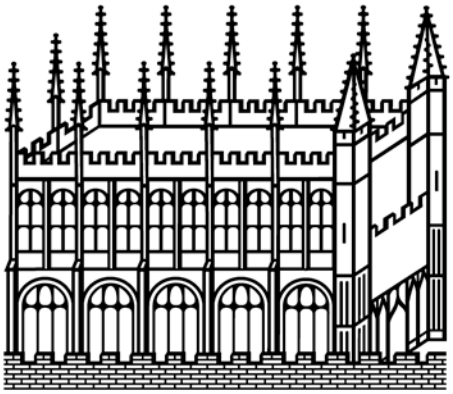

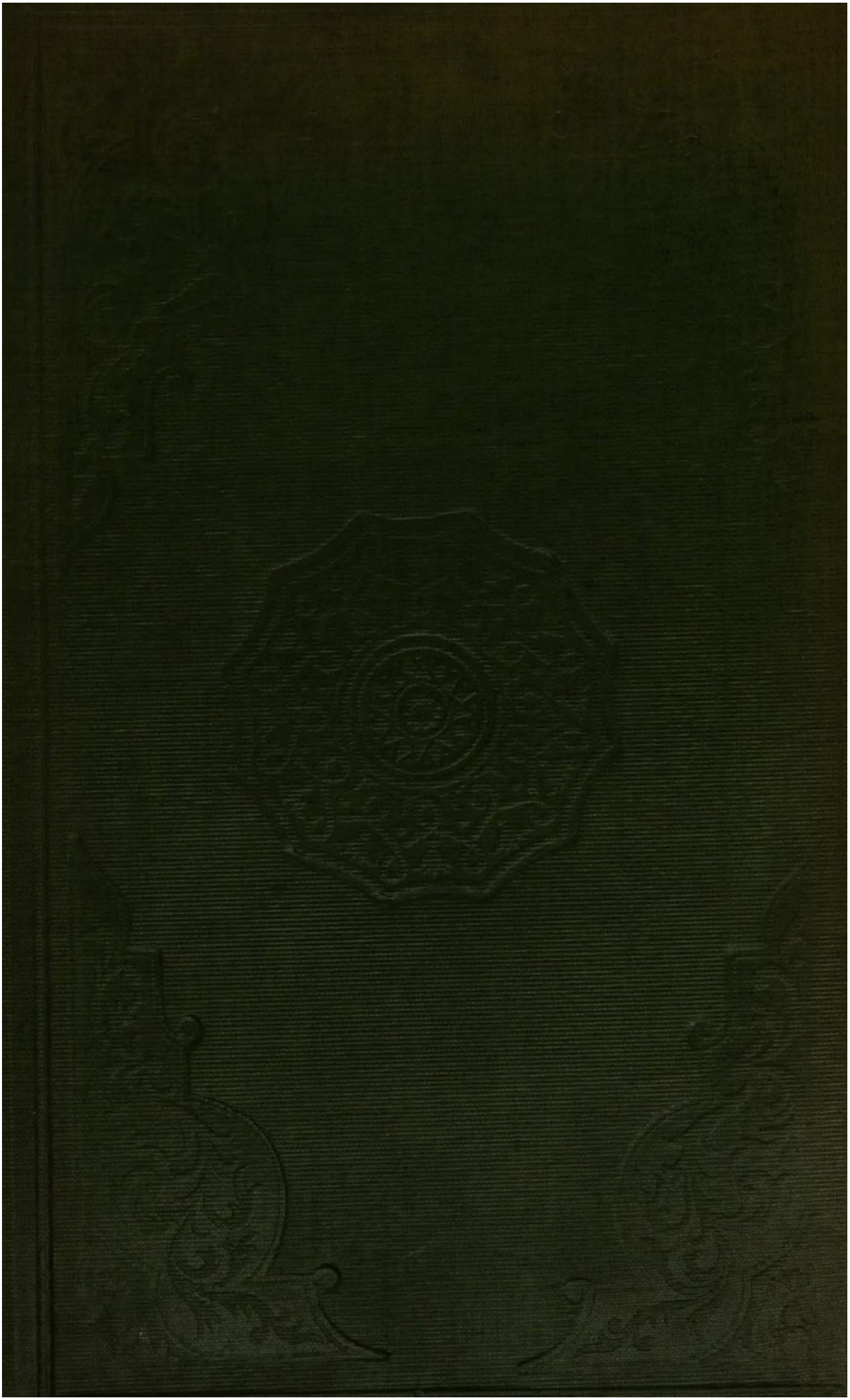

MR. DALTON'S LEGATEE,

A VERY NICE WOMAN.

A Novel

BY

MRS. STONE.

AUTHOR OF

"THE ART OF NEEDLEWORK," "THE COTTON LORD," "CHRONICLES OF FASHION," "THE YOUNG MILLINER," ETC.

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MR. DALTON'S LEGATEE.

CHAPTER I.

"It is not possible," said Charlotte, "that Prabby really means to ask mamma to receive Mrs. Augustus here—she cannot be in earnest."

"She is quite in earnest, I am sure," replied Evelina.

"But she can't possibly succeed?"

"It is impossible for me to say what

Prabby can or cannot do ; her influence with mamma, however obtained, is certainly unbounded."

" I should trust it will find a limit now," said Helena.

" Of course it will," replied Charlotte ; " my wonder is, how Prabby herself could suggest such an idea."

" Oh, no wonder at all," rejoined Evelina, " ' you can't make a silk purse,'—don't look shocked, Helena ; I had not the slightest intention of completing the proverb—it is only a pithy way of telling you what I mean."

" So pithy as to be rather obscure," questioned Charlotte : " at least I don't understand you."

" Obtuse ! don't you understand, Lotty, that in Prabby's style of life, when a person is married, or as she would say, ' made an honest woman of,' her former frailties are all forgotten : thus Augustus having thought proper to marry his *chere amie*,

Prabby naturally (for her) thinks the antecedents of the lady can in no wise affect us poor innocent victims—the sisters-in-law, or by law, of the fair and frail one."

"You are such a 'scoffing fiend' Evelina —I speak with reverence—that I never know whether or not to believe one half you say. But, after all, Prabby's creed is the most merciful—that you must allow."

"Remarkably so to us," sneered Helena.

"But don't you think," persisted Charlotte, "that if mama consents—"

"*If* mama consents repeated Evelina; "my dear Charlotte, don't be such a novice and don't waste your time in arguing impossibilities. Mama will help to support Augustus of course, but as to any association with his wife, it is impossible: mama knows better what is due to herself and to us."

Just at that moment they heard the

well-known patter along the corridor, which Charlotte often compared to that of the Fakenham Ghost. A sharp knock with one hand, at the same moment that the door opened with another, an odd looking face popped in beaming with joy and satisfaction, the head nodding, the eyes winking, whilst the lips proclaimed, "All right, my dears, all right; remember your promise," and the head disappeared, the door closed, and the footsteps went pitter-patter, pitter-patter along the passage, down the staircase, and died away in the distance.

The girls looked at each other in amazement, almost in consternation.

"It cannot be," said Evelina, almost breathless—"she cannot have succeeded."

"It is evident that she has," replied Helena, with a look of supreme vexation, and contempt; "mama is strangely altered of late; I can't think what's the matter."

"It is very unaccountable," remarked Evelina, musingly. "I never could understand Miss Prabble's influence over mama."

"Perhaps Prabby is mistaken," suggested Charlotte.

But it was no mistake. As soon as the dessert was served round, and the butler had retired, Mrs. de Snobyn spoke.

"My dears, I have yielded to Miss Prabble's entreaties, or rather, to speak more correctly, I have assented to your brother's humble and earnest petition, and have consented to open my doors to him sooner much than I had intended to do. He expresses great contrition for his past misconduct, and Miss Prabble thinks his repentance is sincere : I trust it may prove so. It was not my intention to close my heart and house for ever against my son—"

"Oh, no, mama, no," said Charlotte, al-

most unawares, her eyes filled with tears.

Mrs. de Snobyn looked kindly at her, —even *she* felt at this moment support and comfort in her youngest daughter's warm and affectionate heart.

"I had certainly not intended to withdraw my embargo so soon, but if your brother be really repentant, it is not too soon."

She paused—nobody spoke.

After a short interval, she resumed, with rather a faltering tone,

"I have commissioned Miss Prabble to say, that Mrs. Augustus and her infant may accompany your brother to-morrow."

Still not a word—Charlotte was divided between her pleasure at the prospect of a reconciliation, and her misgivings in regard to her sisters, who sate scornfully silent, and evidently exceedingly annoyed.

At length, Helena spoke.

"Are we required to be at home, mamma, to receive your visitors?"

"What is the meaning of this tone and manner, Helena, in addressing me?"

"Nothing, ma'am; I had no intention to offend you; only it is not very long since you told us that Mrs. Augustus de Snobyn was a person with whom we could not possibly associate."

"And so, then, I thought: if I have since found cause to form a somewhat better opinion of the young person, now, unhappily, so nearly connected with us, is that a subject for regret? or if, for any cause which I may deem sufficient, I choose to open my doors to my son and his wife, is it for you to gainsay me."

"No, mamma, no: pray forgive me."

"This is not the first time, Helena, that I have observed in you, of late, a disposition to question my decrees. Let this foible pass away at once, and for ever: if encouraged, it can only result in your own

discomfiture. I am omnipotent here, and so will I continue to be. It would better become you, Helena, to trust to my affection, than to question my actions. Did you know, my daughters," continued Mrs. de Snobyn, in a softer tone, "could you guess—the overwhelming anxieties which harass me—and did you know how they would all seem as nothing to me, were you fairly established in life—you would then be better able to estimate your mother's affection for you."

"Forgive me, mamma; pray, pray forgive me," said Helena, now utterly subdued and weeping.

"Willingly, my dear girl," said Mrs. de Snobyn, as she kissed her forehead kindly, and nodding affectionately to the two other girls, she left the room.

It may readily be supposed, that after the lesson of to-day, neither Helena nor Evelina failed very obviously in the duties of courtesy to their new relative on the

morrow. Indeed, had they been so disposed, the sight of their mother's suffering countenance—every turn and change of which they so well understood—would have disarmed them. It was very evident that Mrs. de Snobyn was ill at ease : it was very evident that she put a violent constraint on herself, and that her reception of her daughter-in-law, whatever might be the motive which influenced it, was a task of bitterness to her. Helena and Evelina saw this plainly.

Not so the young visitor. She had been led to expect, or had pictured to herself, from hints which she had heard—a proud and haughty woman, with forbidding manners—Mrs. de Snobyn's high-bred courtesy relieved her at once. It was no part of our heroine's creed to invite a person to her house—on what pretence, soever—and then render them uncomfortable. Oh, no! A certain *retenu*—a certain reserve, there unquestionably was—but she wel-

comed the young wife with prompt kindness, and took the infant into her arms at once.

This was before she saw the elder child, who toddled in afterwards, supported by its father. The sight of it had nearly overthrown Mrs. de Snobyn's good resolutions. She had specified that *this* child should not be brought. But Augustus, strong for one moment of his life in a good purpose, took the boy right up to her.

"Mother, *if* you *have* forgiven me, you will welcome him."

She suffered the child to be lifted up towards her and pressed her lips to his rosy cheek.

Mrs. Augustus proved to be exactly what Miss Prabble had said, "a nice, quiet, modest young lady,"—gentle and unassuming evidently, with no tinge of the minor theatre, either in her dress or manners; and, moreover, pretty enough, even

pale and invalided as she at present, was to justify the *engouement* of Master Augustus. His mother's heart softened towards her ; she felt that, reckless as he had been, he might have done infinitely worse : his elder sisters found no excuse, perhaps no temptation, to shew off their airs to her who was so completely unobtrusive and unassuming ; but Charlotte and she were friends at once. For little Gussy, who was as shy, and pettish, and spoiled, as bonny eldest sons of fourteen months old usually are, could by no means, be seduced from his mama's side, until Charlottle began to make a noise behind him, by bowling down some miniature skittles, which she had made interest with the servants to procure for her. The bait was irresistible ; the little fellow first peeped slyly under his mother's arm, then turned half round, holding fast by her gown ; at last, fairly forgot his fears and contrived to riot with "Aunty Lotty"—as Augustus, rather to his mother's annoyance, called her—until they were a

nuisance to everybody in the room, but themselves.

So the day passed very well; on leaving, on account of the children, very early—having, indeed, had dinner at the luncheon table, the young mother expressed her thanks to Mrs. de Snobyn with a humility that did her no disservice.

"I shall be pleased to see you again, my dear," said Mrs. de Snobyn.

With tears gushing from her eyes, she turned to her sisters-in-law; the two elder ones, though not unkind, certainly evinced little sympathy; but Charlotte kissed her warmly, and insisted on carrying the baby down herself; Gussy would gladly have dragged her into the coach with him.

"Many—many thanks, my dear Miss Charlotte; bless you—bless you, for your kindness," said Mrs. Augustus.

'Good bye, Lotty," said Augustus, holding out a finger—"the old lady has acquitted herself uncommonly to-day; mind you keep her in good humour,

and swear that I am as steady as a saint."

"I wish I could," said Charlotte, suddenly grave.

The only answer the young man vouchsafed was a certain cabalistic manœuvre with his fingers, which the initiated call "making a face."

CHAPTER II.

A FEW days after this event, Mrs. de Snobyn was agreeably surprised by a call from Sir Charles Marchmont; who, having come up to town on a little business, devoted a leisure hour to enquire after the welfare of his widowed cousin and her family. He was surprised and grieved to see the change in Mrs. de Snobyn's appearance; for, though far more trustful in regard to her than his wife was, he yet had agreed with Lady Marchmont that her letters, since her hus-

band's death, had a tinge too much of display in their expressions of grief and regret. He now blamed himself; he thought he had done injustice to his cousin; and it was with the most respectful and affectionate sympathy that he offered his arm to lead her to another apartment, on her expressing a wish for a little private conversation.

"I am sorry to see you so cast down and dispirited, cousin," said he.

"I have very heavy anxieties, Sir Charles, and have gone through much trouble."

"I know it," he replied, "I know it. But you must endeavour to look on the brighter side—indeed, you ought to do so, for you have a bright prospect before you."

Mrs. de Snobyn shook her head somewhat mournfully.

"Nay," persisted he, "is it not so? You have a noble family, sons who I hope will live to shed lustre on it, and daughters of

whom any parent might be proud. Miss Evelina's prospects, as you yourself told me, are everything you could wish or hope —and I should think you will hardly deem it requisite to defer her marriage very much longer."

"No, perhaps not," said Mrs. de Snobyn, suppressing an inward shudder of doubt; "and in my daughters I am indeed very happy; it were most ungrateful to think otherwise. The trouble which I wish to confide to your kindness proceeds from my son—my eldest son, Augustus."

"Ah," replied Sir Charles, soothingly, "a little wild, a little extravagant—I think I have heard so. You must not take this so much to heart, cousin; many young men are so in their nonage, who become, afterwards, highly estimable members of society. But you must not attempt to draw the reins too tight, Mrs. de Snobyn; young men are most foolishly jealous of a mother's control, you must influence him by kindness rather than by authority."

"It has ever been my maxim to do so; and of late I have felt some self-reproach on that score, for I have thought that stricter coercion might, by possibility, have prevented his last fatal error. I lament to tell you—write it, Sir Charles, I *could not* —I have waited for the chance of this interview; you will feel that my anxieties are not groundless, when I tell you that my thoughtless boy is married."

Sir Charles looked shocked.

"That is indeed a fatal error—an irretrievable one; for the mode of your communication assures me that the marriage is clandestine—perhaps unworthy."

"Both."

And the tears gushed from Mrs. de Snobyn's eyes—she who hitherto had scorned to be mastered by her feelings. But her agitation did her no disservice with the worthy baronet; he was touched by it, and evidently felt deeply for her. He took her hand with the utmost kindness.

"My good friend, this is indeed a severe trial for you, and I cannot all at once bid you not regard it. But remember what is inevitable—what must be borne—it is, I will not say the wisest philosophy, but the Christian's plain duty to submit to with patience and hope. You may yet derive comfort from what appears now only afflictive. But tell me, is there no hope? has the misguided boy's choice been utterly unworthy?"

"A few days ago I should have said yes—I now indulge somewhat of a hope. My daughter-in-law was here very recently, with her infant—"

"Her infant! the marriage then has been contracted some time?"

"It has."

"And you were in ignorance of this?"

"I had not the slightest suspicion of the fact until a few weeks ago."

"And who and what is she?"

Mrs. de Snobyn paused a moment before

she answered. Had she not been in a manner compelled to receive her daughter-in-law, not a word would her baronet-cousin have heard from her of the marriage; but feeling how impossible it would be to keep the secret after the young lady had once been openly introduced into her family, she wished to gain every advantage which an apparently voluntary disclosure might give her. At the same time, it might be as well *now* to put the best appearance on things.

"You may conceive my alarm on learning that this young person had been in some sort connected with the stage; but I trust it can only have been distantly so—I have made no minute enquiries—for her deportment is perfectly modest and unassuming, her manners are gentle, and not ill-bred."

"Oh well, well, this is all very comforting; and though people with such old-fashioned notions as yours and mine would

not prefer that our children should select their mates from the stage of a theatre, still a person may touch pitch and not be defiled. And this young lady is handsome, doubtless; my friend Augustus has an eye for beauty."

"Very pretty, certainly."

"And does she seem affectionate—fond of her young scapegrace?"

"Devotedly attached to Augustus and her chil—infant."

"Ah, very good, very good. My dear Mrs. de Snobyn, there is no ground for you to despair; when we cannot have things as we wish, we must make the best of what we have: modest unassuming, and affectionate—and pretty withal! Oh, she will do very well yet; and luckily you do not want money—so her being portionless is of no consequence. Look at this matter on the bright side, my good friend. This marriage, untoward as it at first appears, may eventually prove a blessing: it may

be the means of weaning your son from his follies, and rendering him a steady man."

"You cheer me inexpressibly. I have hardly been able to reconcile my mind to it or them."

"Do so at once; place such restrictions on their intercourse with you as you, in your better knowledge of them, may deem judicious, but do not, I advise you, let them entirely want your countenance: it may be of infinite moment to their future career. When we return to town I shall, with your approbation, call upon the young couple."

This ultra bonhommie of the good man was rather more than Mrs. de Snobyn either expected or wished; and the thought crossed her mind that certain reserves as of the eldest child, (to whom she had not referred in the most distant way) of her son's enormous and low-lived profligacy, and of the unquestionable vileness of her

daughter-in-law's nearest connections—that these reserves might hereafter tell prejudicially against herself in the event of her warm-hearted cousin's personal association with her son.

However these perplexities, if not imaginary, were future, and for time she dismissed them from her thoughts.

"But enough of this for the present," resumed Sir Charles; "listen to my proposal. You have seen sorrow, my good cousin, since we parted, and your anxieties have evidently shaken you. You want change of air, and change of scene. Come down to us at Dover for a few weeks: there is a house to let on the East Cliff, close to ours, which I think would suit you nicely. Come, don't hesitate and shake your head like a politician, but commission me at once to enquire about it for you. The fine sea breezes will freshen your pulse and revive your spirits, and add a brighter tinge to the young ladies' roses;

and whilst they sentimentalize among the hills, or flirt on the Parade, you and I will moralize on our own youthful follies as compared with those of our children. Is it not a good plan? have you one reasonable objection to oppose to it?"

"In truth I hardly have: it is somewhat sudden."

"Let us consult the young ladies," said the baronet.

Mrs. de Snobyn suffered him to re-conduct her to the drawing-room, and Sir Charles repeated to the girls the proposition he had just made to their mother; requesting with mock anxiety but with very earnest and kindly sincerity, their votes for the measure, and their assistance in subduing the financial and other scruples which, as it seemed to him, his cousin had somewhat unnecessarily raised. Their ready and joyous ascent was eagerly accorded; and Mrs. de Snobyn's objections being in fact of no very serious character soon gave way. Preparations for the visit

were to commence forthwith; and Sir Charles, who was returning by the evening train, was to lose no time in securing a house for them, as near his own as possible.

CHAPTER III.

SIR CHARLES proved an admirable negotiator: in two days Mrs. de Snobyn received a notification that a house was ready for her, and on the day following she and her daughters went to Dover. They were met at the station by Sir Charles Marchmont's carriage and servants, and at the gate of their new domain by Redwald, who came, he said, at his mother's command, to shew them the way to her house,

where dinner would be awaiting them in half-an-hour.

"From consideration to the ringlets of my fair cousins," he continued to Mrs. de Snobyn, "I shall relieve you of my immediate presence, and stroll on the shore for twenty minutes. I shall then hope to have the pleasure of escorting you to my mother's drawing-room. The way is not so very perilous, nor the goal so distant—(for we inhabit the next house but one), that you need have any fear of the dangers of the way, ladies, with so skilful a pioneer as myself."

Then gaily kissing one hand in adieu whilst he raised his hat with the other, the young man darted round the carriage towards the sea. Mrs. de Snobyn looked after him and could not repress the deep sigh that rose to her lips, as she inwardly and almost inadvertently contrasted this frank, gay, open-countenanced and most gentlemanly young man, who seemed not to have a care to cloud his brow, nor a

thought which he wished to conceal, with her own son steeped to the very lips in extravagance, vice, and duplicity, and already, without a profession or a guinea, shackled with the cares of a family. It required all her firmness to maintain a composed demeanour and unclouded brow as she mentally instituted the comparison.

"Ah, here they come, my dear; here they come," said Sir Charles to Lady Marchmont, as leaning from the balcony he recognised his own carriage and horses as they turned by the baths; "I am very glad they are safely arrived: I hope the change of air will be of advantage to them all."

"I hope so," replied Lady Marchmont, as she stooped to pick up the knitting needle she had dropped.

"Yes, I hope it will," continued the baronet, "to them all, for I did not think the young ladies looked quite so blooming as usual: I suppose they have been fretting about their brother's marriage."

"Seven—eight—very likely indeed; and now purl two."

"Yes, and poor Mrs. de Snobyn looked sadly shattered, undeniably so. We have hardly done her justice, Cecilia, when we have smiled at her heroics as we called them; I was convinced so when I saw her the other day. I was much struck with her, she was evidently suffering deeply, and yet bore against it firmly. I thought her a very nice woman."

"A very nice woman indeed: but would you have the kindness, my dear Sir Charles, to reach me that ball of worsted which has rolled away."

True to his promise, Redwald escorted the visitors quite safely to his mother's drawing room, where they were most cordially welcomed by Sir Charles and his lady; for Mrs. de Snobyn's troubles seemed to have opened even Lady Marchmont's heart; at least, she had never before taken the trouble to exert herself in their be-

half, as she did this evening. Sir Charles was, as usual, cordial and kind, Redwald, as usual, gay and animated.

Only one occurrence, or rather one remark, interrupted the complete harmony of the evening; and that interruption was not outwardly apparent; it was like the underswell in the ocean, which discomposes the freshwater sailor, who wonders at it, as to him the sea on its surface appears quite smooth and tranquil.

When Sir Charles said something, as tranquil, fortunate, and good-tempered, elderly gentlemen of the old school are wont to do, of the pleasure of family parties "like the present."

"Yes," rejoined Redwald; "and we shall be quite complete soon when little Maude comes."

Helena started, almost visibly. An undefined jealousy—for she would have scorned to admit its actual existence—an undefined feeling or presentiment—a sort of jealousy of "little Maude" had always

possessed her from the evening of their first meeting at Lady Marchmont's hotel; and now, when internally congratulating herself on the delightful aspect of affairs —of their domestication in Lady Marchmont's house—of that lady's increased cordiality—of Redwald's courteous attention (when most young men would have seceded from a family party)—and of the prospect of *tête-à-tête*, or all but *tête-à-tête* rides, drives, and walks for a month to come—then to hear that their satisfaction would be complete soon, for "little Maude was coming"—it was the very embodiment of the incubus which had so long hovered round her.

