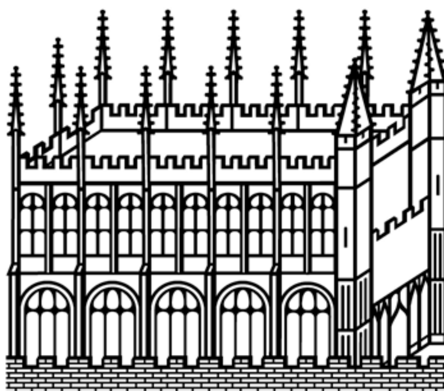

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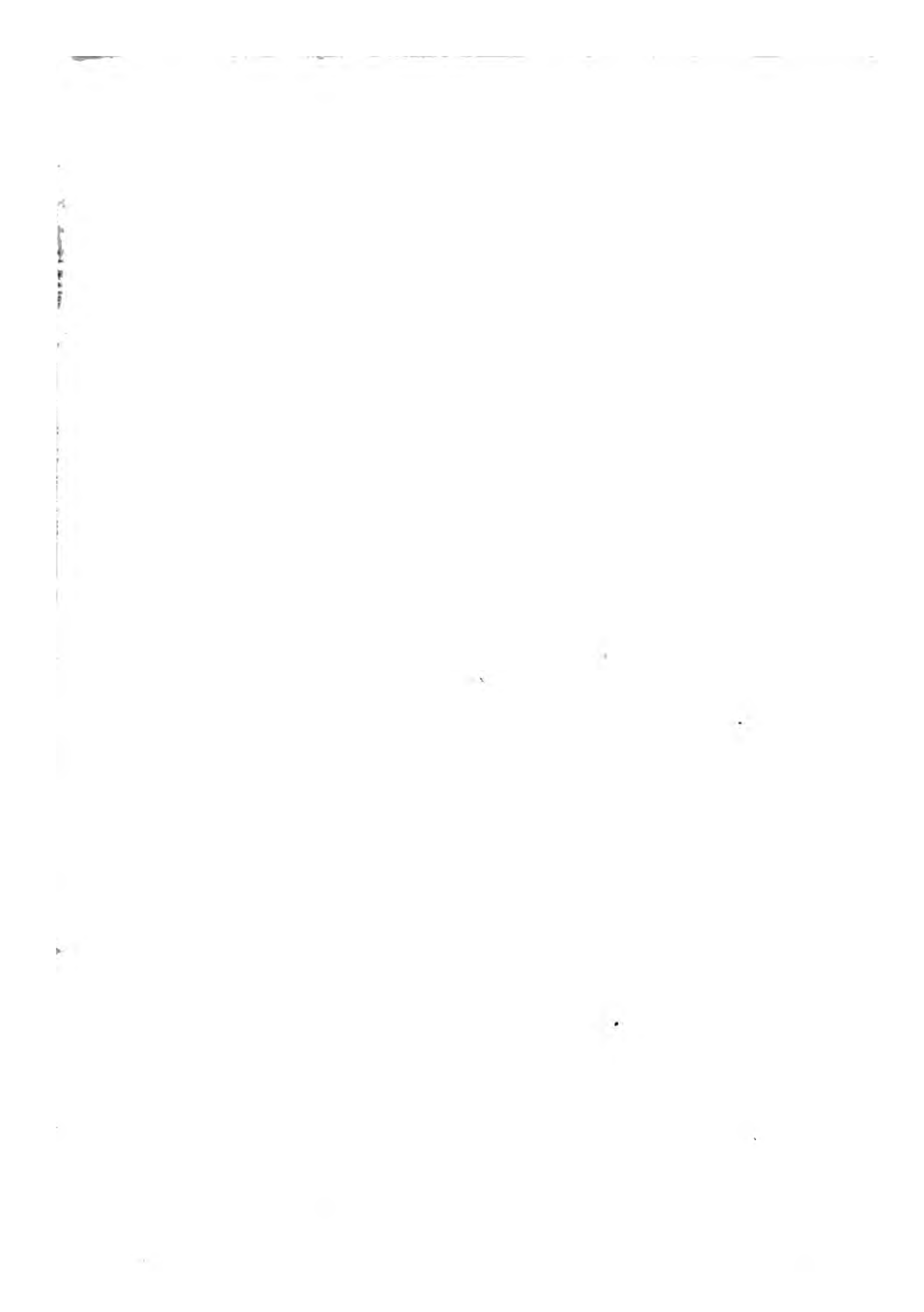

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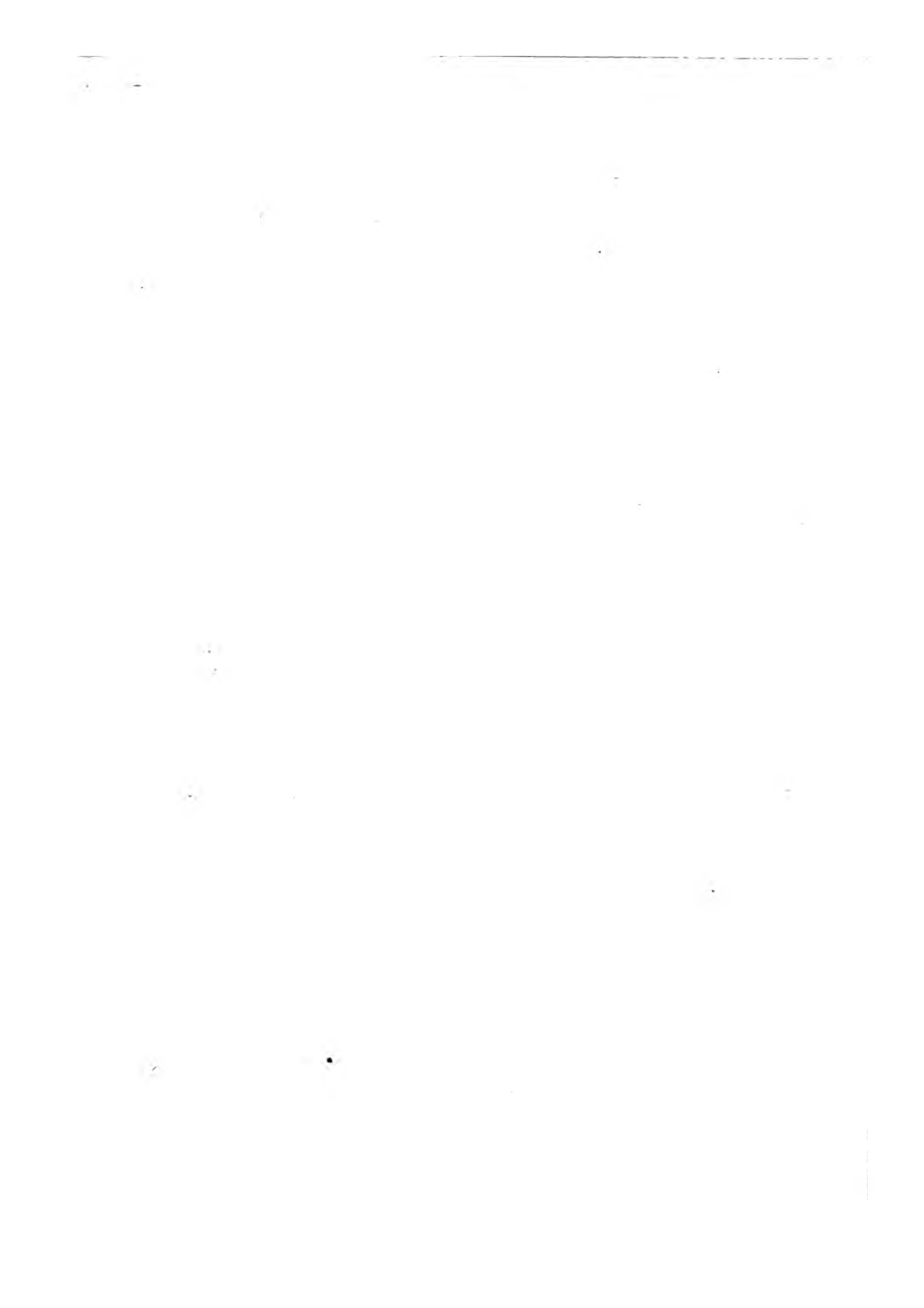

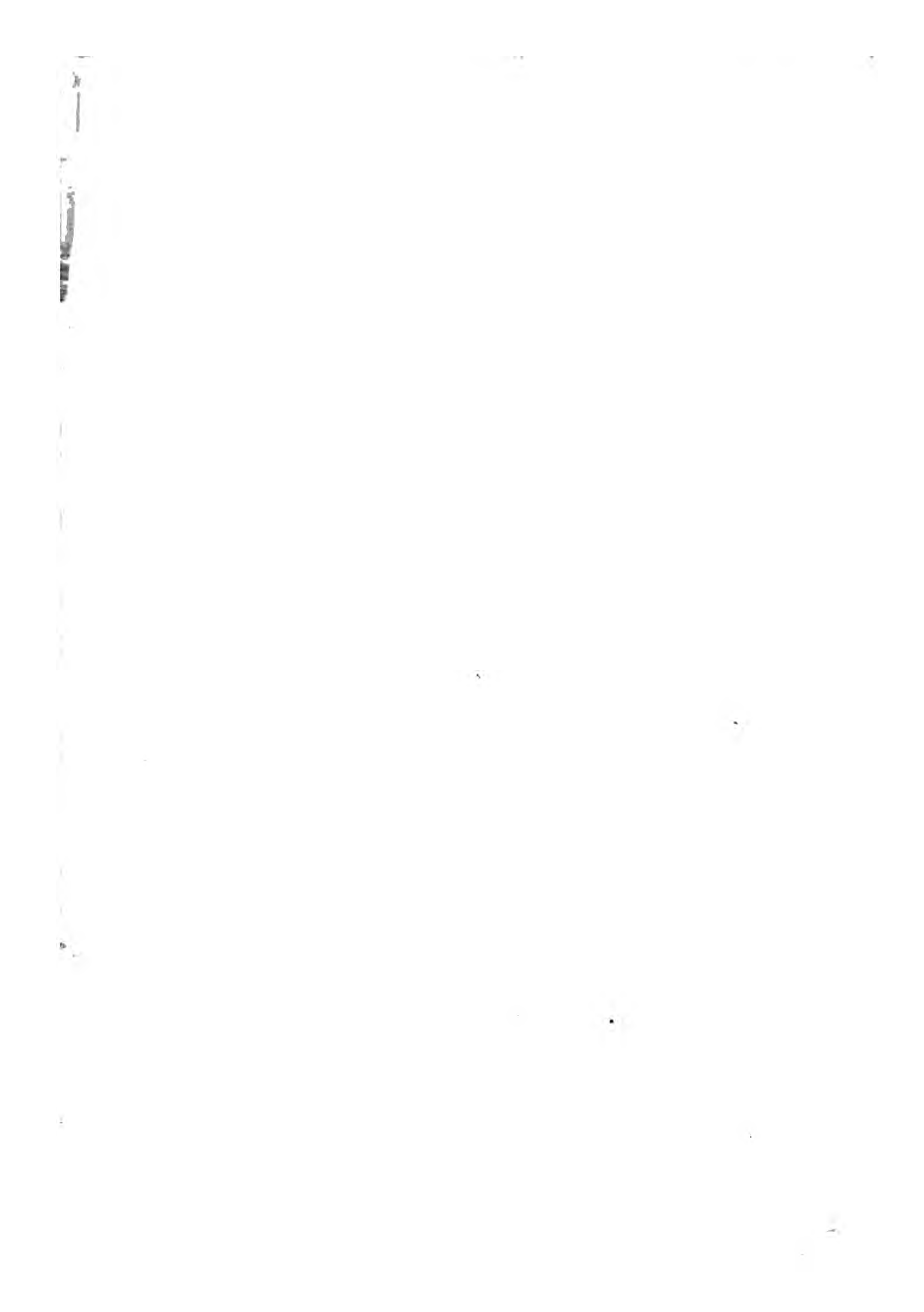

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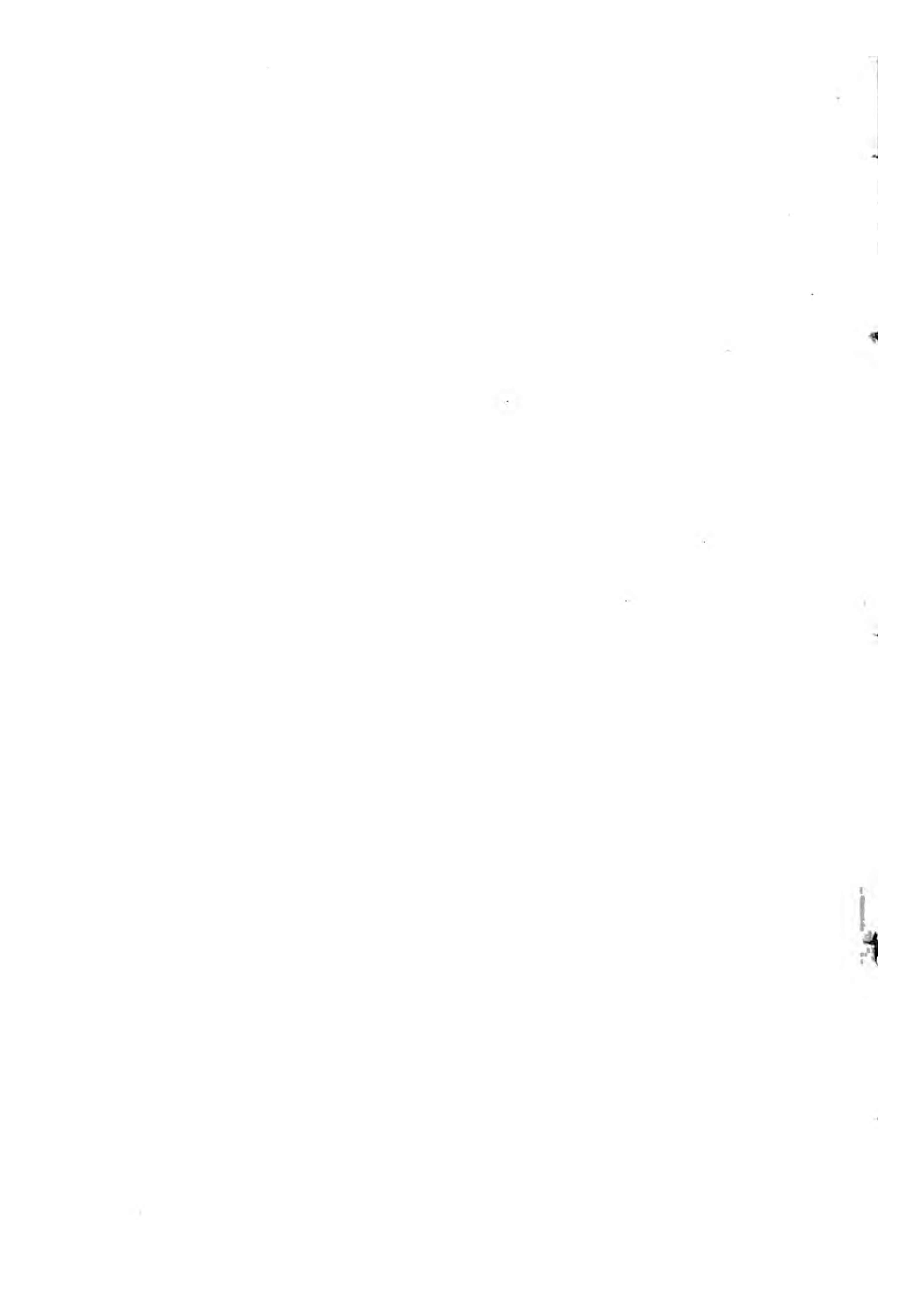

TALES

FROM MANY SOURCES

VOL. II.

NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD & COMPANY
1885

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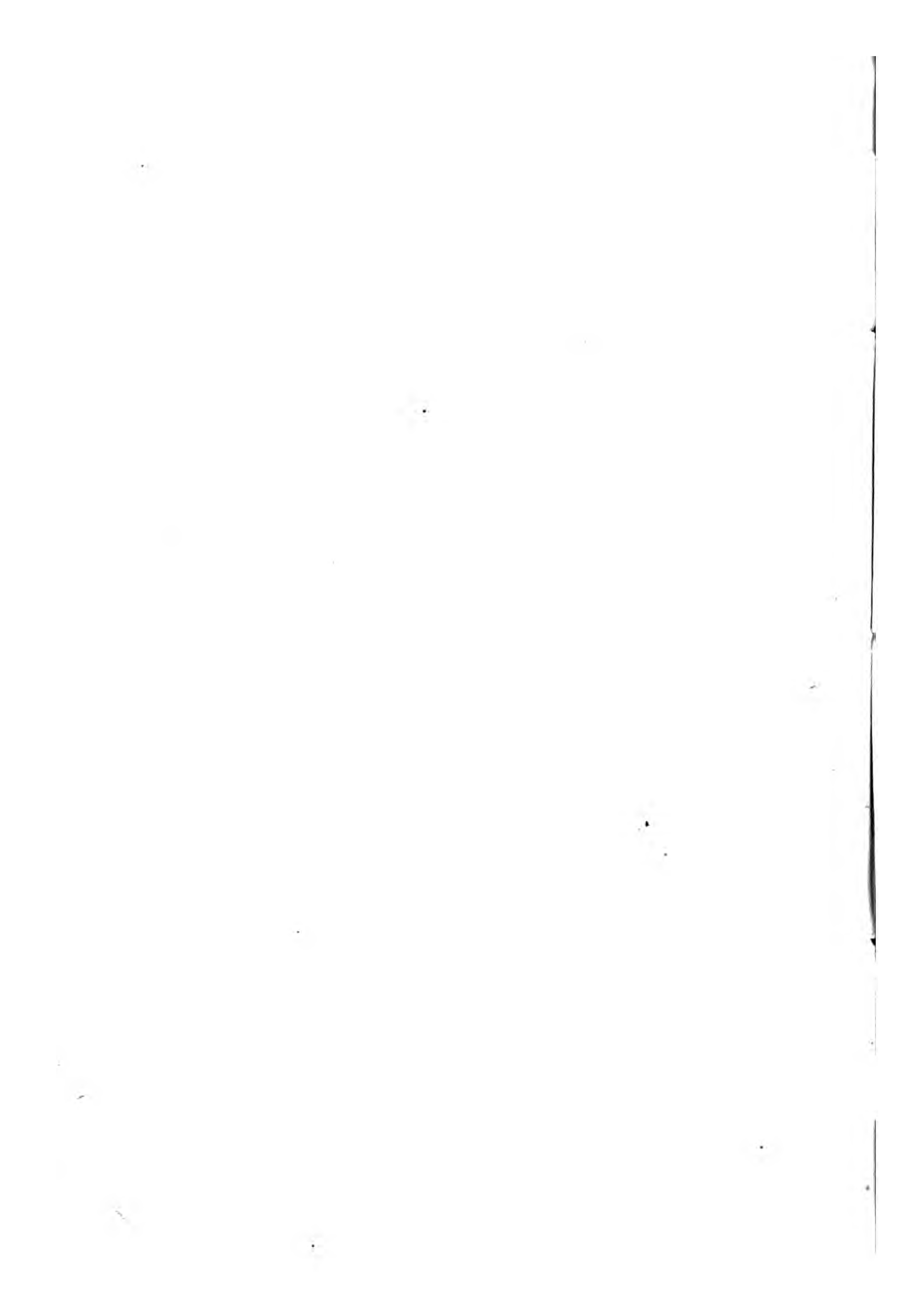

MY PARIS MASTERS.

CHAPTER I.

"GUSTAV," said my uncle to me one evening, "your habits are becoming daily more obnoxious. When will you begin to understand that the chalk is there for writing down sums, and not for drawing faces; that a linen draper's shop is not a studio, and a counter not an easel!"

"Uncle," was my reply, "I can bear it no longer." My uncle looked at me over his spectacles and stroked his smooth chin. We were sitting in the back shop after closing hours; our sausage supper was demolished, but the perfume still lingered in the air. This sausage scent was one of the things which made life hard to me; as was also the despairing neatness of the linen-bales, ranged around us on all sides, upon shelves that reached to the ceiling, and marked with such mystical signs as H.B., H.B.B., or H.B.C., &c. I had a secret hankering after the poetical elements of life—my uncle was prose personified.

"Gustav," said my uncle, "*Einbildung!*"

With this simple formula, which signifies imagination or fancy, he had hitherto succeeded in crush-

ing my poetic yearnings, or at least their outward expression. But to-day the cup was full; I had been forced to measure out fifty yards of linen for a young couple starting in life, and either the bride-groom's happy face or my own aching arms had made me rebellious.

"Gustav," said my uncle, leaning back, with his hands clasped on his stomach, and his thumbs twirling round each other, "what is it you cannot bear longer? Is it the linen, or the *kleine Base* (little cousin) being away?"

Of course the second reason was the true one, so I answered without hesitation, "The linen," and then felt myself grow turkey-cock red up to my sandy hair roots.

"*Einbildung*, Gustav, *Einbildung*," said my uncle, twirling his thumbs rather faster than before. "She will come back again sure enough. I don't believe any harm will come to the girl, even if she has taken it into her head to hide herself from us at present. It is hard upon a chit of a thing like that to be left to the charge of a stepmother who—well, yes, who beats her; but she might have come to me for advice, instead of taking French leave this way, and becoming a nine days' wonder."

"But I said it was the linen," I sheepishly replied.

"Ah, yes, h—m! to be sure; the linen—*Einbildung*!"

"Uncle!" I burst out, "let me go to Paris!"

"To look for *die kleine Base*? Why, we don't even know if she really is there."

"No, not to look for anything or anybody, but to become a painter."

"There is only one sort of painter indispensable to civilization," replied my uncle, "and that is the one who supplies our sign-boards. But rather than that my counter should continue to be thus daily disfigured and my chalk rubbed into formless lumps that I can scarcely hold between my fingers, I shall let you go to Paris."

Thus, to my unspeakable delight, it was settled. Inquiries were made and arrangements undertaken. I bought a dictionary and an Ollendorff and began to rub up the stock of French, which, fortunately, I already possessed, for my uncle had long since destined me to represent the travelling portion of the linen firm. A new suit of clothes, considered by the dress authorities of the town to have a Parisian appearance, was ordered for me; a certain number of yards of linen off the most sacred shelf, marked H.B.B., was measured out for my especial use and sewed into shirts. It was with a fluttering heart that, all arrangements complete, I surveyed myself in the glass.

When a linen draper's apprentice has got yearnings towards the poetical and the artistic, his nose ought at least to be straight and his eyes fiery black or tender blue. Now my eyes were of no particular colour, and my nose of no particular shape. I was big and broad, and I believe that I could have knocked down an ox as easily as most youths of twenty-two. But truth forces me to add that

neither in my bigness nor my breadth was there any particular fascination or grace. I had the unfortunate habit of blushing at the smallest provocation, and, unless armed with a yard measure or a piece of chalk, I was in a continual puzzle as to what I should do with my hands.

Nevertheless, I surveyed myself in the glass to-day with a sort of modest satisfaction, and with a comforting reliance on the proverb which says that it is the clothes which make the man.

On the morning of my departure my uncle held me a speech, which I had noticed him writing down beforehand during the intervals between serving customers. The reader may, perhaps, ere this have heard mention of the dangers of capitals, the foolish trustfulness of youth, and the wiles of tempters, so I will spare him now. I shed tears as I listened.

"Gustav," concluded my uncle, "you are starting with a recommendation to two of the most brilliant geniuses of Paris; it is by a stroke of fortune that my friend Pinselmann should be able to claim the honour of their acquaintance and be willing to favour you with his intercession. I am told that these two accomplished artists, who are as inseparable as brothers, present a truly touching picture of disinterested friendship; they divide everything between them, even to their inspirations, which I take to mean good ideas or lucky hits. So set them up as your examples; do as they do, and you may become the adornment of your native town."

Then my uncle took me by the two shoulders,

looked for a few seconds into my eyes, placed a kiss symmetrically on the centre of each of my cheeks, blinked his eyelids rather fast several times running, and walked back into the shop, slamming the door behind him, and muttering to himself, "*Einbildung, einbildung, einbildung!*"

As I walked towards the station I snivelled a little. I was in a soft and tearful humour altogether, and felt almost kindly disposed towards the linen trade, and almost capable of pressing a linen bale to my heart.

When the train had whirled me off, these sensations subsided. The endless shelves, with their H.B.'s and H.B.B.'s vanished from my mental sight, and in their place there arose another vision—a girl's face, a pair of blue eyes, a pair of flaxen plaits. Should I ever see them again in reality?

I have given the reader several opportunities of observing that I was madly in love with *die kleine Base*; but as for the little cousin herself, I had never let her guess that fact. I was still at that early and agonising stage of the passion which is popularly known as "calf-love." Calf-love is either very demonstrative or very reticent; my state answered to the second description. I used to lie awake at night, making combinations how to meet her "by chance" on my evening walk next day, and then when my combinations were about to be crowned and I had spent the best part of an hour dodging behind a hedge, or crouching in the vicinity of an ant-hill, some unaccountable impulse would

make me walk off whistling in the opposite direction when I perceived her approach.

Once she had expressed a wish for eating crayfish. It was not a poetical wish, but it inspired me. In cold blood I left the shop unguarded, and fished for crayfish in the little stream outside the town. My sport was blest, as forbidden sport usually is ; I landed five splendid specimens. It is true that my right hand was severely bitten, that my coat-sleeve was drenched, and that my uncle boxed my ears when I returned ; but these circumstances failed to damp my spirits. It was only when the moment for presenting them to my cousin approached that the old imbecility came over me. Her visit was announced for the afternoon, and for fear lest she should think that I had taken all that trouble for her sake, I ate two of the crayfish myself, and threw the others over the garden wall. When she caught sight of the claws on my plate, and reproached me with not having kept any for her, I called her greedy and childish; and the moment she was gone, I shut myself into my room and spent an hour in deciding whether I should jump from the window, or hang myself on the ring which occupied the centre of the ceiling. Fortunately the ring was obviously unequal to my weight, and several cases of newly-arrived linen which stood in the courtyard under my window deterred me from the second alternative. My brains might *not* have been dashed out had I fallen on one of these, and I shrank from surviving in a crippled shape.

It was not long after the crayfish affair that my flaxen-haired Hilda had run away from home. She had given no hint of her intentions either to my uncle or me; she had made no complaints of her stepmother's treatment; only for some weeks her face had grown paler, and her eyes more serious; and one fine morning we heard that she had vanished. For the first few days the disappearance was complete; then there arrived a few lines addressed to my uncle, assuring him that she was safe, and solemnly asserting that the first sign of a search would cause her to put an end to her life. The postmark on the envelope was a small town on the frontier of Germany, one of the stations on the way to Paris; and, pondering over this circumstance, together with many casual remarks she had made in old days, I had convinced myself that if ever she was to be found, Paris was the place.

I employed the time of my journey in laying my plans for the future. These plans were simple: they were only to obtain fame as a painter, to find my cousin, and bring her home with a fortune to lay at her feet. The plan had looked simple in the quiet of my uncle's back shop; it still looked comparatively simple in the railway carriage; but when once I found myself plunged in the whirl of clatter and glitter, of dashing carriages and hurrying foot-passengers which people call Paris, my ideas began to grow less distinct; and all I remained conscious of was a desire not to lose hold of my own identity, not to be swept aside by this sparkling torrent of

life for which my wildest expectations had not prepared me.

On the morning after my arrival I had recovered myself sufficiently to ask my way to the lodging of my future masters, the two brilliant geniuses whose torch was to illuminate my path to Art. I will not say how often I asked my way before reaching my destination, but I did reach it at last.

The locality in which the genius-friends lived was remote. After threading some half-dozen extremely ill-smelling streets, I recognised at the entrance of the worst-smelling of the number the directions on the letter of recommendation which I carried tightly clasped in my hand. Knowing nothing of the habits of geniuses, except that they are eccentric, I scarcely thought it strange that such accomplished artists should choose to inhabit this neighbourhood. When I came to house No. 53, which was my destination, my heart began to beat tumultuously; I trod with reverence on the mutilated bricks which paved the entrance, and even on the carrot-parings which strewed the ground with unstudied grace.

The first person I met was a washerwoman, who, however, looked far from washed herself. From this person I inquired in a tremulous voice where lived the painters, Messieurs Laniche et Fourchon. "*Plus haut!*" was the rejoinder, and she pointed with a stick of washing-soap above her head.

After this I mounted several staircases, knocked at several doors, and frightened off several rats who

were feeding on the vegetable-parings which seemed to have been strewed broadcast over the house, as flowers are strewed at a procession, and always the word sounded : " *Plus haut!* "

At last it seemed as if I could go no higher. There was, it is true, still one flight of stairs above me, but it led obviously to the attics, and I did not suppose that my masters lived there. That somebody lived there was evident, for a smell of roast onions floated from the invisible regions, and the snatch of what struck me as a rather doubtful song was being sung in a clear voice. I was about to descend the stairs in despair, when the song above me suddenly broke off amidst a clattering and hissing noise, and somebody said : "Look to the onions, Jérôme, they are on the ground."

This decided me. Jérôme was the Christian name of one of my two masters. I began to ascend the stairs, lost in wonder at the strange fancies of genius.

Just as I reached the landing, an open door was hastily slammed shut ; it was the only door visible, so timidly I approached and knocked. A voice, speaking through the keyhole, asked me what I wanted, and in halting tones I explained the reason of my appearance. There was a moment's whispered consultation behind the door ; then it was opened for about a quarter of an inch, two fingers were protruded, and the letter was asked for.

Several minutes passed, while I paced the tiny landing. First there was dead silence in the room,

broken only by the rustle of paper; then some excited whispers passed, then hurrying steps, followed by a series of curious and incomprehensible sounds. The hissing noise, which had continued unbroken till now, gradually died away as if the cause of it had been removed to some further region; then came one or two strokes as of a broom on the floor, accompanied by a choking sound which suggested laughter. Then, in a stage whisper, I heard:

"There are two more under the press, Jérôme." After that came the scraping noise of something heavy being pushed across the floor. Somebody said: "What shall I put over it?" and the answer was, "The Egyptian cloak will do." A rustle of silk, a little more clattering, a pause, and at last the door was opened, and a very agreeable voice said:

"*On vous prie d'entrer.*"

The first thing which I experienced on following this request was an overpowering smell of turpentine varnish, which completely drowned the onion scent. I have since come to the conclusion that the varnish bottle had been broken in cold blood, with the purpose of effecting a complete transformation in the atmosphere of the room.

"Pray take place," said the person who had opened the door, waving his hand with the ease of an emperor and the grace of a Greek god towards a rush-bottomed chair which stood draped in what I then took to be a cast-off comforter, but which I have since learned to reverence under the title of

"The Syrian scarf." "Pray take place, *sur ce fauteuil ou sur le canapé*, if you prefer."

I looked at the *canapé;* but observing that one of its feet was out of the perpendicular, that the contents of half a paint-box had recently been spilt over its surface, and that, moreover, most of the unencumbered part was occupied by a full-grown, grinning skeleton, I bashfully chose the chair.

"I see by this letter," began the young Frenchman—he looked scarcely older than myself, and I at once put him down as genius No. 2—"that you desire to be instructed by my friend and myself; but I can give you no definite answer without his consent. I shall see whether he is disengaged at this moment, *avec votre permission;*" and, with a slight inclination of the head which months of study would not have enabled me to copy, he walked to the door of the adjoining room and disappeared.

Startled, yet fascinated, I sat still on my *fauteuil.* The effrontery of my host took my breath away, but his smile had gained my heart. Profiting by the opportunity, I cast a hasty glance around me. The space was rather sparely lighted; not from any deficiency in the position of the window, which, indeed, commanded all the neighbouring roofs, but because a piece of bleached green silk had been pinned across the lower panes. The sloping ceiling proclaimed to me that I was in a garret; as for the rest, however, my notions remained tolerably hazy. An easel leant against the wall, another was planted in the centre of the room, with a sheet of drawing

on it, veiled in the folds of a dirty towel flung over the paper. It struck me also that there were a great many pieces of drapery in the room, disposed in unexpected and improbable places, and assuming strange shapes, which they could only have adopted from the objects they covered. In the very centre of the room stood a wooden lay-figure, wrapped from chin to toes in a piece of yellow damask, which still showed portions of red fringe at the edge. I concluded that one of the two geniuses was occupied with some subject from the Bible.

Just as I had settled this point in my mind the door opened again, and there entered my former acquaintance, accompanied by another man, who held my letter open in his hand.

Genius No. 1 was the older of the two by a few years, but only by a few years ; he may have been twenty-eight or twenty-nine. His complexion and hair were both darker than the other's, and his face was more deeply furrowed by lines, which instinctively, I felt, must proceed from some other cause than age.

" Monsieur Bertrand Laniche, Monsieur Gustave Leegold," said the younger man, with one of his incomparable waves of the hand ; and in the next minute I found myself again seated on my rush-bottomed chair, straight in face of the two Frenchmen, and vainly trying to appear unembarrassed by my hands. The ease with which my new masters managed theirs, although they had no visible occupation to turn them to, was to me tantalising

and mysterious. They both wore velveteen coats, from which the original pile had disappeared at most places, and my experienced eye at once detected that the linen of their shirts had never come off a bale marked H.B.B.—scarcely even H. B.—but for all that, and despite my brand-new, scrupulously brushed clothes, despite even the well-fitted cigar case in my pocket, I felt at a disadvantage before them.

" Monsieur Leegold desires to do us the honour of becoming our pupil," said the artist called Bertrand Laniche, in a deep and impressive voice, on which Monsieur Jérôme Fourchon, the younger one, broke in with his flute-like treble and his angelic smile :

" He is warmly recommended, Bertrand ; will you not reconsider your resolution, and make it possible for us to receive him ? "

I perceived with dismay that my acceptance had already been thrown into doubt, and, with a blush, so burning that it sent the tears to my eyes, I murmured something about my devotion to art.

" *L'Art,*" said Laniche, clearing his throat, " *l'Art c'est une maîtresse jalouse.* Are you prepared to labour in her service ? To *labour*, not to trifle and dally with her playthings, *les joujoux qu'elle nous jette ?* "

The metaphor was beyond me, but the deep voice and serious gaze of Laniche impressed me to a degree that no metaphor could have done. I explained that I wished for nothing better than earnest work under an earnest instructor.

Messieurs Laniche and Fourchon hemmed and hawed a little longer, hinted at the valuable nature of their time, and the pressing number of their engagements, until I felt my heart slowly sinking towards my boots ; but at last Laniche seemed to be struck with an idea ; for, turning towards Jérôme, he suggested :

" How would it be if we put off the *Marquis* in order to favour Monsieur Leegold ? "

" It would be hard upon the Marquis," replied Jérôme gravely ; " he is the most punctual in his attendance."

" And in his payments," finished Laniche.

" Exactly," said Jérôme, " though that is a secondary consideration."

It might have been by chance that both pairs of eyes turned towards me at that moment ; but something inspired me to say warmly :

" I shall be as punctual as the Marquis, both in attendance and payment, for my uncle has been most liberal in his provisions."

The angelic smile suddenly reappeared on Jérôme's face, and even the eyes of the grave Laniche appeared to brighten. In a few minutes it was settled that the Marquis should be sacrificed to me.

" We shall begin to-morrow," said Laniche presently ; " I shall make a selection among our models. What do you say, Jérôme ; shall we start Monsieur with the antique classes, or begin with models from the French school ? "

"The question shall be considered," said Jérôme, looking hard at me, as though to read where my abilities lay.

"I trust the staircase does not inconvenience you?" said Laniche, turning to me suavely, "but we affect this situation on account of the light. We are above the multitude here, Monsieur Leegold."

I agreed almost enthusiastically.

"There is one other small circumstance," said Laniche, as I rose to take my leave, and he set to examining his finely-shaped nails rather closely, "no more than a matter of form; but it is against our practice to accept pupils without payment in advance."

"For the charges of a month," threw in Jérôme.

"For the charges of a quarter," finished Laniche, with a severe glance at his fellow-artist. "Our terms are three francs per day, which includes free use of the models, excepting such damages as they may suffer at your hands. That comes to ninety francs a month, two hundred and seventy francs for the quarter."

"Two hundred and seventy francs!" I repeated, with something like a gasp.

"I see you are surprised," said Laniche; "you were no doubt not prepared for the lowness of terms; but *que voulez-vous?* Times are bad for Art."

I still felt somewhat staggered; but I remembered the sacrificed Marquis and drew out my purse.

When I closed it again one of the compartments was empty; and my only comfort was the reflection that my path to Art was clear for three months. Besides, though the sum in a lump had alarmed me, three francs was really not much for a lesson which lasted as long as the daylight.

So, after stumbling over various objects at my feet, and twice overtoppling the yellow-draped lay-figure which obstructed the passage, and which Jérôme put straight again with the utmost good humour, I managed to bow myself out of the presence of my instructors.

It may have been *Einbildung*, but certainly as I closed the door behind me I heard something like a speechless scuffle, which gave me the impression that my two instructors had rushed into each other's arms, and were embracing each other in a transport of some emotion which I knew not how to explain.

CHAPTER II.

PUNCTUAL to the minute, I knocked at the attic door next morning. My night had been disturbed; a feverish excitement had kept me awake, longing for the hour which should mark my first step on the road to Art.

After a short delay the door was opened; Laniche, in rather deep *négligé*, received me politely. The strip of green silk had been taken from the

window, but the various other indescribable pieces of drapery were still disposed about the room, just as they had been yesterday. The lay figure stood still muffled in its yellow rag. Upon the corner of one of the tables, which had evidently been cleared with some difficulty, stood the plaster model of a foot with one toe and part of the heel gone.

"*Notre premier modèle*," explained Laniche, not in the least disconcerted by the want of the toe; and after pulling a sheet of paper from under several portfolios, he hunted round the room for a piece of charcoal, and proceeded, with a rapidity which made my brain reel, to dash off a sketch of the foot in question. With a dozen strokes he had reproduced the general effect, while I stood by awe-struck and dumb, and becoming with every stroke more reconciled to the expenditure of my two hundred and seventy francs.

As for the loss of the toe, Laniche explained that it was of no consequence whatever; that, in fact, by reason of giving more scope to the imagination, it was to be considered more of an advantage than otherwise. It was the Marquis who had broken it, it appeared. Then the accomplished artist showed me how to hold my chalk, mentioned the Latin names of a few bones belonging to the structure of the human foot, which impressed me deeply, and which he called grounding me in anatomy, declared that he saw germs of talent in the first tremulous stroke which I applied to the paper, and then retired

into the next room, where I distinctly heard him getting back into bed.

About two hours later Jérôme made his appearance, looking rather heavy about the eyes. After wishing me good-morning, in a somewhat subdued tone, he came and looked over my shoulder, remarked that my drawing suggested chilblains, and rubbed out two of the criticised toes without substituting any others. After this he appeared to forget my existence, and busied himself with rummaging through portfolios, alternately spilling their contents, swearing a little, and then picking them up again.

On the whole I was not dissatisfied with my first day in the studio; I had learnt two Latin words, and had the satisfaction of knowing that what I had hitherto called my ankle was really termed—but no, I have long since forgotten my grounding in anatomy, and my memory is a blank, even as to the Latin for my little toe.

It is true, that by evening there remained of my original drawing nothing but two sister-toes, orphaned of the foot they belonged to; but then, though my paper might be poor in lines, how rich was not my mind in experience! I felt that I could grapple with the foot in quite a different spirit next day.

When next day came I found the attic door locked, and half an hour passed before any response came to my modest taps. At last the door was opened, apparently by Jérôme, who, however, bolted back

into the inner chamber as soon as the key was turned, and informed me through the chink that I had nothing to do but to go on with the plaster foot, *le pied d'Hercule*, he called it; but I doubt whether Hercules had anything to do with it.

