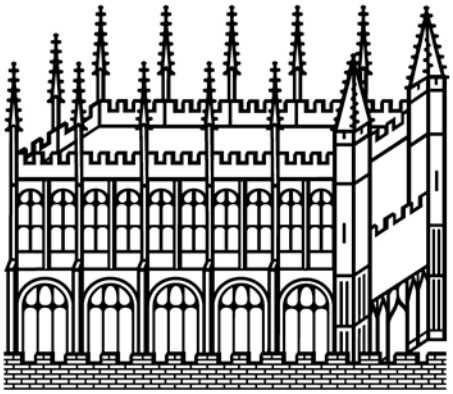

TALES FROM MANY SOURCE

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VOL. IV.

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CONTENTS.

THE TEN YEARS' TENANT.

CHAPTER I.

HOW I MET HIM.

IT is now twenty years ago. I was staying at a hotel in Scarborough, one of the great places where they have a couple of hundred people every day at their *table d'hôte*. In the evening some of the company who had been long enough in the place to make each other's acquaintance had got up an entertainment for the rest in the shape of private theatricals, which was given, after the Elizabethan manner, without the accessories of scenery, in the dining-hall. I forget what the play was; but it needed no scenery, being a comedy of the last century, for which the actors were dressed in the fashions of the second George, stately and splendid, though rather stiff.

I am not very fond of private theatricals. It always seems to me that the best amateur actors are those who have most carefully studied the gestures and tricks of professionals in the same parts. Therefore my attention was gradually diverted

from the performance to the audience, where were all the materials from which an old-fashioned moralist would have drawn his weary old moral, with a tag of "telle est la vie" about the group met together that night, never again, perhaps, to gather under the same roof. There was the doddering old gentleman; there was the bright and happy girl of seventeen, to whom life seemed made up of lovers and sugar-candy, a most delightful object of contemplation for men of all ages; there were the two elderly maiden ladies, who were enjoying the representation enormously, with a fearful joy, because they had been taught to regard the drama as wicked beyond all things: could, it was always asked, a serious person, with a regard to his soul, look even at the outside of a theatre without shuddering? There was a comfortable old widow, sound asleep, with her mouth open; there was a group of children, in happy raptures; there were young men and maidens, half listening and half flirting; there were the usual superior young men from Oxford, who looked on with tolerant pity; there were the country cousins, half ashamed of enjoying the performance too much; there were the waiters and servants at the door, mouths and eyes wide open. Presently my eyes fell upon a listener who somehow compelled my attention, so that I forgot all the rest, even that sweet rosebud of seventeen, and gazed steadfastly upon him alone.

He was a man between fifty and sixty years of age; his hair was "greyed," but not white; his

whiskers were greyer than his hair; his face was puffy and red; his nose was certainly swollen with good living and little exercise: his lips were rather thick; his eyes were bright; his forehead was broad; his chin was square. It was the face of a man who had lived and enjoyed all his fifty years.

He was listening to the performance with a curious intentness which the subject scarcely deserved. What did he see in the old-fashioned play? The dialogue was stilted, the sentiment was false. Lord Bellamour, Captain Lovelace, and Amanda were tedious to me, with their parade of musty epigrams and stale claptrap, though their dresses were fine. Yet to this man they seemed full of interest. Yet he neither laughed nor sighed; what pathos there was in the piece moved him not, nor did the low-comedy servant provoke a smile. There was a good deal of "business" with snuff-boxes and fans; at this he shook his head critically, as if the by-play left much to be desired: when they performed a minuet he turned away his head despondingly, as if he must draw the line of endurance somewhere, and he could not stand that. Yet I thought the minuet gracefully danced.

He was, perhaps, an actor himself; or he might be a London manager on the lookout for talent. That, no doubt, was the meaning of it. Managers in strange towns always go to see the play, I believe, just as the attendants at one Turkish bath spend their little holiday in visiting rival establishments, or conscientious mutes off duty haunt cemeteries. Yes, he must be a London manager.

After the performance some of the men found themselves presently in the smoking-room. Here, instead of gloomily staring at each other, we fell to talking over the evening's entertainment. Hither came my friend with the red face and thick lips. He took a chair next to mine, and, calling for a brandy and soda, began to talk. His utterance was slow and measured.

"It is always," he said, when his mixture was set before him, "advisable to fall in with the habits of the current generation. A hundred years ago—in 1760, for instance—gentlemen did not drink brandy and soda, nor did they smoke tobacco. Common people, country clergy, light porters, and the like took their pipes. But not gentlemen."

These propositions, thus baldly stated, produced on my mind much the same effect as two or three copy-book texts.

"I suppose," I replied, presently rallying, "that one cannot help adopting the manners of his own generation."

"Perhaps," he said, "it is difficult for ordinary people to avoid doing so. As for myself, I confess it is sometimes pleasant to live again in the past—sometimes to dine off peacock pie at noon, to eat a larded swan, to order a plum-porridge, now and then to exchange claret for mead, and to breakfast off that neglected beverage, small ale."

Not a London manager: an antiquary, an eccentric of uncommon type. It would, perhaps, reward one to encourage him by a nod of approval, as if

mead, larded swans, and plum-porridge were within the art of every plain cook at sixteen pounds a year.

"It gratified me to-night," he went on, "to witness an attempt, laudable though unsuccessful, to revive something of the great and glorious eighteenth century. The dresses were fairly correct; it is difficult to go wrong in the matter of dress with so many pictures before one; and at the same time the fashion of one wig was that of 1750, and of another that of 1770, while I think the patches in the year 1760 were worn quite differently. But perhaps I am thinking of 1745; one's memory sometimes plays one false in the matter of ten years or so. As for the language, it was, of course, that of the time; where they failed was in the tone, the pitch, the management of the voice. Good Heavens, sir!"—he turned quite red with emotion as he said this—"what would be your surprise and indignation were a modern actor to represent a young gentleman of the Victorian age talking in the cockney accent and the nasal twang of an omnibus cad? And the management of the fan and snuff-box! Deplorable, sir! Quite pitiable! And the minuet! How contemptible a failure! To think of that courtly dance being executed as if by clumsy boys and girls in a dancing academy!"

"But, my dear sir," I ventured to say, "it is not everybody who has studied the period so deeply as yourself. What, for instance, was wrong about the snuff-box?"

"They handed it so;" he imitated with exaggera-

tion the offering of the box as rendered by our actors of the evening. "So. Did one ever see the like! Why, sir, a cit at Vauxhall, a London mercer trying to pass for a gentleman at Epsom Wells or Tunbridge, a country bumpkin thinking to put on the manner of St. James's at Bath, would have done better! The true way to offer the snuff-box, the courtly way, is—thus."

He stood up and assumed an attitude which, in his frock-coat, seemed profoundly ridiculous. The body was slightly bent, the head inclined in an attitude of courteous and deferential invitation, the right hand held out the snuff-box with the lid open, the left was raised as if partly to protect the snuff-box and partly to emphasize the offering. The attitude of the legs was similarly studied, the right leg being advanced and slightly bent at the knee, the left being held in readiness for immediate action.

"That, sir," said the antiquary, "was the courtly method of offering the snuff-box, and, of course, with the lid open. I would I could by any attitude of mine figure to you the elegance and ease with which the charming ladies of the period handled their fans. Believe me, they as far surpassed the present age in their grace and beauty (which was the triumph of Art practising on Nature in her most generous mood) as the beaux of the time surpassed the uncouth moderns in carriage, wit and politeness."

He sat down again and drank off his tumbler of soda and brandy.

"A theory," I said very weakly, "which you would have to defend against a formidable array of facts."

"Facts? what facts?" he burst in. "Where are they? Can literature, books, letters, poetry, reconstitute a *salon?* Can we actually see Horace Walpole amusing old Madame du Deffand, for instance, or can we again hear the witty Mrs. Montague or see the beautiful Peggy Banks, or cry over the fate of the lovely Miss Ray cut off in her prime? Can you even imagine the atmosphere, the light, the grace of an evening when men met ladies, not to rush round the room with them, but to *talk?* I say advisedly, *talk.* Why, sir, every sentence was an epigram; the meaner wits studied their phrases before they came; the ladies were as ready as the men—ay, readier sometimes—with their arrows, whose points were so sharp, though they were no longer than the point of a pin. A dance in such an assembly was a stately thing, in which every lady walked as if she were a goddess, and every man as if he were a great lord. Attitudes were taught and studied in those days; a proper carriage of the body was part of a gentleman's education, and the art of deportment, now lost, was a thing which could never be truly acquired save at courts and under the wing of great ladies. This art alone, sir, marked the distinctions of rank, and taught the classes who work for their bread that between themselves and the nobility was fixed a gulf never to be bridged over. Why, why did the nobility of England and France resign that inestimable advantage? Why

has a school of manners been allowed to grow up which opens the *salons* of the greatest to every scrub who can boast that he does not jump a counter and who can buy a black tail-coat? A dress-coat! Saw one ever a more frightful, a more meaningless, a more levelling garb? Into what days are we fallen, when our gentlemen sit down to dinner in the same dress as the lackeys and fellows who wait upon them!"

This was given with such earnestness, that one felt exactly as if the man were delivering himself of a personal reminiscence. Of course that was nonsense. But one felt so. The other men in the room were attracted, and chairs were pushed closer to the table at which we sat. Presently conversation ceased, and all listened.

"Every century," he went on, his eyes having a far-off look, "takes something away with it which can never be restored. I dare say there is something, if one knew it, in this dull and driving age of yours which is to be prized; but one by one the old things leave us. What I most regret in the eighteenth century is its politeness. What have you gained to compensate for the loss of politeness? Think what it means. The attitude of body proper for every circumstance in life—can one ever forget the dignity with which, for instance, Lord Ferrers went to be hanged?—that is one thing; the tone of voice suitable for every kind of necessary or complimentary speech, such as that proper for a tradesman or servant, that for a lady,

that for a pretty woman. Lord Foppington in the play may show you what I mean. There is the true manner of estimating your own position and rank compared with those of other people. None of your accursed revolutionary levelling down ; no freedom in print over a nobleman's name ; a gentleman was a gentleman ; rank had a real meaning ; every younger son of a squire did not consider himself as good as an earl ; and lawyers, and doctors, chaplains, ushers, actors, artists, writers, curates, and such cattle, worthy enough in their way, did not pretend to be gentlemen. Think of the absurdity of any man who earns his living by work calling himself a gentleman ! When levelling began, politeness vanished. Where are your manners now ? How do you treat ladies ? What respect remains for rank ? What have you got in exchange for the good old rules which laid down the deference to be paid to a woman and the aristocracy ? I saw, only a month ago," here he shuddered, " I actually saw a common man, whom I knew to be a person in the City, tap a duke—a duke !—upon the shoulder ! "

The men laughed, One of them replied conventionally :

" We have railways. We can travel."

" The better sort travelled then," replied the antiquary, " and quite fast enough. As for the rest, they stayed at home, did their work, went to church, died, and went to the heaven set apart for the unbred and the illbred."

"Electric telegraph," proposed a second.

"Rubbish! What good to know bad news a minute before you need?"

"Free trade," said a third. "You will allow that——"

"That farmers are on the high road to ruin."

"Universal education is fast coming," said a fourth. "That alone——"

"Will complete the ruin of the world. Society will dissolve into universal anarchy when you have taught even your farm-labourers to read, write, learn, and compare. Stick to your old Church Catechism: 'Learn and labor to get your own living in that state of life'—ah, good and honest teaching, how it is disregarded! Your own state! You would like my state!"

"Come, sir," said a man who looked as if he belonged to Birmingham—that is, he had an intensely practical and self-satisfied air, so that one felt sure, if he was not really a native of that illustrious town, he must sympathize with the opinions of the majority —"come, sir, what do you say to the spread of Radical ideas and the progress of national freedom? What do you think of universal suffrage and the ballot, which we are bound to introduce?"

"Tut, tut!" The learned antiquary put him aside with a wave of his hand, and declined to reply. As no one else made any suggestion, he went on himself:

"Your steam has turned the workingman into a machine. He is no longer an intelligent man: he

makes a little bit of something, always the same little bit ; away from his work he is a barrel for the reception of beer, which you have not the sense to supply unadulterated ; he can read, but he cannot think, therefore he is a tool in the hands of any agitator. Your railways incite people to travel about and look for visionary joys abroad instead of finding substantial ones at home ; your electricity threatens to upset everything left that we value—but never mind. Of all your boasted inventions, only two deserve to be mentioned with respect. One is the use of chloroform. This shows that when mankind begins to pay one-tenth the attention to medicine which they pay for the accursed arts by which accidents are multiplied and life made noisy and noxious, they will be on the right path. I believe the sewing-machine is also a useful invention. And upon my word, gentlemen "—he rose and took a candle from the table—" upon my word there is no other invention in modern days worth a thought, and your losses are greater than your gains. Politeness, rank, conversation, dress, dancing, cookery—all these are gone."

" Pardon me, sir "—it was a young fellow who had played in the piece—" you have forgotten one thing. Permit me to suggest that we have gained by the loss of the tallow candle."

The antiquary sat down his candlestick, and regarded the speaker with a benignant admiration.

" That," he said, " is the most sensible speech I have heard to-night. You are the young man who

made an exhibition of ignorance with a snuff-box just now, are you not? Come to me to-morrow morning, and I will teach you better, as a reward for this reminder. Yes; you have gained by the adoption of a composite candle. Everything which adds to the comfort of the upper classes is a distinct gain to humanity, if only because it promotes admiration of their happy lot. I allow, gentlemen, that the tallow candle was, in the last century, a serious grievance. No house, however rich, could afford wax candles for the kitchen; few, indeed, of the middle class could afford a sufficiency of common dips. From the palace to the tavern we were cursed with the continual dropping of tallow. The servants smeared the loaf with it and poisoned the butter with it; they snuffed candles with their fingers, and then handled the white French bread for breakfast; the cook held a tallow candle with one hand while she fried a cutlet with the other; the tallow mingled with the hot bread-crumbs; you found a melted drop in the soup; it lurked in the sauce; it poisoned the gravy; it lay upon the browning; it corrupted the pudding; you smelt it in the air, especially when you passed a bevy of servant-girls on a Sunday; the smell of the candle-snuffing destroyed the illusion at the theatre and shocked the flow of devotion in the church. The saloon, lit with wax candles and crowded with high-bred ladies and gentlemen who knew the value of manners, more nearly resembled heaven than anything you have to show; but to reach these sweet and pleasant places

you had to pass through a purgatory of stinking tallow. Gentlemen, I wish you good night."

CHAPTER II.

HOW I DID HIM A SIGNAL SERVICE.

By the simple process of asking the waiter, who consulted the visitors' book, I discovered before going to bed that this remarkable lover of the past was named Mr. Montagu Jekyll, and that his room in the hotel was next to my own, both being at the end of a long passage on the first floor. The name taught me nothing. I knew of no books written, so far as I could remember, by any one of that name; I had never heard of any great historian or scholar of the name. Possibly he was one of those little known but learned antiquaries who grub along among their books in the country, acquire immense knowledge, keep it to themselves, chuckling over the ignorance of mankind, and never write anything except, perhaps, a paper for a meeting of the Archæological Institute, should that rambling body pass their way.

We continued to talk of him after he went away at eleven o'clock. The reality and vividness which he had thrown into his talk concerning the past; the confidence with which he spoke of such little details as the snuff-box, whose lid was always to be open when offered; the attitude with which he

illustrated his teaching; the way in which he spoke of us and our *gaucheries* as "you" and "yours," just as if he did not belong to the century at all—all these things pointed to an absorbing study of our period. Then we began to recollect similar instances from our own experience and from the pages of history.