Mrs. de Snobyn skilfully took up the clue which Helena had let fall.

"My granddaughter coming—you surprise me. I had not heard: Mrs. Villiers is then, we may hope, recovering."

"Recovered, my good friend, recovered and coming; we expect her here in three

or four days; Abel has engaged apartments for them in No. 7."

"Abel!"

"Yes; did you not know," said Sir Charles, regarding her with some surprise, "your son Abel is gone to escort them; surely you knew that."

Mrs. de Snobyn was going carelessly to assent and plead forgetfulness, when she saw Lady Marchmont's cold, grey eye fixed upon her. It was seldom Lady Marchmont took the trouble to raise her head, or fix her eye. Mrs. de Snobyn felt the suspicion implied.

"No, my dear sir, I did not know it. You who know our dear Abel so well, must be, in some degree, aware of his eccentricities. Since my irreparable loss, I have seen less of my excellent step-son than I could have wished; but, probably, it might be inconvenient to him to penetrate to the secluded retreat, where we passed some months."

"Oh, most likely, most likely," said the open-hearted Sir Charles, who never looked beneath the surface, and seldom dreamt of others being less open than himself; "most probably that was the reason. I forgot you had been in the country."

But all this time, Lady Marchmont's "cold, grey eye," as Mrs. de Snobyn called it, was still perusing the countenance of her guest.

"So," said Charlotte, as they assembled in their mamma's room that evening, for a few moments, before retiring to their own, "so little Maude is coming,—how very glad I shall be to see her."

"I cannot imagine what you can see in Maude to be so fond of," said Helena, tossing her head; "a prim, little puss, a conceited precisian."

Charlotte laughed.

"You are excited, Helena; but remember, as Abel would say, 'hard words break no bones;' or, as I would word it—'metaphors are no arguments.'"

"Metaphors! I mean what I say."

"That Maude is really a puss," laughed Charlotte; "then beware of her talons, for you, at any rate, seem ready to come to the scratch."

"Charlotte, my dear Charlotte," exclaimed Mrs. de Snobyn, "what language! where, my dear, could you possibly learn such expressions as these?"

"From Octavius, mamma," returned Charlotte, still laughing.

"Then, my dear," said her mother, in a tone of strong displeasure, "I must request that you will reserve them for Octavius, and not use familiarly, in my presence, expressions which I am ashamed a daughter of mine should ever have heard."

"I beg pardon, mamma; but it really is too good to see Helena so jealous of poor little Madge."

"Jealous!" repeated Helena, in a tone of strong disdain.

"Why yes, Helena, jealous. What else can be your motive for always underrating poor Maude, who, I am sure, is a very nice girl. I will appeal to you, mamma—do you not think her so."

"Certainly I thought her a very promising girl indeed, and your sister will remember that I cautioned her sometime since to conceal, if she could not eradicate such feelings as she is now indulging."

"I don't know, mamma, why you should take me to task thus, merely because I can't enter into the raptures of some people about Maude. She seems to me a mere bread-and-butter girl, though elevated into a goddess by the great dictator of the family—Abel."

"We will speak no more of Maude at present," said Mrs. de Snobyn, "we can hardly form a fair judgment having not seen her for so long a time; but I wish to take this opportunity to caution you, Helena, and your sisters also, as to your conduct to your brother Abel, as he is coming amongst

us so unexpectedly. I pray you to beware how you offend his opinions, even though they may appear to you to be prejudices."

"About Maude you mean, mamma?'

"Not about Maude alone, though as you all know she is his very heart's darling, and he is peculiarly sensitive regarding her. But I meant my remark to apply generally. Abel has much in his power; he has always led a prudent and economical life; and his property must have increased considerably in his hands."

"But, dear mamma," said Evelina, "what can that be to us; I thought his property was inconsiderable compared to yours?"

"So it is, in itself. But compare his expenses with mine—look at the innumerable and heavy claims on me, and look at the utter absence of any whatever on him. Maude is amply provided for in the station she will occupy, by her father and godmother, even if she receive not one guinea from him. I have never exacted blind

obedience from you, therefore I tell you plainly not wilfully to thwart Abel, for I may find it advantageous, perhaps necessary, to make some call on his purse."

"Mamma, mamma," said the girls, almost aghast, "is it possible you can want money."

"Do not alarm yourselves unnecessarily; the inconvenience, if it come at all, will be but trifling and temporary. If you consider the enormous expenses of our last seasons in Connaught Place—the press of affairs in consequence of your father's death, and the heavy burden of your brother's unbridled extravagance, you cannot be surprised that I foresee the possibility of having to apply to Abel, and that I wish, in a reasonable and unobtrusive way, to propitiate him."

"Certainly, mamma, but it seems strange."

"To you, it may, because I have always jealously guarded you from any approach or intimation of inconvenience. But it is

not strange to me. I have ever lamented that by my most earnest entreaties I could not prevail on your father to retain a share secretly, in the Budge Row concern. I have lamented lately that I was too proud to allow it to be done openly. But now, my dears, trust to my care: there is no need for any anxiety on your parts, all will be right. But I have spoken thus openly, that you might not suppose me to be actuated by mere caprice in my advice to you to propitiate your brother Abel. Good night."

CHAPTER IV.

But Mrs. de Snobyn's expressed anxieties about Abel, and Helena's possible jealousy of Maude, were all suddenly merged in their chagrin regarding Evelina.

At first, after the catastrophe which separated them, Sir Gabriel Burford's letters to Evelina were all that she could wish—from *him*, acquainted as she was with the listless indolence of his constitution. The death of his mother's sister, who had so long been in a declining state,

happening almost simultaneously with that of Mr. de Snobyn, had prevented, inevitably, the attendance of the Baronet at the funeral of his intended father-in-law. Sir Gabriel expressed much regret at this circumstance, and there can be little doubt that his regrets were, at that moment, sincere.

But he was weak-minded; and fickle, as weak-minded people often are, and the impression which Mrs. de Snobyn and her daughter had with so much pains achieved, soon became fainter and fainter under the counteracting influence of the affectionate and considerate, but strong-minded Dowager of Burford Park.

Very shortly his betrothed began to discern, to feel, however, rather than to see, a difference in his mode of address to her. His letters had never been warm, therefore she could hardly complain of their becoming cool; they had never been very frequent, therefore their infrequent arrival now might not in itself have been

matter of much moment. But Evelina had a key in her secret heart, by which to interpret these letters, and she could no longer be deceived.

For well did she know that he had viewed her throughout under a false medium, and that he had made her an offer of his hand under a false impression. He had been completely gulled she knew, and she felt, almost on her first interview afterwards with the Dowager Lady Burford that she, at least, saw through her—understood the whole.

This did not so much signify whilst the baronet remained near her. Within reach of her influence, almost hourly exerted over him, she had little fear of maintaining the illusion until the time fixed for her marriage. That achieved, she cared not a pin how clear-sighted the husband might become. Establishment was all she looked to, the husband was a necessry evil attached to it.

But her father died; and not yet all

corrupted by her worldly training, and moreover struck with awe and horror at the first scene of death with which she had ever been connected, Evelina forgot for the moment her own broken prospect, her own disappointed hope, and wept earnest and heartfelt tears for the death of her father.

Hardly, however, had the first dread shock subsided, ere her thoughts recurred naturally enough to her own peculiar position, and she felt—for conscience indeed made a coward of her—strong misgivings as to the result.

But she mentioned them to no one. She felt, however, before she could explicitly define the change even to herself, she felt that her influence was fading away from his mind; that his mother's—that mother who had so clearly scanned her and hers—was again predominating.

Therefore, though shocked, disgusted and hurt, Evelina was hardly surprised when two days after her arrival at Dover, the morning papers announced the mar-

riage of Sir Gabriel Burford, Bart., of Burford Park, and of Arlington Street, to Miss Emily Dovely, only daughter and heiress of the late Samuel Simon Dovely, Esq., M.P., &c., &c., &c."

The de Snobyns had often seen Miss Dovely in town, under the wing of the Dowager Lady Burford, and knew her to be a pretty, shy, goodnatured, unintellectual bread-and-butter-girl, of good old family among the squirearchy of the county, (Worcestershire) to which she belonged, and heiress in her own right to a considerable estate which marched with Burford Park. This latter circumstance, no doubt, had its own weight, combined with her childish and governable temperament, in rendering her so especial a favorite with the Dowager Lady Burford, under whose auspices, as before noticed, she had made her *debût* in town. Whether these negative virtues, even when supported by his mother's more explicit commendations, might have sufficed to render Sir Gabriel faith-

less to the fair and fascinating Evelina de Snobyn, is much to be doubted; had it not been that the baronet, once convinced that he had been deceived and made a tool of, dwelt on the circumstance with a pertinacity almost remarkable in a man of so gentle and unassuming a temper. It almost seemed as if some innate conviction of his own deficiency gave an additional sting to the feeling of disgust and shame which oppressed him. Then, his mother's task was easy.

Nothing could exceed Sir Charles Marchmont's indignation, when Mrs. de Snobyn pointed out to him the newspaper paragraph announcing Sir Gabriel Burford's marriage. He would not, all at once, believe it.

"It is not—it cannot be true—it *shall* not be true!" I think, in the warmth of his heart, he went so far as to say, "dear Mrs. de Snobyn, you know what lies these newspapers publish; rely upon it this is a blunder."

"I fear not," replied Mrs. de Snobyn, mournfully: "I fear it is too true; the account is too circumstantial to warrant the hope of its being merely an idle report."

"Perhaps so," said Sir Charles, his countenance falling as he re-perused the offending paragraph more carefully. "But were you quite unprepared for this, Mrs. de Snobyn? Had you no intimation of his change of feeling? Is this announcement as unexpected to you as to me?"

"Undoubtedly, it is," said Mrs. de Snobyn, thankful that her cousin had so worded his queries that she could thus reply to them; undoubtedly this announcement has shocked and surprised me; still I have fancied of late that Sir Gabriel has slackened in his attentions to my daughter; but, as Evelina appeared perfectly satisfied, made no complaint or allusion to any change I trusted that I was mistaken."

"She has not, then, had any suspicion of this?"

"None."

"Poor girl! poor girl! he must be a scoundrel—he must. A cowardly puppy! to take pains and care to win a good girl's affection, and then cast her aside with as little ceremony as he would a useless toy. Oh! would that I had the chastising of him!" And the good old gentleman having wrought himself up almost into a passion, strode hurriedly about the room and clenched his fist in a kind of anticipatory vengeance.

However much pleased at this demonstration of ardour in her cause; it was important to Mrs. de Snobyn, knowing what she did know, to soothe and moderate rather than excite his ire. It was important to her that her warm-tempered, open-hearted cousin, should not quixotically, proclaim her wrongs in circles where, possibly, he might hear something of the other side of the question, and become enlightened as to her manœuvres. But in one point the hardened mind of the woman of

the world failed to scan that of the high-minded baronet: not the most remote idea of giving *eclât* to the affair, even for the purpose of expressing his just indignation —had ever entered his thoughts. Mrs. de Snobyn, however, had fancied differently, and was anxious, as we have said, that the unguarded expression of his feelings should not awaken any comments which might enlighten him as to the manœuvres of herself and her daughter.

"I think you will feel with me, dear Sir Charles, that the less we speak of this unhappy affair the better."

"Undoubtedly; do not pointedly avoid it, but converse of other things, and gradually, as it were, prevent her thoughts from fixing on this."

"Ah! Evelina, you mean?—yes, certainly—but—"

"Were you not referring to Evelina? to whom then?"

"At the moment it struck me—the public—"

"The public, Mrs. de Snobyn! what have the public to do with this?"

"You mistake me, dear Sir Charles," said she, shrinking, however, into her very innermost self. "I only meant to say that I must trust to those friends who sympathise with me to repress any expression of their indignation which might cause any *esclandre* of this unhappy affair."

"You cannot suppose," said he, very gravely, and with a touch of reproof in his manner, "that *I* am a person to infringe the silence and reserve in which this matter should be at once shrouded; know me better Mrs. de Snobyn."

"You think, then—as I do," she added after a moment's hesitation. "You think, then, as I do, that the matter should be passed over in perfect silence."

"Certainly, any other course would be paltry—pitiful—beneath you. This is one of those evils of modern society, in which the injured party can have no redress. To a delicate-minded woman, there is but

one course—silence, She may suffer, but the greatest balm to her sorrow will be the idea that it is unsuspected—unknown."

Mrs. de Snobyn was a little at a loss.

"Poor Evelina!" sighed she, *pour passer le temps.*

"Aye, indeed!" exclaimed Sir Charles, again striding about, as if the half-breathed ejaculation had given a sudden philippic to his feelings.

"Poor child! poor child! we must take care of her, Mrs. de Snobyn: God! that such villains can't be punished: murderers of the worst sort, I call them. But, poor girl, how does she take it?"

Mrs. de Snobyn was spared the necessity of reply, for well-known voices were heard on the stairs, and the next moment the door opened, and the sisters appeared.

Helena looked vexed and mortified, Charlotte had evidently been crying: Evelina alone showed no symptoms of depression, but her flushed face, sparkling

eye, and excited manner, showed that all was not well with her. If tears swam in her brilliant eyes, they were evidently those of scorn and anger, not of grief.

"My dear Evelina, my dear child," began Sir Charles, taking her hand, with almost paternal affection.

"Oh, pray Sir Charles," interrupted Evelina, drawing herself haughtily from him, "pray do not waste your sympathy on me. There is not the least occasion. I'm not the lady who—

'Sadly sate sighing,
All under a willow tree.'"

Sir Charles drew back surprised and hurt. He was not deceived by Evelina's assumed indifference; he saw that she was suffering severely: but he saw that it was her pride that was wounded, not her affection. For this, in some sort, he might be glad, but it lowered her in his opinion. He would have loved Evelina better if she

had shed a few womanly tears, displayed some little sensitiveness of affection, towards those who sympathized so truly with her. He had been endeavouring, all along, despite Lady Marchmont's misgivings, to think her an affectionate, good-hearted girl: at this moment his eyes were opened, he began to doubt his former opinion, and to fear that she was a worldly-minded woman.

He turned to her sisters: Helena was evidently dispirited, and he spoke to her kindly: Charlotte's eyes were again swimming in tears, and he greeted her with affectionate warmth.

Mrs. de Snobyn saw in a moment, the unfavourable impression that Evelina had made; in fact, the pique and petulance of her manner were not to be disguised, hardly glossed over.

"I hardly know whether to rejoice or not," said the careful mother, closing the door after her, as she accompanied her relative to the head of the stairs, "that

Evelina's disappointment has assumed a tone of petulance; I fear the re-action that must follow—that the wound in her affections will only sink the deeper, from being thus temporarily staved off by pride."

"Let us hope otherwise," said Sir Charles, gravely, as he shook hands and took his way homeward.

CHAPTER V.

WHATEVER misgivings of Evelina might have crossed Sir Charles Marchmont's secret thoughts they were not allowed to interfere with his conduct to her, nor to cool, in the slightest degree, his very real and substantial kindness to them all.

Mrs. de Snobyn's evidently deep disappointment and regret seemed to soften Lady Marchmont's heart towards her in a much greater degree than had hitherto

been the case ; and spite of her mortification and chagrin, she could not but inwardly congratulate herself on any circumstance having softened that hitherto impenetrable nature, having dimmed that heretofore " cold grey eye." Lady Marchmont, quiet and undemonstrative as she was, had hitherto sate like a brooding incubus between Mrs. de Snobyn and the fruition of her darling plans.

Redwald, too, as if his own chivalry of disposition were all aroused by the failure of another towards his fair cousins, paid close and gallant attention to them all. If, almost involuntarily he were just now a little more devoted to Evelina, Helena drew no unhappy inferences therefrom : indeed, she almost beguiled herself into a hope that even this might be regarded as a token of homage to herself. Indeed her hopes were now rapidly resuming their pristine brightness, and perhaps—if—but we must not anticipate.

The party, having watched with their glasses from Lady Marchmont's windows the steamer across, in which it was expected that Abel and his niece would sail, were still debating whether or not their friends were really in it, when a carriage drove up to the wicket gate which opened from the little garden to the shore.

Before Redwald could hurry down stairs, almost before the young ladies could muster on the balcony, Abel alighted and assisted from the carriage a small, neat figure who was soon recognised as Mrs. Villiers. She was followed by a tall sylph-like girl, holding a little dog carefully in her arms, which in one instant Helena's jealous eye recognised as Ariel. Had she had any doubt on the subject, the color which mounted in Redwald's face, as after shaking hands with Maude he turned his attention to the dog, would have sufficed to assure her of the correctness of her conjecture.

Or a few moments later it might have

struck her—perhaps it did, that Redwald's gesture of surprise and pleasure might have had reference to the mistress rather than the dog.

"Why Maude," said Mrs. de Snobyn, with an admirable affectation of delighted surprise, "is this indeed you? I can hardly believe the change. What have you been doing with her, Mrs. Villiers?"

Mrs. Villiers cast a quiet fond look on her *protegée*, but did not speak.

"You must no longer talk of 'little Maude', Charlotte."

"I shall behave to her with all the deference her height deserves, mamma; but remember I am grown much taller also," replied Charlotte, as she and Maude affectionately kissed each other.

Though Mrs. de Snobyn had already commenced her task of "propitiating" Abel, there really was abundant cause for her expression of surprise—and of pleasure had the latter been real—which the sight of Maude elicited.

The "little Maude" whom Charlotte used to tantalize, the "dumpling of a playfellow" whom Redwald was so fond of referring to, was now a tall, elegantly formed young woman, with manners perfectly self-possessed, and attired in the first style of fashion. The style of her clothes might be the merit of the Parisian *modiste*, the grace with which she wore them was her own.

Mrs. de Snobyn saw at a glance that the quiet godmother, and eccentric uncle had effected for Maude, what all her own ambitious vauntings and excessive expenditure, and truth to tell, untiring exertions, had failed to effect for her own daughters. She saw at a glance that Maude's manners and appearance were precisely those of an accomplished English gentlewoman. That Maude should have inherited some of the otherwise incommunicable attributes of this most engaging of all characters from her mother, the unseen, unheard, unnoticed, Mrs. John Snobbins, it never entered her

head to think. Yet such was the case: and Mrs. de Snobyn should have gone back even thus far, to account entirely for the wide difference which now struck her so forcibly, between her daughters and her grand-daughter.

Yet shewy, fashionable, and handsome, the Miss de Snobyns undoubtedly were; and far more likely to attract notice and receive attention in a ball-room or a throng: far more likely to be selected to hold the golden guerdon during the running of a crack race; far more likely to have the glasses tossed over the heads at a bachelor revel, in order that the lustre of the crystal might never be dimmed by another toast.

Maude though not shy was retiring, though perfectly self-possessed was by no means forward. Then her beauty was of a kind to win, not dazzle: to steal upon the heart, rather than take the fancy by storm. She was very fair—perhaps she looked somewhat too pale just now, but that might be caused by the fatigue of the

voyage. Her hair was light and silky, and was banded, for it was too soft to keep in curl; her eyes grey, well opened; intelligent in their glances and very kindly. Abel often thought that the mother of his unceasing love and reverence—the Madge Snobbins of old—never evinced more truthful sincerity of purpose, more unequivocal kindliness of heart, than beamed in the youthful, placid countenance of his heart's darling, his niece Maude.

Miss Snobbins was dressed in deep mourning. Mrs. de Snobyn attributed it as another whim of Abel's, that the granddaughter of Mr. de Snobyn should still be in much deeper mourning than custom required that his own daughters should wear. In compliance with the style of the day the Miss de Snobyns had altered the fashion of theirs some weeks ago.

But enough of Maude, who is not—nor was ever intended—to be our heroine.

Sir Charles Marchmont had kindly

volunteered to inform Abel of the unforeseen abolition of Evelina's engagement, and Mrs. de Snobyn was, at all times, too happy to escape the acute enquiries and searching glances of her son-in-law. She, therefore, gladly accepted the offer.

To the surprise of Sir Charles, Abel, though he looked vexed and grieved, expressed no indignation at the circumstance.

"I think the man is a scoundrel," said Sir Charles, warmly.

"He *may* be," said Abel, thoughtfully.

"'May be!'" repeated Sir Charles, "why, surely, Mr. Snobbins, you don't justify him?"

"Certainly, I do not *justify* him; a man ought, on no pretence, to break his pledged word. But before I utterly, and entirely, condemn him, I must know more of the matter."

"Why, surely, my good sir," returned

Sir Charles, a little piqued ; "you know enough to form an opinion. You know that your sister was openly engaged to him ; that the articles, if not absolutely signed, were ready—that the poor girl's trousseau—to which, indeed, I happen to know you made a munificent contribution, was completed—and that the marriage would have taken place within a week, if your father's death had not intervened. You knew all this."

"I knew all that," replied Abel.

"Well, then, as I learn from my good cousin, his letters, affectionate at first, as they might well be, became cooler and cooler, infrequent and more infrequent, and at last, without any notification from him, they see in the newspaper an account of his marriage to another lady. You cannot surely justify that ?"

"I do not ; I think the manner unpardonable ; nor, as I said before, do I justify the act itself. I am very sorry for

Evelina—very ; for such a circumstance cannot but be disadvantageous to any young lady ; and more especially to one brought so forward as my sister. 'Slander leaves a score behind it.' I am very sorry for Evelina now ; though I think it not impossible that this trial—severe it certainly is—may have a beneficial influence on her character. But, Sir Charles, 'It's ill-talking between a fu' man and a fasting,' and I observe you take no wine. Pray let us join the ladies."

Sir Charles followed his guest pondering—he was not satisfied at all. As usual he appealed to Lady Marchmont. The visitors were all gone ; Redwald was escorting the De Snobyns home.

"Do you know, my dear, I have been very much puzzled by our friend, Mr. Snobbins, to-day."

"How so, Sir Charles?" said Lady Marchmont, who, overcome with the exertions of the day, was languidly smelling her aromatic salts.

"Why, I had engaged, as you know, to tell him of poor Miss Evelina's sad disappointment; and you would hardly believe that he shewed neither surprise nor indignation."

"He did not care then?"

"I don't mean to say that, at all. No; Abel shewed unequivocal feeling on his sister's behalf—he was chagrined and pained for her evidently; but not one word could I extract from him of censure on the young jackanapes, who, to my mind, deserves a horsewhip."

"Humph."

"You don't answer, my dear?"

"I'm thinking, Sir Charles."

Sir Charles knew, perhaps, by experience, that this was somewhat a tedious process with his wife: so he deliberately paced the room, thinking also, for company, we may suppose."

In bounced Redwald, post haste.

"Oh, mother, I'm so glad you're not

gone to bed ; I was afraid I shouldn't see you"

"What do you want, Redwald ?"

"Nothing particular ; I only wanted to ask your opinion of little Madge. Is she not grown beautiful ?"

"I did not see it."

"Mother !" ejaculated the young man, in amazement, and even his father "stinted" in his walk and looked at his wife, so very cold was her expression. "Well, mother, you really do surprise me. I think I hardly ever saw a girl so much improved as Maude is."

"So I think, too."

"Ah, my dear mother, what made you say otherwise. I cannot fancy *my* mother grown cold-hearted."

"You need not think me so, Redwald, because at my age I am not in raptures at a pretty face. I always loved Maude ; I always thought more highly of her, than either you or your father ; I always thought her a sweet-tempered, pure-hearted, high-

minded girl, and knowing and feeling her real worth, I am not in raptures, because she is also grown taller and handsomer than we expected. We have sufficient example in her own family, of the little real worth of such advantages."

"Dear mother," replied Redwald, passing over the moral reflection concluding his mother's remarks, "I never heard you say half so much in praise of Maude before."

"Perhaps not; but you must have seen how much I loved her," answered Lady Marchmont: "but do, my dear boy, light my candle for me; and Redwald, I've dropped the stopper of my vinaigrette—do you see it?—ah, there it is, just by the fender: and that ball of pink German wool—ah, there it is, just under the chair, Redwald; thank you, my dear, thank you: good night, no, no further, your father will be so good as to give me his arm, I'm sure."