"*Vous trouverez tout*," he said, as he vanished from my sight.

I *did* find everything—does not Bible-teaching say that he who searches finds? At the end of half an hour I discovered the foot of Hercules serving as a prop to a rickety picture stand, which, without this crutch, limped piteously; but, alas! my two sister-toes I never saw again. However, I had grown bold enough to help myself to paper at my own discretion, and to take chalk and charcoal where I could find it, and with the pigheaded perseverance of my race I set out again upon the round of four toes and a half which at present was the aim of my ambition.

That day was to me a melancholy one; I experienced several shocks, due to my curiosity alone, for during the hours that elapsed before either of my instructors appeared, I foolishly lifted the draperies which had seemed to me so mysterious. Under a strip of red velvet I discovered to my affright a row of bottles, five empty and one full one, all marked "*Cognac*"; in one corner, with a piece of tattered lace flung over them, I found a roulette board and a heap of dirty cards, lying higgledy-piggledy upon each other. But my sensitive nature suffered most when I threw back the yellow rag,

respectively "Egyptian cloak," veiling the figure which, till then, I had taken to represent some Biblical character. I perceived now that this wooden model, whose joints were pliable, was precariously poised on one toe; and adding this circumstance to the shortness of the pink muslin skirts which met my gaze, I had no difficulty in divining that the creature was standing for a ballet-girl.

The discovery so upset me that my next two toes suffered severely in the execution.

Laniche did not appear at all that day; Jérôme looked in occasionally and let drop some vague but encouraging remarks.

On the third day, and for many days afterwards, the door was left unlocked for my convenience, and also for that of my masters. During the first half of the day I worked generally in solitude. The *atelier* and all its contents was left entirely at my mercy; I might have filled my pockets with oil-paints, or stuffed my sleeves with sketches at my discretion; and nothing but my conscience stood in the way of my carrying off the lay-figure, or eloping with the skeleton, any day of the week. The indescribable pieces of drapery, though they still went by such names as "Syrian scarf," "Turkish sash," or "Indian veil," were now no longer so carefully disposed; the bottles stood unmasked, and even the ballet-girl, scorning concealment, stood poised on one toe before my eyes. The *Marquis*, who had done much service at first, was now less frequently alluded to; the *couplets* were sung before

me, the onions were fried under my nose, and I was even invited to partake of them.

After the first shock, the successive stages by which I descended from the ideal representation I had made to myself of my masters were rapid. Oh! innocent, innocent uncle Leegold! with your experience, as dull as the shelves in your back shop, and as spotless as the linen you daily measure out, had I obeyed your parting injunction, and done as they did, I might perhaps have ended by adorning the jails of my native town, but scarcely its social life. And yet the description had not been quite false; the affection which these two men bore to each other was genuinely true; it was true also that they divided everything, even to my cigars, whenever I was foolish enough to leave my case unguarded on the table.

The days passed in great sameness. About twelve, or a little later, my two masters would appear, one after the other, with bloodshot eyes and ashy complexions. The first move was generally to call for a *siphon*; then, if Laniche happened to be in a particularly laborious frame of mind, he would employ two hours in pointing three pieces of chalk, or Jérôme would hunt rats with a broom. And I must not here forget to mention that the foot of Hercules came to a wretched end, in consequence of being shied across the room at a rat that showed itself in broad daylight.

But these were exceptional cases. More generally the two accomplished artists would each sit in

a corner, in a sort of sullen stupor, absolutely indifferent to their surroundings, and apparently still half asleep. Somewhere about the middle of the afternoon they would suddenly wake up, and laying hold of chalk or charcoal, paint or pencil, or anything that happened to be within reach, they would dash off sketches of subjects which, to use a mild expression, belonged to the flippant order of Art. Then, with these sketches under their arms, they would disappear for the rest of the afternoon, and occasionally reappear without the sketches, but with a suggestive chink about their pockets, or half a ham and a bottle of brandy for supper. I do not know whether either of them answered in any way to the word "genius;" but that this pair of irreclaimable rakes possessed between them talent enough to set up half a dozen ordinary men there is no denying.

After the first few days they did not pay much attention to my presence. If I could find chalk for myself it was my luck; if not, *tant pis*. They conversed, as it were, over my head, while I struggled, as best I could, with the Herculean toes, or with the "hand of Apollo," to which I was in time advanced. As for the style and subjects of their conversation, there was much that bewildered me; my inexperience was extreme, so perhaps it was only natural that my hair—and it was lanky hair—should occasionally stand on end as I listened to the thrilling tales of adventure with which they enlivened their hours of labour.

From portions of their talk I gathered that they had each lately sent a painting to the *Salon*, and as the critical day approached on which the names of the accepted pictures were to be made known, a fever came over them both. At every sound in the house, or step on the staircase, Jérôme would rush across the room and burst open the door, only to return discomfited.

At last one morning, as I was working alone as usual, and thinking rather more of blue eyes and flaxen plaits than of plaster fingers—for I cannot deny that my artistic taste had begun to abate—I was startled by Jérôme storming into the room through the outer door (I do not suppose that he had been home all night) and shouting at the top of his voice:

"Accepted! accepted, Bertrand! accepted!"

Laniche appeared at the noise, and asked, "Yours or mine?"

"Mine!" screamed Jérôme, throwing himself into his friend's arms; and for full two minutes they hugged and let go, and hugged and let go, until I feared that utter exhaustion must follow. There was not the smallest trace of envy in Laniche's manner towards the younger man; the acceptance was regarded evidently as a piece of equal good luck to both, and I confess that this remark tended somewhat to soften the loss of my two hundred and seventy francs, which I was beginning to acknowledge had been a vain expenditure.

After this it was foolish of me to try and obtain a hearing upon the question of a curve of a finger; both artists were in far too jubilant a state of mind even to understand me. In answer to my question they merely pressed me to their hearts, and went off arm-in-arm, singing playful airs, and not reappearing in the studio for three whole days.

When they did reappear their voices were husky and their hands shaky; but, after a night's rest, it seemed as if a reaction were going to take place in the spirit of the successful artist. He had got hold of a newspaper with a critique of the paintings exhibited, and, amongst others, of his own. Although admitted to the Salon, it was here severely censured, not so much on account of the execution, which was even alluded to as "promising," but because of the choice of the subject, which was called "vicious;" and there followed a tirade upon the degeneracy of public morals and of artistic taste. I never ascertained precisely what were the subjects of Jérôme's accepted and of Laniche's rejected pictures, but I have since heard that of Jérôme mentioned as "*le moins frivole des deux.*"

After reading this article, Jérôme was very quiet for about an hour, and sat dreamily biting his finger-nails, and passing his hand through his curly crop of hair. At last, twisting himself round in his chair, he addressed Laniche, who had been occupied with pulling threads out of what remained of fringe on the Egyptian mantle.

"*Ecoute*, Bertrand, I have an idea."

"*Eh bien?*" grunted the other.

"I am going to give the lie to that fellow who declares that my inspirations are grovelling; I am going to paint the most moral picture, comparatively moral, that is to say, that you can imagine. I give you three guesses at my subject."

"*Mon petit chat*, child and kitten at play," suggested Laniche, grimly. But Jérôme was in no humour for jokes; without waiting for the other two guesses he announced that the subject he had chosen was Faust and Gretchen.

"I fancy I have seen it treated once or twice before," said Laniche, who was in a sarcastic mood.

"But never as I shall treat it," explained Jérôme, rising in his excitement. "Hackneyed? Nonsense, I deny it, or rather I agree completely; and exactly because it is hackneyed, the originality of my talent will shine all the more. I am going to view the subject in an entirely new light, which has occurred to no one before. I am going to awaken pity for Mephistopheles. Gretchen shall only be placed on the picture in order to foil his satanic beauty by her insipid charms. Do you grasp my idea, Bertrand?"

"Not quite," said Laniche, with a yawn. "But where are you to procure your insipid Gretchen and your satanic Mephisto? Models don't grow on trees. And how about Faust? Is he to be allowed a hand in the business?"

"He may loom in the background," said Jérôme, striding up and down the room under the pressure of inspiration. "I shall give him a crouching and watchful attitude, something panther-like, you know. It would be quite new, no one has thought of it yet. Then I shall require an altar, and a great many flowers,—heaps of flowers, freshness and innocence, you know."

"And a spinning-wheel?" suggested Laniche, "and a couple of thousand francs or so worth of jewels?"

"No, the spinning-wheel is exploded. I should like best to seat Gretchen at a patent Howe double lockstitch sewing-machine, but that might be thought eccentric. I shall give her an instrument instead, perhaps the zither."

"I never heard that she played it," said Laniche.

"So much the better, all the more original; besides, you never heard she did not, did you?"

Laniche acknowledged the truth of this remark.

"And as for the background," continued Jérôme, "that question must still be weighed. I am still hesitating between a thunder-cloud sky and a slight eclipse of the sun. The eclipse would be more uncommon, but we are short of black paint, and the thunder-clouds would certainly come cheaper, as they would carry off all that indigo which remained over from my last harem picture."

Laniche threw back his head and burst into a peal of laughter.

"You had better advertise a course of lectures

upon practical economy," he said. "I undertake to paste the placards."

"Laugh to your heart's content," responded Jérôme, "the duck's back is not more indifferent to water than I am to your levity. A great change has come over me; from the moment that my Mephistopheles and Gretchen flashed into my mind my views of life have become serious. And now I am off to procure my models; I have my eye on a Gretchen already; let me hope to find you in a more congenial spirit when I return; and, by-the-by, do you happen to have any loose francs about you? Unless they see silver they will not believe I am serious."

"I have not, but Monsieur Leegold has," answered Laniche with admirable coolness, "and no doubt he will favour you with the loan of them."

"I am afraid I can scarcely afford—" I began nervously.

"Pardon, monsieur," said Laniche, whose presence of mind never forsook him. "I made a mistake in using the word *loan;* but you have no doubt overlooked the fact that we have made no charge as yet for materials used; it was an oversight on my part, but twenty francs will cover it. The use of the india-rubber is included."

I was no match for Monsieur Laniche; the twenty francs were transferred from my pocket to that of Jérôme, who, snatching up a hat, which, by-the-by, was mine, went off in search of his models.

The idea may seem far-fetched, but it really has

occurred to me once or twice that Jérôme might have been reclaimable. It is true that he carried the germ of almost every vice within him; but something still plastic in his nature left room for hope. In Laniche, on the contrary, everything was too deeply ingrained to be uprooted. They trod the same path, or rather the same byways; but the course of life which Jérôme pursued with a song on his lips and a laugh in his eyes was followed by Laniche in a far more deep and earnest, and, if I may say so, more business-like manner. The pursuit of amusement was to him a more serious question, vice to him a more profound study than to Jérôme.

It was two days after this conversation that, arriving at the studio in the morning, I found to my amazement the door standing wide open and the place empty. The inner door was open also, disclosing two mattresses on the ground, and various articles of clothing strewn about, but of my masters there was no trace. In some alarm I questioned the washerwoman who lived downstairs, and from her I learnt that late last night a letter had been brought to the painters, the contents of which had seemed to rejoice them exceedingly, and that immediately after receiving it they had left the house, *de très bonne humeur*, had not been seen since.

Despondently I returned to the deserted studio, and set about my work. The collection of my stray materials was more troublesome than usual, for most of the articles in the room bore an appearance

of having been tossed up into the air and caught again, or not caught, as might happen ; and joining what I knew of Jérôme's disposition to the *très bonne humeur* mentioned by the washerwoman, I did not think the circumstance improbable.

It was a sultry June day, which bade fair to end in a thunder-storm, and by the time I had worked for an hour the perspiration was standing on my forehead. I pushed open the window, and, taking off my coat, leant out to breathe the air and rest from my labours. I was no longer the indefatigable student who a month ago had entered on the path of Art. My ardour was considerably damped; I had discovered that poetry is largely adulterated with prose, and, whatever else I may not have learnt in the *atelier* of Messieurs Laniche et Fourchon, I certainly had learnt that a turn for scribbling faces on a counter does not necessarily mean that you are a Raphael in embryo ; and that, though I might fairly aspire to paint signboards enough to rejoice my worthy uncle's heart, yet the higher paths of Art were not likely to open their gates at my touch.

That counter ! It was not the first time that I had caught myself thinking almost sentimentally of yard-measures and linen bales, and wondering when I should again see the familiar spectacles, and hear again the familiar word " *Einbildung*."

Of course I was free any day to turn my back on the studio, and re-enter my uncle's house ; and it was not alone the idea of my irretrievable two hundred and seventy francs that kept me faithful

to the accomplished artists. My unacknowledged object in coming to Paris had, after all, been stronger than the acknowledged one, and that object was still unfulfilled. In vain had I employed every free hour in walking the streets of Paris and risking my inexperienced life at crossings; in vain had I darted after every flaxen head of hair I espied; I had caught no glimpse and heard no word of the little cousin whom I began to mourn for as dead.

To-day as I looked out over the roofs, and counted the chimneys and sparrows below me, something like a panic came over me as I thought how possible, even how probable it was, that I might never find her; or find her some twenty or thirty years hence, when my hair—and perhaps hers also—should be turning grey and scant; when her heart—and perhaps mine also—should be growing old and cold.

My work would not progress at all that day. Towards twelve Jérôme dashed into the room.

"*Bon jour!*" he shouted. "Have you heard the news? My academy picture is sold—five hundred francs! Are you in want of money? I can lend you some" (he did not, however). "I have halved with Laniche, of course; he has just lost the last of it at roulette, and they have turned us out of the café Filigrane; but he is to have his *revanche* immediately." Jérôme, as he spoke, was collecting cards on the ground.

"*Cher ami,*" he said, standing up again, and smil-

ing one of his angelic smiles which even now I felt so hard to resist, "I see that you are not using your coat; mine has had a little accident with a bottle of Château-Morgaux; it can be no inconvenience to you to lend me your garment for a couple of hours;" and before I had time to consent or refuse, my coat was on Jérôme's back.

"You have everything you need, I suppose?" he asked, apparently with a touch of remorse, as he reached the door. "*Que cherchez vous là?*"

"I am looking for the chalk," I answed meekly.

"*Cherchez seulement*," said Jérôme, in a tone of pleasant encouragement, as he slammed the door behind him.

CHAPTER III.

After this I fully expected to pass the day in undisturbed solitude, but to my surprise the afternoon brought a knock to the door.

"*Vous êtes Monsieur Fourchon?*" said an unknown voice sternly as I opened.

I said I was not Fourchon.

"Who are you then? And where is he? And what do these gentlemen mean by making appointments which they do not keep?"

The stranger who had stalked past into the room was wrapped entirely in a long dark cloak. He cast a sweeping glance of surprise and dis-

pleasure around him, and then measured me scornfully from head to foot.

"Do you wish to speak with the artists?" I asked. "If it is only a message ——"

As an answer he threw back his cloak with a stage gesture, and displayed to my dazzled gaze a costume of purple silk laced with gold.

"*Je suis Faust*," he announced, sinking on to the nearest chair.

I had forgotten Jérôme's projected picture, as unquestionably he had done himself, although he had employed half the day of yesterday in measuring canvas and rubbing colours, and, as I remembered now, had even definitely engaged the models. Despairingly I asked myself what I should do with Faust. To send him away would be a risk; for there was no saying whether Jérôme, when fleeced of his last five hundred francs, might not unexpectedly reappear in the studio; so all I could do was to take refuge in evasive excuses and hazy allusions to the painters' numerous engagements.

My position was not enviable, but it was yet to become worse. Faust had not been five minutes in the room when another knock came, and Mephistopheles was introduced, looking so lean and hungry that Jérôme's idea of awakening pity for him appeared very feasible upon near view. Mephistopheles was acquainted with the studio; he had sat here as model before, once as an Italian brigand, and once as a Turkish pasha (I suspect that his terms were low), but Faust, who evidently

considered himself as belonging to quite a different circle to the unfortunate demon, was obviously snorting with displeasure, and insinuated that his sitting at all was only by condescension for the encouragement of Art.

I was ignorant of what exact moment Jérôme had chosen for his illustration of the poem, and therefore did not know how many characters might yet be expected. But I was prepared for everything: peasants, soldiers, burgesses, students, and spirits—either heavenly or infernal—or even for a whole mob composed of all the earthly portions of these elements. With my eyes on the door I sat, devoutly praying for the reappearance of at least one of my masters. The models were hard to entertain; they would not talk to each other; Faust looked hard at Mephistopheles, and Mephistopheles looked deprecatingly at Faust. I believe the wretch was as near starvation as is possible to a man who yet keeps on his legs; more than once I caught his eye fixed hungrily on the stale breadcrumbs with which I was cleaning my paper.

My fears with regard to the mob were groundless. The next half-hour brought only Martha, in her silken skirt and velvet bodice. This comparatively youthful female, being stout, was severely blown by the staircase, and took some time before she recovered breath enough to abuse the unpunctuality, and what she called "*le manque de tact*," of painters. She was also much exercised in her mind as to the fate of her two tender infants, who, as far as I

could gather, she had left locked up in an empty larder at home.

By degrees, and as the afternoon wore on, even Mephistopheles's patience began to give way. The three infuriated models sat in a half-circle round me, and launched invectives at my innocent head.

"I have sat to the greatest painters of Paris," said Faust, sullenly, "but such treatment as this is new to me. My time presses, at five I have an appointment with Monsieur Pastello; I have promised him my hand for his picture of Charles I.," and Faust looked down tenderly at his carefully-tended white hand.

"And have you promised your little toe, or the lobe of your lovely ear, to anyone else?" inquired Martha, snappishly; glad apparently to vent her ill-humour even on a fellow-victim.

Faust merely gave her a withering glance.

"Of course we charge just the same as for a sitting," he remarked.

"Of course," echoed Mephistopheles, less hopefully; he was thinking probably of past experiences with regard to the punctuality of the artists' payments.

"As for me," said Martha, giving a vicious tug to the lace on her bodice, "if either of the *pauvres chéris* has broken its neck meanwhile, I shall ——"

"Prosecute Fourchon?" suggested Faust.

"Charge double," finished Martha.

My efforts at pacification were vain, my apologies not believed in, my exhortations to patience not

listened to. At the end of an hour Faust got up fuming, and, draping himself savagely in his long cloak, declared that he could not in conscience deprive Monsieur Pastello any longer of the hand which was to grace Charles I. Martha seemed inclined to follow suit.

"Thanks for an agreeable entertainment, *Monsieur l'artiste*," she snorted, flouncing her petticoats at me, who, after all, was quite innocent of being an artist. "I hope you will sleep well, with the blood of my innocent children upon your head. But *tiens*, there comes someone; I hear a step on the staircase; has Monsieur Fourchon put on slippers, that he treads so softly?"

As she spoke there was a low knock at the door. The three models rushed in a body to open, but fell back again immediately with an air of disgust.

"It's only another unfortunate," said Faust, with a bitter laugh, "I forgot that the picture was not complete."

"It is only a girl," said Martha, pettishly shrugging her shoulders. "You had better go home again, poor child! If you have come here to sit for Monsieur Fourchon, you have come on a fool's errand, and nothing more."

"Am I not late?" said a low voice from under the shawl, which the new-comer held cast about her head.

Though I should live to see my hundredth birthday I shall never be able to forget the electrifying effect which these four syllables produced in my

soul. Millions of confusing sensations awoke into life at the sound of that voice. Without a word to anybody or a moment to reflect, I strode in between Faust and Martha, who were obscuring my sight, and in an instant, like an unmannerly ruffian that I was, I had torn aside the shawl which a tiny white hand still held together beneath the chin.

The shawl slipped to the ground, fell in a soft heap at her little feet, encased in low shoes and snowy stockings. She stood there before me in her soft blue dress, her golden plaits hanging on her shoulders, her rose-red lips parted in amazement, her blue eyes wide with wonder—the most beautiful Gretchen that painter's brush ever attempted to put on canvas. But to me no Gretchen; to me only Hilda, my long-lost, my miraculously-found cousin.

And the next thing that happened was that straightway on the spot, before the eyes of Faust, Mephisto, and Martha, I, Gustav Leegold, fell at her feet like a stone, and, seizing both her hands, called out in my native tongue—

"*Kleine Base, kleine Base!* come home again, come home again with me!"

To the three spectators, who understood not a word of what I said, it may have suggested insanity. Martha cast her eyes round the room, as if in search of water to dash over my head. But fortunately there was only varnish visible, and I suppose she shrank from using that. The six eyes upon me did not confuse me; the surprise had quite tri-

umphed over my bashfulness. It did not even occur to me that this demonstration, into which I had been carried headlong, must be almost as astonishing to Hilda as it was to the spectators. I had told her my secret so constantly in spirit that it almost seemed to me as if she must know it in reality.

But my ardour was rudely chilled; the *kleine Base* had a great deal more self-possession than I had. After the first moment of stupefaction, her senses seemed to recover themselves, and stepping back gracefully, she made me a low curtsey as I knelt on the floor, and replied—

"Go home again, *mein Vetter* (my cousin)—go home again alone. If it is to fetch me you have come to Paris, then you have wasted a railway ticket."

"Hilda," I cried, rising abruptly from my kneeling posture, which had lost its point, since there remained now only the lay-figure in front of my outstretched arms, "Hilda, you must let me explain myself. I forgot that you did not know," and I made a snatch at her hand; but Hilda had stepped behind the lay-figure, and her blue eyes looked at me dark and threatening across its wooden shoulder.

By this time the others had quite grasped the situation. Frenchmen have an instinctive sympathy in such cases, and though our dialogue was in German our pantomime was, I suppose, in a language which every nation understands.

"*Voyons!*" said Faust, whose bad humour had

vanished; "this begins to interest me: I am glad I stayed."

"But I doubt whether we should stay longer," said Martha, torn between curiosity and sympathy. "They have had a quarrel, *c'est clair*, and I don't believe they will make it up while there are so many of us in the room."

"On the contrary," retorted Faust, "*nous aiderons.* Bravo, *mon ami*, that is the way. When girls run away, it is only because they want to be caught. I shall help you, if you like; there are not many more tables to get behind."

"Go away, go away, all of you!" I cried, stamping my foot furiously on the ground, for their presence and well-meant jokes had suddenly become unbearable to me. "This girl is my cousin: she will tell you so herself."

Whether they believed me or not I do not know; but they actually went away, not without some parting shots from Faust, whom Martha, however, who evidently belonged to the match-making order of women, hurried out of the room. Mephistopheles slunk after them. The *kleine Base* and I were alone in the garret studio.

She stood in a corner like a pouting child, the tip of her foot beat the floor. Since her first speech she had said not a word, and had appeared not even to notice when the others went.

"*Kleine Base?*" I said humbly.

"*Grosser Vetter?*" she answered defiantly.

"I have been a fool all my life, *kleine Base.*"

"Well," she replied, with her ravishing nose in the air, "if you have nothing more novel to say I shall go."

"No, you shall not, because I should follow you. You cannot hide from me again, now that I have found you."

"Did you read my letter to your uncle?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Do you remember what I threatened to do if I were searched for?"

"Indeed," I cried, alarmed. "I have not searched for you, that is to say, not exactly searched; it was not for that I came to Paris."

"Then what was it you came to Paris for?" she coldly inquired.

"To become a painter. But I am sick of art, I am a fool at that as at everything else. I made a mess of it from the beginning."

"Of your paintings?" she asked, raising her eyebrows.

"No, of my happiness, Hilda. I began by being too timid, and now I have been too bold; I never seem to get on, I make no progress."

"You should take another master," said Hilda, with a sweet but icy smile.

All this time she was standing at the furthest end of the studio, as far away from me as she could place herself. With her hands behind her, and her small feet crossed before her, she leant against the table, and bent her gaze earnestly downwards, as

though the colour of her shoe-strings were to her by far the most interesting subject in the world.

"My masters be hanged!" I cried angrily, "or rather let them be blest, since they have brought us together after these months of agony, to me at least I mean. But I could never have lain down in my grave without telling you that my heart is full, quite full of you alone; that there have been no flowers, and no birds, and no sunshine since you left; that I have—in short, that I have been a fool—and, *kleine Base*, will you come home now? Will you come home with me? Or are you so happy in this great Paris that you can do without those who love you?"

Hilda bent her head lower for a moment, as though to examine her shoe more closely; there was a struggle in her face, but before I had time to ask myself what it meant, she had thrown her muslin apron over her face and burst into stormy tears.

My recollection of what followed is blissful but indistinct; I remember only that the space between us was cleared in a moment, and that my first kiss was pressed on a wet cheek, and that presently we were seated side by side on the *canapé*, on the top of I don't know how many portfolios and loose sketches, absolutely indifferent to the skeleton who sat beside us cheek by jowl, and absolutely forgetful of the lapse of time. There was so much to ask and answer, so many tears to dry, so many mysteries to be explained, that the dusk began to fall without our knowing it.

"*Bäschen, Bäschen,*" I said reproachfully, "you might have come to my uncle, instead of flying off alone to strange countries and leaving us exposed to mortal terrors. Did you never think of coming to my uncle?"

"I thought of it often," she answered, squeezing up her pretty apron into an unsightly roll, "but *you* were there, you know."

"I? But I was your slave, I would have protected you, I would have died for you!"

"But in the meantime you were rude to me; you went out of my way, you—oh, Gustav—how was it that you never guessed my secret?"

"Because I am a fool, I suppose, or because I was too busy in hiding my own."

"It must have been the same with me," said Hilda, reflectively. "How clever we have been, cousin! How well we have hidden our secrets from each other! So well, that we might never have found them again—never, never!"

"And that is why you did not come to my uncle?"

"That is why I could not take my secret to that house, you know; so I thought it best to go far away from everybody."

Far away from everybody! Helpless blockhead that I was! It was my imbecile sheepishness, quite as much as her stepmother's stick, which had driven her far away from everybody. But then, how could I ever, unaided, have hit upon the unimaginable idea that she actually loved me?

And then we talked of the linen shop and the uncle, of the crayfish she had not eaten, and the ant-hill I had crawled over while I watched for her. And I learnt that she had managed to get a living by her embroidery, in which she excelled, and that once or twice her face had been used as a picture, for there was a dearth of fair heads just then among the models of the artistic world. "But I should never have done it if I had not been so hungry," said Hilda, with a shake of her flaxen head, "for people in Paris are not what they are at home, Gustav."

"And have you sat before in this studio?" I asked with a sudden alarmed recollection of Jérôme's flippant laugh and reckless speeches.

"No, but Monsieur Fourchon has engaged me for three sittings; this was to be the first to-day."

"And shall be the last!" I cried vehemently. "You cannot sit to these monsters. We have done with the studio, you and I, and done with Paris; we are going home together, *Bäschen;* to the uncle and the counter, and the yard-measure and the linen bales. Come away!"

A terror rushed over me at the anticipation of the painters' return. What folly had possessed me to linger here so long?

And just as we rose from the sofa the door opened, and Laniche, with his hat very much on one side of his nead, stood in the doorway.

"*Tiens, tiens,*" he said, "*des tourterelles!* What an agreeable surprise! Have they flown in by the

window? Ah, I see"—as he came nearer—"Jérôme's insipid Gretchen; but the picture will fail; *le pauvre Méphisto* has not a chance beside her, she is not near insipid enough."

At the sight of his flushed face and shining eyes, Hilda shrank trembling to my side.

"Good evening, Monsieur Laniche," I said, with all the iciness I could command, "my cousin and I are going home, so pray let us pass."

I had drawn her hand through my arm, and made straight for the door; but Laniche, excited by drink, was not so easily got rid of.

"*Doucement!*" he said, planting himself squarely in our passage; "I wonder who is at home here, you or I?"

"I shall show you who is master here, at any rate," I said furiously, "if you do not make room."

"What for? For you to carry off the model which is to make Jérôme's name famous? *Pas si bête!*"

"She is not Jérôme's model," I replied, attempting to push past him, "she is my cousin and my bride."

"*Rien que ça?*" laughed Laniche, huskily; "I don't approve of sudden engagements; it isn't correct. Let me have a look at her, why does she hide her face? *Ah ça!* my name is Bertrand Laniche, and——"

He had put out his hand, as if to take her by the chin, but my self-control was at an end. My hands,

which I had so often regarded as useless encumbrances, seemed suddenly to have become indispensable instruments. I did not wonder what to do with them ; I felt all at once that their vocation was to knock down this insolent Parisian.

In a moment we were grappling together, and in another moment the accomplished artist lay on his back on the floor, still cursing faintly but otherwise exhausted.

" And now quick, Hilda," I said panting, " quick, before the other comes."

" But you have no coat," said Hilda, " and it is raining."

I remembered that my coat was on Jérôme's back, so snatching up the first piece of drapery which lay within reach, I seized Hilda by the hand and we flew down the staircase together.

Half way down we passed Jérôme, fortunately so tipsy that he did not recognise me, and we were able to pursue our way unmolested.

As soon as we reached the street, which was dusk by this time, I hailed a fiacre and hurried my cousin into it.

There was no pursuit, and before another twenty-four hours had passed we had turned our backs for ever upon Paris and upon Art, and were kneeling at my uncle's feet and requesting his blessing.

I had one more communication from Messieurs Laniche et Fourchon ; it was a bill of twenty francs for the " Egyptian cloak," which, in my hurry, I had snatched up in default of my coat ; but I took the

liberty of not paying it, and no second effort was made.

It is preserved in our house as a relic of my Paris masters, who doubtless now are gulling some other unfortunate pupil whom their good and his bad luck may have thrown in their path. As for the *Marquis*, I believe he had been invented for my especial benefit; and since he lured two hundred and seventy francs from my pocket, there is no denying that he served his purpose.

Whether Jérôme ever painted his "Mephistopheles and Gretchen" I do not know; but I am certain he never found a model to equal the one which I carried away from Paris, and whose fairy-like beauty and angel-like qualities——but my uncle says that this also is "*Einbildung*."

MOUFFLOU.

MOUFFLOU'S masters were some boys and girls. They were very poor, but they were very merry. They lived in an old, dark, tumble-down place, and their father had been dead five years; their mother's care was all they knew; and Tasso was the eldest of them all, a lad of nearly twenty, and he was so kind, so good, so laborious, so cheerful, and so gentle, that the children all younger than he adored him. Tasso was a gardener. Tasso, however, though the eldest and mainly the bread-winner, was not so much Moufflou's master as was little Romolo, who was only ten and a cripple. Romolo, called generally Lolo, had taught Moufflou all he knew; and that all was a very great deal, for nothing cleverer than was Moufflou had ever walked upon four legs.

Why Moufflou?

Well, when the poodle had been given to them by a soldier who was going back to his home in Piedmont, he had been a white woolly creature of a year old, and the children's mother, who was a Corsican by birth, had said that he was just like a *moufflon*, as they call sheep in Corsica. White and

woolly this dog remained, and he became the handsomest and biggest poodle in all the city, and the corruption of Moufflou from Moufflon remained the name by which he was known ; it was silly, perhaps, but it suited him and the children, and Moufflou he was.

They lived in an old quarter of Florence, in that picturesque zigzag which goes round the grand church of Or San Michele, and which is almost more Venetian than Tuscan in its mingling of colour, charm, stateliness, popular confusion, and architectural majesty. The tall old houses are weather-beaten into the most delicious hues ; the pavement is enchantingly encumbered with peddlers and stalls and all kinds of trades going on in the open air, in that bright, merry, beautiful Italian custom which, alas, alas ! is being driven away by new-fangled laws which deem it better for the people to be stuffed up in close, stewing rooms without air, and would fain do away with all the good-tempered politics and the sensible philosophies and the wholesome chatter which the open-street trades and street gossipry encourage, for it is good for the populace to *sfogare*, and in no other way can it do so one-half so innocently. Drive it back into musty shops, and it is driven at once to mutter sedition. . . . . But you want to hear about Moufflou.

Well, Moufflou lived here in that high house with the sign of the lamb in wrought iron, which shows it was once a warehouse of the old guild of the Arte della Lana. They are all old houses here, drawn

round about that grand church which I called once, and will call again, like a mighty casket of oxidized silver. A mighty casket indeed, holding the Holy Spirit within it ; and with the vermilion and the blue and orange glowing in its niches and its lunettes like enamels, and its statues of the apostles strong and noble, like the times in which they were created,—St. Peter with his keys, and St. Mark with his open book, and St. George leaning on his sword, and others also, solemn and austere as they, austere though benign, for do they not guard the White Tabernacle of Orcagna within ?

The church stands firm as a rock, square as a fortress of stone, and the winds and the waters of the skies may beat about it as they will, they have no power to disturb its sublime repose. Sometimes I think of all the noble things in all our Italy Or San Michele is the noblest, standing there in its stern magnificence, amidst people's hurrying feet and noisy laughter, a memory of God.

The little masters of Moufflou lived right in its shadow, where the bridge of stone spans the space between the houses and the church high in mid-air : and little Lolo loved the church with a great love. He loved it in the morning-time, when the sunbeams turned it into dusky gold and jasper ; he loved it in the evening-time, when the lights of its altars glimmered in the dark, and the scent of its incense came out into the street ; he loved it in the great feasts, when the huge clusters of lilies were borne inside it ; he loved it in the solemn nights of win-

ter ; the flickering gleam of the dull lamps shone on the robes of an apostle, or the sculpture of a shield, or the glow of a casement-moulding in majolica. He loved it always, and, without knowing why, he called it *la mia chiesa.*

Lolo, being lame and of delicate health, was not enabled to go to school or to work, though he wove the straw covering of wine-flasks and plaited the cane matting with busy fingers. But for the most part he did as he liked, and spent most of his time sitting on the parapet of Or San Michele, watching the venders of earthenware at their trucks, or trotting with his crutch (and he could trot a good many miles when he chose) out with Moufflou down a bit of the Stocking-makers' Street, along under the arcades of the Uffizi, and so over the Jewellers' Bridge, and out by byways that he knew into the fields on the hill-side upon the other bank of Arno. Moufflou and he would spend half the day—all the day—out there in daffodil-time; and Lolo would come home with great bundles and sheaves of golden flowers, and he and Moufflou were happy.

His mother never liked to say a harsh word to Lolo, for he was lame through her fault : she had let him fall in his babyhood, and the mischief had been done to his hip never again to be undone. So she never raised her voice to him, though she did often to the others,—to curly-pated Cecco, and pretty black-eyed Dina, and saucy Bice, and sturdy Beppo, and even to the good, manly, hard-working Tasso. Tasso was the mainstay of the whole,

though he was but a gardener's lad, working in the green Cascine at small wages. But all he earned he brought home to his mother ; and he alone kept in order the lazy, high-tempered Sandro, and he alone kept in check Bice's love of finery; and he alone could with shrewdness and care make both ends meet and put *minestra* always in the pot and bread always in the cupboard.

When his mother thought, as she thought indeed almost ceaselessly, that with a few months he would be of the age to draw his number, and might draw a high one and be taken from her for three years, the poor soul believed her very heart would burst and break ; and many a day at twilight she would start out unperceived and creep into the great church and pour her soul forth in supplication before the White Tabernacle.

Yet, pray as she would, no miracle could happen to make Tasso free of military service : if he drew a fatal number, go he must, even though he take all the lives of them to their ruin with him.

One morning Lolo sat as usual on the parapet of the church, Moufflou beside him. It was a brilliant morning in September. The men at the hand-barrows and at the stalls were selling the crockery, the silk handkerchiefs, and the straw hats which form the staple of the commerce that goes on round about Or San Michele,—very blithe, good-natured, gay commerce, for the most part, not got through, however, of course, without bawling and screaming, and shouting and gesticulating, as if the sale of a

penny pipkin or a twopenny pie-pan were the occasion for the exchange of many thousands of pounds sterling and cause for the whole world's commotion. It was about eleven o'clock ; the poor petitioners were going in for alms to the house of the fraternity of San Giovanni Battista; the barber at the corner was shaving a big man with a cloth tucked about his chin, and his chair set well out on the pavement ; the sellers of the pipkins and pie-pans were screaming till they were hoarse, " *Un soldo l'uno, due soldi tre!* " big bronze bells were booming till they seemed to clang right up to the deep-blue sky ; some brethren of the Misericordia went by bearing a black bier ; a large sheaf of glowing flowers—dahlias, zinnias, asters, and daturas—was borne through the huge arched door of the church near St. Mark and his open book. Lolo looked on at it all, and so did Moufflou, and a stranger looked at them as he left the church.

" You have a handsome poodle there, my little man," he said to Lolo, in a foreigner's too distinct and careful Italian.

" Moufflou is beautiful," said Lolo, with pride. " You should see him when he is just washed ; but we can only wash him on Sundays, because then Tasso is at home."

" How old is your dog ? "

" Three years old."

" Does he do any tricks ? "

" Does he ! " said Lolo, with a very derisive laugh : " why, Moufflou can do anything ! He can

walk on two legs ever so long; make ready, present, and fire; die; waltz; beg, of course; shut a door; make a wheelbarrow of himself: there is nothing he will not do. Would you like to see him do something?"

"Very much," said the foreigner.

To Moufflou and to Lolo the street was the same thing as home; this cheery *piazzetta* by the church, so utterly empty sometimes, and sometimes so noisy and crowded, was but the wider threshold of their home to both the poodle and the child.

So there, under the lofty and stately walls of the old church, Lolo put Moufflou through his exercises. They were second nature to Moufflou, as to most poodles. He had inherited his address at them from clever parents, and, as he had never been frightened or coerced, all his lessons and acquirements were but play to him. He acquitted himself admirably, and the crockery-venders came and looked on, and a sacristan came out of the church and smiled, and the barber left his customer's chin all in a lather while he laughed, for the good folk of the quarter were all proud of Moufflou and never tired of him, and the pleasant, easy-going, good-humored disposition of the Tuscan populace is so far removed from the stupid buckram and whalebone in which the new-fangled democracy wants to imprison it.

The stranger also was much diverted by Moufflou's talents, and said, half-aloud, "How this clever dog would amuse poor Victor! Would you bring

your poodle to please a sick child I have at home ?" he said quite aloud to Lolo, who smiled and answered that he would. Where was the sick child ?

"At the Gran Bretagna ; not far off," said the gentleman. "Come this afternoon, and ask for me by this name."

He dropped his card and a couple of francs into Lolo's hand and went his way. Lolo, with Moufflou scampering after him, dashed into his own house, and stumped up the stairs, his crutch making a terrible noise on the stone.

"Mother, mother ! see what I have got because Moufflou did his tricks," he shouted. "And now you can buy those shoes you want so much, and the coffee that you miss so of a morning, and the new linen for Tasso, and the shirts for Sandro."

For to the mind of Lolo two francs was as two millions—source unfathomable of riches inexhaustible !

With the afternoon he and Moufflou trotted down the arcades of the Uffizi and down the Lung' Arno to the hotel of the stranger, and, showing the stranger's card, which Lolo could not read, they were shown at once into a great chamber, all gilding and fresco and velvet furniture.

But Lolo, being a little Florentine, was never troubled by externals, or daunted by mere sofas and chairs ; he stood and looked around him with perfect composure, and Moufflou, whose attitude when he was not romping was always one of magis-

terial gravity, sat on his haunches and did the same.

Soon the foreigner he had seen in the forenoon entered and spoke to him, and led him into another chamber, where, stretched on a couch, was a little wan-faced boy about seven years old—a pretty boy, but so pallid, so wasted, so helpless. This poor little boy was heir to a great name and a great fortune, but all the science in the world could not make him strong enough to run about among the daisies, or able to draw a single breath without pain. A feeble smile lit up his face as he saw Moufflou and Lolo, then a shadow chased it away.

"Little boy is lame like me," he said, in a tongue Lolo did not understand.

"Yes, but he is a strong little boy, and can move about, as perhaps the suns of his country will make you do," said the gentleman, who was the poor little boy's father. "He has brought you his poodle to amuse you. What a handsome dog! is it not?"

