alas! the experiment was as unsuccessful as the other

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had been. The patent fuel was found to give far less heat than the common coal; it required a tremendous draught of air to keep it burning; and the engine-room was still greatly inconvenienced with carbonic acid gas, though not nearly to the same extent as in the previous trial.

“Mr. Cochrane again resolved to give up the idea of becoming wealthy by his own inventions, and he endeavoured to occupy himself solely with literature and the affairs of his family. But the patent mania had seized him, and in spite of all his good resolutions his mind was inveterately bent on succeeding. He was now obliged to work on without letting his wife into the secret, for his extravagance had so much reduced their income that she became terribly alarmed as to the possible results, should he pursue his folly further. Nothing, however, could stop the infatuated man; and to find funds for his purpose, he, unknown to his wife, mortgaged to an insurance office, at a very heavy interest, his pension from the Crown.

“It would be useless to detail the different experiments made by Mr. Cochrane for improvements in the fuel of marine engines, or the

various patents, or amendments of patents, which were taken out to secure his invention. Suffice it to say, none of them proved to be of the slightest value; and yet, as each failed, his determination to succeed with a new one became the stronger. His finances in the meantime diminished rapidly, and he was obliged to remove from the house he had occupied to one of far smaller dimensions. In vain his wife tried to restrain him in his follies, in vain she pointed out to him the inevitable ruin which awaited them all if he did not relinquish his wild schemes. All her remonstrances, however, had no other effect than to draw from him on each occasion the assurance that he was on the point of making a large fortune, and that it would be madness now to desist, when all he had been trying for was actually within his grasp.

“The amount of scientific knowledge he had shown in his earlier inventions had now completely vanished; and he took up ideas utterly at variance with the very first principles of natural philosophy. He entertained thoughts of reducing charcoal to a fraction of its original bulk, so

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that steamships might be able to carry with them sufficient fuel for a long voyage, without being obliged to put into port for coal. But that terrible objection—the generation of carbonic acid gas—not only existed, but he found that the quantity developed was in proportion to the weight of the charcoal and not to its bulk. He then proposed to reduce the charcoal to powder, and after mixing it with water, to compress the whole to one-fifth part of its original bulk, hoping that the water it contained would supply the oxygen necessary for its combustion, but utterly forgetting the incompressible nature of the fluid.

“The money Mr. Cochrane lavished on this absurdity not only consumed all he could raise on his Government pension, but encroached largely on the remaining funds of his wife, so that she was reluctantly compelled to request her friends to interfere on her behalf. A family council was held, which Mr. Cochrane was invited to attend. When he presented himself in the room his altered appearance struck with surprise those of his relatives who had not seen him for some time. He was not only much paler and thinner

than he was wont to be, but they also noticed a singular wildness of expression. He had a look of restlessness and intense impatience, which seemed to indicate that his mind was becoming unsettled. But if this at first was only a suspicion, his subsequent behaviour proved it to be a fact. He listened with considerable calmness to a very kind address from his wife's uncle, and afterwards to some remarks from other members of the family. They then waited for him to speak.

“ He remained calm and silent for some moments, when suddenly his self-possession left him, and he rose impatiently to address his friends. He commenced to speak somewhat hurriedly, but yet to the point. After a few sentences, however, he was obliged to stop to collect his ideas. When he recommenced, after a slight pause, his words flowed fluently enough. There was little reason or rational excuse in them for the extravagant expenditure he had been guilty of. His address consisted principally of an earnest appeal to their good feelings, and entreaties not to place any impediment in the way of his continuing his

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experiments, even should they not feel inclined to directly assist him in so doing. It would not only, he said, be unkind and injurious to him, but to his dear wife and children as well. He was at that moment on the point of completing an invention for supplying steam-ships with fuel, which would not only produce a complete revolution in steam navigation, but certainly raise him to great celebrity. But he pleaded besides, that to restrain him at that moment would be to deprive his family of the enormous fortune which he held almost within his grasp. Earnestly and with considerable pathos he implored them not to interfere with him for a little time longer. The sum he now required to complete his experiments was only one thousand pounds (he had but fifteen hundred left), and he was sure that if they would only go with him a little deeper into the subject, and listen to the arguments he was able to offer, they would see the advantage of allowing him to complete his patent.

“With one voice the family conclave objected to his proposition ; imploring him to listen to reason, and assuring him that if he wished for employ-



ment in any other occupation they would assist him as far as lay in their power. With the inconsistency of a partial maniac, Mr. Cochrane took their kind remarks very ill. He accused his friends of unkindness and selfishness, and also of stupidity; and setting them all at defiance, he took up his hat and left the room in a towering passion.

“The day after the family meeting Mr. Cochrane left home in the morning. His wife received an incoherent note from him in the evening, in which he informed her that he considered it was a duty he owed to her, their daughters, and himself, to leave a house in which he was treated with disrespect, and in which he was no longer regarded as the master. In the strongest terms he deprecated what he called the conspiracy which had been concocted against him by a party of self-interested persons; who, quite unable to judge with coolness and discretion of the merits of his invention, thought fit to interfere at the eleventh hour, when success was on the point of crowning all his labours. It was evident that they had jumped to the conclusion that they



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might possibly be called upon to assist his family, should the speculation prove a failure. He finished his letter by stating that he should go on with his invention in spite of all opposition. He trusted that both she and the girls would view his intentions in their proper light, and believe that, although they might not see him again for some time, he should have the same ardent affection for them, and have their real interest as much at heart during his absence, as if he were residing with them.

“The alarm which this letter caused Mrs. Cochrane may be easily imagined. Nor was it without foundation. Had Mr. Cochrane not left the house, she might have exercised over him some degree of influence; but once away from her, there would be no impediment to his follies. Again, she could not divest herself of the suspicion that her dear husband's mind was not in a perfectly sane state; although it was true he had as yet shown no positive symptoms of such incipient insanity as would justify the usual legal proceedings being taken in his case. He was neither dangerous to himself nor to others in a

physical point of view, and therefore no personal restraint could legally be placed upon him.

“Removed from the slight control his wife was capable of exercising over him, Mr. Cochrane gave full sway to his monomania. He now left his original patent agent, who, although perfectly willing to assist him in his absurd speculations while he believed his client to be in his right senses, was a man of too much integrity to profit by his insanity. As soon as he suspected Mr. Cochrane of being incapable of conducting his own affairs he declined longer to act as his agent. But the unfortunate man now chose another, who was not so honourable ; who was, in fact, little better than a scoundrel. When younger this man had been somewhat of a speculator in inventions himself, and had spent in this way a few hundred pounds he had inherited. He afterwards found some inexperienced persons to advance him money on his wild schemes, under the condition that he should give them a portion of the profits. These were, it is needless to say, his dupes ; though at the same time he had still some slight faith left in the possible success of his

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own projects. With the loss of the money which had been advanced to him his belief in his own mechanical genius vanished. He must live, however ; and as in his experience he had acquired no small amount of patent agent slang, and as he naturally possessed considerable plausibility of manner, he determined to start in that line of business on his own account. To make things still more profitable, he established an intimacy with a dishonest bill-discounting Jew attorney, and the pair resolved to work together. Their system was something like the following:—The patent agent was to find the dupe, who was invariably to be some one who fancied he had hit upon a grand invention. Of course no one was to be taken under the protection of the agent who was not possessed of some little money of his own ; and their connection would last but a short time even then, unless the unlucky individual had also some relatives or friends who could back him in his speculations were more money required, or assist him in paying his debts if he should exceed his own resources. The system was to encourage the would-be millionaire till he had lost the money

he originally possessed ; and then, as the agent was always to be short of cash himself, he was to introduce his client to the Jew. This worthy was in like manner to be obliged to raise the money at high interest, and after the discount and commission had been deducted, the residue was to be handed over to the patent agent. As soon as it should be found that the patience and liberality of the client's friends were exhausted, judgment was to be procured, and the party who had taken out the patent, and his friends or relatives, severely mulcted.

“ To this man a connection with Mr. Cochrane promised to be a profitable investment for his talents. He soon discovered that some remnants of his victim's original fortune were still left ; and, moreover, that the affection the maiden aunts bore for him and his family might be viewed in the light of an admirable collateral security. To crown all, the now too evident insanity of Mr. Cochrane proved to the dishonest adventurer how great a dupe such a client might be made. At first he told Mr. Cochrane that he was so fully impressed with the certainty of his patents

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succeeding, that he was willing personally to advance all necessary funds for carrying them out, solely on the security of the patents themselves. This, of course, fell in so admirably with my hero's views on the subject, that he immediately plunged deeply into the necessary preparations for making another experiment on a large scale. But before all was in readiness, and when at least a hundred pounds more were still required, Mr. Cochrane received from his patent agent the unpleasing intelligence that, owing to the defalcation of a person to whom he (the agent) had advanced money, he could not possibly accommodate his client with a further loan. Rather, however, than that an invention of so much importance should fall to the ground, he would apply to a friend of his who, he had no doubt, would be able to raise the money on their joint acceptances. This friend was, of course, the Jew money-lender; who informed Mr. Cochrane, that in consequence of the disturbed state of the money market he should have much difficulty in raising the sum required, but that he would do his best. The money was

procured at an enormous rate of interest, and of course was only wasted by Mr. Cochrane in experiments as unfortunate as those he had already attempted.

“The bill in due time was presented for payment, and Mr. Cochrane not having the money to take it up, it was renewed at a heavy loss. This, however, gave him but little concern, the unhappy man’s infatuation being now beyond all control. Vacillating as he had been in his former projects, he now hardly showed the slightest common sense in his experiments. He continually changed his plans, increasing his debts the while, till at last both the agent and the money-lender considered the time had arrived when no further advance should be made to him. They now began to press him for the money owing them. Finding he had not the power to pay their demands, the Jew commenced proceedings at law; and the patent agent, who pretended still to have his client’s interest at heart, advised him to be reconciled to his wife, and obtain money from her to meet the claim out of the balance which still remained in her hands, and which my patient,



to do him justice, had entrusted her with, on the understanding that it should be entirely at her own disposal. It is more than probable he would have kept to this determination, had the idea not presented itself to his unsettled brain, that he had now hit upon the certain means of burning seawater for fuel. Of the success of his present scheme there could be, he argued, no doubt; he had not only seen the experiment tried by others, but he had also proved it to be true himself. It consisted simply of passing a stream of steam through a platinum wire gauze heated to redness, and then burning the gas as the steam was decomposed by the action of the heat.

“He placed his new scheme before his patent agent, who, unscrupulous as he was, had not the courage to advise him to commence any experiments, for even he could not longer shut his eyes to the fast developing insanity of his client. Still he hardly liked to relinquish so lucrative a victim, and he contented himself by simply complimenting the ingenuity of the theory set forth by Mr. Cochrane; but as without funds it would be impossible for them to take the



subject into their serious consideration, he again advised Mr. Cochrane to become reconciled to his wife.

“‘My dear sir,’ he said one day, at the conclusion of a long lecture he had bestowed upon his client, ‘the only advice I can give you under present circumstances, if you wish to go on with your invention, is to get money ; without it we can do nothing. I have no doubt the invention you now propose will in the end produce to you an enormous fortune ; but without the sinews of war, you must yourself perceive that it would be utterly absurd in us to attempt to carry it out. Now once more let me advise you to be reconciled to your wife ; she is still able to assist you ; and more than that, I am sure her sisters, when they fully understand the brilliant prospects before you, will contribute something towards their realization.’

“As Mr. Cochrane seemed still to have some compunction at the idea of drawing on the limited funds in his wife’s hands, the agent changed his tactics. He proved to him that from the animosity shown by the Jew money-lender, it was more than probable, that not only would the

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invention itself fall to the ground, but that Mr. Cochrane might find himself before long the inmate of a debtors' prison.

“Terrified at this, Mr. Cochrane reluctantly resolved to pay a visit to his wife. She had removed with her family from the vicinity of Hastings, and had taken a small house in Lambeth. Her two maiden sisters resided with her ; and, in fact, their purses supplied almost the whole of the household needs. The evening Mr. Cochrane fixed for calling on them was wet and stormy, and it was winter. The unfortunate man had driven to the house in a cab, and had dismissed the driver ; but just when he was upon the point of knocking at the door, his courage, from some inexplicable reason, suddenly left him, and he gently let the knocker fall from his grasp. He walked some paces from the house, and then turned round and gazed at it, utterly unconscious of the rain which was pouring on him. The lights, which he could see through the drawing-room window-curtains, clearly proved that the family were at home ; but this rather frightened than encouraged him.

“After remaining in this position for some minutes he suddenly resolved that he would not enter the house. In spite of his insanity he had still the feelings of a man of honour left, and he seemed to feel innately, without perhaps acknowledging the fact to himself, that in this visit to his wife he was not actuated by any feelings of love either to her or her children, but by the dishonest intention of depriving her of some portion of the small means she still had at her disposal.

“He now turned his steps homewards, but had scarcely passed the house when he suddenly stopped, for the idea struck him that the money he proposed taking from his wife was merely a small loan, which would shortly be returned to her a thousandfold; and that so far from being actuated by any unworthy motives in his visit, the very fact of taking her money for a purpose of the kind was in itself an act of affection.

“He now walked a few steps towards the house, but he again suddenly stopped, without perhaps being able to give any lucid reason for his so

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doing. Presently the postman passed him, who knocked at Mrs. Cochrane's door. As soon as the servant had answered it Mr. Cochrane hurried up, and, without speaking either to the man or the servant, rushed past them up-stairs to the drawing-room. The girl was so bewildered at his behaviour that she was for a minute or two unable to follow him; but the postman, more collected, advised her instantly to go up-stairs, and inquire what the man's business might be, as from his conduct he strongly suspected him to be a thief. The servant acted on the postman's suggestion as quickly as she could. Before she had reached Mr. Cochrane, however, he had opened the door, and entered the drawing-room. In it, seated at a table, was his wife, with her back towards the door, and on either side of her sat her daughters, occupied with needlework. Beside the fireplace were the two maiden aunts. No one for a moment paid any attention to the opening of the room door, imagining it might have been the servant who had entered. But as she did not advance, Mrs. Cochrane turned partially round to ascertain what the girl might be

doing. She saw her husband standing before her. He was motionless as a statue, his countenance was pallid and haggard, and the rain was dripping from his saturated garments.

“ Surprise for a moment deprived her of the power of moving ; but suddenly recovering herself she rose hurriedly from her seat, and uttering a cry, half of alarm, half of astonishment, she rushed towards him. Aroused by Mrs. Cochrane’s behaviour, her daughters and the maiden aunts advanced to welcome the unhappy man. The scene which followed was a most affecting one. Every possible expression of endearment was lavished upon him, but he seemed completely dazed, and incapable of making any reply. His eye anxiously wandered from one to another of his family, as if trying to understand what was passing before him, but without any success attending the effort.

“ They now led him unresistingly to an easy chair by the fire, and, crowding around him, each gently endeavoured to claim his attention. All was in vain ; the multiplicity of their endearments tended rather to add to the confusion of his ideas

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than otherwise. At last his eye became riveted upon his youngest daughter, who had remained outside the circle, and was silently giving full vent to her sorrow. The sight of his child's tears somewhat recalled the poor man to reason. He rose from his seat, and pressing through the others, he clasped her in his arms, and tenderly embraced her. He now began to understand better the position he was in, and spoke to his family rationally enough. He told them, if they would receive him again, he had come to take up his residence among them, and he trusted they would never more be separated.

“They naturally heard this intimation with great joy ; and Mrs. Cochrane immediately left the room to give orders that her husband's luggage should be taken up-stairs, that he might have an opportunity of changing the wet clothes he had on. To her great surprise, however, she found he had brought nothing with him. She returned to the room to inquire if his luggage would soon arrive, and she then found he had forgotten it altogether. Fortunately, she had still some articles of his clothing in her possession, which were instantly



laid out for him in his bedroom; and after having changed his dress he returned to the drawing-room.

“When again seated by the fireside Mr. Cochrane seemed supremely happy. The excited expression of his countenance, which had terrified them so much when he first entered the room, was now fled, and he was perfectly calm and composed. He talked fluently and with great lucidity. The conversation ran principally on subjects connected with the family affairs during his absence, and he appeared to take great interest in all the details they gave him. It was a very happy family meeting, and for some time all went on satisfactorily. They were beginning to think of retiring to bed, when Mrs. Cochrane imprudently inquired of her husband how he had occupied his time since she had last seen him. A more unfortunate question could hardly have been imagined. The calm expression he had worn during the later part of the evening, and which had given her so much confidence, immediately vanished; his eye lighted up with unnatural brilliancy, and he commenced the history of his



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different experiments. Perceiving the unhappy effect of her incautious question, Mrs. Cochrane attempted to change the current of the conversation ; but in vain. The unhappy man was now upon his favourite topic, and it was impossible to stop him.

“As he went on he became still more excited, till at last the terrible fact of his insanity became apparent to all. Still there was method in his madness. Although he discoursed with great volubility on his different experiments, and expatiated on the grand results they would certainly lead to, with all the incoherency of a maniac, not one word did he mention of the debts and liabilities he had incurred. He informed them that he had now completed an invention compared with which the fabled philosopher’s stone, had it really existed, would have been but insignificant. He told his daughters that the richest heiresses in England were little better than in utter poverty, compared with the wealth which they would shortly be in possession of. In this manner he ran on till not the least coherence or reason was discernible in his language.

“Suddenly he stopped for a moment to take breath, and then he remarked for the first time that all his family were in tears. Instead of becoming calmer, or attempting to console them, his excitement simply changed its course. He now flew into a violent passion, accused them of ingratitude in not receiving with pleasure the news he had given them, and insisted on immediately leaving the house. This of course they would not allow. They closed around him, and earnestly and affectionately begged him to be pacified. For a moment he was silent, and they thought they had succeeded ; but he again broke out on the subject of his inventions, and continued raving about them till exhausted nature could sustain the excitement no longer.

“When Mr. Cochrane presented himself at the breakfast-table the next morning he appeared much depressed by the fatigue caused by the excitement of the previous evening. His face was pale, and its expression haggard and anxious, but still he conducted himself both in speech and behaviour with perfect propriety. The only cause for uneasiness noticed by his wife and family was his

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total loss of appetite. After breakfast the newspaper was placed in his hands, and although at first his eye wandered from column to column without dwelling on any particular subject, at last he got interested in a parliamentary debate, the whole of which he perused with much attention. When he had finished he spoke to his family on the debate he had been reading, and he analyzed its merits and those of the different speakers with so much intelligence that his wife began to hope that his mind had again recovered its healthy tone. But a slight incident soon afterwards occurred which proved to her that she was totally deceived in the favourable conclusion she had arrived at.

“Mrs. Cochrane, thinking it would be judicious to keep her husband, if possible, with her in the house for a few days, so that his mind might become a little more settled before he again mixed with strangers, asked him for the address of his lodgings, that she might send for his luggage ; or in case it was not ready, she offered to go with a servant herself, to superintend its being packed up. He seemed pleased with the suggestion, and

approached the inkstand, which was on the table, to write on a piece of paper the number of the house and the name of the street for his wife's guidance, as well as a list of the different articles he wished she should bring back with her. But although the paper was before him, and he had dipped the pen in the ink, he sat motionless, without writing a word. His wife pretended to take no notice of his hesitation, but left the room to prepare for leaving the house. When she was quite ready, and the cab which was to take her and the servant was at the door, she again entered the sitting-room, where she found her husband still seated at the table with a pen in his hand, and the paper untouched before him. 'I am quite ready now, dear,' she said, 'and as soon as you have given me the address and the list I will start off.' He was silent for a moment, and then turning his face towards her, his eyes filling with tears the while, he said to her in a sorrowful tone of voice, 'I am very sorry, Charlotte, but I cannot remember, all I can do, the name of the street, nor in what part of London it is situated.' Mrs. Cochrane had too much tact to press him on

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the subject, and with a heavy heart she again left the room, to dismiss the cab and take off her walking dress.