"I knew a man," said one, "who never read anything which was not connected with the history of his own cathedral."

"I knew a man," said a second, "who never read anything that did not bear on the subject of infant baptism."

"I knew a man," said a third, "who was always engaged in finding out mysterious things about the Great Pyramid."

"I knew a man," said a fourth, "who was forever occupied with the site of Solomon's Temple. He couldn't talk about anything but the Temple."

"I knew a man——" said a fifth; and so on.

They went on telling anecdotes about men they had known. I listened until two superior undergraduates began to relate marvels about the men of their college. Then I left them and went to bed.

I found the antiquary putting his boots outside the door. He looked up and nodded.

"Very interesting conversation to-night," I said, "thanks to you."

"About the last century? Yes, you know nothing, any of you—nothing at all, conceited though you are—of that most remarkable period."

"In what books," I asked, "can a man find these curious details which you presented to us to-night in the smoking-room?"

"Books! books!"—he spoke with great contempt—"I never read. Men—and women—women especially—are the only books worth studying."

"Then how in the name of goodness——"

"Good-night, sir. It is past twelve o'clock."

I went to my own room and sat down on the bed, pondering over this very singular person. Perhaps he was mad; perhaps he was only affected. Men have been known to study repartees and *bons mots*, which they afterwards bring out under the pretence of their being impromptu. No doubt this humbug had carefully got up the whole scene beforehand. Not read books! Of course he must read books. How else could he know things? To be sure it was possible, and perhaps not unlikely, that he invented. Anybody, with the necessary impudence *and a little practise beforehand*, could have invented the whole thing. Likely enough he was posturing before his looking-glass at that very moment in an eighteenth-century attitude. Or was he the Devil?

I went to bed with just that little touch of nervousness which always comes over a man when he seems to touch upon the domain of the supernatural; and I confess that I should have been better pleased had my room been at the other end of the house. There was a door of communication between my room and his; there was a bolt on my side, which I drew. The key was on his side, to be

sure ; but it was useless while my bolt held. With such reflection to soothe me, I fell asleep.

I was awakened an hour or so later by a suffocating smell of smoke. I sprang to my feet, rushed to the door, and looked into the passage ; there the gas was burning tranquilly, and I could see no sign of fire. I ran to the end of the passage ; all was quiet and safe. I returned to my own room ; there was no mistake possible, the room was filled with smoke. But where was the fire ? My candle had long been out. The fire, I said to myself, must be below me ; the ceiling very likely was already on fire. At any moment the flames might break through the floor. At least, I thought, rapidly weighing the chances, the joists might hold out long enough to enable me to escape either through the door or the window.

One thinks quickly in moments of great danger. I bethought me, next, of my neighbour, the man in the next room. I ran to the door of communication, unbolted it, and tried to open it. It was locked on the other side. With one firm and judicious kick, I burst the lock open and rushed in. Good Heavens ! the man was lying in a heavy sleep on the right side of the bed, while on the left, close to him, the curtains, sheets, mattress and all, were in flames. I threw myself upon him, dragged him, still half asleep, from the bed, and began to pile the blankets upon the flaming mass. There were a couple of cans full of water, for the bath in his room and my own. I poured the whole over the bed, pulled down the curtains, and succeeded, at the expense of

a few slight burns, in rapidly subduing a fire which might have burned the house down. When I saw that there was no more danger, I opened the windows in both rooms, and lit a candle in my own. Then, and not till then, I remembered my friend, the antiquary. He was sitting on a sofa in his room in the dark, shivering and shaking. He had taken no part in extinguishing the fire ; he had said nothing ; and now, when it was all over, he sat still in helplessness, terrified out of his wits.

"Come," I said, taking him by the arm, "you must not sit there any longer ; you will catch cold. The fire's out, however ; that's the great thing. Get up and come into my room, out of this horrible mess."

He followed without a word. His teeth were chattering, his face was horribly pale, his limbs shook with terror.

I had a spirit-flask containing brandy. I made him drink a couple of glasses, one after the other ; then he looked up, gasped, and said incoherently—

"I lost it in the eighteenth century."

"What did you lose?" I asked, to humour his wandering wits.

"I lost my Religion. In a moment like this one feels to want it ; but it is quite gone. I have not looked after it for close upon two hundred years."

"You had better get between my blankets and go to sleep," I said, wondering if the man was really mad, or only frightened out of his wits. "This business has upset you. Come."

I laid him in my bed and covered him up like a child. Then I stole to look at the extinguished fire—*what* a mess the place was in!—shut the windows, wrapped myself in my rug, and went to sleep on my sofa.

In the morning I awoke and found my guest still sleeping. I rang for the waiter and explained things; the manager was called; he came and saw the mischief and heard my story. He used bad words about the cause of the accident, still asleep, and good words about my promptitude in action. Truly the house had had a narrow escape.

After breakfast I found my antiquary still sleeping. In fact, it was not until past eleven that he awoke; then he sat up with lack-lustre eyes and looked round. If it was a remarkable face which I had observed the night before, the face of the morning was still more remarkable: it seemed the face of a very, very old man, older than any man one has ever read of, full of wrinkles, crows' feet, and lines; shrunken were the cheeks and feeble were the eyes. As I looked on, the sleep passed from him, a change came upon him; the lines rapidly disappeared, the cheeks filled out, the eyes brightened. The face became again that of a man of fifty or so.

"I know now," he said, nodding his head. "I remember now what happened last night. I was reading in bed. I went to sleep. (I shall never, never, never read again in bed, unless by daylight, as long as I escape accident.) The bed caught fire. You got in, somehow, and dragged me out.

You saved my life. I do not know your name, sir, but I thank you."

"That is nothing," I replied. "Of course I did what——"

"You call it nothing"—he had by this time got one leg out of bed—"you call it nothing? Sir, the life you have saved is no common ephemeral existence. It is a most remarkable life, sir, although you know it not."

I bowed.

"It is a life to which history affords no parallel, one of which the world is ignorant."

"Really!"

One naturally felt a little angry at this extraordinary boastfulness. Both legs were out of bed.

"Sir"—he stood upright with the blanket round him—"the life you have saved is a *unique* life."

He strode with the grandest air into his own room and closed the door of communication. Presently, while I was packing my portmanteau, he opened it again.

"In case I do not see you again to-day," he said, "would you kindly give me your card? Thank you, I will do myself the pleasure, if you will allow me, of calling upon you in town. You have saved, sir, a life which is unique in history."

CHAPTER III.

HOW HE REWARDED ME.

AFTER my return to town, I thought little more about the strange old antiquary. Perhaps the adventure, with its hero, made with too much learning, served for an after-dinner story more than once. But I hardly expected to see him, and nothing ever surprised me more than to receive his card brought to my room by a clerk one afternoon in the following winter. He followed his card. He called, he said, to thank me again for the presence of mind and courage I had displayed, and begged me to believe that he was not insensible or ungrateful. Having satisfied me upon this point, he invited me to dine with him that evening at the well-known private hotel in Jermyn Street. I accepted, and he went away. When he was gone I began to recall the many curious things connected with the fire ; how old and worn he looked when he woke up in the morning, the strange words he used about his own life.

" A maniac," I said. " Probably a harmless one, mad on one point. One had better humour him."

He gave me an excellent dinner, with no attempt at emulating the ancients in the matter of larded swans and plum-porridge. On the contrary, the *menu* was as modern as could be desired, and the dinner as well cooked and as well put on the table as could be wished.

"Come," I said, "the eighteenth century could not beat a dinner like this, and there couldn't have been better wines."

"The century was greater at suppers," he replied, "than at dinners. As for wines, the clarets and champagne and German wines were as good as they are now. The port, I admit, was generally too fiery! Many a quarrel has been caused, many a valuable life has been thrown away, by the ardent nature of the eighteenth century port."

"We do not fight duels now," I urged. "You must give us credit for so much."

But he refused to give us any credit on that account. He said that a quiet and unpretending gentleman need never fight a duel: that the knowledge of its dangers made all men practise and acquire the noble art of fencing, which brought with it a dignified carriage; that polite manners were greatly assisted by the fear of being called out if you offended a man; and that public opinion was set dead against unnecessary duels and professional bullies.

I humoured him, and he enlarged at length on the eighteenth century. He seemed to know the beginning as well as the end, and was as familiar with Queen Anne's reign as with George III.'s. Yet it was a strange sort of familiarity. He showed no interest in political events, regarded Ministries with contempt, and such things as wars, alliances, sieges, and victories, or the growth of national liberty—about which modern historians keep such a coil—

he had either forgotten or was ready to forget. Nor did he care at all to talk about poetry and literature, evidently holding authors and poets in the greatest contempt. Indeed, he professed not to know who Oliver Goldsmith was and called Dr. Johnson himself a dictionary grub. He loved, however, to talk about dinners, society, the coffee-house, amusements, theatres, actresses, young lords, gambling hells, and so forth ; and he told me some excellent stories about Cupid's Gardens, the Folly, Ranelagh, the Marylebone Bowling Green, and Vauxhall. One thing presently struck me ; he seemed to have collected, and to remember quite clearly every story he could hear connected with accidents.

" It was not nearly such a time for accidents," he said, after telling me some of them, " as the present. To be sure there were a good many fires, and the service for extinguishing them was next to useless ; but there were no railways. There was a great thing to begin with. There were no hansom cabs, no mail-carts, no galloping butcher's carts, no enormous vans thundering down the street. Things everywhere went slow. There was no hurry. Only think of the safety to life and the immunity from accident involved in that single statement. Things went slow. Then there was no steam-engine of any kind ; not a locomotive yet built, not a paddle-wheel boat yet devised, no machinery, no boilers, no driving wheels, no explosions, no bursting of pipes, no scaldings by escape pipes, no collisions.

Think of there being no fear of accident on the line or on the river. To be sure, one could not wholly escape the danger of accident. If you rode, your horse sometimes ran away with you and killed you ; but you might easily get a quiet pad. In the streets there were sometimes mad bulls ; a friend of mine —that is, a man of whom I have read—was once killed by an escaping bear ; there was once a highly respectable merchant of the City, also a friend of mine—that is to say—well—such a man was once killed by the fall of a shop sign upon his head ; another, I remember to have read, was knocked over by a crowd chasing a pickpocket, and trampled on so that he died ; or a man might be bitten by a mad dog, or might be run through by mistake, being supposed in the twilight to be quite a different person. Then there were such things as occur everywhere, such as the fall of things from roofs upon your head, or slipping and breaking your ribs, or being upset in a coach, or—in fact, one can never escape the chance of an accident. But in quiet and slow times one has comfort in taking precautions, and I say that the precautions one had to take a hundred years ago were as nothing, merely nothing, compared to those one must take now.

He spoke with heat, and as if labouring under the sense of some personal injury. I said that everybody must run his chance, and that if we did nothing but look out for accidents, we should have no time to look after our business. The observation was weak.

"Ay," he groaned, "you are right. That is what I find: looking out for accidents absorbs the whole of a man's time."

At eleven o'clock I left him. He very kindly hoped that we might meet again, and spoke of calling upon me when next he should be in London.

In the morning I received a small parcel with Mr. Montagu Jekyll's compliments. It contained a splendid gold watch and chain. This was very handsome. I wrote to thank the donor, but received my letter back. Mr. Jekyll had left the hotel, given no address, and ordered that letters were not to be kept for him.

It was in the year 1870, ten years later, that I saw my friend again. He called at my office as before, and asked me to dinner as before. I congratulated him on his excellent health. In fact, he looked younger than he had some ten years before, yet he must then have been considerably over sixty. He said he had been at some German baths, and had found great relief as to gout.

"We old fellows," he said, "like to look as young as we can."

In the course of the evening he informed me that he had married since he saw me last, but had lost his wife. I condoled with him, but found him singularly cold on the matter, or perhaps he affected a coldness which he did not feel.

"It is the way of life," he said. "We desire a wife; we take a wife; if she is a good wife she dies, to disappoint him; if she is a bad wife she

lives, to torment him. My dear friend, if I could only tell you my experiences ! Are you married ?"

"No ; but I am engaged."

"Ah !"

The expression he threw into that interjection was wonderful, but he did not pursue the subject.

The day after the dinner he came to my office and desired to confer with me on professional matters. He proposed, he said, to buy a certain house standing in its own grounds about ten miles north of London.

I managed the business for him and drew up the conveyance of the property. After he had bought it, however, something disgusted him—I think it was the fall of a slate from the roof, which he said might have come upon his own head and killed him—and he begged me to sell it again. I managed that, and my friend disappeared without telling me he intended to leave London.

I saw him no more for ten years. It was in May of this present year of grace eighteen hundred and eighty, while the young spring days were still like January for rigor, that he came to see me once more. For the third time I went to dine with him, and he looked positively younger than ever, yet he must have been seventy-five at least. He was very friendly ; produced a pretty set of presents which he begged me to give to the wife and children, made a little speech about that fire business, and offered me as good a dinner as the heart of man could desire. I asked him where he had been dur-

ing the last ten years. He said that he grew restless from time to time ; that England, France, and other civilized countries became during these fits insufferable to him, and that, under the influence of one of these fits, which were a kind of melancholy, or, as he boldly put it, due to the extraordinary isolation of his position, he had thought that a few years in some quiet place, reasonably free from the chances of accident, quite removed from western civilization, would act as a beneficial change, and probably restore his mind to its usual groove of contentment. The place which he fixed upon, after great inquiry and search among gazetteers and consular blue-books, was a small island in the Greek Archipelago.

"The wine there," he said "is rough but remarkably good ; it keeps a long while, like Commandery, and when you get it old it has a luscious fragrance, quite peculiar ; the climate is delightful ; the fare simple, it is true, but wholesome for a few years. No carts, no horses, no railways, because there are no roads ; none of the ordinary causes of accident. There were dangers in getting there, to be sure, and I meditated long whether I should go on grumbling over the dulness and stupidity of this century, of which thirty years more had then to be got through before we began a new period" —did the man expect to live another thirty years? —"but I turned everything over in my own mind, and at last resolved to pluck up courage and brave the dangers of the journey. You will probably

laugh when you hear me speaking of dangers which common men, ordinary men of the groove, so to speak, recklessly meet every day and think nothing of them. But you do not know, my friend, you do not know what risk I, alone among men, have to face. You, and the rest of you may lose the short remainder of your contemptible lives . . . bah ! ten years, twenty, thirty, forty at the outside . . . while I . . . but you do not know. Horrors ! I did face the danger. I went across the continent in an express train, and a tumult of terror ; had three days of gale and peril in a steamer, with four-and-twenty hours' risk in a half-decked boat ; and finally landed with all my stores and with my French valet on the island. Ah !" He breathed a long sigh. "Here I lived for nine years and a half. I married a wife"—good heavens ! he had actually married again—"found that the place suited me remarkably well, and, in fact, was for a short time perfectly happy. They murdered my valet ; but as I found that the Greeks of that island only stick knives into each other when they are jealous, I did not consider myself in any peril. My wife was, at first, a most remarkably beautiful girl, with such eyes as one dreams of when one is young. She fell off, however, terribly, and—and in fact, the reason why I came away was that I made the dreadful discovery that Greek women are sometimes jealous without a cause. There was not a creature of her sex upon the island on whom I dared cast an eye on account of their brothers'

knives. Yet she was jealous. And her temper was violent, and I love a philosophical calm. So I ordered a steam-yacht; gave instructions to the skipper to pretend it was his own; went on board to see the craft when she arrived, and—ho! ho! steamed away."

"And your wife?"

"She will, I dare say, think that I was drowned. No doubt by this time she has dried her eyes. Do not let us trouble ourselves about her."