"Oh, *bufflins!*" said the the poor little fellow, stretching out his wasted hands to Moufflou, who submitted his leonine crest to the caress.

Then Lolo went through the performance, and Moufflou acquitted himself as ably as ever, and the little invalid laughed and shouted with his tiny thin voice, and enjoyed it all immensely, and rained cakes and biscuits on both the poodle and its master. Lolo crumped the pastries with willing white teeth, and Moufflou did no less. Then they got up

to go, and the sick child on the couch burst into fretful lamentations and outcries.

"I want the dog! I will have the dog!" was all he kept repeating.

But Lolo did not know what he said, and was only sorry to see him so unhappy.

"You shall have the dog to-morrow," said the gentleman to pacify his little son, and he hurried Lolo and Moufflou out of the room and consigned them to a servant, having given Lolo five francs this time.

"Why, Moufflou," said Lolo, with a chuckle of delight, "if we could find a foreigner every day, we could eat meat at supper, Moufflou, and go to the theatre every evening!"

And he and his crutch clattered home with great eagerness and excitement, and Moufflou trotted on his four frilled feet, the blue bow with which Bice had tied up his curls on the top of his head, fluttering in the wind. But, alas! even his five francs could bring no comfort at home. He found his whole family wailing and mourning in utterly inconsolable distress.

Tasso had drawn his number that morning, and the number was seven, and he must go and be a conscript for three years.

The poor young man stood in the midst of his weeping brothers and sisters, with his mother leaning against his shoulder, and down his own brown cheeks the tears were falling. He must go and lose his place in the public gardens, and leave his

people to starve as they might, and be put in a tom-fool's jacket and drafted off among cursing and swearing and strange faces, friendless, homeless, miserable ! And the mother—what would become of the mother ?

Tasso was the best of lads and the mildest. He was quite happy sweeping up the leaves in the long alleys of the Cascine, or mowing the green lawns under the ilex avenues and coming home at supper time among the merry little people and the good woman that he loved. He was quite contented ; he wanted nothing, only to be let alone, and they would not let him alone. They would haul him away to put a heavy musket in his hand and a heavy knapsack on his back, and drill him, and curse him, and make him into a human target, a live popinjay.

No one had any heed for Lolo and his five francs, and Moufflou, understanding that some great sorrow had fallen on his friends, sat down and lifted up his voice and howled.

Tasso must go away—that was all they understood. For three long years they must go without the sight of his face, the aid of his strength, the pleasure of his smile. Tasso must go ! When Lolo understood the calamity that had befallen them, he gathered Moufflou up against his breast and sat down too on the floor beside him and cried as if he would never stop crying.

There was no help for it : it was one of those misfortunes which are, as we say in Italian, like a tile

tumbled on the head. The tile drops from a height, and the poor head bows under the unseen blow. That is all.

"What is the use of that?" said the mother, passionately, when Lolo showed her his five francs. "It will not buy Tasso's discharge."

Lolo felt that his mother was cruel and unjust, and crept to bed with Moufflou. Moufflou always slept on Lolo's feet.

The next morning Lolo got up before sunrise, and he and Moufflou accompanied Tasso to his work in the Cascine.

Lolo loved his brother, and clung to every moment whilst they could still be together.

"Can nothing keep you, Tasso?" he said, despairingly, as they went down the leafy aisles, whilst the Arno water was growing golden as the sun rose.

Tasso sighed.

"Nothing, dear. Unless Jesú would send me a thousand francs to buy a substitute."

And he knew he might as well have said, "If one could coin gold ducats out of the sunbeams on Arno water."

Lolo was very sorrowful as he lay on the grass in the meadow where Tasso was at work, and the poodle lay stretched beside him.

When Lolo went home to dinner (Tasso took his wrapped in a handkerchief) he found his mother very agitated and excited. She was laughing one moment, crying the next. She was passionate and

peevish, tender and jocose by turns; there was something forced and feverish about her which the children felt but did not comprehend. She was a woman of not very much intelligence, and she had a secret, and she carried it ill, and knew not what to do with it; but they could not tell that. They only felt a vague sense of disturbance and timidity at her unwonted manner.

The meal over (it was only bean soup, and that is soon eaten), the mother said sharply to Lolo, "Your aunt Anita wants you this afternoon. She has to go out, and you are needed to stay with the children: be off with you."

Lolo was an obedient child; he took his hat and jumped up as quickly as his halting hip would let him. He called Moufflou, who was asleep.

"Leave the dog," said his mother, sharply. "'Nita will not have him messing and carrying mud about her nice clean rooms. She told me so. Leave him, I say."

"Leave Moufflou!" echoed Lolo, for never in Moufflou's life had Lolo parted with him. Leave Moufflou! He stared open-eyed and open-mouthed at his mother. What could have come to her?

"Leave him, I say," she repeated more sharply than ever. "Must I speak twice to my own children? Be off with you, and leave the dog, I say."

And she clutched Moufflou by his long silky mane and dragged him backwards, whilst with the

other hand she thrust out of the door Lolo and Bice.

Lolo began to hammer with his crutch at the door thus closed on him; but Bice coaxed and entreated him.

"Poor mother has been so worried about Tasso," she pleaded. "And what harm can come to Moufflou? And I do think he was tired, Lolo; the Cascine is a long way; and it is quite true that aunt 'Nita never liked him."

So by one means and another she coaxed her brother away; and they went almost in silence to where their aunt Anita dwelt, which was across the river, near the dark-red bell-shaped dome of Santa Spirito.

It was true that her aunt had wanted them to mind her room and the babies whilst she was away carrying home some lace to a villa outside the Roman gate, for she was a lace-washer and clear-starcher by trade. There they had to stay in the little dark room with the two babies, with nothing to amuse the time except the clang of the bells of the church of the Holy Spirit, and the voices of the lemonade-sellers shouting in the street below. Aunt Anita did not get back till it was more than dusk, and the two children trotted homeward hand in hand, Lolo's leg dragging itself painfully along, for without Moufflou's white figure dancing on before him he felt very tired indeed. It was pitch dark when they got to Or San Michele, and the lamps burned dully.

Lolo stumped up the stairs wearily, with a vague, dull fear at his heart.

"Moufflou, Moufflou!" he called. Where was Moufflou? Always at the first sound of his crutch the poodle came flying towards him. "Moufflou, Moufflou!" he called all the way up the long, dark, twisting stone stair. He pushed open the door, and he called again, "Moufflou, Moufflou!"

But no dog answered to his call.

"Mother, where is Moufflou?" he asked, staring where his mother sat knitting. Tasso was not then home from work. His mother went on with her knitting; there was an uneasy look on her face.

"Mother, what have you done with Moufflou, *my* Moufflou?" said Lolo, with a look that was almost stern on his ten-year old face.

Then his mother, without looking up and moving her knitting-needles very rapidly, said,—

"Moufflou is sold!"

And little Dina, who was a quick, pert child, cried, with a shrill voice,—

"Mother has sold him for a thousand francs to the foreign gentleman."

"Sold him!"

Lolo grew white and grew cold as ice; he stammered, threw up his hands over his head, gasped a little for breath, then fell down in a dead swoon, his poor useless limb doubled under him.

When Tasso came home that sad night and found his little brother shivering, moaning, and

half delirious, and when he heard what had been done, he was sorely grieved.

"Oh, mother, how could you do it?" he cried. "Poor, poor Moufflou! and Lolo loves him so!"

"I have got the money," said his mother, feverishly, "and you will not need to go for a soldier: we can buy your substitute. What is a poodle, that you mourn about it? We can get another poodle for Lolo."

"Another will not be Moufflou," said Tasso, and yet was seized with such a frantic happiness himself at the knowledge that he would not need go to the army, that he too felt as if he were drunk on new wine, and had not the heart to rebuke his mother.

"A thousand francs!" he muttered; "a thousand francs! *Dio mio!* Who could ever have fancied anybody would have given such a price for a common white poodle? One would think the gentleman had bought the church and the tabernacle!"

"Fools and their money are soon parted," said his mother, with cross contempt.

It was true: she had sold Moufflou.

The English gentleman had called on her while Lolo and the dog had been in the Cascine, and had said that he was desirous of buying the poodle, which had so diverted his sick child that the little invalid would not be comforted unless he possessed it. Now, at any other time the good woman would have sturdily refused any idea of selling Moufflou;

but that morning the thousand francs which would buy Tasso's substitute were forever in her mind and before her eyes. When she heard the foreigner her heart gave a great leap, and her head swam giddily, and she thought, in a spasm of longing—if she could get those thousand francs ! But though she was so dizzy and so upset she retained her grip on her native Florentine shrewdness. She said nothing of her need of the money ; not a syllable of her sore distress. On the contrary, she was coy and wary, affected great reluctance to part with her pet, invented a great offer made for him by a director of a circus, and finally let fall a hint that less than a thousand francs she could never take for poor Moufflou.

The gentleman assented with so much willingness to the price that she instantly regretted not having asked double. He told her that if she would take the poodle that afternoon to his hotel the money should be paid to her ; so she despatched the children after their noonday meal in various directions, and herself took Moufflou to his doom. She could not believe her senses when ten hundred-franc notes were put into her hand. She scrawled her signature, Rosina Calabucci, to a formal receipt, and went away, leaving Moufflou in his new owner's rooms, and hearing his howls and moans pursue her all the way down the staircase and out into the air.

She was not easy at what she had done.

" It seemed," she said to herself, " like selling a Christian."

But then to keep her eldest son at home,—what a joy that was! On the whole, she cried so and laughed so as she went down the Lung' Arno that once or twice people looked at her, thinking her out of her senses, and a guard spoke to her angrily.

Meanwhile Lolo was sick and delirious with grief. Twenty times he got out of his bed and screamed to be allowed to go with Moufflou, and twenty times his mother and his brothers put him back again and held him down and tried in vain to quiet him.

The child was beside himself with misery. "Moufflou! Moufflou!" he sobbed at every moment; and by night he was in a raging fever, and when his mother, frightened, ran in and called the doctor of the quarter, that worthy shook his head and said something as to a shock of the nervous system, and muttered a long word,—"meningitis."

Lolo took a hatred to the sight of Tasso, and thrust him away, and his mother too.

"It is for you Moufflou is sold," he said, with his little teeth and hands tight clinched.

After a day or two Tasso felt as if he could not bear his life, and went down to the hotel to see if the foreign gentleman would allow him to have Moufflou back for half an hour to quiet his little brother by a sight of him. But at the hotel he was told that the *Milord Inglese* who had bought the dog of Rosina Calabucci had gone that same night of the purchase to Rome, to Naples, to Palermo, *chi sa?*

"And Moufflou with him?" asked Tasso.

"The *barbone* he had bought went with him," said the porter of the hotel. "Such a beast! Howling, shrieking, raging all the day, and all the paint scratched off the *salon* door."

Poor Moufflou! Tasso's heart was heavy as he heard of that sad helpless misery of their bartered favourite and friend.

"What matter?" said his mother, fiercely, when he told her. "A dog is a dog. They will feed him better than we could. In a week he will have forgotten—*chè!*"

But Tasso feared that Moufflou would not forget. Lolo certainly would not. The doctor came to the bedside twice a day, and ice and water were kept on the aching, hot little head that had got the malady with the long name, and for the chief part of the time Lolo lay quiet, dull, and stupid, breathing heavily, and then at intervals cried and sobbed and shrieked hysterically for Moufflou.

"Can you not get what he calls for to quiet him with a sight of it?" said the doctor. But that was not possible, and poor Rosina covered her head with her apron and felt a guilty creature.

"Still, you will not go to the army," she said to Tasso, clinging to that immense joy for her consolation. "Only think! we can pay Guido Squarcione to go for you. He always said he would go if anybody would pay him. Oh, my Tasso, surely to keep you is worth a dog's life!"

"And Lolo's?" said Tasso, gloomily. "Nay,

mother, it works ill to meddle too much with fate. I drew my number ; I was bound to go. Heaven would have made it up to you somehow."

" Heaven sent me the foreigner ; the Madonna's own self sent him to ease a mother's pain," said Rosina, rapidly and angrily. " There are the thousand francs safe to hand in the *cassone*, and what, pray, is it we miss ? Only a dog like a sheep, that brought gallons of mud in with him every time it rained, and ate as much as any one of you."

" But Lolo ? " said Tasso, under his breath.

His mother was so irritated and so tormented by her own conscience that she upset all the cabbage broth into the burning charcoal.

" Lolo was always a little fool, thinking of nothing but the church and the dog and nasty field-flowers," she said, angrily. " I humoured him ever too much because of the hurt to his hip, and so—and so——"

Then the poor soul made matters worse by dropping her tears into the saucepan, and fanning the charcoal so furiously that the flame caught her fan of cane-leaves, and would have burned her arm had not Tasso been there.

" You are my prop and safety always. Who would not have done what I did ? Not Santa Felicita herself," she said, with a great sob.

But all this did not cure poor Lolo.

The days and the weeks of the golden autumn weather passed away, and he was always in danger, and the small close room where he slept with San-

dro and Beppo and Tasso was not one to cure such an illness as had now beset him. Tasso went to his work with a sick heart in the Cascine, where the colchicum was all lilac among the meadow grass, and the ashes and elms were taking their first flush of the coming autumnal change. He did not think Lolo would ever get well, and the good lad felt as if he had been the murderer of his little brother.

True, he had had no hand or voice in the sale of Moufflou, but Moufflou had been sold for his sake. It made him feel half guilty, very unhappy, quite unworthy all the sacrifice that had been made for him. "Nobody should meddle with fate," thought Tasso, who knew his grandfather had died in San Bonifazio because he had driven himself mad over the dream-book trying to get lucky numbers for the lottery and become a rich man at a stroke.

It was rapture, indeed, to know that he was free of the army for a time at least, that he might go on undisturbed at his healthful labor, and get a rise in wages as time went on, and dwell in peace with his family, and perhaps—perhaps in time earn enough to marry pretty flaxen-haired Biondina, the daughter of the barber in the piazzetta. It was rapture indeed ; but then poor Moufflou !—and poor, poor Lolo ! Tasso felt as if he had bought his own exemption by seeing his little brother and the good dog torn in pieces and buried alive for his service.

And where was poor Moufflou ?

Gone far away somewhere south in the hurrying, screeching, vomiting, braying train that it made

Tasso giddy only to look at as it rushed by the green meadows beyond the Cascine on its way to the sea.

"If he could see the dog he cries so for, it might save him," said the doctor, who stood with a grave face watching Lolo.

But that was beyond any one's power. No one could tell where Moufflou was. He might be carried away to England, to France, to Russia, to America,—who could say? They did not know where his purchaser had gone. Moufflou might even be dead.

The poor mother, when the doctor said that, went and looked at the ten hundred-franc notes that were once like angels' faces to her, and said to them,—

"Oh, you children of Satan, why did you tempt me? I sold the poor, innocent, trustful beast to get you, and now my child is dying!"

Her eldest son would stay at home, indeed; but if this little lame one died! Rosina Calabucci would have given up the notes and consented never to own five francs in her life if only she could have gone back over the time and kept Moufflou, and seen his little master running out with him into the sunshine.

More than a month went by, and Lolo lay in the same state, his yellow hair shorn, his eyes dilated and yet stupid, life kept in him by a spoonful of milk, a lump of ice, a drink of lemon-water; always muttering, when he spoke at all, "Moufflou, Mouf-

flou, *dov' è* Moufflou?" and lying for days together in somnolence and unconsciousness, with the fire eating at his brain and the weight lying on it like a stone.

The neighbors were kind, and brought fruit and the like, and sat up with him, and chattered so all at once in one continuous brawl that they were enough in themselves to kill him, for such is ever the Italian fashion of sympathy in all illness.

But Lolo did not get well, did not even seem to see the light at all, or to distinguish any sounds around him; and the doctor in plain words told Rosina Calabucci that her little boy must die. Die, and the church so near? She could not believe it. Could St. Mark, and St. George, and the rest that he had loved so do nothing for him? No, said the doctor, they could do nothing; the dog might do something, since the brain had so fastened on that one idea; but then they had sold the dog.

"Yes; I sold him!" said the poor mother, breaking into floods of remorseful tears.

So at last the end drew so nigh that one twilight time the priest came out of the great arched door that is next to St. Mark, with the Host uplifted, and a little acolyte ringing the bell before it, and passed across the piazzetta, and went up the dark staircase of Rosina's dwelling, and passed through the weeping, terrified children, and went to the bedside of Lolo.

Lolo was unconscious, but the holy man touched his little body and limbs with the sacred oil, and

prayed over him, and then stood sorrowful with bowed head.

Lolo had had his first communion in the summer, and in his first preparation for it had shown an intelligence and devoutness that had won the priest's gentle heart.

Standing there, the holy man commended the innocent soul to God. It was the last service to be rendered to him save that very last of all when the funeral office should be read above his little grave among the millions of nameless dead at the sepulchres of the poor at Trebbiano.

All was still as the priest's voice ceased; only the sobs of the mother and of the children broke the stillness as they kneeled; the hand of Biondina had stolen into Tasso's.

Suddenly, there was a loud scuffling noise; hurrying feet came patter, patter, patter up the stairs, a ball of mud and dust flew over the heads of the kneeling figures, fleet as the wind Moufflou dashed through the room and leaped upon the bed.

Lolo opened his heavy eyes, and a sudden light of consciousness gleamed in them like a sunbeam. "Moufflou!" he murmured, in his little thin, faint voice. The dog pressed close to his breast and kissed his wasted face.

Moufflou was come home!

And Lolo came home too, for death let go its hold upon him. Little by little, very faintly and flickeringly and very uncertain at the first, life

returned to the poor little body, and reason to the tormented, heated little brain. Moufflou was his physician ; Moufflou, who, himself a skeleton under his matted curls, would not stir from his side, and looked at him all day long with two beaming brown eyes full of unutterable love.

Lolo was happy ; he asked no questions,—was too weak, indeed, even to wonder. He had Moufflou; that was enough.

Alas ! though they dared not say so in his hearing, it was not enough for his elders. His mother and Tasso knew that the poodle had been sold and paid for ; that they could lay no claim to keep him ; and that almost certainly his purchaser would seek him out and assert his indisputable right to him. And then how would Lolo ever bear that second parting ?—Lolo, so weak that he weighed no more than if he had been a little bird.

Moufflou had, no doubt, travelled a long distance and suffered much. He was but skin and bone ; he bore the marks of blows and kicks ; his once silken hair was all discolored and matted ; he had, no doubt, travelled far. But then his purchaser would be sure to ask for him, soon or late, at his old home ; and then ? Well, then if they did not give him up themselves, the law would make them.

Rosina Calabucci and Tasso, though they dared say nothing before any of the children, felt their hearts in their mouths at every step on the stair, and the first interrogation of Tasso every evening when he came from his work was, " Has any one

come for Moufflou ?" For ten days no one came, and their first terrors lulled a little.

On the eleventh morning, a feast-day, on which Tasso was not going to his labors in the Cascine, there came a person, with a foreign look, who said the words they so much dreaded to hear : "Has the poodle that you sold to an English gentleman come back to you ?"

Yes : his English master claimed him !

The servant said that they had missed the dog in Rome a few days after buying him and taking him there ; that he had been searched for in vain, and that his master had thought it possible the animal might have found his way back to his old home : there had been stories of such wonderful sagacity in dogs : any how, he had sent for him on the chance ; he was himself back on the Lung' Arno. The servant pulled from his pocket a chain, and said his orders were to take the poodle away at once : the little sick gentleman had fretted very much about his loss.

Tasso heard in a very agony of despair. To take Moufflou away now would be to kill Lolo,— Lolo so feeble still, so unable to understand, so passionately alive to every sight and sound of Moufflou, lying for hours together motionless with his hands buried in the poodle's curls, saying nothing, only smiling now and then, and murmuring a word or two in Moufflou's ear.

"The dog did come home," said Tasso, at length, in a low voice ; "angels must have shown

him the road, poor beast! From Rome! Only to think of it, from Rome! And he a dumb thing! I tell you he is here, honestly: so will you not trust me just as far as this? Will you let me go with you and speak to the English lord before you take the dog away? I have a little brother sorely ill —— "

He could not speak more, for tears that choked his voice.

At last the messenger agreed so far as this. Tasso might go first and see the master, but he would stay here and have a care that they did not spirit the dog away,—"for a thousand francs were paid for him," added the man, "and a dog that can come all the way from Rome by itself must be an uncanny creature."

Tasso thanked him, went up stairs, was thankful that his mother was at mass and could not dispute with him, took the ten hundred-franc notes from the old oak *cassone*, and with them in his breast-pocket walked out into the air. He was but a poor working lad, but he had made up his mind to do an heroic deed, for self-sacrifice is always heroic. He went straightway to the hotel where the English *milord* was, and when he got there remembered that still he did not know the name of Moufflou's owner; but the people of the hotel knew him as Rosina Calabucci's son, and guessed what he wanted, and said the gentleman who had lost the poodle was within upstairs and they would tell him.

Tasso waited some half-hour with his heart beating sorely against the packet of hundred-franc notes. At last he was beckoned upstairs, and there saw a foreigner with a mild, fair face, and a very lovely lady, and a delicate child who was lying on a couch. "Moufflou! Where is Moufflou?" cried the little child, impatiently, as he saw the youth enter.

Tasso took his hat off, and stood in the doorway, an embrowned, healthy, not ungraceful figure, in his working-clothes of rough blue stuff.

"If you please, most illustrious," he stammered, "poor Moufflou has come home."

The child gave a cry of delight; the gentleman and lady one of wonder. Come home! All the way from Rome!

"Yes, he has, most illustrious," said Tasso, gaining courage and eloquence; "and now I want to beg something of you. We are poor, and I drew a bad number, and it was for that my mother sold Moufflou. For myself, I did not know anything of it; but she thought she would buy my substitute, and of course she could; but Moufflou is come home, and my little brother Lolo, the little boy your most illustrious first saw playing with the poodle, fell ill of the grief of losing Moufflou, and for a month has lain saying nothing sensible, but only calling for the dog, and my old grandfather died of worrying himself mad over the lottery numbers, and Lolo was so near dying that the Blessed Host had been brought, and the holy oil had been

put on him, when all at once there rushes in Moufflou, skin and bone, and covered with mud, and at the sight of him Lolo comes back to his senses, and that is now ten days ago, and though Lolo is as weak as a new-born thing, he is always sensible, and takes what we give him to eat, and lies always looking at Moufflou, and smiling, and saying, 'Moufflou! Moufflou!' and, most illustrious, I know well you have bought the dog, and the law is with you, and by the law you claim it; but I thought perhaps, as Lolo loves him so, you would let us keep the dog, and would take back the thousand francs, and myself I will go and be a soldier, and heaven will take care of them all somehow."

Then Tasso, having said all this in one breathless, monotonous recitative, took the thousand francs out of his breast-pocket and held them out timidly towards the foreign gentleman, who motioned them aside and stood silent.

"Did you understand, Victor?" he said, at last, to his little son.

The child hid his face in his cushions.

"Yes, I did understand something: let Lolo keep him; Moufflou was not happy with me."

But he burst out crying as he said it.

Moufflou had run away from him.

Moufflou had never loved him, for all his sweet cakes and fond caresses and platefuls of delicate savory meats. Moufflou had run away and found his own road over two hundred miles and more to go back to some little hungry children, who never

had enough to eat themselves, and so, certainly, could never give enough to eat to the dog. Poor little boy! He was so rich and so pampered and so powerful, and yet he could never make Moufflou love him!

Tasso, who understood nothing that was said, laid the ten hundred-franc notes down on a table near him.

"If you would take them, most illustrious, and give me back what my mother wrote when she sold Moufflou," he said, timidly, "I would pray for you night and day, and Lolo would too; and as for the dog, we will get a puppy and train him for your little *signorino;* they can all do tricks, more or less, it comes by nature; and as for me, I will go to the army willingly; it is not right to interfere with fate; my old grandfather died mad because he would try to be a rich man, by dreaming about it and pulling destiny by the ears, as if she were a kicking mule; only, I pray you, do not take away Moufflou. And to think he trotted all those miles and miles, and you carried him by train too, and he never could have seen the road, and he has no power of speech to ask——"

Tasso broke down again in his eloquence, and drew the back of his hand across his wet eyelashes.

The English gentleman was not altogether unmoved.

"Poor faithful dog!" he said, with a sigh. "I am afraid we were very cruel to him, meaning to be kind. No; we will not claim him, and I do not

think you should go for a soldier; you seem so good a lad, and your mother must need you. Keep the money, my boy, and in payment you shall train up the puppy you talk of, and bring him to my little boy. I will come and see your mother and Lolo to-morrow. All the way from Rome! What wonderful sagacity! what matchless fidelity!"

You can imagine, without any telling of mine, the joy that reigned in Moufflou's home when Tasso returned thither with the money and the good tidings both. His substitute was bought without a day's delay, and Lolo rapidly recovered. As for Moufflou, he could never tell them his troubles, his wanderings, his difficulties, his perils; he could never tell them by what miraculous knowledge he had found his way across Italy, from the gates of Rome to the gates of Florence. But he soon grew plump again, and merry, and his love for Lolo was yet greater than before.

By the winter all the family went to live on an estate near Spezia that the English gentleman had purchased, and there Moufflou was happier than ever. The little English boy is gaining strength in the soft air, and he an Lolo are great friends, and play with Moufflou and the poodle puppy half the day upon the sunny terraces and under the green orange boughs. Tasso is one of the gardeners there; he will have to serve as a soldier probably in some category or another, but he is safe for the time, and is happy. Lolo, whose lameness will

always exempt him from military service, when he grows to be a man means to be a florist, and a great one. He has learned to read, as the first step on the road of his ambition.

"But oh, Moufflou, how *did* you find your way home?" he asks the dog a hundred times a week.

How indeed!

No one ever knew how Moufflou had made that long journey on foot, so many weary miles; but beyond a doubt he had done it alone and unaided, for if any one had helped him they would have come home with him to claim the reward.

And that you may not wonder too greatly at Moufflou's miraculous journey on his four bare feet, I will add here two facts known to friends of mine, of whose truthfulness there can be no doubt.

One concerns a French poodle who was purchased in Paris by the friend of my friend, and brought all the way from Paris to Milan by train. In a few days after his arrival in Milan the poodle was missing; and nothing more was heard or known of him until many weeks later his quondam owner in Paris, on opening his door one morning, found the dog stretched dying on the threshold of his old home.

That is one fact; not a story, mind you, *a fact.*

The other is related to me by an Italian nobleman, who in his youth belonged to the Guardia Nobile of Tuscany. That brilliant corps of elegant gentlemen owned a regimental pet, a poodle also, a fine, merry and handsome dog of its kind; and the officers all loved and made much of him, except,

alas! the commandant of the regiment, who hated him, because when the officers were on parade or riding in escort the poodle was sure to be jumping and frisking about in front of them. It is difficult to see where the harm of this was, but this odious old martinet vowed vengeance against the dog, and, being of course all powerful in his own corps, ordered the exile from Florence of the poor fellow. He was sent to a farm at Prato, twenty miles off, along the hills; but very soon he found his way back to Florence. He was then sent to Leghorn, forty miles off, but in a week's time had returned to his old comrades. He was then, by order of his unrelenting foe, shipped to the island of Sardinia. How he did it no one ever could tell, for he was carried safely to Sardinia and placed inland there in kind custody, but in some wonderful way the poor dog must have found out the sea and hidden himself on board a returning vessel, for in a month's time from his exile to the island he was back again among his comrades in Florence. Now, what I have to tell you almost breaks my heart to say, and will, I think, quite break yours to hear: alas! the brute of a commandant, untouched by such marvellous cleverness and faithfulness, was his enemy to the bitter end, and, in inexorable hatred, *had him shot!* Oh, when you grow to manhood and have power, use it with tenderness!

BEAUCHAMP & CO.

It was one of those summer days, which threaten now to become a tradition, in a year not long past, when the summer lasted in untroubled splendour for three months together ; and farmers, for want of a grievance, cried out for rain, and grumbled at the lavish abundance of the fruit. In the fertile districts of the west midland counties, the plums were bending under their purple weight—even the children were satisfied, and the pigs came in for their share—the corn was turning red gold, and the cottage gardens were wonderful to see with noble pyramids of many-coloured hollyhocks, sunflowers, sweet-williams, and dark-red clove pinks ; the white lilies had faded and only a few straggling roses had survived the heat. A yellow and red photographic van, drawn by a more respectable looking brown horse than is usually to be seen in such conjunction, was slowly dragging up the steep way which seemed to lead into the heart of the misty blue hill in front, which looked far away and almost mountainous in the afternoon sunshine which bathed everything in a golden haze. The air was quivering with breathless heat, and alive with insects born of the summer. Everything had an enchanted

look, the smoke wreaths curling from the cottages nestling in little clusters about the hill, the noble elm trees, the tangle of flowers and weeds on the roadsides, the cornfields and the dim outlines of the hill ranges.

Two young men walked beside the van smoking; one of them apparently about twenty-six, and the other, a long, thin, stork-like youth in spectacles, some years younger. The elder, in spite of his shabby light suit—faded to a dusty white—and his big panama hat, had something about him so unlike the usual itinerant photographer that an observant eye would at once have detected the mark of the class to which he must belong. He was a good looking young fellow, sunburnt and brown altogether—brown eyes, brown beard, curly brown hair, hands like brown gloves; a pleasant face and untouched by the prevailing melancholy of our self-communing and unsatisfactory nineteenth century. As he went he whistled airs from the last new opera, and a profound contentment rested upon his comely countenance. The long-legged figure by his side stalked onwards also with an air of placid satisfaction, but his sharp and by no means beautiful features had a less cheerful cast; the spectacles shone as he turned his long neck from side to side, taking observations of the country they were invading. This latter person was commonly called Longshanks, his name, Edgar Denham Ward, being converted into E. D. Ward, surnamed Longshanks. His companion had painted conspicuously on his

van the following inscription : " Beauchamp & Co., Photographers, Portraits from 1 s." Mr. Ward was the Co., the elder of the two rejoicing in the name of Wilfred Beauchamp.

" Shall we sleep in the van to-night, or try the village inn, Ted ? "

" The inn, Gaffer," the long youth replied promptly. He had taken up each dialect of the country through which they passed with great promptitude and exactness, and was now speaking the purest Worcestershire. " Thee grabbed ahl the pillows last night, lad, and I had no rest for my yud. I goes in for a Christian-like bed to-night."

" It's too jolly to spend a minute in sleeping," the other said with enthusiasm. " What benighted idiots the rest of the world are, Ted ! Fancy a crowded hotel—table d'hôte and all the rest of it, and this perfect country, perfect weather, and no end of fruit and perfect freedom. Who wouldn't be a photographer ? "

" I shouldn't mind the table d'hôte for a change —and I could do without insects," the other replied drily, destroying a creature that had just stung him with the palm of his hand as he spoke ; " otherwise it's very jolly. Not a paying concern though, exactly. How many shilling cartes have we taken since we started, Will ? "

" Well, I can't answer for the shillings. You see we have given away most. But don't be sordid ; could money have paid us for the joy of photographing that wedding group, and for the inesti-

mable memento of its beauty which I carry next my heart;" and Will produced from his breast pocket with a flourish a picture representing an artless group posed with strong feeling for effect by "Beauchamp & Co." at the last large village where they had halted. The bride in light-blue silk—the group was coloured by the hand of a master—very much flounced and trimmed, wore also an astonishing bonnet and veil; she leant fondly with both her great hands, encased in primrose kid—at 1 s. 1¾ d. a pair—clasped on the shining broadcloth arm of the beaming bridegroom whose hair was well oiled for the occasion, and whose ruddy face shone with delight. A bridegroom in rustic circles does not feel himself so entirely a fool as one in more exalted rank. The bridesmaid, in pink and white stripes, stood by the bride, with a nosegay, giggling; the groom stood by her grinning—a very good imitation of his principal without the flower in his coat. The other guests looked over the heads of the happy pair in the background. Will gazed fondly at his *chef-d'œuvre.*

"It *is* lovely! How it will adorn Mad's den—if I can make up my mind to part with the sweet memento of the jolliest time I ever passed. Oh! the fun these people are! It is so intensely delicious to draw them out. If we were not with a van we should never get at them. Shall I ever forget that girl's indignation with her young man? 'You call yourself a gentleman and walk in before a lady!' They do call themselves gentlemen and ladies; it is

only the upper ten they look down on. How they stand on forms, and how polite they are to each other. It is delicious—everything is delicious. I shall never be able to go back to civilized life again. What idiots people are to go rushing about to show places when here, in the heart of England, there is a paradise like this! Talk about Switzerland!"

"You are so very impulsive, my friend," drawled the Co., switching about him with a large red handkerchief. "I wish these fiendish midges would take a turn at you. It is too bad, you have not an insect within a foot of you, and they are devouring me by millions. How do the wretches exist when they have no human prey? What a great mistake it was to create insects."

"If you had settled things, what animals should you have allowed? You strongly object to most."

"It would be a much nicer world if I had had the settling of some things," Mr. Edgar Ward returned with solemnity. "There should be no insects; pigs should be abolished, also cats, also rats and babies. Children should appear at the age of three."

"No insects! How about bees?"

"Bees!" the other retorted with contempt. "They talk more rubbish about bees than anything else—bees are simply humbugs. They delight in taking in infatuated enthusiasts. You may do anything for bees; the more you do the less you'll get. Pamper them, feed them, build them palatial residences, and they will refuse to yield an ounce of

honey. Not they; they're much too wide awake! They will suck in all the stuff you give them and in return sting their proprietor out of all likeness to humanity. Now if you cram them into an old straw hive and do nothing for them but sulphur them now and then, you'll get pounds of honey. They're perfect delusions. No, I never could see the use of insects."

"By Jove, what a pretty turn! Look down that grassy lane, Will."

Sharply turning off to their right as they wound around the hill there was a deep, shady road which looked irresistibly attractive from the white heat of the dusty highway where they stood.

"Let the horse graze and we will go down and see what it comes to. There seems a suggestion of an earthly paradise here."

So "Beauchamp & Co." plunged into the coolness and followed the deeply-rutted and neglected-looking road for some distance.

"Ted, what a picture?"

As he said the words Will grasped his companion's arm, and they stood a moment to take it in.

An old iron gate, which had once been very handsome but was now rusty and broken, surrounded by a luxuriance of clematis, a vista through the gate of an old timbered house, whose steep gables were rich with the mellowest tints of green, red and orange, and in whose eaves innumerable pigeons, white and grey, shot with brilliant hues, sunned themselves; ricks of corn beside the house, wild

struggling flowers, mixed with scarlet runners and vegetable marrow vines — these were the accessories. This was the heart of the picture.

A tall young woman in black leaning against the wall, with light hair inclined to red—a sort of corn-colour—dark eyes, and a face at once sad and capable of merriment, not regularly beautiful, but more interesting than regular beauty; a careless grace which perfect unconsciousness and natural refinement gave to an already well-moulded shape, a golden-haired little gipsy in a pink pinafore playing at her feet, and a peacock strutting at a little distance from the child.

"The van—go and fetch it!" Will gasped, and the long legs disappeared with velocity.

The young woman looked at Will; it was a very quiet, inquiring look from a beautiful pair of dark eyes. Somehow it made him feel foolish, but he came forward at once.

"I hope you will allow me to take your photograph, miss," he said, touching his hat and assuming his professional air. "My van is near by here, and it would be really a pleasure. You don't often get such an atmosphere."

The girl coloured a little and could not help smiling.

"I am not a miss; that is my house; this is my little girl."

Will stared at her in a sort of wonder.

"I beg your pardon—you look so young." And then remembering his role of wandering photog-

rapher, he added hastily, "You'll let me take you and the child? Only a shilling for a beautiful portrait. I can take you together; and if you would let me make a picture of the old house, I should be so grateful."

The young woman kept her eyes on him in a way that rather embarrassed him. He felt as if she read the word "gentleman" through all he said.

"Oh, I don't mind your taking me and Polly," she said, rather proudly. Her way of speaking was slightly rustic, but not in the least degree unrefined. "But I don't know why you should care to do the tumble-down, rubbishy old place."

"It is beautiful—a perfect picture," he said, with enthusiasm.

"It may look like a picture to-day," she returned, shrugging her shoulders, "but it is miserable to live in, I know. I hate it."

She looked around with a sort of movement of repugnance—a kind of shudder which was strangely expressive. Will felt instinctively that she had been unhappy there. A shuffling tread behind her came nearer over the path littered with weeds and leaves, and an old, foolish-looking, weak-eyed man became visible, blinking about him and dragging one foot after him as he leant heavily on two sticks. He made a blot on the scene and disturbed its beauty.

"Who's that, Millicent?" he mumbled, peering at the young man in the Panama hat and faded suit.

The rattle of the van was heard along the road.

"A photographer," she answered, shortly. "Where's Sarah? Has she come back?"

"Yes," the old man answered, still staring and blinking; "she's a-putting tea out o' doors."

"Shall we have tea before we are taken?" the girl asked, for in years she was little more, looking up at Will with the smile that made her face very pleasant.

"Is that your man? Would you like to come in and have a drop of tea?"

Will and Ted were delighted. They followed the young hostess inside the iron gate and the arch of white clematis, and the agreeable sight appeared of a table laid with a white cloth in the shade on a grass plot by no means trim and tidy. A tall, thin woman, apparently ten years older than Millicent, was making tea; a great dish of gooseberries stood on the table, a huge loaf and a plain current cake. The firm looked at each other with expressive joy.

"This is my sister, Miss Roberts," the younger woman said in her frank, rather off-hand way. "Sarah, these are photographers who want to take us and the house. Will you give them some tea first? Come, Polly, let's put on your pinny. Put grandfather's chair."

Will was looking about for the husband, the owner of this dilapidated, picturesque farmhouse, this handsome young woman and beautiful rosy child. Probably he was working in the field. He was not wanted to complete the picture. Miss Roberts had a keen, rather stern face, but an honest

one, and a voice like Millicent's—a good voice, frank and pleasant, though it had sharp tones in it. Will and Ted enjoyed their tea, and talked away as if they were quite at home. This was their way. The only mistake they made was that sometimes they forgot their part and were themselves, and I need not say that these selves were well-to-do young men, born to a very different sphere from the humble travelling photographic van.

"And all this time you have not said what your names are," Miss Roberts said rather sharply; "but whatever they may be, it's not difficult to guess you are out of your place now."

"Let me introduce myself and partner, before we begin business," Will said, getting up very gravely with a low bow, "and really we must not lose this afternoon light, ladies!"

"My name is Will Beauchamp, travelling artist and photographer, at your service, miss; this very tall fellow, who sees further than you might think, judging from appearances, is Mr. Edgar Ward. But I must ask for your name in return that I may know what to enter the proofs as," he continued, looking at Millicent.

"My name is Frankland," she answered quickly and shortly.

"Come, if we are to be done, let us get it over."

"It's a horrid thing to be photographed," Sarah remarked drily, "as bad as a dentist. You be taken with the child, Milly."

"And with you, too, Sarah."

"Let me suggest a group," said Will, in a properly deferential tone.

"What's the good of sticking my ugly face in?" Sarah demanded, in an undertone, "who wants to see me?"

"Or me either, for that matter," the younger returned in the same voice with a little bitter laugh; then, still more sinking her tones, she went on, "but for the fun of the thing let it be you and me, Sally, and the child—not him."

Will had ears like a rabbit, and caught the words and the glance at the old man—he thought it a hard glance, almost unwomanly, yet he could not feel that Millicent Frankland was unwomanly. Her manner with the child was deeply, quietly tender, she looked such a young mother, as she caught up the little one with one swing of her vigorous arms, crying laughingly, "Now, how are we to stand? You must make a beautiful picture of Polly."

Will posed them in the old gateway, pretty much as they were when he saw them, while Longshanks got the apparatus ready. First he took Millicent, Sarah, and the little girl together, then mother and child only, then a separate picture of each. The shadows were getting long when he finished, but he lingered talking.