“ Before the day was over Mrs. Cochrane was in possession of the address of her husband’s lodging, and the information was conveyed to her in a most painful manner. In the afternoon a shabbily dressed man called at the house and requested to see Mr. Cochrane. The servant, in doubt whether he should be admitted, made some demur, saying she was not certain whether he was at home, but she would inquire. ‘ Oh, nonsense!’ said the man, ‘ he is at home, and expects me ; so I may as well see him at once ;’ and he followed the girl into the room.

“ As soon as Mr. Cochrane caught sight of the man he rose from his chair and trembled violently. The man advanced directly towards him, and without any preliminary remark placed a slip of paper in his hands. ‘ I am directed, sir,’ he then said, ‘ to serve you with a copy of a writ. Here is the original. The sum claimed is eight hundred pounds. Of course you will be advised by your solicitor, who I have no doubt knows our firm

well. I called at your lodgings in Newman Street as I came along, and not finding you there, I followed you here.' Then, without saying another word, he turned on his heel and left the house.

"Mrs. Cochrane took the copy of the writ from her husband's hands and read it attentively, while he stood speechless before her. When she had made herself fully mistress of its contents, she threw herself into a chair and burst into tears. To pay the amount would be to deprive her of every farthing she possessed in the world. True, she could apply to her sisters for aid, but her mind revolted at the idea, after the sacrifices they had already made in her behalf. After considering the subject over and over again, she resolved on consulting the family solicitor, and for that purpose she left the house. Fortunately, she found him at home, and in his hands she placed the affair. The solicitor tried all in his power to effect a compromise, but without success. The Jew would have his bond; and he received it in full—thanks to the liberality of the two maiden aunts.



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“Mr. Cochrane now remained quietly at home with his family. From the kindness and attention they showed him his health rapidly improved, both in body and mind. The subject of his inventions was never alluded to by any one, and they fondly imagined he was perfectly cured of his mania. At length he was allowed to leave the house unaccompanied by any of the family, so perfectly convinced were they of his sanity. But they were doomed again to be miserably disappointed. He had obtained a ticket of admission to the reading-room in the British Museum, and he visited it, as they believed, every day. One morning, when her husband was from home, Mrs. Cochrane was surprised by a van drawing up to the house containing a magnificent pianoforte, which her husband had ordered for his daughters. She had hardly succeeded in proving to the man that it was a mistake, when a jeweller’s shopman arrived with a beautiful diamond brooch which Mr. Cochrane had ordered for his wife. Fortunately, in this case the shopman refused to leave it without the money; and Mrs. Cochrane



easily got rid of him. Article after article of the most costly description arrived at the house during the day, all of which had been sent in by her husband.

“In the evening Mr. Cochrane arrived at home in a state of maniacal excitement. He hurriedly cast his eye round the room, and inquired what had been done with the piano. On his wife’s informing him that she had sent it away, as well as the other articles he had purchased, he flew into a violent passion, and accused her of gross ingratitude. He told her he had just hit upon an invention which would make him the richest man in the world ; but from the indignity she had shown to the trifles he had bought for her, he found she was unworthy of him, and he would never speak to her again. In spite of all her efforts to restrain him, he rushed frantically from the house. She immediately gave notice to the police of his departure, offering a handsome reward to any one who would bring him back again. For two days she heard nothing of him, but on the third day he was brought back to her an

utter maniac. He was shortly afterwards placed under my care; and although his case is quite incurable, you may perceive he is sufficiently recovered to be neither in a physical nor moral sense dangerous to himself or others."

*V.—A SINGULAR LOVE STORY.*

THE hero of my present narrative was a dapper little man of perhaps fifty or fifty-five years of age. He was amiable and intelligent, and, apart from the eccentricity of his manners, very gentlemanly. During the time I had the pleasure of his acquaintance, which was more than two years, I never in a single instance saw him out of humour. Though by no means aristocratic in his manners, he had evidently been accustomed to respectable society. He was not destitute of education, but could hardly be called a man of learning ; although he had certainly read a great deal, chiefly however of the lighter kind of literature. He was far from wealthy, all his

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worldly riches consisting of an annuity of some two hundred pounds a year, which was in the hands of trustees, who remitted quarterly to Dr. Austin the sum due for board and medical attendance, and a certain amount for pocket-money. The principal feature in his behaviour was an affectation of boyishness, which occasionally rendered him exceedingly ridiculous. I say occasionally, for generally there was little in his conversation or manners to distinguish him from those we ordinarily meet in good society. His dress also partook of the peculiarity of excessive youthfulness, being as nearly as could be the costume of a lad of perhaps sixteen or seventeen years of age.

It was some time before I got into his confidence ; in fact, he seemed exceedingly averse to become intimate with any one. But one day I chanced to detect him gazing on a coarsely executed portrait of a fair, slim, insipid-looking young girl, and with such an expression of intense fondness as fully persuaded me that some love affair was mixed up with the cause of his mental disorder. I had often seen the same portrait

before, but had never taken any particular notice of it. It hung on a nail in the wall opposite the foot of his bed, and appeared to be one of those productions of art which we occasionally find in out-of-the-way rooms, and which neither the proprietor of the house nor any other individual seems to care anything about.

I was in the habit now and then of looking into his room to have a little conversation with him. On the occasion alluded to I found the door ajar, and opened it without knocking. He was seated before the picture, gazing at it in so deep a reverie, that it was some moments before he noticed my presence. When he did so, he rose from his chair and coloured deeply. Although he requested me to take a seat, I easily perceived that he was greatly embarrassed at my presence ; and I endeavoured to excuse myself and leave the room. This, however, he would not allow me to do, but earnestly begged me to remain.

“To speak the truth,” said he, “you somewhat startled me. I was at the moment conjuring up reminiscences of the past, and my mind was occupied with what is certainly the most interesting

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episode in my singular history. Perhaps the doctor has told you under what an extraordinary peculiarity I have passed through life."

"He certainly did mention it to me," I said; "and I hardly know whether to sympathize with you or congratulate you on it."

"Candidly," he replied, "I am somewhat puzzled to come to a conclusion on the subject myself. I certainly have enjoyed from it many advantages which have never been possessed by any other mortal man, and I have seen life under aspects of the most extraordinary description; still, at the same time, it has had its disadvantages."

This last remark he uttered in a very melancholy tone, casting the while a most sad look at the picture, as if the subject were a very doleful one to him. I thought, however, that I could discover by his manner a wish to be interrogated as to the cause of his depression, and as I confess I had a strong curiosity to know something more about him, I asked him if it were true that he had been born an old man, as the doctor had told me, and that he had been daily growing younger?

“It is quite true,” he said. “You see before you one of the most remarkable phenomena of nature. I was born at seventy-three years of age, and am now only sixteen.”

“You must certainly have seen life under very singular aspects,” I said ; “and I am exceedingly curious to know some of your experiences.”

“I should be somewhat puzzled,” he replied, “where to begin ; they have been so numerous and so extraordinary. You ordinary mortals, starting on the course of life, have grown old together, as others have done who were born about the same time as their fellows. You started forward by their side on the journey of life, and as you advanced, from time to time some of your companions dropped from your side into the grave ; but none were ever in advance of you. Those who were born after you never overtook you, while of those who had started before you, you noticed some drop off from the path, but you could never increase or diminish the distance between you and those who continued on it. While you in your march have never met any one advancing towards you, I, on




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the contrary, had no companion as I descended the hill of life, but met every one directly face to face. I assure you, some of my experiences have been most singular, and occasionally most painful, my pain arising principally from my power of seeing those at a great distance who were coming forward, and of marking many of the most youthful and high-spirited among them drop into the grave before they reached me. With young children this was always to me particularly distressing, as I was very fond of them. I have often watched the fond mother tending her fine chubby boy, and have heard her augur for him the most brilliant career. The week afterwards I have seen him fall from her arms into the tomb.

“One family caused me great sorrow. I was intimate with the parents, and a more amiable couple I believe never existed. They had six children, and the fate of all was particularly melancholy. The parents doted on them, and bestowed every care they could on them, both physical and moral. They were all of delicate constitutions hereditarily; but the attention they

received neutralized to a very considerable degree their want of stamina. The eldest was a boy, and a more handsome, intelligent lad it would have been difficult to meet with ; the second was a girl, who bade fair to be as amiable and lovely as her mother ; and the others were all most interesting children.

“Nothing appeared to mar the prospect which the parents had drawn for themselves of the future career of their six children till the eldest boy was about sixteen years of age, when symptoms of consumption showed themselves. The danger was too terrible for the parents fully to realize, but they could not close their eyes to the fact that their boy was seriously ill. In truth, in spite of all their willing blindness, they had a vague but oppressive idea that some terrible misfortune hung over them. They obtained for their son the best medical advice, and lavished on him every indulgence it was possible for them to bestow. But all in vain. The boy had hardly reached his seventeenth year when, as I saw him advancing towards me, he dropped into the grave. The tears of his parents were



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hardly yet dried when the same symptoms revealed themselves in the eldest daughter. The experience so painfully gained by their son's malady opened the eyes of her parents at once to her danger, and they took her to the south of Italy, where they remained for a year. The change of climate had a most beneficial effect; indeed, every vestige of the disease seemed to have vanished when the family returned to England. On the occasion of her seventeenth birthday they had a party of young friends at their house. The girl during the evening looked very lovely, and the exercise of the dance gave a glow of health and animation to her face, which greatly increased her natural beauty.

“The guests had departed, and the family were one by one retiring for the night, when a servant girl who had been assisting her young mistress to undress rushed rapidly down-stairs and knocked at her master's bedroom door, requesting him to come directly to his daughter, who was suddenly taken very ill. Before the parents could get any explanation from the girl, she had again ascended the stairs. The mother was the first to reach her

daughter's bedroom, and it was intense maternal affection alone that kept her from fainting on witnessing the terrible sight. Seated on a chair, her night-dress bathed in blood, was her daughter, apparently dying. Medical assistance was instantly sent for, but before the physician arrived the poor girl was a corpse.

“Symptoms of the disease also manifested themselves in the next child—a girl—when she was about fifteen years of age. The parents this time determined to try extreme remedies. A near relative of the father's had received an appointment in Australia, and it was resolved to send out the child under the protection of his wife, to try if so abrupt a change in climate would not have the effect of stopping the advancement of the disease. The experiment succeeded perfectly, and the most flattering advices reached England from the colony. The happy parents were congratulating themselves on their prudence in submitting to the loss of their daughter's society for a few years, feeling that they would now be amply repaid by the comfort she promised to be to them in their old age. But just then the news arrived

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that the disease had again appeared, and before the fatal seventeenth year had passed they received the intelligence that they had lost her for ever in this world. The same fate attended the others : the death of the last child occurred when he was about fifteen years of age, and it was to the parents perhaps the most painful loss of all. They seemed to have concentrated all the force of their love on this boy. They survived him only a few years, and the family is now extinct. The whole case left a most painful impression upon me ; the more so as I watched the poor creatures dying one by one, while I was myself getting year by year younger and stronger."

It struck me that the painful circumstances would have had the same effect had he believed he was increasing in years in the natural way. However, I made no remark on the subject, but merely asked him if he had not frequently met with other circumstances of a far less melancholy description.

"Certainly," he said ; "but all were more or less tinged with what was melancholy and painful. From the very peculiar nature of my position, I

had a better opportunity of watching and remarking the vanity of human affairs than other men who have followed the ordinary course of life. In fact, I will candidly confess to you that my strange experience has made me somewhat cynical. How indeed could it be otherwise when I have seen an old man with hardly a year's life before him taking a new lease of a house for one-and-twenty years, and then bargaining anxiously as to the amount to be paid as fine, should he wish to give it up at the end of the first fourteen? I have seen men hoarding all they could scrape together for some spendthrift son, who had no filial affection, and seemed to consider the large amount left to him a reason for forgetting the donor the sooner. I have noticed old women tottering to the grave already opening before them, who, as they approached it, became daily more and more infirm, and at the same time more greedy of fresh ornaments to decorate their persons, as they tried to persuade themselves that the world thought them still young and blooming. Of course they were not aware of the sneers and ridicule lavished on them by their followers, some



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of whom were but a few paces in their rear, while I, meeting them as I became younger, noticed it all."

"Were you ever married?" I inquired.

"Never; but at the same time few men have been more deeply in love than I have; and, moreover, I have been true to one person for upwards of forty years. That is her portrait," he said, pointing to the daub I had seen him rapt in contemplating when I entered the room.

"But pardon me," I remarked, "if you were born at seventy-three years of age, your affection must have commenced not long after you came into the world."

"Exactly so" he said; "you are quite right."

"But if it is not an indiscreet question, what age must the lady be now?"

"Not at all indiscreet," he replied; "she is now nearly sixty years of age.

"Your arithmetic fairly puzzles me," I remarked; "pray explain it."

"Nothing is easier," said he, "although I admit that at first sight the subject does seem somewhat obscure. The fact is, my love story is an



exceedingly singular one, and unlike that of most other men. The attachment which a young couple form for each other, if a fortunate one, remains nearly of the same description for the duration of their lives, while my love has experienced many changes. It commenced with such an attachment as an old man bears to an interesting little girl—such, indeed, as a grandfather may feel to the youthful bequest left by a much-loved daughter. As years passed on, the feeling changed to such as a fond father would entertain towards a fragile, delicate young woman—his darling child. As I got younger, and as she became older, it changed again to that calm, considerate affection, that combination of love and prudence, with which a middle-aged man may be supposed to regard a woman about his own age, fitted in every respect to become his wife. But as years rolled on, and I got still younger, she in the same ratio becoming older, my love changed to the more enthusiastic and less selfish passion of the youthful admirer whose ardency can overlook difference of age. Now, although I have not seen

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her for some time, and am aware that she is advancing in years, my love for her is greater than ever, and I am convinced it will continue to increase in intensity as long as I live. So you see that, although I have had but one attachment, my experience in love matters has, nevertheless, been far greater and more perfect than that of thousands of others who have fluttered from beauty to beauty, persuading themselves they were in love, though hardly alive to the meaning of the term."

"Your experience," I said, "has certainly been of a singularly extensive, and at the same time very peculiar description. You greatly excite my interest, I assure you, even in a psychological point of view. The different changes which took place when your affection was being transformed from that of a grandfather to a father, from that of a father to a middle-aged lover, and from that again to the ardent youthful admirer, must be well worth studying."

"If you think so," he said, "I shall be happy to give you a more detailed sketch of my history. Frankly, I do not think you will find it

wholly without interest, although perhaps I am not altogether an impartial judge. But I will narrate it to you the more readily, as I believe you will be able to discover in it an excellent moral."

"Pray do so," I replied; "you will oblige me greatly, I assure you."

"As I told you before," he began, "I entered the world at seventy-three years of age. I may say, without self-flattery, that for my time of life I was a remarkably hale, clear-headed, and active old man."

"I beg your pardon," I remarked, "but you have not said who were your parents. In all autobiographies, I believe, that is considered a necessary opening statement."

"On that point," he replied, after some little consideration, "I must inform you that there is a certain mystery, which I am not at liberty to disclose. I resided in the house of a relative, who had but one child—a little girl about three years of age."

"Then she was also related to you. May I ask in what degree?"

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“But very distantly,” he said, pettishly. “But if you continue to interrupt me in that manner, it will be impossible for me to continue my narrative.”

“Pray go on,” I said; “I will not speak again till you have finished.”

“The child to whom I alluded,” he continued, “was a pretty, flaxen-haired little creature; indeed, it would perhaps have been impossible to find one more engaging. Her father was dead, and her mother was a confirmed invalid, and could pay but little attention to her child; but as she had a great aversion to her being in the society of the servants, she was a good deal with me. In fact, I may say that I was her earliest instructor; for when I first knew her, her vocabulary did not go beyond a few infantile expressions. Under my instruction, however, she made great progress, and I began to entertain a great affection for her,—such an affection, in fact, as I said before, as a grandfather might feel towards a beloved grandchild. We resided in the neighbourhood of Pimlico; and one of the chief pleasures of my life was to take the dear little

creature with me into the Park, and feed the aquatic birds in the lake. I remained in the same house with her for seven years, when my vigour having increased, in consequence of my becoming younger, I determined on taking a voyage to India, to look after some family business of importance. At sixty-six years of age this required no little courage, and I think I should not have attempted it had I not had in view the future welfare of my dear little granddaughter, as I was accustomed to speak of her. All her worldly prospects depended on the re-establishment of an agency which her father had originated, and which had been grossly mismanaged after his death. The parting was a most painful one for me, and the child herself showed much feeling. I left her with less anxiety than I might otherwise have done, as a change for the better had taken place in her mother's health, and she was then much stronger, and better able to be a companion and guide to her daughter.

“I will not detain you with any account of my business transactions in India. Suffice it to

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say, they were far more difficult than I had anticipated before leaving England. I found a large part of the business connection had gone over to other firms, and I had much trouble in bringing a portion of it back again. By dint of perseverance things got gradually better, but so slowly that it was ten years before I considered matters sufficiently safe to allow of my returning to England.

“When I arrived in England, I found great changes had taken place. I had, of course, had frequent correspondence with my granddaughter. Her poor mother, I regret to say, suffered a relapse shortly after my departure, and in a few months died, leaving little Maggie to the care of a maiden sister of her father's. Often, during my absence, letters came to me from the dear child. It was curious and gratifying to notice the great improvement in her handwriting, till at last it was fluent and ladylike; the composition being excellent. I used to treasure up these epistles with the greatest care, and I frequently entertained myself with picturing the progress she was making, both in manners



and appearance. To return, however, to my subject. When we met, I found Maggie so much changed that I was perfectly astonished. The chubby, thick-set little girl had grown into an exceedingly tall and remarkably slim young lady, of painfully delicate appearance. Another circumstance also struck me as being strange : although I had left England a somewhat elderly man, and had returned considerably younger than I had left it, yet she did not in any way notice the difference. After all, I thought, this no doubt arises from the effect of the climate of India, which generally acts most unfavourably on the personal appearance. But afterwards, when I found that she did not notice my getting younger, of course I became aware that I had been in error in my supposition. Indeed I may here remark, that even up to the present time, when my change in form and feature, from age to youth, must have struck her forcibly, she has never made an observation on it ; whether from delicacy or from a womanly dislike to acknowledge that her lover looks younger than herself, I know not.



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“On my return to England I did not live in the same house with her, but took lodgings a short distance off, and visited her daily. In fact, I began to entertain great anxiety on her account, for I feared that she had overgrown her strength. I am glad to say, however, that my anxiety had vanished before she was twenty years of age, as you may judge for yourself. That,” said he, pointing to the scraggy, half-faded portrait on the wall, “is her likeness, taken about the time; and you will admit there was but little to fear from the weakness of her constitution.

“I should now mention that, imperceptibly, a change had come over the quality of my affection for her. It altered from the love of a doting old grandfather to that of a parent. I now watched over her with truly paternal anxiety. I used to inquire rigidly into the character and respectability of every young man who visited at the house, or who appeared to regard her with anything like feelings of admiration. In fact, I much suspect that I took too much care of her, and, by so doing, drove suitors away; for lovely as she was she had no offers. This at the time greatly sur-

prised, and perhaps annoyed me ; but I had a parent's duty to perform, and I resolved on doing it conscientiously.