Sir Charles assisted his lady to her

dressing-room, where she at once dismissed her attendant, with the words,

" In a few minutes, Blewitt."

Then turning to her husband, who was standing on the hearth-rug, after depositing her in her easy chair, she said :

" You were telling me, Sir Charles, about our friend, Mr. Snobbins, showing no anger about Evelina's disappointment. Did he justify her lover's conduct?"

" By no means ; but he said he must know much more about the matter, before he condemned him *in toto.*"

" Yet Abel has never shown any want of kindness towards his sisters ?"

" Never, never."

" And you have a high opinion of his judgment ?"

" One of the most acute, clear-judging men, I ever knew in my life."

"' Then, Sir Charles—just reach me that smelling-bottle, please—it seems to me plain, that Mr. Snobbins must know some-

thing, or suspect something, which may partly excuse the young man."

Sir Charles took a turn or two about the room, his hands on his back: then he stopped, and leaned his elbow on the mantel-piece in thought. At length, he said,

"I don't know how it is, Cecilia, but you always seem to hit the nail on the head. I think you are right: twenty trifling matters, both in his conduct and in that of Mrs. de Snobyn, occur to me now, as proofs that you are correct in your surmise. But it is very strange, so quiet and apparently unobservant as you are. Our friend would say, I suppose, that

"'Still waters often run the deepest.'

Lady Marchmont made no immediate reply. For some seconds, she had been fumbling most ineffectually at her bracelets and her belt pin. At last she gave up

the attempt in despair, and muttered, whilst she raised her smelling-bottle to her face,

"Will you be so good as to ring for Blewitt.

CHAPTER VI.

THEN began a series of those walks, rides, drives, and sailing excursions, proper to healthy and animated young people at a fashionable watering-place. Dover, however, is not a very gay one. The daily raffles, hedge-conjuring, and village theatricals, which used to be the delight of our grandmothers, in the days when Margate was in its glory, are, of course, utterly exploded now, and have probably

never been heard of by the ears polite, which periodically listen to Charles Kemble's "readings," or Mr. Wilson's Scottish melodies, at Dover. Balls there are, but they are not very much in vogue. A Parade there is, on which, at stated hours, people assemble to hear the band; but it is often *triste* and often dismally cold. We are certainly very much genteeler than our grandmothers, but certainly not so social, perhaps not so happy.

At Dover, however, setting aside those social crowds where "*wo*-men do congregate," there is no dearth of interesting occupation, but it is more private and domestic than social. The walks, the rides, and drives; the syllabubs at St. Radigund's, the tea and lobsters at St. Margaret's—all these are very pleasant recreations indeed with your own two or three chosen friends. The visit to Walmer Castle, as the feudal relic is not like Haddon, a "show place," but only obtained through friendly interference, is necessarily a pri-

vate expedition, and so we would have it ; we should feel it a sort of desecration of the frowning pile itself, and of the hero who illustrates it, to have it exposed to the eager, vulgar. and unappreciating gaze of the crowds of pleasure-seekers. Let them revel in Chatsworth and its gilding.

The noblest object of interest at Dover, the proud old Castle, is of course a universal object of attraction, but sadly are those annoyed—who fraught with reading and knowledge, seek to verify the historical associations of the place—by the troops of mere sight-seers who scamper here, scutter there, climb up one place, jump down another—setting craddies, as we used to call it—discuss their luncheons often without the least respect to the attire of their neighbours, and pass their practical, and not always most decorous, jokes around. With the well-behaved—though you are churlish enough in your antiquarianism to wish to dispense with their company—the

force of contrast may amuse you. One of the marvels of the place is, a well of enormous depth, and the licensed cicerone desires all to be silent—"ladies especially,' —for so many seconds, until its depth is sounded by a pin which he drops.

"Dear me," said a magnificently attired female to me at the close of the experiment. "Dear me! what a while we have all been silent, to be sure."

At first Abel was propriety player during the excursions of the young people at Dover, for Mrs. Villiers was too delicate, and totally unused to bustle; Mrs. de Snobyn was not sorry to be excused, except on especial occasions, when her diplomatic address might be advantageously displayed; and Sir Charles and Lady Marchmont proclaimed themselves old and lazy. But Abel was returning to London on the morrow, and this afternoon was devoted to a ramble over Shakespear's Cliff, to the point beyond where the rocks were blasted for the railway tunnel.

They were a very cheery party those four young ladies, Abel, and Redwald Marchmont. Charlotte and Maude had all the exhilaration of youth, health, and good temper: poor Evelina was glad to enter into any excitement to drive away unpleasant thoughts, and Helena with *l'homme desiré* in company, was not disposed to cavil at anything proposed. Abel, intelligent and happy, enjoyed the fresh air, the fine scenery, the animating exercise, and above all, the good temper and good spirits of those around him. Redwald alone professed himself overwhelmed with the accumulation of delight, and as he assisted one young lady after another—for Abel left all that to him—over the difficulties of a lofty stile, or through the intricacies of an awkward turn *too near* the precipice, he would exclaim occasionally, his hand pathetically pressing his breast,

"How happy could I be with either
Were t' other dear charmer away."

Charlotte declared he had said it to every one of them in turn—she had noticed it was so, and she, for one, would vote him to Coventry, as a gay deceiver.

He solemnly denied the "soft impeachment," and strenuously asserted that her accusation was *scandalum magnatum.*

Both appealed to Abel, who after mature deliberation, gravely decided, as Sir Roger de Coverly had formerly done, in a case of equal importance, "that much might be said on both sides."

So they went on gaily and happily, sometimes hunting for the bee-orchis, of which very beautiful specimens are found here; sometimes—held firmly by Abel or Redwald—taking fearful peeps over the cliffs; sometimes looking across the glorious ocean at the little fleet of Calais fishing-boats, as they were putting forth for their dangerous toil—so dangerous that the fishermen dream not of setting forth on their daily expedition without first duly attending mass—and the rays of the declining sun gleaming

on their various coloured sails and boats, giving the whole the appearance of a raree show in the distance. Then, in contradistinction to this, a black-hulled, lugubrious steamer would be cutting her way, with a speed and certainty that seemed to have somewhat supernatural in it, over that restless, heaving ocean, and close by these treacherous depths, marked by a bright red hull to be avoided by everything having life: more in shore numerous pleasure-skiffs are floating about; and turning your head from this scene of life and light and animation, you have a complete contrast in the old feudal ruin, looking grey with time, dimmer still in the approaching twilight, crowning that lofty cliff; with the British church and Roman pharos, like two outposts of the world grown aged since their time; while all around, heaving and falling, rich pasture and lofty hill spread in their beauty beneath the cloudless sky.

So they had journeyed on cheerily, had

surmounted the hill beneath which the tunnel commences, had descended by the narrow, precipitous chalk-path to the shore, and closely surveyed the fearful-looking gap, had returned to Shakspeare's Cliff, and were about to rest themselves a little on the flowery turf, when they saw a young man stretched along, using his spy-glass. He started up when the ladies addressed him, and his garb showed that he was one of the Coast Guard.

His appearance was singularly attractive —that is to say, if I were writing a romance instead of a matter-of-fact history, he would be the very hero for it.

He was not above the middle-height, but slim and well-proportioned; his complexion was extremely dark, almost swarthy; his eyes piercingly black, his teeth small and brilliantly white; his bright black locks flowed on his shoulders in spiral ringlets as elaborately curled as a woman's.

His appearance instantly attracted the notice of the whole party, and his manners

did not belie it; he was intelligent, acute, and well-bred. In reply to the enquiries of Mr. Snobbins, it seemed that he was of Italian parentage, by the mother's side—his father was an Englishman.

"And how long have you been here?"

"Not long on this station; I have been in the service two years."

"From choice?"

"Hardly that; I was bred to the navy, my patron—my godfather—died, and, with him, any hope I had formed of rising above the rank of common seamen; my prospects thus blighted, I was, for awhile, in despair. This situation offered, and I took it."

"And like it?"

"Yes—tolerably."

"It seems rather sluggish employment to lie here peeping through a spy-glass half your time," said Evelina.

"Not so very sluggish, always, ma'am," said he, laughing.

"No, I suppose you have pretty sharp work here, at times," enquired Redwald.

"You may say that, sir."

"But nothing, I understand, to what there used to be," said Abel.

"No, sir: the preventive are so very active, that there's little going on, comparatively; or, at least, though there is enough going on to keep us on the alert, there are not the dreadful fights and horrible scenes which used to be so common. Still we see pretty sharp work sometimes."

"But I can't understand," said Helena, "the good of your being perched on this cliff, when the smugglers are landing a cargo below."

"Oh, the cliff is nothing, ma'am."

"How nothing?"

"Oh, we are down that in a minute."

"Nonsense!" said Helena.

The young man coloured, but said nothing.

"But you cannot surely descend this cliff easily by night?" enquired Abel; "in the day, I know you brave fellows can do anything."

"As easy by night as by day, sir; for we know all the little projections and landing places by heart."

"True, true," replied Abel, "I forgot that."

"As easily by night as by day is rather an equivocal expression, my friend," sneered Helena.

"Ma'am," said he, colouring painfully.

"Helena!" said Abel, in a tone of reproof.

"Oh, don't alarm yourself, Abel: I am no knight-errant, nor is it my vocation to make Signor Braggadocia eat his words. But look down the cliff and judge for yourself of their probability."

"Ma'am—young lady," said the coast-guardsman, with apparent difficulty, for his face was now as pale as it had been

flushed; "if you will throw your glove over, I will fetch it up for you."

"You shall have a better mark than that, friend," replied Helena, and she flung over her parasol.

The man threw down on the grass his cap and his telescope, and had already his foot on the verge of the cliff, when Abel placed a strong grasp on his arm, and, at the same instant, Redwald had caught hold of his jacket.

"Stop," said the former: "are you mad?"

"Not at all, sir; but the lady thinks I was bragging of what I couldn't do."

"Come back, I say, and don't be a fool."

"Perhaps, sir," said the young man, now excited, and fearfully pale, and struggling to escape from Abel, who held him with a strong grasp, "perhaps, sir, *you* think I can't do it."

"I think nothing of the sort; if it were in the way of your duty I should say,

'Go, and if you are a coward, take your fate;' but you ought not to run the risk—for a risk there is at all times—because of an ignorant girl's sneer. 'Who perisheth in *needless* danger is the devil's martyr.' Helena," continued he, turning towards her with a tone of authority and reprimand—"Helena, speak to him instantly, I desire."

"Not I," retorted Helena, tossing her head, for she was indignant beyond measure at Abel's disparaging remark on her, "not I—settle the matter among yourselves, I pray you," and she turned scornfully away.

Redwald looked at her in disgust and horror, and involuntarily relaxed for a moment his hold on the jacket of the coast-guardsman; the latter, feeling this, with one sudden jerk escaped from Abel, and was three or four yards down the cliff before they could again speak to him.

The party watched in breathless awe as the man dropped from one jutting point—

points that to the common eye appeared but resting places for birds—to another; often, as it appeared to them diverging widely from his path, but still gradually receding from them, whilst they fearfully watched, until they felt, to use Shakspeare's phrase,

"How dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low."

Helena alone, ashamed, yet scorning to show it; vexed at herself yet determined not to own it, drew back with a careless air; whilst the others, forgetting in their excitement the natural fear which had hitherto deterred them from approaching the edge of the precipice without support, now leaned over, regardless of danger. When at last the man disappeared beneath a jutting crag, Abel sighing deeply, as if even his breath had been hitherto suspended, drew back, and gently drew back his fair charges also.

"He's safe now," he said, "and you are not."

"By Heaven, he's returning already," said Redwald, who had not moved from the brink.

They again drew to the edge, but more carefully than before, and saw indeed the man ascending with the same certitude of footing, and almost with the same celerity of motion that he had descended, at first indeed like some animated doll, so diminished was his figure by the distance; but they soon discerned the colour of his dress, his hair, and even his features, but more especially, and before this, the parasol, which he held in his teeth, not probably from necessity, but to give him the unfettered use of both hands. The countenances of all the party brightened as step by step he approached them, and at last with one elastic bound stood on the cliff by their side.*

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* This circumstance,—i. e. of a coast-guardsman

"Bravely done!" exclaimed Abel.

But the man heard him not; his gaze was fixed on Charlotte, who in her excitement had, all unaware, clasped his arm the moment he touched the cliff. As she caught his gaze she withdrew her hand hastily, blushing deeply, and he advancing to Helena, with a formal bow presented her her parasol.

"Thank you," said she, carelessly, and drew out her purse, but his look at her, and at it, caused her to replace it without offering any money. "We had better be moving now I fancy," said she; for now that all was safe and right, and the anxiety that she could not help sharing in was dispelled, she assumed an air of bravado

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descending for a lady's parasol, the authoress heard on the spot from an individual such as she has described in the text. The lady had indeed dropped her parasol accidentally, but she *permitted* and *approved* of his proposal to regain it at—what may fairly be considered—the risk of his life.

which she thought might best disguise certain uncomfortable sensations which she could not quell ; " we had better be moving homeward ; the air is rather chilly, and we shall have Lady Marchmont preparing warm whey, mamma looking quite diplomatic, and Mrs. Villiers in agonies about Maude."

With a slight bend to the coast-guardsman she and Evelina moved on, Charlotte and Maude spoke a kind good-night and looked one kinder still, and also moved onward ; Abel and Redwald both lingered—Abel, the more experienced tactician of the two, contrived to make the young man move onward also. He then held out his hand to shake hands, pressing a sovereign into that of the coast-guardsman.

" Good night, my friend ; you have courage and sinews to do good service to your country, don't throw them away on the whims of a silly girl."

" Good night, very kindly to you, sir ;

but pray, if you please, take back the money."

"Nay, my friend," began to remonstrate Abel.

"If you please, sir," interrupted the man; "my honour was called in question, sir, and I'm not to be paid for that. The risk is nothing sir, to us who are used to it, but if it had been ten times as much I should have been more than paid by the kind look of the other young lady. I saw the tears in her eyes, sir."

Abel replaced his money, shook hands kindly with the man, and turned away. Whether like some disappointed old bachelors, he was peculiarly sensitive as to the tender passion, and sympathized with the young man's incipient heroics, or whether in the more matter of fact morality of his later every day life, he considered that "least said is soonest mended," certain it is he turned homeward without another word.

How different, how utterly different was

that walk home from the progress thither. None remarked how magnificently the sun was setting, how beautifully the moon was rising. None stopped to call the attention of others to the magnificent castle now black and frowning, and defined so sharply and clearly in the grey sky; while a gentle mist rising from the valleys around, like a gossamer veil floating round a beautiful woman, gave a softness to the features whose glory it could not dim. No good-humoured petulant exclamations of pretended terror and real disgust followed the encroachments of those pests of a summer evening, cockchafers—or as they call them there—May bugs. No one eagerly announced the first gleam of the evening star, with light so subdued yet clear, so pure, so holy, or pointed to where

> "the gray-hooded Even,
> Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed,
> Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain."

The flowers which had been sought so

carefully were heedlessly dropt; the conversation which had been so animated, sank gradually into whispered remarks, and then gradually died utterly away. And so with languid and weary steps they wended their way homeward.

Helena and Evelina first—the former sulky and offended that Redwald had never once joined them, save for the requisite courtesies of the rugged path: the latter vexed and annoyed, thinking that Helena had done foolishly, but that far too much fuss was made about it.

Charlotte and Maude followed, kindly towards each other, but thoughtful and silent, and probably fatigued.

Mr. Snobbins and Redwald came last, but so fruitless were Abel's endeavours to excite the young man to conversation, that at length he quite desisted from the attempt.

For Redwald's eyes were now fully, though abruptly opened, and he was

thoughtful indeed. A tone, a word, a look will serve at times to render clear what has heretofore been an impenetrable mystery : but now were tone, word, look, and action all combined. The idol before whom his secret spirit had bowed, and whom he had hesitated to acknowledge publickly only from respect to his mother's urgent entreaty for delay—had indeed proved herself of the earth, earthy. Some idea of petulance, of fault of temper, he had formed ; but here was a deficiency of heart—of humanity. A woman who would risk a man's life for a momentary whim was only a monster in the eyes of Redwald.

We have been told of a young lady who meeting with opposition to the indulgence of her affection, consented to elope with her lover. They made good speed and a considerable progress towards Gretna Green, but, in this matter of fact sublunary sphere even lovers must eat, and it was found

desirable to stop at an inn for refreshment. A chicken was served up to the enamoured couple; the husband elect carved, and having helped the lady to some inferior portion, decidedly and deliberately heaped the daintier parts of the chicken on his own plate. The lady observed, ate her portion in silence, but thought the while—

"If he do this *before* marriage, what will be my portion *after*."

Quietly making some common-place excuse, she rose and left the room, placed herself under the protection of the landlord, and when the bridegroom rose from his salad and cheese, his intended bride was off some time in a postchaise and four on her way back to her father's house.

The selfishness which he had successfully concealed during his courtship, was fully revealed to the awakened eye of the lady by this trifling action.

In like manner did Helena de Snobyn's

conduct about her parasol, reveal the real heartlessness of her nature to the admirer whose eyes had been hitherto successfully hood-winked.

"Mother," said he, as having declined alike the invitation of Abel, and of the Misses de Snobyn, he parted from them at his father's gate, and hastening into the drawing-room, threw himself, heated, jaded, and, in some degree, dejected, on the sofa.

"Mother, you are the best friend I ever had in my life."

"Why so, Redwald ?"

"Because you persuaded me to wait."

Not another word passed; the good, watchful mother, content, thankful, happy, saw that the great point was achieved; and she had no paltry curiosity about minor details. She never even asked him a question.

More than that—she saw that her son was suffering, and yet she had the self-

denial, the resolution, to abstain from even offering a word of soothing, or of approbation, which she knew would as yet be premature and mis-timed. There she sate, dropping her stitches, as she made-believe to knit, for a full hour, till the twilight was deepening into absolute gloom. There she sate—not a word—not a breath. She dropped her stitches—she dropped her needles—she dropped her worsted—and, at length, even the work itself. She had not her smelling bottle either, and it was too dark to see where it was. No matter.

At length—

"Redwald, I think I should much like a glass of wine, if you would be so kind as to ring."

He did so; the wine came, and the reader must be dull indeed who does not understand that the mother contrived her son should drink a glass of wine, whether her own was tasted or not.

Direful confusion, indeed, did the lady's-maid find in the knitting next morning; but she was quietly desired by her lady "to put that away, and set on a fresh piece."

CHAPTER VII.

WHILST the fortunate De Snobyns were thus pursuing the pleasant recreations to which health, ease, and competence invited them, the disinherited daughter was working out her sad destiny in sorrow, suffering and privation. Her husband's engagement, from which they had hoped so much was soon and most unhappily terminated. Like other apparent openings, which were promising to the sight, it had proved, as he

said, bitter ashes to the taste. The way in which an engagement proposed to extend over three months, was terminated in almost as many weeks, however unusual, has not been without precedent.

It is too much the fashion, to make no allowance for the peccadilloes of clergymen, to have no sympathy for their errors, but to expect them to comport themselves as if they were, by their profession, exempted from the weaknesses and frailties of humanity.

Surely this is most unjust and unreasonable, yet it is not the less common. Those best qualified by general knowledge and varied experience to judge, are ready to admit that, as a body, *en masse*, the clergy of the church of England are more upright in principle, and pure in conduct, than any equal portion of the laity gathered anywhere.

It ought to be so, certainly : it is but a fair deduction from those high and holy principles, the inculcation of which is the

duty and the occupation of their lives, that such should be the case; but it does not therefore follow that they should be purged from the weaknesses of humanity, which, until they finally "shake off this mortal coil," must inevitably cling to them; still less is it to be expected that in any large body of men, professing what tenets soever, there should not be individuals who are a discredit to the profession to which they belong. The shame is that such rare instances should be cited, dwelt upon, proclaimed, as sullying by their individual misdeeds, the purity of the general body.

Mr. Brellarde had no particular love for the practical duties of his profession, whilst he had a love, somewhat more than seemly, for the good things of life, especially the indulgences of the table.

He was in a position of life to command appearances—*appearances* on which so many a worthy and excellent character

has been condemned without a hearing; for he had private wealth, independent of that which flowed in from his rich and valuable church preferment.

Mr. Brellarde was a florid preacher, and as it might appear, proud of his eloquence. He accidentally met his new curate, and accosted him loudly in the open street, on some alleged indiscretion or indecorum in his conduct the day before. Meredith all unconscious of the offence, replied warmly; the other rejoined more warmly; the altercation attracted the notice of passers-by, and ere many minutes had elapsed, Meredith had readily acceded to the peremptory request of his rector, that he should enter the church no more.

On his way homeward he communed with himself; shocked, harassed, agitated, heated as he was, he yet communed pretty fairly with himself. What had he done on the yesterday?—of the alleged indecorum at the altar he knew nothing: if

he had indeed yawned, it was an inadvertence which no man would more sincerely regret than himself, but which he really could not tax on his conscience as a crime.

Then, what else of yesterday?

Having taken some tea without milk or sugar, and some bread but scantily spread with butter, he had hastened to the church by nine o'clock in the morning to take the weddings. There were many; and he had hardly completed them by service time. He read the prayers; the Rector, as usual, preached. He then assisted at the celebration of the Holy Sacrament to a large number of communicants. He then hurried home; he had not time to sit down; he could not eat—food seemed loathsome to him, but he swallowed, hastily, a glass of porter, and hurried back to take the funerals. The afternoon service bell was dropping—only waiting for his return to drop, which it did as he hur-

ried to the vestry from the last grave. Then he read the prayers for the Afternoon Service ; and the afternoon lecturer preached. Then there were churchings and christenings awaiting him. Having duly performed the Holy Services here, he again hurried home, or rather to his lodgings, where tea was waiting for him, and Emily, on her knees, was trying to coax a slice of bread to brown by her poor fire, as she thought, perhaps, Henry might relish it. He ate it at any rate, and swallowed three cups of tea ; and then answering to his wife's entreaties to wait while she made another bit of toast, that he "really could not—he should be too late," he again hurried to his duty ; and, for the third time, read prayers in the large, lofty, thronged church, now reeking with the breath of two former congregations, and heated by the numerous gas lamps—for the church was what is called "brilliantly lighted." A large, old-fashioned chandelier, hanging from the ceiling, and full of lights, beamed

right on his face. Sick with fatigue and over exertion, aggravated by the want of suitable nourishment, the glare of the chandelier seemed to increase his sufferings to intensity; he not merely closed his eyes, but further shielded them by resting his head in his arm. So some over-righteous person not so absorbed by his own devotions, but that he could keep watch on those of his neighbours, represented to the irasble Rector that his new curate was asleep. Could that lordly Rector have heard the analysis of his sermon given that evening by the humble curate to his wife, as to please her he languidly tried to relish a mutton chop, the Rector's tingling cheeks might, perchance, have told that the curate had *not been asleep.*

However, so it was, and Meredith ran over every circumstance in his mind, in order to account for the fact of his Rector's intolerant language, and, consequently, his own sudden dismissal. But so it was; and he could find no reason.

He had no appeal, because, for so short a period as three months, he had hardly thought it requisite to expend his few remaining shillings in obtaining the bishop's license; therefore, he had no appeal to high authority.

From the "powers that be," in a thronged and populous parish—the churchwardens—who were not unaware, perhaps, of the foibles of their Rector, he received a testimony that the abrupt termination of his engagement, was a matter of private feeling, and not caused by any moral dereliction on his part.

This, however, was the process of subsequent days. As he returned home from his way-side embrouillement, with Mr. Brellarde, his heart was heavy indeed.

For his wife was now busy in preparing for an expected stranger—how busy, can only be comprehended by the very poor, who have seen better days.