It seemed afterwards, when I came to think of it, a tolerably cold-blooded thing to do.

We drank a good deal of wine during dinner and after. My friend's red cheeks became redder and he began to talk faster. When we were in the middle of the second bottle of claret he laughed oddly, and said:

"And who do you think I am?"

"I have not the slightest idea. You are an enigma to me."

"And to everyone else who knows me: that is the reason why I am unhappily compelled to change all my friends every twenty or thirty years."

"Of course, I do not understand a word you say."

"I have a great mind to tell you. Yet I fear. Are you sure that you can keep a secret?"

"It is part of my profession to hear and to keep secrets."

"True, true; and it would be comfortable to have a man like yourself to advise on matters. You

see, my position is a lonely one: I have never confided my history to a single person, not even to any of my wives."

"*Any* of your wives?"

"I have had seventeen," he replied calmly. "Now to you I think I might, perhaps, communicate part of my history. People are no longer burned for possessing knowledge, even if you should break confidence. And besides I may sometimes want an adviser."

"Pray go on."

I was by this time extremely curious and interested.

"I was born," he said solemnly, "in the parish of Malvern, being the eldest son of a gentleman of good family, on the fourteenth day of August, in the year one thousand six hundred and fifteen."

"What!" I pushed the chair back, ready to fly from a madman. "In what year?"

"In the year one thousand six hundred and fifteen. Sit down again, my dear sir; I am no more mad than yourself. Shall I repeat the words? In the year one thousand six hundred and fifteen."

CHAPTER IV.

HOW HE CONFIDED IN ME.

"I WAS born," he continued, "in the year one thousand six hundred and fifteen. Ah! a long time

it seems to look back upon, but nothing when it is gone. The Jekylls are an old family, although ours was a younger branch. They sent me to Cambridge, and thence to Lincoln's Inn, where I studied such law as is useful for a country gentleman and a justice of the peace. There came a time, however, when I exchanged the pursuit of the law for one more fascinating and useful. After profiting by the result of those studies for two hundred and fifty years, it would be ungracious to join in the ignorant outcry which your men of science (poor blind mortals, most of them) carry on against the search which we of the seventeenth century made after the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life. I allow that you know more about electricity, with which, if you used it rightly, you could——" here he stopped short and paused for a moment. "What we sought was effect; that is the only thing in this world worth looking for; what you seek is cause. You consider that when you have formulated laws, you have found a cause; you think that you have classified facts and deduced a rule, you have laid your hand on the final cause; you escape from God by substituting an equation; you think it better to live under the reign of law than the reign of love. Cause! Can any one among you all tell me why the sun puts out the fire, why the poker placed in front of it gets it up again; or why the moon causes the rain to fall? Yet these are little things. How, then, can you explain birth, growth, and decay? We did not try to explain. We sought to prevent

decay, to find out, not the secret of life, but the preserver of life, the universal specific to cure all things, even the slow decay of man's strength. Glorious and noble pursuit!

"You never heard, I suppose, of John Rowley, reputed necromancer and astrologer? Yet history preserves the smaller names of Cromwell, Milton, and Hampden, who lived about the same time. Rowley was no astrologer, though he did not doubt the influence of the stars, a thing no reasonable man who has weighed the evidence can for a moment doubt. He was a searcher after the secrets of Nature; he worked upon the properties of matter; he looked to find the primitive metal from which all the common metals have descended; he wanted to make gold for himself, because the possession of gold gives power to conduct experiments; and he worked at the discovery of this universal medicine.

"I made the acquaintance of this remarkable man, it matters not how. I was admitted to his laboratory. I acquired his confidence; I worked with him. In those days I was young, hopeful, and enthusiastic; I worked with an ardour the contemplation of which at this moment appals me: sometimes our labours were continued without remission for two or three days and nights continuously, one of us taking turn now and then to snatch an hour's slumber while the other watched at the fire. All other work was thrown aside, all other friends were neglected, and from my twenty-second to my

twenty-eighth year it was hardly known whether I was living or dead. Yet during this long period I was but on the threshold, working for the master as his apprentice, by whom all kinds of work must be done, while his master teaches him by slow degrees the mysteries of the craft.

"After serving John Rowley as long as Jacob served Laban for Rachel (which is an allegory for the patient working after the Elixir), and received Leah (which means that he got that lower, yet most excellent, gift which came to me), the master called me apart and spoke to me very gravely.

"It had given him, he was good enough to say, the greatest pleasure to watch the zeal and patience with which I had worked for seven years, and it cut him to the heart to discourage any student in our glorious science, the only science worthy of the name. Yet I must understand, and be under no illusions, that the highest prize of philosophy is given to none but those who possess, to a degree beyond that of my own gifts, an insight almost prophetic, and the power of reaching out, as it were, into the darkness and depths of ignorance which enables the truly great man to walk blindfold among pitfalls and traps. Therefore he would not encourage me to persevere in researches which would lead me to disappointment. Let me leave them to others more favored by Heaven than myself.

"I was greatly dashed at hearing this advice, for I was already so far advanced as to know something of the infinite possibilities of chemistry. Yet

the master spoke with so much wisdom, and with such evident sorrow, that I could not choose but be persuaded that he spoke true words.

"'Those,' he continued, 'to whom it is given to discover the Great Secret of Life, hidden away by Nature till the time shall come, must keep that secret jealously and hand it down to few. No greater misfortune to humanity could possibly happen than a general immortality with all their sins and vices still upon them. Think of an immortal Nero? Think of an immortal Grand Inquisitor! It is the prospect of dissolution alone which prevents men from committing the most frightful crimes. Thanks to death, there is a limit to suffering as well as to sin. The tyrant must die as well as his victim; the torturer must lie down beside the tortured.'

"I asked him, were there many who knew the secret?

"He replied that, so far as he knew, there were but two or three to whom it had been given to discover it, and that they had communicated it to none. He was himself, he said, one of those who had arrived at it after a long life of research. 'I hold it in my power,' he said solemnly, 'to live as long as I please; to die when I please; to ward off all diseases; to suffer no pain; to return to youth, if youth should seem desirable to me. If I please I can go on enjoying the pleasures of life, or I can spend a deathless period, as long as the world endures, in research and contemplation. I can follow the slow growth of true religion, and mark the on-

ward march of mankind, a man among men. Or, by a simple effort of the will, I can stay the beating of the pulse, and pass away painlessly to an unknown and unknowable Eternity.'

"I asked him, then, if his studies gave him any glimpse or vision of the other world.

"He replied that Nature can only yield up her own secrets. As to the mysteries of the hereafter, they were hidden from the search of man, and could only be seen and apprehended by the eye of faith. And here he changed the discourse, and informed me with further expressions of good will that he was resolved upon giving me such a proof of his affection as the world had never before heard of.

"It was, in fact, this. He offered me nothing short of the absolute power of living as long as I pleased. There were certain conditions which, he said, were necessarily imposed upon the gift; otherwise I should grow to regard myself as an Immortal. The mention of conditions, I confess, troubled me; but as he proceeded to unfold the plan, I found the conditions light indeed compared with the magnificence of the gift.

"Briefly, because it would be tedious to relate all the discourses we held and the instructions I received, I learned by following a simple course in which he instructed me, I could arrest my age for ten years—that is to say, supposing I began at thirty, I could for ten years remain thirty, and then after ten more years I could again remain thirty for another decade; but that should I pass be-

yond the ten years without renewing the term, I should at one leap become forty ; and if I did not choose to continue, the ordinary lot of human life would be mine, and in the course of time decay of strength and gradual decline would follow. During each period of ten years I was to be subject to no other disease than any which might be upon me or in my constitution at or before the beginning of that period ; so that if I were subject to rheumatism, gout, cold, or fever, I should remain subject, but yet not be killed by any attack. The rule, further, did not hold me free from accident. A drunken man's club, a quarrelsome man's knife, a chance gunshot, the kick of a horse, anything might bring upon me the death which otherwise I had no occasion to fear. When, in cold blood, I came to think of this danger, it became certain to me that some day or other I should fall a victim to accident. For though a man may possibly pass through the wretchedly short tenure of life allotted to the common herd without accident ; and although one may, as I have done, pass through two centuries and a half in perfect safety, yet the time may come—nay, sometimes I think it must come—when the inevitable accident will happen, and I shall perish. "

He paused again, overcome by this apprehension. It was not till much later that I realized how differently the chance of an accident would appear to him. For to us, though a hansom cab may run over us or a train may have a collision, yet there is always the feeling (in anticipation) that we are all

of us in the same boat; whereas to my friend Mr. Jekyll the feeling was always that he was alone. He would live forever; he had lived already for a quarter of a thousand years; and there was only this one danger to fear: no disease, no decay could kill him—only the danger of accident. Presently he went on again, with a long sigh:

"The conditions once understood, and the instructions learned, we had next to decide upon the age of commencement. This on reflection, proved a much more difficult matter than would at first be supposed. The master was for my waiting until I was seventy, and then beginning life. 'For,' he said, 'at seventy, one is free from the passions of youth and the ambitions of middle life; one is full of wisdom, reflection, experience, and learning. There may be, it is true, a few of the inconveniences of old age, but think of the advantages of beginning with the stock of a lifetime of work!' Now a singular change had come over me from the very first moment that the master communicated his design to me. My thoughts flew away from the dingy and smoky laboratory to the joys of the world. 'Let me,' I cried, 'be twenty-two.' 'Fie upon thee!' said the master; 'wouldst remain ever a boy? Well, I see that the last and greatest gift could never have been thine. Choose rather some ripe age, when the passion of youth is over, and the strength of the brain is at its best; an age which commands reverence, but not as yet pity.' I had, however, no taste for gray locks, and

pleaded at last to begin at once, being then about twenty-eight. To this, however, he would not accede. Finally he consented to my beginning at thirty-five, provided that I should wait in patience and take my chance with the rest of mankind until then. Thirty-five, he reminded me, is an age when one should be strongest in body and fittest in brain for undertaking any kind of work, and most ready for any kind of enjoyment. I have always thought it a happy thing that I consented to wait for seven years in order to begin the long period during which I remained steadily at thirty-five. Fool, insensate fool that I was, ever to pass that limit !

" Further, the master promised me that just as my health and vigour should continue unabated, so my fortune should be unimpaired. Both were to remain unaffected by time or waste. Therefore he urged upon me to live with economy and thrift, as well as with great moderation as regards eating, drinking, exercise, and so forth, for the seven years between me and full fruition. Then he took a solemn farewell of me. We should never more, he said, meet in this world ; he was about to retire to the wastes of Arabia, where, removed from the clash of arms and the struggles of men, he could work on until he felt tired and satisfied, and content to fall asleep. As for me, he wished me a happy use of the gift which he had placed in my hands, and hoped that I should find this limited tenure of life so satisfactory that I should be induced to prolong it indefinitely. He exhorted me

to use it well, and for the benefit of mankind; to work on, accumulating knowledge, extirpating diseases, discovering new modes of increasing happiness, preventing famines, and spreading wisdom. 'Then,' he said, 'you will be a benefactor to the human race such as the world has never yet seen. We who learn and meditate can assist you who will learn and work. My friend, you may become the greatest of mankind.' He added cautions about certain temptations which might draw me aside, but I will not repeat these. 'Farewell!' he said. 'I have hopes, but I have misgivings. Take the gift and use it as you will. When you are tired of your work or dissatisfied, let the years go on unheeded; take your chance with the rest; lie down and die with the common herd.' He left me, and I sat down, wondering, overwhelmed at this great and wonderful fortune. Now consider my situation. I was twenty-eight years of age; I owned an estate of five hundred pounds a year in Warwickshire (what was then five hundred has since risen, by increase in the value of money—for I have long since sold my land—to five thousand a year). I had seven years to wait, during which my life was exposed hourly to the same dangers which threaten Tom, Dick, or Harry. I might in quiet times have gone to live on my estate, content to wait there in comparative safety. But the times were not good for quiet men. Everybody in the year 1643 was taking a side: a man had to be Cavalier or Roundhead, and to fight

for his cause. Was it likely that I, with so great a gift, was to imperil my precious life, my unique life, for the sake of a party? Why, from that very moment I ceased to take the least interest in either side or in any politics. Men who had only a few trumpery years to throw away might go and fight for King or Parliament. Was a man who had hundreds, nay thousands—perhaps—to hazard them for any cause whatever? I made up my mind, therefore, to withdraw. I put my affairs into such order as was possible, and I retired to Leyden, under the pretence of studying at the newly founded University.

"Few places in Europe were better suited to my purpose than Leyden. It was retired; it was not a great city; it was peaceful; it was healthy; the students were not brawlers or strikers; one might reasonably expect there, if any where, to escape accident and disease. I entered my name as a student, and I began the seven years—a longer seven years than any captive ever passed—with an anxiety which made me, who had previously been as brave a man as my neighbors, nothing short of a coward. I passed for one who was entirely absorbed in study. Alas! I read but little, being continually pondering over the chances of accident. I had narrow escapes, too, which made me more anxious. Once there was a rumour of the plague; once a neighbour's house took fire in the night and was burned down; once, when I was walking with a companion, a drunken fellow ran past us with a

knife and stabbed him to the heart, so that he fell dead. It might just as well have been myself. They accused me of cowardice because I did not run after a flying madman. Why, what would have been the sense in pursuing a man who would have finished the race with a stab in the vitals? Was such a life as mine to be fooled away in an attempt to revenge the death of another? And another time I was run over by a trooper on horseback. It seemed as if sudden and horrible accidents were around and about me on every side.

"The years passed slowly on; there came a time when twelve—six—three months only remained to complete the time. The three months became one; the four weeks became one week; and then, because I would be alone when the time arrived, I left Leyden and sought a lodging in a farm-house some four or five miles from the town. The farmer, who lived there with his family of two or three sons and a daughter, gave me his best room, thinking that the grave and serious scholar from the University would benefit by the country air.

"Then came the eve of the day, my birthday, my thirty-fifth birthday. I spent the day in the fields, meditating. The words of the master returned to me. I was to be a benefactor of the human race. I was to use his gift in the acquisition of knowledge. I resolved that I would do so. I would master all knowledge; I would confer such benefits on mankind as they had not dreamed——"

"And have you done so?" I asked eagerly.

"Not yet," he replied; "all in good time. Why, man, it is only two hundred and fifty years since I began to live. Give a man a little rope——"

He grumbled and growled for a few moments about the hardships of expecting a man to begin work at once before he had had his fling. Presently he resumed his narrative.

"In the evening I went early to my room. Now I suppose I could have considered the day as beginning at midnight. I would not; it should begin at sunrise. All night long I sat up waiting. The casement was closed; I would not begin the new life with a cold in the head. Then I considered myself carefully. I was well made, strong, and had no complaint, weakness, or defect of any kind. Every function of mind and body in perfect working order. What a future lay before me!

"As I waited and watched, full of fears, calculations, and doubts, it seemed, just at the darkest hour, about two in the morning, when the whole world is sleeping, as if the room became suddenly filled with ghosts. I saw nothing, but I knew they were there, and they had come to reason with me. First it was the voice of my mother who spoke to me. 'Son,' she said, 'I looked to see thee soon among us in the Islands of the Happy Dead. Now must I wait—and how long? Yet forget not that, soon or late, Death will come even to you, and the past shall be but as a dream of the night, even if thy days be as long as the days of Noah. Forget not this; and remember that men do not live until the after-life.'

"Then spoke the voice of my father. 'Twere better, son, to fight the good fight and then to die like thy forefathers. Thou hast turned aside from thy country and thy kin in their sorest need. Turn not aside from the Faith. We watch and wait for thee.'