“ Things went on, and nothing occurred worthy of particular remark till she was nearly thirty years of age, when I began to entertain for her the feelings of a lover. I will candidly confess, that at first my attachment was not of a very ardent description. In fact, it was the prudent love of a man of forty. I earnestly wished to make her my wife, but pecuniary considerations kept me from making the offer. She had nothing, and I was far from rich. The profits of the establishment in India had been falling off gradually for some years, in great part owing to the neglect of the person I had engaged to manage it. After deliberating on the subject for some time, I resolved to make a voyage to India, and remain there for a year or a year and a half. I intended on my return to propose to her, if I found affairs better, or her old infirm aunt dead, with whom she resided, and at whose decease she expected a few thousand pounds.

“ I left her and proceeded to India. I will

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confess to you, that although I felt sorry to leave her, my grief was not so great as her good qualities and wonderful beauty merited. During my absence I corresponded with her frequently, but I was very careful that in none of my letters should there be any expression which could convey to her my ultimate intentions. Things did not progress satisfactorily in India, and I was almost on the point of giving up all idea of marriage, when I received a letter from her stating that her aunt had died suddenly, and had left at her absolute disposal something more than four thousand pounds. This was news indeed. All my love for her returned, her many attractions came vividly before me ; indeed, I now began to wonder by what fatality I had not long before made her my wife.

“ As soon as the tidings of her aunt’s death reached me I determined to return to England and marry. I commenced a letter to her, telling her the great regard I had for her ; but on consideration I thought she might suspect I was influenced in making the offer by the money she had received, and I merely filled my letter with

expressions of condolence for the heavy loss she had sustained, hoping that Heaven would give her strength of mind to bear it with resignation. Of my own affairs I only told her that they were progressing satisfactorily (God forgive me!), and that by the next ship that left Calcutta I should return to England.

“The voyage round the Cape was particularly long and stormy; in fact, I did not arrive in England till five months after the date of my embarkation. Still, the longest day must come to an end, and at last I landed safely at Dover. So anxious was I to see my future wife, that I even refused to wait till my luggage could be examined at the Custom House, and proceeded by train to London. On my arrival at the London Bridge terminus I hailed a cab, and immediately proceeded to Pimlico; her last letter having been addressed to me from the house which her aunt had lived in, and which had been bequeathed to her niece.

“The cab stopped at the house, and with a beating heart I was hurriedly paying the driver his fare, when a rather ill-looking man knocked

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at the door. As the knock was not very quickly answered by the servant, I had time to examine him somewhat minutely. The expression of his countenance, the style of his dress, and his general bearing, were such as to make me feel a decided aversion to him. There was a sharp, betting-man look about him ; his eye was bright, deep set, and cunning ; he seemed to be watching me, and calculating in what manner he could cheat me. His dress was scrupulously clean and well-fitting, but very much in a fashion of its own—half gentlemanly, half that of the horse-coupers you see hanging about Dickson's Repository in St. Martin's Lane on the eve of an auction. Altogether, the impression the fellow made on me was so disagreeable, that it was a positive relief when the servant opened the door.

“As he had knocked first, I made way for him to enter, which he did, without in any way acknowledging my civility.

“‘I wish your mistress would make you be a little more alive in answering the door,’ he said, sulkily, to the girl.

“‘My dear,’ said a voice I knew but too well,

'it was more my fault than hers. I had sent her on an errand to the top of the house.'

"'Then you should have opened the door for me yourself,' he replied, in an equally rude tone.

"I was so astonished at all this, that I was unable to answer the servant's inquiry as to the object of my visit. I immediately rushed into the front parlour, from which the voice had proceeded, leaving the man in the passage occupied in taking off and hanging up his overcoat. Maggie, as soon as she recognized me, gave a short scream, and, rising from her chair, rushed towards me. I clasped her in my arms, and kissed her affectionately. I had scarcely released her, and was still speechless from emotion, when the man entered the room.

"'John,' she said to him, 'this is my dear relative, just returned from India. This gentleman,' she continued, turning to me, 'is my husband, Mr. John Wiggins.'

"If I was speechless before from emotion, I was so now from amazement ; in fact, I stood in front of the fellow with my mouth open, utterly bewil-



dered. He was, or at all events seemed to be, much pleased to see me, and offered me his hand, which I took mechanically. I had great difficulty in recovering my self-possession, but at last, pride coming to my aid, I succeeded. We conversed together on subjects connected with my visit to India, my voyage home, the circumstances connected with the death of Maggie's aunt, and many other matters; occasionally also their marriage was spoken of, but each time they mentioned it I felt such bitter disappointment that I changed the subject as speedily as possible.

"This continued till the servant entered to prepare the table for dinner, when I rose to depart. They would not, however, allow me to go, but insisted on my remaining and partaking of their meal. This I did, and the evening would have passed off pleasantly enough had it not been for the very peculiar relation in which I stood to the newly married couple. The only thing of any special importance that occurred during the time of dinner was when I was talking with Mrs. Wiggins on some old family affairs. I noticed Mr. Wiggins take from his pocket a little oblong



black-covered memorandum book, the contents of which seemed to interest him greatly. As soon as a momentary lull occurred in our conversation, Mr. John Wiggins closed the memorandum book, fastened the strap, replaced the pencil in its sheath, and then, holding the closed book up before me, asked me whether I did anything in that way.

“‘In what way?’ I inquired.

“‘On horses,’ he replied. ‘I have made, this time, about as nice a little book as any man in London, and if you like, I can put you up to a thing or two.’

“‘I am much obliged to you,’ I said. ‘I have never tried my hand at anything of the kind ; and as I know nothing about horses, I should be afraid to begin.’

“‘I do,’ he replied ; ‘but as far as that goes, you needn’t know much about horses to make a good book. Why, bless you ! with a good friend to advise you, you might make lumps of money without knowing one horse from another. You leave yourself in my hands, and I’ll see you’re not done.’

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“‘Well,’ I said, wishing to change the conversation, ‘we will talk about that another time.’

“The next thing I noticed, and which I liked quite as little as the betting-book, was that when I announced my intention of leaving, he insisted on bringing in a *liqueur* case, with three large cut-glass bottles in it, containing brandy, rum, and whisky. He pressed me to take a large glassful before leaving the house, urging as an excuse that they always did so before going to bed. It was in vain I endeavoured to decline the offer ; he would take no refusal ; the hot water was brought, and in a few moments Mr. Wiggins and myself had before us a reeking jorum of whisky and water, while his wife, I am happy to say, contented herself with a little in a wine-glass.

“Our glasses empty, he proposed filling them again ; but this I would not allow, notwithstanding his repeated invitation. Finding me determined, he proposed that we should have a rubber at short whist, saying that he would take dummy, and that his wife should be my partner, but this also I declined, pleading a headache

as my excuse. Shortly afterwards I left the house.

“I will not detain you with any lengthened account of the domestic economy of Mr. and Mrs. Wiggins’s establishment. She, dear creature, was as amiable, affectionate, and obedient as it was possible for a wife to be, while he on his side was about as detestable a husband as ever lived. He was nothing better than a betting man and a swindler, and he gradually added to his other qualifications that of being a drunkard. We soon parted acquaintanceship. He tried to induce me to make a book under his directions, and failing, he attempted to get me to play at cards, but he was equally unsuccessful in that. I am here bound to remark that in every instance when he proposed a rubber, his wife invariably objected, saying she was sure that it was unpleasant to me, and that she would not allow it. It appeared to me also that he used to regard her with angry and significant glances for her interference, and I became uneasy lest he should maltreat her on my account. My apprehensions I afterwards discovered were not unfounded ; for one day when I called I no-

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ticed her face covered with bruises. On my interrogating her on the subject, I found these were caused by a blow she had received from her brutal husbands for making objection to cards one evening when he had brought home two friends with him to have a quiet rubber with me.

“I now questioned her more particularly about her husband’s behaviour, and I found my worst fears realized. He had commenced to ill-treat her shortly after their marriage, as well as to plunder her little by little of her money. At the time she spoke to me he had already deprived her of more than half she possessed. His drunkenness increased, and when intoxicated he became raving mad. For some time after their marriage he was tolerably careful as to the friends he brought to his house, but now the lowest horse chaunters, outside betting men, and vagabonds of every sort connected with horses and the turf, were his constant home associates.

“Drink, which acts so detrimentally on the constitutions of most men, seemed to have no effect upon this wretch. He continued his drunken and brutal career for more than six years, his poor wife

submitting the while with exemplary patience to a long series of outrages. At last even her gentleness could support it no longer, and she claimed my interference. Beyond the furniture of her house she had not then a shilling or a shilling's worth in the world, and she began to fear actual starvation.

“I saw in a moment that no time was to be lost. I hired a respectable house in my own name, and on the next occasion of her husband's absence at Newmarket I engaged a van, and had her furniture removed. When Wiggins returned, and found that neither wife nor furniture was left, he burst into a fit of rage, and, I understand, rushed to a neighbouring public-house, and there indulged in liquor till he was turned out of it hopelessly intoxicated, and was taken in charge by the police. When liberated next morning, after having been fined five shillings, he was so ill that he had to be taken to the house of one of his associates. A terrible attack of delirium tremens supervened, from which, thanks to the strength of his constitution, he recovered. But he was never again the active, wiry sort of man he had been. He had made

some money at Newmarket races, and, true to his nature, he resolved on using it as far as lay in his power for the disgrace and injury of his wife. He had contrived to discover the locality to which she had removed, and also my participation in the affair, and without further warranty than bare possibility, he raised an action against me of a most objectionable character through the agency of an unprincipled attorney. Fortunately, however, he was not permitted to carry out his intended wickedness. One morning, about a fortnight before the trial was to come on, he was so late in leaving his bedroom, that one of his intimates went up to arouse him. The attempt was in vain, however; no answer would he give, although evidently awake. On his friend shaking him, he got a violent kick for his pains. Disgusted at this treatment, he left Wiggins alone, and went down-stairs.

“About six o'clock in the afternoon, Wiggins not having made his appearance, his friends determined on awakening him, if only to ask whether he would not partake of some refreshment, and one of the party took upon himself the respon-



sibility of carrying out this arrangement. He met with no more courteous reception than was given to the other in the morning. The man, irritated at this behaviour, after firing off a volley of abuse at Wiggins, left the room, saying those might go near him who pleased, but for his part he would have nothing more to do with 'the sulky brute.'

"Next morning came, and still Wiggins did not leave his room. This time an old woman-servant undertook the task of calling him. Her reception was not better than the others had received. Evening came, but they could do nothing with Wiggins. He lay there in bed without speaking a word, and when any one brought him nourishment he simply kicked the person who offered it.

"The morning succeeding found matters in much the same state, and as he was evidently sinking from want of food or from disease, his friends determined on removing him by force to Westminster Hospital, that being the nearest. But to resolve and to put into execution were two totally different affairs. Although he would not utter a word, the opposition he offered to



being removed was desperate. He plunged and kicked so violently that it was as much as six strong men could do to take him to the hospital. At last, however, they succeeded, and he was placed in one of the beds, when the effect of his extreme exertions was shown by his falling into a succession of fainting fits, which followed each other so rapidly that the attendants expected every moment would be his last.

“In the middle of the day one of the principal physicians saw him. For some time he could make nothing of the case, except that the patient was evidently awake and sinking fast. The doctor tried to attract his attention by asking him different questions, but the only reply he could obtain was a low sort of guttural whining.

“‘Come, come, my man,’ said the doctor to him, good-naturedly, ‘you must not make that noise, or I shall think I have got a horse for a patient, and order you a mash.’

“The effect this remark had on Wiggins was electrical. He immediately rose in his bed and looked about him with an expression of intense anxiety, as if in search of somebody. The doctor

quickly caught the real character of the case. Turning round, he sent one of the nurses into the kitchen with orders to bring back with her a large basin of thick hot gruel, and to feed the patient with it. In about a quarter of an hour the nurse returned, bringing with her the gruel. Taking some of it in a spoon, she commenced blowing on it to cool it before offering it to him. But when she approached Wiggins, he dashed her hand aside without speaking, and seizing the basin, he plunged his muzzle into the gruel, evidently in imitation of a horse, and began to swallow it voraciously, scalding himself fearfully the while. It now became very difficult to administer food to him in any form, and the result was that the fellow gradually sunk, and four days after he had entered the hospital Mrs. Wiggins was a widow.

“All legal proceedings against me were stopped by the death of Wiggins; and I determined that, after the conventional twelve months had passed, I should propose to his widow. I at first thought of limiting the time to six months, in consideration that as she would be a year older, and I a

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year younger, before the time regulated by the laws of society should expire, the delay would make a difference to us equal to two years with ordinary mortals ; but, on reflection, I felt persuaded that it would be more agreeable to her feelings to wait the full time.

“ During the year affairs went very badly in India ; so much so, indeed, as almost to threaten me with insolvency. With Mrs. Wiggins, certainly, things had gone better. She kept a respectable lodging-house, which, from her obliging, amiable manners, was always filled with guests. The profits of it were, in fact, sufficient for the maintenance of us both. But I had too much pride to rely on my wife’s exertions for support ; and having nothing myself, I resolved to wait a year or two longer, hoping matters might take a change for the better. But affairs continued to go so badly with me, that I was obliged to ask hospitality of her, assisting her in return as far as I could in her occupations.

“ As time passed on, and I gradually became younger, my love for her increased till it began to assume the character of the passion of a mad, hot-

headed youth. As she grew older and stouter, the capacity of my love continued to enlarge in proportion, until I had reached my seventeenth year, when it became irrepressible. One evening, when she was sitting close to the dining-table, reading by the light of the lamp suspended from the ceiling a letter she had received, I could resist the temptation no longer. I flung myself on my knees, and in impassioned eloquence made her an offer of marriage. With exquisite modesty, hardly to be expected at her time of life, she gently refused my suit. Finding her inexorable, I rushed from her presence, and, having gained my room, I threw myself on the bed, and wept as if my heart would break.

“I now tried to stifle my love for her, but it was impossible. I sometimes obtained a little calmness for a few hours, but the instant I caught sight of her tall, portly figure, all my passion returned in full force, and I can only plead my youth as excuse. I had so little control over my feelings, that I acted very indiscreetly, and importunately urged my suit whenever I saw her, whether at home, in the street, or even in church.

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To give me time to recover myself, she left the house in charge of her servants for a week, while she went on a visit to a friend in the country. The day after her departure, singularly enough, Dr. Austin called to see her on some business. Finding that she was not at home, he requested he might have an interview with me instead. Of course I granted this, and the doctor was shown into the parlour where I was. He briefly described to me the object of his visit to Mrs. Wiggins, which, to say the truth, I did not very clearly understand, possibly in consequence of my mind being occupied with other matters. We then commenced to converse on general topics. You know how attractive are the doctor's manners; in a short time I told him frankly the extraordinary peculiarity in my history, of my misfortunes in business, and the overwhelming love I bore for Mrs. Wiggins. He listened to me with the utmost interest, and expressed the fullest sympathy with me; at the same time he advised me to leave London for a short time, in order to recover myself, otherwise he averred that it was possible the intensity of my love might drive

me into a consumption. He moreover told me of this establishment, adding that he was the proprietor of it, and that if I should like a short residence in the country he would be most happy to receive me. I thanked him warmly for his offer of hospitality, and requested he would give me a few days to consider the subject. This he willingly assented to, and after promising me that he would call on the following Saturday for my answer, we conversed a little longer on various topics, and he then left the house.

“He had no sooner gone than I began seriously to reflect on my position. I endeavoured to place everything before my mind in its true and proper light. I reflected on the extraordinary love I bore for Mrs. Wiggins, and how completely my happiness was bound up in her, and the misery I should have to endure if I were separated from her. After I had thought over the whole subject, I drew a clear description of my own position. I remembered the anecdote of the Archbishop of Toledo mentioned by Gil Blas,—how, as he grew older, and his wits feebler, he considered that his power of preaching improved, and his insane and foolish

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anger at having his real state pointed out to him. I was determined not to shut my eyes to my increasing youth and inexperience. I then reflected that if it were not a duty I owed to myself to guard against committing such a folly, I at least owed something to Mrs. Wiggins. Although I was still old enough to make a union with the widow possible, I could not overlook the fact that in a short time the case would become different. Instead of my being a companion to her, and cherishing her in my bosom, she might be employed in packing my boxes and sending me to school. And, worse still, in a few more years she would need a stay and protector in her advancing age, and she would then have to bestow on me the care and solicitude due to tender infancy. No, I was resolved I would never subject her to such a duty. That she would perform it with tenderness and affection I was persuaded; but it would be unjust on my part, through selfishness, to put a task like this upon her. No, nothing should shake my resolution: I would go with the doctor. I did go, and here I trust I shall remain for the rest of my life, look-



ing forward to the certainty that in a few short years we shall each go off at the extremities of life, she in old age, and I in infancy, and that we shall meet in heaven. Till that time arrives I will bear my misery with all the fortitude in my power."

Here he covered his face with his hands and wept bitterly. I stood and gazed on him with astonishment. How he could have deceived himself in such an extraordinary manner it was impossible to imagine. That he believed every word he uttered I was convinced, and yet the whole was a complete delusion. He had never been out of England, but had lived as a respectable tradesman in London. With the exception of his having annoyed with his addresses an old woman who kept a lodging-house in which he had lived, nothing could have been more false than his narrative from first to last.

Finding him still weeping, and seeing the necessity of my saying something, I remarked,—

"I have no doubt you will think me very dull, but I do not see the moral you promised me."

"You do not!" he said, dropping his hands,

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and looking at me with astonishment, his face the while suffused with tears. "You do not see the moral!"

"Candidly I do not."

"Have you not frequently heard people say, as they advanced in life, 'I am sorry to say, I am not getting younger'?"

"Very often," I replied.

"Then," said he, with great solemnity of manner, "for the future, whenever you hear any one make so foolish a remark, advise them to be content with getting old in the natural course of nature: you have also my permission to point out what might befall them if their foolish wish could be realized."

*VI.—L'AMOUR MÉDECIN.*

CLEARLY as the origin and progress of Mr. Gurdon's case might be traced, it was perhaps exceeded in this respect by another which came under my notice during my residence at the doctor's. The patient in this instance was a lady, a Miss Clara Mordaunt. When she joined our party she was about three-and-twenty years of age. She was tall, graceful, and exceedingly handsome. An accident had occurred to her about two years prior to her sojourn among us, the effect of which was to render her totally blind. But Miss Mordaunt's blindness was of such a singular and peculiar character, that it did not in the least spoil her beautiful countenance, which was

certainly one of the loveliest I ever saw. Her face was a faithful index to her mind. It bore on it an expression of the highest intelligence and amiability, and a mildness rarely found in union with so much intellect. When I made her acquaintance she was suffering under such severe melancholia, that it was feared she might in one of her fits of despondency attempt suicide. This danger was increased by the fact that she was of an eminently religious disposition,—a feature frequently attending suicidal mania. No actual symptom of a bias towards suicide had indeed ever been noticed in her, the danger being only assumed from accidents of the kind often occurring in that peculiar phase of insanity. Her history was a most romantic one; so much so indeed that it may possibly be regarded as infringing too closely on the borders of fiction, for being quoted in a perfectly matter-of-fact and scientific work of this description.

Miss Mordaunt's father was the second partner in the firm of Wilson and Mordaunt, silversmiths and jewellers, carrying on a considerable business in one of the principal market towns of the mid-

land counties. The senior partner, Mr. Wilson, a man of great wealth, had advanced the larger portion of the capital, but took little share in the management, leaving the entire care of the business to his associate, who, although somewhat eccentric, was perfectly competent to the task. Mr. Wilson lived a few miles from town, and rarely visited it oftener than two or three times a week for a few hours, and even of that short time an important part was taken up in visiting the principal banking establishment in the town, in which he had embarked some portion of his capital.