"Looking up," as the phrase is, all her things, and bringing forward many things

which, a few months ago, she would hardly have thought fit to put in a beggar's bundle, she cut them up, and manufactured them to the best of her ability, for the behoof of the little being now so anxiously looked for.

It may be so supposed that this absolute occupation, combined with her delicate health, would put an effectual stop to her literary aspirations; but feeling how requisite, actual, if not intense, occupation, was becoming to her peace of mind—to the distraction, in fact, of her harassing thoughts, she seldom relinquished her needle-work without attempting, at least, to pen a few sentences of her projected novel.

Now again, indeed, was Meredith's very heart wrung; now had he the anguish of seeing her in want of those necessaries, which the poorest of her sex, under her circumstances, may usually in some way obtain; but not so Emily. She could not dig, to beg she was ashamed.

She would have stooped thankfully, thankfully, to pick up such crumbs as used

to fall all unheeded from her father's table.

But now the time was close at hand from which she shrank with natural horror, and far from having her mind soothed and cheered by the affectionate voices of mother and sisters, or being temporarily enlivened by the cheerful gossip of godparents expectant, and the comforting, albeit officious solicitude of "nurse," she sat alone day after day, week after week, toiling painfully at the little paraphernalia, which she feared her exertions might not suffice to make ready in time.

Haggard and miserable indeed did her husband now begin to look; his very heart was torn: he envied—absolutely envied the sweepers of the crossings—for they had occupation—employment—and were paid for it.

At length he wrote again to Mrs. de Snobyn. It was no selfish feeling of dislike or degradation, however well-grounded,

which had prevented his earlier application —he had no thought of self when he looked on the pale, worn face of his wife— but simply an innate conviction that, from the style in which his first application had been received, any subsequent one would be unsuccessful. However he stopped not to argue upon this impression, amounting almost to conviction, by which he was possessed ; he wrote thus :

" MADAM,

" It is with feelings of no common intensity, and urged by motives of no usual pressure, that I again appeal to you on a topic, which when once placed before you—now a considerable time ago—you seemed little disposed to entertain. I then appealed to you, madam, in the terms of the late Mr. Dalton's will, on behalf of his disinherited daughter ; disinherited, madam, to your own great advantage, and for my

most unhappy fault. At that time you accorded temporary aid, but with a repugnance so evident, that it was not less my own wish than yours, that our intercourse might then and there finally terminate.

"But fortune has ordered otherwise; and it is my fate again to appeal to you on a plea which you cannot, ought not, and, as I think, *dare* not reject—that, madam, by which Mr. Dalton in his last will adjudicates, that the person who luxuriates in the wealth which ought in natural course to be his daughter's, will not suffer that daughter to feel the pressure of want.

"I appeal to you, madam, on this ground, even according to the most rigid intrepretation which you can put upon it. Since the time I formerly addressed you, Mr. Dalton's daughter has not known one day of independence, scarcely one day of tolerable ease and comfort. Her exertions to maintain her own independence have been unremitting, and beyond her strength

to sustain, and they have been as unsuccessful as my own. More I cannot say.

"Mrs. Meredith, madam, is now daily expecting her confinement; and by exertions cruel to witness, she has made such preparation for the event as was in her power. But of the comforts and solaces usual in her circumstances, she is totally destitute.

"Need I say more to secure the beneficent good-will of the fortunate and happy possessor of Mr. Dalton's wealth?

"I have the honour to be, madam,

"Yours obediently,

"HENRY MEREDITH."

In due course of post came the answer, enclosing a twenty-pound note.

"REV. SIR,

"I have read your letter with much pain, for it convinces me that you still cherish hopes and expectations for which I do assure you you have not the shadow of a pretence.

"By the terms of the will of my late much respected relation, I was *requested*, not *required*, you understand, to afford temporary relief to his daughter, should the sudden deprivation of property which her own wilful disobedience had subjected her to, press all at once too heavily upon her. This claim I liquidated, as your own letter testifies.

"More, sir, I cannot do, nor do I feel disposed thereto: it seems to me that nature and justice alike forbid me to squander my children's portion. Their claims are surely first, and those liquidated, I confess, in simple-hearted truth, there is little left for the indolent to fatten on.

"I did not read, without some emotion,

your eloquent exposition of Mrs. Meredith's deprivations. Nature has gifted you with a poetical tongue, sir—for poetical I must in common charity suppose some of your pathetic figures to be. But I am a woman of business, sir, practised in the affairs of life, and I happen to know that curates are—to speak technically—at premium; that they are wanted everywhere. It can, therefore, be only from utter mismanagement, if your wife be, as you say, in want of the common necessaries of her situation.

"Still, I shrink from closing my eyes to even the possible fancies of a fellow-crea- in those circumstances; I trust, therefore, that Mrs. Meredith will not hesitate to appropriate the enclosed douceur to any ornamental addition to her baby's basket which her fancy may suggest.

"Believe me, Sir,

"Yours always,

"HELENA DE SNOBYN."

This occurred just after Mrs. de Snobyn's return to Connaught Place, from her country retirement.

One word for Mrs. de Snobyn.

She did not in her heart believe the reality of the terrible privations of which Mr. Meredith spoke. That he was in depressed circumstances she could well imagine; she was fully aware that a curate's stipend would not allow him to live on velvet. But she really did not know his actual circumstances, for, as a point of prudence and precaution, she had all along strictly forborne to make any enquiries about him.

Therefore, really not believing to the full extent the grievances which he pointed out, she had little doubt the whole was exaggerated, probably, very probably, as she thought, for the ultimate purpose of fixing an enduring claim on her.

This she felt it only common prudence at once, and for all, to abrogate; hence the

cutting tenor of her letter to Mr. Meredith.

It may well be supposed that Emily was not enlightened either as to his letter, or the sarcastic rejoinder it elicited.

CHAPTER VIII.

MEREDITH had lost no time, on his dismissal from his curacy, in removing into a cheaper, humbler lodging than he had thought it advisable to inhabit, whilst he held a responsible position in a large church. Now there could be only one consideration —that of ekeing out his little means in such way as might best promote the comfort of Emily.

He placed her in what he considered

might be a cheap neighbourhood—on the second floor of a neat and respectable house, the landlady of which appeared to be a kind and motherly woman. A lady with two infants inhabited the ground floor; the first floor was occupied by an eccentric old gentleman, who with abundant means—wealthy it was supposed rather than otherwise—and with, perceptibly, many of the habits of a gentleman, yet choose to live in two small rooms, and moreover to prepare his own victuals and cook all his food at his drawing-room fire. Of these peculiarities, and a score of others, Mr. and Mrs. Meredith as yet knew nothing and cared nothing; but on the first evening they were startled, and Emily, who weary and worn, had retired to bed, was rather alarmed, by a torrent of vituperative language, addressed by some irate person to the landlady, who seemed to be attempting very ineffectually to pacify him.

"I tell you its all a d——d lie; you couldn't see her without knowing."

"But I didn't see her, sir; the gentleman took the apartment."

"Its a d——d lie; I don't believe a word of it—you're a pack of cheats altogether. Send her off in the morning."

"I can't do that, sir, the rooms are taken for six weeks certain—very likely more—I can't go from my word, sir."

"Then by ——!" thundered he, "I'll leave you—I'll leave your house to-morrow, and you may pick up your lodgers where you like. Hold your tongue," vociferated he, "hold your tongue, and don't choke me with your lies. You hav'n't kept faith with me—"

"Indeed, sir—"

"Hold your tongue, I say—didn't I come to your house for peace and quietness, and didn't I tell you so; and hav'n't you taken in two squalling brats below, and isn't there another squaller coming above, and—"

"Indeed, sir, the children below are very quiet."

"Very be ——; when are children ever quiet? when *were* children ever quiet? I was never quiet, and I never heard of one yet that was. How the devil do you suppose I'm to live in such an infernal broil—a puling babe above, and squalling brats below? Why Bedlam itself would be peaceful to it. However I shall go in the morning."

So Mr. and Mrs. Meredith heard him shuffle from the stair head, where this altercation had taken place, into his bed-room, banging the door after him with a report compared to which a postman's knock were a lullaby. It seemed to shake the very walls of the floor above. For some time he seemed to be pursuing the same theme of discourse for his own especial amusement, accompanied by a shuffling of feet, and sundry bangs of cupboard doors and chairs; in a while the latter sounds ceased

entirely, the audible grumblings sank into indistinct mutterings, and at length all was silence.

The landlady appeared betimes in the morning with profuse apologies, and hopes that her lodgers had not been disturbed the night before.

"Not disturbed! Mrs. Grundy, why the noise was enough to waken the Seven Sleepers."

"So it was, sir, so it was, I can't deny it. But I hope you will look over it, sir."

"But what was it all about?"

"Oh nothing, sir,—nothing, he's rather a choleric old gentleman, sir."

"So I should think; and does he always swear in that terrible way—why every other word was an oath?"

"Too much, sir, he's rather given to be hasty. But I hope you won't feel offended, sir, and the lady."

"Oh no, we've no right to be offended;

but I must hope that we are not often to be subjected to such uproars as that of last night."

"Oh no, sir, he's a very nice old gentleman, very, sir, very quiet except when he's put out by anything, being rather hasty. He's threatened to leave me fifty times, sir; when he's vexed he always says he will go in the morning, but he never does, and now I don't mind him, sir."

"Well, my good woman, we must try not to mind him either, only for our sakes you must endeavour not to provoke him often."

"Oh ma'am, I hope you and the good gentleman your husband will be very happy, and he's not so bad either except just when he's provoked."

At the first moment Emily referred both the latter and the former clause of this parting speech to her husband, and was rather puzzled about it, but Meredith laughingly explained that the personal

pronoun referred to a much greater "he" than himself, even to Mr. Griffith, the irate occupier of the first floor, or as the landlady, *á la Londres*, styled it, her drawing-room apartments.

Probably the agitation of change of scene and place, or the hurry of removal—though effected with all possible attention to her comfort—had been too great an exertion for Emily's strength; for somewhat sooner than she expected she was taken ill, and ere the second night had waned of her residence at Mrs. Grundy's, she was the happy mother of a promising boy.

Who now so happy as she—and for a time as her husband; but not even the excitement of this joyous event, not even the safety of his beloved wife, could long beguile him from the remembrance of his approaching destitution, of his now utterly hopeless position. But as to Emily, forgotten totally were past sorrows, unheeded future probable anxieties, she thought of

nothing but her babe. Even the remembrance of her father—who was never very long absent from her thoughts—came with a softened impression, a shade less of sadness than had ever heretofore been the case, as she pressed her babe to her bosom, whispering the while,

"He would have forgiven me now—*now*—I am sure."

Emily recovered quickly and happily: her nurse was clever and faithful, her landlady kind and attentive: and the irascible old gentleman in the drawing-room apartments behaved wonderfully well. The landlady, the first time she had occasion to approach him after the birth of the infant, certainly did so with fear and trembling, and almost quailed, accustomed as she was to it, at the torrent of abuse he levelled at her; but he did it in a low voice. For days no one could pass the doors of his rooms up, or down stairs, without hearing muttering, chunnering, grumbling, pishing and pshawing, aye and

even swearing, and he was indisputably in an exceedingly bad temper, so much so, that his landlady never went near him except compelled; but after all there was yet remaining a sentiment of kindliness all unextinguished even by his own selfishness and his long commerce with the world.

So for some days no doors were slammed, no cupboards banged, and no unhallowed curses reached Emily's ear as she lay in her humble chamber, where the

> "hallow'd air
> Was fragrant with a mother's first and fondest prayer."

So it continued for some days, but one morning as the nurse was going down stairs, the door of the "drawing-room apartment" was abruptly opened, and the much-shunned possessor thereof, stood before her.

"Here, you old b—, come in here."

This address, which being true, we are

compelled, however unwillingly, to indicate, was not of a very flattering nature, and certainly in no way calculated to propitiate a member of that very important—self-important—sisterhood, the monthly nurses. The one in question indignantly stood aloof.

"Come in, I tell you, and be d—d to you."

Thus impressively adjured, the woman entered and he closed the door.

"Didn't I hear that d—d Doctor of yours—(will our readers oblige us by understanding that that emphatic and ill-mannered word, or some other equally significant and undesirable, is introduced at every other word—at every possible and impossible opportunity)—"Did I not hear that Doctor of yours—a pack of fools they all are—and talk so cursed loud too—didn't I hear him say that the poor fool upstairs was to have a mutton chop ?"

"The lady is to have a chop, sir, I'm going down to see about it."

"You are going down for it, you old harridan, are you—and she was to have it at twelve o'clock—how can I help hearing if they make such a deuced noise in the house? she was to have it at twelve o'clock, and it's now twenty-five minutes past—'and you're going down to see about it.'"

Here he mimicked the nurse's tones in a most ludicrous manner, she, much offended, turned to leave the room.

"Stay where you are, I tell you," said he in a tone which she, not having heard before, was rather astounded by: she remained. "And what are you going down to see about? a bit of coarse meat, with a wob of tallowy fat, scorched on the fire and smoked against the coals; and then brought up with grimy salt and a wiped knife on a spotted greasy cloth—and that to tempt a delicate sick woman to eat. Don't I know their lodging-house style of things. Pah! the very idea of their nastiness makes me sick. Here—

take up this; and I have just placed one little mouthful of bread—wholesome bread—not poisoned with alum and bone-dust."

While speaking thus in a quick, testy, angry tone, he had covered a small waiter with a spotless damask napkin, and placed therein a china plate with a cover to match, raising which for one second, he displayed a small mutton chop of most appetizing appearance—Ude, the immortal, never excelled it—a small, bright knife and silver fork, a salt-cellar, and the mouthful of bread. The nurse was a good-hearted woman, and her personal dissatisfaction melted away at the first sight of so dainty a repast for her invalid lady.

"There, there—begone, begone—don't bother me with your d— thanks. My compliments to the lady—no thanks: I only did it to amuse myself."

And he almost pushed her from the room, and decidedly, though perhaps not intentionally, slammed the door.

For several days the old gentleman amused himself with preparing some little dainty matter and sending it up to Emily, until he learnt that the lady was recovered and the nurse leaving.

A man of varied knowledge and wide experience, having been more or less a sojourner in almost every clime; wealthy it appeared, and well born it was supposed, it was yet his humour to shut himself up in this third-rate lodging, where he spent no insignificant portion of every day in culinary labours.

He was rather saucy in his appetite; his landlady certainly could not please him; chop-houses were disgusting, and hotels were costly; and therefore he chose to be his own cook.

"It amused him," he said, "and helped to pass the day."

It has been said that the distinguishing characteristic between man and the brute creation is, that the former is "a cooking

animal." But it has also been said, much more ambitiously :—" *Qu'un cuisinier est un wortal divin.*"

Mr. Griffith was a proficient in this useful art—*that*, Mrs. Grundy, to whose share fell many relics, was always ready to testify.

" And strange to say," she would add, " though the old gentleman be rather dainty, and have a good hot dinner every day, and though he cooks bytimes all manner of things, he have lived with me upward of a twelvemonth, and I have never found one spot of grease on the hearth or the carpet."

One day Emily knocked timidly at his door, and on hearing " come in," in his usual stentorian tones, she opened it, but was withdrawing instantly.

" I fear I am intruding," said she.

" Not at all ; not at all."

He was standing with his back to the door, in a loose dressing-gown and slippers,

without waistcoat or neckcloth, a fork in his right hand, a napkin in his left, and spectacles on, carefully watching the progress of something which was simmering over a spirit lamp on the table.

As Emily hesitated to advance, he half turned, and seeing who it was, at once welcomed her with gentlemanly courtesy.

"I interrupt you, sir," said she.

"Not at all, ma'am; pray take a chair."

"I only wished to express my thanks to you, for your kindness when I was ill."

"No need of thanks—no kindness at all—I only did it for amusement—I'm fond of cooking."

"I am not the less obliged."

"Well, well, say no more about it: but the truth is *I* can't eat their lodging-house messes—can *you*?" asked he in a confidential tone.

Emily shook her head.

"My circumstances do not warrant me

in being very particular ; and Mrs. Grundy is very obliging and kind."

" Oh yes, yes, she's a very good-natured woman, in fact she's too good natured, she can't say *no*. I don't mean to say that she's too good-natured to you, ma'am or to me—but her taking in that little body below—just because she didn't like to say no."

" What, Mrs. Barrett ? surely she is a nice woman."

" Oh yes, she's well enough herself ; I have nothing to say against her ; but then those tiresome brats of children : you see—" he was continuing, when suddenly his eye fell on Mrs. Meredith's infant, which he had not before noticed.

She smiled gaily and pressed it closer to her.

" Ah, I see, I see," he muttered, " all fools alike."

She rose to take leave, and he did not again oppose her ; the recognition

of the baby had evidently caused her to fall in his good graces. But with all courtesy he opened the door of the apartment for her, and bade her adieu.

CHAPTER IX.

So Meredith and Emily continued their anxious and well nigh hopeless course ; a life truly of penury and painfulness, limiting their expenses with the most rigid frugality, and striving day after day unweariedly to achieve that most hopeless of all tasks, eking out one shilling to perform the work of two. Occasionally the chance befel him of a day's duty, which he grasped as eagerly as a drowning man a straw,

and it did so happen that a solitary 5*l.* note found its way to her purse, for some one or other of the sketches, which a few months earlier she had sent to various magazines.

So they toiled, so they struggled, so they lived happy in their true and faithful affection, happy after all in their mutual trust and love, their only solace and refuge in fact from the bitter storms of the world without.

One other solace indeed had Emily—one new, unaccustomed, but how inexpressibly great! Her child!

As she gazed upon it as it lay on her lap, its gentle, clear, wondering eyes turned upon her, as she thought, with a look of recognition, she felt that with this comforter in her arms she could bear all—all.

What was her horror then, her utter dismay, when it became evident to her that her babe was ill! that the sustenance he took seemed not to nourish him, that he seemed to shrink in size, that his hereto-

fore sweet and placid features were disturbed; that he was twiny, sleepless, cross.

She appealed to Meredith in agony, but he thought she was alarming herself unnecessarily. He saw the change in the child, but babies he thought were often ailing from one cause or other.

"Perhaps it is teething," suggested he.

"Too soon, too soon," murmured she, as she mournfully shook her head.

"Would it be any comfort to you if Betham were to see it?"

"The greatest," said Emily, turning on him a thankful look.

"Then I will fetch him directly," and taking his hat he left the house.

Mr. Betham was the surgeon who had been called in to Emily in her accouchment, but she had feared to suggest his further attendance on account of the expense.

In a short time Meredith returned accompanied by the medical man.

He looked at the infant.

"I should recommend you," said he, "to obtain a wet-nurse."

Meredith and his wife looked at each other in dismay, their whole remaining finances would not have liquidated the cost of one. They had long accustomed themselves to but two meals a-day, and from habit this was become no hardship to them; but even these were of the very plainest and most frugal description, such as no hired servant would be content with, especially one of a class usually seeking, as indeed their vocation partly requires, extra indulgence in food.

Emily raised her woe-struck face first to her husband whose countenance was hidden from her, but she knew too well what its expression would be, and then down on the precious little being who lay pale and helpless in her lap. At length

in a tremulous, faltering voice she asked—

"Might not my own unceasing attention, my own anxious, watchful solicitude suffice? I will follow your directions and advice implicitly, to the very letter."

He saw that in some way or other the idea of a nurse was very unpropitious, perhaps he might suspect the cause.

"You can try," he said, "you can but try. I should recommend a little change of diet for the child—a spoonful of arrow-root, a taste of smooth grit gruel, in alternation with its usual food."

So he took his leave. Meredith went to procure some arrow-root, and Emily remained seated; her tears, of which she was all unconscious, dropping fast on the white nightrobe of her child, when a gentle tap was heard at the door.

In answer to Emily's faint "come in," a pretty, gentle looking woman entered; Mrs. Barrett, in fact, the lady with the two

children on the ground-floor. She had frequently been up during Emily's confinement, always on some mission of womanly kindness.

"I met Mr. Meredith going," he said, "to buy arrow-root; and I stopped him; he is now keeping watch over my children, while I come to you. I know, dear Mrs. Meredith, what you do not, that people going to buy this in small quantities, seldom if ever, obtain it pure: so I have brought up a small jar of mine, which you must accept: it was the gift of a West India merchant, and I know it to be the true thing. Nay, don't look as if it were an obligation, for it is none: arrow-root is cheap every where now, this cheaper still, for it literally cost me nothing. Besides," she added, raising the child from Emily's knee, and pressing its little withering cheek to her fair, soft, healthy one, "you would not poison your darling with druggist's stuff. So now,

leave off crying, that's a dear woman, and get me a little boiling water, and I'll show you how to make this stuff—for I dare say you don't know."

To leave off crying was far beyond Emily's power just now, for she was become very nervous and weakly, but she hurriedly put some wood on her particle of fire, and in a few minutes the food was ready: but the child refused it, not one drop did it swallow. Emily sobbed aloud, with alarm and grief.

"My dear Mrs. Meredith, my dear woman, this will never do," said Mrs. Barrett, though her own eyes were full of tears, at the sight of the young mother's anguish :—" you are alarming yourself quite unnecessarily; the food is strange to the child, and he does not like it at first, that's all : we'll make a little with milk, and try if he likes that better—if not, we'll try gruel : depend upon it, in a day or two, he will take it quietly enough."

The child, however, was not induced to

take them that day: the next day, without notice given, or reason assigned, (though the landlady was honourably remunerated, in lieu of the accustomed notice,) Mrs. Barrett quitted the house with her children, not, however, without stealing a few minutes, in the midst of her hurry and bustle, to give Mrs. Meredith ample directions about her infant's diet.

"And don't be alarmed, dear Mrs. Meredith, at his refusing his food: if he won't take one thing, he'll take another: or what he rejects at one time, he will probably be glad of at another. And above all, don't fret, for that will do him more harm than every thing; good bye, I shall come and see him."

"Do," breathed Mrs. Meredith, as she pressed the hand of this kind friend, "do."

The child never took kindly to its food, though it occasionally swallowed a little, which always excited new hopes in its mother's mind.

In hope she struggled and watched; in hope she trusted, each returning day, that somewhat would arise, whereby she might procure a nurse. But day after day passed on, and the hope deferred of the morning ended in the heart-sickening despondency of the evening, and she retired to a restless bed, and short anxious slumbers, perpetually interrupted by the feeble wailing of her declining babe. But yet nature did her gracious hest; broken, anxious, interrupted, as this slumber was, it yet strengthened the careworn woman for the toil and anxiety of the succeeding day.

But the child worsened perceptibly, and now indeed rapidly. Its skin assumed a livid tinge—its little features were wrinkled as if by age—its eyes environed by a dark rim, looked unnaturally large. The landlady came into the room to look at it; Emily raised her eyes wistfully to the kind woman's face—but spoke not a word, asked not a question—she dared not. Mrs. Grundy told her in the approved

phraseology for such occasions, to "keep up her heart—while there was life there was hope," and retired from the room. But she hastily slipped on her shawl and bonnet, and went to the doctor, Mr. Betham, whom, fortunately, she found at home.

An experienced mother herself, she had no difficulty in explaining, accurately, to him the symptoms and appearance of the little child.

"Ah," said he, shaking his head, "bad, very bad; why didn't they have a wet-nurse when I told 'em."

"Did you tell 'em so, sir?"

"Of course, I did; it was plain, the mother's milk had no nourishment in it; she's starved the child.

Mrs. Grundy shuddered; she saw in a moment how it all was. Emily had never named the wet-nurse to her.

"Would a wet-nurse do now, sir?"

"Doubtful—very doubtful indeed; but it's the only chance."

Mrs. Grundy curtsied, turned from the door, and hurried home, for she knew she was absent at a time she would be expected there. But though she walked hurriedly, she pondered deeply.

Arrived at home, she found, as she partly expected, that "the gentleman who occupied the drawing-room apartments," had arrived before her, and was storming in tones that resounded through the house, because he did not find the saucepans, plates, &c., placed to his hand, according to his wont, when he was about to exercise the mysteries of the culinary art for the preparation of his mid-day meal.