"May I come to-morrow and do the house?"

"Oh, yes, if you like. For yourself, not me," she added quickly.

"Can you let us see those?"

"Not to judge. I will to-morrow. We are going

to sleep at the 'Chequers.' What do they call this farm, ma'am?"

"The Hill Farm, Hazelor."

"The village is Hazelor? What a nest of villages there are about here."

"I suppose there are. I don't know much about other parts. I was born and bred at the foot of this hill. Have you been travelling about much with that van?"

Will fancied there was a twinkle of humour in her eyes as she said this. Had she found him out? Her manner was free and easy enough, but hardly the manner that the mistress of a farmhouse—though a dilapidated one—would generally adopt with an itinerant photographer.

"All the summer. Me and my partner stop in London in the winter time, mum."

"Oh, you have a shop in London?"

"Exactly so."

"It must be rather nice strolling about the country this weather?"

"Awfully nice—especially when one gets a good subject," and Will looked up from under his hat in a rather meaning way. Millicent returned the glance with a sudden assumption of her little haughty manner which was odd and simple, though not without its own dignity. She said nothing for a moment, and then, just nodding, bade him good evening, took Polly's hand, and went indoors.

The partners packed up and jogged off in silence, which Ted broke.

"Gave us our congé pretty decidedly! Young woman's got a temper."

"Is her husband dead?" Will asked abruptly; "if not, where was he?"

"Gone to market."

"She was in black."

"Not bad looking—picturesque in a way."

"Not bad looking!" Will repeated indignantly. Ted looked at him through his spectacles with a queer smile. "Well, I should say so. Did you think her plain?"

"I think, sir," the other retorted, giving a violent bang to the wooden side of the van, to emphasize his words, "I think I have never seen a finer specimen of young womanhood, pure and simple, without an art or affectation!"

"Oh dear! oh dear!" groaned the Co., "I wish we hadn't taken the wrong turning. I shall have to tell your ma it wasn't my fault."

Will did not say any more; he was, among other things, a very fair amateur artist—if he had not been blessed or cursed with a sufficient fortune he might have had a very good professional one—and he was painting an ideal picture in his memory of the tall young woman with the reddish hair, the dark eyes, and firm but not untender cast of face, framed in by the flowery foliage and the golden green branches of the overhanging trees which kept the sunshine from her fair, glowing skin. He had a vivid fancy, a most lively imagination—these dangerous gifts were kept in bounds by a good deal

of practical common-sense, but sometimes, in summer weather, ran riot, and set his warm heart and romantic brain working on all sorts of impossible possibilities. Life seemed to him very sweet that July evening when the hundred scents of the country came to him, carried by the lightest and warmest of west winds, all uglinesses of the world, all the jarring elements of society were hidden and silent. The earth seemed freshly created, and to the ardent young man's soul it was very good.

Will had no difficulty in drawing out the landlady of the "Chequers," a buxom widow who seemed to thrive on a very small number of guests. She was ready to talk by the yard about every one of her neighbours, and the only trouble was to keep her to one subject, the one that interested him.

"The Hill farm? Lor', yes, I know 'em ahl. T' old mon is getting silly, he never was very bright, and he has drunk what little wits he ever had away. Ah, to think of the trouble that poor young thing has had first and last! Bless you, I know her well. I nursed her when the child was born. Her husband was a bad lot, if ever there was one—he took her in with his soft ways, and she married him at nineteen. She was a minister's daughter over at Hillsborough, fifteen miles away; and a well brought up, well edicated girl—ay, and handsome too. Well, that poor girl she were a regular victim; Frankland drunk like a fish, and when the drink was in him, he was more like a brute than a man."

"Is he dead?" Will asked abruptly.

"Dead, yes, this two years, thank the Lord. He was found one night in a ditch, and after he was took home he had what they call tremenjous delirium, or something like that, and inflammation of the lungs atop of that. Sarah, her sister, came to help, but at times it took two men to hold him. The poor thing was very bad, nervous like, after that for a long time, but she's a wonderful lot of sperits and courage has Millicent Frankland. She plucked up and tried to keep the farm together, and she made a home for that wretched old father of his, who was allers a drunken good-for-nothing like his son, and helped to take her in. Ah, dear! The goings on as I've seen in that house. When her baby was only three days old and she as weak as a kitten, he came in mad drunk one day, and was very near the death of her—would have been but for me. Lor', how the poor thing cried and clung to me. 'Oh, Mrs. Long,' says she, 'what a pity the child and I didn't die! Why didn't the doctor let us die together? it's better to be dead than have a broken heart,' says she, poor thing, not twenty then! But the Lord had mercy on her and rid her of the fellow who broke her heart. If ever there was a worthless lot, that Tom Frankland was one—he made out a fine tale when he was after Millicent, and they were simple folk and took it all for gospel. But it warn't many weeks after she was married afore she found him out—drink, drink, drink. 'Twas bred in the bone with him—and

everything about the farm going to rack and ruin! The good Lord only knows what for he makes such men—it passes us—they don't seem good for this world nor the next."

The night was too beautiful to spend much of it in bed, Will Beauchamp thought; he sat at his little window long after the Co. was sleeping the sleep of the just, and the still, scented air, lightly touching the sleeping fields and scarcely moving trees, was full of vague whisperings such as only youth hears. The incomplete storm of Millicent Frankland's married life haunted him somehow, as did the vision of her careless grace.

The next day the photographic van made its way again to the Hill farm, and the views of the place and of the people were made to take longer than shilling photographs ever did before. The thin mask of concealment was difficult to keep up, and in talk gradually slipped off, and Will Beauchamp forgot to be very different from his ordinary self. He begged to be allowed to help about the farm when the ostensible business that had brought him thither was done, and though Sarah looked a little glum and disapproving, Millicent after all was still almost a girl, and found it hard to resist a pleasant hour or two which so seldom came her way.

There is nothing like a day spent together in the country for making young men and women intimate, and this girlish widow was of a frank and open nature which harmonised well with the man who had kept himself curiously natural in the

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artificial life of fashionable London. It seemed to him that he had never met a real woman before, just as nature made her ; all the girls of his old set by contrast seemed insipid and tame.

Millicent had strong opinions and a resolute will ; she might have been a little hard but for a warm and tender heart which had survived all the blows that fate had dealt it. She could still laugh and enjoy life though she had suffered so ; but the laughter sometimes gave place to fits of depression and almost gloom—she was not long in the same mood.

It happened that she and Will were alone together after she had taken him to inspect the dairy, about which he professed great interest. "Of all lives, I think this in a farm the most perfectly desirable," Will said, with enthusiasm.

Millicent looked at him with rather a bitter smile.

"That just shows how little you know about it," she said, in her emphatic voice ; "on summer days like this, to you who just see a peep of it, I dare say it seems pleasant enough. If you knew what it was to keep a ruinous concern going anyhow, to fight off debt, and to prop it up from all falling to pieces, you wouldn't think it quite so pleasant. Bad seasons, bad management, no money—my heart's sick at times—" She broke off and put her hand suddenly to her throat. Will saw that there was a kind of spasm in it. "Oh, how I have suffered here !" she went on, with a sudden passion, "how

I've struggled! and I must give in, I suppose, before long."

"And what shall you do then?" Will asked, unconscious of the tenderness of his voice.

"God knows," she answered, in the harsh tone of suppressed feeling. "Go to service, if I could bear to bring myself down." After a pause she tried to laugh, but it was more like a sob than a laugh. "Whatever do I tell you for! I haven't known you twenty-four hours, and I know nothing about you. What are you, after all? For of course I'm not stupid enough to swallow your pretence."

"I'm your friend, Mrs. Frankland, if you'll let me be."

"But that isn't a trade," she rejoined, colouring, but trying to laugh it off. "What else are you?"

"A good many things—a bit of an artist."

"A gentleman?"

"I hope so."

"Ah, well, don't take to farming, whatever you do. It's a trade that has gone near to break my heart. Among other things——"

"I know," Will said, in a low, moved voice. "I know something about you, and I wish I could tell you what I feel."

"I suppose Mrs. Long has been gossiping," Millicent said, half angrily; but something in her companion's look changed her mood, her eyes fell, she grew a little pale, and her bosom heaved. She said in a gentle voice, "I'm proud, and I don't like being talked about and pitied; but I think you

mean well. But don't say any more about it now."

But when Beauchamp & Co. left the farm and wended their way to the "Chequers," Edward Longshanks remarked, drily enough: "I suppose you mean to push on to-morrow, old man?"

"No, I don't," Will replied, shortly and defiantly. "I like this place. Where the deuce is the hurry to get on?"

"Mrs. Beauchamp might be able to tell you, if she were here."

"She isn't here, and I suppose I'm my own master?"

"Oh, certainly. Far be it from me to interfere if you want to make a fool of yourself."

"It's easy to be wise for other people. But I have no intention of being a fool. Anyway, I mean to stay over to-morrow. There is a sketch I want to get."

Mr. Ward made no further remarks; he was of a calm and philosophical temper, and could quietly stand by and look on when any little drama of real life was performed under his spectacles.

Will Beauchamp managed to find so many sketches near the Hill Farm, which had to be done, that the one day more lengthened itself indefinitely, and Ted found the homely "Chequers" so superior to most of the humble hostleries they had generally been obliged to put up with, that he only feebly objected to the prolonged stay on the hill-side. It was too hot to make a fuss, and Will was a fellow

who always would have his own way, even if that way consisted in "running his head against a post," as Mr. Ward expressed it. If he would flirt with the handsome young widow, he must.

Ted was awakened one night by a vigorous shaking and an impetuous voice calling in his ear.

"Get up and come along; there's some ricks burning, I believe, at the Hill Farm. Wake up and make haste."

It took some time to get an idea impressed in Ted's sleepy brain, but he followed in the steps of his impetuous partner, who tore off at wild speed in the direction of the flare. All the inhabitants of the farm were out, and all the neighbours, but, as usual, half of them had lost their heads and were worse than useless. Will's rapid glance at once discovered the tall figure of the young mistress, with that of her sister, hard at work with buckets of water, and Millicent's voice, sounding very different from what he had heard it before, was giving orders with masculine decision—orders that the stupid, gaping rustics were slow to obey. "You idiots!" she said at last, fairly stamping with passion, "don't you see every rick I have will go? Can't one of you be of some use?" And turning, she saw Will making his way swiftly to her. "Oh, that's right," she cried, her face changing as he set at once to work with the skill of a trained mind, "you'll help me."

But though he did what he could, the fire was not easy to subdue, and water was scarce. The

ricks burned away in spite of all that they could do.

"Are they insured?" Will asked her, rapidly, as he passed on bucket after bucket. She shook her head.

"No. My husband let the money drop. It means just ruin."

"Look! I'm dreadfully afraid for that corner of the roof; if it catches, the house will too: we must attend to that first."

"The house!" she cried, suddenly losing all her calm. "The child is in it!" and without another word she darted off. Will stayed to set everyone at work on the dangerous corner where the ricks were close to the thatch of the outbuildings abutting the farm house, and then he ran after her. He met her at the door with the child on her breast. Their eyes met, hers were wide open and shining with excitement, her golden hair streamed behind her, her dress was in disorder. Will thought, at that moment, that she looked strangely and irresistibly beautiful; his heart yearned to her, and the new, fierce, subtle passion, such as in all his life he had not felt, thrilled through his veins like fire.

"You have the child safe?" he said, in a strange voice, and holding out his arms to take it. "Let me take her, she is heavy for you!"

"No, I'll keep her; you are helping me so well. But never mind anything now, I have the child, it may all go. Nothing can save me from ruin."

"Yes, I can. I will save you, Millicent.

He took hold of her, embracing her and the little one at once. She started from him, trembling, and her eyes searched his face with a sort of terror. "Let me go. What do you mean? Do you know what you are doing? Are you mad to stop me now to talk like this, at such a time?"

"Yes, I'll let you go," he said, suddenly calming down; "it can wait. I'll work for you till I drop, and we shall save the house at least."

He turned and ran away, and for a few moments Millicent stood where he had left her, in a kind of bewildered maze, holding the child tight and trying to collect her thoughts.

The house was saved, but the ricks were destroyed. No one was hurt except old Frankland, who had been tumbling about in a stupid state, half asleep and half dazed with his nightly potations. He managed to fall down and break his leg in the confusion, and so add to his daughter-in-law's trouble by another item. He was one of those hopeless people who are never any good to any one, but decidedly the reverse. And if, as seemed likely, he was not to rise again from his bed, there was no one to regret it.

Will went back to the "Chequers" at dawn, but he did not attempt to sleep, and soon after sunrise, he returned to the scene of the disaster. The place looked desolate enough, with the smouldering ricks falling into mere heaps of dry ashes, the gates and fences broken down and pools of water everywhere. Will came upon the mistress of the forlorn looking

homestead as she stood alone and glanced with quiet sadness over the devastation of her domain. As she turned and faced him, her pale cheeks flushed and her lips trembled for all her efforts to be calm. It was quite impossible to forget that little episode of the strange night.

"It looks dreary, doesn't it?" she said as he took her hand and kept it. "I don't believe I've thanked you yet for the trouble you had with my unfortunate ricks. You saved the house at any rate from going too."

"Never mind that. I never worked before so gladly. Yes, it does look dreary. Does it pain you much to see it?"

"Not so very much: it is only hastening what I knew must come. It's been a hard struggle to keep my head above water, and now it's come to an end. I must sell everything, pay what I can, and begin afresh."

"Shall I tell you how to begin?

She tried to laugh. "Much you know about it! I am only sure I've got to work."

"But shall I tell you the way I want you to begin in? And the place?"

"Well?"

He took her suddenly into his arms and pressed her to his breast. She struggled to get free.

"How dare you? Let me go, sir."

"I want you—here. I want you to begin life again, with me. It shall not be so hard a life as it has been, darling. I'll make it very happy for you."

"Oh, hush, hush. You don't know what you are saying—it is madness—folly—we know nothing of each other—you are beside yourself."

"I know that I love you. I am quite sure that I have fallen madly in love with you, Millicent, and I can teach you in time to love me. Come, I won't frighten you. I won't hurry you; sit down here by me, and I'll tell you just exactly who and what I am. Don't be afraid of me; I am, I hope, a gentleman and an honourable one, and I would rather die than hurt or injure you. Let me have your hand; you need not shrink from me, indeed you need not."

Millicent yielded so far as to let him seat her gently on the trunk of a fallen tree, and she left her cold and trembling hand in his clasp, as he told her in a few quiet words the plain statement of his position and his way of life. Then, after a short silence, she said in a broken voice:

"So you are a gentleman of a good family, and you have a fortune, and friends who think a great deal of you. Well, now, how much do you know about me and mine? I am the daughter of a poor Wesleyan minister, not well-educated nor anything like a lady born. I am the widow of a poor farmer—who—who—who wasn't a good man, and who dragged me through the dirt. I have had a terrible time of it, and it's no wonder I've got coarse and hard with it. I should never make a real lady, and you would be ashamed of me; all your friends would think that I'd disgraced you. I've got a

child and my husband's father dependent on me: I've some humble relations whom I never mean to give up. You've known me a few days—do you see, now, what a ridiculous thing this is? Go away, and forget it—and me—it'll be far your wisest plan. You mean well by me, I know; I do believe you are a good man, but that's all the more reason why I should not spoil your life, and I tell you, I never, never will!"

As she spoke these last words, she broke out into hysterical sobbing, tore her hand from his and put both over her face. Her whole strong, fine young frame shook with passionate sobs. Will put his arm round her, in spite of her resistance, and held her close against his heart.

"I will *never* give it up," he said in a strong voice; "I believe in love at first sight. I can't reason about it, I only feel it. If you made me go away, I'd come back. Every word you say makes me more determined to have you. Do you think I *want* you to give up your friends, to care less for your child? I'm not a snob. I honour you for your feeling for them; I honour your past—you are neither coarse nor hard, but a noble, sweet woman. I will fill your life with sunshine, I will make what you have suffered seem like a bad dream. I don't mean to marry to please my friends, but to suit myself. I am no boy. Look here, as you say it is quick work; if you haven't had time to know me, but if you will give me hope, I'll give you time. We will wait six months, and then,

when you know that I am to be trusted, you will see whether you can care for me or not. Look in my face, Millicent, and see for yourself, whether I am in earnest."

She raised her head, and their eyes met full—clear, honest eyes both—that found nothing to shrink from in the long mutual gaze. Sweetness came into the woman's face, and a soft answer to the love in his. Then, before either shaped the thought, their lips met. But Millicent drew back with a burning face.

"Oh! I ought not! It is very wrong. I was forgetting."

"Forget again then, sweet."

"No, no. I am in earnest. Listen to me. Mr. Beauchamp, you are very good. I am not ungrateful. I do not dislike you, but I won't marry you to be looked down on. I won't enter a family that is ashamed of having me."

"Now listen to me, you proud, fierce thing. I want to ask you this. Will you marry me, if my mother comes herself to make friends with you?"

Millicent looked at him, and her lips parted involuntarily into a smile. "Perhaps—if—but she won't do that."

"We will see."

About breakfast time, Mr. Beauchamp calmly announced to his companion that the partnership must dissolve, as urgent business called him at once to his family. More than this Ted could not discover. Mr. Beauchamp left his former partner

with the van to wander where his fancy took, abruptly abandoned his romantic life, and returned to civilisation and railways, with a base fickleness and inconsistency which disgusted his friend and the sharer of the fortunes of the van.

Millicent Frankland kept her secret ; no one, not even Sarah, knew anything of that momentous interview by sunrise amongst the ashes of the ricks. She set to work steadily to face the difficulties of the situation, and she tried hard to believe that Wilfred Beauchamp had thought better of his folly, and had returned to his ways which were not her ways ; and that he and she should meet no more. But the idyl of those summer days was obstinate in refusing to be forgotten ; her fancy would wander to the one only romantic episode of her life. She had never really been in love with Tom Frankland, and a very few days of the hard reality of her married life had killed any lingering affection that had survived his courtship. Will was a man of a new world to her, one that she could not but admire, and whom it was difficult not to love. The memory of his briefly tender wooing made a secret sweetness in her heart and touched everything with a new light. Millicent was ashamed of the folly of her own imaginings, but she still lingered on them.

One day she was in the dairy skimming cream, with her fine arms bare above the elbow, and her sun-bonnet on her head, when Sarah came to her in great bewilderment.

"What do you think, Milly? here's that photographing man come, and a lady with him—a handsome old lady with powdery sort of white hair and bright dark eyes—she's asking for you."

"I'll come," Millicent said, putting down her skimmer; "see to this for me, Sally."

For a moment she thought of running upstairs and putting on her black silk, but the next she held up her proud, young head.

"I won't! I'll go as I am—they shan't see me under false pretences."

And she went straight into the parlour in her clean holland dress and apron, with her sun-bonnet in her hand. Will was standing by the window, Mrs. Beauchamp sitting on the sofa, watching the door with a rather heightened colour and very anxious eyes. She was very like Will, and had a bright, high-bred, eager, handsome face. He was her idol; for his sake she had swallowed her pride, tried to conceal her little mortification, and had consented to the hard condition he had imposed upon her love. She drew a long breath when the door opened and Millicent came in with an air of forced calm, which ill-concealed the tremulous anxiety of her mind. Will thought she looked like a disguised princess with her natural, unstudied, noble grace, but Will was in love, and a poor judge. Whatever his mother thought, her face cleared, and a certain relief came into it. Millicent dared not look at him: she felt all her courage would vanish if she met his ardent eyes; but she knew, all the while,

exactly how he looked. Mrs. Beauchamp came forward to meet her.

"You see Will has brought me, Mrs. Frankland," she said in her sweet, refined tones: "he wants his mother to make friends with the lady he has chosen. I don't think I ever thwarted him yet; he has been the dearest boy to me, and I always try to love what he loves. I hope we shall be friends."

"It is so good, so good of you to come," Millicent faltered out as Mrs. Beauchamp took her hand; all her calmness forsook her at so gentle a greeting. "I hardly believed you would be so kind. I am not worth it indeed."

"Wilfred thinks you are."

Millicent glanced at him, only for a moment, but long enough to see the light in his eyes. The sudden fulness of joy, of tender gratitude, which flooded her whole soul, overpowered her as few of her sorsows had ever done.

Mrs. Beauchamp understood her as she tried to say something, but could not make her words articulate. She knew that she meant to promise a return for all, and love answering to love. She kissed the girl and soothed her with the tender tact of a true lady, and, taking her by the hand, put it into Will's.

"You must wait," she said, smiling. "You must wait till you know each other better, you foolish, romantic children, but I fancy you do not mean to change your minds. And if it ever comes about,

you must fit up the van again for next summer, Wilfred, and take some one else with you in place of poor Ted. It will be a new idea for a honeymoon!"

THE KNIGHTSBRIDGE MYSTERY.

CHAPTER I.

In Charles the Second's day the "Swan" was denounced by the dramatists as a house where unfaithful wives and mistresses met their gallants.

But in the next century, when John Clark was the Freeholder, no special imputation of that sort rested on it; it was a country inn with large stables, horsed the Brentford coach, and entertained man and beast on journeys long or short. It had also permanent visitors, especially in summer; for it was near London, and yet a rural retreat; meadows on each side, Hyde Park at back, Knightsbridge Green in front.

Amongst the permanent lodgers was Mr. Gardiner, a substantial man; and Captain Cowen, a retired officer of moderate means, had lately taken two rooms for himself and his son. Mr. Gardiner often joined the company in the public room, but the Cowens kept to themselves upstairs.

This was soon noticed and resented, in that age of few books and free converse. Some said, "Oh, we are not good enough for him!" others inquired what a half-pay Captain had to give himself

airs about. Candor interposed and supplied the climax :

" Nay, my masters, the Captain may be in hiding from duns, or from the runners : now I think on't, the York mail was robbed scarce a s'ennight before his Worship came a-hiding here."

But the landlady's tongue ran the other way. Her weight was sixteen stone, her sentiments were her interests, and her tongue her tomahawk. " 'Tis pity," said she, one day, " some folks can't keep their tongues from blackening of their betters. The Captain is a civil-spoken gentleman—Lord send there were more of them in these parts !—as takes off his hat to me whenever he meets me, and pays his reckoning weekly. If he has a mind to be private, what business is that of yours, or yours ? But curs must bark at their betters."

Detraction, thus roughly quelled for certain seconds, revived at intervals whenever Dame Cust's broad back was turned. It was mildly encountered one evening by Gardiner. " Nay, good sirs," said he, " you mistake the worthy Captain. To have fought at Blenheim and Malplaquet, no man hath less vanity. 'Tis for his son that he holds aloof. He guards the youth like a mother, and will not have him to hear our tap-room jests. He worships the boy —a sullen lout, sirs ; but paternal love is blind. He told me once he had loved his wife dearly, and lost her young, and this was all he had of her. ' And,' says he, ' I'd spill blood like water for him, my own the first.' ' Then, sir,' says I, ' I fear he

will give you a sore heart, one day.' 'And welcome,' says my Captain, and his face like iron."

Somebody remarked that no man keeps out of company who is good company; but Mr. Gardiner parried that dogma. "When young master is abed, my neighbor does sometimes invite me to share a bottle; and a sprightlier companion I would not desire. Such stories of battles, and duels, and love intrigues!"

"Now there's an old fox for you," said one, approvingly. It reconciled him to the Captain's decency to find it was only hypocrisy.

"I like not—a man—who wears—a mask," hiccoughed a hitherto silent personage, revealing his clandestine drunkenness and unsuspected wisdom at one blow.

These various theories were still fermenting in the bosom of the "Swan," when one day there rode up to the door a gorgeous officer, hot from the minister's levée, in scarlet and gold, with an order like a star-fish glittering on his breast. His servant, a private soldier, rode behind him, and, slipping hastily from his saddle, held his master's horse while he dismounted. Just then Captain Cowen came out for his afternoon walk. He started, and cried out, "Colonel Barrington!"

"Ay, brother," cried the other, and instantly the two officers embraced, and even kissed each other, for that feminine custom had not yet retired across the Channel; and these were soldiers who had fought and bled side by side, and nursed each

other in turn : and your true soldier does not nurse by halves ; his vigilance and tenderness are an example to women, and he rustleth not.

Captain Cowen invited Colonel Barrington to his room, and that warrior marched down the passage after him, single file, with long brass spurs and sabre clinking at his heels ; and the establishment ducked and smiled, and respected Captain Cowen for the reason we admire the moon.

Seated in Cowen's room, the new-comer said, heartily : "Well, Ned, I come not empty-handed. Here is thy pension at last ;" and handed him a parchment with a seal like a poached egg.

Cowen changed color, and thanked him with an emotion he rarely betrayed, and gloated over the precious document. His cast-iron features relaxed, and he said : "It comes in the nick of time, for now I can send my dear Jack to College."

This led somehow to an exposure of his affairs. He had just £110 a year, derived from the sale of his commission, which he had invested at fifteen per cent., with a well-known mercantile house in the City. "So now," said he, "I shall divide it all in three ; Jack will want two parts to live at Oxford, and I can do here well enough on one." The rest of the conversation does not matter, so I dismiss it and Colonel Barrington for the time. A few days afterwards Jack went to College, and Captain Cowen reduced his expenses, and dined at the shilling ordinary, and indeed took all his moderate repasts in public.

Instead of the severe and reserved character he had worn while his son was with him, he now shone out a boon companion, and sometimes kept the table in a roar with his marvellous mimicries of all characters, male or female, that lived in the inn or frequented it, and sometimes held them breathless with adventures, dangers, intrigues, in which a leading part had been taken by himself or his friends.

He became quite a popular character, except with one or two envious bodies, whom he eclipsed ; they revenged themselves by saying it was all braggadocio : his battles had been fought over a bottle, and by the fireside.

The district east and west of Knightsbridge had long been infested by foot-pads ; they robbed passengers in the country lanes, which then abounded, and sometimes on the King's highway, from which those lanes offered an easy escape.

One moonlight night Captain Cowen was returning home alone from an entertainment at Fulham, when suddenly the air seemed to fill with a woman's screams and cries. They issued from a lane on his right hand side. He whipped out his sword and dashed down the lane. It took a sudden turn, and in a moment he came upon three foot-pads, robbing and maltreating an old gentleman and his wife. The old man's sword lay at a distance, struck from his feeble hand ; the woman's tongue proved the better weapon, for at least it brought an ally.

The nearest robber, seeing the Captain come at him with his drawn sword glittering in the moonshine, fired hastily, and grazed his cheek, and was skewered like a frog the next moment; his cry of agony mingled with two shouts of dismay, and the other foot-pads fled; but, even as they turned, Captain Cowen's nimble blade entered the shoulder of one, and pierced the fleshy part. He escaped, however, but howling and bleeding.

Captain Cowen handed over the lady and gentleman to the people who flocked to the place, now the work was done, and the disabled robber to the guardians of the public peace, who arrived last of all. He himself withdrew apart and wiped his sword very carefully and minutely with a white pocket-handkerchief, and then retired.

He was so far from parading his exploit that he went round by the park and let himself into the "Swan" with his private key, and was going quietly to bed, when the chamber-maid met him, and up flew her arms, with cries of dismay, "Oh, Captain! Captain! Look at you—smothered in blood! I shall faint."

"Tush! Silly wench!" said Captain Cowen. "I am not hurt."

"Not hurt, sir? And bleeding like a pig! Your cheek—your poor cheek!"

Captain Cowen put up his hand, and found that blood was really welling from his cheek and ear.

He looked grave for a moment, then assured her

it was but a scratch, and offered to convince her of that. "Bring me some lukewarm water and thou shalt be my doctor. But, Barbara, prithee publish it not."

Next morning an officer of justice inquired after him at the "Swan," and demanded his attendance at Bow Street, at two that afternoon, to give evidence against the foot-pads. This was the very thing he wished to avoid; but there was no evading the summons.

The officer was invited into the bar by the landlady, and sang the gallant Captain's exploit, with his own variations. The inn began to ring with Cowen's praises. Indeed, there was now but one detractor left—the hostler, Daniel Cox, a drunken fellow of sinister aspect, who had for some time stared and lowered at Captain Cowen, and muttered mysterious things, doubts as to his being a real Captain, etc., etc. Which incoherent murmurs of a muddle-headed drunkard were not treated as oracular by any human creature, though the stable-boy once went so far as to say, "I sometimes almost thinks as how our Dan do know summut; only he don't rightly know what 'tis, along o' being always muddled in liquor."

Cowen, who seemed to notice little, but noticed everything, had observed the lowering looks of this fellow, and felt he had an enemy: it even made him a little uneasy, though he was too proud and self-possessed to show it.

With this exception, then, everybody greeted him

with hearty compliments, and he was cheered out of the inn, marching to Bow Street.

Daniel Cox, who—as accidents will happen—was sober that morning, saw him out, and then put on his own coat.

"Take thou charge of the stable, Sam," said he.

"Why, where be'st going, at this time o' day?"

"I be going to Bow Street," said Daniel, doggedly.

At Bow Street Captain Cowen was received with great respect, and a seat given him by the sitting magistrate while some minor cases were disposed of.

In due course the highway robbery was called and proved by the parties who, unluckily for the accused, had been actually robbed before Cowen interfered.

Then the oath was tendered to Cowen: he stood up by the magistrate's side and deposed, with military brevity and exactness, to the facts I have related, but refused to swear to the identity of the individual culprit, who stood pale and trembling at the dock.

The Attorney for the Crown, after pressing in vain, said, "Quite right, Captain Cowen; a witness cannot be too scrupulous."

He then called an officer who had found the robber leaning against a railing fainting from loss of blood, scarce a furlong from the scene of the robbery, and wounded in the shoulder. That let in Captain Cowen's evidence, and the culprit was com-

mitted for trial, and soon after peached upon his only comrade at large. The other lay in the hospital at Newgate.

The magistrate complimented Captain Cowen on his conduct and his evidence, and he went away universally admired. Yet he was not elated, nor indeed content. Sitting by the magistrate's side, after he had given his evidence, he happened to look all round the Court, and in a distant corner he saw the enormous mottled nose and sinister eyes of Daniel Cox glaring at him with a strange but puzzled expression.

Cowen had learned to read faces, and he said to himself: "What is there in that ruffian's mind about me? Did he know me years ago? I can't remember him. Curse the beast—one would almost—think—he is cudgelling his drunken memory. I'll keep an eye on *you*."

He went home thoughtful and discomposed, because this drunkard glowered at him so. The reception he met with at the Swan effaced the impression. He was received with acclamations, and now that publicity was forced on him, he accepted it, and revelled in popularity.

About this time he received a letter from his son, inclosing a notice from the College tutor, speaking highly of his ability, good conduct, devotion to study.

This made the father swell with loving pride.

Jack hinted modestly that there were unavoidable expenses, and his funds were dwindling. He

inclosed an account that showed how the money went.

The father wrote back and bade him be easy ; he should have every farthing he required, and speedily. "For," said he, "my half-year's interest is due now."

Two days after, he had a letter from his man of business begging him to call. He went with alacrity, making sure his money was waiting for him, as usual.

His lawyer received him very gravely, and begged him to be seated. He then broke to him some appalling news. The great house of Brown, Molyneux & Co. had suspended payments at noon the day before, and were not expected to pay a shilling in the pound. Captain Cowen's little fortune was gone, all but his pension of £80 a year.

He sat like a man turned to stone. Then he clasped his hands with agony, and uttered two words, no more—"My son!"

He rose and left the place like one in a dream. He got down to Knightsbridge, he hardly knew how. At the very door of the inn he fell down in a fit. The people of the inn were round him in a moment, and restoratives freely supplied. His sturdy nature soon revived, but, with the moral and physical shock, his lips were slightly distorted over his clenched teeth. His face, too, was ashy pale.

When he came to himself, the first face he noticed was that of Daniel Cox, eyeing him, not with pity, but with puzzled curiosity. Cowen shuddered and

closed his own eyes to avoid this blighting glare. Then, without opening them, he muttered: "What has befallen me? I feel no wound."

"Laws forbid, sir," said the landlady, leaning over him. "Your honour did but swoon for once, to show you was born of a woman, and not made of nought but steel. Here, you gaping loons and sluts, help the Captain to his room amongst ye, and then go about your business."

This order was promptly executed, so far as assisting Captain Cowen to rise; but he was no sooner on his feet than he waved them all from him haughtily, and said: "Let me be. It is the mind; it is the mind:" and he smote his forehead in despair, for now it all came back on him.

Then he rushed into the inn and locked himself into his room. Female curiosity buzzed about the doors, but was not admitted until he had recovered his fortitude, and formed a bitter resolution to defend himself and his son against all mankind.

At last there came a timid tap, and a mellow voice said: "It is only me, Captain. Prithee let me in."

He opened to her, and there was Barbara with a large tray and a snow-white cloth. She spread a table deftly, and uncovered a roast capon, and uncorked a bottle of white port, talking all the time. "The mistress says you must eat a bit, and drink this good wine, for her sake. Indeed, sir, it will do you good after your swoon." With many such encouraging words she got him to sit down and eat, and then filled his glass and put it to his lips. He

could not eat much, but he drank the white port—a wine much prized, and purer than the purple vintage of our day.

At last came Barbara's post-dict. "But, alack! to think of your fainting dead away! Oh, Captain, what is the trouble?"

The tear was in Barbara's eye, though she was the emissary of Dame Cust's curiosity, and all curiosity herself.

Captain Cowen, who had been expecting this question for some time, replied, doggedly, "I have lost the best friend I had in the world."

"Dear heart!" said Barbara, and a big tear of sympathy, that had been gathering ever since she entered the room, rolled down her cheeks.

She put up a corner of her apron to her eyes. "Alas, poor soul!" said she. "Ay, I do know how hard it is to love and lose: but bethink you, sir, 'tis the lot of man. Our own turn must come. And you have your son left to thank God for, and a warm friend or two in this place, thof they be but humble."

"Ay, good wench," said the soldier, his iron nature touched for a moment by her goodness and simplicity, "and none I value more than thee. But leave me awhile."

The young woman's honest cheeks reddened at the praise of such a man. "Your will's my pleasure, sir," she said, and retired, leaving the capon and the wine.

Any little compunction he might have at refusing his confidence to this humble friend did not trouble

him long. He looked on women as leaky vessels; and he had firmly resolved not to make his situation worse by telling the base world that he was poor. Many a hard rub had put a fine point on this man of steel.

He glozed the matter, too, in his own mind. "I told her no lie. I *have* lost my best friend, for I've lost my money."

From that day Captain Cowen visited the taproom no more, and indeed seldom went out by daylight. He was all alone now, for Mr. Gardiner was gone to Wiltshire to collect his rents. In his solitary chamber Cowen ruminated his loss and the villany of mankind, and his busy brain resolved scheme after scheme to repair the impending ruin of his son's prospects. It was here the iron entered his soul. The example of the very foot-pads he had baffled occurred to him in his most desperate moments, but he fought the temptation down: and in due course one of them was transported, and one hung; the other languished in Newgate.

By-and-by he began to be mysteriously busy, and the door always locked. No clew was ever found to his labours but bits of melted wax in the fender and a tuft or two of gray hair, and it was never discovered in Knightsbridge that he often begged in the City at dusk, in a disguise so perfect that a frequenter of the "Swan" once gave him a groat. Thus did he levy his tax upon the stony place that had undone him.

Instead of taking his afternoon walk as heretofore, he would sit disconsolate on the seat of a staircase window that looked into the yard, and so take the air and sun : and it was owing to this new habit he overheard, one day, a dialogue, in which the foggy voice of the hostler predominated at first. He was running down Captain Cowen to a pot-boy. The pot-boy stood up for him. That annoyed Cox. He spoke louder and louder the more he was opposed, till at last he bawled out : "I tell ye I've seen him a-setting by the judge, and I've seen him in the dock."

At these words Captain Cowen recoiled, though he was already out of sight, and his eye glittered like a basilisk's.

But immediately a new voice broke upon the scene, a woman's. "Thou foul-mouthed knave! Is it for thee to slander men of worship, and give the inn a bad name? Remember I have but to lift my finger to hang thee, so drive me not to't. Begone to thy horses this moment; thou art not fit to be among Christians. Begone, I say, or it shall be the worse for thee;" and she drove him across the yard, and followed him up with a current of invectives eloquent even at a distance, though the words were no longer distinct : and who should this be but the house-maid, Barbara Lamb, so gentle, mellow, and melodious before the gentlefolk, and especially her hero, Captain Cowen!

As for Daniel Cox, he cowered, writhed, and wriggled away before her, and slipped into the stable.

Captain Cowen was now soured by trouble, and this persistent enmity of that fellow roused at last a fixed and deadly hatred in his mind, all the more intense that fear mingled with it.

He sounded Barbara; asked her what nonsense that ruffian had been talking, and what he had done that she could hang him for. But Barbara would not say a malicious word against a fellow-servant in cold blood. "I can keep a secret," said she. "If he keeps his tongue off you, I'll keep mine."

"So be it," said Cowen. "Then I warn you I am sick of his insolence; and drunkards must be taught not to make enemies of sober men, nor fools of wise men." He said this so bitterly that, to soothe him, she begged him not to trouble about the ravings of a sot. "Dear heart," said she, "nobody heeds Dan Cox."

Some days afterward she told him that Dan had been drinking harder than ever, and wouldn't trouble honest folk long, for he had the delusions that go before a drunkard's end: why, he had told the stable-boy he had seen a vision of himself climb over the garden wall and enter the house by the back door. "The poor wretch says he knew himself by his *bottle nose* and his cow-skin waistcoat, and to be sure, there is no such nose in the parish, thank Heaven for't, and not many such waistcoats." She laughed heartily, but Cowen's lip curled in a venomous sneer. He said: "More likely 'twas the knave himself. Look to your spoons, if such a face as that walks by night." Barbara turned grave

directly. He eyed her askant, and saw the random shot had gone home.

Captain Cowen now often slept in the City, alleging business.

Mr. Gardiner wrote from Salisbury, ordering his room to be ready and his sheets well aired.

One afternoon he returned with a bag and a small valise, prodigiously heavy. He had a fire lighted, though it was a fine autumn, for he was chilled with his journey, and invited Captain Cowen to sup with him. The latter consented, but begged it might be an early supper, as he must sleep in the City.

"I am sorry for that," said Gardiner. "I have a hundred and eighty guineas there in that bag, and a man could get into my room from yours."

"Not if you lock the middle door," said Cowen. "But I can leave you the key of my outer door, for that matter."

This offer was accepted; but still Mr. Gardiner felt uneasy. There had been several robberies at inns, and it was a rainy, gusty night. He was depressed and ill at ease. Then Captain Cowen offered him his pistols, and helped him load them, two bullets in each. He also went and fetched him a bottle of the best port, and after drinking one glass with him, hurried away, and left his key with him for further security.

Mr. Gardiner, left to himself, made up a great fire and drank a glass or two of the wine; it seemed remarkably heady, and raised his spirits. After all,

it was only for one night: to-morrow he would deposit his gold in the bank. He began to unpack his things, and put his night dress to the fire. But by-and-by he felt so drowsy that he did but take his coat off, put his pistols under the pillow, and lay down on the bed, and fell fast asleep.

That night Barbara Lamb awoke twice, thinking each time she heard doors open and shut on the floor below her.

But it was a gusty night, and she concluded it was most likely the wind. Still a residue of uneasiness made her rise at five instead of six, and she lighted her tinder and came down with a rush-light. She found Captain Cowen's door wide open. It had been locked when she went to bed. That alarmed her greatly. She looked in. A glance was enough. She cried, "Thieves! thieves!" and in a moment uttered scream upon scream.

In an incredibly short time pale and eager faces of men and women filled the passage.