Mr. Mordaunt, as I said before, was the working partner, though his share in the profits of the business was comparatively small. He was about sixty years of age, a widower, and had been the father of several children, all of whom were now dead, with the exception of Clara. He was domestic and regular in his habits, rarely enjoying or seeking the slightest amusement; and I may remark, by the way, that he was proud of this circumstance, and used to boast that he had taken but one holiday in nine years,

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though he omitted to state that it was to attend the funeral of a distant relative whose executor he was, and who had bequeathed to his daughter Clara, absolutely, the sum of two thousand pounds. Beyond his love for his daughter and concern for his business, he seemed to have but one other object of real interest, and that was the large clock in the market-place fronting his house. There was an extraordinary sympathy between them. Every action in the daily routine of his life seemed exactly and mechanically regulated by the movements of that timepiece. In the morning, winter and summer alike, his servant-maid tapped at his door just as the clock struck six, and informed him that it was time to rise. Precisely at seven his barber rang at the private door at the back of the house, and went in to shave him. If he arrived a few minutes before the striking of the hour, he would wait with the handle of the bell in his hand till the sound was heard, and immediately after the door opened, and he was ushered into his patron's bedroom. But poor Jobbins, the barber, had far more difficulty in arranging his movements by the town clock



than had Mr. Mordaunt. He not only lived some short distance from it in a back street, and consequently could not check the movements of his own somewhat capricious time-piece so exactly as his patron, but it frequently happened also that he had, at the moment he ought to have left for Mr. Mordaunt's, some half-shaved customer under his hands, whom it would have been not only indiscreet, but positively impolitic to have left before the operation was completed. On these emergencies he practised an innocent fraud upon his employer, Mr. Mordaunt, in the perpetration of which he found ready coadjutors and conspirators in the members of Mr. Mordaunt's own establishment. On those occasions when Jobbins was behind time, the friendly housemaid would silyly open the street-door, and ring the bell herself, then wait for two or three minutes, and if Jobbins had not made his appearance, ring it again, and so on till the arrival of the defaulter, who would then, following his clue, rush breathlessly into his patron's room, and loudly complain of the inattention of Mary in not opening the door. The culprit was then sent

for to be scolded, but she would plead that she was waiting on her young mistress at the time, and could not leave her ; a plea which, from the great affection Mr. Mordaunt bore to his child, he always admitted to be a valid one. At eight o'clock breakfast was upon the table, and there he met the resident assistant and deputy manager of the business, Mr. Gideon Pursite, of whom I shall speak more anon. Mr. Pursite reported to his superior that everything in the establishment was in working order for the day, and they then sat down to their breakfast, Clara generally joining them, but being free to absent herself whenever she might feel so inclined. The breakfast invariably lasted half an hour ; at all events, they sat thus long at table, for even though they had completed their meal before the expiry of the allotted time, Mr. Mordaunt and his assistant sat fixedly on their chairs till the clock in the market-place struck the half-hour, when they both rose and commenced the business of the day.

The dinner hour was as punctually observed as the breakfast one. Exactly as the town clock struck one, Mary entered the shop, and informed

her master that dinner was on the table. He knew the fact perfectly well, but inasmuch as it was a portion of the servant's duties to summon him, he naturally looked for her arrival as the hour struck, and the reception he gave her if she happened to be a minute late was not of a description to be readily forgotten. The moment Mr. Mordaunt received notice that his meal was ready, he left the shop, handing over any customer with whom he might be engaged at the moment to Mr. Gideon Pursite. The time Mr. Mordaunt allotted himself for dinner was the same as that for breakfast—half an hour. As the clock in the market-place struck the half-hour, Mr. Mordaunt and Clara, who invariably dined with her father, both rose and left the room. Mr. Mordaunt then entered the shop, and informed Mr. Gideon Pursite and the other assistant that they could retire, and he took charge of the business himself during their absence. No press of customers, even on the busiest market days, could have induced Mr. Mordaunt to disturb his assistants till their allotted half-hour had expired. Tea-time was as punctually observed at five

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o'clock, and at eight the shop shutters were put up. Then the second shopman, who did not live in the house, went home, and Mr. Pursite either joined Mr. Mordaunt and his daughter in the sitting-room, or, as he was a leading member of several religious societies, occupied himself in the town till half-past nine, when a frugal supper was placed upon the table, at which he was expected to be present. On the last stroke of ten by the town clock, Mary entered the room with a chamber candlestick. Mr. Mordaunt descended with it into the shop, and, opening the iron safe, took from it a large japanned cash-box, which generally contained not only a large sum of money, but several very valuable articles of jewellery, which were not habitually shown in the glass cases in the shop. With the cash-box in his hand, he then made his way to his bedroom on the second floor, and having deposited the box exactly in the centre of the top of a chest of drawers, he locked and double bolted his door, and a few minutes after was in bed.

Such had been the mechanical routine of Mr. Mordaunt's life for many years. He seemed to

consider that it would be as impossible for him to make a single exception in it, and then resume it with regularity again, as it would be to break two or three of the cogs in the works of a chronometer, and get it still to go with its accustomed exactitude. At the same time it must be admitted that Mr. Mordaunt's eccentricity was not without some excuse. He had been suffering for many years from disease of the heart, and as the slightest excitement occasioned the most alarming palpitations, he naturally avoided all circumstances, no matter how trivial, which might disturb his ordinary routine. For the rest, Mr. Mordaunt, although somewhat parsimonious, was really a kind-hearted, charitable man, tenderly attached to his daughter, and strictly honourable in every relation of life.

His assistant, Mr. Gideon Pursite, who might almost have been termed one of his family, was about twenty-seven years of age, of middle height, rather good-looking, and of strong religious principles. He was not only a Sunday school teacher, but also a leading speaker in the town missionary and temperance meetings. He was an excel-

lent hand at his business, steady and regular in his habits, a great favourite with Mr. Mordaunt, and on as good terms with Clara as was proper for one in his circumstances to be with the daughter of his employer. The only other resident in the house was Mary, who was in her own person not only lady's maid, housemaid, and cook, but general servant as well. Her good qualities consisted in being honest, patient, industrious, and respectable in her conduct. Her failings may be very briefly enumerated: she was a heavy sleeper and a late riser, with a detestable habit of looking out of the windows when she ought to have been making the beds, and of leaving the marks of her fingers on new bonnets or other articles of dress which were sent home for the use of her young mistress.

For the better understanding of my narrative it will be necessary for me to describe somewhat particularly the arrangement of the premises. The shop was double-fronted and of considerable breadth, and, as we before stated, was situated in the market-place, opposite the Town Hall. Behind the shop there were two rooms: one was



used for the meals of the family ; the other was the bedroom of Mr. Gideon Pursite. As the whole of the ground-floor to the front was used for business purposes, and as it was necessary, from the valuable nature of the contents of the shop, that the shutters should be of a strong and somewhat complicated description, the entry to Mr. Mordaunt's residence was at the back of the house, opening to a long and respectable street. The front room on the first floor, during the hours of business, was used as Miss Clara's sitting-room, and in the evenings and on Sundays, as the sitting-room for the whole family. Behind it, as is frequent in tradesmen's houses of this description, Mary had her kitchen and laboratory. Mr. Mordaunt's bedroom, as before mentioned, was the second floor front room ; his daughter's, separated by a short passage, was behind his ; and Mary's bedroom was a garret at the back of the house.

I must now introduce to the reader another individual, who, although not a member of Mr. Mordaunt's family, had every desire to become one. This was a certain Mr. Frederick Heath-

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cote, a faithful servant of the Queen, the holder of a commission in her Majesty's navy, and a devoted admirer of Miss Clara Mordaunt; by whom, in return, he was looked upon with great complacency. From the description I have given of Miss Mordaunt it will be admitted that the young fellow's attachment to her was not by any means to be wondered at; and he, on his part, was possessed of many of those qualifications likely to attract the attention and affection of a young and enthusiastic girl. He was a brave, generous, kind-hearted, and good-natured young fellow. He was not particularly handsome, although his expression was decidedly intelligent, which compensated in a considerable degree for any want of regularity of feature. In this respect he formed a singular contrast to Gideon Pursite, whom he somewhat resembled, both in face and form. Gideon was certainly by far the handsomer of the two, but the subdued cunning in his look operated most unfavourably when compared with the frank, open expression of Frederick Heathcote's. However, as from their relative positions they were not likely to come into con-

tact, it mattered little to observers in general, and Clara Mordaunt in particular, which was the better looking.

It would be incorrect to say that Clara Mordaunt's attachment to the young sailor altogether met with her father's approval. At the commencement he distinctly set his face against the match, and even expressed his disapprobation in very strong terms. He had not a word to say against Mr. Heathcote personally, except that he was poor; but he objected to his daughter marrying a man who would, from the nature of his profession, be obliged to absent himself from home for long periods. By degrees, however, when he came to find his daughter's happiness so mixed up in the affair, he gradually withdrew his objections, and received Frederick Heathcote, though at first somewhat coldly, as a suitor for Clara's hand. By-and-bye the old man looked on Heathcote in a more friendly manner, although it was not difficult to perceive that, notwithstanding all the young fellow's good qualities, he would have preferred a member of another profession for his future son-in-law. Of the at-

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tachment between Clara Mordaunt and her lover it would hardly be within the scope of the present work to enter at any length, so very romantic was it. For his part, he simply seemed to worship her; while Clara, although far less demonstrative, was perhaps not less enthusiastic in her affection.

In this, as in almost every other interesting love affair, the oft-repeated quotation, that "the course of true love never did run smooth," was perfectly illustrated, although the obstacle appeared easily removable. Frederick had received an appointment as lieutenant on board a gun-boat about to be despatched to the China seas as a part of the squadron on duty there, and being not only poor, but destitute of friends in high official quarters, he was afraid to refuse it, as it might be detrimental to his interests. He therefore accepted it, consoling himself with the thought that he should return in about two years to marry Clara; and if his prospects did not appear to be brighter than they were at the moment of his joining his ship, he would probably leave the service and seek for some other occupation.

Mr. Mordaunt and his daughter viewed the near approach of Frederick Heathcote's departure with very different feelings. Clara was depressed in spirits, and often in tears at the prospect of such a long separation. Her father, on the contrary, was not altogether displeased at the circumstance. He calculated that during an interval of two years many accidents might occur which would either tend to weaken the strength of his daughter's affection for her lover, or that Frederick Heathcote might, with prospects of advancement in his own profession, change his mind on the subject. He did both his daughter and her betrothed an injustice: improbable as it was that any alteration could take place in Frederick Heathcote's attachment to his mistress, it was yet more improbable that his daughter's affection for her lover should lessen. It seemed to have now become a part and portion of her existence. To have denied her the hope of union with him would have been almost as rude a shock as the separation of soul from body.

The time at last arrived for Frederick Heathcote's departure. The mail-train, by which he

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was to travel, passed through the town about midnight ; and, as might naturally be expected, he spent the earlier part of the evening in company with Clara. From eight o'clock till ten Mr. Mordaunt sat with the young couple, and he would have liked to have remained with them longer ; but habit was inveterate, and although he tried to ignore his usual time of going to bed, he found it impossible. A quarter of an hour had not elapsed since the Town Hall clock struck ten, when he could no longer resist the temptation to retire. Mary had brought in his candle at the usual time, but he had ordered her to extinguish it ; he now rose, however, from his seat and rung the bell, and told Mary to light the candle again. After bidding his daughter an affectionate good night, and wishing Frederick Heathcote a happy and prosperous voyage, he took his candle and left the room. As usual he then descended the stairs into the shop to take the cash-box from the iron safe ; and that done, he sought his bedroom for the night.

The young couple remained in conversation together till the bell tolled half-past eleven, and



then Frederick Heathcote rose to take his departure. Clara accompanied him to the door, and their leave-taking there was long, sad, and sorrowful. When at last Heathcote summoned up sufficient courage to part from his betrothed, the street door was opened, and Clara was suddenly dazzled by a vivid flash of lightning, for a thunderstorm was on the point of breaking over the town. As soon as she had recovered from her surprise she watched her lover, as long as she could, by the light of the street lamps, and then weeping bitterly she closed the street door, and retired to her room.

When in bed Clara's thoughts were so intently fixed upon her lover that for some time she paid but little attention to the thunder, or the vivid flashes of lightning which accompanied it. She could get no sleep, and she continued in the same train of thought till the town clock struck two. Its vibrations had hardly died away when she thought she heard a cry of distress proceeding from her father's bedroom. Hardly certain of the fact, she sat up in her bed and listened attentively.

The sound was repeated, and along with it a

loud cry in her father's voice for help. Clara, without a moment's hesitation, sprung from her bed, and having hastily thrown on a dressing-gown, rushed to her father's bedroom. By the lightning flashes, which now followed each other with great rapidity, she perceived him standing on the floor in his night-dress. She spoke to him, but it was some moments before she could make him understand that it was she who addressed him, so terrified and alarmed was he. As soon as he had somewhat recovered, he informed her that he had been awakened by somebody moving about in his room. Although greatly frightened, he had sufficient presence of mind to inquire who it was. The figure made him no answer, but immediately extinguished the night-light, which had been burning on the drawers, and then hurriedly rushed from the room. He was afraid that the cash-box had been stolen, as he could not find it on the spot on which he had been accustomed to place it. He acknowledged, however, that he was so agitated he could not remember whether he had not put it somewhere else. Clara attempted to calm him in the best way she could, and

assisted him in feeling over the tops of the different articles of furniture, but no cash-box could they find. She then asked her father if he had recognized the individual who had disturbed him. He said he had not. All he could distinguish was, that he had on a coat similar to those sailors were accustomed to wear in rough weather, but even of that he could not be positively certain.

Clara, after having somewhat tranquillized her father, left him, and descended in the dark to the back room on the ground floor, in which Gideon Pursite slept. She had not seen him during the whole of the evening, as he had retired to his bedroom immediately after the shop was closed, on the plea of a violent headache. She knocked at his door, and begged that he would rise as quickly as possible, and go to assist her father, who she feared had been robbed. As soon as she had succeeded in making him understand the position of affairs, she ran up-stairs to call the maid-servant, who, as we before stated, slept in the garret at the back of the house. Having with some difficulty aroused Mary, she ordered her instantly to obtain a light, and take it

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to Mr. Mordaunt's room. Clara now descended the staircase, and proceeded to her father's room. She there found him somewhat more collected, but impatient at the non-arrival of Pursite or the girl with the light. Clara, to appease him, left the room for the purpose, if possible, of obtaining a candle herself; but when she had arrived at the head of the staircase she heard Pursite's door open, and, not wishing he should see her in such *deshabille* as she was then in, she turned to enter her own room, with the intention of putting on some more clothes. Just before entering it her foot struck against something soft in the passage. She stooped down and took it up, and carried it with her into her room. She closed the door, as she was anxious to ascertain what she had found. On carrying it to the window to profit by the faint light coming in, she was suddenly assisted by a bright flash of lightning, which showed that she held in her hand a naval officer's cap, similar to the one she had seen worn by Frederick Heathcote. Immediately the remark of her father, that all he could distinguish in the appearance of the robber was

that he wore a naval officer's rough coat, came before her, and a terrible dread flashed across her mind, in spite of her confidence in the honour and integrity of her lover. She attempted to convince herself that the cap could not be his, and she again held it up to the window, and was again assisted in her investigation by fearful flashes of lightning, which followed each other in rapid succession. Not only was it such a cap as had been worn by her lover, but she perceived on it, moreover, an indisputable proof that it was his. Some time after he had purchased it, the son of a friend with whom he was living—a little boy about five or six years of age, just beginning to learn the use of his pen—had covered over with ink the initials "F. H.," which had been drawn with pencil in the leather lining by Heathcote himself, in order to please the child. The result was that the letters were not only thick and clumsy, but were marked by a large ink-blot as well.

Clara for a moment stood aghast. The cap then dropped from her hand, she made a step forward towards her bed, but before she could reach it, she fell senseless on the floor. How long

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she remained there she knew not. When she recovered her senses, all was perfectly dark. With difficulty she rose up and threw herself on her bed. She remained for some time under a sort of hysterical oppression, when at last a violent flood of tears came to her relief. It now seemed perfectly clear to her that the man who had robbed her father must be her lover, and the idea gave her such terrible grief that the present condition of her father, and the agitation which was then reigning in the house, were for the moment totally forgotten.

She was suddenly aroused from her train of thought by some one tapping at her chamber door.

“Oh, please, Miss, do get up,” said Mary the servant, from the outside; “your poor pa is so ill I don’t know what to do with him, and he never stops asking for you.”

“Bring me a candle, Mary,” said Clara, now recalled to herself, and somewhat collected, “and tell my father I will be with him in a few minutes.”

“A candle, Miss,” said Mary, “why, it’s broad



daylight. Let me open your curtains for you." So saying, she opened the door and advanced towards the window, but finding the curtains already withdrawn, she turned round to her young mistress on the bed to ask an explanation, when she uttered a cry of terror, and was for a moment silent. There was good cause for the girl's surprise and alarm, for a more ghastly figure than Miss Mordaunt presented at the moment could hardly be imagined. She was seated on her bed, her hair falling loose over her, and her face covered with tears and blood. In falling, her head had struck against a corner of the bedstead without her being aware of it, and the wound had bled profusely, but had now stopped.

"Why, Miss," said Mary, "what is the matter with you? you must have hurt yourself dreadfully."

"I don't know I am sure, Mary," was the reply. "Tell me, do you say it is daylight?"

"Yes, broad daylight, Miss."

"And I can see nothing," said Clara; "all is dark around me. What shall I do! What shall I do!"

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A tap was now heard at the door of the room.

“Mary,” said the voice of Gideon Pursite, “tell Miss Clara her father wants her directly. Beg of her to come, as he is dreadfully anxious about her.”

“Tell him she will be with him in a moment,” said Mary, and Gideon Pursite left the door.

“Come now, Miss,” said Mary to her mistress, “do rouse yourself. Let me bathe your face for you, and you will be able to see better afterwards, I am sure.” So saying, she turned to go to the washstand, which was near the window, but suddenly she stopped short, and, stooping down, said, “Dear me, Miss, why, here’s a sailor’s cap; how could it have come here? I wonder whose it is!”

“Mary, give me that cap,” said Clara, quickly, starting from her bed, and making towards the spot from whence Mary’s voice proceeded.

As she uttered the words she attempted to snatch the cap from the girl’s hand, but Mary had moved from the spot without her young mistress being sensible of it, proving clearly that she was totally blind.

“Give me that cap,” she repeated; “I will

have it ;” and she stretched her arms forward as if searching in the dark for an object she eagerly desired to obtain.

Mary, terrified at the wildness of her mistress's manner, placed the cap in her hand. Clara clutched it with her right hand, and with her left felt her way, as if in utter darkness, to her bed, and then concealed it under her pillow.

“Mary,” said Clara, “come here and give me your hand. Now promise me solemnly you will never mention to any one a word about that cap. I struck my foot against it at the bottom of the stairs, after I had called you this morning, and I then brought it in here to see to whom it belonged. Now do you promise me ?”

Mary was silent with astonishment, for she had understood in an instant her mistress's meaning, and to whom the cap belonged. Once assured on that point, she replied to Clara's request,—

“Don't be afraid of me, Miss ; I would sooner have my right hand cut off than say one word about it. But when you go out of the room, take my advice, lock the door and put the key in your pocket, for I think it very likely the police will

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soon be here. Now let me help you to dress, and after I've washed your face, perhaps the dizziness will go off, and you'll be all right again."

A hasty toilet having been accomplished through the assistance of Mary, the girl said to her mistress,—

"Now, Miss, I will go and tell your father you are coming ; but don't forget to lock the door after you."

"But, Mary, you must lead me ; I can see nothing. What has come over me ? What have I done that I should be punished so cruelly ?"