Contrary to her wont, she came into his awful presence without preparation or apology. She bearded the lion in his den.

"So, you lazy old harridan, ye're come at last are ye? What the —— do you mean by gadding out in this way, when

you ought to be at home waiting on your lodgers? Here have I been groping in your infernal hole of a kitchen, but not a thing can I find—of course not—of course not—you women are all alike—the d—st sluts in creation. Well now, what the —— is the woman snivelling for—crocodiles that ye all are. Do you suppose, you old fool, that crying will mend the matter?"

"I was not crying for that, sir."

"What the ——— are you crying for then? What else have you to cry for?"

"The lady's baby up-stairs."

"D—— the lady's baby up-stairs."

"Is dying, sir."

"What the d—— is that to me? So much the better for it."

"The lady don't think so, sir."

"The lady's a fool—as most ladies are."

"Poor little dear! poor little cherub!

such a sweet, beautiful baby as it was—and to see it now!"

"What in the name of all the devils do you stand snivelling and blubbering here for? What is the woman's brat to me? Begone!"

"If you kill me, sir, I won't go till I have said what I came to say."

"Say it, then, and be ——," said he, throwing himself into a chair.

"The baby up-stairs, sir, is dying for want of proper nourishment; and it's my belief, sir, as the lady is starving, or nearly so."

He started up and gazed at her with a look of horror, which gradually changed to one of incredulity.

"Woman," he said, clenching his enormous, bony hand close to her face; "woman! isn't—this a —— lie?"

"God's truth, as I hope for his mercy! Go up-stairs and see for yourself, sir."

"And what's to be done?"

"A wet-nurse, sir, might by chance bring round the poor babe. At least, Dr. Betham says it's the only chance."

Down he stalked, grumbling and swearing all the way, and shut the front door door after him with a bang which reverberated to the very roof.

It might perhaps be an hour—no it was scarcely so much—when a cab rattled to the door at the very utmost speed to which the poor horse could be driven. Out of it issued Mr. Griffith, followed hurriedly by a decent young woman, who seemed half frightened by the impetuosity of her companion.

"Here, come along—come along," as she was waiting for a small trunk which the cabman was extricating from under his driving-box; "come along, and let t'other woman see to your d——d finery: you fools of women think of nothing but your gew-gaws. Here, this way, you fool—you creep like a tortoise!"

So he thundered upward, three steps at

a time, and bolted right into the room of the astonished and alarmed Mrs. Meredith.

"Here, ma'am—got her from the lying-in-hospital—matron tells me she'll serve—dare say they're all liars, though. Here, where the —— are you—you slug, you tortoise, you!"

The young woman, who had remained outside the door, now advanced and curtsied modestly to Emily, who gazed in amazement.

"Why, you be ——! what do you stand mopping and mowing there for! why don't you set to work! what the —— are you hired for?"

The young woman unpinned her shawl, opened her dress, and then with a respectful look, as if claiming Emily's permission, she gently raised the child from her lap, and laid it to her own bosom.

The next instant, Emily was on her knees before Mr. Griffith.

"Pshaw! pshaw! stuff—nonsense!"

ejaculated he, as he flung out of the room.

Arrived safely in his own "drawing-room apartment," he rang the bell violently.

"You old she-wolf, with your hypocritical tears—I suppose even yet you've the impudence to call yourself a Christian woman."

"I hope I am, sir—I hope so humbly."

"Humbly be ——! which part of your bible is it which tells you to let your fellow-creatures starve under your roof—eh, ye harridan, tell me that!"

"As I hope in Heaven, sir—as I hope for mercy, I knew nothing about it till this morning. No, sir, that poor lady—for a lady she is, I'll testify—should have been welcome to half my poor dinner, any day, if I had known."

"You must have known they hadn't enough food."

"No, sir, not at all. Just consider, sir, I don't wait on those attics and worser rooms, as I does on you or any other gentleman in my drawing-room apartments, or as I do even in my ground floor apartments, which are very respectable rooms. Those above, sir, always waits, and does everything for themselves—I never know what they have—the gentleman usually goes out after dusk, and brings in what they have, sir,—it wasn't my place to pry into it. And this morning, sir, the gentleman, who looks as pale and sickly as his poor wife, only with it all, sir, there's a proud flashing look about him which sorrow has taken away from her sweet face, if she ever had it—"

("D—— the woman," *par parenthese*).

"—and so, sir, he came to me this morning just as I was doing the door steps, and he says—he's always remarkable kindly spoken, sir,—and so he says, 'My good friend,' says he, 'I wish you'd go up

and look at my baby, for I fear it's very ill, and your motherly experience might be of comfort to my poor wife.' Them was just his words, sir, and so as soon as I'd done up things a little decent-like in the kitchen, and made your bed, sir, and dusted your rooms—"

"Fine dusting, you slut," growled he, as he glanced round the room.

"—then, sir, I went up stairs, but I didn't stay many minutes, sir, I hadn't heart; and then I just turned in my head what was best to do, and I went right to the doctor, sir; and he said he'd ordered a wet nurse long since, for he saw the mother could give it no nourishment. So then, sir, I thought of her look and of his look, and it came into my mind that they hadn't food enough, and then, sir, twenty little things struck me which I had not thought of before, and I felt sure it was so. And so then, sir, I came right to you."

"Humph! I know you did, and you suppose that I'm to support all the starving women and brats of the parish, do you?"

Mrs. Grundy made no reply—wisely.

"Well," said he, after a few moments, during which he had stalked up and down the room with much the air of a chafed tiger in his den. "Well, what next—I suppose she must have something to eat."

"Of course, sir, and as I thought it would not do to give her meat, or anything strong at first, sir, I bought a little bit of tapioca as I came home from the doctor's, and I thought I'd make a little very smooth and nice, and take it up without saying a word to her, and perhaps it might tempt her, sir."

"Humph! for a woman, you're not such a very great fool. Go and get it done."

She curtsied, and turned away.

"Stay—a little at a time, mind you, a very little at a time."

She curtsied again, and was going.

"Here, what are you in such a devil of a hurry for?"

She returned.

"You had better call in here as you take it up, and I'll put a teaspoonful of wine in it."

"You're very good, sir."

"D—d. nonsense! she'd better have a little mutton broth, bye-and-bye."

A curtsey—no speech.

"But you'll only make a greasy mess of it. I'll see to that myself."

Another curtsey of acquiescence.

"And you may as well—you'll of course be out on your d—d gossipping expeditions this evening; you had better order them to send a nice fresh chicken in the morning."

"Yes, sir, sure."

"Well, be off, then; what the devil are you waiting for?"

Mrs. Grundy retired, but returned almost instantly.

"Well, what now?" thundered he; "no more starving women, I hope."

"Oh, no, sir, no; but I forgot, sir, the nurse, if you please—what must she have?"

"D—n the nurse—get her a bottle of porter, and set her a guzzling to begin with; it's what you all like in your hearts."

* * * * *

The unfortunate baby took eagerly its new nourishment, and Emily was again in an ecstasy of rapture and hope; but alas! only to be again overwhelmed with disappointment and despair. Its functions were too much weakened—its powers of life too nearly expended, to be restored. The stomach rejected the sustenance which, a little earlier, would have given life and

vigour to its frame. The best advice was had by Mr. Griffith's orders, and every prescribed restorative tried, but it was too late.

The baby died.

CHAPTER X.

AND now Mr. Meredith had to turn his attention to a new subject of thought, one more bitter, more painful than it had ever entered his heart to conceive—the burial of his little boy—his first, his only child. He wrung his hands hard and set his teeth, so as to prevent auy audible expression of his agony escaping, which might reach the ear of his wife. She lay on the small bed in the corner of the darkened room—her

head and shoulders shrouded closely in wrappings, as if even the feeble light that penetrated through the chinks of the shutters, was hateful to her. Every now and then, a low, feeble moaning was heard, as if wrung from the tortures of an agonized spirit; and this sound was the only one that escaped her; as yet, she had shed no tears.

So they remained, that grief-stricken father and mother, throughout the rest of that miserable day, and so they remained throughout the long and weary hours of that miserable night. For, when the last glimpse of light had faded away from the fractured shutter, and when from the gradual change in the sounds, and cries, and noises, in the streets—which to an habituated Londoner, are almost equivalent to a clock—Meredith knew that the evening was advancing, he saw the latch of his door gently raised, the door very, very slowly opened a few inches, and a vision of his landlady bearing a

waiter, with a lamp and two cups of tea. He raised his hand quickly to forbid her approach, and in another instant the door was gently closed; the kind-hearted woman leaving the waiter with its contents on the floor outside.

None presumed to approach the mourners after that; but at Mrs. Grundy's bed-time the lamp was re-trimmed, the untouched cups of tea removed, and a glass of wine and water, supplied by Mr. Griffith, placed in their stead. But all unheeded by the hapless mourners within.

In passing in the morning from her own attic bed-room, Mrs. Grundy found the lamp dying in the socket, and the negus untouched. She lost no time in preparing a little breakfast, and again opening the door, was thankfully welcomed by Meredith, who had the comfort of seeing her with womanly and experienced kindness prevail on Emily to swallow a few mouthfuls of food.

After the lapse of a few hours, Mere-

dith's feelings of anguish, if not softened had been varied by the perplexities of his position. He must bury his child, and how must he procure funds for this last duty. Done in the simplest and most penurious manner possible, it must still require a sum far beyond what he possessed. A sudden thought struck him, and he took from a drawer a cameo ring, a fine antique, but of enormous size and most unfashionable appearance: clumsy indeed in the extreme it might now be called. It was the last, the only relic of his personal belongings, and it remained only because he had not been able to obtain any money for it. Two or three second-rate jewellers to whom he had successively offered it, were not capable perhaps of appreciating the value of the cameo, and seeing only a monstrous ring, perfectly unwearable in these days, they assured him that the article was utterly unsaleable—they could do nothing with it—they could make no offer—they would rather, in fact, be without it. So this ring

still remained; and with this in his hand he descended to the apartment of Mr. Griffith, and requested the favour of a few moments' conference.

Mr. Griffith received him with kindness —even *his* humour was tamed for the present; he enquired with some feeling after Mrs. Meredith, and then asked Meredith how he could be of service to him.

"I took the liberty of coming to you to enquire," (he spoke at first with evident difficulty, and in a thick, husky voice, which cleared however as he proceeded and gained courage) "I took the liberty of coming to you, to enquire whether you would have any inclination to purchase a ring which I wish to sell. As an antique I know it to be of value, and I thought, perhaps, from your wide travels and extended knowledge, you would be better able to appreciate it than the ignorant jewellers to whom I have in vain offered it."

"I will purchase your ring, sir," said

Mr. Griffith, who during all this time had not raised his eyes from the apples which he was paring—"I will purchase your ring, albeit I am no connoisseur. But perhaps I may as well look at it."

Meredith held it towards him, but he deliberately laid down the knife he was using, dipped his fingers in a basin of water, which stood on a side table, and wiped them on a towel which hung near it: then putting on his spectacles, he turned to Meredith.

"Now, sir, if you please."

But he had hardly touched the ring, ere he started vehemently, looked at it again, then at Meredith, and gasped out,

"Where, in the name of all the devils, did you get this?"

Meredith replied as calmly as he could, that it was the only remaining relic of the few he had long cherished, in the hope of their some day enabling him to identify his parentage.

Mr. Griffiths looked at him closely,

keenly, almost fiercely: he scanned him from head to foot, and then seized his arm with a giant's grasp, and turned him towards the light, that he might better examine his countenance. At length, trembling with agitation, he turned over the ring, touched a secret spring, the top flew open, and displayed, on the reverse of the cameo, an exquisite miniature portrait of a beautiful woman.

It was Meredith's turn to start now, for the resemblance to his own wife was undeniable. Allowing for difference in the style of dress, &c, it might have passed for Emily, at the time he married her. He looked in amazement for an explanation.

"This," said Mr. Griffiths, "is the portrait of my mother, as I well remember her. You were not aware of this secret spring?"

"No."

"Nor ever saw the miniature?"

"Never."

"How came you by the ring?"

"I told you, sir, it was a relic of my childhood."

"And what does that tell me," said Griffiths, passionately; "What know I about your childhood? tell me where you were born, and where you lived."

"Alas!" replied Meredith, "of my birth I know nothing—I was received into the Foundling Hospital—"

"*You were*," interrupted Griffiths, seizing him by the wrist, with the grasp of a vice—"*what* Foundling Hospital?"

"That in Guilford Street, near Saint Pancras—Captain Coram's Hospital."

"I know, I know: why the devil don't you get on."

"I have little to tell you, sir. At about three years old, I was taken away by a widow lady, who had lately lost her only child, and who fancied that I resembled him. She gave me her name, brought me up as her own, and while she lived, I never had a care. She told me often that

this ring and some other little matters had been tied round my neck when I was left at the Hospital, and that, when she took me away, they were given to her, as the probable means of hereafter identifying my birth."

"In God's name, have you a mark on your neck?"

"Yes, on my left shoulder, what the old women call a strawberry."

Meredith was dreadfully agitated; overwhelmed with long privation, sorrow, want of food and rest, this catechising, and the ideas it excited, were more than he could bear. He turned deathly pale, staggered, and would have fallen, but the old man caught him, and supported him to a chair. He poured some wine, and made him drink it, and when he saw him a little recruited, he said in that inward, concentrated voice which tells of intense agitation.

"I gave this ring—this very ring—to one whom I left—unintentionally at first—

I gave her this ring, as a pledge of my truth—I fully meant then to redeem my pledge. I heard she had borne me a son—I have never heard of her since, though I made enquiries after her. The news reached me, too, that my son had been received into the Foundling Hospital, but when I applied there for him, I was told he had been removed. Of your identity there could be no doubt, for your mother had given you my name, or rather the name I had then assumed, on an irrevocable quarrel with my family; but she, your mother, thought it was my true and paternal name. The trinkets left with you were described to me, this ring amongst the rest; the mark on your shoulder was named—there could be no mistake—none—none.

"But further I could not trace you: they had lost sight of your new protectress—and it may be that my injunctions of search were not very accurately en-

forced, for I was far away in India—fast—"

Again he looked earnestly at the shaking Meredith, and with an irrepressible burst of emotion, whilst he wrung the hand of his new-found son, he buried his face in his other arm on the table, and sobbed aloud.

The many memories of the past, of his father's house, his childhood's home, his youth's first love, his early, happy, unprofaned years, rushed over his heart, and, for the time, rendered the strong, hardened man of the world powerless as an infant.

No reference to this mighty change in Meredith's affairs was made that day to Emily; she was not in a state to bear the slightest additional agitation with impunity.

But the first horrible shock was subsiding, she was becoming more composed, she struggled, she prayed for resignation

—her earnest self-schooling, for the last two years, brought forth rich fruits now —and in the evening, she was able to converse—mournfully indeed—but calmly, with her husband. God was already tempering the wind to the shorn lamb.

At night her anguish returned, but towards morning, she fell into a sound and refreshing slumber, which lasted some hours.

It was with a momentary thrill of anguish at past remembrances, quickly succeeded, however, by a warm, sunny feeling of thankfulness and joy, that Meredith saw Emily, after breakfast, wash her cups and saucers, and then, according to her habit, prepare to dust and put in order her meagre furniture. He knew well there was now no need, he trusted there would never hereafter be any occasion for her to put her hand even to the lightest domestic drudgery, but he had the good sense not to interrupt her now. He knew that oc-

cupation must be the best solace to her mind, the very best interruption to her melancholy thoughts; so he quietly sate, pretending to read, until she had performed as much as her strength permitted of her accustomed morning's task.

That completed he could refrain no longer.

"Emily, love, you have often said to me when I was desponding, almost despairing —and I should have been in utter despair more than once but for your support— you have often told me to be patient, to hope still."

"I have always wished and endeavoured to do so; I still wish: I still try:" but her lip quivered, *one thought* rendered the attempt all but impossible just now."

"You have always said that if we struggled patiently and hopefully, some blessing would reach us at last."

"What is it, Henry? you have heard of something, I can see. Have you got a curacy—tell me?"

"No, my dear Emily, no curacy: but—but—I have found my father."

Emily put her trembling hand in his, and looked earnestly for explanation. He told her all the wondrous occurrences of the preceding day circumstantially, as they happened, and when he concluded with the words—

"And my greatest and truest satisfaction lies in the hope, that now my dear and excellent wife will never again be exposed to privation and want."

The one recollection came over her, and as she pressed her hands closely together she breathed almost involuntarily as it seemed,

"My child—my child!"

Meredith was deeply touched; for a few moments all his fresh hopes and brightened prospects were forgotten, and the bereaved parents mingled their tears.

However, he recovered his composure, and succeeded in time in soothing hers. Then he recurred, naturally enough, to his

new fortune, and entered into earnest conversation on his altered prospects. For some time Emily sustained her part in the conversation, but she flagged, and Meredith seeing she was fatigued, ceased to talk to her, and lapsed himself into deep thought. So deeply, so earnestly was he engrossed, that he did not see her leave the room.

At length he perceived her absence but supposed she would soon return. But she did not ; and at length, becoming suddenly nervously agitated, he went in search of her. A secret misgiving prompted him where to go. He crept up to the back attic and there found her quite insensible, stretched across the cradle containing the corpse of her child.

CHAPTER XI.

As Meredith was bearing Emily in his arms down to her own room, he met Mrs. Barrett who had called to see her. She was in tears herself, for she had just learnt the sad history from the landlady, and was stealing up to the attic, unheard as she hoped by its parents, to look once more on the sweet and now solemn face of the babe.

She turned now however into Meredith's

room, assisted him to recover Emily from her fainting fit, and then offered to remain with her for an hour or two, so as to leave him at liberty to attend to other calls.

The offer was thankfully accepted by both, and Emily received as much consolation as she was then capable of, from the unfeigned and affectionate sympathy of her friend.

They talked together long, but only on one subject: Mrs. Barrett never attempted to change it. Young and inexperienced as she was herself, she felt that this outpouring of her feelings must be the best relief to the poor mother. So thus seated on the side of the bed on which Emily had been laid, pressing occasionally her friend's hand, she spoke softly and listened patiently, until, partly from exhaustion, partly from the effects of an anodyne which had been given to her on her recovery from fainting, Emily fell asleep. Mrs. Barrett

then gently withdrew her hand and softly stole away. Of the change in the pecuniary circumstances of her friend she knew nothing: the matter had never entered Emily's thoughts.

Mrs. Barrett then went up stairs to take a last look at the poor little victim and cause of so much suffering, and deeply was she touched as she looked at this hapless child, and thought of her own cherubs at home, so healthy, so thriving, so gay. She left the house in tears.

Probably our readers have already recognized Mrs. Augustus de Snobyn in Mrs. Barrett; it now remains for us to explain why that lady was not known by her high sounding title. It had pleased Augustus before his marriage was made known to his family, that his wife should bear an assumed name; it was prudent; it facilitated his plans of secresy. When he brought her to London, Mrs. de Snobyn seeming resolved, as he said, to keep him

under eclipse, it would be folly to attempt to shine forth as a De Snobyn; and as his mother intimated that she had no ambition to have her high sounding name localized in the purlieus of the minor theatres, the title assumed at Oxford as a matter of common propriety and necessity, had been continued by a sort of tacit understanding.

Miss Prabble, whom Mrs. Augustus looked upon, and with reason, as one of the kindest and best of friends, in consequence of her successful intercession with her husband's family, called very frequently to see her, and always made herself welcome; for she was always ready to assist in whatever was passing; to make the tea when the baby was fractious, to propitiate Gussy with a sugar plum—of which efficacious *bon-bons* there was always a reserve in some inaccessible (to all but herself) corner in her capacious pockets—to help to undress the children

and coax Gussy to be washed without crying, to lay her head on his pillow, and "make believe" to go to sleep with him: then when his eyes really closed and the grasp of his little hand relaxed, to steal away and help his mother in some little needle-work—a matter of tapes or buttons. Then "wrapping herself well up," as she said, which consisted in putting on handkerchiefs and shawls innumerable, some under, some over her cloak, a little handkerchief under her bonnet, another over to tie it "well down over her ears," and a veil to hide that—a pair of old kid gloves and over them a pair of woollen ones, and over these a pair of outside muffatees to keep them "over her wrists," her thick boots and a pair of pattens, her umbrella —the cotton one—and her useful straw basket, then Miss Prabble was attired as she loved to be on a winter's night. No wonder that some one who saw her disrobe herself to her gown and cap, said that "she peeled like an onion."

For she always waited at that season, until about nine o'clock in the evening.

"Because then, my dear, it's just as light as day, and a vast deal pleasanter, and the shops look so brilliant, and one can see all the things so well, it's quite an entertainment to me, quite: and one sees what things are going, and prices, and all that, its really quite informing: and there's such a nice butcher's at the corner, always the best o' meat, my dear: and he's such a civil, well-spoken man, remarkable civil, to be sure: I often buy me a morsel as I pass, having my basket so handy, and he's as partic'lar in cutting my pound, or may be, pound and a half, o' chump of mutton, as if I was the first lady in the land. He's a remarkable civil man, to be sure."

One day, it was in the Summer, she waited a considerable time before Mrs. Augustus made her appearance. This did not signify; Miss Prabble was perfectly at

home; she laid aside her bonnet and gloves, put on her spectacles, and began to busy herself with some sewing that was on the table. At length, Mrs. Augustus came down.

"I heard you come in, my dear Miss Prabble, and I am very sorry to have been detained so long, but I could not avoid it."

"Never mind, my dear, never mind: it is of no sort of consequence; but what have you been so busy about?"

"I've been up stairs with the lady on the second floor, her baby is poorly."

"Oh, the lodger you were telling me about: have you made her out, my dear, what she is?"

"Not at all: she keeps quite entirely to her own room: I fancy she is very badly off. I don't know, but I think Mr. Meredith is a clergyman."

"Mr. Meredith!" exclaimed Miss Prabble.

"Yes, that's the name: do you know him?"

"Not at all, my dear," said Miss Prabble, taking her work to the window, under pretence of disentangling a knot, which, in reality, she made ten times worse.

"And how do you know he's a clergyman, my dear?"

"Mrs. Grundy said she believed so; I think he let drop something of the kind when he first came."

"And she, my dear, what is she like?"

"Oh, she's every inch a lady, a real lady, a true lady, I'm quite sure: whatever has brought her to this pass."

Miss Prabble became suddenly silent, and remained so, for probably a longer space than any of her friends remembered such an occurrence. Then she began to talk of other things; then little Gussy, who had escaped to the kitchen, was brought

up again, *vi et armis*, by the landlady, who was too busy to attend to him; and he, in virtue of the prerogative of his sex, roared manfully, and would be appeased by nobody, not even by Miss Prabble. At length, however, she succeeded, mainly by exhibiting a terrific portrait of the gentleman in "the Drawing-Room Apartments," and order was restored.

Then came tea, and then the children were undressed and put to bed; but nothing would induce Gussy even to lie in bed, unless "Pab Pab," remained with him, and for once, for the very first time in her life, even "Pab Pab," thought Gussy a little tiresome.

She did not show it, however, but beguiled him as usual till he was asleep, and then, in all haste, she pattered away. So entirely were her thoughts occupied, that she really never saw White and Greenwell's window, though it exhibited a miraculous assortment of new and fashionable elegan-

cies. Nay, she did not even see the butcher's-shop at the corner, though the man was standing on his own door-step, looking as "remarkable civil" as ever; and though she was absolutely without provision for the morrow's dinner, and in coming, had "quite made up her mind to treat herself with a little piece of the kidney end of that fine loin o' veal, which with a pound of nice pickled pork, of the streaky part, would dine her three days beautiful and leave a scrap for poor old Peggy, besides."