Cowen's room, being open, was entered first. On the floor lay, what Barbara had seen at a glance, his portmanteau rifled, and the clothes scattered about. The door of communication was ajar; they opened it, and an appalling sight met their eyes: Mr. Gardiner was lying in a pool of blood, and moaning feebly. There was little hope of saving him. No human body could long survive such a loss of the vital fluid. But it so happened there was a country surgeon in the house; he stanched

the wounds—there were three—and somebody or other had the sense to beg the victim to make a statement. He was unable at first; but, under powerful stimulants, revived at last, and showed a strong wish to aid justice in avenging him. By this time they had got a magistrate to attend, and he put his ear to the dying man's lips; but others heard, so hushed was the room and so keen the awe and curiosity of each panting heart.

"I had gold in my portmanteau, and was afraid. I drank a bottle of wine with Captain Cowen, and he left me. He lent me his key and his pistols. I locked both doors. I felt very sleepy, and lay down. When I woke, a man was leaning over my portmanteau. His back was toward me. I took a pistol and aimed steadily. It missed fire. The man turned and sprang on me. I had caught up a knife, one we had for supper. I stabbed him with all my force. He wrested it from me, and I felt piercing blows. I am slain. Ay, I am slain."

"But the man, sir. Did you not see his face at all?"

"Not till he fell on me. But then very plainly. The moon shone."

"Pray describe him."

"Broken hat."

"Yes."

"Hairy waistcoat."

"Yes."

"Enormous nose."

"Do you know him?"

"Ay. The hostler, Cox."

There was a groan of horror and a cry for vengeance.

"Silence!" said the magistrate. "Mr. Gardiner, you are a dying man. Words may kill. Be careful. Have you any doubts?"

"About what?"

"That the villain was Daniel Cox."

"None whatever."

At these words the men and women, who were glaring with pale faces and all their senses strained at the dying man and his faint yet terrible denunciation, broke into two bands; some remained rooted to the place, the rest hurried, with cries of vengeance, in search of Daniel Cox. They were met in the yard by two constables, and rushed first to the stables, not that they hoped to find him there. Of course he had absconded with his booty.

The stable door was ajar. They tore it open.

The gray dawn revealed Cox fast asleep on the straw in the first empty stall, and his bottle in the manger. His clothes were bloody, and the man was drunk. They pulled him, cursed him, struck him, and would have torn him in pieces, but the constables interfered, set him up against the rail, like timber, and searched his bosom, and found—a wound; then turned all his pockets inside out, amidst great expectation, and found—three halfpence and the key of the stable door.

CHAPTER II.

THEY ransacked the straw and all the premises and found—nothing.

Then, to make him sober and get something out of him, they pumped upon his head till he was very nearly choked. However, it told on him. He gasped for breath awhile, and rolled his eyes, and then coolly asked them had they found the villain.

They shook their fists at him.

"Ay, we have found the villain, red-handed."

"I mean him as prowls about these parts in my waistcoat and drove his knife into me last night—wonder a didn't kill me out of hand. Have ye found *him* amongst ye?"

This question met with a volley of jeers and execrations, and the constables pinioned him and bundled him off in a cart to Bow Street, to wait examination.

Meantime two Bow Street runners came down with a warrant, and made a careful examination of the premises. The two keys were on the table. Mr. Gardiner's outer door was locked. There was no money either in his portmanteau or Captain Cowen's. Both pistols were found loaded, but no priming in the pan of the one that lay on the bed; the other was primed, but the bullets were above the powder.

Bradbury, one of the runners, took particular notice of all.

Outside, blood was traced from the stable to the garden wall, and under this wall in the grass, a bloody knife was found belonging to the " Swan" Inn. There was one knife less in Mr. Gardiner's room than had been carried up to his supper.

Mr. Gardiner lingered till noon, but never spoke again.

The news spread swiftly, and Captain Cowen came home in the afternoon very pale and shocked.

He had heard of a robbery and murder at the " Swan," and came to know more. The landlady told him all that had transpired, and that the villain Cox was in prison.

Cowen listened thoughtfully, and said: " Cox! No doubt he is a knave ; but murder !—I should never have suspected him of that."

The landlady pooh-poohed his doubts. " Why, sir, the poor gentleman knew him, and wounded him in self-defense, and the rogue was found a-bleeding from that very wound, and my knife, as done the murder, not a stone's-throw from him as done it, which it was that Dan Cox, and he'll swing for it, please God." Then changing her tone, she said, solemnly, " You'll come and see him, sir ? "

" Yes," said Cowen, resolutely, with scarce a moment's hesitation.

The landlady led the way, and took the keys out of her pocket, and opened Cowen's door. " We keep all locked," said she, half-apologetically ; " the magistrate bade us ; and everything as we found it

—God help us! There—look at your portmanteau. I wish you may not have been robbed as well."

"No matter," said he.

"But it matters to *me*," said she, "for the credit of the house." Then she gave him the key of the inner door, and waved her hand toward it, and sat down and began to cry.

Cowen went in and saw the appalling sight. He returned quickly, looking like a ghost, and muttered, "This is a terrible business."

"It is a bad business for me and all," said she. "He have robbed you too, I'll go bail."

Captain Cowen examined his trunk carefully.

"Nothing to speak of," said he. "I've lost eight guineas and my gold watch."

"There!—there!—there!" cried the landlady.

"What does that matter, dame? *He* has lost his life."

"Ay, poor soul. But 'twont bring him back, you being robbed and all. Was ever such an unfortunate woman? Murder and robbery in *my* house? Travellers will shun it like a pest-house. And the new landlord he only wanted a good excuse to take it down altogether."

This was followed by more sobbing and crying. Cowen took her downstairs into the bar and comforted her. They had a glass of spirits together, and he encouraged the flow of her egotism till at last she fully persuaded herself it was *her* calamity that one man was robbed and another murdered in *her* house.

Cowen, always a favorite, quite won her heart by falling into this view of the matter, and when he told her he must go back to the City again, for he had important business, and besides had no money left either in his pockets or rifled valise, she encouraged him to go, and said, kindly, indeed it was no place for him now; it was very good of him to come back at all; but both apartments should be scoured and made decent in a very few days and a new carpet put down in Mr. Gardiner's room.

So Cowen went back to the City and left this notable woman to mop up *her* murder.

At Bow Street next morning, in answer to the evidence of his guilt, Cox told a tale which the magistrate said was even more ridiculous than most of the stories uneducated criminals get up on such occasions; with this single comment he committed Cox for trial.

Everybody was of the magistrate's opinion, except a single Bow Street runner, the same who had already examined the premises. This man suspected Cox, but had one qualm of doubt, founded on the place where he had discovered the knife, and the circumstance of the blood being traced from that place to the stable, and not from the inn to the stable, and on a remark Cox had made to him in the cart: "I don't belong to the house. I hain't got no keys to go in and out o' nights; and if I took a hatful of gold, I'd be off with it to another country—wouldn't *you?* Him as took the

gentleman's money, he knew where 'twas, and he have got it; I didn't, and I hain't."

Bradbury came down to the "Swan," and asked the landlady a question or two; she gave him short answers. He then told her that he wished to examine the wine that had come down from Mr. Gardiner's room.

The landlady looked him in the face, and said it had been drunk by the servants, or thrown away long ago.

"I have my doubts of that," said he.

"And welcome," said she.

Then he wished to examine the key-holes. "No," said she. "There has been prying enough into my house."

Said he, angrily: "You are obstructing justice. It is very suspicious."

"It is you that is suspicious, and a mischief-maker into the bargain," said she. "How do I know what you might put into my wine and my key-holes, and say you found it? You are well known, you Bow Street runners, for your hanky-panky tricks. Have *you* got a search-warrant, to throw more discredit upon my house? No? Then pack: and learn the law before you teach it me."

Bradbury retired, bitterly indignant, and his indignation strengthened his faint doubt of Cox's guilt.

He set a friend to watch the "Swan," and he himself gave his mind to the whole case, and visited Cox in Newgate three times before his trial.

The next novelty was that legal assistance was provided for Cox by a person who expressed compassion for his poverty and inability to defend himself, guilty or not guilty; and that benevolent person was—Captain Cowen.

In due course Daniel Cox was arraigned at the bar of the Old Bailey for robbery and murder.

The deposition of the murdered man was put in by the Crown, and the witnesses sworn who heard it, and Captain Cowen was called to support a portion of it. He swore that he supped with the deceased, and loaded one pistol for him, while Mr. Gardiner loaded the other; lent him the key of his own door for further security, and himself slept in the City.

The judge asked him where, and he said, "13, Farringdon Street."

It was elicited from him that he had provided counsel for the prisoner.

His evidence was very short, and to the point. It did not directly touch the accused, and the defendant's counsel, in spite of his client's eager desire, declined to cross-examine Captain Cowen. He thought a hostile examination of so respectable a witness, who brought nothing home to the accused, would only raise more indignation against his client.

The prosecution was strengthened by the reluctant evidence of Barbara Lamb. She deposed that three years ago Cox had been detected by her

stealing money from a gentleman's table in the "Swan" Inn, and she gave the details.

The judge asked her whether this was at night.

"No, my Lord; at about four of the clock. He is never in the house at night. The mistress can't abide him."

"Has he any key of the house?"

"Oh dear no, my Lord."

The rest of the evidence for the Crown is virtually before the reader.

For the defense it was proved that the man was found drunk, with no money or keys upon him, and that the knife was found under the wall, and the blood was traceable from the wall to the stable. Bradbury, who proved this, tried to get in about the wine, but this was stopped as irrelevant. "There is only one person under suspicion," said the judge, rather sternly.

As counsel were not allowed in that day to make speeches to the jury, but only to examine and cross-examine, and discuss points of law, Daniel Cox had to speak on his own defense.

"My Lord," said he, "it was my double done it."

"Your what?" asked my Lord, a little peevishly.

"My double. There's a rogue prowls about the 'Swan' at nights, which you couldn't tell him from me. [*Laughter.*] You needn't to laugh me to the gallows. I tell ye he have got a nose like mine." (*Laughter.*)

Clerk of Arraigns. Keep silence in the court on pain of imprisonment.

"And he have got a waistcoat the very spit of mine, and a tumble-down hat such as I do wear. I saw him go by and let hisself into the 'Swan' with a key, and I told Sam Pott next morning."

Judge. Who is Sam Pott?

Culprit. Why, my stable-boy, to be sure.

Judge. Is he in Court?

Culprit. I don't know. Ay, there he is.

Judge. Then you had better call him.

Culprit (*shouting*). Hy! Sam!

Sam. Here be I. (*Loud Laughter.*)

The Judge explained, calmly, that to call a witness meant to put him in the box and swear him, and that although it was irregular, yet he should allow Pott to be sworn, if it would do the prisoner any good.

Prisoner's counsel said he had no wish to swear Mr. Pott.

"Well, Mr. Gurney," said the Judge, "I don't think he can do you any harm." Meaning in so desperate a case.

Thereupon Sam Pott was sworn, and deposed that Cox had told him about this double.

"When?"

"Often and often.

"Before the murder?"

"Long afore that."

Counsel for the Crown. Did you ever see this double?"

"Not I."

Counsel. "I thought not."

Daniel Cox went on to say that on the night of the murder he was up with a sick horse, and he saw his double let himself out of the inn the back way, and then turn round and close the door softly: so he slipped out to meet him. But the double saw him, and made for the garden wall. He ran up and caught him with one leg over the wall, and seized a black bag he was carrying off; the figure dropped it and he heard a lot of money clink: that thereupon he cried, "Thieves!" and seized the man; but immediately received a blow, and lost his senses for a time. When he came to, the man and the bag were both gone, and he felt so sick that he staggered to the stable and drank a pint of neat brandy, and he remembered no more till they pumped on him, and told him he had robbed and murdered a gentleman inside the "Swan" Inn. "What they can't tell me," said Daniel, beginning to shout, "is how I could know who has got the money, and who haan't, inside the 'Swan' Inn. I keeps the stables, not the inn: and where be my keys to open and shut the 'Swan'? I never had none. And where's the gentleman's money? 'Twas somebody in the inn as done it, for to have the money, and when you find the money, you'll find the man."

The prosecuting counsel ridiculed this defense, and *inter alia* asked the jury whether they thought it was a double the witness Lamb had caught robbing the inn three years ago.

The judge summed up very closely, giving the

evidence of every witness. What follows is a mere synopsis of the charge.

He showed it was beyond doubt that Mr. Gardiner returned to the inn with money, having collected his rents in Wiltshire; and this was known in the inn, and proved by several, and might have transpired in the yard or the tap-room. The unfortunate gentleman took Captain Cowen into his confidence, and revealed his uneasiness. Captain Cowen swore that he supped with him, but could not stay all night, most unfortunately. But he encouraged him, left him his pistols, and helped him to load them.

Then his Lordship read the dying man's deposition.

The person thus solemnly denounced was found in the stable, bleeding from a recent wound, which seems to connect him at once with the deed as described by the dying man.

"But here," said my Lord, "the chain is no longer perfect. A knife, taken from the 'Swan,' was found under the garden wall, and the first traces of blood commenced there, and continued to the stable, and were abundant on the straw and on the person of the accused. This was proved by the constable and others. No money was found on him, and no keys that could have opened any outer doors of the 'Swan' Inn. The accused had, however, three years before been guilty of a theft, from a gentleman in the inn, which negatives his pretense that he always con-

fined himself to the stables. It did not, however, appear that, on the occasion of the theft, he had unlocked any doors, or possessed the means. The witness for the Crown, Barbara Lamb, was clear on that.

"The prisoner's own solution of the mystery was not very credible. He said he had a double, or a person wearing his clothes and appearance ; and he had seen this person prowling about long before the murder, and had spoken of the double to one Pott. Pott deposed that Cox had spoken of this double more than once ; but admitted that he never saw the double with his own eyes.

"This double, says the accused, on the fatal night let himself out of the 'Swan' Inn, and escaped to the garden wall. There he (Cox) came up with this mysterious person, and a scuffle ensued, in which a bag was dropped, and gave the sound of coin, and then Cox held the man and cried 'Thieves!' but presently received a wound, and fainted ; and on recovering himself staggered to the stables and drank a pint of brandy.

"The story sounds ridiculous, and there is no direct evidence to back it. But there is a circumstance that lends some color to it. There was one blood-stained instrument, and no more, found on the premises, and that knife answers the description given by the dying man, and indeed may be taken to be the very knife missing from his room, and this knife was found under the garden wall, and there the blood commenced, and was traced to the stable.

"Here," said my Lord, "to my mind, lies the defense. Look at the case on all sides, gentlemen: an undoubted murder done by hands; no suspicion resting on any known person but the prisoner, a man who had already robbed in the inn; a confident recognition by one whose deposition is legal evidence, but evidence we cannot cross-examine, and a recognition by moonlight only and in the heat of a struggle.

"If on this evidence, weakened not a little by the position of the knife and the traces of blood, and met by the prisoner's declaration which accords with that single branch of the evidence, you have a doubt, it is your duty to give the prisoner the full benefit of that doubt, as I have endeavoured to do; and if you have no doubt, why, then you have only to support the law, and protect the lives of peaceful citizens. Whoever has committed this crime, it certainly is an alarming circumstance that, in a public inn, surrounded by honest people, guarded by locked doors, and armed with pistols, a peaceful citizen can be robbed like this of his money and his life."

The jury saw a murder at an inn; an accused, who had already robbed in that inn, and was denounced as his murderer by the victim. The verdict seemed to them to be Cox or impunity. They all slept at inns. A double they had never seen; undetected accomplices they had all heard of. They waited twenty minutes, and brought in their verdict—Guilty.

The judge put on his black cap and condemned Daniel Cox to be hanged by the neck till he was dead.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER the trial was over, and the condemned man led back to prison to await his execution, Bradbury went straight to 13 Farringdon Street, and inquired for Captain Cowen.

"No such name here," said the good woman of the house.

"But you keep lodgers?"

"Nay, we keep but one, and he is no Captain, he is a City clerk."

"Well, madam, it is not idle curiosity, I assure you; but was not the lodger before him Captain Cowen?"

"Laws, no. It was a parson. Your rakehelly Captains wouldn't suit the likes of us. 'Twas a reverend clerk; a grave old gentleman. He wasn't very well to do, I think: his cassock was worn; but he paid his way."

"Keep late hours?"

"Not when he was in town; but he had a country cure."

"Then you have let him in after midnight."

"Nay, I keep no such hours. I lent him a pass-key. He came in and out from the country when he chose. I would have you to know he was an old man, and a sober man, and an honest man; I'd

wager my life on that. And excuse me, sir, but who be you, that do catechise me so about my lodgers?"

"I am an officer, madam."

The simple woman turned pale and clasped her hands. "An officer!" she cried. "Alack! what have I done *now?*"

"Why, nothing, madam," said the wily Bradbury. "An officer's business is to protect such as you, not to trouble you, for all the world. There, now, I'll tell you where the shoe pinches. This Captain Cowen has just sworn in a court of justice that he slept here on the 15th of last October."

"He never did, then. Our good parson had no acquaintances in the town. Not a soul visited him."

"Mother," said a young girl, peeping in, "I think he knew somebody of that very name. He did ask me once to post a letter for him, and it was to some man of worship, and the name was Cowen, yes—Cowen 'twas. I'm sure of it. By the same token, he never gave me another letter, and that made me pay the more attention."

"Jane, you are too curious," said the mother.

"And I am very much obliged to you, my little maid," said the officer, "and also to you, madam," and so took his leave.

One evening, all of a sudden, Captain Cowen ordered a prime horse at the "Swan," strapped his valise on before him, and rode out of the yard post-haste: he went without drawing bridle to Clapham, and then looked round him, and seeing no other

horseman near, trotted gently round into the Borough, and then into the City, and slept at an inn in Holborn. He had bespoken a particular room beforehand, a little room he frequented. He entered it with an air of anxiety. But this soon vanished after he had examined the floor carefully. His horse was ordered at five o'clock next morning. He took a glass of strong waters at the door to fortify his stomach, but breakfasted at Uxbridge and fed his good horse. He dined at Beaconsfield, baited at Thame, and supped with his son at Oxford ; next day paid all the young man's debts, and spent a week with him.

His conduct was strange : boisterously gay and sullenly despondent by turns. During the week came an unexpected visitor, General Sir Robert Barrington. This officer was going out to America to fill an important office. He had something in view for young Cowen, and came to judge quietly of his capacity. But he did not say anything at that time, for fear of exciting hopes he might possibly disappoint.

However, he was much taken with the young man. Oxford had polished him. His modest reticence, until invited to speak, recommended him to older men, especially as his answers were judicious, when invited to give his opinion. The tutors also spoke very highly of him.

" You may well love that boy," said General Barrington to the father.

" God bless you for praising him ! " said the other. " Ay, I love him too well."

Soon after the General left, Cowen changed some gold for notes, and took his departure for London, having first sent word of his return. He meant to start after breakfast and make one day of it ; but he lingered with his son, and did not cross Magdalen Bridge till one o'clock.

This time he rode through Dorchester, Benson, and Henley, and as it grew dark, resolved to sleep at Maidenhead.

Just after Hurley Bottom, at four cross-roads, three highwaymen spurred on him from right and left. "Your money or your life!"

He whipped a pistol out of his holster and pulled at the nearest head in a moment.

The pistol missed fire. The next moment a blow from the butt end of a horse-pistol dazed him, and he was dragged off his horse and his valise emptied in a minute.

Before they had done with him, however, there was a clatter of hoofs, and the robbers sprang to their nags and galloped away for the bare life as a troop of yeomanry rode up. The thing was so common the new-comers read the situation at a glance, and some of the best mounted gave chase ; the others attended to Captain Cowen, caught his horse, strapped on his valise, and took him with them into Maidenhead, his head aching, his heart sickening and raging by turns. All his gold gone, nothing left but a few £1 notes that he had sewed into the lining of his coat.

He reached the "Swan" next day in a state of

sullen despair. "A curse is on me," he said. "*My* pistol miss fire : *my* gold gone."

He was welcomed warmly. He stared with surprise. Barbara led the way to his old room, and opened it. He started back. "Not there," he said, with a shudder.

"Alack ! Captain, we have kept it for you. Sure *you* are not afear'd."

"No," said he, doggedly—"no hope, no fear."

She started, but said nothing.

He had hardly got into the room when, click, a key was turned in the door of communication. "A traveller there ! " said he. Then, bitterly, "Things are soon forgotten in an inn."

"Not by me," said Barbara, solemnly. "But you know our dame, she can't let money go by her. 'Tis our best room, mostly, and nobody would use it that knows the place. He is a stranger. He is from the wars ; will have it he is English, but talks foreign. He is civil enough when he is sober, but when he has got a drop he does maunder away to be sure, and sings such songs I never."

"How long has he been here ? " asked Cowen.

"Five days, and the mistress hopes he will stay as many more, just to break the spell."

"He can stay or go," said Cowen. "I am in no humour for company. I have been robbed, girl."

"You robbed, sir ? Not openly, I am sure."

"Openly—but by numbers—three of them. I should soon have sped one, but my pistol snapped fire just like his. There, leave me, girl ; fate is

against me, and a curse upon me. Bubbled out of my fortune in the City, robbed of my gold upon the road. To be honest is to be a fool."

He flung himself on the bed with a groan of anguish, and the ready tears ran down soft Barbara's cheeks. She had tact, however, in her humble way, and did not prattle to a strong man in a moment of wild distress. She just turned and cast a lingering glance of pity on him, and went to fetch him food and wine. She had often seen an unhappy man the better for eating and drinking.

When she was gone, he cursed himself for his weakness in letting her know his misfortunes. They would be all over the house soon. "Why, that fellow next door must have heard me bawl them out. I have lost my head," said he, "and I never needed it more."

Barbara returned with the cold powdered beef and carrots, and a bottle of wine she had paid for herself. She found him sullen, but composed. He made her solemnly promise not to mention his losses. She consented readily, and said, "You know I can hold my tongue."

When he had eaten and drunk and felt stronger, he resolved to put a question to her. "How about that poor fellow?"

She looked puzzled a moment, then turned pale, and said, solemnly: "'Tis for this day week, I hear. 'Twas to be last week, but the King did respite him for a fortnight."

"Ah! indeed! Do you know why?"

"No, indeed. In his place, I'd rather have been put out of the way at once; for they will surely hang him."

Now in our day the respite is very rare: a criminal is hanged or reprieved. But at the period of our story men were often respited for short or long periods, yet suffered at last. One poor wretch was respited for two years, yet executed. This respite, therefore, was nothing unusual, and Cowen, though he looked thoughtful, had no downright suspicion of anything so serious to himself as really lay beneath the surface of this not unusual occurrence.

I shall, however, let the reader know more about it. The judge in reporting the case notified to the proper authority that he desired his Majesty to know he was not entirely at ease about the verdict. There was a lacuna in the evidence against the prisoner. He stated the flaw in a very few words. But he did not suggest any remedy.

Now the public clamoured for the man's execution, that travellers might be safe. The King's adviser thought that if the judge had serious doubts, it was his business to tell the jury so. The order for execution issued.

Three days after this the judge received a letter from Bradbury, which I give verbatim.

The King v. Cox.

"My Lord,—Forgive my writing to you in a case of blood. There is no other way. Daniel Cox was not defended. Counsel went against his

wish, and would not throw suspicion on any other. That made it Cox or nobody. But there was a man in the inn whose conduct was suspicious. He furnished the wine that made the victim sleepy—and I must tell you the landlady would not let me see the remnant of the wine. She did everything to baffle me and defeat justice—he loaded two pistols so that neither could go off. He has got a pass-key, and goes in and out of the 'Swan' at all hours. He provided counsel for Daniel Cox. That could only be through compunction.

"He swore in court that he slept that night at 13 Farringdon Street. Your Lordship will find it on your notes. For 'twas you put the question, and methinks Heaven inspired you. An hour after the trial I was at 13 Farringdon Street. No Cowen and no Captain had ever lodged there nor slept there. Present lodger, a City clerk; lodger at date of murder, an old clergyman that said he had a country cure, and got the simple body to trust him with a pass key: so he came in and out at all hours of the night. This man was no clerk, but as I believe, the cracksman that did the job at the 'Swan.'

"My Lord, there is always two in a job of this sort—the professional man and the confederate. Cowen was the confederate, hocussed the wine, loaded the pistols, and lent his pass-key to the cracksman. The cracksman opened the other door with his tools, unless Cowen made him duplicate keys. Neither of them intended violence, or they would have used their own weapons. The wine

was drugged expressly to make that needless. The cracksman, instead of a black mask, put on a calf-skin waistcoat and a bottle nose, and that passed muster for Cox by moonlight; it puzzled Cox by moonlight, and deceived Gardiner by moonlight.

"For the love of God get me a respite for the innocent man, and I will undertake to bring the crime home to the cracksman and to his confederate Cowen."

Bradbury signed this with his name and quality.

The judge was not sorry to see the doubt his own wariness had raised so powerfully confirmed. He sent this missive on to the minister, with the remark that he had received a letter which ought not to have been sent to him, but to those in whose hands the prisoner's fate rested. He thought it his duty, however, to transcribe from his notes the question he had put to Captain Cowen, and his reply that he had slept at 13 Farringdon Street on the night of the murder, and also the substance of the prisoner's defense, with the remark that, as stated by that uneducated person, it had appeared ridiculous: but that after studying this Bow Street officer's statements, and assuming them to be in the main correct, it did not appear ridiculous, but only remarkable, and it reconciled all the undisputed facts, whereas that Cox was the murderer was and ever must remain irreconcilable with the position of the knife and the track of the blood.

Bradbury's letter and the above comment found

their way to the King, and he granted what was asked—a respite.

Bradbury and his fellows went to work to find the old clergyman, *alias* cracksman. But he had melted away without a trace, and they got no other clew. But during Cowen's absence they got a traveller, *i. e.*, a disguised agent, into the inn, who found relics of wax in the key-holes of Cowen's outer door and of the door of communication.

Bradbury sent this information in two letters, one to the judge, and one to the minister.

But this did not advance him much. He had long been sure that Cowen was in it. It was the professional hand, the actual robber and murderer, he wanted.

The days succeeded one another : nothing was done. He lamented, too late, he had not applied for a reprieve, or even a pardon. He deplored his own presumption in assuming that he could unravel such a mystery entirely. His busy brain schemed night and day ; he lost his sleep, and even his appetite. At last, in sheer despair, he proposed to himself a new solution, and acted upon it in the dark and with consummate subtlety ; for he said to himself : "I am in deeper water than I thought. Lord, how they skim a case at the Old Bailey ! They take a pond for a puddle, and go to fathom it with a forefinger."

Captain Cowen sank into a settled gloom ; but he no longer courted solitude ; it gave him the hor-

rors. He preferred to be in company, though he no longer shone in it. He made acquaintance with his neighbour, and rather liked him. The man had been in the Commissariat Department, and seemed half surprised at the honour a Captain did him in conversing with him. But he was well versed in all the incidents of the late wars, and Cowen was glad to go with him into the past; for the present was dead, and the future horrible.

This Mr. Cutler, so deferential when sober, was inclined to be more familiar when in his cups, and that generally ended in his singing and talking to himself in his own room in the absurdest way. He never went out without a black leather case strapped across his back like a dispatch-box. When joked and asked as to the contents, he used to say, "Papers, papers," curtly.

One evening being rather the worse for liquor, he dropped it, and there was a metallic sound. This was immediately commented on by the wags of the company.

"That fell heavy, for paper," said one.

"And there was a ring," said another.

"Come, unload thy pack, comrade, and show us thy papers."

Cutler was sobered in a moment, and looked scared. Cowen observed this, and quietly left the room. He went upstairs to his own room, and, mounting on a chair, he found a thin place in the partition, and made an eyelet-hole.

That very night he made use of this with good

effect. Cutler came up to bed, singing and whistling, but presently threw down something heavy, and was silent. Cowen spied, and saw him kneel down, draw from his bosom a key suspended round his neck by a ribbon, and open the dispatch-box. There were papers in it, but only to deaden the sound of a great many new guineas that glittered in the light of the candle, and seemed to fire, and fill the receptacle.

Cutler looked furtively round, plunged his hands in them, took them out by handfuls, admired them, kissed them, and seemed to worship them, locked them up again, and put the black case under his pillow.

While they were glaring in the light, Cowen's eyes flashed with unholy fire. He clutched his hands at them where he stood, but they were inaccessible. He sat down despondent, and cursed the injustice of fate. Bubbled out of money in the City; robbed on the road: but when another had money, it was safe: he left his keys in the locks of both doors, and his gold never quitted him.

Not long after this discovery he got a letter from his son, telling him that the college bill for battels, or commons, had come in, and he was unable to pay it: he begged his father to disburse it, or he should lose credit.

This tormented the unhappy father, and the proximity of gold tantalised him, so that he bought a phial of laudanum and secreted it about his person.

"Better die," said he, "and leave my boy to Barrington. Such a legacy from his dead comrade will be sacred, and he has the world at his feet."

He even ordered a bottle of red port, and kept it by him to swill the laudanum in, and so get drunk and die.

But when it came to the point, he faltered.

Meantime the day drew near for the execution of Daniel Cox : Bradbury had undertaken too much. His cracksman seemed, to the King's advisers, as shadowy as the double of Daniel Cox.

The evening before that fatal day Cowen came to a wild resolution. He would go to Tyburn at noon, which was the hour fixed, and would die under that man's gibbet. So was this powerful mind unhinged.

This desperate idea was uppermost in his mind when he went up to his bedroom.

But he resisted. No, he would never play the coward while there was a chance left on the cards. While there is life there is hope. He seized the bottle, uncorked it, and tossed off a glass. It was potent, and tingled through his veins, and warmed his heart.

He set the bottle down before him. He filled another glass. But before he put it to his lips jocund noises were heard coming up the stairs, and noisy drunken voices, and two boon companions of his neighbour Cutler, who had a double-bedded room opposite him, parted with him for the night. He was not drunk enough, it seems, for he kept

demanding t'other bottle. His friends, however, were of a different opinion; they bundled him into his room, and locked him in from the other side; and shortly after burst into their own room, and were more garrulous than articulate.

Cutler, thus disposed of, kept saying, and shouting, and whining, that he must have t'other bottle. In short, any one at a distance would have thought he was announcing sixteen different propositions, so various were the accents of anger, grief, expostulation, deprecation, supplication, imprecation, and whining tenderness in which he declared he must have t'other bo'l.

At last he came bump against the door of communication. "Neighbour," said he, "your wuship, I mean, great man of war."

"Well, sir?"

"Let's have t'other bo'l."

Cowen's eyes flashed. He took out his phial of laudanum, and emptied about a fifth part of it into the bottle.

Cutler whined at the door, "Do open the door, your wuship, and let's have t'other (hic)."

"Why, the key is on your side."

A feeble-minded laugh at the discovery, a fumbling with the key, and the door opened, and Cutler stood in the doorway, with his cravat disgracefully loose, and his visage wreathed in foolish smiles. His eyes goggled; he pointed with a mixture of surprise and low cunning at the table: "Why, there *is* t'other bo'l: let's have'm."

"Nay," said Cowen, "I drain no bottles at this time. One glass suffices me. I drink your health." He raised his glass.

Cutler grabbed the bottle, and said, brutally, "And I'll drink yours," and shut the door with a slam, but was too intent on his prize to lock it.

Cowen sat and listened.

He heard the wine gurgle, and the drunkard draw a long breath of delight.

Then there was a pause; then a snatch of song, rather melodious, and more articulate than Mr. Cutler's recent attempts at discourse.

Then another gurgle, and another loud, "Ah!"

Then a vocal attempt, which broke down by degrees.

Then a snore.

Then a somnolent remark—"All right."

Then a staggering on to his feet. Then a swaying to and fro, and a subsiding against the door.

Then by-and-by a little reel at the bed, and a fall flat on the floor.

Then stertorous breathing.

Cowen sat still at the key-hole some time, then took off his boots and softly mounted his chair, and applied his eye to the peep-hole.

Cutler was lying on his stomach between the table and the bed.

Cowen came to the door on tiptoe and turned the handle gently; the door yielded.

He lost nerve for the first time in his life. What

horrible shame, should the man come to his senses and see him !

He stepped back into his own room, ripped up his portmanteau, and took out, from between the leather and the lining, a disguise and a mask. He put them on.

Then he took his loaded cane ; for he thought to himself, " No more stabbing in that room," and he crept through the door like a cat.

The man lay breathing stertorously, and his lips blowing out at every exhalation like lifeless lips urged by a strong wind, so that Cowen began to fear, not that he might wake, but that he might die.

It flashed across him he should have to leave England.

What he came to do seemed now wonderfully easy ; he took the key by its ribbon carefully off the sleeper's neck, unlocked the dispatch-box, took off his hat, put the gold into it, locked the dispatch-box, replaced the key, took up his hatful of money, and retired slowly on tiptoe as he came.

He had but deposited his stick and the booty on the bed, when the sham drunkard pinned him from behind, and uttered a shrill whistle. With a fierce snarl Cowen whirled his captor round like a feather, and dashed with him against the post of his own door, stunning the man so that he relaxed his hold, and Cowen whirled him round again, and kicked him in the stomach so felly that he was doubled up out of the way, and contributed nothing more to

the struggle except his last meal. At this very moment two Bow Street runners rushed madly upon Cowen through the door of communication. He met one in full career with a blow so tremendous that it sounded through the house, and drove him all across the room against the window, where he fell down senseless; the other he struck rather short, and though the blood spurted and the man staggered, he was on him again in a moment, and pinned him. Cowen, a master of pugilism, got his head under his left shoulder, and pommelled him cruelly; but the fellow managed to hold on, till a powerful foot kicked in the door at a blow, and Bradbury himself sprang on Captain Cowen with all the fury of a tiger; he seized him by the throat from behind, and throttled him, and set his knee to his back; the other, though mauled and bleeding, whipped out a short rope, and pinioned him in a a turn of the hand. Then all stood panting but the disabled men, and once more the passage and the room were filled with pale faces and panting bosoms.

Lights flashed on the scene, and instantly loud screams from the landlady and her maids, and as they screamed they pointed with trembling fingers.

And well they might. There—caught red-handed in an act of robbery and violence, a few steps from the place of the mysterious murder, stood the stately figure of Captain Cowen and the mottled face and bottle nose of Daniel Cox, condemned to die in just twelve hours' time.

CHAPTER IV.

"AY, scream, ye fools," roared Bradbury, "that couldn't see a church by daylight." Then, shaking his fist at Cowen: "Thou villain! 'Tisn't one man you have murdered, 'tis two. But please God I'll save one of them yet, and hang you in his place. Way, there! not a moment to lose."

In another minute they were all in the yard, and a hackney-coach sent for.

Captain Cowen said to Bradbury, "This thing on my face is choking me."

"Oh, better than you have been choked—at Tyburn and all."

"Hang me. Don't pillory me. I've served my country."

Bradbury removed the wax mask. He said afterward he had no power to refuse the villain, he was so grand and gentle.

"Thank you, sir. Now what can I do for you? Save Daniel Cox!"

"Ay, do that and I'll forgive you."

"Give me a sheet of paper."

Bradbury, impressed by the man's tone of sincerity, took him into the bar, and getting all his men round him, placed paper and ink before him.

He addressed to General Barrington, in attendance on his Majesty, these:

"GENERAL,—See his Majesty betimes, tell him from me that Daniel Cox, condemned to die at

noon, is innocent, and get him a reprieve. Oh, Barrington, come to your lost comrade. The bearer will tell you where I am. I can not.

"EDWARD COWEN."

"Send a man you can trust to Windsor with that, and take me to my most welcome death."

A trusty officer was dispatched to Windsor, and in about an hour Cowen was lodged in Newgate.

All that night Bradbury labored to save the man that was condemned to die. He knocked up the sheriff of Middlesex, and told him all.

"Don't come to me," said the sheriff; "go to the minister."

He rode to the minister's house. The minister was up. His wife gave a ball—windows blazing, shadows dancing—music—lights. Night turned into day. Bradbury knocked. The door flew open and revealed a line of bedizened footmen, dotted at interval up the stairs.

"I must see my Lord. Life or death. I'm an officer from Bow Street."

"You can't see my Lord. He is entertaining the Proosian Ambassador and his sweet."

"I must see him, or an innocent man will die to-morrow. Tell him so. Here's a guinea."

"Is there? Step aside here."

He waited in torments till the message went through the gamut of lackeys, and got, more or less mutilated, to the minister.

He detached a buffer, who proposed to Mr.

Bradbury to call at the Do-little office in Westminster next morning.

"No," said Bradbury, "I don't leave the house till I see him. Innocent blood shall not be spilled for want of a word in time."

The buffer retired, and in came a duffer, who said the occasion was not convenient.

"Ay, but it is," said Bradbury, "and if my Lord is not here in five minutes, I'll go upstairs and tell my tale before them all, and see if they are all hairdressers' dummies, without heart, or conscience, or sense."

In five minutes in came a gentleman, with an order on his breast, and said, "You are a Bow Street officer?"

"Yes, my Lord."

"Name?"

"Bradbury."

"You say the man condemned to die to-morrow is innocent?"

"Yes, my Lord."

"How do you know?"

"Just taken the real culprit."

"When is the other to suffer?"

"Twelve to-morrow."

"Seems short time. Humph! Will you be good enough to take a line to the sheriff? Formal message to-morrow."

The actual message ran:

"Delay execution of Cox till we hear from Windsor. Bearer will give reasons."

With this Bradbury hurried away, not to the sheriff but to the prisoner: and infected the jailer and the chaplain and all the turnkeys with pity for the condemned, and the spirit of delay.

Bradbury breakfasted, and washed his face, and off to the sheriff. Sheriff was gone out. Bradbury hunted him from pillar to post, and could find him nowhere. He was at last obliged to go and wait for him at Newgate.

He arrived at the stroke of twelve to superintend the execution. Bradbury put the minister's note into his hand.

"This is no use," said he. "I want an order from his Majesty, or the Privy Council at least."

"Not to delay," suggested the chaplain. "You have all the day for it."

"All the day! I can't be all the day hanging a single man. My time is precious, gentlemen." Then, his bark being worse than his bite, he said, "I shall come again at four o'clock, and then, if there is no news from Windsor, the law must take its course."

He never came again, though, for, even as he turned his back to retire, there was a faint cry from the farthest part of the crowd, a paper raised on a hussar's lance, and, as the mob fell back on every side, a royal aid-de-camp rode up, followed closely by the mounted runner, and delivered to the sheriff a reprieve under the sign-manual of his Majesty, George the First.

At 2 P. M. of the same day General Sir Robert

Barrington reached Newgate, and saw Captain Cowen in private. That unhappy man fell upon his knees and made a confession.

Barrington was horrified, and turned as cold as ice to him. He stood erect as a statue. "A soldier—to rob," said he. "Murder was bad enough —but to rob!"

Cowen, with his head and hands all hanging down, could only say, faintly: "I have been robbed and ruined, and it was for my boy. Ah me! what will become of him? I have lost my soul for him, and now he will be ruined and disgraced —by me, who would have died for him." The strong man shook with agony, and his head and hands almost touched the ground.

Sir Robert Barrington looked at him and pondered.

"No," said he, relenting a little, "that is the one thing I can do for you. I had made up my mind to take your son to Canada as my secretary, and I will take him. But he must change his name. I sail next Thursday."

The broken man stared wildly; then started up and blessed him; and from that moment the wild hope entered his breast that he might keep his son unstained by his crime, and even ignorant of it.

Barrington said that was impossible; but yielded to the father's prayers, and consented to act as if it was possible. He would send a messenger to Oxford, with money and instructions to bring the young man up and put him on board the ship at Gravesend.

This difficult scheme once conceived, there was not a moment to be lost. Barrington sent down a mounted messenger to Oxford, with money and instructions.

Cowen sent for Bradbury, and asked him when he was to appear at Bow Street.

" To-morrow, I suppose."

" Do me a favor. Get all your witnesses : make the case complete, and show me only once to the public before I am tried."