Mary took her mistress by the hand, and led her out into the passage which separated her room from her father's, and there left her for a moment while she locked the door ; then, giving the key to Clara, who placed it in her pocket, she conducted her to her father's room.

The old gentleman, who was now dressed, and seated in an easy chair alone in the room, said to her,—

"Clara, my dear, what has kept you so long ?"

"Father," she replied, "I fell down and wounded my head somewhat severely, and Mary has been

occupied in washing the blood from my face, or I should have been with you sooner."

"Wounded yourself, my dear," said her father, gazing at her, and noticing the white handkerchief which Mary had bound round her head,—  
"Wounded yourself,—not severely, I hope."

"No, not very, but the singular thing is, that I cannot see. There is a dizziness before me, and everything is obscure," she continued, modifying the intensity of her blindness, not to shock her father by divulging the real truth. "I was even obliged to ask Mary to lead me in here."

"No doubt, my dear, it has been caused by loss of blood," said her father, "and possibly will soon go off. Sit down, and I will send Mary for a doctor."

"Pray don't, father; I have no doubt I shall be better presently," said Clara, seating herself on a chair which Mary had placed within her reach. "Now tell me, what has been done since I left you this morning?"

"Gideon Pursite has done all that could be done, and he has been very active indeed. He will tell you everything when he returns; all I

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know is, that when he went down-stairs to give notice of the robbery to the police, he found the street door wide open, so the thief must have escaped by that means. As soon as he had discovered it, he came up to inform me of the fact, and then went away again to the police station, and he has not since returned."

A ring was now heard at the street door, and Mary left the room to answer it.

"Father," said Clara, as soon as the girl had quitted the room, "are you certain the cash-box is really gone? Collect your ideas a little, and think now where you placed it. It would be cruel to throw suspicion on any one unnecessarily."

"My dear, I am almost positive that I placed it as usual on the drawers, but as my mind was occupied with Heathcote's departure, it is possible I might have placed it somewhere else."

"Then let us ascertain for a certainty," said Clara, "that it is no longer in the room." She then arose from her seat, and feeling her way to the drawers, she passed her hand rapidly over the top, and opening the drawers one after the other, she



felt in each of them. Not finding it, she carefully drew her foot along the carpet round them, and afterwards searched on each piece of furniture she could find on one side of the room, while her father, though not so actively, searched on the other. Some footsteps were now heard on the stairs, and Clara hurriedly felt her way back to her chair, while her father slowly advanced towards the centre of the room to see who were arriving. Presently the door opened, and Gideon Pursite, accompanied by an inspector of police and a constable, entered the room.

“Have you discovered anything?” asked Mr. Mordaunt of the inspector.

“Nothing of importance,” he replied; “but I should like to have a little private conversation with you, if you have no objection.”

“Certainly, none whatever,” said Mr. Mordaunt; “all can leave the room if you wish it, but as my daughter is very ill, perhaps you would have no objection to her remaining.”

“None at all,” said the inspector; and the policeman, and Gideon Pursite, and Mary, who had followed them into the room, now left it.

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After the inspector had carefully closed the door, he said in an undertone to Mr. Mordaunt,—

“The only points I can ascertain are, that the robbery must have been committed by some one well acquainted with the premises, and if the thief entered from the street the door must have been opened by a false key, and the bolts, both top and bottom, must have been left unfastened, otherwise from the make of the door it would have been almost impossible for him to get in.”

A sensation of faintness immediately came over Clara at these words, for she remembered that when her lover left the house she had simply closed the door, without taking any further precaution. Possibly the inspector noticed her agitation, but he made no remark.

“Now tell me,” he continued, still addressing Mr. Mordaunt, “what the man was like you saw in the room.”

“I was so agitated at the moment that all I can remember is, that he was of average height, and wore a sort of rough undress naval officer's coat ; but even of that I am not positively certain.”

“Now tell me, is there any one in the house you

suspect? What kind of character did you have with your maid-servant, and how long has she been with you?"

"She has been with us three years," said Clara, "and we had an excellent character with her. We have no reason whatever to doubt her integrity."

"That's all very well," said the inspector, "but has she a lover?"

"Not that I know of," said Clara, "nor do I think she has one. She confides a good deal to me, and I am sure I should have heard of it if she had."

"Then we are all right there," replied the inspector. "Now who sleeps in the house besides the servant?"

"Only Mr. Gideon Pursite," said Mr. Mordaunt; "and you know his reputation to be above suspicion."

"I certainly have always heard him very highly spoken of," said the inspector; "but you of course have had a better opportunity of judging of him than any one else."

"I am as certain of him as I could be of myself."

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“Then I will call him in,” said the inspector, “and we will first examine him.”

He then opened the door and called to Gideon Pursite, who immediately made his appearance.

“Now,” said the inspector, “tell me all that has taken place, as far as you know, since last night.”

“I know very little,” replied Gideon. “After business was over I went to a missionary meeting. I had felt very sick and ill all day, and I had hardly entered the room, when the heat acted so oppressively upon me that I left directly. On arriving at home, Mary told me that a gentleman of the name of Heathcote, a friend of Mr. Mordaunt’s, was spending the evening with him prior to his departure for India ; and not wishing to intrude upon their conversation, I went to bed. Early this morning, I should think between two and three o’clock, Miss Clara knocked at my door, and told me that her father had been robbed. She begged me instantly to go to his assistance. I did so ; and finding him greatly agitated, I waited with him till he was somewhat calmer, and then I started off to the station to give you notice of the robbery.”

“That seems clear enough,” said the inspector. “Now did you notice anything tending to prove how the robbery was effected?”

“Nothing whatever,” replied Gideon, “with the exception that when I was descending the stairs on leaving the house to give you notice of the robbery, I remarked that the street door was wide open.”

“Had the maid-servant been out for anything?”

“She did not leave my room,” said Mr. Mordaunt, “from the moment my daughter called her till some time after Mr. Pursite had left the house.”

“Who was the gentleman who spent the evening with you?” asked the inspector of Mr. Mordaunt.

“Mr. Heathcote,” replied Mr. Mordaunt, “who you may possibly have heard is engaged to my daughter.”

“At what hour did he leave you?” inquired the inspector.

“I don’t know myself, for I was in bed at the time. Clara, what o’clock was it?”

Clara made no answer, but sat motionless. She was apparently absorbed in thought, and that

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thought, judging from the anxious expression of her countenance, was of a most painful character. Mr. Mordaunt repeated his question.

“About half-past eleven, father,” replied Clara, rousing herself.

“What did he propose doing after he left the house?” asked the inspector.

“He was to return to his lodgings to seek for his luggage, and then to proceed to the railway station to meet the mail train for London.”

“Who let him out when he went away?” inquired the inspector.

“I did,” said Clara.

“Did you bolt and lock the door after he had left?” was the next question put to her.

“I don't remember ; I rather think not,” replied Clara, in so confused a manner that it riveted the attention of the inspector. He was silent for some moments, and watched Clara attentively, as if there was something in her conduct he was unable to understand rightly. Possibly his curiosity was still further excited by the singular appearance she presented as she sat erect in her chair, her face deadly pale, and her eyes turned



towards the inspector, but wholly expressionless, like those of a blind person. She evidently saw him not, but spoke to him as if judging his position from the sound of his voice. The inspector, as if puzzled, changed the conversation, and told Mr. Mordaunt that he would leave him for the purpose of making some further inquiries, and would return again at the latest in half an hour. In the meantime he suggested that no one should be allowed to leave or enter the house.

No sooner had the inspector gone than Gideon Pursite entered the room. Mr. Mordaunt immediately conveyed to him the inspector's request, and Gideon promised to see that it should be duly carried out; he would go down himself, he said, and lock the street door, so that no one could leave the house without his knowing it, and he would also see that no one came in through the shop till the inspector had returned.

When the father and daughter were alone, no conversation passed between them for some time. The affair had given the old man a great shock. He was so unnerved as to be unable to speak. The violent palpitations of the heart,

which continued unabated, were now felt the more painfully as his attention was no longer drawn from his own person by the presence of the inspector. Clara, on the contrary, sat as motionless as a marble statue, and as pale. Not a muscle in her face moved; the vacant look of blindness was in her eyes; and yet it would have been utterly impossible for an attentive observer not to have seen that she was suffering some terrible mental emotion. Her mind was so thoroughly centred on herself, that she seemed not to be aware of her father's presence. She did not even make one inquiry respecting his health, although, from the distressed state of his breathing, she might have known that he was near her, though she could not see him. After a lapse of several minutes the old man mechanically turned his face on his daughter, and for the first time appeared to be fully cognizant of the fearful condition in which she was.

"Clara, my dear," he said, "has the dizziness you complained of left you?"

"No, father," she replied, "it is worse than ever; I can see nothing."

"I will send Mary for the doctor directly," said the father, greatly alarmed.

"Pray do not think of it," said Clara; "possibly it may go away. My mind is at present so agitated that I can hardly collect my thoughts; and if the doctor came, I should scarcely be able to give him an intelligible answer."

"Clara, my dear," said her father, "can you form any idea how that villain got into the house?"

He had no sooner uttered the question than his agitation, great as it was, was exceeded by that of his daughter. So violent was it, that she was obliged to press her hands upon her heart to control its beating.

"No, father," she answered at last; "I can come to no conclusion about it;" the expression of her countenance at the time strongly contradicting her assertion.

"Of one thing I am resolved," said her father; "I will spare neither pains nor expense to discover him, and get him well punished for his villany."

The inspector now re-entered the room, and spoke to Mr. Mordaunt, though at the same time

he kept his glance fixed upon Clara. He inquired if he had correctly understood that the gentleman who had spent the previous evening with Mr. Mordaunt was Mr. Heathcote.

"Certainly," said Mr. Mordaunt.

"By what train did you say he was to leave?"

"By the mail train," answered Mr. Mordaunt.

"Why do you ask?"

"Because Mr. Heathcote did not leave by the mail train, but by the first train this morning. Did you remark," he asked, turning to Clara, "how he was dressed when he left the house?"

"As usual, I believe," said Clara, in so low a tone of voice as to be almost inaudible; "I noticed nothing particular."

"Because," said the inspector, "the porter at the railway station remarked the singularity of his dress; he wore a rough naval officer's coat and a civilian's hat."

Clara sank back in her chair as if on the point of fainting, but by a great effort she partially recovered herself, though not without having attracted the notice of the inspector. "I should also mention," he continued, "that from marks I

discovered, your street door has evidently been opened by a picklock from the outside, and that in a very clumsy manner, as if by some one not accustomed to the work."

"At what conclusion do you arrive, then?" asked Mr. Mordaunt.

"I should be sorry to suspect any one wrongfully," said the inspector; "but there appears to be but little doubt on the subject. Everything tends to prove that Mr. Heathcote was the thief."

Clara clutched at the arm of her chair, and bent forward to catch every word that fell from the inspector's lips. When she heard the conclusion he had arrived at, her countenance, which had remained fixed, though anxious, suddenly changed its expression to one of intense terror.

"What would you advise me to do?" asked Mr. Mordaunt.

"To telegraph immediately to the railway terminus in London, advising them to be on the look-out for him, and to arrest him as soon as he alights."

"Then do it at once," said Mr. Mordaunt; "I will be responsible: let no time be lost."

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The inspector instantly left the room, but could hardly have arrived at the head of the stairs before Clara had arisen from her chair to follow him. In so doing she came with considerable force against the door-post, of which, however, she took no notice.

“Pray stop one moment,” she called to the inspector; “my father will speak to you directly.”

“He had better not delay,” said the inspector, “or it may be too late.”

Clara then closed the door, and felt her way back to the chair on which Mr. Mordaunt was seated.

“Father,” she said, “you must not send the telegram.”

“Not send the telegram!” he answered, somewhat angrily; “nothing shall prevent me. Do you think I would allow so despicable a thief to escape without the punishment so justly due to him?”

“Father,” said Clara, “consider for one moment. Think in what relation he stands to your unhappy child. Any proceedings you might take against him would not only injure me in the eyes



of the world, but also most cruelly wound me. Remember, he is my affianced husband."

"Do you mean to say," Mr. Mordaunt continued, with great surprise in his tone, "that you would marry a common thief?"

"You do me an injustice if you think so, father. I will never speak to him again. But grant me this one favour. Am I not sufficiently unfortunate, without your adding so heavy a weight to my misery?"

"Clara," said Mr. Mordaunt, angrily, rising from his chair, "nothing shall induce me to alter my resolution. He shall be arrested, and it shall be from no fault of mine if he does not receive the punishment he so richly merits."

Clara stretched forth her hand to stay her father, but missed him, and he hurried towards the door.

"One word more, father, and I have done. The man on whom I had set my affections—and God knows how ardently I have loved him—I admit is unworthy of me; but believe me, if you prove before the world that he whom I have acknowledged as my future husband is a felon, you

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will lose your child by the same verdict. I never could survive the shock. Dear father, give me your hand, and look at me. Do you discover nothing?"

"Nothing, my dear," he replied, affectionately, "but that you have wounded yourself."

"Father, I cannot see you," said Clara.

"My dear, I trust the dizziness you complain of will soon go off. I will send for Dr. Morgan, and I have no doubt you will soon be well again."

"Never, father; I am blind. All is as dark around me as the blackest night, and I am certain I shall never recover my sight. A flash of lightning occasioned it after I had entered my room, and I have disguised it from you, fearing it might increase the illness you are suffering from. Now you know the truth. Come nearer, dear father, that I may kiss you."

Mr. Mordaunt obeyed her.

"You cannot have the heart," continued Clara, "to make me more wretched than I am. Dear father, do forgive him. I will never speak to him again."

Clara could contain herself no longer, but threw herself on her father's breast, and wept bitterly. The magnitude of his daughter's misfortune completely overwhelmed the old man. All other ideas vanished from his mind, and he thought only of his child. Without hesitation he gave up all attempts to arrest Heathcote, and the prosecution for the robbery was proceeded with no farther.

VII.—*L'AMOUR MEDECIN.*

PART II.

CLARA'S blindness was naturally a source of intense grief and anxiety to her father. He placed her immediately under the care of Dr. Morgan, the leading practitioner in the town, who used all the means in his power to restore her to sight, but without any beneficial effects. True, he had had but little experience in diseases of the eye, but having sufficient honesty to admit this, he proposed that she should take a journey to London for the purpose of consulting Dr. B——, an eminent oculist. Mr. Mordaunt immediately adopted the suggestion, and the more readily as Dr. Morgan himself had occasion to visit the metropolis on some affairs of his own. Clara,

under the charge of an aged female relative, accompanied him, her father's health at the time being in so precarious a condition that it was deemed inexpedient that he should undertake the journey. They arrived safely in London without anything occurring on the way worthy of notice, and the next morning they called on Dr. B——. Clara's case gave the oculist immense embarrassment. During his whole practice, which had been very extensive, he had never met with one in any way similar. He could discover no clue by which to form a judgment as to what treatment should be adopted. In the eye itself he could detect no abnormal characteristic, although he tried every expedient to discover it that his vast skill could suggest. On holding up an object before her at different distances, he found that the pupil of the eye would dilate and contract in a perfectly natural manner, and with such exact regularity as to give him reason to imagine she saw it perfectly ; yet he found she had lost all power of vision. He questioned her closely on the origin of her malady, but in her answers she could hardly be called a faithful witness. She

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stated to him candidly and correctly enough the facts as to the flash of lightning and her total blindness afterwards. She told him that when the servant called her, she had requested the girl to bring her a light, not being aware that it was broad daylight at the time. But not one word did she utter about the discovery of her lover's cap, or indeed anything about her engagement with him. The man of science was completely puzzled. He continued for some time longer questioning her as to the sensation she felt in her eye, and on every other subject his ingenuity and skill dictated, without being in the slightest degree able to understand the case. He then ceased to ask her any more questions, and remained silent for some moments, as if endeavouring to come to some conclusion. He at last appeared to give up the point, and requesting Clara and her friend to enter the reception-room, he remained in consultation for a considerable length of time with Dr. Morgan. Anxiously and carefully did they talk over the case, but they were able to form no definite opinion on it. Finding all their science in vain, it was at last determined that some simple remedies



should be employed, and that Clara should return home and remain under the charge of Dr. Morgan, who was to correspond with the oculist on her malady, from time to time, as occasion might require. Mr. Mordaunt was deeply grieved at the unsuccessful termination of his daughter's visit to London, and his sorrow acted most prejudicially on his infirm state of health. Clara, on the contrary, submitted to the infliction with the greatest patience and meekness. The only sorrow she showed was at the disappointment of her father, who had buoyed himself up with the hope that she would return home perfectly cured. Clara accepted her blindness as a dispensation of Providence, which it was her duty to bear with patient submission. There was something exceedingly beautiful in the manner the young girl bore her terrible misfortune. The dignity mingled with resignation which she displayed in her behaviour gained her not only the respect and admiration of all who knew her, but also their sincere sympathy and love.

To return to the subject of the robbery. Although all proceedings to discover the thief had

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been stopped, Mr. Mordaunt having yielded to the wishes of his daughter, affairs did not go on so smoothly between him and his partner. The latter was naturally and justly indignant at the heavy loss the firm had sustained, nearly two thousand pounds worth of goods having been stolen; and he had, of course, no idea of allowing the robber to escape with impunity. He was also considerably puzzled for some time at the behaviour of Mr. Mordaunt on the occasion. He could not imagine how a man of so much probity himself should attempt to screen so gross an act of dishonesty in another.

But a short interview he had with the inspector of police put him right in the matter, and he then unhesitatingly dropped all idea of prosecuting; he refused, however, to submit tranquilly to the loss. We have before stated that Mr. Mordaunt possessed but a comparatively small interest in the business, and also that he was a man of somewhat parsimonious habits. As might have been expected, he rejected with indignation the senior partner's suggestion

that he ought to bear, if not the whole of the loss, certainly a very large proportion of it. The dispute at last reached such a height, that it threatened to destroy the good feeling which had hitherto existed between them ; but a satisfactory arrangement, at least to Mr. Wilson, was arrived at through Clara's agency. Her father, with great kindness and good feeling, had kept from her the knowledge of the disputes which had arisen. But Mary, the servant, who was no longer the drudge of the establishment, but had been raised to the position of personal servant to Clara, having heard of the disagreement, communicated it to her young mistress. The news was far from being so annoying to Clara as her servant feared it would have been. She received the intelligence one night when she was preparing for bed, and she did not sleep till she had marked out for herself a well-defined course of action, which the very next day she put in practice. After breakfast, at which meal she no longer attended, she sent Mary below to request that Mr. Mordaunt would come upstairs, as she wanted particularly to speak with him. Mr. Mordaunt, with whom the slightest wish

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of his daughter was now law, immediately joined her in the sitting-room.

“Father,” she said, as soon as their mutual inquiries respecting each other’s health was over, “I wish particularly to talk with you about the heavy loss you have sustained. To how much does it amount?”

“To nearly two thousand pounds, my dear. Why do you ask?”

“I will tell you that presently,” said Clara. “What does Mr. Wilson say about it? Is he not very angry?”

“Very much so,” said Mr. Mordaunt, “and very unreasonable into the bargain. He says that as I refused to prosecute the villain——”

“Dear father,” said Clara, interrupting him, “do not speak so. Tell me only about Mr. Wilson. That he should be angry is very natural; no one can justly blame him for that, but in what way is he unreasonable?”

“Inasmuch,” said Mr. Mordaunt, “that he insists I should make good the loss from my own pocket.”

“From your pocket, dear father? It would

certainly be unreasonable : still I consider he is not without reason in wishing to be reimbursed."

"In what way is it to be done, then?" said Mr. Mordaunt. "Unless I pay it myself, which I certainly shall not do, I do not see from what source the money is to come. I have only one-fourth share in the business, and that proportion I am willing to give, but I will not refund one shilling beyond it."