Arrived in her own neat little parlour, Miss Prabble continued to take counsel with herself. She was perfectly aware that no hint of Mrs. de Snobyn's accession to the Dalton property, or of Mrs. Meredith and her disappointments, had ever reached, or was ever to reach the ear of Mrs. Augustus, the despised though acknowledged "pretty Vi;" and it was no more Miss Prabble's duty to tell her than

it was her inclination. Though a gossip, she was no blabber; though a woman, she could keep a secret; she might in inadvertence betray one, by design never—*that* she had proved.

She wrote to Mrs. de Snobyn, telling her of the discovery she had made, and putting in a warm, kind, womanly word for the "poor young lady," who, as Mrs. Augustus assured her, seemed really very ill off.

On reading this communication, Mrs. de Snobyn wrote instantly to her daughter-in-law, as follows:

"DEAR MRS. AUGUSTUS,

"Circumstances, which I cannot explain to you within the compass of a note, render me earnestly and anxiously desirous that you should quit your present lodgings at once, without an hour's delay

—on the very day you receive this communication, if possible.

"This may seem awkward in some respects, but money smooths many difficulties, and I enclose you a bank-note of sufficient amount, as I hope and believe, to cover any accidental liabilities, or even some extra expense in lodging. Should your sudden removal be rendered easier to you by your taking a somewhat more costly apartment, you will, therefore, feel that you are authorized to do so.

"If I understand my son's arrangements rightly, your present landlady will require a week's notice on your removal. I wish, in lieu of that, to present her with a *douceur* to the amount of a fortnight's rent of your rooms.

"Your promptitude in this matter will please and *oblige*

"Yours truthfully,

"HELENA DE SNOBYN."

To which, by return of post, Mrs. de Snobyn received the following reply:

"MADAM,

"I will obey your directions implicitly; I have already arranged, in compliance with your wishes, to leave this house this evening.

"Believe me, madam,

"Yours respectfully,

"VIOLET DE SNOBYN."

Thus it happened that Mrs. Barrett's, or Mrs. Augustus de Snobyn's sudden removal from Mrs. Grundy's took place, at the time Emily's baby was so ill, as I hope my readers will remember.

But Mrs. de Snobyn defeated her own object by the stately mystery she assumed; had she said that she did not wish her to form any associates in Mrs. Grundy's house and that removal was the easiest means, poor Violet would have obeyed her as implicitly, and could not have *wondered* more than she did now.

Her heart's most intense hope and desire was to propitiate her husband's family—his mother, especially; and to accomplish this point, she would readily have given up any and every association she had. But Mrs. de Snobyn had given no reason—Violet had no sort of clue to guess at it, all she could do was to wonder and obey.

It never once entered the mind of Mrs. Augustus to conceive that her haughty mother-in-law's objection to Mrs. Grundy's house consisted in the apprehension that she, Violet, might form some acquaintance with the sick lady up stairs. Therefore, whenever, and as often as her duties to

her own little children rendered her temporary absence possible, she returned to her old lodgings to assist as much as possible her unhappy friend, by soothing and hushing her suffering baby.

CHAPTER XII.

As we stated at the commencement of the last chapter, Mrs. Augustus de Snobyn was moved to tears at the sight of Mrs. Meredith's dead baby, and it was before the traces of them were by any means effaced, that, on going home, on turning the corner of the street where she now lived, she met suddenly Miss Prabble and Mr. Abel Snobbins. They had met accidentally, and as their course lay the same way, had walked on together.

Abel had heard originally from Sir Charles Marchmont of his half brother's secret and ill advised marriage, and of course had also heard from him that favourable account of the young lady, which the politic Mrs. de Snobyn had thought it advisable to give to the baronet; and her appearance now fully bore out the favourable impression. Miss Prabble introduced them, and Abel took her hand cordially and kindly.

"But what is the matter with you, my dear?" said Miss Prabble.

"Oh, Miss Prabble, I've just seen such a sight, such a sad sight," said she, half choking in her attempt to swallow the sobs rising in her throat, "that poor baby—starved—starved to death."

"What baby! my good girl, what do you mean?"

"You know, I told you," said Violet, speaking as well as her sobs and tears would let her, "that she was very ill off,

but I little thought it would come to this—poor, poor Mrs. Meredith !"

Miss Prabble had begun to suspect, and the moment the name of Meredith escaped, she showered a profusion of nods and winks, and even ventured to touch her elbow to stop Violet's mouth.

But Violet neither saw nor felt—Abel saw all and heard all.

"The doctor says," continued Mrs. Augustus, as soon as her sobs allowed her to speak, "the doctor says that Mrs. Meredith must have been absolutely in want of food herself, and that there is no doubt the baby has been starved to death. Oh, it is too, too shocking;" and Violet burst into a passion of tears.

Abel drew her aside, under a sort of awning which projected from a shop window, where she was rather more retired than on the open flags, and placed himself between her and the passers-by until she should have a little recovered herself.

"I had better take her home," said Miss Prabble.

"No," replied Abel sternly, "I will take her home myself;" for Miss Prabble's winks, nods, and telegraphic signs, had made a very unfavorable impression on him, knowing, as he did, how intimately she was in his step-mother's confidence.

But he did her injustice. Miss Prabble was not less shocked than himself, and she was greatly surprised; for as we have already said, she had made an appeal to Mrs. de Snobyn on Mrs. Meredith's behalf, and had no doubt—so much too highly after all did she rate her fashionable friend—that it would be at once attended to.

"Mr. Snobbins," she said, all her vivacity of manner gone, "I see and hear a good deal in many families, but I have never been thought a mischief-maker, especially to those who are kind to me. But it is only due to myself, as a Christian woman, to tell you that I did not know of this, but that weeks ago I warned Mrs. de Snobyn

to send help to the poor lady. I did indeed, sir."

Abel looked in her face, and then grasped her hand warmly.

"I believe you, Miss Prabble; I fully and entirely believe you: but now, my good friend, go home, and leave me to take care of my sister-in-law; I wish to have some conversation with her."

Miss Prabble could only obey, though she did not do so with her very best grace, and Abel, drawing Violet's arm through his, desired her to lead the way to her lodgings.

When seated there, having placed her at her ease by a kind reference to her husband and enquiry after her little girl, he told her to forget that he was a stranger, to think of him if possible as an old friend, and to narrate to him all the particulars she knew, of the melancholy occurrence to which she had alluded when she met Miss Prabble.

Thus requested, Violet, who knew of no

cause for evasion or secrecy, told all she knew, and all she had heard and even suspected. Of Mr. Meredith's tall form and gentlemanly countenance, though stooping as it seemed from weakness, and pale and emaciated in face; of Mrs. Meredith's sweet and melancholy voice, and gentle, lady-like ways; of their voices and footsteps never being heard in the house, and of their secluding themselves so entirely from notice, that even their landlady had no idea of their real condition until the approaching catastrophe revealed all, and that then Mrs. Grundy had interested a fellow-lodger in their behalf.

All this, and much more, did Violet pour into the attentive ear of Abel Snobbins, who, his head bent down, his hand resting on the table, listened to every word, and at length, when Mrs. Augustus had quite finished, drew a long breath as if relieving himself from some pressure.

His heart was burning, his spirit was boiling with indignation against his step-

mother; he thought of her with withering contempt; he could hardly at once subdue his feelings, but he was accustomed to self-control. It was not from him, not from the high-minded Abel, that the young wife should first learn to think with disrespect of her husband's mother.

She sat very silent, she wondered at him, but did not presume to remark on his agitation. At length he became quite composed, and he spoke to her.

"My dear, you will do me a kindness, I think? You will execute a commission faithfully for your husband's brother."

"That I will; you may trust me indeed, sir."

"I do trust you, my good girl. I am summoned to Dover on peremptory business; indeed, I was on my way to the station when I met you. I cannot, therefore, go to Mr. and Mrs. Meredith to-day myself, neither indeed do I think it would be right to intrude. I want you, therefore,

to take this bank-note for 20*l.* to them," (he took one from his pocket-book, and placed it in her hands): "make them take it; tell them it comes from one whose bounden duty it is to help them, and who will prove his claim to this right in a few days. Say to them, that I will surely come to them myself within a week."

"I must tell them your name, of course."

"By no means—I charge you not—not on any consideration."

"But they will be sure to ask me, and what excuse must I make?"

"None at all; speak the truth; that I will come to them in a few days, and that, in the mean time, I desired you *not* to tell my name. Will you obey me implicitly?"

"I will, sir, indeed; you may rely upon it."

"Very well; you will oblige me very much; and now I will say good by."

But just at that moment a girl entered with the two children.

"Oh," he said, "this is your child," beginning to caress the one the girl had in her arms; "and whose sturdy rebel is this?" turning to Gussy.

"Mine," faltered Violet, looking surprised, and turning very pale.

"Yours!" he exclaimed, then hastily taking the infant, and dismissing the nurse, he turned for explanation.

"Yours! is it Augustus's then?"

"For what do you take me, sir," said she, turning towards him with some spirit; "I have long felt that I was wrong, culpable; but Mrs. de Snobyn and her family knew of this boy, and forgave me."

"But I did not know of him, my dear," replied Abel, gravely, but very kindly, "or I should not have distressed you by a question. Here, take this little one, while I make acquaintance with him."

"What's your name, sir," said Abel.

"Dussy," said the boy.

"Will you give me a kiss ?"

"No," said the boy.

"Manfully spoken, upon my word."

Abel drew out a bright halfcrown.

"Will you have this ?"

"Yes."

"Give me a kiss then."

In another instant his rosy lips were pressed to Abel's cheek, his tiny arms trying to grasp his neck. He won his halfcrown honestly.

At length Abel really went. His last words to his weeping sister-in-law—weeping now with grateful joy—were—

"Be a good wife to Augustus, a good, careful mother to these beautiful children, and you shall always find a true friend in me."

But here was another of Mrs. de Snobyn's petty chicaneries which made Abel's spirit recoil in disgust.

She had professed to confide all the misconduct of her son to Sir Charles Marchmont as to a friend, seeking advice as to her future course regarding him : she had referred to Augustus also in confidential seeming to himself, (Abel) yet not the most distant allusion had she made to the existence of this little boy, although it appeared he had been with Mrs. Augustus in Connaught Place.

CHAPTER XIII.

With the energy and promptitude which suited his general character, Mr. Griffith made arrangements for Emily being at once transferred to his apartments, nor would he suffer one word of deprecation from Meredith, who, as well as Emily, felt naturally diffident at the idea of his being put to inconvenience.

Mr. Griffith peremptorily commanded silence, and told Meredith that had it been possible for Emily to be removed, she

should that very day have been placed in apartments fitted for a lady, not in those "d——d, paltry, dirty holes:" and he looked round with an expression of disgust: but as things were, Mrs. Meredith must be contented with them for a few days.

Her husband accordingly tenderly supported her down stairs—for her sorrow had made her very weak—on the forenoon of the day succeeding that visit from Mrs. Augustus de Snobyn, which we have recorded. Mr. Griffith met her at the door of the room, and also assisted her to a large, comfortable *fautieul* which he had that morning ordered in for her use. As he placed her in it he kissed her forehead and said—

"My dear, I hope you will learn to look upon me as a father."

The words were unfortunate—they called to mind her own father, and all her sad remembrances; she burst into an agony of tears. But she became calmer, and the

unwonted ease and comfort of her position, the cheered looks of her husband, and the animated conversation of Mr. Griffith, who appeared to have forgotten all his accustomed boisterousness, had a soothing and happy effect on her. So much so, that after the lapse of a few hours, Mr. Griffith began to make more minute enquiries into the particulars of their past history than he had hitherto done.

"Your husband told me something of your marriage, my dear; and I know that you were a very naughty boy and girl, very naughty; it is not for me to say which was the most to blame. But all that, you know, is past and forgotten now. But your husband never told me what your name was, or whether you had changed it for a better."

"Dalton—Emily Dalton was my name."

"Dalton!"

"Yes, sir, my father was Frederick Dalton of Beechwood Manor."

"The devil!"

"Did you know him, sir?" faltered Emily, half frightened.

"Beechwood Manor, in Gloucestershire?"

"Yes, sir."

"Frederick Dalton, son, *second* son of Gamaliel Dalton and Hermione Brancker?"

"Oh, you did know him, sir, you did," said Emily, stretching her trembling hands towards him.

He knitted his brows as he strode about the room, with a stamp which showed that for the moment at all events, the agitation of his own mind rendered him totally forgetful of the tremors of his timid and nervous guest.

"Amazing!" he muttered; "hell and all devils, it is amazing."

Emily became frightened, and looked timidly towards her husband. He could only press her hand and draw her closer to him in token of support and sympathy;

he was as much surprised and perplexed as she was.

At length the old gentleman stalked towards her.

"And you say," he began, then suddenly stopt, looking at her in astonishment. "But what's all this—what the dev—what's this; why you're crying—what have I said, what have I done."

"Oh, nothing, sir, nothing; pray forgive me—I'm very weak, I believe."

"You're a fool, I believe," said he, half crossly, looking at her though with much kindness; "you are a fool, as I believe all women are; and I'm a bear I know, and not society for them. But you must learn not to mind it, my dear, and now you must be a good, obedient daughter, and go to sleep until I come back again."

"But, sir, my father; you knew my father, I'm sure."

"What then?"

"Oh, sir, I don't know; but have pity on me, and speak."

"My good girl have pity upon yourself, and don't raise bug-bears out of nothing. I did know your father intimately; more intimately than you can conceive, and I can tell you all about it in two words, but whilst you are so weak and foolish I dare not. You shake and tremble now as if you had an ague fit."

"Sir, I am quite firm in mind, indeed."

"Oh very, remarkably; you women are all damnably firm when you have a mind. But listen, my dear," said he, more seriously, taking her hand, "listen, and if you wish to please me *try* to be firm—Did you ever hear your father mention his elder brother, Thomas, who, it was supposed, died in India?"

"Often, sir, often."

"My dear, I am that elder brother; now," continued he, menacingly, "remember your promise—be firm."

"I—will; I—am—firm," gasped Emily, as she sank back in her chair powerless.

"And you, you audacious scoundrel,"

said he, turning to his son, "who steal away gentlemen's daughters in order that stray uncles may pick them up again—if you are worth your salt, you will talk your wife to sleep at once, in order that she may be refreshed and cheery when I return."

And he stalked out of the room.

Whether the veritable soporific were, in fact, her husband's conversation, has not, I believe, been anywhere specifically recorded; but certain it is that Emily did fall into a slumber from which she awoke composed and refreshed.

The conversation in the evening was deeply interesting to all parties, though happily free from agitation and excitement. *The* ring was produced, the unsaleable cameo, containing the portrait of Mr. Griffith's mother, Emily's grandmother, Mrs. Hermione Dalton, *née* Brancker. The likeness to Emily was discussed; Mr. Griffith could not deny the general resemblance, but was fastidious on some minor points.

Mr. Meredith attributed them in great measure to the difference in style of dress.

"Moreover," he added, "I don't refer it to Emily so much just now, when she looks ill and worn; but as she was, gay and blooming, when I married her."

Still Mr. Griffith would not be convinced.

"Serves you right, Henry," whispered Emily, "for comparing me to my grandmother."

Henry could scarcely believe his ears. Long, long months had passed since he had heard anything so gay and *piquante* pass Emily's lips. But he was careful not to express his astonishment and delight —he only smiled in return.

Mr. Griffith spoke of the Beechwood property.

"It is mine by right," he said, "mine by the express terms of your grandfather's will; and your father, himself holding it illegally, though he knew it not, supposing I was dead—your father, I say, had in fact

no right to will it. When I appear, the claim of this she-wolf in woman's form, this Mrs. de Snobyn, will be lighter than thistle-down. And as she has dealt by you, so shall she be dealt with, I swear by ——."

"Oh, stop, stop, I implore you," said Emily, placing her hand on his mouth; "we are so happy—you have made us so very happy, that we can well afford to forgive her."

"*You* may—you women are all soft fools!" (he had just called one a she wolf) "but *I* cannot forgive her, and I will not, by all the saints in Heaven! Henry, didn't you say that that trumpery hundred pounds when she stepped into my brother's shoes, and that pitiful twenty pounds the other day were all you ever received from her, though she knew your distress?"

"All, sir," said Meredith, who was much more of his father's mind regarding her than of Emily's; "all, sir, though she had come into the enjoyment of four thousand a-year, by Emily's loss."

"I know it, and more than that—more than that."

"Twenty pounds the other day, Henry; I never heard of that."

"No, dearest; it was just before your confinement, and I did not wish you to have the humiliation of being cognizant of my application."

"But why, sir, have you never brought forward your claim to your own estate?"

"Why! because I didn't want it; because I didn't care for it; because everything I've touched has turned to gold. I didn't care a button for the dirty acres—at least, I thought I didn't. I left my brother in possession because I'd wronged him when a boy; and when he died, of what use were they to me, who don't spend one twentieth part of my income? But I didn't know I'd a son living to inherit it. I do care for it now—you shall have it, my boy, every acre, and every guinea of arrears I'll wring out of——well, well, well, damnation! don't put on that imploring face again. There, I'm good."

"Very," smiled Emily; "but tell us, sir, what took you abroad."

"A truant disposition, my dear: I was a wild and foolish and profligate young man, ungoverned in my temper and reckless in my habits. I quarrelled with my father and brother, left my home, changed my name, and led a profligate life. I had a little money bequeathed to me by my god-father, enough to enable me to keep up the appearance of a gentleman for a while. I became the father of your husband, but understand me Emily, it was never my deliberate intention to break faith with his mother: she mistrusted me, I suppose, and I lost sight of her; for my profligacy soon overwhelmed me with difficulties, and too haughty to make submission to my father, I quitted the country clandestinely. Understand me too, Emily, I have no other son or daughter, nor ever had; there is no one claimant to divide my affections with your husband.

"Well, my dear, to make a long story

short, I got to India: I penetrated even as far as China, which was not in my young days an every-day affair as it is now. I have been in Syria, Egypt, and many European countries. Some of these expeditions were undertaken from mere recklessness, and thirst for variety: but in most I was engaged in mercantile pursuits which all turned to account. I am one of those born, as the saying is, with a gold spoon in my mouth. I never lost a guinea, and everything I touched turned to gold—to teach me, as I sometimes thought, that prosperity itself may be a curse.

"I was in India when my father died, and I knew by the advertisements for I saw them all—that he had forgiven me, and restored me to my rights. But I couldn't rejoice in his property, though I was thankful, truly so, for his forgiveness. I thought the very footstep of such a scamp as myself near his grave would dis-

turb him in it, and I thought Frederick might have the estate, and so he had. Fred and I had never agreed, he was no saint in temper, but when I was ten or twelve thousand miles away from him I felt that I had often done him wrong, and it pleased me to think that I was, unknown to himself, making some atonement.

"Well, my dear, this is a brief but faithful outline of my history. It would neither be for your advantage to hear, nor my credit to recount all minute particulars: my life has been a reckless one, though I hope on the whole, I have been more an enemy to myself than to any one else. I have been as Hamlet says 'indifferent honest.'"

"But now, my dear, I shall bid you good-night. You have had excitement, and more than enough, for one day."

"Good night, sir, and thank you very, very much. But first of all, I should like

to ask you, whether you have formed any guess as to the donor of this bank-note which Mrs. Barrett brought me last night."

"Not I—I never thought of it again; did you, Henry?"

"Yes, sir; but without being able to form any conjecture regarding it. But you know, Emily, we shall soon be informed, as she said the gentleman was coming himself."

"Yes, but it is very strange that she was so positively forbidden to mention his name."

"Certain sign it wasn't worth naming," said Mr. Griffith, with something more approaching his usual growl than he had yet exhibited before Emily, for he had not at all liked the occurrence; "but you fools of women have so much curiosity. But go to sleep—go to sleep—and forget it."

But all Emily's unwonted cheerfulness of this evening vanished with the morn-

ing's light, for this one was the one appointed for the funeral of her child.

In the agonising renewal of her grief, she almost felt as if the happiness of the day before had been a sin on her part.

The funeral was perfectly plain and unostentatious, anything else would have been ridiculous. But whilst insisting on this point, Mr. Griffith had given orders that no minor arrangement which could mark the gentleman's child should be omitted; therefore, the little wrapping shroud was of the very finest material—the lining of the coffin of the richest white silk, the cover and ornaments of the most approved fashion. After all, it was a mockery; during the few weeks of its suffering life it had been clothed, warmly indeed and sufficiently, but most economically, in robes made from its mother's half-worn-out garments.

So at ten o'clock, a plain mourning coach, drove from the door. On the back

seat were Mr. Griffith, and Mr. Meredith, who looked paler than ever: on the front, sate good Mrs. Grundy, crying, and carrying on her lap the coffin of the ill-fated child.

Mrs. Augustus de Snobyn, or, as she was here known, Mrs. Barrett, according to previous agreement, remained, during this time, with Emily.

CHAPTER XIV.

On the day preceding his accidental interview with Mrs. Augustus, Mr. Abel Snobbins had received a letter from Sir Charles Marchmont, begging, that if it would not be inconvenient to him to step over to Dover—it is but a step now—he would do so, as he, Sir Charles, was anxious to have a little conversation with his old friend. Though the letter was perfectly cheery and unalarming, Abel was yet certain that

something important was mooting, and, at first, his fears were alarmed for his darling niece, Maude; but a moment's reflection convinced him that the baronet would not, for an instant, have left him to the misery of vague imaginings in anything regarding her health or welfare. What else it could be, he could not conjecture, and did not waste time in attempting to do so.

To go that day was impossible; but he made arrangements for starting on the next; and he was on his way to the station when, as we have already fully detailed, he met Miss Prabble and Mrs. Augustus de Snobyn. When he parted from the latter, he thought it too late to fulfil his intention that evening, so did not leave for Dover until the morning—a fatal delay.

On his arrival at Dover, he found Sir Charles Marchmont at the station.

"I thought," said he, "you would probably come by this train, and that I might as well take my walk in this direction.

Have you any objection to walk home? My man is here and will see to your luggage."

"None at all; I prefer walking. But tell me, how are all?"

"All well; all perfectly well, Maude looking charmingly, Mrs. Villiers not perceptibly worse, though I begin to fear this climate will never suit her."

"I have long thought so," replied Abel.

By this time they had emerged a little from the bustle of the station, and Sir Charles plunged *in medias res* at once.

"I sent for you, my good friend, because I thought your mediation might succeed where mine, I am sorry to say, has failed, in arranging a difference which has arisen between Miss Charlotte and her mother."

"Indeed," said Abel, anxiously, "I am sorry to hear it. It cannot have escaped your observation, Sir Charles, that I am on no terms of affection with Mrs. de Snobyn

and her family, but I would make an exception for Charlotte and Octavius, they are frank, warm-hearted young people; though I could not but fear that they would be corrupted, in time, by influence, and bad example. But I do love Charlotte, and would help her in any way. What is the matter?"

"I was quite aware that she was your favourite; nor was I surprised that it should be so. It was therefore that I wrote to you. I cannot acquit Miss Charlotte of imprudence, certainly I cannot—of great imprudence; but I fear Mrs. de Snobyn's severity has increased the evil which perhaps—for Charlotte is an affectionate girl—which perhaps, I say, might have been obviated by more consideration and kindness. She is very young. You remember the handsome coast-guardsman who descended Shakspeare's Cliff, to pick up Miss de Snobyn's parasol? I had the whole history from my son."

"Perfectly well I remember."

"Well, I am sorry to tell you that Miss Charlotte has ever since kept up a regular communication with him, and they have had a series of interviews, which seem to assume importance from the fact that she positively refuses to break off her correspondence with him."

"I am sorry to hear this," said Abel, gravely, "very sorry. But after all," added he, his countenance brightening up, "may it not be some mere girlish folly, magnified into more importance than it deserves."

"I hope and believe that it is so; and therefore I sent at once for you. I have lately learned to think that my cousin has a spice of the devil in her, of which her handsome daughters inherit a due share, and I hope and think that injudicious severity on the one hand, and girlish pertinacity on the other have raised a cloud which a little kindly counsel from you will soon dispel."

They were now approaching the east cliff.