"Then spoke the voice of one whom I had loved in my youth and forgotten. 'Sweetheart,' she said, 'bethink thee. There is no life without love; there is no love between our generation and those which follow after.'

"Then it was the voice of my little sister. 'Brother,' she said, 'come to us before you have forgotten us all; do not quite desert me. Come soon and play with me again.'

"Strange. It is two hundred and fifty years ago. I have indeed forgotten them. During all these years I have never thought of them again until now. Can it be that they wait for me still? My sister must long since have grown up—grown old—do they grow old there?"

His face changed as he said these words; his eyes softened; but only for a moment. Then he went on again:

"These appeals annoyed me. Just at the last moment, when I was entering upon my glorious career, to be thus addressed by my own people, who should have been proud of their son's distinction! I thought of the future, and hardened my heart against the past. Then the voices ceased, though I heard a weeping and sobbing as of women

over the death of one they love. Yet this moved me not; for I was mad to begin the new life free from fear of death, disease, want and age. The weeping of the spirits ceased, and they left me. Then another vision began, and it seemed as if the world with all its pleasures lay at my feet, waiting for me to enter upon my inheritance and enjoy.

"A long night, but it came to an end. I saw the streak of light in the east; I saw the grey grow into red, the darkness into dawn. Then up sprang the glorious sun, bright, warm, clear; the sky was blue; the birds burst out a-singing. Nature rejoiced with me as I rose and followed the instructions I had so long known by heart.

"Why, I was filled with a new life; I was like one intoxicated with the joy of breathing; I was strong with a strength you cannot dream of. Heavens! what a splendid man I was; what a splendid man I remained for two hundred and sixty years! You shall hear, presently, by what mad folly I threw away that glorious manhood."

CHAPTER V.

HOW HE USED HIS MOST EXCELLENT GIFT.

"I REMAINED in my room," he went on, after a pause, "while the sun rose higher in the heavens. With every moment my pulse beat stronger, the blood coursed more freely through the veins, my

heart sounded the note of stronger, eager and impetuous manhood. I was more than a king—I was a demi-god, because Death, the slayer of all, and Time, the slow subduer of all, had no power over me. I, alone of created things, was free from the law of decay. In the fields below me I saw the farm drudges creeping about their day's work ; I heard the song of my landlord's daughter as she began her work in the dairy ; I watched the birds in the trees, the cattle in the meadows, the horses being led from the stable, all alike, at first, with that pity which naturally seized the mind in thinking of the pitiful condition from which I had myself only that moment emerged."

"And you still feel that pity?" I asked.

"Not at all," he replied promptly. "I feel no more pity for those who are beneath me—in fact, for all humanity—than you feel for the menial condition of the waiter who has just brought in the soda and brandy, or for the abject state of any wretched beggar in the street, or for the sufferings of any unknown patient in a hospital. It is Fate. We have nothing to do with Fate. When I think of my long life behind me and the long life before me I am glad, that is all."

I was silent, and he proceeded :

"I went downstairs, presently, in a dream, and my landlord's daughter, a blue-eyed girl of eighteen, gave me a cup of milk, for which I thanked her with a kiss. She laughed and said she did not expect that of the grave scholar from Leyden

schools; and then she blushed and started, and wanted to know what I had done with myself; for my feet seemed to dance as they went, and my eyes were bright with life and love; my lips were ready to sing, or to kiss, or to drink; my cheek was ruddy and healthy, and dotted with a couple of dimples; and my arms were swinging so loosely that it seemed the most proper and seemly thing in the world for them to seize the girl by the waist and kiss her again. Poor Lisa! Well, she has forgotten her troubles this many a day.

"After a few weeks I began to think it was time to devise some plan for the future, and without saying farewell to the poor fond creature—indeed, I found consolation in the thought that a short forty or fifty years would bring her to the end of any sorrow my departure might occasion. I therefore returned to Leyden, where I sat down, resolved to draw out a fixed plan for work.

"First, I recalled the words of the master, how I was to use my gift so that it might become a boon to the whole of mankind. How was this best to be effected? Not, I thought, by conferring the same gift upon the whole of humanity. Why, if there were no end to life, there would be no need of religion, to begin with. Why, if there were only two such men in the world at the same time as myself, very serious difficulties might arise.

"I would not make men immortal; but I would free them from disease.

"I conceived the most beautiful dream—some

day I mean to work it out thoroughly, if it takes me a thousand years to do it ; but not just yet, not yet. To remember that dream causes me the greatest satisfaction, because it shows how fit and worthy a man I am for the confidence bestowed in me. I thought that if a man situated as happily as myself were to devote himself, taking one disease at a time, not only to its alleviation and cure, but also—a very much more important thing—to its complete and entire suppression, he would become in very truth the greatest benefactor to the human race that has ever appeared upon the world. It would take time to collect statistics, facts, figures, and accounts ; but what was time to me ? Nothing. If each disease were to take me a century of uninterrupted labour, consider what that would mean to mankind if it ended in its entire abolition.

" You see, there are the big things first : fevers, plagues, small-pox, consumption, rheumatism, gout; then the smaller things, for which surgeons use the knife ; then the many little ailments of life which cause so many grievous moments, such as tooth-ache, earache, headache, and all pains. I would begin with the great things, and after destroying them from off the face of the earth, I would attack the smaller, and finally the smallest diseases. Acknowledging that this was a great—a noble dream, I pictured myself at work in my laboratory for generation after generation, discovering why this or that disease existed, and what should be done to meet it and prevent it. What, to me, were

centuries of patient labour? I pictured to myself at last a strong and grateful humanity plagued no longer with diseases, or, if the symptoms showed themselves in punishment for excesses, able to meet them at once, and, with little suffering; to subdue them. My friend, I declare to you that this dream, while it lasted, filled me with an ineffable rapture; my old religion, which seemed to have deserted me, came back and filled my soul; I was able to thank God solemnly for His great and wonderful gift, and to implore His blessing on my most beneficent enterprise."

He was silent, and shook his head sorrowfully.

"Why did the dream leave you?" I asked him.

"There is always between the conception and the realization of a dream," he replied, "the interposition of something from the outside. This time it was the arrival at Leyden of Lisa's brothers. I fled with such precipitation that the dream was for the time shattered to atoms.

"I repaired to Paris, whither I was quite certain those young Hollanders would not follow me. Here, as an English gentleman of fortune, I was hospitably received, although I was fain to assume the disguise of a Roman Catholic, as an excuse for not having fought for the King.

"Paris, in the year 1650, was a much less desirable place of residence than London, except that there were fewer theological controversies. The streets were narrow, accidents were fearfully common, the people were rough and rude;

gentlemen were given to duelling on small provocation, and there were always the dangers of the Bastile. Suppose, I thought sometimes, that I was to incur the misfortune of being imprisoned for life on suspicion of some libel. How long would it be before my jailers would have their suspicions aroused by the youthfulness of their prisoner? And what would the Church say, if the problem were set before it? And with what face could I tell the story and bear the tender mercies of the secular arm, which was heavy indeed upon magicians? Had it not been for disquietude on these accounts, I should have been happy in Paris. It was a city which possessed (should my dream of labor come back to me) the best library of medical books in the world, and when I was inclined to enjoy the pleasures of life, gave me such boon companions as Chapelle, Bachaumont, and Bois-Robert; such evenings as none but well-bred ladies of Paris could offer; and such talk as was to be heard nowhere but among the scholars of Paris.

"After a year or two of Paris, when it seemed as if things were becoming more settled in my own country, I returned to Warwickshire. In the calm retreat of my estate, I thought, I could carry out undisturbed those projects which I had only laid aside for awhile; and proposed to undertake in earnest."

"And what prevented you?"

"The usual thing—a woman. I fell in love. She was a girl of twenty-four, handsome, well-born,

with a considerable fortune, and was reported to have a good temper. I have nothing to say against her at all ; she was a most excellent housekeeper. At making of strong waters, brewing, baking, pickling, preserving, and the knowledge of herbs, there was never any one her equal. We married, and for the first twenty years of my married state I was perfectly happy. But in each experiment made in a life like mine there are new dangers and difficulties which were unforeseen. The danger which I had overlooked was that my wife would grow old while I should not. In fact, when she was forty-five and I was, in the eyes of the world, fifty-five or so, I was freely congratulated on my wonderful preservation. This, which was only matter for laughter then, became, ten years later, when I should have been sixty-five, a thing of unwelcome notoriety. To be sure, it is not every day that one sees a man of sixty-five with the crisp beard and brown curls, the clear eyes and the elastic tread of thirty-five. To avoid this kind of talk I once kept my bed for a week, pretending illness, and came out of it with a stoop in the shoulders and a shaking at the knees. I also adopted an old-fashioned peruke, and painted every morning crows'-feet and lines about the eyes.

" It is very well to make up (being five-and-thirty) into five-and-sixty. But what about five-and-seventy, five-and-eighty, five-and-ninety ? My friend, the most unforeseen thing happened. The life of my wife was prolonged so far beyond the usual span that

she actually reached the age of ninety-eight. Now consider what that meant to me. First, there was the discomfort, which lasted for sixty years and more, of being married to a wife older than yourself. How should you at thirty-five like to be married to a woman of ninety-five, eh? Then there was the inconvenience of having to look as if age was telling upon me more and more. It would be positively indecent for a man at a hundred to shake a leg as merrily as a man at thirty; he may not laugh, nor sing, nor ride, nor dance, nor talk cheerfully, nor even drink. Now when she had got to ninety-eight, I, though still only thirty-five, was actually supposed to be a hundred and nine. You may walk bowed and bent; when any one was looking, you may shake in every limb; you may pull an old-fashioned wig over your ears, or sit muffled up in a night-cap; yet your *eye will look young*. You cannot pretend at five-and-thirty to get along on the same amount of food as does for an old man of a hundred; you cannot disguise the fact that you have all your teeth; you cannot wholly dissemble your vigour. Therefore it became the fashion in my neighbourhood to see, and bring strangers to see, this wonderful old fellow, who, at a hundred and eight, was so vigourous. 'Look at him,' they would say, as if I was a prize-ox; 'there is health for you at a hundred and eight. Look at his eye, full and clear and strong. A hundred years, gentlemen, and eight! This is marvellous! He ate two mutton-chops yesterday to his dinner,

and a dish of hot sausages to his supper, and drank a quart of October. Saw one ever the like? His teeth, too, look at them! And your memory, good sir?'

"'Alack,' would I reply, in feeble pipe, 'there my age finds me out; for my memory, gentlemen, save for things of my childhood, when Charles I. was King, is but a poor thing.'

"Clergymen preached about me, books were written upon me; and I sat still in my chair opposite the poor old lady, who was now bent double, wondering what would happen, and how to get out of the difficulty. A cruel thing, to desire the death of a wife, yet what else could I wish for? And in the end I killed her."

"You murdered your wife?"

"Not exactly; yet I killed her. Thus it was. On one Saturday afternoon in June, the year being 1724, I felt an uncontrollable desire to leave the arm-chair, in which after dinner at noon I was left for my afternoon nap, and to move about somewhere. The maids were in some distant part of the house. I took my sticks and hobbled slowly along, intending to creep into the garden, where, if no one were about, I might straighten my back and stand upright for a bit. On the way I passed the cellar door, and thought I should like for once a full tankard of ale. I descended; and throwing away the sticks, I sat on a stool and poured down the strong October tankard after tankard, till it mounted to my head. Still I did not so far forget myself

but that I returned to my own room on the crutches, stooping and staggering, so that the maids whispered that the old gentleman was failing fast. When I found myself alone, as I thought, I contained myself no longer; but, locking the door, I threw my wig up to the ceiling, my crutches on the floor, and I began to dance, the jolly old ale in my heels.

"Ouf! It was a relief. For many days I had been so carefully watched, that there had been no chance of any exercise. The quiet house, in which the only noise was the slow ticking of the cuckoo-clock; the aged lady who sat opposite to me all day long, bowed and bent, meditating on the past and future—for to the old there is no present—the old servants, the old dogs, the old furniture, amid which our married life of seventy-five years had been spent—all these things fell upon my spirits like lead. So that, warmed by the strong ale, believing myself free from observation, I shook off all disguise, and danced with the agility of a man in his twenties.

"A loud shriek interrupted me. I had made a mistake in the room, the beer being in my head; instead of my own bedroom, I was in our common sitting-room. My poor old wife stood before me, pointing with her shrivelled finger, gasping for terror and amazement. Then her head turned, and she fell headlong to the ground. The shock and affright were too much for her, and she never spoke again."

"After that," I said, "there would be nothing to prevent your beginning the Grand Research."

"Stop a moment. Think. Another difficulty began here. How was I to get rid of myself? An old man of a hundred and eight could not suddenly leave his house and go away by himself. How was I to make the old man disappear? This difficulty occupied my thoughts continually. Sometimes I thought of escaping at night; but I wanted to keep my estate, which, when I disappeared, would fall to my heirs. Now, here an accident happened which proved of the greatest use to me. My eldest son (cut off at seventy) had left a grandson, his own son having also died, who was at the time living quietly, being a young man of twenty-two, and of studious habits in a lodging at Westminster. Here he contracted a fever of some kind, which quickly carried him off. No one of the family, except myself, knew his place of residence; none of his cousins or great-uncles (my sons) had ever seen him; for an obscure country lad to die in an obscure London lodging makes but little stir. Therefore I made use of his death to my own advantage. I instructed my lawyers that my heir, Mr. Montagu Jekyll the younger, would shortly call upon them. He did call: he had a long talk with them about the estate and the failing health of the old squire; but when he came to pay his respects at the Hall I was nowhere to be found.

"It was strange; I had disappeared. They dragged the rivers; they searched the woods; they found my crutches; they found my clothes, my wig, and my hat. But my body was never recovered. I

need not tell you that the young man, the heir, was no other than myself.

"That difficulty surmounted, I resolved that it should not occur again. The estates were not entailed, and I sold them, reckoning on the promise that I should always have the equivalent to what I started upon in an annual income."

"And the rest of your children and grandchildren?"

"I do not know. It is absurd to suppose that I could keep the genealogical tables of so large a family as mine. Why, at the estimate of four children apiece, I have reckoned that my present descendants amount to over a million and a quarter; and, of course, many of them must have had more than four children. It is long, however, since I cared about following the fortunes of my grandchildren. I start the sons and portion the daughters; then they go out into the world, and I know nothing more about them. Long before the grandchildren begin to get troublesome, I am away and forgotten."

"Do you, then, change your name?"

"Sometimes, for a generation or two. Then I take it again, and display a curious acquaintance with the family history of the Jekylls of Worcestershire. At present I am bearing my own name."

"Then, having got rid of your estate, I suppose the Research was fairly begun? There were no longer any obstacles?"

He laughed gently.

"No obstacles? Why, I was beginning the world

all over again. I, who had for forty years pretended to be an old man, I was a young fellow again at five-and-thirty. My heart was young as well as my body ; I quickly forgot the old lady with whom I had for so long been unequally yoked ; and I burned to make a new departure."

"But your studies, your resolutions—did you think nothing of them ? "

"Yes, at times I thought of them ; but they would always wait ; meantime, I wanted to enlarge my experience of the world.

"I went to London this time ; the glorious eighteenth century was well begun : when shall we see its like again ? I found myself among wits of whose talk you can have no conception, among ladies whose beauty was only equalled by their incomparable grace, and in a school of manners the like of which the world has never seen. It was only in the eighteenth century that men and women succeeded in defeating age. By means of wigs, powder, paint, stays, and other artificial adornments, they kept up the pretence of always being young. When they failed, as sometimes happened through an unmannerly palsy or a disconcerting blindness, or anything of that sort, the rest of us pretended that nothing was wrong. But, short of their afflictions, men and women—I mean gentlemen and ladies, of course—went on with their suppers, their cards, and their dice, until they fell down and died. To me, of course, who dreaded nothing but an accidental knock with a chair-pole, or the upset of a coach, or

the falling of something on my head, there was no merit in this kind of acting; but I confess that I was then, and am still, lost in admiration of the admirable way in which these poor creatures of a few short years behaved as if centuries at least were before them."