"What reason does he give for requiring more?"

"He holds that as I have refused to prosecute, and have thereby put it out of the power of the police to recover any portion of the property, it is for me to make good, at least, the greater proportion of the loss."

"Dear father," said Clara, drawing nearer to him on the sofa where they were seated, and seeking for his hand, which she continued afterwards to hold in hers, "I consider it would be unreasonable either for you or Mr. Wilson to sustain the slightest loss by this most lamentable affair. It was through no fault of his that it occurred, nor of yours that the money was not afterwards recovered. I alone am to blame. You gave over all

pursuit at my request—and may God bless you for it—and I alone ought to be held answerable for the consequences. I have money sufficient to pay all, and I insist on doing it. Nay, dear father, do not speak till I have done,” she continued, feeling that her father started at her proposition. “If you refuse the money, you will make me miserable ; if, on the contrary, you accept it, I shall love you, if that is possible, more than I do now. I take shame to myself for not having proposed restitution before ; but pray do not make me more ashamed by refusing to allow me to do it now. There will be no difficulty in my selling out my money. It is my own ; I am of age, and little as I understand of business matters, I know that I can do it legally. Promise me, my dear father, that you will not attempt to throw any impediment in my way.”

Mr. Mordaunt, who had with great difficulty restrained himself while his daughter was speaking, now addressed her with much warmth of feeling ;—

“My dear child, your offer, kind as it is, I cannot for a moment think of accepting. It would



be a gross act of injustice on my part to allow you to pay one shilling of the loss. Did I consider Mr. Wilson's claim a fair one, you may be certain I should not have delayed meeting it a single day. I refuse to pay it upon principle, and no argument shall induce me to alter my determination. Now, kiss me, my dear, and promise me this, that you will never speak to me on the subject again."

Clara kissed her father, but declined making him the promise he required.

"I am sorry you refuse me, my dear," he said, "because, as I told you before, nothing shall induce me to accept your offer, and you will merely put me to the pain of refusing to oblige you."

So saying, he rose from the sofa and left the room.

Clara did obey her father in not speaking to him again on the subject ; but she requested Mary to obtain for her all the information in her power relative to the misunderstanding between him and Mr. Wilson. Through the girl's agency, she discovered that the rupture, in-

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stead of healing, was rather widening; and also, that Mr. Wilson had threatened to commence legal proceedings. This information rendered Clara very unhappy, not only on account of the uneasiness it would occasion her father, and the consequent ill effect it would certainly have upon his health, but the unpleasant notoriety it would give to the whole affair. To her own inevitable share in it, she was comparatively indifferent; but although she had resolved that all communication should cease between her and Frederick Heathcote,—a determination from which there was not the slightest probability of her swerving,—she did not even attempt to disguise from herself the fact that she loved him as dearly as ever. She felt certain that any legal proceedings, which might be taken by Mr. Wilson, would have the effect of blasting the future prospects of one whose success in life was as dear to her as her own, and of whose reformation she felt perfectly assured. Day by day, she received fresh intelligence from Mary of the increasing ill-feeling existing between her father and his partner, and each additional item she

received made her still more unhappy. The continued agitation in which she was kept by this state of affairs was so great that at last it threw her on a bed of sickness, and Dr. Morgan was as usual sent for.

For some time it considerably puzzled the worthy doctor to ascertain the exciting cause of his patient's malady. The proximate cause he detected readily enough to be uneasiness of mind, but what had caused that uneasiness he could not make out. Possibly it may strike the reader that it was an act of indiscretion on the part of Dr. Morgan to inquire minutely into the matter ; but it should be remembered that he was not merely the medical adviser of the family, but their intimate friend as well. For some time he deliberated whether he should speak to Clara personally on the subject, or endeavour by some indirect means to discover the truth. At last he determined on adopting the latter method, as he feared, from the resolute character of his patient, that he might fail in any attempt to obtain an explanation from her. He therefore applied himself instead to her handmaid Mary. With her he

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found no difficulty whatever, and he received a full, true, and particular account of the whole state of the case. With these facts in his possession, he sought an interview with Mr. Mordaunt, and explained to him the critical position his daughter was in, and the strong necessity there existed for some energetic steps being taken to relieve her mind from the heavy oppression that rested upon it.

“Doctor,” said Mr. Mordaunt, “I perceive Clára has been making you first her confidant and then her agent, in order to obtain from me that which I have already peremptorily refused her. If so, I assure you, you are losing your time and trouble; nothing shall induce me to alter my determination.”

“You are mistaken as to both these charges,” replied Dr. Morgan. “She has not made me her confidant, although I now understand fully the disappointment she has met with. Nor has she requested me to apply to you; on the contrary, she is totally in ignorance of my present application. I do not wish, believe me, to interfere in the matter, nor should I have done so, had I

not had great reason to fear that if something is not done to relieve her present sorrow, the consequences may be very serious indeed."

"But what can I do? If it will satisfy her, I will pay the whole amount out of my own pocket ; but she insists that I shall take her money to make good the loss the firm has sustained. You must perceive yourself the gross injustice I should be guilty of if I acceded to her request."

"Granted," said the doctor. "In the abstract you have undoubtedly reason on your side, but would it not be possible to compromise the matter, so as to allow her to believe that you have met her wishes, while at the same time she shall not in the end be prejudiced by the step she wishes to take?"

"I do not see in what way it could be done," said Mr. Mordaunt.

"I understand you to say that you would willingly pay the whole sum yourself," was the doctor's reply, "if you could secure your daughter's peace of mind?"

"Certainly ; unjust as Mr. Wilson's demand is, I would willingly pay the whole amount rather

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than that Clara's health should suffer in the slightest degree."

"I expected nothing less from you," said the doctor. "Now let me ask whether it would not be possible to allow her apparently to pay the money, while you could invest for her a like amount in some security without her being aware of your intention, so that at your death she could receive it back again, principal and interest? I cannot, as I am no lawyer, advise you in what way it should be done—whether to place it in the hands of trustees or otherwise—all that, of course, as an experienced man of business, you will yourself understand far better than I do. At the same time I am satisfied that nothing less than some compromise will content your daughter."

Mr. Mordaunt remained for some moments absorbed in thought; at last he said,—

"Doctor, I must admit that your scheme appears feasible enough. At any rate, I will give it my serious consideration, as well as consult my solicitor on the subject. Whether it can be carried out in a satisfactory manner or not, I am greatly obliged to you for the suggestion, and



for the interest you have taken in my daughter's welfare."

The result was that the money, to Clara's great gratification, was sold out to make good the loss to the firm; while at the same time her father, unknown to her, invested a like sum in a good security, to be paid her, with the interest accumulated on it, at his death.

Clara's mind was now comparatively at ease, and her bodily health in consequence improved rapidly. But all she had wished was not yet accomplished. She had purchased a machine invented for aiding the blind to write, and in a short time had so completely mastered its difficulties as to be able to write a letter with comparative facility. The first use to which she applied her newly-acquired art was to pen a letter to her lover; in fact, it was the great end and aim for which she had purchased the machine. The letter, though not lengthy, was admirably to the point. She informed him that many and grave circumstances had occurred since his departure, circumstances of such a nature as to necessitate that all correspondence should cease between them

for the future. She admitted it was a necessity which inflicted on her the greatest pain, but it was imperative that she should adopt such a course, alike out of duty to him and to herself. She informed him that on the night of his departure a serious robbery had been committed in her father's house, and that money and valuable jewels to a large amount had been abstracted. She was happy to say that the robber had never been discovered, and that all search after him had definitely ended. She sincerely trusted the unhappy man who had committed the act would profit by his escape from the punishment which the law would have meted out to him, and atone for it either by making restitution of the plunder, or by leading an honourable life for the future. So heavy had been the loss his dishonesty had occasioned, that the little property she had been possessed of, and which was to have formed her marriage portion, had been applied to make up the deficiency, and she was now penniless. But her family misfortunes had not ended with the robbery. During the thunder-storm that had raged during that fearful night a flash of lightning

had struck her, and she was now totally and incurably blind. She trusted he would have the good sense to perceive the justice of the resolution she had come to. Without money, and afflicted with the loss of sight, she had still too much pride to be a burden on any man; and although she fully believed that the affection he bore her was sufficiently great to overlook these obstacles, to her they were invincible. She trusted he would accept her letter kindly, and not attempt to reply to it, as she had come to the resolution that all acquaintanceship should cease between them; and in case he should doubt it, and send an answer to her letter, she assured him it would not be received.

When Clara had finished her letter and addressed it, she resolved to put it into the post-office box herself. She had communicated to no one her intention of writing a letter to Heathcote; she had carefully kept her door closed when occupied in its composition, and it now only remained for her to post it herself to insure its remaining a secret. Having deposited her letter in her pocket, she unbolted her door,

and ringing for Mary, who always accompanied her now when she went out, she told her to make ready to lead her to some shops in which she had to make purchases. She was quickly obeyed, and mistress and maid left the house together. Clara, with genuine feminine *finesse*, had arranged her commissions in such a manner as to make it necessary for them, in going from one shop to another, to pass by the post office. After having entered the street in which the post office was situated, she occupied herself in thinking how near she was to the building, and when she supposed she had reached it, she told Mary to lead her to the letter-box. The girl obeyed, and Clara having with her left hand felt for the mouth of the letter-box, she with her right placed the letter in it, holding it in such a manner as to preclude the possibility of Mary seeing the address. As soon as the letter had left Clara's hand, she gave a sigh of relief and continued her road. Mary, however, was not altogether blind to her young mistress's behaviour, nor altogether without interest in the matter. Hitherto she had always been commissioned by her mistress to

post her letters for her; but on this occasion she had done it herself, and evidently in such a manner as to conceal its address. Again, she remarked that before they had arrived at the post office her mistress had talked incessantly—a most unusual circumstance with her, as she was naturally rather taciturn than otherwise. No sooner, however, had her mistress deposited the letter in the box than her flow of spirits suddenly ceased, and she uttered not a word, but walked hurriedly along. The girl was at last so struck with her mistress's silence, that she looked in her face to ascertain the cause, and found that Clara was in tears, which she had great difficulty in repressing. Presently she said softly, as if rather thinking aloud than speaking, "May God bless and preserve him." The tears then began to flow down her cheeks so rapidly that Mary became somewhat alarmed, and proposed that her mistress should enter some shop and sit down for a while; but Clara requested her instead to guide her home as quickly as possible.

On reaching home she immediately retired to her bedroom, and did not leave it again for

some hours. In the evening she sent Mary to Mr. Mordaunt, to request that he would come into the sitting-room when he was disengaged. The old man obeyed the summons directly. As soon as they were alone, Clara opened the subject of her message.

“Dear father,” she said, “I wish to ask a favour of you, but I must beg you will not put any questions to me about it, nor speak to me of it ever afterwards. Should any letter arrive for me from India, you will refuse to take it in. Also, that you will inform every one in the house of the order, without giving them any reason for it, only insisting that it shall be rigorously obeyed. I also wish that you will never mention to me the name of one whom I shall never speak to again. Do you clearly understand me?”

“Clearly, my dear, and you shall certainly be obeyed. I compliment you on your resolution.”

“I had almost forgotten to say that, should a letter arrive for me and be refused, you must also promise me I shall never hear of it.”

“I will take good care, my dear, that you shall



know nothing about it, either from me or any other person in the house."

The conversation on the subject then dropped.

Clara, after the despatch of her letter and her short conversation with her father, appeared to be much easier in her mind than she had been since the robbery. It must not be imagined, however, from the course she had adopted, that her love for Frederick Heathcote had in the least diminished. It continued as pure and unsullied as ever, and the heavy misfortune that had come upon her rather increased her facilities for thinking of her lover than otherwise, shutting her up, as it did, from much intercourse with the outside world and external objects, thus allowing him to be more frequently and uninterruptedly in her thoughts. Although her blindness was by no means ameliorated by time, her life now passed tranquilly enough. She had several friends who were much endeared to her, and their love for her was increased by the placid, amiable, and resigned manner in which she submitted to her terrible misfortune. Another cause also assisted in producing Clara's resignation. She was natu-

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rally of a religious temperament, and had also been thoroughly educated under the care of a pious mother. She now fully experienced the benefits of the instruction she had received. With little outward demonstrations of piety, beyond regularly attending all the services at her parish church, her petitions to the Deity in the seclusion of her chamber for courage and support were frequent and earnest. Nor were her prayers unheard or unanswered. She received in return an amount of comfort and consolation which could only have been accorded to one who had prayed sincerely and gratefully; and she received with humility the mercies vouchsafed to her.

Mr. Mordaunt never recovered the shock which his daughter's misfortune and the robbery had caused him. The most correct bulletin which could have been given of his state of health was that, though it gradually sunk, it was by such imperceptible degrees that he hardly felt it himself, although it was easily noticed by those of his friends who only saw him occasionally. He became so weak that he was unable to attend to business before the middle of the day, and then

he could continue in the shop only for a few hours. Another circumstance occurred which by no means tended to strengthen him, either in mind or body. About two months after the robbery, he lost the services of his foreman, Gideon Pursite. Gideon had received a letter from his uncle, a jeweller in a small way of business in Bristol, informing him that in consequence of his own declining health, and of his only son having emigrated to Australia, taking his shopman with him, he was in want of some one to assist him in his business, and that if Gideon would take the charge of it, he would admit him into partnership without his advancing any capital. Although the uncle, from his nephew's description, appeared to be by no means of an amiable disposition, still the offer was too tempting to be refused, and with many expressions of regret, Gideon gave his master notice of his intention to leave him. Mr. Mordaunt was greatly annoyed at the circumstance, for the double reason that he not only had the greatest reliance on Gideon, and the deepest respect for him, but that he found him a perfect master of his business. Still he could

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offer no objection. On the contrary, he was obliged to admit that the young man was perfectly justified in profiting by the offer his uncle had made him. The only stipulation he made was that Gideon should remain with him till he had found an efficient person to supply his place. This being agreed to, things went on in their usual manner without any one being found eligible to supply Gideon's place. As, however, his uncle was getting very impatient at his delay, it was at last resolved that the senior shopman, who had been in the service of the firm for some years, should get the situation of foreman on trial. The parting between Mr. Mordaunt and his assistant did equal credit to both. Mr. Mordaunt desired that he would always look upon him as a friend, and assured him that he warmly regretted the loss of his services ; while Gideon, on his part, assured Mr. Mordaunt that he should always carry with him a grateful remembrance of the kindness and consideration he had received at his hands.

Although greatly chagrined at first at the loss of his confidential assistant, Gideon's successor performed his duties so well as to meet with the

perfect satisfaction of his employer, and the effect of the change on the shattered constitution of Mr. Mordaunt was not so great as might have been expected.

Things went on regularly enough in the business, and nothing occurred worthy of notice for some months. One day, as Dr. Morgan was descending into the shop after his professional visit to Mr. Mordaunt upstairs, the mayor of the town entered. He was much pleased to meet the doctor, with whom he was intimate, and they conversed together for some minutes, when the mayor, suddenly turning to the assistant, and placing a small leather case on the counter, said :—

“A lady of my acquaintance, whom I met a few days since in London, has given me a little commission to execute for her. Her watch, which is a great favourite with her, is out of order, and as it appears, by the name on it, to be one of your make, she requested me to bring it to you to put in repair. Tell me what requires to be done, and how long it will take you to do it. I shall visit London again in about a fortnight, and if possible I should like to take it back with me.”

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So saying, he turned from the shopman to continue his conversation with the doctor.

When the shopman drew the watch from the case it almost fell from his hands, so great was his surprise, for he recognized it as part of the property which had been stolen on the night of the robbery. It was a lady's watch, with a blue enamelled back, richly studded with diamonds, and was altogether so remarkable in its appearance that he could not be mistaken. What to do puzzled him at first exceedingly; but he soon recovered his presence of mind. He opened the watch and inspected it minutely, and then told the mayor that the mainspring was broken and that several trifling repairs were needed, but that he thought he could promise it should be in perfect order in about ten days' time—at any rate before the mayor started for London. The mayor expressed himself perfectly satisfied; and the shopman, without further remark, locked up the watch in one of the drawers. At last the conversation between the doctor and the mayor terminated, and they were on the point



of leaving the house, when the shopman said,—

“I beg your pardon, Dr. Morgan, but I should be greatly obliged to you if you would allow me a minute’s conversation.”

“Certainly,” said the doctor. “What can I do for you?”

“If you would kindly step into that room,” said the man, “I will join you in one moment.”

The doctor entered the back room, and the shopman took the watch from the drawer, and followed him. Having closed the door, he said,—

“I am sorry to trouble you, sir, but would you kindly give me a little advice how I ought to proceed? A very singular circumstance has just occurred, and I do not like, unless you authorize me, to speak to Mr. Mordaunt on the subject, as I do not know what effect it might have on his health. The watch the mayor has just brought in was part of the property stolen on the night of the robbery.”

“That is very extraordinary, certainly,” said the doctor; “but are you certain you are right?”

“Perfectly certain. As you may perceive,” the

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shopman continued, "the watch is a very remarkable one. During the time I have been with the firm I have never seen one like it."

"But there might have been, before you joined it. At any rate, you did perfectly right in not speaking to Mr. Mordaunt on the subject before consulting me. If the watch is really one of those which were stolen, and were the information conveyed to Mr. Mordaunt without great caution, the effect might be injurious. I hardly know how to advise you to proceed. Perhaps, after all, the best plan would be for us to call on the inspector of police and take his advice in the matter."

The shopman readily agreed to the proposal, and leaving his assistant to take charge of the shop, he proceeded with the doctor to the police station. Fortunately they found the inspector at his post. He listened patiently to the doctor's recital, and when he had finished, he inquired of the shopman whether he was certain that the watch had been a portion of the stolen jewellery."

"I am morally certain of it," said the shopman, "but cannot swear positively to it as a fact. I

have been some years with the firm, and have never seen another watch during the whole time like it. Besides, I saw that watch, or one exactly similar, on the night of the robbery. I gave it to Mr. Mordaunt myself to lock up in the strong-box."

"Then what causes you to have the slightest doubt on the subject?" inquired the inspector.

"Merely the possibility of the firm having had another like it before I entered their employment."

"There is certainly a chance of that," said the inspector; "but you are certain, whether they ever had another like it or not, that the watch formerly belonged to them?"

"Of that," said the shopman, "there can be no doubt whatever. It was made by our people, and their name, as you may see, is engraved on it."

"Well, that is a point gained, certainly," said the inspector; "but now we must discover whether the firm ever had another like it, before we take any decided step in the matter. The fact of the watch having been given to the mayor by a lady friend of his shows a strong possibility of

our being able to trace it, especially if they—I mean your firm—never had another like it. Now how can we be certain on that subject? Shall I call on Mr. Mordaunt and inquire?”

“Certainly not,” said the doctor; “any sudden mental shock might be fatal to him. We must not apply to him till every other course open to us has failed.”

“Do you think his partner, Mr. Wilson, could tell us anything about it?” inquired the inspector of the shopman.

“I very much doubt it; besides, he is now in France, and I am not sure that we have got his right address. Even if we had, I do not think it would be of any use writing to him, he takes so little part in the business.”

“Then I do not see what we can do,” said the inspector, turning to Dr. Morgan, “save question Mr. Mordaunt about it. How had it better be managed, sir?”

“If it is absolutely necessary, I will undertake the task myself,” replied Dr. Morgan. “I shall see him to-morrow morning professionally, and I will then take the opportunity of questioning him

about it. I shall call on him about eleven o'clock, and you," addressing the shopman, "can arrange matters in such a manner that you will be able to leave the house about noon, and we will call on the inspector, if that hour will suit him, and report progress."