"Well, Captain," said Bradbury, "you were square with me about poor Cox. I don't see as it matters much to you ; but I'll not say you nay." He saw the solicitor for the Crown, and asked a few days to collect all his evidence. The functionary named Friday.

This was conveyed next day to Cowen, and put him in a fever ; it gave him a chance of keeping his son ignorant, but no certainty. Ships were eternally detained at Gravesend, waiting for a wind : there were no steam-tugs then to draw them into blue water. Even going down the Channel letters boarded them, if the wind slacked. He walked his room to and fro, like a caged tiger, day and night.

Wednesday evening Barrington came with the news that his son was at the " Star " in Cornhill. " I have got him to bed," said he, and " Lord forgive me, I have let him think he will see you before we go down to Gravesend to-morrow."

" Then let me see him," said the miserable father. " He shall know naught from me."

They applied to the jailer, and urged that he could be a prisoner all the time, surrounded by constables in disguise. No; the jailer would not risk his place and an indictment. Bradbury was sent for, and made light of the responsibility. "I brought him here," said he, "and I will take him to the 'Star,' I and my fellows. Indeed, he will give us no trouble this time. Why, that would blow the gaff, and make the young gentleman fly to the whole thing."

"It can only be done by authority," was the jailer's reply.

"Then by authority it shall be done," said Sir Robert. "Mr. Bradbury, have three men here with a coach at one o'clock, and a regiment, if you like, to watch the 'Star.'"

Punctually at one came Barrington with an authority. It was a request from the Queen. The jailer took it respectfully. It was an authority not worth a button; but he knew he could not lose his place with this writing to brandish at need.

The father and son dined with the General at the "Star." Bradbury and one of his fellows waited as private servants: other officers, in plain clothes, watched back and front.

At three o'clock father and son parted, the son with many tears, the father with dry eyes, but a voice that trembled as he blessed him.

Young Cowen, now Morris, went down to Gravesend with his chief; the criminal back to Newgate,

respectfully bowed from the door of the "Star" by landlord and waiters.

At first he was comparatively calm, but as the night advanced became restless, and by-and-by began to pace his cell again like a caged lion.

At twenty minutes past eleven a turnkey brought him a line; a horseman had galloped in with it from Gravesend.

"A fair wind—we weigh anchor at the full tide. It is a merchant vessel, and the Captain under my orders to keep off shore and take no messages. Farewell. Turn to the God you have forgotten. He alone can pardon you."

On receiving this note, Cowen betook him to his knees.

In this attitude the jailer found him when he went his round.

He waited till the Captain rose, and then let him know that an able lawyer was in waiting, instructed to defend him at Bow Street next morning. The truth is, the females of the "Swan" had clubbed money for this purpose.

Cowen declined to see him. "I thank you, sir," said he. "I will defend myself."

He said, however, he had a little favour to ask. "I have been," said he, "of late much agitated and fatigued, and a sore trial awaits me in the morning. A few hours of unbroken sleep would be a boon to me."

"The turnkeys must come in to see you are all right."

"It is their duty: but I will lie in sight of the door if they will be good enough not to wake me."

"There can be no objection to that, Captain, and I am glad to see you calmer."

"Thank you; never calmer in my life."

He got his pillow, set two chairs, and composed himself to sleep. He put the candle on the table, that the turnkeys might peep through the door and see him.

Once or twice they peeped in very softly, and saw him sleeping in the full light of the candle, to moderate which, apparently, he had thrown a white handkerchief over his face.

At nine in the morning they brought him his breakfast, as he must be at Bow Street between ten and eleven.

When they came so near him it struck them he lay too still.

They took off the handkerchief.

He had been dead some hours.

Yes, there, calm, grave, and noble, incapable, as it seemed, either of the passions that had destroyed him or the tender affection which redeemed yet inspired his crimes, lay the corpse of Edward Cowen.

Thus miserably perished a man in whom were many elements of greatness.

He left what little money he had to Bradbury, in a note imploring him to keep particulars out of the journals, for his son's sake, and such was the influence on Bradbury of the scene at the "Star,"

the man's dead face, and his dying words, that, though public detail was his interest, nothing transpired but that the gentleman who had been arrested on suspicion of being concerned in the murder at the " Swan Inn " had committed suicide : to which was added by another hand : " Cox, however, has the King's pardon, and the affair still remains shrouded with mystery."

Cox was permitted to see the body of Cowen, and, whether the features had gone back to youth, or his own brain, long sobered in earnest, had enlightened his memory, recognized him as a man he had seen committed for horse-stealing at Ipswich, when he himself was the mayor's groom : but some girl lent the accused a file, and he cut his way out of the cage.

Cox's calamity was his greatest blessing. He went into Newgate scarcely knowing there was a God ; he came out thoroughly enlightened in that respect by the teaching of the chaplain and the death of Cowen. He went in a drunkard ; the noose that dangled over his head so long terrified him into life-long sobriety—for he laid all the blame on liquor—and he came out as bitter a foe to drink as drink had been to him.

His case excited sympathy : a considerable sum was subscribed to set him up in trade. He became a horse-dealer on a small scale : but he was really a most excellent judge of horses, and, being sober, enlarged his business ; horsed a coach or two ; attended fairs, and eventually made a fortune by

dealing in cavalry horses under government contracts.

As his money increased, his nose diminished, and when he died, old and regretted, only a pink tinge revealed the habits of his earlier life.

Mrs. Martha Cust and Barbara Lamb were no longer sure; but they doubted to their dying day the innocence of the ugly fellow, and the guilt of the handsome, civil-spoken gentleman.

But they converted nobody to their opinion; for they gave their reasons.

ARCHDEACON HOLDEN'S TRIBULATION.

SHE was so frail and small that the country squires who came in at the one stopping-place and left the train at the next, and talked of petty sessions and highway-boards in a strong slow way, like men with a tight grasp of a slippery subject, felt fatherly towards her : and so fair that their sons found out new and painful ways of sitting which hid dirty boots, and strange modes of propping their guns which employed hands suddenly gifted with a sense of over-abundance ; and so dainty, yet withal bright of eye and lip, that a gentleman who got in one stage from Stirhampton, and knew her, was tormented by his fancy : which pictured her as a sparkling gem in its nest of jeweller's satin. Altogether so frail and fair and dainty was this passenger ; and yet in the flush of her young beauty and fearless nature, there was about her so imperious a charm that they all, though they might travel with her but three miles—it was a dreadful train—and exchange with her not three words, became her slaves. And the gentleman who knew her grovelled before her in spirit to an extent unbecoming in a man, much more in a clergyman and a

curate. She was popular, too. For though she parted from him at the door of the carriage, she fell in almost at once with another who knew her. His business, as far as any save chatting with her was apparent, seemed to be about the book-stall. And after she had gone laughing from him, and the servant who met her—and was equally her slave with all the others, though he was more like a bishop and father of the church than they promised ever to be—had taken her luggage in charge, she met yet another, who blushed, and smiled, and bowed, and stammered before her after his kind. With him she was very merry until their roads diverged—if he had any road which was not of the nature of the last one's business. And then she tripped on just as gaily with a very tall acquaintance—they were all of one sex—and after him with another, who took up the walking where his predecessor left off, just for all the world as if she were a royal letter, and they were those old Persian post-runners, who made so little of "parasangs" and whose roads seemed always to be through "paradises." But this last one brought her to the Rectory gates, and—much lamenting—left her.

There was only Granny in the drawing-room when Dorothy ran upstairs. Granny, who was eighty-seven, and with a screen at her back and a wood fire toasting her old toes, could tell wonderful tales of the great war. Who had heard "Clarisa" read aloud *Coram Puellis*, and at times shocked a mealy-mouthed generation by pure plain

speaking. She was the Archdeacon's grandmother; but to Dorothy what relation she was, or whether she was any relation, not all Stirhampton could tell, though it spent itself in guessing, and dallied to some extent with a suggestion that she was Dorothy's great-great aunt; not, however, committing itself to this, nor altogether breaking with a rival theory, that they were first cousins three times removed.

Whatever she was, Dorothy hugged her a score of times, and the tiny old lady said, "God bless you, my dear," half as many, and was going on to her full number, when the Archdeacon himself came in. He, too, smiled upon seeing the girl, and smoothed his ruffled brow, and tried to be as if the drawing-room—when he was in it—were all his world. For this was a part of the Archdeacon's system, and he was of note through four dioceses as a man of system. So he patted the girl's hair and said kindly:

"Well, my dear, I trust you have had a pleasant visit?"

"Oh, charming, and yet I am so glad to be at home again: but, Guardian, what is the matter?"

The Archdeacon was vexed and pleased. Vexed that his attempt had not succeeded, and pleased that he could now tell his trouble. "The matter, my dear?" he said, taking a turn up and down the room; "why, I am greatly annoyed and put out. I never knew such a thing happen before."

Granny clasped her hands upon the arms of her chair in sudden excitement. "It isn't overdrawn, George, is it?" she said, nervously.

"Overdrawn!" he replied, cheerfully, "not at all." There had been a time when he was not an Archdeacon, or a Rector, or even in orders, but only a hard reading under-graduate, when Granny's bank account had been with great difficulty kept above zero. Then it was her bugbear; now the family fortunes were as solidly substantial as the comfortable red brick Rectory itself; but Granny found some difficulty in laying her bogey. "Not at all, not so bad as that," he said, cheerfully; "but very annoying, nevertheless. I was writing my Sunday evening sermon this afternoon—as I always do, you know, on Friday—when Whiteman came running in to me at five minutes after four, and said there was no one at the church to take the four o'clock service. Of course I had to break off and go. The congregation had to wait fully ten minutes. It is not so much the inroad upon my time, though that is not unimportant, as the lack of system, that I deplore. Maddy and Moser,"—they were the married curates, and took charge of the two chapels of ease—"are, of course, engaged elsewhere; but surely one of the other five might have been there. It is a piece of gross carelessness on the part of some one."

Dorothy nodded and looked gravely into the teapot. "And I saw Mr. Gray on my way from the station!" she said.

"Ah, just so. You did not meet any of the others?"

"Yes, I think I did," she replied, with a great show of candour. "Of course, I saw Mr. Bigham by the church club, and Mr. Brune in Wych street."

"Brune is the culprit, I expect. I do not think it would be Charles Emerson's fault, because he is unwell."

"Unwell!" cried the girl, impulsively. "Indeed, he is quite ill; I never saw anyone look so bad."

"Oh! And where may you have seen *him?*" asked the Archdeacon, stopping suddenly in his promenade of the room and facing her.

Dorothy bit her tongue to punish it. There is nothing so dangerous as a half-confidence. It so often leads, will-he-nill-he, to a whole one.

"He got into the train at Bromfield. He had walked out there," she said meekly, surprisingly meekly for her.

"Quite so; and may I ask whereabouts you met his brother?"

"Met his brother?"

"Yes, my dear," said the Archdeacon suavely. "Met his brother, Mr. Philip Emerson?"

"Let me see," murmured Dolly, with a vast pretence of considering, though her little ears were scarlet by this time. "Where did I meet Mr. Philip? Of course, I met him at the station. But how ever did you know?" she asked, with the utmost effrontery.

"When one sheep, Dorothy, jumps over a gap, all

the flock follow. Four of my curates being so busily engaged meeting my ward, I had little doubt that the fifth was as well occupied."

Unseen by him she made a face at Granny, who was understood to say that boys would be boys.

"And sheep, sheep," retorted the Archdeacon with sharpness.

"They did not tell me they had come to meet me," said Dolly, rebelliously. She did not like that proverb, or whatever it was, about sheep.

The Archdeacon frowned.

"No," he said, severely, "but I do not doubt that you would have been better pleased with them if they had. Let me speak to you seriously, Dorothy. I cannot—I really cannot—have you distracting these young men in this way. I observed before you left several little matters of this kind — little laxities and a want of energy and punctuality on their part, that were due, I fear, to your influence."

"Little laxities!" murmured she, "I never heard of such things."

But he put her aside with a grand wave of his hand.

"I am not inclined to say it is altogether your fault. You cannot help your looks or your youth, but you can avoid being a hindrance instead of an assistance in the parish. I must not suffer"—he was working himself into a well-regulated passion —"my arrangements to be disorganised even by you. I will not, and I cannot say, were this to go

on, what steps it might not be my duty, however painful, to take."

After uttering this tremendous threat the Archdeacon walked hastily across the room, and, turning, looked to see what effect it had had upon his ward. She was playing with her teaspoon, tapping petulantly with her foot, reddening and pouting, and glancing for sympathy to Granny, behaving altogether like a naughty school-girl under reproof. He took another turn, feeling that he did well—thoroughly well—to be angry, and looked again. She had risen, and was leaving the room. He could only see her back. I don't know what it was—perhaps he could not tell himself—in the pose of her little head and her shoulders, or whether it was something quite outside her which made him step after her and touch her shoulder gently.

"There, there," he said, staying her kindly. "My scolding has not been very dreadful, Dorothy. We must be good friends again. Will you please to give me my second cup? and then I will go back and finish my other sermon."

Granny looked surprised, and Dorothy laughed as brightly as if there were not and never had been in the world such a thing as a tear, for the Archdeacon rarely made a joke, even a little one. Jokes cannot be made upon system, and Archdeacon Holden had found system so good a thing that any pursuit which did not admit of it was apt to be out of favour with him. He was gifted with great powers of organization, and these he had used well

and found sufficient, so that by their means, without being a great preacher or a small controversialist, without inventing a new doctrine or reviving an old garment, he had risen to preferment. He was little more than thirty when he was presented to the living of Stirhampton, and though the parish was over-populated and under-churched, he reduced it in ten years to such a condition that it ranked as a model and its rector as a great man, often consulted by the heads of the church upon parochial matters. Moreover, men talked of him as of one likely to rise higher.

In person he was a tall, well-favoured man, in the prime of life, with hair just beginning to be flecked with grey. He had nothing of the ascetic in his appearance, though his manners were cold and reserved ; but he was liberal and had good nature and good temper as well as good parts. These qualities, however, the strict formality of his habits and his rigid adherence to rule, hid in a great measure from all who were not well acquainted with the man.

To Dorothy he had been almost a father, and would perhaps have come to be looked upon entirely in that light, but that he was betrayed from time to time by little things. For instance, what do fathers —ordinary allowance-making, bill-paying fathers— know of their girls' dresses? The smallest chit in the nursery will tell you, nothing ; and Carrie and Eddie are so persuaded of this that they will flaunt their new seal-skins, which have not been paid for, and are absurdly inconsistent with papa's allowance,

under his very nose, without the slightest tremor; and Flo will wear three new dresses in a quarter with as little chance of being prematurely found out in her extravagance as if they were three new pairs of mittens. But in this respect the Archdeacon was not Dorothy's father, for not only did he observe during the few days which followed his scolding that she had not forgotten it; that she went sadly, or seemed to go sadly, about the house and shunned his visitors with a pensive air, leaving Mr. Maddy, who was over fifty and had seven children, to pour out his own tea. Not only did he note this, but when Dorothy appeared at breakfast upon the fourth morning with a demure face and downcast eyes, he marked the novelty of her quaker-like grey dress, with its plain collar and cuffs, as quickly as did Granny.

"That is very becoming, Dorothy," he remarked, pleasantly. He wished to be upon the old footing with her. To tell you the truth, he was tired of that going sadly. The house seemed as soberly dull as when she was away. And of late he had come to think it was rather a dull house. She had been away a good deal.

"Becoming!" cried Dolly, to his surprise, in a piteous voice. "And I had thought that this would do."

"Would do, my dear? What do you mean? So it does. It seems to me to do excellently." He was slightly taken back.

"But I thought you said it was becoming?" she

cried, querulously. "You did, too. I heard it quite plainly."

"Well, my dear, and what more would you wish me to say? It is—it is very becoming."

He tried to speak in a tone at once critical and archidiaconal, such a tone as the palæontologist adopts when he admires a bone of the pliocene mammoth in the case of a rival collector, or as paterfamilias uses when praising—to order—his girls' bonnets. He did not altogether succeed. The ribs of that primitive animal, though they have pretty curves enough, do not preen themselves before a mirror with a little fluttering blush, and bright backward glances, and quick-straying dainty fingers adjusting here and defining there; nor do they form together a picture such as none but paterfamilias himself—no *locum tenens*, for instance—can look on with a perfectly even pulse-beat. The Archdeacon felt that his tone was not quite the tone he had, so to speak, commissioned, and swallowed half a cup of hot coffee at a gulp.

"Oh, dear!" he cried, hastily.

"Oh, dear!" echoed the girl, stamping her foot in a pet. "Then I don't know what to do. I am sure I thought this would please you, and I should not be likely to—to do what you said I did in this. But now I shall not know what to do."

And she ran out of the room, leaving her guardian in a state of much doubt as to whether she were laughing or crying; and perplexed, too, by uncertainty whether that grey dress sprang from a

conscientious endeavour after sedateness, a real desire to improve—for oft the habit doth proclaim the mind—or from a freakish, wicked, contrary, wilful, teasing spirit, such as old Mrs. Fretchett had told him inhabited the bodies of young girls.

Alas! he was soon driven to be of old Mrs. Fretchett's opinion. There was no more sedateness, no more going sadly, after this; nor ever did scolding seem more entirely thrown away than that extempore sermon upon the day of Dolly's return. She was gayer, prettier, more heedless, more flighty than of old. The drawing-room was never free from curates now, whose business might indeed be with the Archdeacon; but by the time he was ready to talk it over, to audit their accounts, or sign their checques, the gentlemen were always upstairs, and —*difficilis descensus Olympi.* There were rumours of disagreements among the black-coated ones. The parish districts—and especially their lady visitors—declared that they were neglected; the rector never got a quiet cup of tea in his own house, nor even a quiet placid moment; for the sounds of young people laughing and, as Mrs. Fretchett called it, "fribbling" upstairs would float down to him working in his study, and then he would pish and pshaw, and move his chair impatiently. And no wonder. It meant that the parish was taking its chance; it meant that his system was breaking down. He knew it did. He told himself he did well to be angry. And he did thoroughly well; but after all it gave him small satisfaction. He began to feel

more sore, and think more seriously about the matter every day. He could not have the work of ten years and more undone in this absurd fashion. Some remedy must be found. He might get rid of all the curates in a body, for violent diseases call for violent remedies; but that might not turn out a remedy. Or Dorothy might be well, not dismissed exactly—but disposed of out of the way in some sort or other. The more Archdeacon Holden thought it over, the more he was forced to the opinion that his duty lay in this direction. And then something happened which brought matters to a head.

It was on the day of the grammar school sports, which were held by his permission in the large field at the back of the rectory, where the old town wall, running round two sides of the enclosure, afforded a capital place of vantage for such spectators as did not wish to enter the ground. It was past five o'clock, and the sports were over. Of course the Archdeacon had attended them; and then he had retired to his study, and was thinking of going upstairs to tea, when a renewal of the shouting in the rear of the house attracted his attention. Wondering what this might be he mounted to the drawing-room, and finding only Granny there, fenced in as usual with her screen, walked to the further window which overlooked the field. The sports, to all appearance, had been resumed, late as it was; for though the ground was almost clear, a crowd was fast collecting upon the wall, and he could make out figures—it was just growing dusk—

moving quickly round the ropes, which had not been taken away. One, two, three, four, five black figures moving swiftly in single file.

"I am afraid this won't do. I don't think that this can be allowed," he was beginning, shaking his head slowly, under the impression that the town boys had taken advantage of the place and occasion to get up a little impromptu competition of their own. "I don't think—good heavens!"

Granny woke upon the instant, the Archdeacon's voice rang out so loud in anger and reprobation. "What is it?" the old lady said, weakly, feeling for her stick. "What is it, my dear? I hope it is not much. You know it is very near quarter-day, George, very near, and some money will be paid in then. Dear me, dear me!"

Even in his wrathful astonishment the Archdeacon tried to say gently, "It is not that, Granny. It it nothing of any consequence. I shall be back in a moment."

And then he ran downstairs. "Nothing of any consequence," indeed; three steps at a time, and so, bare-headed and his skirts flying behind him, reached the terrace, taking no notice of a couple of maids in the hall, who were looking through a window and giggling, and who fled at his approach. On the terrace, with a charming hood over her head, was Dorothy, looking down into the field, and now laughing and now clapping a pair of little gloved hands in great delight, a white rose on the wall before her. He scarce looked at her, but

peered into the dusk. Yes, his eyes had not played him false. The five athletes speeding round the rope circle were his five curates, and none others.

"Isn't it fun?" cried Dorothy at his side, all unconscious of his feelings. "The boys were nothing to them, they look so funny in their long coats. They are walking a mile, and the winner is to have this rose. Don't you think Mr. Bigham is gaining?"

The Archdeacon was speechless. He glared at this mocker, and then at the crowd upon the wall opposite—the cheering, shouting, growing crowd—and breathed hard. Funny! Fun! Had the girl lost all sense of decorum? He would waste no words upon her; but he ran down the steps and strode across the grass as swiftly as his dignity, a little impaired by haste and passion, would permit. Fortunately the competitors were just then at the near side of the circle. But, for that very reason, by the time he approached the ropes, the walkers, who had only eyes for one another and that slender figure on the terrace, had passed the point nearest to him, and were speeding away quite unconscious of their superior's presence. He thought he should cut off the last man, and increased his pace. He called to him and waved his hand. But Mr. Brune, intent upon the business before him, and going steadily like a machine heel and toe, his elbows well in, and his eyes upon the small of his predecessor's back, neither saw nor heard him. The Archdeacon was excited and provoked. In the heat of the

moment he followed, still calling to him; and, being quite fresh, began to overhaul Mr. Brune. He did not hear a louder shout rise from the crowd upon the wall; he did not hear his ward clapping her hands in a perfect ecstasy of delight; he did not—indeed he could not—hear the giggling of the maids at the hall window. But all these people and everybody else thought that he had joined in the "Parson's race." Some, like Dorothy, thought it very nice "and liberal" of him; and more, like Mrs. Fretchett, who had a fine view from her window, thought it very odd of him. And the faster he pressed on to catch Brune, becoming with every stride more and more angry, the more the crowd upon the wall shouted, and Dolly clapped, and Brune increased his speed, and the maids giggled; until at length the Archdeacon, beginning to suspect that his own position was far from dignified, and a glimmer of the light in which he was being viewed by others dawning upon him, broke into a run, and the crowd in a shout of reprobation of his unfairness; and then at last he laid his hand upon Mr. Brune's shoulder.

"Stop, Mr. Brune," he gasped; "stop! This is most unseemly. Do you hear? Most unseemly! I exceedingly disapprove of this—this disgraceful exhibition. Do you see the people, sir?"

This at last brought Mr. Brune to a standstill. He was a pitiable object as, hot, dishevelled, and panting, his tie awry and his collar rumpled, he stared, dumbfounded, into his superior's flushed

and indignant face. He tremulously wiped his brow, and by a tremendous effort recovered his eyeglasses from between his shoulders, where they had been swinging rhythmically. He put them on and looked round. Then he became aware of the spectators who had gathered since he and his fellows had, in quite a private way, started on their little frolic, and the affair became apparent to him in its true colours. For, left to themselves, and unperverted by Dolly and unreasoning rivalry, there were no curates anywhere of more proper ideas than the Archdeacon's. Brune dropped his glasses, quite crushed ; but, seeing the necessity for action, revived. He did what the Archdeacon should have done at first. He jumped over the ropes and ran across to stay the others.

The rector did not wait to speak with them then, but, still frowning, stalked back to the terrace, striving to recover his self-possession upon his way. With but partial success, for as he mounted the steps, "Oh, guardian!" cried a merry laughing voice above him, "what is the matter? Why did you stop? I am sure you would have beaten them all if you had gone on as well as you started. You walked capitally. And why have they all stopped?"

"Because they have come to their senses," he said, hoarsely, striving vainly to repress his passion. "Have you ever heard of Circe, girl?"

Dolly only stared. This tone at any rate she had never heard before.

"Because my parish is not large enough to con-

tain her foolish rout and their senseless tricks. They were walking for a rose, were they?" he continued, bitterly. What he had said already seemed to have hurt the girl not one whit, only surprised her; and he was terribly exasperated. "I suppose that is but a pretty figure of speech, and stands for yourself. I am surprised you have so much modesty. It is fitting and maidenly in my ward to offer herself as the prize of a public walking match."

Her face turned white in the dusk. "How dare you?" she cried, starting back as if he had struck her. He had hurt her at last, if that was what he wished to do. "How dare you?" she cried, passionately. But this time there came a quiver in her voice and a catching of her breath, and before he could be ready for this change of front she was gone, and he heard her sobbing bitterly as she passed through the hall. Only the white rose lay where she had flung it.

He went into his study and sat down very miserably, thinking, no doubt, over the state of the parish, and of what Mrs. Fretchett would say, and took no tea that evening. Only at one time or another, before nine o'clock prayers, he saw all the five curates. At dinner he was very silent, looking from time to time curiously at Dolly, who was silent too, attending chiefly to Granny's wants, and avoiding his eyes, with a conscious shrinking, new in her and strangely painful to him.

But the Archdeacon had made up his mind, and before twenty-four hours were over had put it before

Dorothy. First, however, he had asked her pardon quite formally for what he had said in his haste; and the strange look which had pained him had passed from the girl's face, as melts a shadow cast by a cloud that was before the sun, and suddenly, even as we look up, is not. And then he had gone on to speak seriously to her of the state of his parish, touching upon the report of the previous day's doings, which was already abroad, and which Dolly, with some temper and much justice, set down to Mrs. Fretchett.

"Well, my dear," the Archdeacon answered pleasantly, though in a tone which made her look sharply at him, "she and I are—well, old enough to remember that you are young, and, as Granny says, young folks will be young. Still I am bound to take care that the interests of my parish come first. It must not suffer through any one, even through you. And suffer it does, Dolly; which brings me to the other matter. An opportunity offers—I may say, three opportunities—of solving our difficulty. I have told you that you are too thoughtless for a clergyman's daughter, but I think you would make a good and true clergyman's wife."

Crash! Dorothy had dropped the paper weight with which she was playing. He let her stoop to pick it up, which she did clumsily, and was long about it, and then went on: "I have had three proposals for your hand, my dear. I do not know that this *embarras de richesses* is altogether to your credit, but so it is. Three of your fellow-culprits of yes-

terday, Philip Emerson, Mr. Bigham and Mr. Brune, are anxious to press their suits. They all have some means, and are young men of whom, notwithstanding that little affair, I can approve."

She was drawing outlines on her work-table with one white forefinger. "I don't think I want to marry either of them," she murmured, with much indifference, considering the effect of an imaginary landscape, with her head on one side.

The Archdeacon frowned. "They think that you have given them reason to hope."

"They cannot all think that!" she retorted, pouting scornfully, and the worst of it was that he could not controvert this.

"Philip Emerson, Dorothy, seemed in particular to fancy he had received some encouragement."

"Oh," said Dolly. "I should like to ask him what he meant; I don't think he would dare to say it to my face. Perhaps he meant this!" she went on contemptuously, rummaging in her work-basket: "For all I can remember he may have given it to me. One of them did, I know. Isn't it nonsense?"

She held a crumpled scrap of paper towards her guardian, and he took it with the air of a man accepting service of a writ. "Am I to read it?" he asked, stiffly.

"Of course—I suppose he intended it to be read."

And the Archdeacon, holding it gingerly, just as if it were the royal invitation before mentioned, read a few lines—

"Ah! great grey eyes, that, in my true love's face,
Tell of the pure and noble soul within,
One look in your calm depths I fain would trace,
I fain would win."

And threw it down with a contemptuous "Pshaw!" He looked through the window for a moment, before he spoke again; then with a great show of cheerfulness he said: "Now, my dear, let us be serious. Which of them would you like to see yourself?"

"Which of them!" she answered, impatiently. "None of them—ever! I hate them! That is, I mean that I don't want to marry them."

"I shall not let you give that answer without thought. It seems to me that you have encouraged one or the other of them. You must take a fortnight to think it over."

"I won't have a minute," she cried, angrily.

"A clear fortnight," he repeated with some sternness. "If you are then resolved, I shall be the last to force you to marry against your will. I have, indeed, no legal power over you. I am not your father."

"No, you are not," she replied sullenly.

That pained the Archdeacon more than all that had gone before. It was not only thoughtless, it was ungracious, it was ungrateful, and it hardened his heart so that he spoke out what was in his thoughts.

"Quite so," he began, "I was only going to say that if at the end of the time you found yourself unable to embrace—"

"I am a woman, if I am your ward," suddenly and spitefully.

"To embrace this opportunity," shot out the clergyman, very red in the face, "then I should have to make an alteration in my household: in what direction, you will, no doubt, be able to guess."

She bent over her work and made no reply, so that he felt a cruel satisfaction that he had at last managed to cow her. Then, as there seemed no more to be said, the Archdeacon went downstairs and tried to feel content with his partial success. One way or another the difficulty would now be settled, and this being so, if he sighed over the consideration of this comfortable fact, we may presume that the sigh was one of relief.

The gravity which on a sudden fell on the rectory folk was not unmarked by Stirhampton. But Stirhampton felt no surprise at it. Stirhampton well knew the cause of it. What wonder, asked Stirhampton, if the Archdeacon looked perplexed, and Miss Dorothy gloomy, and the curates anxious? What wonder, indeed, when as sure as eggs were what they seemed to be—and there they generally were—the court of Arches had its eyes upon Stirhampton, and sentences of suspension were in the air, and there was even talk of unfrocking! So that much discussion was raised in town circles as to the details of that ceremony, and whether a cook's cleaver did, or did not, figure in it, and if it did, in what particular way it was used? What wonder, indeed? Though those who knew best whispered

that the race for the girl's hand—oh, those giggling, eaves-dropping maids !—disgraceful as it was in men of their calling and the Archdeacon's age might—observe—*might* have been overlooked. "But when it came," said these, "to the Archdeacon, in his chagrin at being outstripped by younger men, striking Mr. Brune, and knocking his own curate over the ropes, so that the very crowd cried shame ! That was indeed going a little too far. There could be no winking at that, be the authority ever so favourable to him."

Still there are always forward people who will have no fire where others have been first to discover the smoke. There were these at Stirhampton, men who were rude and said it was all fiddle-de-dee when Mrs. Fretchett said it was *scandalum magnatum*—a plain and unmannerly contradiction—and made themselves otherwise unpleasant. But even these grew silent after a time, when a very weighty fact came to be known. Two official letters—missives were the more proper word—of most threatening appearance had been delivered at the rectory. Their envelopes had been stamped with the name of an august street, and bore also in the left-hand bottom corner a distinguished title. On one had been a twopenny stamp. Timid people scanned the rector with curious pity, and such upon the whole was the effect of this postal intelligence that the doctrine of *scandalum magnatum* gained almost universal credence ; even the forward ones grew serious and thought it over.

It was probably from a feeling of delicacy that they refrained from carrying their surmises to the Archdeacon. To the curates some hints were given, but what with their obtuseness—they scarcely seemed to understand—and a fretful, touchy disposition, noticeable in young men, nothing came of these hints.

Of all the rectory folk, it was Dolly only who—oh, those giggling, tattling maids!—came to hear of the rumour. It distressed her beyond measure. She could not feel sure that it was untrue. Nay, she knew that one part was true, for had she not seen the Archdeacon read one and the other of the letters mentioned, and immediately thereafter fall into deep thought. Ever since he had been grave and pre-occupied. Her ideas upon unfrocking—though the cleaver was not one of them—were sufficiently terrible, and grew more and more vivid and daunting the longer she dwelt upon them. Yet there was not between herself and her guardian such an amount of confidence as made it easy for her to speak to him upon such a subject.

So poor Dorothy knew not what to think. She had her own little distresses, we know; but they were forgotten in this greater apprehension that she had brought grief and disgrace upon the Archdeacon. And when, about the end of the fortnight, he bade her come to his study, she thought of them only as matters to be put aside, if mentioned, as quickly as possible, as matters of no importance in the face of the blow she felt was about to fall.

Archdeacon Holden was writing steadily. He looked up at her entrance to point with a faint smile to a chair, and then went on with his work. She fancied that there was something strange and new in his air; she marked under the paper-weight the letters about which all the town was talking; at her elbow she spied an envelope addressed to the Dean and Chapter of W—, the patron of the living, and Dorothy felt sick at heart.

Whether he was or was not aware of the direction of her thoughts, he folded his letter slowly, willing, perhaps, to put off as long as possible the evil day when something must be told. It was not until he had risen and approached the fireplace, so that his back was toward her, that he said pleasantly:

"Well, Dorothy, we will talk of your affairs first."

"They will not occupy you long," was her quiet answer—what were these things to her now?—"I have made up my mind, or rather it is unchanged. If I have thoughtlessly caused pain to Mr. Emerson and others I am sorry; but I cannot marry any of them."

He did not speak for a moment. Perhaps his thoughts had gone off to his own matters, for his hand shook a little as he adjusted the date case over the mantelpiece. "You are quite sure, my dear?" he said at last. There was no displeasure in his tone.

"I am quite sure."

"Well, that would have been an embarrassing answer, Dorothy, if things still stood as they were," he said. "But they do not; and any change I am going to make will be the result of another cause. I have some news for you. I am going to leave Stirhampton, and you are the first person to whom I have told the fact. You will not do my parish much more harm, my dear, for in a few weeks at most I shall be without one."

His back was toward her, and so he could not see the current of grief and trouble that flashed from Dolly's heart to Dolly's face. He waited for the eager, happy words of congratulation that should have come; for the touch at which he should turn to meet the bright, animated face that would smile on him for a moment, and then flit joyfully upstairs to Granny. He waited for these things, wondering if his elevation could bring him any other pleasure to compare with this. And then, instead, he heard behind him a quick, low sob, and turned, with a sinking of the heart, to find the girl crying bitterly, her face cast forward utter self-abandonment upon her arms, and her whole frame quivering with the sharpness of her sorrow.

His heart sank with a natural foreboding. But surely it must have been a singularly affectionate one, or where otherwise lay hidden the source of that deep feeling which welled up in the simple words wrung from him by the sight of her distress. "My darling, my darling, only tell me what it is,"

he cried, stroking her fair hair and striving to comfort her. "Tell me your trouble. Don't you know I would give my life to save you pain, Dolly? Don't hurt me like this, but look up and tell me. What is it, my darling?"

But for a time, though she heard him, she would not be comforted, and his words even seemed to give a fresh impulse to her grief. At last, amid half-stifled sobs, with her face still hidden, Dolly made him understand what she had heard, and what she had feared and what she had supposed him to mean when he said he was about to leave Stirhampton; and poured out, too, her own self-reproach, while he stood over her and listened, and now touched the bowed head, and now smiled grimly at the rumour of that unfrocking. And when he came to answer her, he did it in a score of words that dried her eyes effectually, and made her turn her flushed, pitiful, tear-stained face upon him, a glorious smile of pure happiness irradiating it that somehow made his heart leap up like a boy's—and then ache as those deserve to ache who play the boy when old enough to know better.

"It is a mistake," was all he had said; "I am leaving here, but not in disgrace, Dolly. I have accepted the bishopric of the new see of Deringham. What a silly, loving little girl it is! you may read the letter, my dear." And while Dolly, in radiant dishevelment, was striving to tell him her pleasure, he took an envelope from his pocket and held it out. Dolly seized it eagerly and opened it, and

found within it not at all what the Archdeacon had thought was in it. The envelope contained no statesman's autograph, or courtly to-apron-inviting note from Downing Street, but only a white rose, a dried rose, flattened, but still sweet and fragrant. Almost as soon as the girl's fingers touched it the Archdeacon was aware of his mistake—surely a very curious mistake—and snatched it from her with some confused words and a reddening brow. But Dolly had seen it—had certainly seen it; and somehow it brought back to her memory the day of the curates' race; so that when the Archdeacon brusquely put another letter into her hand, she read it with her eyes, and not her mind. As for the Archdeacon, he sought the window, and hemmed and hawed, and at last said hastily, without turning, "There, there, my dear, I think there is no more to be said. Will you kindly go and tell Granny?" and so affected to select a volume from a shelf of the early fathers.

But Dorothy did not move. She sat stooping forward, passing the hem of her much-bedabbled handkerchief through her fingers.

"Are you sure you have told me all you wish to tell me?" she asked, slowly.

Her guardian started. "I think so," he answered, and plunged recklessly at a volume of Origen, or it might be St. Anthony, perhaps.

"Then why," cried Dolly, standing up and facing him, with crimson cheeks, "why did you call me your darling just now? You had no right to

do it—no right, though you are my guardian, to say that—if you are going to say nothing more! If you want me, why don't you ask for me? Philip could, and Mr. Brune, and the other! I hate a coward. Why cannot you say, if—you—want me?"

There are men who have seen deans in their shirt-sleeves, playing billiards, and there is one still living—chiefly on the fact—who once was last in a three-legged race in double harness with a duke. So it is undeniable that great men do unbend at times to a surprising extent. But that the Archdeacon at the point of the story we have reached unbent in the manner much hinted at in Stirhampton, I shall ask no reader to believe. The more as the real facts which have been told fully explain the disorder of lace and neck-ribbon, the softness of eye, and the crimson of cheek which Granny noticed about the girl when she ran in upon her, all smiles and tears, knocking down the screen, and hugging the little old lady into a state of deep alarm.

Which took, of course, the old direction. But the Archdeacon came upstairs in time to anticipate the usual question. "No," he said, putting his hand on the kneeling girl's head, "the balance is all right, Granny—except in years. There is a heavy overdraft of those against me."

"And I will honour it," said Dolly, gravely, and took his hand and kissed it. As for what followed—we had better put up Granny's screen again. This, the man of system, who had no taste for jests!

But then it is just possible that Dolly did not mean it for a jest. The curates, Mr. Philip Emerson, Mr. Brune, and Mr. Bigham? Indeed I cannot say what became of them. I should suppose they died prematurely of broken hearts. But the next time I visit Deringham I will call at the palace and ask the bishop.

MICHEL LORIO'S CROSS.

In the southwest point of Normandy, separated from Brittany only by a narrow and straight river, like the formal canals of Holland, stands the curious granite rock which is called the Mont St. Michel. It is an isolated peak, rising abruptly out of a vast plain of sand, to the height of nearly four hundred feet, and so precipitous towards the west that scarcely a root of grass finds soil enough in its weather-beaten clefts. At the very summit is built that wonderful church, the rich architecture and flying buttresses of which strike the eye leagues and leagues away, either on the sea or the mainland. Below the church, and supporting it by solid masonry, is a vast pile formerly a fortress, castle and prison ; with caverns and dungeons hewn out of the living rock, and vaulted halls and solemn crypts ; all desolate and solitary now, except when a party of pilgrims or tourists pass through them, ushered by a guide. Still lower down the rock, along its eastern and southern face, there winds a dark and narrow street, with odd antique houses on either side. The only conveyance that can pass along it is the water-cart which supplies the town with fresh water from the mainland. The whole

place is guarded by a strong and high rampart, with bastions and battlemented walls; and the only entrance is through three gateways, one immediately behind the other, with a small court between. The second of these strong gateways is protected by two old cannon, taken from the English in 1423, and still pointed out to visitors with inextinguishable pride by the natives of Mont St. Michel.

A great plain of sand stretches around the Mont for miles every way; of sand or sea, for the water covers it at flood-tides, beating up against the foot of the granite rocks and the granite walls of the ramparts. But at neap-tides and *eaux mortes*, as the French say, there is nothing but a desert of brown bare sand, with ripple-marks lying across it, and with shallow, ankle-deep pools of salt water here and there. Afar off on the western sky-line a silver fringe of foam, glistening in the sunshine, marks the distant boundary to which the sea has retreated. On every other side of the horizon rises a belt of low cliffs, bending into a semicircle, with sweeping outlines of curves miles in length, drawn distinctly against the clear sky.