He sat still and stroked his chin reflectively.

"How well I remember it, that century of gaming, drinking, suppers, and what preachers call unreality! Unreality, indeed, when men and women took all there was to be had in life, and said: 'Thus will we live while we are in health. Sufficient for the present the wax-tapers, the supper-table, the wit and conversation of well-bred men.' Ah!"

He heaved a profound sigh.

"We might have been going on still in the same way, making a little Paris in every capital, the rich enjoying life, and the poor—I suppose the poor were no worse off than they are now. But the French Revolution came and spoiled everything. I never before thoroughly realized the selfishness of mankind. The most beautiful society that the world had ever seen, smashed and destroyed; a whole continent in flames; and all because a few demagogues persuaded the people that they were unhappy. For the first time I was disgusted with my epoch, and for the first time for a hundred and fifty years I was contented to think that I had not spent my time in toiling for them.

"Long, however, before the crash of the Revolution, which altered and upset so much, I left London

and retired to the country, where I met with that great misfortune which——"

"Which retarded the prosecution of the Great Research?"

"No, sir, worse than that—which added ten years to my life. It began, naturally, with a woman. I formed for her the most serious passion of my life. Can you wonder if I postponed, for the sake of her society, the prosecution of my stupendous design, which could always wait, and might be commenced when she grew old?

"She was eighteen when I married her! She was the daughter of the old vicar of the parish. She was innocent and true; her temper was of the sweetest; her face was the loveliest; she loved me"—here he paused and sighed again. "Never, never shall I meet again any one like her. We lived together in perfect bliss for eight years; at the end of that time a fever carried her off.

"I was entirely cast down at this sad misfortune: her religion had softened me; her faith at the end subdued me; I made a resolution that, come what might, I would give up my immortality for her sake, and take my lot among my fellow creatures. I kept that resolution with firmness. I saw the hour approach when I must either go back ten years again, or take the irrevocable step of going on ten years. Life was so dreary without my Susan that I did not care to face it again; and on the last night of the tenth year, when I should have become five-and-thirty for the fifteenth time, I went to bed heroically resolved

to pass straight on to forty-five, and after that to endure the rapid advance of time, and to sink to the grave with my seventieth year. I would live, I said, always in the country ; I would know no joys but those of meditation and retrospect ; I would recover, if I could, the consolation of religion ; my future years should be spent in making me worthy to join my Susan in Heaven, where she awaited me.

" Nothing could have been more laudable than my resolution ; but there was one thing which I had forgotten. There was a clause in our agreement that should I slip a decade, and therefore carry on my age for ten years, I should be, like other men, liable to punishment in the flesh for the sins of my past life. Now before I fell in love with Susan I had been drinking in the company of the hardest livers of the time, with perfect disregard of the future, as I had a right to do, port, punch, and strong waters of all kind. I had gone to bed in the most beautiful, resigned, and religious mood possible. I felt, for the first time since many a long year, repentance for the past follies, and a sincere desire to amend during the brief future. I would, I was resolved, die when my time came and join my Susan in Heaven. And at that moment I even remembered my mother and sister departed so long before, and forgotten since that night in the Dutch farmhouse.

" This peaceful and holy frame of mind was to be rudely disturbed in a way quite unexpected and most disagreeable. I fell asleep. At midnight I

awoke suddenly to find that not only was I forty-five years of age, in itself a fearful misfortune, but also that I was afflicted with the most violent attack of gout in the great toe that ever unfortunate man experienced. What can withstand gout? Not love, not religion, not regrets. All these vanished, and I cursed the hour when I was fool enough to voluntarily, actually without being obliged, to surrender the best part of my manhood.

"I got through the gout; but, my dear friend, forty-five is not thirty-five. The elasticity of life is gone at forty-five; the muscles are no longer young; the stomach is beginning to be used. They say that a man of forty-five is in his full vigour. I deny it; he is not. He has already begun to feel the prickings of time; he has past the first fresh rush of feeling and enjoyment. The world has no more to give him; and to think that I might have continued my vigour and enjoyment, but for mere boyish, weak, mawkish, sentimental regret over a girl I loved."

He paused again, this time deeply moved.

"That was," he resumed, "about the year 1795, more than eighty years ago. I confess that my life since then has been a wandering and uncertain life. You, as a moralist, might condemn it——" He hesitated, and looked at me with uncertain eyes.

"I am your confidant first," I said, "and a moralist afterwards. Let me hear such particulars as you wish to tell me."

"I told you before," he went on, "that I have had seventeen wives. I have only as yet accounted

for two. That leaves fifteen for eighty-four years, an average of less than six years apiece."

"You don't mean to say, man," I cried, "that you have murdered fifteen wives?"

"Nay, I am not Bluebeard. I did not murder them; I only deserted them."

"You—deserted—them?"

"Yes." He was quite calm, and looked as if he was confessing an action neither virtuous nor the opposite, but just of the commonplace kind. "Yes; you see, after my last experiences of marriage, I was difficult to please. If my poor Susan, blameless herself, was the cause of my gout, my forty-five years, the loss of my youth, the appearance of crows'-feet, fatness, puffed cheeks, thin hair, and a red nose, she had also instilled into my mind an ideal of womanly perfection which, while it was delightful to possess and to reflect upon, stood greatly in the way of conjugal happiness. I passed in review one maiden after another; I considered, but without profit, the widows; I failed anywhere to find my ideal. I did not, perhaps, consider that most unfortunate rule of human life, that, as a man grows older, and knows women better, he becomes more difficult to please, because his imagination is duller; while it is more difficult for him to please, because he is no longer a young man and comely. To be sure, I was less comely just then than I am now, having upon me the effect of a hundred years' suppers. Still, with a courtly manner, good means, and such experience of the world as was mine, one

might have hoped for something better than what I found. Eight of my wives lasted for an average of two years each. Then they became insupportable, and, after making due provision for their welfare, I left them."

"Children and all?"

"Children and all. I never did care greatly for children, and latterly I have cared less than ever. They are the most selfish creatures in existence. To be sure, women are not much better."

He was silent again, and reflected for a few minutes.

"I did not expect much; but a little honour, a little respect to my extraordinary attainments, I did look for. Yet—would you believe it?—they treated my science as if it was so many old women's tales, and my stories of the past as if I had made them up, and the halo of romance, which I could not help wreathing round my own brow, they laughed at. Women have no poetry, no imagination! And then they annoyed me by always wanting to know about my parents and connections; searching among my papers when they thought I was out of the way; putting leading questions about the origin of my fortune; giving me, all round, no peace.

"It was this intolerable curiosity which caused me to desert my vows, not, I assure you, any roaming disposition, nor any selfish desire to seek for greater beauty. Selfishness is a vice of which I have never, I am happy to say, been guilty, though

my wives have frequently brought it against me as a charge. The difficulty in each case was to get rid of them quietly and without fuss. The best way seemed to make them widows. You can't call a man selfish who makes away with himself in order to benefit his wife—come. Once, when we lived by the seaside, I pretended a violent passion for boating, kept a sailing-boat, and one evening set the sail, stove a great hole in her side, and launched her. I then walked away. The boat was found, capsized, and of course they concluded I was drowned. On another occasion, later on, when we were in London, there was a great accident on the river—a steamer run down, with two or three hundred people drowned. I did not go home that evening or ever after, and had the satisfaction, a few days later, of seeing my own name among the list of the supposed victims. One cannot, however, always find an accident ready to one's hand, and different means had to be devised. In these I think I showed considerable ingenuity. On one or two occasions, however, I was compelled to adopt a common and even a brutal plan, as when, after a more than stormy scene with a very bad-tempered and long-tongued wife (although a beautiful creature), I left home, and sent her a letter to say that I was going away and should return no more. This was in 1808, I remember. She was living in Edinburgh, but I suppose she lives nowhere now. Ah ! she promised well at the beginning. But they all fall off—they all fall off after the first month or

two. Selfishness, morbid curiosity, and inability to appreciate my exceptional qualities! But these details tire you. Of course I had to leave the place and move to quite another part of the world after every such little change.

"They have been, one with another," he went on, "a good-looking lot of women; fair, dark, brunette, blonde; eyes of every shade, blue, grey, brown, black, violet, hazel; tall and *petites;* majestic, like Juno, or *gracieuses*, like Venus. I have had little to complain of about their beauty. Their tempers have, of course, varied from 'set stormy' to 'change.' They could all be coaxed into good temper, and most of them would believe anything, unless they were jealous. One of them, whom I could only stand for three months, was extraordinary in her jealousy—gave me no peace at all."

"And about your friends?"

"My—my friends!" He lifted his voice a little, and smiled. "You are comparatively young; you think there are such things as friends in the world. Perhaps some day you will know better. Friends! I never had any. Nobody ever has any. A few men become close acquaintances, and are fools enough to tell them all their private concerns; but I was never that kind of man. No; we were acquaintances in the dear delightful eighteenth century who conversed with each other, gambled, drank, and banqueted, at arm's length; ready at a moment to draw the sword upon each other, distrustful and distrusted, anxious to get the best for ourselves,

and careless about anybody else. Friendship means the association of men for the purpose of making the best out of life ; marriage means a compact in which either party expects the other to work for him or her ; children love their parents for the good things they get——"

"And parents love their children—for what ?" I asked.

"You forget," he answered coldly, "I told you I did not like children !"

He went on talking ; but I fell into a sort of reverie, and only half heard what he said. He was describing his different wives, I believe. I was thinking what a strange effect this man's wonderful gift had produced upon his moral nature ; of his cold and callous crust of selfishness, which made him insensible to any of the ordinary feelings of human nature ; how the sight of so many generations dying around him had robbed him of sympathy, power of love, friendship, humanity—all the qualities which draw men together, and make them seem less lonely. He could no longer love woman, man, or child ; he could no longer shed tears for bereavement, or feel the sorrow of the hastening years. He could no longer feel for the sufferings of others ; he pretended to perish suddenly, thinking only how to get rid of a woman of whom he was tired ; he walked away, deserting a creature who loved him, with children who looked for his love, in cruel, heartless, unheeding callousness. It seemed to me as if, were that the inevitable result

of such a gift, it would be better to take one's chance with the rest, and live out the three score years and ten.

When I listened again he was still talking.

"On leaving her, my fifteenth wife, a truly dreadful thing happened. I had been so continually occupied for a whole year in devising this notable scheme of separation, that I actually forgot that the fatal ten years was once more drawing to a close. The time arrived in the middle of the night, when I was still walking away from the house, on the hard and frosty road, rejoicing to be once more free, and resolving that it should be indeed a long time before I would again run the risks of matrimony. Suddenly I heard the clock strike twelve; in a moment I remembered, with horror and agony, what had happened. A sudden loss of vital force, a curious feeling of comparative weakness. I had forgotten to renew my forty-fifth year, and I was fifty-five.

"That, my friend, I am still; that I intend to remain. It is not a bad age. My gout is with me still, but it is not so troublesome as it has been. I have contracted no fresh diseases. I lead a regular life, drink little, go to bed early, and enjoy things in moderation."

"And now," I said, "that you have given up marriage, you will be able to commence the Research."

"Oh, the Research—the Research!" he spoke impatiently. "Yes; no doubt some day I shall

begin it. Meantime, is my experience complete—*have* I done with matrimony? Truly, I cannot say. Stay; I will show you some of my manuscripts."

He opened a desk, and took out a volume bound in leather, fastened with brass, and put it into my hands.

"Sir," he said, "one of my old volumes. This contains all the chemistry of the sixteenth century."

I opened it. The volume was closely written in a small and crabbed handwriting, on paper gone yellow with age, and in ink still black and clear.

"All the chemistry of the sixteenth century. I have only to read that book again, to read the discoveries of modern science, and I am furnished with the materials for the Grand Research. Yes, I am resolved to begin it. Sometimes, though, I confess, my desire to benefit my fellow creatures is much less than my desire to live comfortably and beyond the reach of accident. And, to live quite comfortably, I want the right kind of wife. Find her for me, my friend, and I will show my gratitude to you in any way you prefer."

We had more talk, but it was of no further importance; and presently, as I saw that my host was growing silent, and besides, as it was already half past eleven, I took my leave. He promised to call upon me the next morning about some business, the nature of which he did not state, and, shaking my hand, he said:

"My friend, I am in earnest about a wife. Find me a sensible, kind, good-tempered girl, who will

put herself out a little to please a man—no longer young."

"But you would grow tired of her after a little, and leave her."

"Not till she grew tired of me," he replied. "Believe me, my wives were as glad to get rid of me as I was to be free. 'Selfish, thoughtless, except about my own pleasures'—such were the epithets they used to hurl at me! What a benefactor I have been, to make so many widows—and all so young!"

"What a benefactor," I said, "you might have been, had you stuck to your Grand Research!"

"Perhaps," he replied airily. "Patience; your great-grandchildren will reap the benefit of my work. I shall begin—say in thirty, forty, or fifty years. Who knows? I am now two hundred and sixty-four years of age. During nearly the whole of that time I have lived for my own pleasure. What a life I have had! And how I wish the eighteenth century would return with my five-and-thirty years! Oh, to sit at the play in wig and satin coat, with your hat under your arm, your little telescope in your eye, ogling the women behind the wax-candles! Oh, for the little suppers after the play, with songs and the wine and the punch! Oh, for the faro-table and the sweet rapture of winning a *coup!* Oh, for the St. James's Park in the afternoon and Ranelagh in the evening, and the dominoes and hoods and the chase of the fair *incognita!* But the century is gone, and with it half the grace and pleasure of life. Good night, my friend!"

I was very busy next day, and forgot all about his appointment, which was for half-past twelve. At about two o'clock inthe afternoon, however, a policeman came to see me, with a letter addressed to me. I opened it. The lines which were written were illegible. The signature alone remained. "Montagu Jekyll," with the address.

"Sad accident, sir," said the policeman. "The gentleman slipped in the road and was run over and instantly killed. It was a hearse as did it."

A sad accident, indeed. I went to the hotel. My poor friend was laid out, quite dead, ready for his funeral. The odd thing was that his face had grown already quite old, incredibly old; a thousand lines were round the eyes and mouth, the skin looked like parchment, the fingers were lean and shriveled.

"He made up wonderfully well," the head waiter whispered. "Who would have thought he was such an old man? He looks like ninety."

"He looks, John," I said, "like two hundred and sixty-four—or," I added, because the number might seem strange, "like any other age you like. I was his lawyer once, in some business matters. I will if you please, open his desk, and ascertain, if possible, the address of his present advisers."

We searched the desk. There was money in it, but no more than enough to pay his hotel and funeral expenses, and a number of papers, but all of them illegible. Nor have I learned anything since then about this wonderful client.

TRUTH TRIUMPHANT.

"WHERE is Truth?" How many have asked the self-same question: how many will ask it to the end of time: how few will be more successful in their pursuit than the handsome young clergyman who, seated in a comfortable chair in the reading-room of the Grosvenor Library, put this question to the attendant and to various friends, and yet received no satisfactory answer? No one knew where Truth was, no one even hazarded a suggestion as to where it might be but one slim gentleman, who felt sure that one of the stout members of the club must be sitting on it. Many stout members were present, glued to their chairs and happy with their newspapers, so with a sigh of vexation our clergyman gave up all hope of success. He had wanted a very different kind of truth from that sought after by philosophers; his was the "Truth" we all know, covered in cold grey-green paper, who looks as if neither for kingdoms nor for empires would she utter anything short of an "eternal veracity," or lend her countenance to any statement not "entirely verifical."