"That time will suit me perfectly," said the inspector. "I will wait for you here: but in the meantime, do you not think it would be as well for me to call on the mayor and find out what he knows about the affair?"

"It would be useless," said the doctor; "besides, I know you will not find him at home, as he told me half an hour since that he was just going to drive over to a friend's house some eight or nine miles off, but that he should return at night. All things considered, it will be better for us to call on him at the Town Hall after our meeting to-morrow."

Next morning the doctor, true to his appointment, called at the house of his patient, and was ushered into the room on the first floor, where he found Mr. Mordaunt awaiting him. After the ordinary topics regarding health had been ex-

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hausted, the doctor skilfully turned the conversation on other subjects.

“By-the-bye,” he said at last, “did you ever trace any of the property lost on the night of the robbery?”

“Never,” was the reply; “and I expect we never shall.”

“Why not?”

“Because no doubt it has all been carried abroad.”

“I remember often remarking, in one of the glass cases, a very beautiful blue enamelled watch, set with diamonds, which used to excite my admiration very much, and which I have not seen lately. I hope it was not among the things stolen.”

“Indeed it was,” said Mr. Mordaunt. “There was a singular fatality about that watch. I made it for an extravagant young fellow who wished to present it to a lady whom he wanted to marry. After it was completed, I heard that he bore a bad character, and I refused to let it leave the house till he had paid for it. This he was not able to do; and shortly afterwards it was dis-



covered that he was a worthless fellow, and the match was broken off. It remained as part of our stock up to the time of the robbery, as we were never able, owing to its price, to find a purchaser for it. So, having escaped a swindler,—for he was no better,—it has fallen into the hands of a thief.”

“I should have thought you would have sold it easily. It was one of the handsomest things of the kind I ever saw. Did you ever make another like it?”

“Never. It was a very foolish affair on our part altogether. However, I was not to blame in the matter. My partner, Mr. Wilson, introduced the young man to me, and of course I imagined he was perfectly convinced of his integrity.”

“Perhaps he had no suspicion of his want of means. Whose design was it?”

“I believe it was designed by the fellow himself and my partner together. At least, Mr. Wilson used to take great interest in it when it was making, and was not a little proud of it when finished.”

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Dr. Morgan then inquired into the manner the new foreman performed his duties, and contrived to continue the conversation on different matters till it was nearly noon, when he took leave of Mr. Mordaunt, and accompanied the shopman to the police station, where they found the inspector waiting them.

“I have been able to ascertain from Mr. Mordaunt,” said the doctor, “that the only watch of the description he ever made is the one stolen on the night of the robbery. Of that he is certain. I found out also from him that his partner, Mr. Wilson, took great interest in the watch while it was making, and therefore there is little doubt he will be able to state whether it is the one in question. It is a great pity he is not in England, otherwise you might be able to go on with the affair without troubling Mr. Mordaunt about it.”

“We received a letter from Mr. Wilson this morning, sir,” said the shopman, “saying that, without fail, he would be in England at the latter end of the week, as he particularly wished to superintend the stock-taking himself.”

“So much the better,” said the doctor. “Now although my part in the matter is finished, I should like, merely from curiosity, to be present at your interview with the mayor. I suppose there will be no objection.”

“None whatever, sir,” said the inspector; “and I think we had better go at once, as we shall be certain to find him at the Town Hall.”

The three then left the station, and found the mayor in his private room.

“I have called, sir,” said the inspector, “respecting a watch you left yesterday to be repaired at Mr. Mordaunt’s. It appears to have been part of the effects stolen on the night of the robbery, of which you have heard. Would you have the kindness to tell me what you know about it, and how it came into your possession?”

“Certainly,” said the mayor. “You astonish me greatly, and I cannot help thinking you are labouring under a great mistake. It was entrusted to me by a lady of my acquaintance, residing in London, to get repaired for her at the makers’. How long it has been in her possession, and how she obtained it, I cannot tell you.”

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“Perhaps, sir,” said the inspector, “you could make some inquiries about it for us, as it may afford a clue to the whole affair. The shopman is able to swear to it, and Dr. Morgan has ascertained that Mr. Wilson, who is shortly expected in England, will also be able to identify it, and corroborate the fact.”

“Then,” said the mayor to the shopman, “why did you not tell me of it when I gave you the watch yesterday?”

“I recognized it immediately, sir; but at the moment I hardly knew how to act. Mr. Mordaunt is in such a state of health that I did not like to speak to him on the subject; but as soon as you had left I mentioned the circumstance to Dr. Morgan.”

“That is perfectly correct,” said the doctor; “and I have ascertained indirectly from Mr. Mordaunt that the watch is certainly the one stolen.”

“Well,” said the mayor, “I will write by this night’s post to the lady, requesting her to tell me how she became possessed of it, without stating my reasons for making the inquiry. I shall no doubt have an immediate answer, and if you will

call here about this time the day after to-morrow, I will inform you of the result."

On the day and hour named the party waited on the mayor, with the addition of Mr. Wilson, who had returned some days earlier than was expected. He informed them that he had received an answer to his inquiry, and he read to them the lady's letter. She stated that she had purchased the watch, about two months since, from a jeweller in Weymouth, in which town she had been for some time sojourning for the benefit of her health. The receipted bill for the money she had paid for the watch to Watkins & Pursite, who carried on their business in that town, was also enclosed in the letter. The reading of the letter and the receipt caused no little surprise to all present, especially to Mr. Wilson and his assistant, the latter of whom remarked that Gideon had informed him that he intended carrying on business in Bristol.

"No doubt it was to throw us off the scent," said the inspector, "in case any inquiries should be made. He must be a very stupid fellow if he could not invent a better dodge than that."

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“I should be sorry,” said Mr. Wilson, “to pre-judge any one, but if he turns out to be the canting hypocrite he appears to be, I will spare no expense or trouble in obtaining for him the punishment he deserves.”

It was at last resolved that the whole affair should be left in the hands of the inspector, who started the next day, along with the shopman, for Weymouth. It would be useless to detail their proceedings; suffice it to say that the shopman identified several articles of jewellery which had been stolen from his employers. Pursite's uncle admitted that they had been added to their stock by his nephew, who had also paid him a premium in money to be admitted into partnership. All the articles found on the premises, which had belonged to Messrs. Wilson & Mordaunt, were placed in the hands of the inspector, who returned home with Gideon as a prisoner. At the examination before the mayor, the case was made out clearly against him, he having been in possession of the stolen property, a great portion of which, including the watch, was identified by Mr. Wilson. After having been duly cautioned by the mayor,



he was asked if he wished to say anything. He merely answered that it was useless for him to deny it. He was very sorry for what he had done, and he sincerely hoped his late employers would show him mercy. It was, he said, his first offence, and that, since he had perpetrated the crime, he had not had a single happy hour,—an assertion his haggard, anxious appearance strongly bore out. The mayor told him that even if Mr. Wilson (who, however, showed no signs of relenting) was willing to forego the prosecution, it could not be allowed, and he was committed for trial.

Thanks to the exertions of Dr. Morgan, the whole affair was for some time successfully kept secret from Mr. Mordaunt and his daughter, the former being now so feeble as to be confined to his bed. The men employed in the business were especially directed not to mention the circumstance when in the house, and they faithfully obeyed the injunctions given them. Mary also was particularly requested to be careful in her conversation, and great as was the difficulty she had in maintaining silence, she succeeded perfectly. But, in spite of all the caution observed, the secret

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became known, and sad indeed were the results. One morning, about a week before the trial was to take place, a young lady, an intimate friend of Clara's, who had just returned from a month's visit to a friend in London, called on her. She passed through the shop without difficulty, being well known to the assistants, and proceeded upstairs to her friend's room. Mary was for the moment absent, and the young lady entered Clara's room without being announced. The joy at the meeting was great on both sides, and fluent indeed was the conversation which passed between the friends. Suddenly the young lady broke out with,—

“Were you not very much surprised to hear of Gideon Pursite? Who would have thought he would have turned out such a villain!”

“I have heard nothing about him,” said Clara.

“Heard nothing about him!” said the young lady, almost with a scream. “You must be joking, Clara?”

“I assure you I am not,” replied Clara; “what has he done?”

“You have heard nothing about the robbery?”

“Robbery!” said Clara, with surprise; “you must be mistaken. He is a very religious, honourable young man, or he must have greatly changed since he was with us. What have you heard about him?”

“Changed since he was with you!” said the young lady. “Why, you do not mean to say that you have not heard that he has been arrested for having committed the great robbery in this house, and that he has since admitted his guilt? Clara, my dear,” she continued, “for heaven’s sake, what is the matter with you? are you ill?”

But Clara heard her not; she had sunk back in her chair in a fainting fit. The young lady, greatly alarmed, rushed to the bell and rang it violently, and a few minutes afterwards Mary entered the room. She was much alarmed at the state her young mistress was in, and did what she could to restore her, but without effect.

“How foolish of me to forget that Dr. Morgan is with master just now! I will fetch him,” said Mary at last.

She left the room, and the next minute returned with the doctor, who, with some difficulty, suc-

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ceeded in restoring animation. As soon as consciousness had returned, and Clara was aware of the doctor's presence, she said,—

“Tell me, is there any truth in what I have just heard, that Gideon Pursite has been arrested for robbery?”

“From whom did you hear it?” said the doctor, evading the question, and looking angrily at Mary.

“I mentioned it casually,” said the young lady. “Of course I was not aware there was any secret about it.”

“Tell me once more,” said Clara, impatiently, “is there any truth in it?”

“It is no use disguising it any longer from you,” said the doctor; “Pursite has certainly been arrested, and, moreover, admits his guilt.”

“And I,” said Clara, “have believed that one of the most honourable of men was a despicable thief. Oh, I am justly punished for my fault. Shame, shame on me to have doubted him, even for a moment! Pity me! pity me!”

She now burst into a violent flood of tears,

which ended in an hysterical fit. So severe was it, and so loud were her cries, that they reached her father's chamber. He became terribly alarmed, and rang his bell for Mary. The girl immediately answered it, and Mr. Mordaunt inquired from whom the screams proceeded.

"From Miss Clara, sir," said Mary, now thrown totally off her guard; "she has just heard about Gideon Pursite."

"What about him?" inquired her master.

The girl at once perceived the blunder she had made, and attempted to repair it, but so clumsily that Mr. Mordaunt, agitated though he was, easily perceived that there was something she was endeavouring to conceal, and he imperatively insisted on an explanation. Mary, now fairly at bay, informed him briefly that Pursite had been arrested, by Mr. Wilson's orders, for the robbery, and that he had acknowledged himself guilty. Although Mr. Mordaunt had not the same cause for regret that had acted so powerfully on his daughter, the shock on his weak constitution was even stronger than it had been on Clara's. So alarming was it, that Mary hurriedly left the room

to request Dr. Morgan's assistance. As soon as the doctor saw his patient he perceived the great danger he was in. He attempted to calm him, and with great difficulty succeeded, but it was followed by a prostration so severe that he never recovered from it. He died the same evening; and although the news was concealed from Clara till the next morning, she almost sank under it. Youth and a good constitution fortunately bore her through it as far as her bodily strength was concerned, but a terrible impression was left on her mind. While her father's corpse remained in the house she continued in a comatose and bewildered state, occasionally broken by passionate fits of weeping. After the funeral she became somewhat better aware of what had taken place, and the position in which she was placed. So intense, however, was her grief, that Dr. Morgan became very anxious about her, while her many friends lavished on her every consolation that kindness could suggest, but without the slightest beneficial result.

Gideon Pursite's trial came on. He persisted in his original determination of pleading guilty, and



he was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. After the trial he made a full confession of the manner the robbery had been committed. He had received, he said, a letter from his uncle residing in Weymouth, offering him, if he could raise the money, a half-share of his business, his only son having emigrated. The offer was a most tempting one, the amount asked for the half-share being very small ; but as he had not the required capital he was obliged to write to his uncle declining the offer. The answer, instead of satisfying his uncle, merely produced in reply a modified proposition, offering the half-share on terms so reduced from the original sum named, that the nephew had not the heart directly to refuse it, but wrote back that he would give the subject his serious consideration, and send a final answer in a few days. As soon as he had despatched his letter he turned over in his mind in what way he could obtain the required amount, but by no ingenuity could he discover how it could possibly be done. The thought at last presented itself to him that he might consult his employers on the subject, thinking it possible that one of them might

make the advance on the security of the half-share in the business to be purchased. It is true he did not feel sanguine as to the success of his application, and he could not summon up sufficient courage to make it. One afternoon, when he was alone in the shop, and occupied in thinking in what way it would be best to bring the subject under the notice of his employers, a Jew dealer in second-hand clothes, travelling trunks, &c., and with whom he was slightly acquainted, came in and inquired if the firm purchased gold lace. Gideon replied that they did not. "Perhaps you can tell me," said the Jew, taking up a blue cap with a gold band upon it, "what is about the value of the gold lace on this cap?" Gideon tested it, and told him the probable value, and then, noticing the initials in the cap, inquired from whom he had obtained it? "I exchanged it," replied he, "for a portmanteau with that young sailor officer who visits here so often. He was going abroad, he said, and as it was no longer the regulation cap, he intended buying another in London."

Gideon Pursite assured the mayor, to whom

he was speaking, that up to that moment the idea of committing the robbery had never entered his head, but an inexplicable temptation, as yet without any ultimate intention, induced him to make an offer for the cap. He inquired of the Jew what he would sell it for, and, after a little chaffering, he purchased it. Once in possession of the cap he commenced his plot. He first took occasion to inspect the fastenings of Mr. Mordaunt's bedroom door. He found that when the key was in the lock inside, the end of it projected slightly on the outside of the door. He then obtained a small vice, such as jewellers and watch-makers use in their trade, and found that by applying it to the projecting portion of the extremity of the key he was able to turn it in the lock. Fully certain of being able to enter Mr. Mordaunt's bedroom when he pleased, it only remained for him now to choose his opportunity for perpetrating the robbery. After much deliberation he selected the evening of Frederick Heathcote's departure for his purpose, so that the suspicion might fall on him. He waited till he heard Heathcote depart,

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and then he put on a sea-coat which he had purchased some years before, when he had made a voyage to America, and placed the cap he had bought on his head, with the intention, if Mr. Mordaunt should wake, of misleading him as to identity. He opened the door, and, entering the room, saw by the glare of the night-light that the cash-box was in its place. Before he had fully secured it, Mr. Mordaunt awoke and called for assistance. Pursite immediately extinguished the lamp and hurried off with his booty, purposely throwing the cap on the landing-place, in order that it might be found there. He then rapidly but softly descended the stairs, and opening the street door he tried to make some marks with the vice on the outside of the lock, and afterwards made for his bedroom and locked himself in. Having placed the cash-box at the bottom of his chest, which he then locked, he undressed himself and got into bed. When requested to go for the police he again took the cash-box from its hiding-place, and concealed it in a spot he had selected before the robbery, and afterwards called at the

station. Of the reason of Frederick Heathcote's departure by the morning instead of the evening train, of course, he could give no account. Most probably it was owing to his being too late for the latter.

*VIII.—L'AMOUR MEDECIN.*

PART III.

MR. MORDAUNT, at his death, proved to be far wealthier than any of his friends had supposed. His will was sworn under £19,000, all of which, with the exception of some trifling legacies, and among them the sum of one hundred pounds to Gideon Pursite in consideration of his faithful services, he left to his daughter, Clara, absolutely. He had named his partner, Mr. Wilson, and Dr. Morgan, his executors, but the former declined to act. In the doctor Clara found a faithful friend and adviser,—a very fortunate circumstance for her, as the condition of her mind, apart from her blindness, rendered her utterly



incapable of passing any opinion on business matters. She removed, shortly after her father's decease, to the house of the lady who had accompanied her to London on the occasion of her visit to the oculist, and was treated by her with every kindness and consideration. The doctor watched her anxiously for some time, hoping that a change for the better might take place after her first fit of sorrow was over, but he was terribly disappointed. Instead of her mind acquiring a more healthy tone her melancholy fast became chronic. She sought for consolation in religion, but unfortunately not in a way which tended to her improvement or happiness. She appeared to have a settled conviction that she had been guilty of an enormous sin in doubting the integrity of her lover, who seemed to her now, as before the robbery, the soul of chivalrous honour. She believed that her blindness was a punishment inflicted on her by the Almighty for the fault she had committed ; and its incurable nature, she argued, was a proof that in this world she would never be forgiven. In vain did the doctor reason with her on the subject ; in vain did he enlist the

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services of an excellent clergyman to prove to the poor girl that the conclusion she had arrived at was wrong. In spite of all their efforts her mental malady was evidently increasing. At last her prayers became incessant petitions to Heaven that she might be taken from this world, and several expressions she let drop on the subject so greatly alarmed the doctor that he began to dread that she was fast settling down into a religious monomaniac. Knowing the very frequent occurrence of suicide in that phase of insanity, he became very anxious on her account. At last he came to the conclusion that it would be advisable to place her, if not under restraint, at least in some establishment where she could be carefully watched. For this purpose he wrote to Dr. Austin, who was an intimate friend of his, to inquire whether he could conveniently make room for her in his establishment, and having received a reply in the affirmative, he broached the subject to Clara. To his great satisfaction, and perhaps greater surprise, she offered but little objection, and a fortnight afterwards she left her home, accompanied by the female friend with whom she

had resided, and her servant, Mary, and they took up their residence among us.

Clara, by her amiable manners and attractive appearance, soon became a general favourite. Dr. Austin gave her the most unremitting attention, and her mind slowly but perceptibly improved. But apart from her tendency to religious monomania, her blindness greatly interested him. He had considerable skill as an oculist, and yet he was very much puzzled to understand the loss of her sight. He noticed that the pupil expanded and contracted regularly, and that there was not a single feature discernible in her appearance, apart from the fact that she held her head in the manner peculiar to the blind, which would have induced him to believe she could not see perfectly. Still there was evidently a total loss of vision, and all his experiments did not furnish him with one tangible proof to the contrary. He watched her narrowly when walking in the grounds with Mary; and he even went so far, on more than one occasion, as to call the maid away on some pretext, that he might watch Clara's movements during her absence. But

he could discover nothing which did not tend to prove her total blindness. She would walk from the path on to the beds, and strike against the slender branches of plants which were in her way. He questioned her companion closely as to the origin of Clara's blindness, but could find no reason to doubt that it was not occasioned by the lightning. He then questioned and cross-questioned Mary, and at last found out from her about the finding of Heathcote's cap on the floor, a secret the girl had hitherto kept from every one. Here was the first glimmering of hope to the worthy doctor. He now thought he should be able to prove there was more of mind than physical infirmity mixed up with Clara's blindness. But how to proceed with his investigation puzzled him extremely. He at last adopted the plan of occasionally accompanying her in her walks, instead of her companion or Mary, and then skilfully engaging her in conversation on the subject of her loss of sight. For some time, however, all his attempts were in vain ; but at last he obtained some slight success, at least enough to confirm him in the opinion he had formed. One afternoon, while

walking with Clara, she inquired whether he had any faith in dreams?

“In what way do you mean?” he asked.

“Whether they have any special signification? Whether, in fact, they are given us by Heaven as lessons from what has already happened, or to prognosticate what is to occur?”

“Those are very difficult questions to answer,” said the doctor. “To deny the possibility of either would be to deny the power of Heaven to convey its lessons in its own especial way. At the same time I believe that the ordinary run of dreams are merely kaleidoscopic reminiscences of what may have taken place the previous day, or random pictures conjured up by thoughts which have lately passed through the brain. But why do you ask?”