The only way to approach the Mont is across the sands. Each time the tide recedes a fresh track must be made, like the track along snowy roads; and every traveller, whether on foot or in carriage, must direct his steps by this scarcely beaten path. Now and then he passes a high, strong post, placed where there is any dangerous spot upon the plain, for there are perilous quicksands, imperceptible to any

eye, lurking in sullen and patient treachery for any unwary footstep. The river itself, which creeps sluggishly in a straight black line across the brown desert, has its banks marked out by rows of these high stakes, with a bush of leafless twigs at the top of each. A dreary, desolate, and barren scene it is, with no life in it except the isolated human life upon the Mont.

This little family of human beings, separated from the great tide of life like one of the shallow pools which the ebbing sea has left upon its sands, numbers scarcely a hundred and a half. The men are fishers, for there is no other occupation to be followed on the sterile rock. Every day also the level sweep of sands is wandered over by the women and children, who seek for cockles in the little pools; the babble of whose voices echoes far through the quiet air, and whose shadows fall long and unbroken on the brown wilderness. Now and then the black-robed figure of a priest, or of one of the brothers dwelling in the monument on the top of the rock, may be seen slowly pacing along the same dead level, and skirting the quicksands where the warning-posts are erected. In the summer months bands of pilgrims are also to be seen marching in a long file like travellers across the desert; but in winter these visits cease almost wholly, and the inhabitants of the Mont are left to themselves.

Having so little intercourse with the outer world, and living on a rock singled out by supernatural visitants, the people remain more superstitious than

even the superstitious Germans and Bretons, who are their neighbours. Few of them can read or write. The new thoughts, opinions, and creeds of the present century do not reach them. They are contented with the old faith, bound up for them in the history of their patron, the archangel St. Michel, and with the minute interest taken in every native of the rock. Each person knows the history of every other inhabitant, but knows little else.

From Pontorson to the Mont the road lies along the old bay of St. Michel, with low hedgerows of feathery tamarind trees on each side as far as the beach. It is not at all a solitary road, for hundreds of long heavy carts, resembling artillery wagons, encumber it, loaded with a grey shaly deposit dug out of the bay. A busy scene of men and women digging in the heavy sand, while the shaggy horses stand by, hanging their heads patiently under the blue-stained sheepskins about their necks.

Two or three persons are at work at every cart; one of them, often a woman, standing on the rising pile, and beating it flat with a spade, while a cheerful clatter of voices is heard on every hand.

But at one time a man might have been seen there working alone, quite alone. Even a space was left about him, as if an invisible circle were drawn, within which no person would venture. If a word were flung at him across this imaginary cordon, it was nothing but a taunt or a curse, and

it was invariably spoken by a man. No woman so much as glanced at him. He toiled on doggedly, and in silence, with a weary-looking face, until his task was ended, and the wagon driven off by the owner, who had employed him at a lower rate than his comrades. Then he would throw his blue blouse over his shoulders, and tramp away with heavy tread along the faintly marked trail leading across the beach to Mont St. Michel.

Neither was there any voice to greet him as he gained the gateway, where the men of the Mont congregated, as they always congregate about the entrance to a walled town. Rather, the scornful silence which had surrounded him at his work was here deepened into a personal hatred. Within the gate the women, who were chattering over their nets of cockles, shrank away from him, or broke into a contemptuous laugh. Along the narrow street the children fled at the sight of him, and hid behind their mothers, from whose protection they could shout after him. If the curé met him, he would turn aside into the first house rather than come in contact with him. He was under a ban which no one dared to defy.

The only voice that spoke to him was the fretful, querulous voice of an old, bedridden woman, as he lifted the latch, and opened the door of a poor house upon the ramparts, which had no entrance into the street; and where he lived alone with his mother, cut off from all accidental intercourse with his neighbours.

"Michel! Michel! how late thou art!" she exclaimed; "if thou hadst been a good son thou wouldst have returned before the hour it is."

"I returned as soon as my work was finished," he answered in a patient voice, "I have not lost a minute by the way."

"Bah! because no one will ask thee to turn in with them anywhere!" she continued. "If thou wert like everybody else thou wouldst have many a friend to pass thy time with. It is hard for me, thy mother, to have brought thee into the world, that all the world should despise and hate thee, as they do this day. Monsieur le curé says there is no hope for thee if thou art so obstinate; thou must go to hell, though I named thee after our great archangel St. Michel, and brought thee up as a good Christian. *Quel malheur!* How hard it is for me to lie in bed all day, and think of my son in the flames of hell!"

Very quietly, as if he had heard such complainings hundreds of times before, did Michel set about kindling a few sticks upon the open hearth. This was so common a welcome home that he scarcely heard it, and had ceased to heed it. The room, as the flickering light fell upon it, was one of the cheerless and comfortless chambers to be seen in any peasant's house. A pile of wood in one corner, a single table with a chair or two, a shelf with a few pieces of brown crockery, and the bed on which the paralytic woman was lying, her hands crossed over her breast, and her bright black eyes glistening in

the gloom. Michel brought her the soup he had made, and fed her carefully and tenderly, before thinking of satisfying his own hunger.

"It is of no good, Michel," she said, when he laid her down again upon the pillow he had made smooth for her, "It is of no good. Thou mayst as well leave me to perish, it will not weigh for thee. Monsieur le curé says if thou hadst been born a heretic, perhaps the good God might have taken it into account. But thou wert born a Christian, as good a Christian as all the world, and thou hast sold thy birthright to the devil. Leave me then, and take thy pleasure in this life, for thou wilt have nothing but misery in the next."

"I will not leave thee,—never!" he answered, briefly. "I have no fear of the next world."

He was a man of few words evidently. Perhaps the silence maintained around him had partly frozen his power of speech. Even to his mother he spoke but little, though her complaining went on without ceasing, until he extinguished both fire and lamp, and climbed the rude ladder into the loft overhead, where her voice never failed to rouse him from his sleep, if she only called "Michel!" He could not clearly explain his position even to himself. He had gone to Paris many years before, where he came across some Protestants, who had taught him to read the Testament, and instructed him in their religion. The new faith had taken hold of him, and thrust deep roots into his simple and constant nature; though he had no words at command to

express the change to others, and scarcely to himself. So long as he had been in Paris there had been little need of this.

But now his father's death had compelled him to return to his native place, and to the little knot of people who knew him as old Pierre Lorio's son, a fisherman like themselves, with no more right to read or think than they had. The fierceness of the persecution he encountered filled him with dismay, though it had not shaken his fidelity to his new faith. But often a dumb, inarticulate longing possessed him to make known to his old neighbours the reason of the change in him, but speech failed him. He could only stammer out his confession, "I am no longer a Catholic, I am a Protestant. I cannot pray to the saints; not even to the archangel St. Michel, or the Blessed Virgin. I pray only to God." For anything else, for explanation, and for all argument, he had no more language than the mute, wistful language one sees in the eyes of dumb creatures, when they gaze fully at us.

Perhaps there is nothing more pitiful than the painful want of words to express that which lies deepest within us. A want common to us all, but greatest in those who have had no training in thus shaping and expressing their inmost thoughts.

There was not much to fear from a man like this. Michel Lorio was a living lesson against apostasy. As he went up and down the street, and in and out of the gate, his loneliness and dejection spoke more eloquently for the old faith than any

banishment could have done. Michel was suffered to remain under a ban, not formal and ceremonial, but a tacit ban, which quite as effectively set him apart, and made his life more solitary than if he had been dwelling alone on a desert rock out at sea.

Michel accepted his lot without complaint, and without bitterness. He never passed Monsieur le curé without a salutation. When he went daily for water to the great cistern of the monastery, he was always ready to carry the brimful pails too heavy for the arms of the old women and children. If he had leisure he mounted the long flights of grass-grown steps three or four times for his neighbours, depositing his burden at their doors, without a word of thanks for his help being vouchsafed to him. Now and then he overheard a sneer at his usefulness: and his mother taunted him often for his patience and forbearance. But he went on his way silently with deeper yearning for human love and sympathy than he could make known.

If it had not been that, when he was kneeling at the rude dormer window of his loft and gazing dreamily across the wide sweep of sand, with the moon shining across it and the solemn stars lighting up the sky, he was at times vaguely conscious of an influence, almost a presence, as of a hand that touched him and a voice that spoke to him, he must have sunk under this intense longing for love and fellowship. Had he been a Catholic still, he would have believed that the

archangel St. Michel was near and about to manifest himself as in former times in his splendid shrine upon the Mont. The new faith had not cast out all the old superstitious nature; yet it was this vague spiritual presence which supported him under the crushing and unnatural conditions of his social life. He endured, as seeing one who is invisible.

Yet at other times he could not keep his feet away from the little street where all the life there was might be found. At night he would creep cautiously along the ramparts and descend by a quiet staircase into an angle of the walls, where he could look on unseen upon the gathering of townsfolk in the inn where he had often gone with his father in earlier days. The landlord, Nicolas, was a most bitter enemy now. There was the familiar room filled with bright light from an oil lamp and the brighter flicker of a wood fire where the landlord's wife was cooking. A deep, low recess in the corner, with a crimson valance stretched across it, held a bed with snow-white pillows, upon one of which rested a child's curly head with eyes fast sealed against the glare of the lamp. At a table close by sat the landlord and three or four of the wealthier men of the Mont busily and seriously eating the omelets and fried fish served to them from the pan over the fire. The copper and brass cooking utensils glittered in the light from the walls where they hung. It was a cheery scene, and Michel would stand in his cold, dark corner, watching it until all was over and the guests ready to depart.

"Thou art Michel *le diable*!" said a childish voice to him one evening, and he felt a small, warm hand laid for an instant upon his own. It was Delphine, Nicolas's eldest girl, a daring child, full of spirit and courage; yet even she shrank back a step or two after touching him, and stood as if ready to take flight.

"I am Michel Lorio," he answered in a quiet, pleasant voice, which won her back to his side. "Why dost thou call me Michel *le diable*?"

"All the world calls thee that," answered Delphine; "thou art a heretic. See! I am a good Christian. I say my ave and paternoster every night; if thou wilt do the same thing, no one will call thee Michel *le diable*."

"Thou art not afraid of me?" he asked, for the child put her hand again on his.

"No, no! thou art not the real devil!" she said, "and maman has put my name on the register of the Monument: so the great archangel St. Michel will deliver me from all evil. What canst thou do? Canst thou turn children into cats? or canst thou walk across the sea without being drowned? or canst thou stand on the highest pinnacle of the church, where the golden image of St. Michel used to be, and cast thyself down without killing thyself? I will go back with thee to thy house and see what thou canst do."

"I can do none of these things," answered Michel, "not one; but thou shalt come home with me if thou wilt."

"Carry me," she said, "that I may feel how strong thou art."

He lifted her easily into his arms, for he was strong and accustomed to bear heavier burdens. His heart beat fast as the child's hand stole round his neck, and her soft cheek touched his own. Delphine had never been upon the ramparts before when the stars were out and the distant circle of the cliffs hidden by the night, and several times he was compelled to stop and answer her eager questions; but she would not go into the house when they reached the door.

"Carry me back again, Michel," she demanded. "I do not like thy mother. Thou shalt bring me again along the ramparts to-morrow night. I will always come to thee, always when I see thee standing in the dark corner by our house. I love thee much, Michel *le diable*."

It was a strange friendship carried on stealthily. Michel could not put away from himself this one little tie of human love and fellowship. As for Delphine, she was as silent about her new friend as children often are of things which affect them deeply. There was a mingling of superstitious feeling in her affection for Michel—a half dread that gave their secret meetings a greater charm to the daring spirit of the child. The evening was a busy time at the inn, and if Delphine had been missed, but little wonder and no anxiety would have been aroused at her absence. The ramparts were deserted after dark, and no one guessed that the

two dark figures sauntering to and fro were Michel and Delphine. When the nights were too cold they took refuge in a little overhanging turret projecting from one of the angles of the massive walls—a darksome niche with nothing but the sky to be seen through a narrow embrasure in the shape of a cross. In these haunts Michel talked in his simple untaught way of his thoughts and of his new faith, pouring into the child's ear what he could never tell to any other. By day Delphine never seemed to see him : never cast a look towards him as he passed by amid the undisguised ill-will of the town. She ceased to speak of him even, with the unconscious and natural dissimulation by which children screen themselves from criticism and censure.

The people of the Mont St. Michel are very poor, and the women and children are compelled to seek some means of earning money as well as the men. As long as the summer lasts the crowds of pilgrims and tourists, flocking to the wonderful fortress and shrine upon the summit, bring employment and gain to some portion of them, but in the winter there is little to do except when the weather is fine enough to search for shell-fish about the sands, and sell them in the villages of the mainland. As the tide goes down, bands of women and children follow it out for miles, taking care to retrace their steps before the sea rises again. From Michel's cottage on the ramparts the whole plain towards Avranches was visible, and he could hear the busy hum of voices coming to his ear from afar through the quiet

air. But on the western side of the Mont, where the black line of the river crosses the sands, they are more dangerous ; and in this direction only the more venturesome seekers go—boys who love any risk, and widows who are the more anxious to fill their nets, because they have no man to help them in getting their daily dread.

The early part of the winter is not cold in Normandy, especially by the sea. As long as the westerly winds sweep across the Atlantic, the air is soft though damp, with fine mists hanging in it, which shine with rainbow tints in the sunlight. Sometimes Christmas and the New Year find the air still genial, in spite of the short days and the long rainy nights. Strong gales may blow, but so long as they do not come from the dry east or frosty north there is no real severity of weather.

It was such a Christmas week that year. Not one of the women or children had yet been forced to stay away from the sands on account of the cold. Upon Christmas Eve there was a good day, though a short one, before them, for it was low water about noon, and the high tide would not be in before six. All the daylight would be theirs. It was a chance not to be missed, for as the tides grew later in the day their time for fishing would be cut shorter. Almost every woman and child turned out through the gate, with their nets in their hands. By midday the plain was dotted over by them, and the wintry sun shone pleasantly down, and the quiet rock caught the echo of their voices. Farther away, out of

sight and hearing, the men also were busy, Michel among them, casting nets upon the sea. As the low sun went down in the southern sky, the scattered groups came home by twos and threes, anxious to bring in their day's fishing in time for the men to carry them across to the mainland before the Mont should be shut in by the tide.

A busy scene was that in the gateway.

All the town was there; some coming in from the sands, and those who had been left at home with babies or old folks running down from their houses. There was chaffing and bartering; exchanges agreed upon, and commissions innumerable to be entrusted to the men about to set out for Pontorson, the nearest town. Michel Lorio was going to sell his own fish, for who would carry it for him? Yet though he was the first who was ready to start, not a soul charged him with a single commission. He lingered wistfully and loitered just outside the gateway; but neither man, woman nor child said, "Michel, bring me what I want from the town."

He was treading slowly down the rough causeway under the walls of the town, when a woman's shrill voice startled him. It was not far from sunset, and the sun was sinking round and red, behind a bank of fog. A thin, grey mist was creeping up from the sea. The latest band of stragglers, a cluster of mere children, were running across the sand to the gate. Michel turned round, and saw Nicolas's wife, a dark, stern-looking woman, beckoning vehemently to

these children. He paused for a moment to look at his little Delphine. "Not there!" he said to himself, and was passing on, when the shrill voice again caught his attention.

"Where is 'Phine?" called the mother.

What was it the children said? What answer had they shouted back? Michel stood motionless, as if all strength had failed him suddenly. The children rushed past him in a troop. He lifted up his eyes, looking fearfully towards the sea hidden behind the deepening fog. Was it possible that he had heard them say that Delphine was lost?

"Where is 'Phine?" asked the mother: but though her voice was lower now, Michel heard every syllable loudly. It seemed as if he could have heard a whisper, though the chattering in the gateway was like the clamor of a fair. The eldest girl in the little band spoke in a hurried and frightened tone.

"'Phine is so naughty, Madame," she said, "we could not keep her near us. She would go on and on to the sea. We could not wait for her. We heard her calling, but it was so far, we dared not go back. But she cannot be far behind us, for we shouted as we came along. She will be here soon, Madame."

"*Mon Dieu!*" cried the mother, sinking down on one of the great stones, either rolled up by the tide, or left by the masons who built the ramparts, "call her father to me."

It was Michel Lorio who found Nicolas, his

greatest enemy. Nicolas had a number of errands to be done in the town, and he was busy impressing them on the memory of his messenger, who, like every one else, could neither read nor write. When Michel caught his arm in a sharp, fast grip, he turned round with a scowl, and tried, but in vain, to shake off his grasp.

"Come to thy wife," said Michel, dragging him towards the gate, "Delphine, thy little one, is lost on the sands."

The whole crowd heard the words, for Michel's voice was pitched in a high, shrill key, which rang above the clamor and the babel. There was an instant hush, every one listening to Michel, and every eye fastened upon him. Nicolas stared blankly at him, as if unable to understand him, yet growing passive under his sense of bewilderment.

"The children who went out with Delphine this morning are come back," continued Michel, in the same forced tone, "they are come back without her. She is lost on the sands. The night is falling, and there is a fog. I tell you the little one is alone, quite alone, upon the sands; and it will be high water at six o'clock. Delphine is alone and lost upon the sands!"

The momentary hush of the crowd was at an end. The children began crying, and the women calling loudly upon St. Michel and the Holy Virgin. The men gathered about Nicolas and Michel, and went down in a compact group to the causeway beyond the gate. There the lurid sun, shining dimly

through the fog, made the most sanguine look grave and shake their heads hopelessly behind the father and mother. The latter sat motionless, looking out with straining eyes to see if Delphine were not coming through the thickening mist.

"*Mais que faire! que faire!*" cried Nicholas, catching at somebody's shoulder for support without seeing whose it was. It was Michel's, who had not stirred from his side since he had first clasped his arm. Michel's face was as white as the mother's; but there was a resolute light in his eyes that was not to be seen in hers.

"Nothing can be done," answered one of the oldest men in answer to Nicholas's cry, "nothing, nothing! We do not know where the child is lost. See! there are leagues and leagues of sand; and one might wander miles away from where the poor little creature is at this instant. The great archangel St. Michel protect her!"

"I will go," said the mother, lifting herself up; and, raising her voice, she called loudly with a cry that rang and echoed against the walls, "'Phine! 'Phine! my little 'Phine! come back to thy poor mother!" but there was no answer, except the sobs and prayers of the women and children clustering behind her.

"Thou canst not go!" exclaimed Nicolas, "there are our other little ones to think of, nor can I leave thee and them. My God! is there then no one who will go and seek my little Delphine?"

"I will go," answered Michel, standing out from

among the crowd, and facing it with his white face and resolute eyes; "there is only one among you all upon the Mont who will miss me. I leave my mother to your care. There is no time for me to bid her adieu. If I come back alive, well! if I perish, that will be well also!"

Even then there was no cordiality of response in the hearts of his old friends and neighbours. The superstition and prejudice of long years could not be broken down in one moment and by one act of self-sacrifice. They watched Michel as he laid his full creel down from his shoulders, and threw across them in its place the strong square net with which he fished in the ebbing tide. His silence was no less expressive than theirs. Without a sound he passed away bare-footed down the rude causeway. His face, as the sun shone on it, was set and resolute with a determination to face the end, whatever the end might be. He might have so trodden the path to Calvary.

He longed to speak to them, to say adieu to them; but he waited in vain for one voice to break the silence. He turned round before he was too far away, and saw them still clustered without the gate. Everyone of them known to him from his boyhood, the story of whose lives had been bound up with his own and formed part of his history. They were all there, except his mother, who would soon hear what peril of the sea and peril of the night he was about to face. Tears dimmed his eyes, and made the group grow indistinct, as

though the mist had already gathered between him and them. Then he quickened his steps, and the people of the Mont St. Michel lost sight of him behind a great buttress of the ramparts.

But for a time Michel could still see the Mont as he hurried along its base, going westward, where the most treacherous sands lie. His home was on the eastern side, and he could see nothing of it. But the great rock rose up precipitously above him, and the noble architecture upon its highest point glowed with a ruddy tint in the setting light. As he trampled along no sound could be heard but the distant sigh of the sea, and the low, sad sough of the sand as his bare feet trod it. The fog before him was not dense, only a light haze, deceptive and beguiling; for here and there he turned aside, fancying he could see Delphine, but as he drew nearer to the spot he discovered nothing but a post driven into the sand. There was no fear that he should lose himself upon the bewildering level, for he knew his way as well as if the sand had been laid out in well-defined tracks. His dread was lest he should not find Delphine soon enough to escape from the tide, which would surely overwhelm them both.

He scarcely knew how the time sped by, but the sun had sunk below the horizon, and he had quite lost the Mont in the fog. The brown sand and the grey, dank mist were all that he could see, yet still he plodded on westward, towards the sea, calling into the growing darkness. At last he caught the

sound of a child's sobs and crying, which ceased for a moment when he turned in that direction and shouted, " 'Phine ! " Calling to one another, it was not long before he saw the child wandering forlornly and desolately in the mist. She ran sobbing into his open arms, and Michel lifted her up and held her to his heart with a strange rapture.

" It is thou that hast found me," she said, clinging closely to him. " Carry me back to my mother. I am safe now, quite safe. Did the archangel St. Michel send thee ? "

There was not a moment to be lost ; Michel knew that full well. The moan of the sea was growing louder every minute, though he could not see its advancing line. There was no spot upon the sand that would not be covered before another hour was gone, and there was barely time, if enough, to get back to the Mont. He could not waste time or breath in talking to the child he held fast in his arms. A pale gleam of moonlight shone through the vapor, but of little use to him save to throw a ghostly glimmer across the sands. He strode hurriedly along, breathing hardly through his teeth and clasping Delphine so fast that she grew frightened at his silence and haste.

" Where art thou taking me, Michel *le diable* ? " she said, beginning to struggle in his arms. " Let me down ; let me down, I tell thee ! Maman has said I must never look at thee. Thou shalt not carry me any further."

There was strength enough in the child and her

vehement struggles to free herself to hinder Michel in his desperate haste. He was obliged to stand still for a minute or two to pacify her, speaking in his quiet, patient voice, which she knew so well.

"Be tranquil, my little 'Phine," he said. "I am come to save thee. As the Lord Jesus came to seek and to save those who are lost, so am I come to seek thee and carry thee back to thy mother. It is dark here, my child, and the sea is rising quickly, quickly. But thou shalt be safe. Be tranquil and let me make haste back to the Mont."

"Did the Lord save thee in this manner?" asked Delphine, eagerly.

"Yes, he saved me like this," answered Michel. "He laid down his life for mine. Now thou must let me save thee."

"I will be good and wise," said the child, putting her arms again about his neck, while he strode on, striving if possible to regain the few moments that had been lost. But it was not possible. He knew that before he had gone another kilometre, when through the mist there rose before him the dark, colossal form of the Mont, but too far away still for them both to reach it in safety. Thirty minutes were essential for him to reach the gates with his burden, but in little more than twenty the sea would be dashing round the walls. The tide was yet out of sight and the sands were dry, but it would rush in before many minutes, and the swiftest runner with no weight to carry could not outrun it. Both

could not be saved; could either of them? He had foreseen this danger, and provided for it.

"My little 'Phine," he said, "thou wilt not be afraid if I place thee where thou wilt be quite safe from the sea? See, here is my net! I will put thee within it, and hang it on one of these strong stakes, and I will stand below thee. Thou wilt be brave and good. Let us be quick, very quick. It will be like a swing for thee, and thou wilt not be afraid so long as I stand below thee."

Even while he spoke he was busy fastening the corners of his net securely over the stake, hanging it above the reach of the last tide mark. Delphine watched him laughing. It seemed only another pleasant adventure, like wandering with him upon the ramparts, or taking shelter in the turret. The net held her comfortably, and by stooping down she could touch with her outstretched hand the head of Michel. He stood below her, his arms fast locked round the stake, and his face uplifted to her in the faint light.

"'Phine," he said, "thou must not be afraid when the water lies below thee, even if I do not speak. Thou art safe."

"Art thou safe also, Michel?" she asked.

"Yes, I am safe also," he answered; "but I shall be very quiet. I shall not speak to thee. Yes; the Lord Christ is caring for me, as I for thee. He bound Himself to the cross as I bind myself here. This is my cross, Delphine. I understand it better now. He loved us and gave Him-

self for us. Tell them, to-morrow, what I say to thee. I am as safe as thou art, tranquil and happy."

"We shall not be drowned!" said Delphine, half in confidence and half in dread of the sea, which was surging louder and louder through the darkness.

"Not thou!" he answered cheerily. "But 'Phine, tell them to-morrow that I shall never more be solitary and sad. I leave thee now, and then I shall be with Christ. I wish I could have spoken to them, but my heart and tongue were heavy. Hark! there is the bell ringing."

The bell which is tolled at night when travellers are crossing the sands, to guide them to the Mont, flung its clear, sharp notes down from the great indistinct rock, looming through the dusk.

"It is like a voice to me, the voice of a friend; but it is too late!" murmured Michel. "Art thou happy, Delphine, my little one? When I cease to speak to thee wilt thou not be afraid? I shall be asleep, perhaps. Say thy paternoster now, for it is growing late with me."

The bell was still tolling, but with a quick, hurried movement, as if those who rang it were fevered with impatience. The roaring of the tide, as it now poured in rapidly over the plain, almost drowned its clang.

"Touch me with thy little hand, touch me quickly!" cried Michel. "Remember to tell them to-morrow that I loved them all always, and I

would have given myself for them as I do for thee. Adieu, my little 'Phine. Come quickly, Lord Jesus!"

The child told afterwards that the water rose so fast that she dared not look at it, but shut her eyes as it spread, white and shimmering, in the moonlight all around her. She began to repeat her paternoster, but she forgot how the words came. But she heard Michel, in a loud clear voice, saying "Our Father;" only he also seemed to forget the words, for he did not say more than "Forgive our trespasses, as we forgive—." Then he became quite silent, and when she spoke to him, after a long while, he did not answer her. She supposed he had fallen asleep, as he had said, but she could not help crying and calling to him again and again. The sea-gulls flew past her screaming, but there was no sound of any voice to speak to her. In spite of what he had said to her beforehand, she grew frightened, and thought it was because she had been unkind to Michel *le diable* that she was left there alone, with the sea swirling to and fro beneath her.

It was not for more than two or three hours that Delphine hung cradled in Michel's net, for the tide does not lie long round the Mont St. Michel, and flows out again as swiftly as it comes in. The people followed it out, scattering over the sands in the forlorn hope of finding the dead bodies of Michel Lorio and the child, for they had no expectation of meeting with either of them alive. At last two or

three of them heard the voice of Delphine, who saw the glimmer of their lanterns upon the sands, and called shrilly and loudly for succour.

They found her swinging safely in the net, untouched by the water. But Michel had sunk down upon his knees, though his arms were still fastened about the stake. His head had fallen forward upon his breast, and his thick, wet hair covered his face. They lifted him without a word spoken. He had saved Delphine's life at the cost of his own.

All the townspeople were down at the gate, waiting for the return of those who had gone out to seek for the dead. The moon had risen above the fog, and shone clearly down upon them. Delphine's mother, with her younger children about her, sat on the stone where she had been sitting when Michel set out on his perilous quest. She and the other women could see a crowd of the men coming back, carrying some burden among them. But as they drew near to the gate, Delphine sprang forward from among them and ran and threw herself into her mother's arms. "A miracle!" cried some voices amid the crowd; a miracle wrought by their patron St. Michel. If Michel Lorio were safe, surely he would become again a good Christian, and return to his ancient faith. But Michel Lorio was dead, and all that could be done for him was to carry his dead body home to his paralytic mother, and lay it upon his bed in the little loft where he had spent so many hours of sorrowful loneliness.

It was a perplexing problem to the simple people.

Some said that Michel had been permitted to save the child by a diabolic agency which had failed him when he sought to save himself. Others maintained that it was no other than the great archangel St. Michel who had securely fastened the net upon the stake and so preserved Delphine, while the heretic was left to perish. A few thought secretly, and whispered it in fear, that Michel had done a noble deed, and won heaven thereby. The curé, who came to look upon the calm dead face, opened his lips after long and profound thought:

"If this man had been a Christian," he said, "he would have been a saint and a martyr."

IN DURANCE VILE.

CHAPTER I.

To find oneself the owner of from twenty to thirty thousand acres of prairie-land and yet without a penny—because of a politely-worded intimation of one's tenants that they don't intend to pay rent—is really nothing nowadays in the Irish land of which I write; to live in daily expectation of a bullet in one's brain, fired from behind any furze-bush on the quiet country road, is quite a matter of course; but to find oneself *boycotted* is—abominable.

The O'Brien Blake, waking one fine morning in October to find himself thus famous (though as yet hardly aware of his advancement), rings his bell vigorously. Waiting for an answer to his summons for thirteen seconds precisely by the ridiculous ormolu ornament on his chimney-piece, he rings it again. Having done this many times, without any result whatever, and when, on the fifteenth effort, the bell-rope gets into the bed with him unsolicited, The O'Brien gives way to language not fit for drawing-room wear.

In the middle of his eloquent but rather highly-

spiced peroration his daughter opens the door. She comes to him across the room in her usual free and graceful manner and an airily seductive costume, suggestive of bath and bedroom. She sinks into a huge arm-chair and twines her pretty arm negligently round the bottom pillow of his four-poster.

"What is it, my dear?" asks The Blake, excitedly, raising himself on his elbow. He has a weakness for nightcaps with tassels, and the tassel of the one now in use is shaking violently. "What has happened? Why doesn't some one answer the bell? Why are you here? What on earth does it all mean? Has the world come to an end, or am I taking leave of my senses? Have I lived to be treated with disrespect by my own menials?"

"No, dear," said Miss Blake, mildly, drawing her dainty, frilled white cambric garment more closely round her with a touch of old Roman grandeur that almost transforms it into a toga; "you have only lived to be *boycotted!*"

"Eh?" says The O'Brien Blake. His elbow gives way, and he sinks back upon his pillow.

"Merely that," says his daughter. It cannot be said but that there is a sense of suppressed enjoyment in her tone. "Now, don't take a wrong view of it, dearest. Regard it as I do,—rather as a *distinction.* The tenants have singled you out to make an example to the country. *Be* an example, therefore, but in a way they don't expect. Turn the tables upon them; spur on the other landlords to be *firm.* Don't give in!"

"Eh?" says The O'Brien again, in a somewhat dazed fashion, being (as he himself would have told you) thoroughly flabbergasted by this mutiny on his estates.

"*Don't give in!*" repeats the slender, fragile, white-robed figure in the arm-chair, leaning forward so as the more effectually to emphasise her remarks with a slim but determined forefinger, and becoming more and more the Roman matron every moment. "Stick to your principles; defy these miserable rebels. *Be yourself*,"—with increasing force, as though she fears there is instant danger of his becoming somebody else,—"and let them do their worst!"

"*Give in!* What d'ye mean, child?" says The Blake, indignantly. And indeed her backing up is plainly thrown away, as the old Squire, scenting the battle from afar, has (metaphorically speaking) buckled on his armour and is ahead charging the host. "I must get up," says he.

"I'm afraid you can't have any one to help you to-day," said his daughter, regretfully.

"Are they *all* gone?" asks he, in a curious tone.

"Rogers is here still, and Mrs. Murphy says she doesn't know her way out of the kitchen, so we have still two people to attend upon us. But of course Rogers is only waiting for his passage-money to England. For the rest,"—she shrugs her pretty shoulders,—"I suppose we must do what we can in the roasting and boiling line for ourselves; and as

for the butcher and baker and candlestick-maker, I don't know how we are to provide those luxuries."

"Do you mean to tell me Brian" (the local butcher) "has been ordered to bring me no meat?"

"So Mrs. Murphy tells me, and of course it is true. The servants would not have flown like this unless they were in bodily fear, and unless the Land League meant *real* mischief.

"Well, I'll get up," says The Blake again, as though the subject is beyond him.

"I am afraid you must turn on your own bath this morning," said Miss Blake, regretfully, "because Rogers is boiling the kettle and growing apoplectic in the kitchen, and Mrs. Murphy (who ought to get the Victoria Cross) is lighting the fire in the breakfast-room, and I"—airily—"am going to make the toast."

"Do you mean to tell me, Patricia," says The Blake, solemnly, "that *all* the servants have gone, except Rogers and that old woman who runs messages?"

"Every one of them; as daylight came they melted. The Land Leaguers have resolved on our destruction; we are to be starved to death. The tradesmen in the village and in Clonbree have been forbidden to sell us anything; our own people have been ordered to render us no assistance. We are to be forced into submission and thirty per cent. But they don't know us yet, do they, papa?"

"By George, they don't!" says The O'Brien Blake.

"Well, get up now, there's a dear heart," says Miss Blake, "and let us get to breakfast and a consultation, with what appetite we may."

She carries herself and the pretty frilled morning robe out of the room with an air of unflinching determination, albeit she is but a slender, lissome creature, barely nineteen.

She is very pretty, very high-spirited, and just a little spoiled. She has no brothers, no sisters, and is therefore soil heiress to Ardrish, The O'Brien Blake's beautiful estate in Galway. Her mother died when she was barely five, and ever since The O'Brien has had to think a great many times before daring to say "No" to her about anything.

Now, when they had got through breakfast so comfortably as to have reduced their enemies to despair, she turns to her father.

"I wonder if Owen has heard of it?" she says.

"He'll be over directly if he has," says The O'Brien.

The "Owen" in question is a young man who lives about half a mile from Ardrish, at a place called Coolmeen, a fatherless and motherless and generally relationless young man with a considerable income and a pedigree that reaches back to King O'Toole; a tall young man, too, of a singularly silent nature, with an imperturbable temper and a *pince nez*.

But that his mouth comes to the rescue he might be said not to have a feature in his face. He is

reserved and *distrait*, yet every one likes him, and women draw their skirts aside to make room for him whenever he enters the room. With men, too (stranger still), he is a special favourite, though why they are ever at a loss to determine. He shoots abominably, rides awkwardly, has a secret objection to see a trout wriggling on a hook, and always gets severely contused when he goes in for cricket or football ; yet he hasn't a name among the men of his set but " old chap " or " old fellow," and they all clap him on the back when they meet him until his glasses fall from his eyes.

He has a tremendously erudite library at Coolmeen, worth a king's ransom, and there he squanders a good deal of his time,—not the most of it, though : that belongs to Ardrish. When Owen Fitzgerald isn't in his library, he is commonly supposed to be at Ardrish, and, indeed, people (that is, his tenants) in a hurry to find him always try Ardrish first, and the library afterwards. This seems to tell a tale, but Nobody can say that it does. He has been so long *ami de maison* at Ardrish, without anything definite coming of it, that Nobody is at all sure whether his relations with Miss Blake are of the indifferently friendly order or whether he is heart and soul her own. But though Nobody is thus ignorant, perhaps Somebody is not, and Miss Blake herself might have enlightened them upon this disputed subject but for the fact that she always grows strangely deaf whenever his name is introduced.

For the first two or three days of the boycotting the excitement and novelty—the sensation of being cast away upon a desert island—carry The Blake and his daughter triumphantly through their difficulties. The Blake's first meditations on the subject had sent him into a towering rage, the second had developed in him a dogged perseverance, the third had filled him with a sense of irrepressible mirth. No! he was certainly not to be subdued, this old gentleman, by the prospect of a bad breakfast and no dinner now and again.

The old woman, Mrs. Murphy, who had been nothing in the family but a pensioner until the crisis came, had remained faithful to them then, and now she and Rogers, The Blake's man (an Englishman), constitute their entire retinue.

Two or three of those who had deserted their mistress (most unwillingly) and their comfortable quarters and good wages at Ardrish because of the threats of final extermination extended to them by the dreaded Land League, or "*the Boys*" (by which name they are most generally known), had come creeping back by stealth now and then to offer their help in various ways,—a help proudly declined, however, and so, after a bit, these timid visitings had died away.

At the end of a week, it cannot be said that the sense of enjoyment to be derived from the situation is as keen as it was the first day, so far as Miss Blake is concerned, Mrs. Murphy's ideas of cooking being of a nature more remarkable perhaps

than satisfactory. "Praties" (so she called those succulent roots) were indeed a *spécialité* with her,—under her treatment they became a great and unsurpassable success,—but with a fowl of any description she struggled unavailingly, not only in the murdering but the cooking of it. A loin of mutton in her hands was found to possess difficulties and intricacies hitherto unknown; a sirloin of beef was a conundrum unanswerable. However, as being the one sole thing of the soil that had clung to her in her necessity, Miss Blake clings to her in return, and treats her with a respect, largely mingled with gratitude, that goes deep to the heart of the poor old soul.

Both the mutton and the beef, together with other common necessaries, have all come from Coolmeen, Mr. Fitzgerald having eagerly proposed himself to The O'Brien Blake as a commissary-general for the occasion. A servant from Coolmeen, therefore, had come to Ardrish daily with provisions of one kind or another up to to-day.

To-day there has been neither message nor messenger from their neighbour, and Miss Blake, finding herself short of bread, has been under the necessity of baking a cake to carry them through the hours that must intervene until to-morrow's sun brings them sustenance.

When done, it is not a cake at all. It is something altogether different, but *what* is difficult of decision. That it possesses adamantine qualities, however, is beyond dispute. The undying animos-

ity it betrays toward a knife, the unyielding front it presents to its blade, induce that sturdy instrument to retire before it, beating a cowardly retreat. Indeed, Miss Blake, in secret conclave with her father, gives it as her opinion that a pickaxe alone would be found fit to cope with her obdurate piece of dough.

"Never mind," says The O'Brien, patting his daughter's pretty pink cheek: "I *like* this cake. Its impenetrability is a lucky sign. The knife means Leaguers, the cake means *us*. And see how successfully we have defied that rascal knife!"

Miss Blake breaks into a merry laugh and twines her arms around his neck.

"It will take them all they know, and a good deal more, to subdue *you*, dad," she says admiringly.

"They are ungrateful beggars, and that's the truth," says The O'Brien. "There, let us forget them for a while. I believe I had better go and make myself lovely for dinner now, if I mean to do it at all."

Almost as he leaves the drawing-room, the English valet, Rogers, enters it to announce "Mr. Fitzgerald."

The room into which the tall young man with the glasses steps in his near-sighted way is lit with careful brilliancy. A soft, low, chattering fire is gossiping on the hearth. Miss Blake, rising from her lounging seat beside it, bids her visitor welcome.

"Come to dinner?" she asks, smiling brightly.

"'*Un*wise young man, *un*learned judge' of what is *good*, what evil genius has forced you into this false position? There is nothing on earth but cold roast beef, and Mrs. Murphy roasted it!"

"Under certain circumstances a dinner of herbs is superior to all others," says Mr. Fitzgerald, with wonderful readiness for *him*. "But I can't stop to-night. I have business on hand that will occupy me, I expect, far into the night. I only came to tell you I was so sorry about it; but I couldn't avoid it, really."

"Avoid what?"

"Why, about the bread and things. I have been so distressed about it all. None of my fellows would bring you anything to-day,—threatened by those vile Land Leaguers, I suppose. But what annoyed me was, that they wouldn't *say* so until just now. By chance I found it out."

"We are a terrible trouble to you, aren't we?" says Miss Blake, softly. "But we shan't starve, indeed. They"—alluding to the rebellious tenants, with a little frown—"shan't have that satisfaction. You really mustn't take us so much to heart."

"Oh, no! I can't, *now*," says the silent young man, after which he falls into one of his brown studies. Waking up from it, he goes on, placidly, "I did all *that* long ago, don't you see."

"What?" demands she, somewhat startled.

"Why, the taking you to heart," returns he.

"*Oh!*" says Miss Blake. She stirs the fire rather vigorously, and then turns to him with unex-

pected vivacity. "*Wasn't* it a pity about our cakes?" she says.

"Whose cakes?" startled in his turn.

"*Our* cakes,—Mrs. Murphy's and—*mine.*" Pleased with her complete success in having drifted the conversation into a safer channel, she now confesses to him all about those indomitable pieces of dough, dwelling with heartrending pathos upon their stiffness and their hard and unyielding natures.