Why did our excellent clergyman want this jour-

nal? He had been two hours in the reading-room already, had read his "Spectator," had skimmed the "Saturday," and a paper in the "Nineteenth Century," wondering the while how much longer the editor of that magazine was going to be in consulting its best interests and translating a certain article of his own from the limbo of slips to the beatific state of full-blown print. Was he now wishing to turn to "Truth" as we turn to almonds and raisins after a pleasurable meal? Not so, he asked for the paper because he had a strong curiosity to see it; and when we say that, do not let any feminine reader measure his feeling by any sentiment of the kind which has ever agitated her own breast, for curiosity as felt by a woman is, even at its highest, "as water unto wine" when compared with that which racks and torments the inner being of a man. He was curious, and he had been baulked of the satisfaction of his curiosity for one hour. An hour ago, he had looked up and had seen in an armchair on the far side of the room a pretty young lady of his acquaintance, lying back and enjoying a glimpse of this paper, which probably she did not often see. By her side was her mother, writing a letter. The girl was so pretty that he could not help looking at her. Some rays of smoky afternoon sunshine were coming in at the window behind her; they had no strength to disturb her, but they set the picture for him. She, conscious of no observation, was quietly amusing herself with such small wares of literature as were

set before her ; but, just as he was about to revert to his magazine, a sudden change came over her. She started—at least, he was almost certain that she did—he was quite certain that she blushed violently, then she threw one quick and anxious glance in his direction, which arrived so straight at its destination that she must already have known he was there. His hand was shading his eyes, so she had no reason to suppose that he was cognisant of what she was doing, but she did not give herself time to think about that, but turned away instantly as if in terror, again looked at "Truth," but only as it appeared to him for one dismayed minute, then threw it down, and stood by her mother's side till the note was ended, on which they left the room. That brief delay, however, lost Mr. Marjoribanks his chance of seeing "Truth." He had not liked to go and take it while they were still there, and some one else got hold of it. Mr. Marjoribanks could not help wondering what pretty Miss Grahame could have seen in that paper to disturb her so? She was the only child of one of his most influential parishioners, who lived very near the Rectory. He had always liked her as well as, or better than, any other pretty girl in his cure of souls ; he liked her father and mother too, and he delighted in their house. It was one of the large, old-fashioned ones which are still to be found in D——. The Rectory was one of the same kind and abundantly appreciated by Mr. Marjoribanks, but the Grahames' house was larger and more picturesque.

It was pleasant, too, and homelike, and the rector often went there on Saturday when Mrs. Grahame was at home. These afternoons were agreeable enough, especially in summer, when everyone went into the garden, which possessed every charm, from splendid old trees which would have graced a nobleman's park, to the most romantically secluded shaded walks, and a lawn which looked like a broad expanse of lovely velvet. Mrs. Grahame was never so happy as when, to use her own phrase, her "lawn was well furnished," *i. e.*, dotted all over with happy groups of well-dressed people. Mr. Marjoribanks had a large garden and likewise a spacious lawn, but his lawn was not often furnished with anyone so pretty as Miss Dorothy Grahame. She was more than pretty, she was beautiful, and doubly beautiful when she blushed. What had made her change colour so suddenly when reading "Truth"? He asked himself this repeatedly, and as he went down Bond street resolved to stop at the first news agent's and buy a copy of the paper, but immediately afterwards he met some friends and fell into a conversation which made him forget all else. Finally, he had to hurry home to dress for a dinner at Hampstead. To dine at Hampstead is a step which, to those who do not keep a carriage, involves considerable mental anguish. The cabman invariably mistakes his way, and at the very time when your watch tells you you ought to be sitting down to dinner at the summit of that terrible hill, you are meandering about in deep uncertainty in level

streets at the base of it, not knowing where to begin your attack on its steepness, after which your driver zigzags slowly upwards with a regard for his horse which you would heartily applaud if you did not know that you were inflicting pain on a yet nobler creature—your unfortunate hostess.

Mr. Marjoribanks was a man who piqued himself on punctuality, and he was twenty minutes late :

"I forgive you," said his hostess. "Indeed, there is nothing to forgive, the Grahames are not here yet ; we must wait for them."

"The Duncan Grahames?" inquired Mr. Marjoribanks.

"Yes. Do you know them? oh, of course you do—they are your own parishioners. By the by, you are to take in Miss Grahame."

"And now," thought Mr. Marjoribanks, "I shall perhaps find out what made her blush so—at least, of course, I shall not—she is not likely to tell me, and I can't ask her."

The Grahames arrived : good, genial Mr. Grahame, with a smile for all on ordinary occasions, but nervous to-night under the sense of being late ; Mrs. Grahame in black velvet, full of excuses and apologies ; and Miss Dorothy in light blue and pale pink roses.

She surely was not blushing again : Mr. Marjoribanks almost thought that she did so the moment she caught sight of him, and then he began to feel as if this blush would save him the trouble of inquiring into the cause of the other, for she had

evidently a habit of changing colour. He had been told that he was to take her in to dinner, and was just making his way across the room so as to be at hand at the critical moment, when he heard Mrs. Grahame say in a low voice to the mistress of the house, who appeared to be an intimate friend of hers, "that's what made us so late—it upset us."

"Naturally. I can understand that."

Mr. Marjoribanks wanted to pass these ladies to get to Miss Dorothy, but did not like to go nearer while they were discussing this grievance. "Some treasure of a servant is leaving them," thought he; some stray word of Mrs. Grahame's seemed to point to that class of misfortune, and he knew that her sphere of joy and sorrow was entirely marked out and bounded by the walls of the garden in which her home stood—nothing which did not affect some member of her household could affect her. Suddenly his hostess came to him and said, "I have made a stupid mistake. I said you were to take Miss Grahame in to dinner, and I find I was wrong—it is Miss Gateacre you are to take—let me introduce you." Then he, whose face was set in the direction of pretty Miss Dorothy, had to turn round and smile cheerfully when confronted by a worse fate.

What a drop from Miss Grahame to Miss Gateacre! For Miss Dorothy was a beauty, and Miss Gateacre was neither a beauty now, nor had she been one at any period of the last half-century. He sat on the same side of the table as Miss Doro-

thy, and could not see her during dinner. Miss Gateacre was a great traveller, and had spent years in the East; she had brought even too much information home with her. Perhaps all the gentlemen had had instructive ladies by their side during dinner—none of them seemed inclined to leave the dining-room. When they did go, most of the ladies were in the inner drawing-room; Miss Grahame and one or two others in the smaller by which the gentlemen entered. Seeing her there, Mr. Marjoribanks took a seat near her. She had not looked up as they passed through the room, but when she saw who had taken this place she blushed. He felt quite angry with her for being so childishly stupid, and wished he had gone into the other room with the rest. She was pretty, but it was absurd to blush so; if she behaved in that way, she would make it quite impossible for him or any one else to speak to her. Her mother ought to talk to her—but that was the worst of it; her mother was an excellent woman, but ignorant as a baby of the ways of the world.

"I know why you are blushing," said he, trying to find some excuse for her to which she could cling for support. "You are ashamed of my having seen you reading 'Truth,' and looking so happy with it."

Miss Grahame looked utterly dismayed—nothing less than dismayed. Tears of confusion rose to her eyes, and a blush whose strength amazed him overspread her face. All those which had gone before

had been as nothing unto this. Before he could speak she rose, and murmuring something of which he could hear only, "find mamma," hastily left him and went into the other room.

The state of Mr. Marjoribanks's mind may be imagined. He was simply overwhelmed. Had she taken leave of her senses? What had he done? What could she have taken amiss? He could arrive at no solution of this inquiry. The only obvious one was that there was some extremely unpleasant bit of scandal in this week's "Truth" which she had read, and she was ashamed of having been seen with the paper in her hand; but she was such a good, innocent girl, that he dismissed this idea at once. She might read the most atrocious publications of the day, and not know there was anything amiss in them. He sat pretending to turn over some photographs until an opportunity occurred of saying good-bye without entering the other room, and then he availed himself of it at once.

There is only one thing more difficult than going to Hampstead to dine, and that is, to return home when dinner is over. When you go, you can get a cab; when you return, everything is abysmal uncertainty: cabs there may be, but how are they to be found? Railway stations there are, but how is the obscurity in which they lurk, to be penetrated? Mr. Marjoribanks made his way to the main street; a gentleman was asking a policeman how to find a railway station. The rector recognised a friend, and at once professed his readiness to guide him;

a readiness hampered only by one fact—that he did not know the way himself.

"What a beastly hole this Hampstead is!" said his friend.

"I call that a beautiful bit of descriptive word-painting," said the rector; "you will never surpass that! A hole!—an inferior mind can't see anything in Hampstead but its hill! Where are you going?"

"To the Athenæum? Where would you have me go?"

"Don't be so fierce; I was not going to suggest home to bed. I'll go to the Athenæum, too. There's a hansom, don't let us lose it."

At the Athenæum, Mr. Marjoribanks at last obtained possession of "Truth." After all, so far as he could see, he had given himself a great deal of trouble for nothing. He had begun at the beginning, and had read three entire pages, but had seen nothing at all blush-compelling, when suddenly, on turning a new page, his eyes fell on one sentence which seemed to dart up at him from the rest as if it had some special concern with him. And yet it was some time before he was positively certain that it really did refer to himself. He read it over and over again, word for word. "We are informed on excellent authority, that the Hon. and Rev. Miles Hylton Marjoribanks, Rector of D——, will shortly lead to the hymeneal altar Miss Grahame, only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Duncan Grahame, of Colebrook House, D——, and Milfield Court, Lan-

cashire." This was what she had seen in "Truth"—this had caused her many blushes, and he had accused her of having been made happy by the sight of this! Here was a pleasant situation for a man who was extremely tenacious of the good opinion of every man, woman, and child of his acquaintance, and the desire of whose heart was to pass through life as a Christian gentleman who had never consciously inflicted a moment's pain on any human being! He at once wrote to the editor of "Truth," to request him to contradict this perfectly unfounded report, which must be extremely annoying both to Miss Grahame and her family. That done, he went home, and, in spite of numerous letters of congratulation which had arrived during his absence, tried to forget the matter, and the fact that she too would have such letters. Surely Miss Grahame would know that he had not seen that paragraph when he spoke so foolishly to her. Of course he did not go to the Grahames on Saturday—of course he felt very uncomfortable at the thought of Sunday, when the three sittings for which Mr. Grahame paid would be occupied by three people who were all made uncomfortable by their clergyman's presence, and who would rejoice to hear of his being appointed to a colonial bishopric. Mr. Marjoribanks did not want preferment *in partibus*—he had a strong regard for a civilisation which had already made some progress. Soon after he had taken his place at the reading-desk he glanced at the Grahames. They looked coldly resolute. Mr. Grahame stood up with

breast expanded and head thrown back, as if to say to injurious calumny, "strike at this bold breast, and not at an unprotected girl." His voice, which usually joined in the psalmody with melodious warmth and friendly disregard of time, was mute. Mrs. Grahame looked stiff and unbending. Miss Dorothy never raised her eyes, much less her bird-like voice. How terrible to have to stand for hours with these Medusa-like heads in front of him! He felt Gorgonised already. Then he remembered where he was, and forgot the Grahames altogether.

It was difficult to forget the Grahames long. There were so many things to remind him of them. He had promised to spend a couple of days in a pleasant house on the Thames. The Grahames were to be there at the same time. Mr. Marjoribanks wrote to say that unforeseen parish business would detain him in Lincoln. He lost his visit, and the Grahames were very angry with him for not letting them do the work of showing that there was no truth in the report that he was engaged to their daughter. This he learnt from Mrs. Wilton, a friend of his and also of the Grahames. "My dear Mr. Marjoribanks," she said, not without some enjoyment of her pastor's troubles, "they are furious with you! Mr. Grahame will never forgive you for having been in such a hurry to disclaim the engagement! He says that you might have considered that such a report was just as disagreeable to them as to you, and have left them to contradict it; and that when he went to the newspaper office and found

that you had already written to deny it, he was mortified beyond expression to find himself anticipated by you. He feels that the contradiction ought to have come from the young lady's friends, and that your haste seems to imply that you hated the idea of being capable of making such a marriage! He knows you are a man of family, he says, but thinks that his family need not have been treated in such an insulting manner! I am telling you exactly what he said—it is better."

"Much better. But I am amazed! I never expected him to be so stupid! I thought I was acting in the very way likely to be acceptable to him."

"You made a great mistake! He thinks that you could not be easy till you had proclaimed that you wished for no connection with his family; that you detested the idea of your name being associated with that of the daughter of a self-made man!"

The expression irritated Mr. Marjoribanks, who was rather a purist in language. "A self-made man!" he echoed; "he was born penniless, and had the brains to make a fortune—that's what people call a self-made man. The clever men made themselves, and God made the fools! Well, Mr. Grahame does not show his brains now. He is absurd! It was my duty to contradict that report, and I did contradict it, and you will never persuade me that I did wrong."

"And you will never persuade Mr. Grahame that you did right," replied Mrs. Wilton. "He is bitterly offended; and when he takes an idea into his head,

no power on earth will remove it. Now, if you fell desperately in love with his daughter, which you are not at all likely to do, I am persuaded that he would never give his consent."

"And why am I not likely to do it?"

"Because, though you won't own it, you do look down on trade and business men! we all know that—she knows it too. But to return to Mr. Grahame. You have done another thing to enrage him. You have given up your visit to Sunbury."

"But you wouldn't have had me go to Sunbury?"

"I am not talking about what I would have had. I say he is furious at your again taking the initiative. You should, he thinks, have left him to do all that was required."

"He is an idiot! However, I am sorry if I have hurt his feelings. I will write and explain."

Mr. Marjoribanks did write and explain, and very kindly and politely; but his letter only appeared to make Mr. Grahame more angry. And in the answer he sent it was only too apparent that he intended to drop his rector's acquaintance altogether.

"Of course he means to cut you," said Mrs. Wilton cheerily, when she saw the letter (quarrels between friends are lively things). "Didn't you know that? I have always thought you had a very inadequate conception of his feeling on the subject."

"But he can't help knowing me. We sit side by side at parish meetings, at least twice a week. He is my righthand man; he is an excellent business

man, and liberal with his money. Whether he likes it or not, he and I must seem to be friends."

"He will go to no more meetings, and I don't suppose he will go to your church, either."

"He won't leave St. Mary's! he doesn't like St. Jude's, it is ill-ventilated, he says."

"St. Jude's! But he will go to the Wesleyan chapel, if he leaves your church."

Even cheerful Mrs. Wilton could not but be touched at the emotion her rector showed when she said this—he was dismayed: "I will write to him again. I will do anything rather than drive him to that," said he.

Next day, however, before he had time to write, he met the Grahames driving. He bowed. Mr. and Mrs. Grahame both deliberately cut him; Miss Dorothy did not look up. This was horrible! Was he, who preached peace and goodwill to men, to be on bad terms with a member of his flock, or indeed with anyone! He again wrote to Mr. Grahame, and once more assured him of his entire innocence of all intention to offend. What is more, he went to Mrs. Wilton, and entreated her, as a friend of both parties, to go forth as an emissary of peace, and to explain to Mr. Grahame that he himself had only done what was usual, but that it gave him the greatest pain to know that Mr. Grahame and his family were hurt by his conduct.