“Merely to obtain your opinion on the subject. But I do not agree with you. Last night, for example, I dreamed that poor papa and mamma were both alive, and that we were going to pass the day with an uncle, now dead, who lived in the country some miles off. On our way an accident happened to the carriage, and we were obliged to

get out. While we were waiting in the road, a lady came to us and asked us to accompany her to her house, and to remain there while the carriage was being repaired. We accepted her invitation, the more readily as it was beginning to rain. When we arrived at her house she introduced us to her three daughters, who received us in the most friendly manner, and we remained with them till the carriage was ready; and when we left they asked us for our address, as they should like to become intimate with us. Certainly not one thought of anything like a circumstance of the kind passed through my mind either yesterday, or, in fact, at any time. Now how do you account for that?"

"I do not pretend to account for it in any way," said the doctor. "At the same time, if that dream were sent you by Heaven for any especial lesson or warning, you must admit it would be very difficult to draw a conclusion from it."

"That I grant," said Clara, "unless it were an intimation that I do not think so often of those I have lost as I ought to do."

"That is a very remote probability," said the



doctor, "and by no means comes within the scope of my theology. I hold that all Heaven's teachings are of the most direct and explicit character. I even consider, although I admit that many wise and pious men do not hold the same opinion, that God is too just to hold us to obedience to any of His teachings unless they are expressed with perfect perspicuity."

"But why, then, should I have dreamed of people of whose existence I was not aware, even supposing they ever existed?"

"I really am unable to answer the question: but are you sure you never saw the mother and daughters before, or any persons who resembled them?"

"I never knew any family that could have afforded me the slightest clue for my conjuring them up in my memory."

"And they received you in a friendly manner?" said the doctor, rather for the purpose of saying something than from interest in the question.

"Nothing could be more friendly than their manner; still it was that of persons offering

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hospitality to strangers, and not to friends and acquaintances."

"And how were the young ladies dressed?" inquired the doctor, somewhat at a loss what to say.

"I do not know."

"Why not? I always thought that was a point rather unlikely to escape a young lady's attention or her memory."

"Because I did not see them."

"Not in your dream?" said the doctor, greatly surprised.

"No, I did not see them," replied Clara.

"But if the circumstance of which you dreamed occurred during your mamma's life, it was before you lost your sight," said the doctor, somewhat surprised.

"Certainly," said Clara; "still I saw them not: I never see anything in my dreams."

The doctor was silent for some moments from astonishment at Clara's statement.

"Do you really mean, my dear," he at last said, "that you never see in your dreams, even when they relate to circumstances which occurred before your blindness?"

"Never," replied Clara.

"That is very astonishing," said the doctor.

He now began to question her with great minuteness on the subject, but she held to the same statement that all was as dark to her in her dreams as when she was awake. He inquired also whether, when roused from a dream and before fully awake, there was any difference at the moment of transition, but he received the same answer.

The conversation he had had with Clara supplied the doctor with much matter for consideration. He was now more firmly convinced than ever that Clara's blindness was rather the effect of mental infirmity than of any physical defect in her eyes. But how to proceed puzzled him greatly. At last he resolved on writing to his friend Dr. Morgan for his opinion and advice. Before he had finished the letter, however, the necessity for it was removed by his receiving a visit from Morgan. Its object was simply to inform Dr. Austin that Frederick Heathcote had arrived in England, and wished particularly to see Clara. He had informed Mr. Heathcote of all

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the circumstances connected with Clara, of the state of her mind, and her incurable blindness. The information only increased the young fellow's desire to see her; and to oblige him Dr. Morgan had run down to Dr. Austin's, to inquire whether she was in a fit state to receive Mr. Heathcote, and if so, what arrangements should be made to that end.

"I am pleased to see you, Morgan," said Dr. Austin; "in fact, I was on the very point of writing to you. I am fully convinced the girl is not really blind, but that her loss of vision arises solely from psychological causes."

"I know you are a clever fellow, Austin, but if you can prove that Clara Mordaunt is not blind you are far more talented than I have ever given you credit for," replied Dr. Morgan, in a somewhat sarcastic tone.

"Jesting apart," said Dr. Austin, "I mean what I say, Morgan. I am fully convinced that she is not blind."

"What facts do you base your conclusions on?" inquired Dr. Morgan.

"The total absence of anything abnormal in the

appearance of the eye, and the perfect power of expansion and contraction of the pupil."

"That greatly puzzled me also," said Dr. Morgan, "and it was the cause of my accompanying her to London, to consult Dr. B——, the oculist."

"Pray what was his opinion of her case?"

"That it was an exceedingly obscure one, and that, taking all the circumstances into consideration, he had never met with one more so. Still, he was fully persuaded her blindness was real."

"Did he and you know all the facts of the case?"

"Certainly. You do not suppose, I hope, that we should have come to any conclusion without them?"

"No, certainly not, as far as they were told you; but I very much suspect that you did not know all. Perhaps you concluded there was no other circumstance attending her blindness but the flash of lightning. Now it turns out that my young lady concealed a most important one. At the same moment, and by the same flash of lightning, she discovered that a cap which she had found outside the door of her father's room was the cap of

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her lover, and she, at the same instant, concluded that he was the thief."

"That is very curious, certainly," said Dr. Morgan: "not a word of that did she say to me. How did you contrive to find it out?"

"From her servant; but I had great difficulty in extracting it from her, as it appears she was pledged to secrecy."

"What an artful young minx!" said Dr. Morgan, laughing; "I should not have imagined her capable of so much duplicity."

"If you had had as much experience of the mental peculiarities of young ladies as I have had," said Dr. Austin, also laughing, "perhaps you would not be so much surprised."

"Very likely not, Austin; but have you any other reasons for imagining her blindness not to be real?"

"Yes; and one of these is very strong. She tells me she cannot see in her dreams. Now I am convinced that she can, and that she is labouring under a delusion;—that, in fact, her insanity precludes her from remembering what she saw in them."



“That is a very extraordinary circumstance, certainly. Did you ever meet with, or read of, a similar case?”

“Never,” said Austin; “still I am not without data altogether. There is no difficulty whatever in finding instances where persons—most frequently women—from a morbid action of the mind, imagine they have lost the power of nervous sensation while it really exists, and have even been able to endure severe pain without feeling it. The miracles of St. Medard, in Paris, and many other instances, might be quoted in proof. Now as the act of seeing is a purely sensational, nervous phenomenon, a strong mental action might temporarily deprive a person of the faculty of sight.”

“Objections might be raised against that theory, Austin; at the same time, I must admit it to be an ingenious one.”

“What do you say, then, to the morbid mental action which not unfrequently will deprive an hysterical woman of the power of speech for a considerable time—in fact, months together, in some cases?”

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“That is certainly coming nearer to the point. Still you have not mentioned what means you would employ to cure her of her insanity, admitting that insanity exists in her case.”

“As the violent mental shock she received at the discovery of the cap, and the consequent belief that her lover had been the robber, deprived her of vision; so do I consider it possible that his sudden and totally unexpected appearance, now that she is convinced of his innocence, might have the effect of restoring her to sight.”

“I almost doubt it,” said Dr. Morgan; “still I admit the experiment to be worth trying. How do you propose to manage it?”

“That requires great consideration. If you see no objection to it, I wish you would prepare Mr. Heathcote for it. In the meantime, I will turn it over in my mind, and let you know when I am fully prepared. For my part, I shall not mention to any one here the object of your visit.”\*

\* I have given the conversation between the two doctors as well as I remember it: still the reader should bear in mind that I am not in the medical profession, and it is very probable that I may have misquoted some of the arguments, and omitted others necessary to fully bear out Dr. Austin's view of the case.

Immediately after Dr. Morgan's departure, Dr. Austin set his mind to work to determine on the best plan to try successfully his experiment on Clara's blindness. He was sorely puzzled for some time as to whether a sudden shock or a more gradual discovery of her lover's presence would be the better. At last he resolved on the latter, fearing that the former might act too powerfully on her nervous system. He now proposed that it should take place in the evening, without anything having apparently been premeditated about it. He was in the habit of occasionally having small evening social parties, at which not only the inmates of his house were present, but also some of the families resident in the neighbourhood. It was at one of these that he resolved on introducing Frederick Heathcote, without, of course, giving the slightest intimation of his intention to Clara. All being arranged, he wrote to Dr. Morgan, informing him in detail of his plan, and requesting him to instruct Heathcote in the part he was to play ; and having received an answer that the young fellow would conduct himself according to the precise instruc-

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tions he had received, Dr. Austin completed his arrangements.

The party at which the meeting of the lovers was to take place was to be larger and more brilliant than usual. The guests arrived about eight o'clock, and were ushered into the drawing-room,—all with the exception of the lieutenant, who was to remain shut up in the doctor's study till it was time for him to appear on the scene. When the room was moderately full of guests, Clara and her companion entered it, and seated themselves on a sofa at the farther extremity from the entrance-door. Clara's companion had, however, been initiated into the doctor's design; but as it was considered dangerous to allow Mary to be a party to it, lest her extreme affection for her mistress might tempt her to commit some indiscretion, she was permitted to spend the evening at the house of some people in the vicinity whose acquaintance she had made. Clara looked more attractive that evening than she had ever done, and was in good spirits. She was, as usual, the great centre of interest, her mild, amiable manners, and her infirmity of blindness, borne

with so much meekness and patience, rendering her an object of love and sympathy to all. After she had been seated a short time, her companion quitted her side, and her place was immediately taken by a lady who resided but a short distance off, who had conceived a great affection for Clara, and was in the habit of taking her out with her in her carriage drives. They talked together for some time in an animated manner, and during their conversation Frederick Heathcote, accompanied by a brother officer, glided quietly into the room, which was now well filled, and took up such a position that Clara could not perceive him.

Before Heathcote entered the room, Dr. Austin had placed himself by the fireplace, and was soon engaged in conversation with another gentleman; but he was evidently watching his patient the while with great anxiety, his gaze being hardly for a moment averted from her. As Heathcote entered, he noticed that an expression of uneasiness passed over her countenance, and the conversation she had been carrying on with the lady beside her suddenly flagged. Nor

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was it again resumed ; for the lady, noticing the change in Clara's countenance (neither she nor any of the guests were aware of the doctor's plot), and thinking probably that one of her fits of melancholy was coming on, did not attempt to carry on the conversation, but sat quietly by her side.

Presently Clara's face assumed a most anxious expression, and she bent forward and leant her brow on her hand, as if she were either in deep thought or wished to conceal her countenance from those near her. The doctor now beckoned to Frederick Heathcote to take a chair on the side of the room exactly opposite to Clara. He at once obeyed, keeping up at the same time a conversation with his friend, who was by him, without looking towards the part of the room where Clara was seated. The doctor now left his position by the fireplace, and placed himself at the back of Clara's sofa, so that he might be able to converse with her and keep his eye the while on Frederick Heathcote, and thus be able to make a sign to him should he require him to move.

“Have you got a headache this evening, Miss Clara?” he said to her.



Clara, not being aware that he was near her, started at the sound of his voice as if awakened from a dream, and replied,—

“No, none whatever ; why do you ask me ?”

“From your leaning your head on your hand. Do you find the room too warm ?”

“No, not at all. I was merely thinking somewhat deeply. Have you not a great many visitors here to-night ?” she continued, turning her head towards him.

“Yes, more than I had anticipated.”

“Who are those two very handsome young men opposite ?” said the lady by Clara’s side, breaking in abruptly, and little imagining how inconvenient it was for the doctor to answer the question.

“I do not know them,” he hurriedly answered ; “they were brought here by a friend.”

Clara mechanically turned her head from the doctor, and Heathcote was before her. Dr. Austin made a sign for him to move, which he immediately did, placing himself behind some of the guests, so as to be completely out of sight. The doctor now looked anxiously at Clara, but the expression of anxiety swiftly vanished, and one of

intense satisfaction took its place ; for he noticed that a thrill of agitation passed over Clara, and he now felt certain that his surmises as to the nature of her blindness were correct. He did not speak to her for several minutes, but continued to watch her with great attention. Presently she assumed a bewildered expression, accompanied by a perceptible tremor of the whole frame. A young lady who had seated herself at the piano now commenced the prelude to a song. Clara with an effort aroused herself, and listened with considerable attention to the song, which was well sung and appeared to please her. As soon as it was finished the same young lady began to play a set of quadrilles, and the younger portion of the company stood up for the dance, with the exception of Heathcote, who, obeying a sign from the doctor, still kept out of sight. During the dance the countenance of Clara brightened up considerably ; she was evidently keeping time, in her mind, with the music.

When the quadrille was over, and the dancers had dispersed, Heathcote again seated himself on the chair opposite to Clara ; but this time he no

longer conversed with his friend, but gazed full upon her. She uttered a slight exclamation of surprise, but not so loud as to claim the attention of any one save the doctor (the lady who had been seated beside her having now removed to another part of the room), and pressed the palms of her hands against her face. The prelude to another dance now sounded, and Clara removed her hands. Heathcote was no longer opposite. The doctor remarked that she turned her face to different parts of the room, as though searching for some one, but as if insensible of the presence of the rest of the company. The dance commenced, but Clara this time paid no attention to the music, and sat evidently in a state of considerable agitation. Although the doctor noticed this, he made no remark to her on the subject, but remained standing behind the sofa.

When the dance had ended Dr. Austin left his position, and requested the gentlemen each to escort a lady down-stairs for the purpose of taking some refreshment. As he gave this invitation he wore an expression of great care and anxiety, for the moment to test the efficacy of his experiment

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had now arrived. As the room became clearer, he advanced to Clara and offered her his arm to conduct her down-stairs. She hardly understood him at first, so deeply absorbed was she in thought; but on his repeating his offer she rose from her seat and took his arm. The room was now completely cleared of guests, with the exception of Frederick Heathcote and his friend. As the doctor was leading her to the door he suddenly stopped, and Heathcote stood before them looking at Clara. A violent trembling seized the poor girl; she could hardly stand erect; but still she appeared to doubt the reality of her lover's presence.

“Heathcote, my dear fellow,” said his friend, “will you not join the rest down-stairs?”

“You go on,” said Heathcote, slowly and distinctly, “and I will join you directly.”

The effect of his voice upon Clara was marvellous. Her morbid fancy had made her doubt the reality of his presence, but his voice at once dispelled it. She uttered a cry, and was on the point of falling. She exclaimed, “Support me! pray, support me!” The appeal she made was to

the doctor, but the support she received was from her lover, who clasped her in his arms.

“Clara, my dear,” he said, “do you not know me? Speak to me, my dear; speak to me.”

“Oh, what has befallen me!” she said; “is this real or a delusion?”

“Perfectly real, my dear,” said the doctor; “you have been suffering under a terrible delusion, but it has vanished. Look around you. You can see now perfectly well, I am sure.”

“Pray God,” said Clara, “that you say the truth, and that I am not dreaming. Frederick, it is really you, I am sure; I feel God has forgiven me at last.”

She now burst into an uncontrollable flood of tears, leaning her head the while on the breast of her lover, who offered her every consolation in his power. Her tears still continued to flow, however, and the doctor, perceiving that an hysterical fit was imminent, thought it was time to put an end to the scene. He now rang the bell for Clara's companion and Mary, and both quickly afterwards appeared, and to their care Clara was confided.

So far Dr. Austin's experiment on Clara's

malady had been perfectly successful, but he still felt a terrible amount of anxiety on her account. He calculated, from the state of mind in which she was when she left him, that it would be some hours before she fell asleep, if she did sleep at all. If she continued awake he considered he had but little to fear, as there would be a continuity of thought on the one subject from night till morn, and the daylight would be an admirable confirmation to her of the reality of her cure and the extraordinary delusion to which she had been subject. Should she fall asleep, however, he feared the effect of her waking. She had for so long a time believed herself to be blind, that he dreaded the possibility of her mind, from the force of habit, running into the same delusion again, as it might be exceedingly difficult to arouse her from it. He had himself no intention of sleeping that night, that he might be ready for any emergency ; but beyond that, he was fairly at a loss. At last, finding he could come to no settled conclusion as to what course to take, Dr. Austin, with an astuteness worthy of the brain of a Mrs. Gamp, thought that it would perhaps be better to



let Nature have her own way, while he kept in readiness to assist her when she should indicate what it was best to do. He now contented himself with instructing Mary, who always slept in her mistress's room, to keep awake the whole night, and if Clara fell asleep to give him immediate notice, adding that she would find him in the drawing-room at any hour during the night. The girl, who was overjoyed at the prospect of her mistress's recovery, promised faithfully to obey his instructions, which she did to the letter.

Before midnight all were in bed, with the exception of the doctor and Frederick Heathcote, who had as little inclination for rest as had the man of science. It may perhaps be imagined that he ought to have had less; but it would be doing the worthy doctor an injustice to imagine that the lover was more interested in the matter than he was. Heathcote was actuated but by one feeling—affection for his mistress; while the doctor acted under two impulses, less powerful in themselves, perhaps, than the one felt by Heathcote, but at least equally strong combined—a genuine fatherly affection for the poor

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girl, and an intense interest in the cause of science.

One o'clock, two o'clock struck, and still no appearance of Mary. The doctor had remained all this time perfectly motionless in his arm-chair, while the young sailor continued unceasingly a sort of quarter-deck walk to and fro in the room. Neither exchanged a word. The turret clock over the stables struck the hour of three, when the doctor suddenly sprang from his chair, and, stamping his foot, said,—

“How stupid of me not to have had that clock stopped! It may keep her awake.”

“Can I do it now?” said Heathcote, stopping in his walk.

“No; on consideration, perhaps it may be best as it is.”

The doctor again seated himself in his chair and remained motionless, and Heathcote again commenced his walk. No further conversation passed between them.

About half-past three, Mary entered the room and reported that her mistress had fallen into a doze.

“Very well,” said the doctor. “Now, if she stirs when the clock strikes again, or if she wakes before that, ask her whether she feels better, and bring me her answer; but do not rouse her purposely.”

Four o'clock struck, and ten minutes afterwards Mary entered the room.

“Miss Clara is awake, sir; I asked her if she felt better, and she said she did, and that she had dreamt she had seen her father and Mr. Wilson talking angrily together.”

“Thank God that she acknowledges she can see in her dreams,” said the doctor, with a sigh of relief; “that is one great point gained. Now, let me see, it will be broad daylight at six o'clock. Keep the shutters of the room fast closed till you hear the clock strike that hour, then open them suddenly, and call her attention to the weather or any object you please. If you hear Mr. Heathcote's voice in the corridor, also call her attention to it; then leave the rest to me.”

The pair remained in the drawing-room till it was nearly six o'clock, when they repaired to the corridor and placed themselves near Clara's door.

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They waited patiently till the clock struck six, and immediately afterwards they heard Mary opening the shutters. In two minutes or so, Dr. Austin said, in a loud tone of voice,—

“Will you take a walk round the grounds before breakfast, Mr. Heathcote?”

“No, thank you,” was the reply; “I shall take a book and remain in the drawing-room.”

The description Mary gave of the effect of the daylight and the power of distinguishing objects, as well as her recognition of her lover's voice, was graphic; but from the anxiety of the girl to give it force, it somewhat bordered on the ludicrous, so I will refrain from narrating it. To make a long story short, Clara's recovery was perfect. She met her lover in the drawing-room, after Mary had taken extra pains with her mistress's appearance. Clara, at the interview, pathetically implored her lover's forgiveness for the injustice she had done him; which, it is hardly needful to say, he granted in full. The end of the story is soon told, and may be given in very stereotyped phraseology. They married, were happy, and were blessed with a numerous family

of children. Heathcote was rapidly promoted in his profession, and was greatly respected. Clara made an excellent domesticated wife; but to the last she maintained that the blindness she had suffered from was a judgment on her from the Almighty for the cruel wrong she had done her lover.

END OF VOL. I.

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