"I think," said Abel, "I will go at once to Mrs. de Snobyn, and then return to you."

"Do so; it will be the best plan. They are not aware of my writing to you, you will name the circumstance or otherwise —just as you please."

They parted; but in a moment Abel returned.

"If I find it desirable to remove Charlotte from her mother, may I trust to Lady Marchmont's kindness to receive her for a day or two, until I can arrange?"

"For a month or two, if *you* wish it—and think it will be of advantage to the young girl. *I* will answer for Lady Marchmont."

Abel expressed his thanks warmly, and then sought Mrs. de Snobyn.

"Ah! our dear Abel! how very *apro-*

pos ; how extremely fortunate ! you have no idea how earnestly I have wished for you."

"I am easily to be found at all times, madam, by those who really wish for me," replied Abel, as he shook hands with his two elder sisters.

"Oh yes—yes ; but I could not be so selfish as to call you from your own important concerns merely for my own convenience. You will not shake hands ! oh well ! well !" smiling to her girls with a haughty concession ; "We all know that Abel's little caprices are to be indulged."

"My object in visiting you to-day, is to make some enquiries respecting Charlotte."

"Ah, indeed! You have heard of the sad disgrace into which she has fallen : who can have informed you ?"

"I have heard of no sad disgrace ; Sir Charles Marchmont informed there was some difference of opinion between you, and that has brought me here."

"Sir Charles Marchmont!" repeated Mrs. de Snobyn, haughtily, for she had been by no means pleased by the baronet's kindly leaning towards her daughter; "I have yet to learn by what possible right Sir Charles Marchmont interferes between me and my daughters?"

"Sir Charles Marchmont does not interfere, Mrs. de Snobyn; that you must full well know. Had *he* wished or meditated interference, *I* should have been the last person he would have summoned."

"Let us speak of this matter calmly, my dear Abel: why, or wherefore you assume such sternness towards me, I cannot say; but I cannot afford to lose your friendship; for, Heaven knows! since the death of your dear father, and the misconduct of my own eldest son, you are the only efficient friend I have to look to—"

Abel was touched; could this be sincere? had he wronged her after all? He caught a glance of her eye; it was enough, it

brought to his mind, did that one glance, the thought of Mrs. Meredith and all her sorrows. He was hard as adamant in an instant.

Mrs. de Snobyn continued after an agitated pause.

"I am much shaken, Abel; I am become very nervous. I recal what I said of Sir Charles Marchmont—it was mistimed and misjudged; he is a most honourable gentleman; but having experienced none, not the slightest tinge of filial disobedience in his own family, he can hardly be a fitting judge of my feelings and conduct in the aggravated troubles I experience!"

Abel made no reply.

"In my daughters I have experienced the highest comfort and satisfaction, which, as regards my two eldest, continues unbroken—"

(Helena and Evelina exchanged glances; their disagreements with their mother

were, of late, frequent, and not, altogether, unknown.)

"But as to Charlotte—"

"Yes," said Abel, "as to Charlotte—"

"She has formed—I grieve deeply to tell you—for she was your favorite, and you will be much shocked—she has formed a *liaison* with a low fellow, which she has had the insufferable insolence to tell me—absolutely to tell me plainly, that she will not break."

"What arguments did you use to induce her to break it."

"Such arguments and remonstrances as an offended and insulted mother is justified in using."

"Severe ones ?"

"Possibly ; they were called for."

"It did not occur to you, Mrs. de Snobyn, to try kindness and forbearance."

"It is good," interrupted Helena, "to hear *you* preach kindness and forbearance to mamma, when I have heard you say

that it was her injudicious kindness and mistaken forbearance that ruined Augustus."

"So I still think; but is there no difference, Lady Helena?" said he.

He had often been in the habit of calling her Lady Helena in good-natured badinage, a sort of merry rebuke to her girlish airs, but as he pronounced it now it sounded like the most cutting sarcasm.

"Is there no difference, *Lady* Helena, think you between a selfish, profligate, and debauched young man, and a warm-hearted, affectionate though perhaps a very silly girl? Or have you in reality forgotten that Charlotte is your sister?"

"I wish I could forget it," sneered Helena.

"I do indeed believe you," rejoined Abel. "But I will tell you what you two girls *ought* to have done in this case; you may compare it with what you have done —what that is I can pretty well guess—at your leisure. You ought to have stepped

between your mother and your sister; your affectionate intercession would have softened the just anger of the one, your sisterly advice might have moderated the disobedience of the other. You might have had, most likely would have had, the great comfort, the great blessing of restoring your sister to her duty, to her mother's favour; and had peace at your fire-side, instead of this disgraceful, disgusting disunion. Sisters were intended by a good Heaven to be harbingers of peace and consolation to each other in trouble; not fire-brands of discord, not adders in each other's path."

"Really, Abel," began Mrs. de Snobyn.

"Oh, mamma, pray don't annoy yourself on our account," said Evelina, contemptuously, "we shall outlive this tirade. Come, Helena, let us retire."

"Do so; and when you see your sister Charlotte again—I do not justify her misconduct, mind you—but remember that you

are her sisters, and 'do not add more trouble to a heart that is vexed.'"

Helena laughed.

"Ha! a proverb! our dear Abel will be himself again soon."

Abel turned sternly to Mrs. de Snobyn.

"I wish to see Charlotte, madam," and without waiting a reply, he rang the bell.

"Ask Miss Charlotte to come here; tell her that her brother, her brother Abel, desires anxiously to see her."

Mrs. de Snobyn sat silent; the picture of insulted dignity; Abel stood by the mantel-piece in deep thought.

The man returned.

"Miss Charlotte is not within, sir."

"Indeed! where is she gone?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Have you any idea, madam?"

"None."

"Pray make enquiry through the house, will you; and let me know what time Miss

Charlotte went out, and whether any one knew her destination."

The man bowed, cast a glance of enquiry towards his mistress, who vouchsafed neither word nor look, and retired.

He returned.

"The kitchen-maid had seen Miss Charlotte go out that morning about seven o'clock. No one had seen her since."

"Seven o'clock this morning, and it is now past four. Is this the care you take of your inexperienced daughter, madam?"

But Mrs. de Snobyn had started up in surprise and alarm.

"How is it possible? how could she get out? who unlocked her door?"

"You locked her up then, did you? a high-spirited girl like that: no wonder she broke out; I hardly blame her.—Send the kitchen-maid up to me, sir."

After some little delay she came with her apron to her eyes, and her strong ex-

pressions of dismay and penitence, at once declared her to be the culprit who had set the bird free.

But Abel's first question was interrupted by the appearance of Charlotte herself, and the kitchen-maid was summarily dismissed from the presence.

Charlotte, the rosy, merry, joyous Charlotte, now looked pale, stubborn, and tear-swollen. Naughty she might have been, but she had evidently been suffering too. She looked at Abel, but made no sort of recognition.

"How Charlotte," said he, in a tone of kindly remonstrance, "won't you shake hands with me?"

Her features worked convulsively as she looked at him.

"Then, then," said she, "they have not set you against me;" and she seized his extended hand and bathed it with tears and kisses.

"No one is set against you, Charlotte,

but you must feel," began Mrs. de Snobyn.

Abel interrupted:

"May I beg you, madam, to leave me alone with Charlotte for a few minutes."

Much offended, Mrs. de Snobyn retired with much dignity. Abel opened and closed the door for her and then returned to Charlotte who was crying tumultuously. It is an odd word to use, but she really was in a perfect hurricane of emotion.

"Now Charlotte," said Abel, "this is all of no sort of use: it is worse than foolish. Drink some of this," (there was wine on the table, he mixed some in a tumbler with water, and put it towards her,) "drink this, and compose yourself, and then I shall be able to converse with you."

She still sobbed uncontrollably.

"This is foolish, Charlotte; you should have some consideration for me. I am here solely on your account."

"Too late, Abel, too late."

"Not at all too late if you are not stubborn, and will be guided"

"Too late, Abel: for—but mind I don't repent," said she quickly, glancing at him for a moment and then dropping her head—"for, I was married this morning."

"Charlotte!"

Abel sank down on the nearest chair, and was most glad to nerve himself with the wine and water which he had just prepared for his sister.

"Charlotte," said he soon after, "do not trifle with me: I wish, I mean, I think of nothing but kindness to you. Do not trifle with me."

"Why should I," said Charlotte; "you are the only friend I have in the world, and if you had been here to protect me, I should not have married—yet."

"Yet!"

"Yes, yet; for I was quite determined

to have him some day ; but I loved him and could have waited. Only I got frightened at them at last, and when you did not answer my letters, I felt I hadn't a friend in the world."

" Letters, Charlotte ; I got no letters from you."

" There it is again," said she : " I wrote twice to beg you to come to me."

" Did you post the letters yourself ?"

" Oh no ; I never thought of that."

" But this marriage ; poor misguided girl, I do not wish to reproach you, but it is a sad affair."

" Not so sad as you think, Abel ; my husband is not the low, vulgar wretch they call him ; he has respectable friends, and has been educated. But if he had been all they call him, it would have made no difference, for I have been mad I think."

" Poor girl, I think so."

" I have been driven mad, Abel, by

threats and severity, and taunts and sarcasm. Everything but curses, mamma, has showered down upon me, and I sometimes thought she had those in her heart. My sisters have made the house unbearable to me, hints and inuendoes and sneers, even before the servants; nay, I have seen the very footmen smiling. I have been locked up before them all, and my meals carried from the parlour table by a footman, and brought up to my bed-room by my mother's maid. Oh, Abel, if instead of this they had given me one kind word—kind words, say I! why would you believe it, Abel, Helena absolutely asked me one day if it was my intention to honor the family with another "little Gussy." Poor little Gussy! I don't think they have ever been really cordial with me since I made such friends with him—as if it were his fault, poor child!"

"Never mind Gussy just now," said Abel, who had nevertheless keenly noted

every word, which in her excitement she uttered: "But tell me about yourself. What are your plans?"

"I have no plans: I was married in desperation, to have a refuge when I could endure here no longer."

"Why didn't you speak to Sir Charles Marchmont?"

"How could I? you may be sure mamma had gained him to her side; I saw that, two or three weeks ago, and I have hardly, if ever, seen him since. You forget," added she with a touch of Helena's sneer, "that I have been locked up."

"Well, it is of no avail now," said Abel, "to continue this catechism. But you must not stay here, Charlotte, and keep your mother in ignorance of your marriage."

"And I dare not stay if she knows of it;" said Charlotte, starting up hastily with undisguised terror in her countenance.

"Stay, impetuous girl," said he, "sit down again."

She did, and he remained for some minutes perplexed in thought.

At length he told her to tie her bonnet and go with him, which she did at once. Giving her his arm, he led her through the little garden out on to the Beach, and was opening a gate two or three doors from it, Sir Charles Marchmont's, when Charlotte drew back.

"I cannot go in there, Abel."

"You can and will, or you forfeit my friendship."

She went in at once.

Entering the lower parlour by the window-door, with the freedom of a privileged friend, he desired Charlotte to remain there a few moments, and he proceeded to the drawing-room.

"Well, my friend," enquired Sir Charles "what have you done with Miss Charlotte? I saw her with you in the garden."

"I have left her below until I obtained permission to bring her up."

"Sir Charles told me, he said—" began Lady Marchmont.

"He did, my good madam, say all that was kind; but the circumstances are altered. Sir Charles, you will feel for me when I tell you that this misguided girl is married."

Sir Charles looked shocked, Lady Marchmont let fall her knitting from both hands, and pushed her smelling-bottle off the table from the unwonted alacrity with which she turned.

Abel briefly recapitulated to them what had passed, and concluded by saying,

"My first care will be to endeavour to reconcile Mrs. de Snobyn, but even if I succeed at once, which I greatly doubt, I think they are better separated for a few hours. I do not, I confess, wish Maude to hear the ebullitions of passion and pride which this misguided girl would give way to, unchecked, before her. Therefore,

I seek your protection for her for a few hours."

"You have it, of course—bring her up."

Abel went to fetch Charlotte up: she would have rebelled, but dared not.

"Miss Charlotte, my dear," said Lady Marchmont, "your brother wishes you to stay with me for a few hours. Go to my dressing-room and take your things off, and then I shall be glad if you will return and read to me a little."

CHAPTER XV.

LADY MARCHMONT, quiet and indolent as she was, never did a kindness by halves; but she was a woman of discretion as well as kindness. She now said, "she did not wish Miss Charlotte to be made uncomfortable in her house, which must be the case if she sate unnoticed, or nearly unnoticed at dinner; at the same time she hardly thought it correct, under the circumstances, that she should receive all the

observance usually offered to a young lady, the only guest at a gentleman's dinner-table."

She therefore suggested that the gentlemen should forthwith adjourn to the hotel to dinner.

"What do you say, Mr. Snobbins?"

"I say that, as always, your ladyship's suggestion is kind and correct. Still, I can improve upon it. Suppose we go and dine with Mrs. Villiers and Maude."

"Hardly fair," said Sir Charles; "Mrs. Villiers will hardly be prepared for three hungry men."

"That is easily remedied," replied Lady Marchmont. "We dine, fortunately, at the same hour. Mrs. Villiers is sure to have some soup: by the time you have discussed that, the *piéce de resistance* prepared for our table shall be there; there will be other matters left which will better suit Miss Charlotte and me."

So said, so done. Sir Charles, his son, and Mr. Snobbins, betook themselves to Mrs.

Villiers and Maude, and when the modicum of white soup was removed, the appearance of a melting haunch of mutton, in addition to the prescribed boiled chicken and cutlet convinced the gentlemen they had done perfectly right.

The other day—it may, perchance, be a twelvemonth ago—the other day, a gentleman and his lady coming out of church, met unexpectedly another gentleman and his lady.

"Ah, W—," says C—, "how do you do: had no idea you were returned, or should bave begged you to come to me today. Now it's impossible, for I happen to know that we have only a chump end of a loin of mutton to dinner; and that, unluckily, won't dine four."

"And I should have been equally glad to see you, but, unluckily, we have only the best end of a loin of mutton, and that won't dine four."

"Certainly not."

And they were parting, when a lucky thought struck C—.

"What hinders us, W—, from putting both ends of the loin together. Send your portion up to my house to be cooked, and let us dine together."

Agreed, *nem. con.:* the two ends of a loin of mutton, smiled on the same dish, and the four friends smiled around them, and declare to this day, that they never ate so happy a dinner.

Certainly that over the lordly haunch we have commemorated, was not so happy: Maude's utmost exertions did not enable her to repress her tears, when told of her favourite aunt's precipitate and improvident marriage, The two elder gentlemen were grave and thoughtful: Redwald, though not unconcerned, wished himself away, especially when he saw "little Madge" crying.

Charlotte was, perhaps, the happiest of the whole party, for the future, to her in-

experience, presented few troubles, the past many. On returning to the drawing-room, she found Lady Marchmont alone, who immediately employed her in disentangling her knitting, which was in a terrible mess. (Charlotte had little idea that this disarrangement was brought about by Lady Marchmont's agitation, on hearing of her own improvident conduct.) Before the knitting was fully arranged, dinner was announced, and after dinner Lady Marchmont always took, or appeared to take, a nap of considerable duration, during which, Charlotte, of course, amused herself as she pleased. Then, when she awoke, she pointed out a book, from which she requested her visitor to read some passages aloud, then asked her to play a waltz on the piano—a soft, slow waltz, which she was rather fond of. Then came tea, and after the removal of the tea equipage, Lady Marchmont invariably retired. So she did now, wishing Miss Charlotte good night, but in two minutes her maid ap-

peared, to conduct Charlotte to a little room, assigned to her use, and where, to her astonishment, she saw her own accustomed night gear laid ready for her.

But how happy she now felt. Lady Marchmont, whom she had always liked, whom she had now learned to love, admitted her to her house, to her table, allowed her to work for, to read to her—Lady Marchmont could not be inalienably offended with her. But did she know of her marriage? A moment's doubt, but only a moment's: Abel was the very soul of truth: he had told all, there was no doubt.

And Abel! dear Abel! yes, dear Abel, in spite of all the awe and dislike which had formerly—not latterly—been inculcated in their minds towards him—dear Abel, to whom she had appealed as her only friend—Abel was still her friend—he was not alienated, that was clear.

Then above all, she had that blissful feeling which only comes once in a life,

and to the beauty and rapture of which no other vision of life, from childhood to the grave can ever approach ; she had "love's young dream."

Happy, spite of all untoward circumstances, happy was Charlotte that night. Less so, in the morning, perhaps, when the matter-of-fact realities of her position were placed before her by Abel—the real truth —not harshly, but simply and unadorned. But love, and youth, and hope were strong within her ; moreover, the recollections of her mother's house, during the past few weeks, were terrible quite. She referred to them when answering Abel.

"I may have to encounter all you say ; I feel that I have been imprudent—I feel that I have never considered—and if I had considered, should not have been aware of what is before me ; for many things you have named never entered my head—how should they indeed into the head of a Miss de Snobyn."

"That is what I fear, Charlotte; and that you will now shrink, not unnaturally, from the performance of homely, but what will be to you most peremptory duties."

"Do not fear that. If I am kindly treated, you need not; if you knew how I have been treated, you would not.

"Oh, Abel," she continued, "you little know what our house has been since papa died."

Abel seemed to shrink within himself at the reference to that name.

"Ah!" continued Charlotte, "I well know how *you* loved him—and I well remember how we used to put on our best manners to him when you were by. Poor papa! he seemed of little consequence in his own house—yet everything, everything, Abel, seems to have gone wrong since he died; and the change in mamma herself, I have no words to express. Then as to being a Miss de Snobyn—what are we—

what have we been? Mamma has fought —fought every step for the position we seem to have acquired, and what have we gained? There's Lady Marchmont, good as she is, has hardly been able to cover her contempt of us all along; and, of late, hardly tries to do so. Sir Charles *can't* be otherwise than cordial, it's against his nature; and Redwald, to gain whom, for two years, Helena has been moving heaven and earth—Redwald absolutely shuns her. Then Evelina—she tricked Sir Gabriel Burford into an offer—but my father died, and all fell through. Then look at Augustus! Then Otty! Oh, Abel," continued she, in a tone of deep feeling, placing, in the excitement of the moment, her hand on his—"oh, Abel! we have little deserved anything at your hands; but do, do save Otty from this vortex."

Abel was touched to the heart.

"I will save Otty," he said; "if it be

still possible, I will save Otty; and you too, Charlotte; and you, too, if you will be true to yourself. 'As you brew, so you must bake.' 'As you make your bed, so you must lie down in it;' nobody can help you now. Set about your new duties, irksome though they may be, with an honest heart and a firm spirit. Be careful not only to please your husband, but to prosper him, remembering the old adage, that 'A man must ask his wife's leave to thrive;' in short, strive honestly to do your best in the station that you have chosen for yourself, and you shall never experience want, that my purse can liquidate, or sorrow, that my kindness can stave off."

But we have anticipated, and must return to the preceding evening.

Sir Charles and Mr. Snobbins sat but a short space over their wine, ere they took a fly, and drove to St. Mary's Church, and having obtained the attendance of the man

in office, examined the marriage register of that day. There it was, clear as words could make it.

"HORATIO NELSON PRICHARD,"

"CHARLOTTE DE SNOBYN."

The man showed them the book of banns—there they saw the same names, three Sundays together : first, second, and third time of asking : all the formalities were complete.

Thence they drove to Mrs. de Snobyn's. We have not space to give the scene in detail, but it was rich. Helena's *hauteur*, especially assumed, of late, towards the Marchmont family ; Evelina's sarcastic independence ; and Mrs. de Snobyn's conflicting feelings ; her secret wish to propi-

tiate Abel, and yet to resent, as she thought it became her—his interference in her family affairs : her wish yet to retain Sir Charles's good opinion, and to appear, to him, still in the light of a most devoted, affectionate mother, struggling with her indignant vexation at his sheltering her undutiful daughter—for Charlotte and Abel had been watched to his house. But when she found that she had been absolutely outwitted by this child—that this degrading marriage had been lawfully and irrevocably completed, her wrath and indignation knew no bounds.

She peremptorily refused ever to re-admit her to her house—refused ever to see her—ever to acknowledge her ; and expressed a wish to be released from the presence of those who, she hinted, by their countenance, supported her erring daughter in her career of disobedience.

The gentlemen withdrew.

That evening, when Sir Charles and Mr.

Snobbins were "cooling their heels," or "warming their toes," by the embers of the drawing-room fire.

It is a strange thing by the way; but, during that last half hour before bed-time, or at bed time, when a gentleman sits perfectly "at home," with his neckcloth loosened—his waistcoat partly unbuttoned, his hands in his pockets, his slippers on, his legs stretched out the whole length of the hearth-rug, be it ever so long, and his glass of grog—if he indulge in such an enormity—on the mantel-piece, then he is said, indifferently, to be "cooling his heels," or "warming his toes;" I never knew why, or that a cold heel, combined with a warm toe, was the synonyme of comfort.

Well, whilst they were thus cooling their heels, the spirit moved Abel, for the very first time, to give Sir Charles some little sketch of his step-mother's career, from her first captivating his father, Mr. Snobbins, at Margate, to the moment when she intro-

duced herself to Sir Charles, *en reine*, as Mrs. de Snobyn of Connaught Place. It was a graphic sketch, and Sir Charles could not but admire Abel's forbearance in having been so long silent. But when, in referring to Mrs. de Snobyn's sudden accession of fortune, he had to dwell particularly—and he did not mince the matter, on her conduct to Mrs. Meredith, as, knowing other circumstances, (of many of which his stepmother supposed him perfectly ignorant) he could well describe it, then the mild, generous, warm-hearted Christian gentleman, had much ado to restrain the curse that rose to his lips.

Next morning Mr. Snobbins had a long interview with Horatio Nelson Prichard, now the husband of his half-sister. It was on the whole, as satisfactory as, under the circumstances, could possibly be expected. But one incident particularly pleased Abel. (We have ill succeeded in the portrait of this, our especial favourite, if our readers

nave not perceived in him a chivalrousness of feeling which was attracted at once towards any thing noble, upright, or generous). Abel taxed the coast-guardsman plainly with misconduct in attempting to win the affections of a young lady so much above his own rank of life ; he replied warmly, saying, that he had as much right as any man, to attempt to win whomever he pleased ; a princess, if he liked ; no man could say him nay, though they might ridicule him for his folly.

Abel replied : he rejoined. Abel pressed the matter still more strongly, he replied with still more warmth, but never, never once, though Abel pushed him purposely until he felt himself somewhat ungenerous—never once did he hint or breathe one word to implicate Charlotte, though her brother knew well all the while that *she* had been the original mover of the courtship ; that she had sought him, not he her. This indication of a chival-

rous generosity of disposition gave him a hold on Abel's good opinion at once.

And Charlotte was right in another point; Mr. Horatio Nelson Prichard (he was named by his godfather after that godfather's especial idol, Lord Nelson) Mr. Horatio Nelson Prichard was not an illiterate, vulgar man: his manners were agreeable, in no way polished, but not vulgarly coarse. His conversation was intelligent. He had evidently had some education, and seemed altogether a man more likely to rise from his present position, than sink below it. So altogether it was not without some hopes, though dimmed by many, many fears, that Abel consigned to him his bride, promising his constant kindness and protection if they deserved it.

Sir Charles Marchmont put a fifty pound note into her hand, Abel another; Lady Marchmont told her she should hear from her in a few days.

And so she did. A complete assortment of household linen, plain, practical useful, and abundant in quantity for a small house—sheets, pillow slips, table-cloths, tea-cloths, toilet covers, tea-napkins, dusters, towels, &c., &c.; everything that a plain, old-fashioned housekeeper would think requisite for a humble, but neat household was there — made, marked, washed—ready for use. To one of these was pinned a small label in Lady Marchmont's own hand—

"With Lady Marchmont's kind wishes."