Mr. Grahame loftily replied that he was quite willing to forgive Mr. Marjoribanks, but not to renew his acquaintance with him; furthermore, he

added, that he did not see that his forgiveness need take the shape of bowing to him when they met. This to Mrs. Wilton. Mr. Marjoribanks himself received no reply to his letter, and naturally did not feel that the situation was at all changed. "He has the vices as well as the virtues of his race," said the rector, when his dove returned without an olive-branch.

"When a Scotchman once declares that forgiveness is impossible, he is proud of his own hard-heartedness and cultivates it as his most cherished possession. They are a horrible people when this mood comes over them! was Mrs. Grahame as unforgiving as he?"

"I think so. She pinched her lips tightly together, and said that 'very high families had been only too glad to intermarry with the Grahames!' You seem to have no curiosity to know what poor little Dolly said!"

"Oh yes, I have. I am sorry for her—this must be intensely disagreeable to her; but I am afraid she thinks as they do, that the best way of proving there is no truth in the report, is to pass me by without speaking."

"Her mother told me that she cried for an hour after they did that the other day. She wanted them to bow, and says you did nothing wrong, and that they ought to remember that such reports are as disagreeable to a man as to a woman."

Mr. Marjoribanks was again silent. His thoughts were lingering caressingly on pretty Miss Dorothy.

Now that he was deprived of her acquaintance, he could not but feel that if he was never to be allowed to see her again, he would miss one of his chief pleasures. "I am glad she took a reasonable view," said he, trying to shake off this fit of sentimentality. "They will soon bring her round to theirs, though."

"I doubt it. With all Dolly's sweetness, she can be very firm."

"They can all be firm," said he angrily.

"What are you going to do about the father, Mr. Marjoribanks? That is the thing to consider now."

"Nothing! I can do no more."

The very next Sunday Mr. Grahame took his family to a red-brick Bethel which stood up in four-square ugliness in one of the new streets of D——. Mr. Marjoribanks, who firmly believed that salvation could only be found within the pale of the Anglican Church, feared that his own want of tact had driven three very promising souls into the net of perdition. This was but the beginning, too, of the discord which grew up between these three wandering sheep and their shepherd. Mr. Marjoribanks strongly supported the Orthodox candidate when he solicited re-election on the School Board. Mr. Grahame was just as zealous in promoting the return of a gentleman who ostentatiously avowed his repugnance to all forms of worship. Under other circumstances, Mr. Grahame would have voted for the rector's man, not because he saw the matter from the rector's point of view, but because the rector was a good fellow and had at least as much

truth on his side as any other religious teacher, and put it forward pleasantly, which some of them did not. Now, however, Mr. Grahame worked tooth and nail for the opposing candidate—spent five or six hundred pounds, and finally, as Mr. Marjoribanks did not hesitate to say, "placarded an infidel into power and place."

The result of the struggle was a terrible mortification to the rector. "That pestilential fellow Grahame did it," said he to Mrs. Wilton, for by this time his adjectives had not only increased in calibre, but were much more in request. "His money carried all before him! Did you see Mrs. Grahame driving infirm old women to the poll in her carriage; and Miss Grahame too!"

"Now, don't say poor Dolly did anything to spite you, for she didn't," said Mrs. Wilton, very eagerly.

Something in her tone made the rector scan her face narrowly. But he saw nothing there, and said, "I shall hate the school board worse than ever, now."

Very soon afterwards he hated it still more, for the board began to agitate for the erection of large new schools in D——, and the site which they proposed was near the back of the rectory. In former days Mr. Grahame and the rector, together, were so powerful, that if they could not have put an end to the project altogether, they could at any rate have placed the school at a greater distance. Mr. Marjoribanks, alone, was comparatively powerless. Mr. Grahame favoured the scheme for building. The

schools were run up in no time. They were of red brick, and possessed of many ambitious architectural features. They were very high, too; so the unfortunate rector could not help seeing them from every window at the back of his house. The playground, large and asphalted, ran back till it touched the wall of the rectory garden, and if in an unguarded moment the rector walked at that end of his grounds, balls descended on him, cries met his ears, and words not received in his vocabulary asserted their claim to a place in the English language. This, too, he characterised as "the work of that low dissenting fellow, Grahame!" and brooded over the vexation.

Thus passed months—months composed of days, most of which were embittered by more and more frequently recurring collisions between Mr. Grahame and the rectory. If the richest, most business-like and energetic inhabitant of a parish chooses to quarrel with his rector and seek every opportunity of thwarting him, opportunities are apt to present themselves. Mr. Marjoribanks, a dignified scholar-like gentleman, with a keen hatred of contention and of all that is petty and degrading, began to feel his life a burden to him. Against his will he was compelled either to dispute with Mr. Grahame, or let things be done in his parish of which he disapproved. Mr. Grahame's opposition was continuous—it amounted to persecution. It brought with it a host of vexations, not the least of which was that Mr. Marjoribanks found his mind perpetually

occupied by irritating trifles. He tried to banish them, but the hateful things returned, insomuch that his whole life was fretted and galled, and yet his conscience reproached him for feeling to anyone as he could not but feel towards the destroyer of his peace.

Meantime the Grahames were happy. He heard of pretty Miss Dorothy queening it at bachelors' balls at Cambridge, or going down to Oxford and being the mark of every compliment at commemoration, or being admired at Royal garden parties. Yes, the Grahames had even helped to "furnish" the Prince of Wales's lawn, and very sure Mr. Marjoribanks felt when he heard of it, that Miss Dorothy had been its brightest ornament. With all his admiration of her beauty, he took every possible care to avoid any opportunity of refreshing his memory of it by seeing her again. Her eyes would not look the prettier for being filled with scorn of himself if they happened to rest upon him; and alas, if she was her father's daughter, that was what he would see; in losing the friendship of the father Mr. Marjoribanks had likewise lost the services of the one lady in his parish who knew how to decorate a church artistically. On the eve of every festival Miss Grahame had appeared with a basket of flowers, and, what was still more important, she always stayed to arrange them. Now, the work was left to people who had no idea how to do it, and the church looked frightful just when it ought to have looked its best. It was not that

there was any lack of flowers, for when Mrs. Wilton heard her beloved rector lament the goodly basketful, which once came from Colebrook House, she had said that never should a due supply of flowers be wanting, for she herself would provide them; and admirably she had kept her word. As soon as the work of decoration began, Mrs. Wilton's contribution appeared. Frequently she herself brought it. Her flowers were even finer than those the Grahames had sent. She brought splendid large clusters of waxlike stephanotis, regal bunches of roses, and a profusion of passion-flowers and lilies —some conservatory must have been rifled of all it contained, yet Mrs. Wilton had neither green-house nor garden. "But that's of no consequence," said she; "I was kind to the Duke of ——'s gardener when he was ill, and now I may have whatever I want." Mr. Marjoribanks was grateful to her; but fine as the flowers were, they did not look half so well as those which had been manipulated by Miss Dorothy's pretty fingers.

On the Saturday before Trinity Sunday he was returning from a distant part of his parish, none the happier for the knowledge that it was proposed to run tramways through its main street, and fearing "that odious Grahame" would see in the project fresh leverage for annoying him. His way led him by St. Mary's, and he went in to see how the work of decoration was progressing.

"Oh, Mr. Marjoribanks, we are in such difficulty about flowers, this time!" said a lady as soon as she saw him.

"I'll go to the nearest shop and send you some."

"It seems a pity to buy flowers—Mrs. Wilton's may come any moment. I had a note this morning from Wivenham to tell me they would be sent as usual. She never failed before! Her servants must have made some mistake!"

"Can't we send for them?" suggested Mr. Marjoribanks.

"If we sent a boy, he would spoil them, and we are so busy!"

"I'll go," said the rector, and went. Mrs. Wilton was at her country house, near Reading, or the difficulty would not have arisen. He walked quickly, and soon reached the house. At the first mention of flowers, Mrs. Wilton's servant burst into a torrent of excuses. She knew about them, she had been told about them by Mrs. Wilton when she went away, and had had a message, besides, that very morning. It was no neglect of hers if they had not been taken to the church sooner, for she had been dressed to go with them for an hour and a half, but they had only just come. She supposed that they were so late because Miss Grahame was away; when she was at home, they always came about twelve—indeed, she generally brought them to Mrs. Wilton's herself.

"What was the message you had this morning?" he asked, doing his best not to show too much interest in the revelations that the girl was making.

"That I was to carry them to the church as soon

as they came from Mr. Grahame's, and to say that they came from Mrs. Wilton."

So these, and all the flowers which had of late been so lavishly bestowed on St. Mary's, were the gift of Miss Dorothy, and she it was who had stripped her green-houses bare to embellish his church! Mrs. Wilton had kept the secret well. The rector was amazed at this discovery, a hundred thoughts rushed through his mind, all of which seemed strange to him. "Give me the basket," said he with an air of indifference; "I'll take it to the ladies at once. They are waiting for it. I can walk quicker than you."

He hung on her answer as if she had the power of granting or withholding a great privilege; he wanted to carry those flowers himself. She gave him the basket, and he hurried away, thinking he had never seen such bright flowers—never smelt such sweet ones. If Miss Grahame did this, she could have no such feelings with regard to himself as he had imputed to her. How strange! the green-houses were her special domain; how bare they must look now! was this act of sacrifice prompted by a desire to atone for the way in which her father behaved? Mrs. Wilton always said that Dorothy Grahame did not feel as her father did; he had never believed it. He gave up the flowers at the church door and went home, but he was thoughtful all night and next day also. Above everything he wanted to see Mrs. Wilton: she could explain what required explanation, but she

was out of town, and he did not like to write to her. Monday evening found him still wondering whether the most sensible thing to do would not be to run down to Wivenham and talk to her. He took his pen and wrote: "You have generously given me leave to come to you when I am free. I am free now, and will be with you soon after luncheon to-morrow, Tuesday. I must leave on Thursday. I will sleep at the little inn if your house is full. Thanks for the kindness which enables me to write as one sure of welcome." He sent this to the post, but next day found that there was a meeting about the tramway nuisance, which he must attend. He telegraphed to Mrs. Wilton not to expect him, and gave up the idea of going to Wivenham for some time, for now he would have to enlist all the strength of his parish to combat this act of aggression on the part of nineteenth century civilisation. The meeting was a stormy one. Mr. Marjoribanks began to see on all sides proofs that an enemy was steadily destroying his influence in the parish; however, just as all seemed hopeless, the tramway project fell to the ground for awhile, owing to some flaw in the procedure, and the rector once more breathed freely.

Why should he not go to the Wiltons'? He hurried home; bade one man pack his portmanteau and another bring a hansom, and at five was on his way to Reading. There was a seven miles' drive from Reading to Wivenham, which he reached just in time to dress for dinner. The Wiltons had a

dinner-party that evening, so he did not expect to be able to say much to Mrs. Wilton till next day. He had just time to apologise for taking her by surprise, and say, "I want to speak to you about the Grahames."

"I suppose they are as disagreeable as ever?" said she.

"Well, I hardly know," was his answer, and it surprised her. The guests began to arrive, and no more could be said. Suddenly Mr. Marjoribanks heard something which interested him. Sir James Allport, a bachelor baronet, exclaimed, "I say, Wilton, didn't you tell me that your pretty friend was staying till the end of the week?" Neither the baronet nor the rector heard any answer to this, for dinner was announced. A very agreeable set of people sat round the table, and there was a sense of freshness and purity about the air which was infinitely soothing to Mr. Marjoribanks, who was tired of London dust and parish discord. He was talking happily enough to the lady by his side, when he heard Sir James recommence the attack by saying, "My dear Wilton, you never gave me an answer when I asked what had become of your pretty visitor. She told me herself that she was not going away till the end of the week."

Mr. Marjoribanks looked up; a secret sense had already informed him that this "pretty visitor" was Miss Grahame, and he was so convinced of the fact that no further proof was required. So certain was he of this, that seeing Mr. Wilton was struggling

how to evade giving an answer while his attention was on the alert, he took pity on him, and turned and talked to a lady on the other side, and thus freed his host from embarrassment. At the same time, however, he could not resist glancing at his hostess, and saw what he expected to see, that she was anxiously watching to discover if he was on the track of her secret. If anything interesting was now being said, he made no attempt to hear it ; he knew perfectly well that Miss Grahame was in the house, and saw how everything had happened. She was staying with the Wiltons when the letter arrived in which he announced his visit. She had then probably decided to leave them, but had been betrayed into staying on by the arrival of the telegram in which he had said he could not come. Then, when he appeared so unexpectedly, late in the evening, she had no other means of escape than to confine herself in her own room. He knew it ; he was sure of it ; he wanted no further proof.

"Let me have ten minutes' conversation with you when these people are gone," said he, snatching an opportunity of speaking to his hostess in the drawing-room.

"I will if possible, but some of them will stay late, and I have two or three things to do."

"Yes, I know you have," said he. "You will have to go and see if the recluse has been dull."

"My *dear* Mr. Marjoribanks—"

"I know Miss Grahame is here. Why could she not come down ?"

"You would both have been very uncomfortable if she had! But I must not talk now," said she, glancing uneasily round.

"Don't go---those people know we are old friends and have not met for some time. I am sorry I have come so inopportunely. I'll go early in the morning, and return some other time. Tell Miss Grahame that I only came for one night and must go by the eleven o'clock train."

"She won't believe me. She knows you meant to stay a couple of days. We will arrange the thing somehow—I'll see you later. I must go to that old lady on the sofa, she is so touchy!"

They had no further conversation that night; for it was impossible to find an opportunity. Mr. Marjoribanks said a few words to his host, but all that he could draw from him was that "the poor girl was miserably uncomfortable. She was better out of the way; she feels ashamed of the way her family have treated you; she packed to go home when your letter came yesterday morning, and was just going off when your telegram set her mind at rest again. That's how it happened—it's no one's fault, but it is unfortunate."

"Yes," said the rector, "most unfortunate; but I am obliged to go back to town in the morning."

"We'll see, we'll see; neither you nor she have any ill-will to each other. Much better stay where you are and make the best of it," said Mr. Wilton; and then they both went to bed.

That is not quite true, for the rector sat down

and wrote a note to Mrs. Wilton to tell her how much he regretted having placed Miss Grahame in so uncomfortable a position, and that under the circumstances he would take the only course open to him, and leave the house before anyone was astir. "Assure her," wrote he, "that I have no feeling towards her which would prevent me from enjoying a pleasant visit under the same roof with her, and that I leave this place only out of consideration for her. I shall be gone when you receive this; I leave my portmanteau behind me—it can be sent later in the day." Having written this, he went to bed and slept till early morning. Then he rose, packed his portmanteau, put his note in a prominent place so that the servant might see it when he came into the room, and then he opened the window. What a dull morning it was—he had not had time to think about it before; the garden below was all but shrouded in gloom—it was a strangely ugly-looking morning—nothing looked well. There was a balcony before his window, and some steps led from it down to the garden; by this way he left Wivenham. He did not suppose many of the servants were astir, but if they were, and saw him, they would only imagine that he was taking an early stroll. He would have no breakfast—hear no remonstrance, but would quietly depart, and leave Miss Grahame as much mistress of her own movements as she had been before he came to disturb them. He walked down the garden towards a door which opened into the lane; there

was a strange sense of oppression outside the house ; the sky was overcast, and the air heavily laden with the scent of flowers. The roses were hanging their heads—the weight of pearly drops which clung to them was almost too much for them.

"Well, it's better than London," thought he ; "we should smell nothing so nice as roses there ! if only it does not rain ! "

In his desire to escape unseen, he had not gone downstairs to fetch either his great-coat or umbrella ; but why should it rain ? It often looked like this in the country, and afterwards the sun broke out in twofold splendour ; he gained the high road, and then he knew that a walk of seven miles would take him to Reading. It was now past six—the train went at eight. "I wish it had been fine," thought he ; "when one does get up at such untimely hours they ought to be pleasant."