Mr. Fitzgerald, having laughed a little, proceeds to console her.

"It doesn't matter now," he says, "because I've brought the bread. It's in the hall."

Here he drops his glasses, and, like all near-sighted men, gropes again for them eagerly. Eventually Miss Blake restores them to him. "Ah, thanks!" he says. "So good of you; so stupid!"

This remarkable speech would lead an outsider to imagine he believes her both good and stupid. Miss Blake, however, takes no umbrage.

"You mean to say you brought it yourself?" she says. "Why?"

"I told you those rascally Leaguers have threatened all my people to such an extent with prospects of death and confusion, and I don't know what else, if they dare to bring you any more provisions, that the poor beggars declare they dare not come near Ardrish. Awful bore, the whole thing, isn't it?"

"For *you*, yes. It was quite too good of you to come here yourself to-night."

"For me?" not heeding the latter part of her little speech, and dropping his glasses again in his amazement. "Can't concern me, you know, except where it concerns you. Bore for *you*, I meant. You're a clever girl; perhaps that's why you took such an extraordinary view of my remark."

"*Was* it so very extraordinary?" making him a present of a very lovely smile. "Well, let it be so, if you will. At least let me say we acknowledge the trouble we give you."

"Oh, as to that, I like it," says Mr. Fitzgerald.

"What! *Trouble?* Well, I don't," says she, gaily. "And to think," beating her small foot with a certain haughty petulance upon the ground, "we should have had none of it but for the insolence of these peasants! But they shall be taught their places yet. We shall neither truckle to them nor bend."

"I wouldn't truckle, certainly," says the young man, regarding with a peculiar sense of tenderness the slight figure beneath him in the low chair, with its lovely mutinous eyes and mouth. "But I think," with a carefully casual air, "during such times as these, when a sense of injury is rife among the farming classes, I should bend—a *little*."

"What!" says Miss Blake.

Mr. Fitzgerald drops his glasses *again*, but otherwise shows no signs of contrition or any desire whatever to retract his offensive remark.

"I really mean it," he says, equably. "Moderation nowadays is everything, and your father (for-

give me!) is a little—well, *precipitate* in his actions."

At this Miss Blake rises and confronts him. She is so pretty that even mistaken indignation sits well upon her, and, indeed, only serves to heighten her charms. She is dressed in a white cashmere gown, with no sleeves worth mentioning, unless the high puffs on either shoulder are meant for them, and she has a little plain band of black velvet studded with pearls round her slender throat. Her arms are covered by long white mittens that reach far above her elbows, and her taper fingers are adorned by many rings. No bracelets, however, are on her rounded arms. A white fan, fringed with down, hangs by her side. She has been at great pains to make her toilet as careful as of old ever since this boycotting business began.

"My father," she says now, very coldly, "is *always* right. One must be either right or wrong. That even *you*" (as though he were a being past all grace) "must allow. If wrong, certainly, let him bend,—*your* word, I believe," disdainfully,—"if *right*, let him stick to his principles. These are his sentiments and mine. We, *knowing* ourselves to be right——"

"Very foolish sentiments," says Fitzgerald, calmly. "The wise man, in a case like this, would temporise. But, really, you know, '*bend*' was *your* word, not mine."

"Temporising, just now, means weakness," says Miss Blake, ignoring his protest.

"I hardly see that. Fifteen, or even ten per cent. would have gone a long way with your father's tenants, if offered in good time. But he has taken too high a stand. If he was a miserly sort of fellow who grudged the money, I should say nothing; but he gave the most of his people twenty per cent. three years ago, when the potato crop failed, without even waiting to be asked for it."

"That is it. He will give of his own free will; but he will not be coerced into giving. He will not be driven into making a gift. I, for one, applaud him," says Miss Blake, with energy. "Papa is quite determined. Even if we *starve*, he will not succumb."

This is the simple truth. From the beginning of the disturbances (now two years ago) The O'Brien Blake went at the insurgents, tooth and nail, swearing he would uphold his authority and the rights of his queen against all traitors, in which he was perfectly disinterested, as certainly Her Most Gracious Majesty did not uphold *his* rights later on.

"Your starving will not content them," says Fitzgerald, ominously. "I tell you, again, a man of his moneyed influence should conciliate the people."

"You are a *coward!*" returns she, shortly.

"A *coward!*" He shrinks from her as though she had struck him. An absurd sensibility about his want of prowess on the many fields of sport clings to him always, and renders him peculiarly sensitive to any word that may seem to hint at his self-supposed lack of manliness.

"It was cowardly to suggest that my father should give in."

"I don't think I said that," says her companion, recovering from his chagrin by an effort, and turning to her a face very pale and still. "I merely advised a little forbearance, which in times such as these is not only kindly, but necessary."

"Papa is not wanting in forbearance, yet you blame him, and to me! I will not hear him censured," says the girl, with tears in her eyes.

"You wilfully misunderstand me."

"I most unwillingly understand you.

"You wrong me, indeed," says the young man, eagerly; then he stops. "It is useless arguing with you *now*," he says.

This is the last straw.

"I am in such an unreasonable temper, you mean?" she says, with the sweetest smile, but an ominous uplifting of her pretty brows. "Ah! good-night, then. You really *won't* stay to dinner?"

"No, thank you; good-night!"

They lightly touch each other's hands and part.

Some hours later, dinner being at an end, and The Blake having gone to the smoking-room for his post-prandial cigar, Miss Blake goes slowly upstairs to her own pretty little sage-green boudoir.

The lamps being turned down, she finds the room rather dark as she enters it, yet still through this half light she sees a girlish figure, clad in peasant costume, as it approaches her.

"Ah! you, Moira?" she says, addressing the girl, who had been her maid, until driven from her service by the threats of the Land League.

"Yes, Miss Patricia," says the stranger, in a pleasant tone, that still has a strain in it. "I have come to ask you for a character, and—— May I shut the door, miss?" She walks slowly, leisurely to the door as she speaks and closes it; not only that, but turns the key in the lock. Then she again faces Patricia, but with what a changed demeanour!

The enforced tranquillity that had sat so heavily upon her a moment since is all gone; her eyes are wild, her lips ashen. Falling upon her knees, as though they refuse any longer to support her, she flings out her arms toward Patricia in an appeal—voiceless, indeed, but grand in the majesty of its silent eloquence.

"What is it, Moira? What is the matter?" says Patricia, hurriedly.

"*Murdher's* the matther!" says the girl in her soft, rich brogue and with terrible intensity. "It's in the very air ye're breathing. They say as how they'll have it out wid Misther Fitzgerald th' night, because of the help he is givin' The Blake, an' we all know by this time what that manes."

"They! Who?" asks Patricia, haughtily, with increased agitation.

"The Boys, miss. They're goin' in an hour's time—at midnight—to burn the ould castle over his head, and then thrae him out, an tache him a lesson he'll '*have no occasion to remember!*' I give you their

own words, miss. They'll kill him, I tell ye, as sure as ye're standin' on that spot!"

"Because he's befriended *us?*" says Patricia. As she says this she lifts her hand and lets it fall with a heavy sound upon her heart.

"Because he has turned a deaf ear to the three warnin's sent him, tellin' him to give ye no more help. They swore last night they'd make an example of him for disobeyin' the ordhers of the Land League. I've come, in danger of me life, to tell ye this," says the girl. "But," rising to her feet, and throwing up her head with a fine gesture of despair, "to what good? Who can save him at this last minute?"

"I can," says Miss Blake, slowly.

The extreme calm of her manner reduces the girl to quietude.

"But how, asthore?" she asks, laying her hand timidly on Patricia's white gown.

"I shall go to him *now*, this *moment*," says Patricia, as quietly as though the determination has been hers for a week rather than a minute.

Moira, releasing her hold of her gown, steps backward and regards her curiously. With a rapid movement she throws the hood from her shapely head, as though half stifled for want of air, and lets all her beautiful, haggard face be distinctly seen. A passionate desire to keep down a hope that *will* yet rise within her breast marks her every feature.

"But who will ye get to go along wid ye, darlin'?" she says, tremulously. "*I* can't; for the boys are on

the watch for me, an' I could never have got here to ye at all but through pretending I had a message to Mrs. Murphy below. An' even if I defied them an' went, it would only be the sure an' certain ruin of all our hopes. An' it's a good step from this to him, an' a hard night, wid the could frost on everything. Tell me, alanna, who will ye thrust to go wid ye?"

"No one; I shall go to him alone," says Patricia, firmly, but as one in a dream. A storm of bitterest emotion is laying waste her bosom. Oh! to think how unkindly she parted from him only a few short hours ago, and now she may never see him again! She had called him coward, yet for her sake, she finds, he has secretly courted death.

"You, *you!*" cries Moira, sharply, though always in the suppressed tone of one possessed by fear. "No, no, dear; ye couldn't, indeed. Is there nothing else? I came to ye because I thought ye might think of something a poor ignorant girl like me might forget."

"It is now five minutes to eleven," says Miss Blake, with a careful consideration of every small fact connected with the situation and a calmness that is utterly out of keeping with her fragile figure and delicate face. "There is no time to be lost. Get me some covering quickly,—my sealskin is in the wardrobe there. Make haste, I tell you, *moments* are precious now!" Her spirits seem to rise with the demand for them. "It is quite a comfort to

find myself with a maid again," she says, with quite a merry smile.

"Don't talk to me like that!" cries Moira, passionately. "You'll hardly be at the castle before *them;* and it's going to your death ye are. But ye shan't do it alone, I tell ye," with a reckless air. "Ye shan't thravel at this late hour widdout a friend as long as yer own Moira is above ground. *I*'ll go wid ye, though they killed me for it, and though Con himself swore—"

She stops abruptly.

"Go on," says Miss Blake, quietly. "Though Con, your sweetheart, swore—"

"'Twas naught, miss, indeed." The touch of native cunning that lies beneath the careless exterior of all the Irish peasantry comes into force now. It enables her to even smile, in a strong endeavour to bring the truth to bear upon her words. But in spite of all her suing, that stern damsel foils her.

"*What* did Con swear?" persists Miss Blake, sternly, her eyes looking her through and through. Overpowered by the hitherto unknown anger in her mistress's soft eyes, and by all the events of the night combined, the girl burst into tears.

"Ye won't bethray him, will ye, darlin'?" she says, clasping her hands in an agony of fear. "I'll thrust it. I'll tell ye all. He—Con—he's the head of them, I tell ye. There's those that are cleverer than him, an' wid a book-larnin' that never could be his, that have led him asthray (*may a curse light upon them by night and by day!*) Six

months ago he thought only of the seed-time and the harvest, an'—an' me," with drooping head; "but there was a spirit in him, an' they found it out, an' seized upon it. He was a rare one to work their wicked wills. An' now the devil has a hould of him an' won't let him go."

"If he is seen and recognised to-night," says Miss Blake, coldly, "it will go badly with him when there is an investigation into this iniquitous work."

"I know it!" cries the girl, almost distraught with horror. "There will be, too, a sin on his sowl, an' the power of the Virgin upon him forever." She clasps her hands before her face and rocks herself to and fro. "Oh, wirra, wirra, wirrasthrue!" she moans, giving way to the low but piercing cry that distinguishes the open grief of those of her class in Ireland. "The bitther hour this is to me! Con wouldn't hurt *you*, darlin', nor harm a hair o' *my* head; but what could he do wid the others if they found us out? If ye *can* save Misther Fitzgerald, ye will save Con too; for ye will keep him from the sheddin' o' blood and all that will come after that."

"Get up from your knees, Moira; time is flying."

"Not till ye swear ye will not inform on Con. I'll hould ye here till ye sware it. Ye would save Mr. Fitzgerald because ye love him, but ye have no thought for the poor girl who has even now risked her life (an' the life of one far dearer to her) to

help ye to do it. Oh, by your own love, I pray ye, at yer feet, to have pity on mine!"

"I shall never betray *you* or *him*," says Miss Blake, solemnly. "Be assured of that. And now haste, haste!"

"You will change your dress, dear?"

"There is no time. But how shall I cover my head? That lace scarf will be warmer than a hat: twist it round me in the old way." Then she turns with feverish impatience to the door.

"Ye can't go in yer slippers, Miss Patricia. Let me get you your strong boots," says Moira, pressing her young mistress into a chair and drawing off the slippers in question, as she has done many a time and oft before this. As the first dainty foot, clad in its silken stocking, lies in her palm, she breaks into tears afresh.

"Oh, the purty little foot of ye!" she says. "How will it ever carry ye this night through the frozen grasses? An' to think of yer going, ye 'lone, on such an errand!" Stooping, she presses her lips with passionate fondness to the arch of the beautiful instep.

"Cry when I am gone if you must," says Patricia, vehemently, "but help me now. There, don't fasten *all* the buttons. I can run just as well if you do only every second one. *Now!*"

She springs to her feet with fire in her eyes and an elasticity in every nerve of her delicate frame.

"Run down quietly to the kitchen," she says to the pale, frightened girl beside her. "But first

take those tell-tale tears from your eyes, and that terrified expression from your mouth. I shall get out of the library window, lest the hall door be watched. For you—say something merry or careless to Mrs. Murphy on going through the kitchen. Remember, all—*all*," with emphasis, "depends upon your assuming a total want of concern. Laugh, if you can,—I dare say they will be on the lookout for you at the back door,—if not, at least show a calmness that will pass for indifference. And now good-by!"

She had meant to let the girl go so, but suddenly she turns and lays her hands upon her shoulders.

"If—if I should not come home ever again," she says hurriedly, "I leave it to you to tell my father that I went on this mission to-night as much for love of him and his honor as for love of—the other!"

The confession contained in her last two words, thus wrung from her for the first time, brings a soft, faint blush to her pale cheeks.

"Tell him (my father) that I weighed it all carefully; that I knew we could raise no help for such a cause among our disloyal tenants, and that before we could have summoned the police or the marines from Clonbree the mischief would have been done, and the old castle of the Fitzgeralds and its owner past all help; and that I forebore to tell him of my determination lest he should strive to keep me from doing a duty that there is no one else to do. Now go, for the last moment has indeed come."

She glances uneasily at the tiny clock upon her mantelpiece.

Moira draws her hood over her head. Something in the agony of her face pierces even through the unnatural calm of Patricia's manner and touches her to present life.

"Be comforted; all may go well," she says, going up to her and laying her hand upon her arm."

"I am sending ye to yer death," says Moira, heavily.

"Nay, you have given me my one chance of *life*," returns her mistress, quickly.

In a moment (and for only a moment) they are in each other's arms, have kissed each other, all distinctions of grade forgotten in the intensity of the hour, and then Moira is gone, and Patricia, creeping noiselessly downstairs to the library, drops from its low window to the ground, and runs with light, fleet footsteps in the desired direction.

CHAPTER II.

MISS BLAKE has taken a little by-path leading from Ardrish straight through the now deserted woods to the castle of Coolmeen—a tiny, unfrequented pathway, known only to her and another. Not once does she slip or stumble, though the ground is treacherous by right of the two days' frost that covers it; not once does she lose heart,

but, young and strong and agile as she is, in spite of her slender frame, flies, straight as an arrow from its bow, to the rescue of him she loves.

In the loneliness and darkness of the hour, flying ever onward, with fear fighting in her breast for mastery over hope, she acknowledges to herself for the first time that she does indeed love Owen Fitzgerald ; that he, and he alone, of all the world, is the one man for her.

How lone seems the night ! how full of ghastly terrors ! Now a rustle in the shrubs on her right hand makes her blood run cold, and now a fancied whisper brings a frightened sob to her throat. And now at last, *at last* the lights of Coolmeen fall upon her straining eyes. Encouraged by them to fresh exertions, she runs as though Hecate herself were at her heels, never drawing breath until she stops where a gravelled walk separates the grass on which she stands from the grass opposite, beneath the library windows.

Cautiously she crosses this walk and presently stands before a large bow-window. The moon, coming languidly now from behind a heavy cloud, lights the panes of these windows into sparks and stars of light.

Trying one of the sashes, she finds it yields beneath her touch, and with a low murmur of relief she throws it up and steps lightly into the room. "*Out* of one library window, *in* at another," she says to herself with a grim smile at her own conceit.

The lamps within are lighted. Fastening the

window carefully she hurriedly closes and bars the shutters. Then, tired and a little exhausted from her run, she flings off her sealskin coat and knows a faint, subdued pleasure in the chill of her bare arms and the white coldness of her clinging gown.

She is just meditating upon the most orthodox fashion of making her presence in his house known to the master of it, when the door is thrown open and he himself enters.

Seeing him all at once such a sense of security overcomes her that, losing sight of the courage that hitherto has sustained and upheld her, she sways forward, and would have fallen but that he catches her in his arms.

"My darling, you here! What has happened!" cries he, in great agitation. "What has brought you here at such an hour?"

"To bring you home with me," she whispers, with difficulty, her heart beating against his. Then she conquers the faintness, and raising herself from his embrace, sinks into a chair.

"I have been your evil genius," she says, sadly. "For the kindness shown to me your life is required. Some members of the Land League have sworn to kill you because you have openly defied their attempts to starve us into submission. I have come here to tell you this."

"I knew it," says Fitzgerald, gently. "I have known it for some time."

"You knew it, and still persisted?"

"I really didn't want to persist, or be obstinate,

or to make myself disagreeable in any way," declares Mr. Fitzgerald, adjusting his eye-glasses and growing quite earnest, "but even to oblige that great and good man, Parnell, I couldn't allow you to go dinnerless."

He has dropped his glasses again as usual, and is now fumbling awkwardly for them, or perhaps he might have seen an expression in her beautiful eyes that would well have repaid him for the risk he has most willingly run.

"You knew it?" she says again in a tone that trembles.

"Why, yes; I was bound to, you know. Some unknown and rather illiterate acquaintance has been good enough to write me two or three very curious notes upon the subject of late. I remember wondering, when the first missive was handed me by Jackson, where on earth my correspondent got his paper and his spelling. The word '*Hel*' tormented me for a considerable time, but it occurred so frequently in connection with another word spelled '*sowl*,' that at last I found it out. I believe it is to the former mysterious abode they mean to do themselves the pleasure of sending my latter, if I *allow* them. Sounds like a riddle, doesn't it?"

"You have risked your life for me!" says Patricia, very pale.

"My dear girl, it is nothing, really nothing,—quite a selfish affair all through, not worth a moment's thought. Do you suppose I could *live* knowing you uncomfortable?"

"You are *right*, it was a selfish affair," says Patricia, rising, impetuously, with a white face full of reproachful passion. "Do you suppose *I* could continue comfortable knowing you *dead?*"

She has raised one bare, rounded arm to the side of her head, and having rested the other on the back of the nearest chair, so steadies herself and looks at him.

"But why suppose me dead?" says he, with a smile.

"You have had my warning."

"You think they will redeem their kindly promise? Well, perhaps they may some day; but——"

"*To-night!*" says Patricia, with startling vehemence. "At any moment now they may be here. Do you suppose I should have come to you unless the need was indeed pressing? At midnight a large body of men (as far as I could learn) will be here to burn and sack your house and——" Her voice fails her.

"What?"

"*Kill* you!" she says, desperately, and covers her eyes with her hands.

"I didn't think it would be such sharp work," says Fitzgerald, with darkening brows. "Who is your informant?"

"You must not ask me. I have given my word never to betray that. See! it is almost twelve. Come," with nervous haste, "another five minutes may make it too late."

"By Jove! so it will," glancing in his turn at the

clock. "Which of the men will be best to take you back?" he says, musingly, "Perhaps——" He seems anxious and puzzled.

"Will not *three* be rather conspicuous in the moonlight?" says Patricia, timidly. "Could not you alone come with me?"

"I, my darling! *I* can't go with you," says Fitzgerald, turning crimson. "I must remain here."

"Oh, you *shall* not!" cries the girl, vehemently. "You *must* return with me. I have come all this way *by myself* for you; will you send me back *alone?*" She lays her little white hands, one crossed upon the other, on his arm, and looks with eager eyes into his face. "I *pray* you to come; will you refuse me?" she says.

"Will you make me a greater coward than you already deem me?" returns he, hastily, the late wound still rankling. In a moment, seeing how she shrinks away from him, conscience-stricken, he curses himself in his heart for having thus upbraided her.

"Forgive me!" he says, in an agony of contrition.

"You do right to reproach me," returns she, in a low tone, with her pretty head bent down and lips quivering, "although in my heart I never meant what I said."

"I believe that," he says, gladly. "But let us talk of it another time. If the information you bring me is correct, there is not a moment to be lost. You must go at once."

"I will not," says Miss Blake, firmly. "If you stay, I shall stay with you."

"Let me tell you one thing before you finally decide," says the young man, regarding her earnestly. "In thus staying here with me, without the protection of your father, you will compromise yourself in the eyes of the world. Unless in the character of my affianced wife, you could hardly take the step you now contemplate."

His voice is strangely calm, but there is great trouble in his face. He seems like one who has cast his all upon the hazard of the die, and expects nothing less than ruin.

"Is *that* the way you ask me to marry you?" asks she, very shyly, but with a mischievous gleam in her large, dark Irish eyes, made up of tears and laughter.

"Patricia!" He makes a step forward, and then stops, as though determined to kill the rising hope within him. "If I thought there was a chance," he begins, his voice somewhat unsteady.

"There isn't," she says, plucking at a fold in her gown and with averted eyes: "it's a certainty." Here she makes another brave effort to smile, but breaks down. "I—I love you," she says, and bursts into tears.

"O love! O darling!" says the young man, and then involuntarily they move toward each other. There is a tremulous pause, a faltering glance, and then the veil is torn down, and they find happiness "imparadised in one another's arms."

"How am I to part from you now?" he says at last, desperately. "But now, *if possible,* you are even dearer to me than you were before, and I must hasten to save *my wife*" (dwelling with infinite tenderness upon the beloved word) "from the threatened danger."

"In danger who should be your comfort *but* your wife?" returns she, sweetly. "I shall stay, dear, unless, indeed, you mean to repudiate my claim to that title. If so, I can go indeed."

"No, no!" seizing her as she half turns aside. "Rather than you should think *that,* I would have you share my danger. Remain, then, and help me to think of what is best to be done." Looking round the room, he sees the shutters barred. "Who has done that?" he says, hastily.

"I did it," says Patricia.

"Dear little heart! she thought of everything," he says, caressingly.

"Forget me now," says Patricia, earnestly. "Think only of the fact that in a very little time you may be attacked by dangerous enemies."

"A fig for them!" says Mr. Fitzgerald, throwing out his arms with a glad gesture of supreme content. "I am too happy to be afraid of anything. I defy them, one and all. Now come with me and have a glass of champagne, and help me to instil courage into the hearts of my people."

The in-door men, four in number (being eventually instilled both with courage and champagne, assisted by a "dhrop o' the crather") are stationed

in a room in the west wing, with windows overhanging the avenue on one side and the entrance to the yard on the other.

" Put out every light in the house," says Patricia, and at once (as though already she is acknowledged as its mistress) every light is put out.

Having armed Patricia, at her own request, with a revolver, Mr. Fitzgerald leads the way to an upper room, from which also the avenue can be seen and part of the gardens.

They have had time to execute all these manœuvres, and to let Patricia begin to believe herself the messenger of a false alarm, when she and Fitzgerald (who are sitting in very close proximity to each other,—the night is cold !) notice simultaneously a wavering shadow that falls across the gravelled sweep before the hall door. It comes apparently from the dark clump of elms on their right hand.

The clouds, that in the earlier part of the evening had been dull and leaden, have all cleared away, and now, through the cold and frost, one sees a most heavenly night. Every tree and shrub and leaf in a glitter with diamonds from Winter's mines, and moonlight, lying over all, softens and deepens into tenderest beauty each thing it touches.

But the shadow—now long, now short—rests on the moonlit patch upon the gravel, and draws the attention to it from all surrounding charms.

Now it grows longer, as though bolder, now recedes, as though in doubt, now—

"There, *look!*" whispers Patricia, hurriedly, tightening her fingers on Fitzgerald's.

Slowly, as they watch, a party of about twenty men emerge cautiously from among the dark elms and move towards the principal entrance. One of these, striking a match, sets fire to a huge pine log (presumably steeped in paraffine, because of its readiness to receive the flame), and then moves even more rapidly towards the hall door.

Mr. Fitzgerald at this, placing Patricia in an angle of the wall, where she is for the present safe, flings wide the window and calls aloud to the insurgents down below.

"What do you want here, you fellows?" he says, in a clear and by no means conciliatory tone.

His sudden presence, being evidently quite unexpected, causes the body of men to come to a standstill. A parley among themselves then ensues, of a very animated order, until broken by one of their number, who, separating himself a little from the others, glances defiantly up at the window where Fitzgerald is standing. He is rather a petty farmer than a workman, a tall and slight young man, and carries in his right hand a revolver.

"*You!*" he says, insolently, in answer to Mr. Fitzgerald's question.

"Well, you see me," says Fitzgerald, calmly. "What can I do for you?"

"Nothing. We're going to do for *you* to-night!" replies the same voice. This retort brings to life

a hoarse, jeering laugh of approbation from the rest of the men.

"As for *that*, we shall see," says Fitzgerald, still quite calmly. "However, one word. It is only fair to warn you that the first man who lays that lighted torch to my door will get a bullet through his brain."

"There are more bullets than yours," shouts another voice, derisively, and almost with the words something whistles past Fitzgerald's head and lodges itself in the wall behind him.

"A near shave," says the young man, with a low laugh. It is a dangerous laugh, however, full of revengeful possibilities, but without a suspicion of fear. Patricia comes quickly to his side. Her soul is filled with pride for him. After all, a man can prove himself no whit lacking in courage, though he be deficient in prowess on the hunting-field. She is as pale as she might be lying in her shroud, but there is no sign of faintness about her now. She does not even ask him to make terms with the miscreants beneath.

"Stand a little to this side; you will be more out of their range," is all she says, drawing him, as she speaks, into the desired position.

"Keep well behind me," he says, anxiously; "but, if you can with safety, point out to me the man who fired that shot. My own wretched eyes are of small use to me in this uncertain light. I don't think"—laughing again, but quite gaily this time—"I ever grieved over my short sight before."

"For the future *I* shall be your eyes," returns she,

sweetly. "And now to tell you what you want to know. See that little man standing behind those two foremost giants: *he* fired that shot."

"You are indeed the very eyes of me," says the young man, softly. "But, darling, what a terrible experience for you! And it is all my fault. But for me you would be——"

"Poor indeed, whereas now I am *rich*. *There*, be on your guard! That fellow is about to fire again."

"All my imperfections declare themselves to-night!" exclaims he, with deep regret. "I cannot be sure of disarming that man. I am a bad marksman with all the rest."

"How you decry yourself!" says she, reproachfully. "If your sight is bad, it is all; there is no *rest*——"

"For the wicked, no," says Mr. Fitzgerald, lightly. As he says this, another bullet flies past him, tearing a small bit of cloth from the shoulder of his coat.

"*There!* I told you so," he says, with a sense of appreciation of the aptness of the insult from below: it has evidently tickled him. "Rather rude, though, to class me thus *publicly* with the very wicked," he says, in an amused tone.

"Why will you expose yourself?" cries Patricia, vehemently. "Stand *back* and fire low."

"Not yet," says Fitzgerald, with a suspicion of shame in his voice. "Don't think me chicken-hearted, darling; but, to confess the truth to you, I can't bear to take the lives of any of those misguided creatures down there. A hand-to-hand

struggle with their vile leaders, who, by false statements and seditious speeches, have led them astray, might have some honour and glory in it, but——"

He has no time to finish his sentence. A volley from the window in the opposite wing, fired by the servants stationed there right into the body of the Leaguers, drown his words, and directs his attention to the scene beneath. Both he and Patricia lean forward.

A wild yell arising on the frosty air tells them that one bullet at least has found its home. A central figure is writhing on the ground ; a thin, dark stream of blood is creeping along and defiling the white carpet that Nature has laid upon the earth.

"It is horrible !" says Patricia. She staggers a little, and lays her hand upon Fitzgerald's arm. It is but for a moment. Then she recovers herself, and standing upright, stares with determination upon the group beneath,—she has even moved a little forward.

Her white gown coming thus prominently into notice, lit by the rays of the glorious moon, is distinctly visible, and brings into bold relief the dark form of Fitzgerald standing a step or so in front of her.

Two or three of the men are stooping over the prostrate body and are drawing it into the rear.

"I hope he is not killed," says Fitzgerald, in a tone of deep anxiety. It is the first symptom of agitation he has betrayed. He is so intent upon the wounded man, and finds such a difficulty in

bringing his deficient sight to bear upon him, that he grows forgetful of consequences and steps into the full glare of the moonlight. Patricia, who is also awe-struck by the presence of death, stands by his side, smitten by the solemnity of the moment into uncautiousness.

A spark of light, however, catching her side view, she involuntarily turns her head in that direction. A little riotous moonbeam glinting off the steel barrel of a gun has caused this spark. The gun itself is raised, and the muzzle is pointed at the very heart of Owen, pointed by the young man who had first addressed him. Now, at this supreme moment, Patricia recognizes him: it is Con, the lover of Moira!

He is taking a very deliberate aim, is pausing, as though to make sure of his mark. There is no time for warning of any sort. Even were she to cry aloud to Owen, the bullet destined for him might be in his heart before he could comprehend her words or his danger. In a second she has raised the revolver in her hand and fired.

A second explosion follows hard on hers, and then a cry of agony. Moira's lover, throwing one arm upward (the other is hanging broken by his side), staggers backwards and sinks into the embrace of a man who hurries towards him. That he has been a leader among the band is plain, from the fact that they now all slink farther from the house and talk together in agitated and angry whispers. Presently there is a movement among

them, and then, almost before one can grasp the fact, they have all gone from the gravel sweep, have melted away once more into the shadows of the elms.

"You saved my life then!" cried Fitzgerald, turning to her excitedly. "Just as he fired I saw my danger, not before. It was too late then to move. But your bullet saved me. I owe my very existence to you, my brave darling! See! *his* bullet must have passed right between us, under your arm."

"But where have they gone?" exclaims she, anxiously. "Have they abandoned their evil work? Have we proved ourselves too strong for them?"

She had stooped forward. Her face, as the moonlight falls upon it, looks ghastly. Fitzgerald gazes at her keenly, then something that soils the purity of her gown attracts his attention. The sleeve has been rudely torn away from her white arm, and on the hanging fragments of cashmere and trickling down the fair, soft flesh is *blood!*

"My angel, you are wounded!" he cries in a dreadful voice. "What vile thing is this? And for *me!* to save *me!* O love, you are faint! Have they *killed* you? Patricia, speak to me!"

"Wounded," repeats the girl, vaguely. Then she sways a little, and with a little, confiding gesture towards him, full of pathos, falls unconscious upon his breast.

Frantic with terror, he lifts the slender figure in his arms and rushes with her down the broad stone

staircase, carrying his beloved burden lightly, as though she were a little child.

In the large hall beneath, the housekeeper and most of the women-servants are congregated together, conversing in frightful whispers. Seeing their master approaching them with an apparently lifeless figure in his arms, a cry goes up from them.

"Mrs. Ryan," says Fitzgerald, desperately, addressing the housekeeper, "see to her. She *can't* be *much* hurt, she spoke to me only a moment since. And one of you," turning wildly to the other women, "tell Moore to saddle a horse for me. I must ride for the doctor at once."

"Not to-night, sir. Ye wouldn't stir out th' night," says Mrs. Ryan, who is a comely, kindly woman of about fifty, "with all '*the Boys*' abroad; and, indeed, ye needn't to. See there, she's comin' round already. Ye're feeling betther now, Miss Blake, aren't ye, my dear? A little dhrop of this brandy now, an' ye'll be all right in a minnit. Take heart now, asthore! See, here's the poor masther near out o' his mind because of the looks o' ye."

Slowly the girl's eyes unclose to meet her lover's.

"It is nothing," she says, feebly, moving the uninjured hand till it rests on his. Fitzgerald, falling on his knees beside her couch, presses his lips to her soft arm with passionate fondness and relief.

The whole scene is like a lovely picture,—the gleaming lamps; the prostrate form of the beautiful

girl, lying on the fur-lined couch, her white gown stained with the cruel crimson, her perfect arms naked to the shoulder, on one of which the blood still lies wet; the attendants grouped around; the young man on his knees beside the central figure in an attitude suggestive of agony subdued.

"There now," says Mrs. Ryan, coming to the rescue. "Sure she can see ye're glad about her without yer' sayin' it. She's comin' to sweetly. Lave her to me to make her a bit comfortable, an' then, if ye like," with a sly smile, "ye can say it to her all over again."

After this—being really a "grand old woman" at small doctoring of all kinds—she bathes and patches up Patricia's wound with tenderest fingers.

"Why, 'tis nothing," she says, cheerfully. "If that's all them villains could do," contemptuously, "'twas a mighty poor thing."

"Poor as you call it, they shall suffer for it," says Fitzgerald, between his teeth.

"Ay, sir," says Mrs. Ryan, who is not without eyes, and who has noticed that Patricia had blushed softly, but had shown no signs of displeasure when the "masther" had kissed her arm. "An' indeed I don't wondher ye're angry, but still things might have been worse; an' in troth I think ye wouldn't be feelin' the man ye are now if Miss Blake hadn't come to warn ye th' night."

Patricia's eyes seek his. After all, Mrs. Ryan is right. This night, terrible as it had been, will always be remembered as the most blessed one of his

life. Had she not *come* to him and *given* nerself to him? Mrs. Ryan is again apparently engrossed with her bandages; under the mistaken impression that she has no eyes in the back of her head, Fitzgerald imprints another fond caress upon his darling's hand.

"There, now, I think I may go an' see about a room for ye, Miss Blake," says the housekeeper. "An' though I'm no docthor, miss, I can warrant ye that no harm will come to ye from that scratch. ''Twill be well before ye're twice married.'" She laughs merrily at the old saying, and then, taking a mean advantage of the fact that she is still supposed to be in ignorance of how matters stand with the young people, says, respectfully, but with a mischievous smile, "Though, for the matther o' that, miss, I won't wish ye a second wedding. One good man like, let us say," with an innocent air, "the masther over there (beggin' yer pardon, sir!) ought to be enough for the happiness of any young lady."

Fitzgerald laughs lightly.

"Thank you, Mrs. Ryan," he says.

Patricia colours again and casts at him a reproachful glance.

"An' now I think you ought to eat something, Miss Blake," says the housekeeper. "If I might ask ye to go into the library, I'll send ye up something in a minute or two. Ye may go there with an easy mind. I'm thinkin' them miscreants will be a long time makin' up their minds about a return."

"A bachelor's quarters as yet, darling," says

Fitzgerald, when he has seated her in a huge arm-chair before a blazing fire in the library. He is rather blushing over the fact that he hasn't the faintest idea what is or is not in the house producible for supper. "But soon the old castle will have the most beautiful mistress in the world, and then she shall have and do just whatever she likes."

"If the most beautiful mistress in the world means *me*," said Patricia, gaily, "I shall begin by having Mrs. Ryan. She is an old dear, and I liked her *so* when she said you were a *good* man. She was right," gazing at him with sweet, earnest eyes; "you are the best and dearest man I know."

"It is because you are an angel of goodness yourself that you think me so," says Fitzgerald.

"Our happiness is so great that I think we ought to show our gratitude for it in some way," says Patricia.

"Tell me the way."

"Let us forgive our enemies, our only ones—those of to-night," says Patricia.

Fitzgerald hesitates, bites his lips, and turns aside.

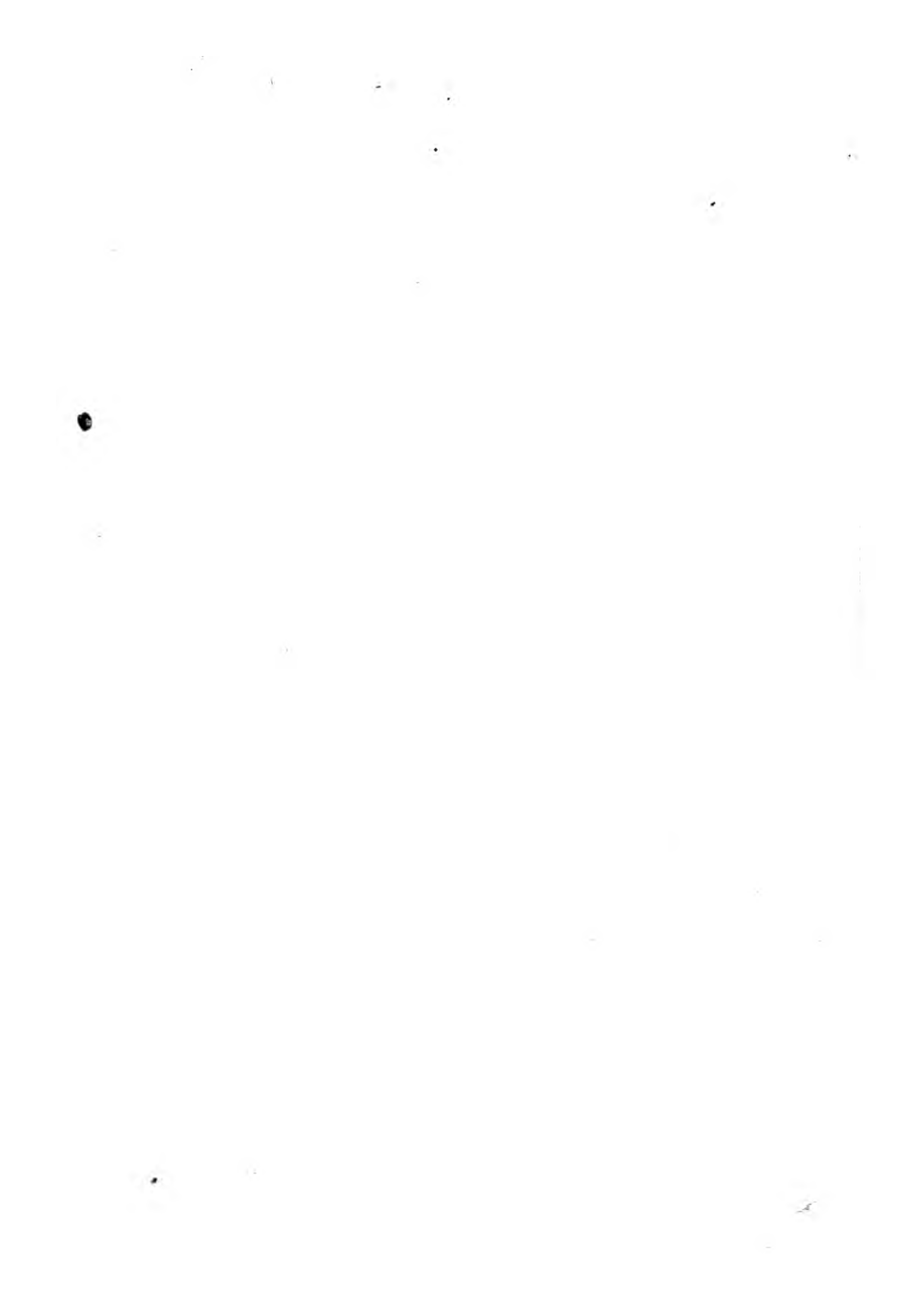
"They have been led astray, poor souls," says Patricia, very softly. "And—and just think, dear heart, but for them we might still be apart. *They* brought us together."

"How can I resist so sweet a pleader?" says Fitzgerald, kneeling beside her chair. "It shall be as you will, my life. When they come to the gallows, sooner or later, it shall be without any assistance from me."

(" Now, I have kept my word to poor Moira and saved her lover," says Patricia to herself, with a glow of tender gratitude toward the girl who had helped *her* to save *hers*.)

She turns and lays her lips on Owen's.

And now, the daintiest of suppers coming in, they make love to *it* with a zest and such light hearts as belong alone to those who have cast out from them the leaven of hatred and malice.



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