There was a parcel separately, carefully made up. On opening it, there was displayed a very handsome tortoise-shell tea-chest, having two boxes for tea, in each of which was a pretty silver shell spoon; and in the sugar-glass, by which was laid a pair of handsome silver sugar-tongs a twisted note.

"DEAR AUNT CHARLOTTE,

"Do not refuse to accept this small offering from your very affectionate

"MAUDE SNOBBINS."

Charlotte cried sadly; the first tears she had shed since she parted from her brother Abel.

The next day she received from London a kind note from her brother Mr. John Snobbins, enclosing a bank-note of fifty-pounds, and announcing the immediate arrival of a very plain silver tea-service, of which Mrs. John Snobbins begged her acceptance, and which was only delayed to be engraven with the proper initials.

For this too she knew she was indebted

to Abel's kind representations to her brother John.

But all this time not one word from her mother, not one. Her clothes had at once been forwarded to Lady Marchmont's, with a polite message intimating that those remaining in London should be forwarded as soon as Mrs. de Snobyn arrived there.

But to Charlotte herself, not the slightest token of remembrance—not one word.

From Helena and Evelina, her sters—

CHAPTER XVI.

As soon as possible after his return to London, Abel repaired to Mrs. Meredith's residence, as described to him by his brother's wife. He sent up his card :

"MR. ABEL SNOBBINS."

It was looked at, as sometimes strange letters are foolishly looked at, on every side, but it did not, like a letter, contain its explanation within itself. "Who can it be," wondered

Emily; and "who can it be," wondered Meredith; and "pshaw!" said Mr. Griffith, "some city man you may be sure; do you know any such?"

Of course they all knew at once that it must be the gentleman who had spoken with Mrs. Barrett, but no more could they guess. That there could be any connection between the vulgar name of Snobbins, and the high-sounding title of her whose hard-heartedness had reduced them to miserable straits, of course it never entered their hearts to conceive.

Mr. Snobbins was requested to walk into the drawing-room, and was courteously invited to a seat. He had no difficulty in supposing that Mr. and Mrs. Meredith were before him, their personal appearance perfectly answered to his sister-in-law's statement. But how to reconcile with her account, the ease, the comfort, the luxury around them—yes, the luxury—for, though the apartment generally was very plain, the lounging chair in

which Emily reclined, the foot-stool to match, and the work-table by her side, were new, and of the very handsomest description. Her dress too, her new and deep mourning, Abel's old bachelor eye discerned to be of the finest material, and of fashionable make. He was quite puzzled.

Emily spoke at length, in her clear, sweet tones.

"I cannot but suppose that I am speaking to the gentleman, who had so kind a recollection for my probable necessities, a few days ago."

"I had the honour, madam, to forward you a note, under an impression, which I am most pleased to perceive must have been a false one."

"No, sir, it was not: at that moment I was in utter destitution, almost in despair. It pleased Providence, at that moment, to raise me up a most kind friend and protector, in the person of a near relation, till then unknown: this gentle-

man, my husband's father. Believe me," she said, taking a little embroidered note-case from her work-box, and approaching Abel. "Believe me, I shall never, never forget this kindness, shown to me in my extremity, by one on whom I could have no claim. I have placed the note, sir, in this little case, my own handiwork," said she, with a sad smile, "in gayer hours and more prosperous days. I venture to hope, you will not refuse so slight a token of gratitude.

Abel bowed—lower than Abel had ever bowed in his life before: but speak he could not: he felt as if he was choking. At length, he found voice.

"I will treasure your memorial, madam, as long as I live: and I can assure you, none can rejoice more sincerely than myself, that the poor services I called to offer you, are rendered useless by your happier position. I rejoice, I am most thankful to see it."

"May I enquire," said Emily, "why you take so much interest in my fate?"

"Simply, ma'am, because I am acquainted with some portion of your history."

"Pray, sir." interrupted Mr. Griffith, "are you acquainted with a Mrs. de Snobyn?"

"I am, sir."

"Humph! Is she a friend of yours, sir?"

"I am proud to say, sir, that she is not."

"Sir, you're an honest man; give me your hand."

Abel smiled, and withheld it.

"As an honest man, sir, I cannot suffer you to take my hand under a false impression. I am not a friend to Mrs. de Snobyn, because her character and conduct are utterly repugnant to me: but I wish nothing unkindly towards her. She is my father's widow."

"*Your* father's widow?"

"Even so."

"But your name is Snobbins."

Abel laughed.

"It is indeed, and so was my father's; but it did not suit the aristocratical prejudices of his second wife, and she altered the spelling to De Snobyn."

"D——d folly."

"So it was."

"I hardly know what to make of you, sir; I hardly know whether it will please you to learn that Mrs. de Snobyn will soon be deprived of the property she acquired so unexpectedly."

"Please me! no;" said Abel, gravely "but," continued he, a moment after turning to Emily, "I cannot regret it if the property returns to this lady."

"It will return to her, sir, she ought not to have been dispossessed of it."

"She ought not," replied Abel, "in that opinion I perfectly coincide; and I rejoice, from my heart I rejoice that she will be

restored to her proper position. But Mrs. de Snobyn has daughters, my father's daughters, my sisters—it is for them I feel."

"Will the restitution of this property render them portionless, sir?" asked Emily, in a tone of feeling sympathy.

"No, madam," said he, "I think not—it ought not, and," added he, recovering, after a little consideration, his usual firmness, "it cannot; my father had realized a very sufficient fortune in trade, when this property fell to his wife. But," turning to Mr. Griffith, "may I not ask how this is to be? I understood the will was unimpeachable."

"In itself; but the simple fact is that the maker of that will had no claim himself to the property he bequeathed. But come down stairs, Mr. Snobbins, and take a glass of wine with me—Mrs. Meredith's tired—and we'll talk it over."

Mr. Griffith's manner altered so completely below stairs, for it was the amaze-

ment of everybody who knew him how the presence of Emily humanized him—that Abel could scarcely believe him to be the gentlemanly old man he had conversed with in the drawing-room—Not that he was now vulgar, but Abel's pure taste and rigidly moral feelings were shocked and outraged by his frequent oaths, and his vituperative language. He set no bounds to his scornful anathemas against Mrs. de Snobyn ; even Abel could hardly endure them, until he added,

" Not for claiming the property, sir, not for that ; d——n it no ; let everybody do the best for themselves ; but, sir, she suffered my poor girl above there to starve, to starve, sir, when one flounce the less on a lace robe would have provided her with food and fuel."

But Mr. Snobbins was a man of the world, and soon began to make allowances for Mr. Griffith's peculiarities of language, revolting as they were ; and soon began to forget them altogether in the intense in-

terest which the narrative he was listening to inspired.

Mr. Griffith was much more diffuse in his autobiography now than he had been to Emily ; and he also placed before Mr. Snobbins all papers, certificates, and documents which might be required to prove his claims, labelled, dated, and arranged with all the precision of a man of business. Abel saw at a glance that all was clear as day, and that nothing was left to Mrs. de Snobyn but to secede.

To do so quietly without litigation would, he at once felt, be her wisest course ; but he doubted her proud, petulant, and haughty spirit. Mr. Griffith was most anxious to avoid law—save, of course, the necessary reference to her own confidential attorney.

"All, you see, sir, all's as clear as the light, but women are such d--d fools, and lawyers are such d—d rascals ; they gull them to the top of their bent. I fear not for the law—not I—nor do I care one but-

ton for your d—d she-dragon of a step-mother; she may litigate to all eternity and be d—d to her for what I care. But you see, Mr. Snobbins, these devil's imps, these lawyers, stick at nothing; they've a scent like a sleuth-hound, and can worm and wind like a weazel; as sure as the sun shines above us, sir, they will snuff out my poor girl's sorrows, and parade them to glut the vulgar curiosity of the public D—n the public; d—n it eternally say I. Now, Mr. Snobbins, though my head is pretty strong, I think this disclosure would drive *me* mad; but I am sure, sir," and in his energy he grasped Abel's arm; "I am sure, sir, that it would kill my girl, kill her, sir; you have seen her, and you may guess that it would. Now, Mr. Snobbins, I want you, a man of sense and of humanity, to help me in this. I am ready to yield any thing to that she-devil; any thing short of my paternal estate, for the sake of that poor child upstairs. I would bribe her to

any amount to let matters be settled quietly; but you see if I intimated as much to her, she would, at once, ascend her high horse, and turn the tables against me."

Abel thought it was too probable.

"Then you see my difficulty; will you give me your assistance to overcome it?"

Abel considered it a moment.

"Yes, I will," said he, frankly.

Mr Griffith grasped his hand in token of thanks.

Their conversation was protracted for a considerable time; and it was, at length, agreed that Mr. Griffith, or to give him his proper title henceforth, Mr. Dalton and Abel should proceed together to Dover, and plainly, at first, without any reference to law or lawyers, lay before Mrs. de Snobyn a statement of Mr. Dalton's claims to the Beechwood property. Mr. Snobbins proposed, and finally engaged, to write by that evening's post to Sir Charles March-

mont, to give him a sketch of the whole affair, to ask him to prepare Mrs. de Snobyn for their visit, and further to remain with her, as her relation and friend, during its occurrence. They appointed the meeting for the morning succeeding the one on which Sir Charles should receive this letter.

As Abel reflected on these strange occurrences in his solitary parlour that evening, he soon began, with the facility natural to a well-regulated and religious mind, to deduce good from the apparent evil. To set aside, not even to refer, to the fact of the long-suffering and much-enduring young lady, being restored to her inheritance ; even as regarded his sisters, on whose account he had, at first, felt shocked, even as regarded them, he thought he saw future advantage accrue from this present deprivation. That they had enough to subsist on in respectability and comfort, he never once doubted : he knew that his

father had realized a handsome fortune. And what good had their late great accession of wealth done to them? none; and worse than none. It had led them to follies, assumptions, and extravagances, which were ruinous to their moral nature. They had not been generous and open-handed benefactresses with their wealth; on the contrary, their expenses, occupations, and pursuits, had had only the one ultimatum —selfish enjoyment,

Of their domestic home-life, as it had of late been exhibited, Abel shuddered to think. Wealth, indeed, had only been a provocative of evil there.

His favorite, Charlotte, had, by her own precipitate act, thrown herself out of the sphere of life, where a large fortune is desirable. A too great command of money to young a man like Prichard, would be more likely to tempt him to evil than incite him to good.

Besides, Charlotte might be considered

as altogether out of the question, as he felt assured her mother did not mean to bestow one guinea on her.

So, altogether, Abel fell asleep very well contented with everything

CHAPTER XVII.

On the day appointed, and at the hour appointed, Mr. Dalton and Mr. Snobbins drove to Mrs. de Snobyn's door at Dover—not the cheerful, social, pleasant-looking, friendly wicket-gate which opens to the beach, but the heavy, dull, sombre-looking "front" door, on the other side of the house, almost touching the chalk-cliff. So they were shown upstairs in state, and formally announced at the drawing-room

door. And there, in state to receive them, and looking more haughty than ever, but deathly pale, was Mrs. de Snobyn.

Seated near her was Sir Charles Marchmont, who looked, good gentleman, as uncomfortable as it was possible for him to look.

It happened that Abel was a little in advance of Mr. Dalton, and entered the room first.

"So, Abel," said Mrs. de Snobyn, with a smile of withering contempt, "you have lost no time in showing me that I must not offend you with impunity."

"I am an agent, madam, in what must necessarily, to you, be a grievous matter—but I come in no unfriendly spirit."

"'Fine words,' sir," sneered she; "I will not pay so poor a compliment to *your* memory as to quote the proverb at length. I, sir, am not fond of proverb or metaphor, and therefore I tell you that I despise your malice, that I will not be crushed by you

with impunity, and that I will fight this matter to the last gasp."

"Forbear, forbear—be patient!" expostulated Sir Charles.

"I will not forbear; I have forborne long enough; I—"

"Great Heaven above! Helena Brooke!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton, rushing forward.

She started and half screamed at the first tone of her voice, but as Mr. Dalton approached her, she gazed into his face, her own features horror-struck, her eyes as if starting from her head; at length, with a gasp, as of utter despair, she fell senseless on the carpet.

"What in the name of Heaven is all this!" exclaimed Sir Charles.

"It is indeed the finger of Heaven," replied Dalton; then turning to Abel, he added. "This is the paramour of my early life—the mother of Henry Meredith!"

"God is just," said Abel, in a solemn voice. "She has driven her own son to the verge of desperation; she has starved her innocent grandchild to death."

"Whatever be her crimes, she needs help now," said Sir Charles, eyeing her piteously, as she lay insensible.

"I will cause her daughters to be sent to her," replied Abel; and turning sternly away, he quitted the room and the house.

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It was about a month after this occurrence, that Emily and Meredith, clad in the deepest mourning, travelled slowly to Beechwood, and arrived there by night, accompanying the coffin with their child's

remains, which, at Emily's agonised entreaty, Mr. Dalton had obtained permission to remove to the family vault at Beechwood.

Thither Emily descended, leaning heavily on the arm of her husband, and saw the little coffin, with its mockery of light blue cloth and silver scutcheons, already soiled and tarnished, with the damps of the grave, placed at the foot of a large massy coffin, veiled in unrelieved black, but of newer appearance than those around. Her heart told her it was her father's, before she could trust her voice to ask the question.

At her own request, made in so excited a tone, that Meredith feared to question it, she was left alone in that dismal charnel house.

It had been the burial place of the Daltons for many generations, and all around were traces of its having long been the receptacle of corruption, the feasting

house of the worm. Some of the earlier coffins had mouldered and fallen to pieces, and bones exhumed by this natural process of decay, lay white and glistening amid the darkened relics.

Here and there worms crawled amid the loathsome and festering remnants of humanity, and glistened amid the black scutcheons which, having fallen from the coffins they originally adorned, now lay, even as they fell, along the ground. But Emily saw nothing, noted nothing of all this; she saw nothing beyond the large, black coffin by which she knelt, and the tiny one at its foot.

Her husband was in agony at the length of her stay—for the one hour it really was, appeared like two; and he was on the point of re-entering the vault, when she appeared with the lamp in her hand. He flew to assist her, for she was fearfully pale; but as he put his arm round her, he saw that her countenance was placid

and composed; nay, she gave him a calm, sweet smile of thanks.

Yes, she could smile now, for her atonement was made, her expiation complete.

She had placed her lost child—starved to death through her fault, for, however remote and distant the result, she now, in her chastened and purified mind, traced its unnatural death through all intervening circumstances, up to that original sin, her disobedience to her father—she had laid her lost child at her father's feet, and kneeling there, her clasped hands resting on her father's coffin, her fast falling tears penetrating, perhaps, through some chink even to his shroud—at that most solemn time, in that most solemn place—she had made an unreserved submission of herself to Heaven.

She arose in peace, and comfort, and hope; she felt that her atonement was complete, her repentance accepted.

The next morning, at an early hour, she

and her husband left Beechwood as secretly as they approached it. They departed forthwith on a three months' tour, prescribed by the medical attendants, and peremptorily enforced by Mr. Dalton.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was, I think, about a twelvemonth after the events recorded in the latter chapters of this veracious chronicle, that Miss Prabble went, by special invitation, to take tea with Mrs. Markwell, in Manchester Buildings.

Our readers are surely aware that Mrs. Blewitt, Lady Marchmont's own woman, had lately married Mr. Markwell, Sir

Charles's butler; and that having themselves been prudent and saving, and having a most generous master and mistress, they were enabled to rent a good house in Manchester Buildings, Westminster, which they let out in lodgings and did it really, as Miss Prabble said—"very genteel."

"You are late, Miss Prabble, my dear," said Mrs. Markwell.

(*Mem:* Mrs. Markwell was rather fond of imitating, as she thought, Lady Marchmont's manner to her inferiors; amongst whom she reckoned now, poor, unconscious Miss Prabble.)

"I am indeed rather later than I meant to be, Mrs. Markwell; but I know you keep fashionable hours, *(a sop to Cerberus, that,)* so I just stopped to give that dear creature, Mrs. Prichard, her cup of tea."

"Mrs. Prichard! sure that's her that was Miss Charlotte de Snobyn, my lady's favourite."

"Just ; and everybody's favourite ; a fine, warm-hearted creature. And she's as happy as the day's long ; and such a house-keeper, it's quite wonderful, considering how she's been brought up ; and her husband, the best, kindest husband that ever was ; so she says, and now—"

"Well, what now ?"

"Don't you know she's confined."

"No."

"A week ago ; such a beautiful boy, and she doing so well. And, of course, you know who's to be god-mother."

"No."

"Don't you indeed ; well to be sure. Why, Lady Marchmont."

"My own house," said Mrs. Markwell, with considerable assumption of importance, "occupies so much of my time, that I cannot see my lady so often as I could wish."

"Oh ! of course, of course, 'charity begins at home,' we all know. Well, my

Lady Marchmont sent word that she wished to be godmother, but that it must be as soon as possible, because of her going abroad."

"Going abroad! my lady going abroad again?"

"Yes, of course; for the marriage you know."

"What, Mr. Redwald's?"

"Yes; to Miss Maude."

"That's really to be, is it?"

"Of course it is: surely you knew?"

"Oh, I've heard; but one hears so many things; it was all the talk at one time, that he was to have Miss Helena de Snobyn."

"Ah," said Miss Prabble, winking and nodding very mysteriously, "*I* never thought that would come to pass."

"And so the wedding's to be abroad, and Sir Charles is *so* English."

"Yes, but that is because of poor Mrs. Villiers, you see: the doctors have given

her up; they say she can't live many months: and she has made it her request that Miss Maude should be married before she dies. So they're all going over, Sir Charles and my lady, and Mr. and Mrs. John Snobbins, and Mr. Abel of course."

"Oh, yes, he is like a father to her."

"He's like a father to everybody that wants it, I believe; ask Mrs. Prichard about that."

"Aye, and Mrs. Prichard: how is it she's in London? I thought the man she ran off with was at Dover."

"Yes, but didn't you know that Sir Charles and Mr. Snobbins made interest, and got him a place here in the Customs, I think they call it. I don't understand what, but something about the docks and the vessels; and he gives the highest satisfaction, and they say he is sure to get on."

"Indeed! then they live very comfortable I suppose?"

"Oh, very comfortable indeed: their house is hardly bigger than a nutshell, a tiny place to be sure: but kept like a little fairy place, it's so neat. And then you see Master Otty living with them is a great help, for Mr. Abel pays his sister so handsome for him."

"Then is he in the Customs too?"

"Bless, you no; he's in some merchant's counting-house, and will be a great man himself some day they say, if he minds his Ps and Qs. But he and Miss Charlotte were always very fond of each other, and Mr. Abel thought they had best live together, and perhaps it would keep him steady."

"And does it?"

"I think so; he seems very happy, and I left him nursing his sister's baby!"

"And the one that went to India? how's he doing?"

"What, Mr. Augustus? Pretty well

I believe by the last accounts; but he don't write much home."

"How came he to go there at all?"

"Why, don't you know? That Mr. Dalton that made such an upset at last, he got him a place, a very good place in India, because his wife, poor Mrs. Augustus, had been kind to Mrs. Meredith in her troubles; and he fitted her and her children out, and paid every expense like a prince."

"And Mrs. Meredith—one never hears of her now."

"No not by that name; the old gentleman made her husband take out a patent to bear the name and arms of Dalton; so she's called Mrs. Henry Dalton now."

"And do they live happy with that old firebrand? an awful character I heard of him to be sure."

"They say he's never been heard to use a bad word, nor ever been seen in a pas-

sion when Mrs. Henry is by : but I suppose he makes up for it, for he's the west wing of the house fitted up complete for himself, a little kitchen and all, and nobody's ever allowed to go in them but Mrs. Grundy."

"Mrs. Grundy ?"

"Yes, that's the person that they lodged with in their troubles ; and Mrs. Meredith, Mrs. Dalton, I should say, coaxed and persuaded her to go with her to Beechwood ; and she was to have the entire care of this set of rooms, and nothing else to do at all ; and I'm told the old gentleman sometimes storms and swears at her the week round, but she says she's quite happy, for she's used to it and don't mind him."

"Hem ! it strikes me as very vulgar ; I shouldn't like Markwell to swear. But tell me—but let me give you one more cup, Miss Prabble, my dear."

"Not one drop more, I thank you,"

said Miss Prabble, shaking the tea-grounds round in her cup, and having examined them, turning it topsy-turvy, and placing the tea-spoon across the top, "not one drop more : but you do excel in tea, Mrs. Markwell."

Mrs. Markwell graciously acknowledged the compliment, and then resumed her enquiries.

"But after all, Miss Prabble, I never could rightly comprehend how Mrs. de Snobyn came to keep a school after all her grandeur ; for I overheard Mr. Snobbins say to my lady, that she need never want, for his father had a handsome fortune."

"All gone, every shilling spent : Mr. Snobbins was thunderstruck ; moreover she was overhead and ears involved ; the debts were tremendous. Such an uproar as there was when the Connaught Place things came to the hammer : half of 'em not paid for."

"But still I think they might have done better for her than put her in a school."

"*They* didn't put her in: she would have nothing from them: she was always proud and independent you know."

"Well I did hear that Mrs. Meredith had sent her a thousand pounds, and that she returned with scorn, telling the young lady that she, Mrs. de Snobyn, had not taken to the begging trade yet: and that old Mr. Dalton told her he was very glad, and she was rightly served."

"Very likely: she's very proud."

"And my lady herself told me that people would have clubbed together to make enough for her and her daughters to live on just in a very quiet way, in a little cottage; but she called it paltry, and sneered and scorned at it so, and the Miss de Snobyns too, that both Mr. John and Mr. Abel Snobbins drew back, and said they wouldn't give a guinea."

"It may be so:" said Miss Prabble

again ; she evidently did not lend a willing ear to any disparagement of Mrs. de Snobyn.

"Then about that affair that came out about a misfortune, or something of that sort, in her young days—I can't say I ever got to the rights of it—but Miss Prabble, my dear, it seems that you knew all about it, all the time."

"Perhaps so, perhaps not. Let by-gones, be by-gones, Mrs. Markwell dear."

"Best so," acquiesced Mrs. Markwell, for she saw that her friend was not in the humour to be pumped any more to-day : "but I understand that her school, however set a-going, is getting on well."

"Exceedingly so ; but call it *establishment* ; she is rather particular about that. But then, you see, her manners are so superior ; she sets up every thing in such style ; and she knows so well what fashionable people want now-a-days. The dancing is superb ; it really is ; it's quite a treat to me to watch it ; and the calisthenic exer-

cises—which are all the rage now, as you know—are particularly attended to. Oh! they are sure to get on."

"So I suppose; and do they do much needle-work."

"Plain needle-work is forbidden, either in or out of school; but fancy needle-work is made a point of the first importance; and you know the Miss de Snobyns were all remarkable for their taste in fancy things."

"Yes, I do; I've seen many pretty things of their making."

"Then the languages, you know. Not a word of English is ever allowed to be spoken on any account. All their lessons are given in French, and all their English history is read in French translations. Sometimes, to the more advanced pupils, the lessons are given in German, or Italian, or Spanish"

"Law! can Mrs. de Snobyn and her daughters do that?"

"No; they merely superintend; they have foreign masters."

"But won't the pupils forget their English?"

"Not at all; no fear of that; for, as Mrs. de Snobyn says, bad habits are adhesive; and she says, too, that youth is the only time in which perfect familiarity with foreign languages can be acquired; and she says, too, that, comparatively speaking, English is, now, little spoken in genteel society."

"Indeed! I never heard Sir Charles and my lady, speak any thing else when in England."

"No, perhaps not; but there can be no doubt Mrs. de Snobyn knows what is the fashion."

"I remember when she first came to Sir Charles's house, I happened, somehow or other, to be on the landing-place—and I was quite struck with her appearance, as she passed, she looked so proud and queen-like; and Markwell, when he came out

from waiting at dinner, said that she appeared to be a very nice woman."

"And Mr. Markwell was quite right, I assure you," said Miss Prabble, "she is, indeed, a very nice woman."

THE END.

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