It was anything but pleasant ! It grew worse ; a dense wall of dingy looking cloud barred him from the sight of the sky—the air he breathed was sluggish and uninvigorating ; all about him was unnatural. The birds did not sing or fly, but darted restlessly from branch to branch, with a sharp, dissatisfied twitter ; the green of every shrub and tree seemed heavy and overcharged with colour. He found himself thinking of Mrs. Browning's beautiful "Romance of Margaret," and the lines,

> All little birds do sit with heads beneath their wings ;
> Nature doth seem, in a mystic dream,
> Absorbed from her living things.

What was about to happen? If he had been reading a description of such a day in a novel, he would of course have known that it was his author's way of leading up to a murder. Was a violent storm about to break, or was it only the way this day took to announce that it intended to be the very hottest of the whole year? This dismal weight of atmosphere must betoken something. It was difficult for the rector to brace himself up to walking fast enough to reach the station by eight o'clock, but he did his best. He had scarcely walked a mile before a raindrop as big as a shilling fell on the sleeve of his coat, and when he raised his head to the blanket-like something which for the moment was pleased to expect to be called the sky, another of equal calibre alighted on his left cheek. He doubled his speed, and soon got into a long lane bordered with magnificent elms which overhung the road so thoroughly that drops large or small were of trifling importance; but soon a low reverberating growl announced to him that the sky above had mischief on hand, and that he, an umbrellaless man, had better not lose a moment. After all, the thunder did not seem in any particular hurry to pour forth its strength. He walked on another mile without hearing more than a few low but savage growls, but the rain began to fall in earnest, and before long, torrents seemed to descend. What was he to do? He was under the shelter of thick trees now, but soon their protection would fail him, and once beyond it in such a storm as this, he would be drenched. It was impossible

to go further, and yet, if he waited, he would lose the train. He crept under a sycamore which branched out so thickly and regularly on all sides of its massive trunk, that when under it he felt himself beneath a gigantic umbrella; but before he had ceased to congratulate himself on such good quarters he began to feel them insecure, for a terrific peal of thunder broke from the sky overhead, and it was instantly followed by a fiery arrow which seemed especially aimed at him. Before he had recovered from the shock of this, a brougham rolled by. Two servants were outside it cowering beneath a huge umbrella, but the carriage was gone before he had framed a wish that those inside it might have sufficient kindness to offer him a seat. Another rattling peal of thunder and another angry flash of forked lightning drove everything out of his mind but the danger of his position. He must get away from that tree, but where was he to go, and what to do?

The carriage had turned back, and was leaving the road to come close to him. It stopped, and a servant—a very drenched one—got down from the box, and came to him with an umbrella, saying, "Miss Grahame wishes to know if you will get into the carriage, sir: she told me to say that it was Mr. Wilton's."

Mr. Marjoribanks was too much startled to answer promptly.

"You had better not stay under that tree, sir; come under my umbrella," said the servant, and drew the rector away with him—he himself dreaded

the neighbourhood of the tree. He opened the carriage door, and with a "Make haste, sir, or you'll get wet through," almost pushed Mr. Marjoribanks in; and thus, before he had made up his mind whether to accept this offer or not, he found himself sitting by the side of the very girl from whom he was making such haste to escape.

She seemed afraid to raise her eyes to his face, but said nervously, "I thought—I hoped, I mean—that you would not mind sharing Mr. Wilton's carriage with me, it is such a terrible storm! I hardly knew you when I passed—I mean I did not expect to see you here—but that dreadful clap of thunder made me come back—oh, there's another!" and she, whose words had been confused enough before, now lost all power of speech and hid her face in her hands.

"It really is a very violent storm," said he; "I don't know how to thank you sufficiently for extricating me from a position that was not altogether safe. I knew it was wrong to stay there, but I had no other protection against the rain."

She looked up timidly, and said: "You know it is the Wiltons' carriage?" Her words sounded inconsequent, but he understood what she meant, and said gently: "I know it is their carriage, but I hope you don't think that I would not have accepted a seat in yours if you had offered it to me under similar circumstances?"

"In mine? Oh, I could not have ventured to offer that!" Another peal of thunder, and another

derangement of her nerves prevented him from making any reply to this. When she had partly recovered, she said: "But I am taking you in the wrong direction! I am going to the railway station and you must be wanting to get back to Wivenham for breakfast."

"I? No, I want to catch the eight o'clock train to London. I was walking to the station, when this storm surprised me."

"You were? You are going away! It is my fault—oh, I am so sorry!" Her cheeks, which the moment before had been bleached with fear, now flamed crimson, and tears of shame rose to her eyes.

"Indeed, it is not your fault," said he kindly; "I am obliged to return home sooner than I intended." He did not think that she heard what he was saying, for again the thunder was crashing overhead, and she was shivering with fear of the lightning.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, with a long-drawn-out sigh—"Oh, how terrible!"

"I am obliged to return home sooner than I intended; it really is not your fault," said he, repeating his words, for he was so sorry for her.

She shook her head, and replied: "Don't say that. No letters have come since you came, but, Mr. Marjoribanks, when you know that I am going away—I shall be gone directly, and you can go back to Wivenham in the carriage."

She seemed so distressed at having spoilt his

visit, that he hastened to say, "indeed you must not think that I have any feeling towards you but regard. I am—"

"Oh, I know what you must think of us all; but we need not both go away. Let the carriage take me to the station, and go back to the Wiltons and finish your visit. I can go again any time."

He shook his head.

"You won't? Oh, how I do wish this had not happened!"

He was afraid she was going to cry, but she only wiped away one tear, which had far more effect than a thousand, for she was so anxious to hide it. Before he could say a word to reassure her, she exclaimed impetuously: "Whatever I try to do turns out ill! I hoped to get away before you were up. I arranged everything last night with Mrs. Wilton. How did you get away? How is it that no one knew you were leaving? I could have spared you this meeting if I had but known what you were doing."

"My dear Miss Grahame, you speak as if it were a misery to me to meet you. Have I ever avoided you? Am I the one who showed a wish to put an end—"

"No, of course not. It's papa, I know, but we can't talk of that; it has made me very uncomfortable."

"It has made me much more so. It has caused me suffering of every kind."

"Yes, I was afraid so. Mr. Marjoribanks, you

don't think that I refused to bow to you because I wished to behave ill to you? There—I wanted to say that, and I have said it. Now we had better say no more; we can't alter things."

"Thank you," said he. "I am grateful for what you have said, and I perfectly believe it;" he looked at her in thoughtful admiration.

"Try not to mind what papa does," she added, nervously. "Mrs. Wilton told me you felt it terribly."

"I don't care the least what he does," he began in some confusion. "I mean, I can bear it quite well when I know that you, for whom I have always had a genuine regard and admiration, have spoken as you have done now."

She raised questioning eyes to his eyes—he said that he had a genuine regard for her—that was a great deal for him to say. He looked as if it were true. He looked as if still more was true—her eyes fell, and she sighed, for it was in vain to wonder about the meanings of a man whom she was never likely to see again.

"You don't doubt that?" he asked. "It is true, and has become more true than ever lately!"

She looked up with regretful expression. "It can't be helped," she said.

"That we cannot be friends, you mean?" said he.

She made no answer.

"I suppose we can't see each other, but I rely on your being as much of a friend as you can to me."

"You may rely."

"And I would do anything in the world to serve you," said he, earnestly.

"Begging your pardon, ma'am," said the footman, suddenly opening the door, "but that's your train just going. We have been hurrying all we could to be in time, but we couldn't get on any faster, along of the roads being so heavy."

The train which was to have been hers was sending up great puffs of smoke in the now lightened air—for the storm was nearly over.

Miss Grahame looked at the rector; dismay was on her face. There was no dismay in his—he did not care what went off without him so long as she did not.

"How long shall we have to wait for the next, William?"

"Till eleven, ma'am," said he, and sneezed violently.

"Don't stand there, William," said she. "Your clothes are wet through! You will be ill, I am afraid, and so will the coachman. And you are wet, too, Mr. Marjoribanks! What have I been thinking of not to see it? Do me a favour—a great favour: only a minute ago you said you would do anything to serve me; come back in the carriage to Wivenham; you will be so ill if you keep those wet clothes on. If you refuse—I shall—"

"But I don't refuse," said he. "William, tell the coachman to drive back to Wivenham." And then he said to Miss Grahame: "Can't you see that I

should be only too glad to go to the end of the world with you?"

Mrs. Wilton, calm, collected, and pretty as usual, was writing notes and admiring the fine sky which the storm had left behind it when she saw the carriage drive up to the door. "Why, here is Dolly back again!" she exclaimed to herself. "I suppose she found out that Mr. Marjoribanks had forestalled her! How pleased Sir James will be!" She hurried to the hall-door to receive her with a few words of friendly banter. But, to her astonishment, saw that the rector was there too. No sooner did Miss Dolly see Mrs. Wilton than muttering something which sounded like "Mr. Marjoribanks will tell you," she darted upstairs to her own room, leaving Mrs. Wilton looking after her in amazement. "Come in here," said she, drawing the rector away from the hall and the servants. "You and Dolly are really most uncomfortable persons to deal with! Did you meet her? Did she pick you up on the road? Have you missed the train, or what has happened?"

"Everything that you are mentioning has happened," said he.

"And so you have come back together? Well, I must say, that is the best thing you could have done; only, now that you are here, I must entreat you, for my sake, to try to get on together."

"I will, I promise you, I will."

"That's sensible! most sensible! There has not been much sense shown in the matter so far. I

never knew such a foolish quarrel as yours and the Grahames ! You have allowed a stupid lying newspaper paragraph to part you all for life ! "

" You are quite mistaken about that paragraph," said he quietly. " It was neither stupid nor untrue ; the only possible complaint that could be brought against it was that its announcement was a little antedated."

" You are engaged to Dolly ! "

BONES.

THE APRIL FOOL OF HARVEY'S SLUICE.

ABE DURTON'S cabin was not beautiful. People have been heard to assert that it was ugly, and, even after the fashion of Harvey's Sluice, have gone the length of prefixing their adjective with a forcible expletive which emphasised their criticism. Abe, however, was a stolid and easy-going man, on whose mind the remarks of an unappreciative public made but little impression. He had built the house himself, and it suited his partner and him, and what more did they want? Indeed he was rather touchy upon the subject. "Though I says it as raised it," he remarked, "it'll lay over any shanty in the valley. Holes? Well, of course there are holes. You wouldn't get fresh air without holes. There's nothing stuffy about *my* house. Rain? Well, if it does let the rain in, ain't it an advantage to know its rainin' without gettin' up to unbar the door. I wouldn't own a house that didn't leak some. As to its bein' off the perpendic'lar, I like a house with a bit of a tilt. Anyways it pleases my pard,

Boss Morgan, an' what's good enough for him is good enough for you, I suppose." At which approach to personalities his antagonist usually sheered off, and left the honors of the field to the indignant architect.

But whatever difference of opinion might exist as to the beauty of the establishment, there could be no question as to its utility. To the tired wayfarer, plodding along the Buckhurst Road in the direction of the Sluice, the warm glow upon the summit of the hill was a beacon of hope and comfort. Those very holes at which the neighbours sneered helped to diffuse a cheery atmosphere of light around, which was doubly acceptable on such a night as the present.

There was only one man inside the hut, and that was the proprietor, Abe Durton himself, or "Bones," as he had been christened with the rude heraldry of the camp. He was sitting in front of the great wood fire, gazing moodily into its glowing depths, and occasionally giving a faggot a kick of remonstrance when it showed any indication of dying into a smoulder. His fair Saxon face, with its bold simple eyes and crisp yellow beard, stood out sharp and clear against the darkness as the flickering light played over it. It was a manly, resolute countenance, and yet the physiognomist might have detected something in the lines of the mouth which showed a weakness somewhere, an indecision which contrasted strangely with his herculean shoulders and massive limbs. Abe's was one of those trusting,

simple natures which are as easy to lead as they are impossible to drive ; and it was this happy pliability of disposition which made him at once the butt and the favorite of the dwellers in the Sluice. Badinage in that primitive settlement was of a somewhat ponderous character, yet no amount of chaff had ever brought a dark look on Bones's face, or an unkind thought into his honest heart. It was only when his aristocratic partner was, as he thought, being put upon, that an ominous tightness about his lower lip and an angry light in his blue eyes caused even the most irrepressible humourist in the colony to nip his favourite joke in the bud, in order to diverge into an earnest and all absorbing dissertation upon the state of the weather.

"The Boss is late to-night," he muttered as he rose from his chair and stretched himself in a colossal yawn. "My stars, how it does rain and blow ! Don't it, Blinky ? " Blinky was a demure and meditative owl, whose comfort and welfare was a chronic subject of solicitude to its master, and who at present contemplated him gravely from one of the rafters. "Pity you can't speak, Blinky," continued Abe, glancing up at his feathered companion. "There's a powerful deal of sense in your face ; kinder melancholy too. Crossed in love, maybe, when you was young. Talkin' of love," he added, "I've not seen Susan to-day ;" and lighting the candle which stood in a black bottle upon the table, he walked across the room and peered earnestly at one of the many pictures from stray illustrated papers,

which had been cut out by the occupants and posted up upon the walls.

The particular picture which attracted him was one which represented a very tawdrily-dressed actress simpering over a bouquet at an imaginary audience. This sketch had, for some inscrutable reason, made a deep impression upon the susceptible heart of the miner. He had invested the young lady with a human interest by solemnly, and without the slightest warrant, christening her as Susan Banks, and had then installed her as his standard of female beauty.

"You see my Susan," he would say, when some wanderer from Buckhurst, or even from Melbourne, would describe some fair Circe whom he had left behind him. "There ain't a girl like my Sue. If ever you go to the old country again, just you ask to see her. Susan Banks is her name, and I've got her picture up at the shanty."

Abe was still gazing at his charmer when the rough door was flung open, and a blinding cloud of sleet and rain came driving into the cabin, almost obscuring for the moment a young man who sprang in and proceeded to bar the entrance behind him, an operation which the force of the wind rendered no easy matter. He might have passed for the genius of the storm, with the water dripping from his long hair and running down his pale, refined face.

"Well," he said, in a slightly peevish voice, "haven't you got any supper?"

"Waiting and ready," said his companion cheerily, pointing to a large pot which bubbled by the side of the fire. "You seem sort of damp."

"Damp be hanged! I'm soaked, man, thoroughly saturated. It's a night that I wouldn't have a dog out, at least not a dog that I had any respect for. Hand over that dry coat from the peg."

Jack Morgan, or Boss, as he was usually called, belonged to a type which was commoner in the mines during the flush times of the first great rush than would be supposed. He was a man of good blood, liberally educated, and a graduate of an English university. Boss should, in the natural course of things, have been an energetic curate, or struggling professional man, had not some latent traits cropped out in his character, inherited possibly from old Sir Henry Morgan, who had founded the family with Spanish pieces of eight gallantly won upon the high seas. It was this wild strain of blood no doubt which had caused him to drop from the bed-room window of the ivy-clad English parsonage, and leave home and friends behind him, to try his luck with pick and shovel in the Australian fields. In spite of his effeminate face and dainty manners, the rough dwellers in Harvey's Sluice had gradually learned that the little man was possessed of a cool courage and unflinching resolution, which won respect in a community where pluck was looked upon as the highest of human attributes. No one ever knew how it was that Bones and he had become partners; yet partners they were, and

the large, simple nature of the stronger man looked with an almost superstitious reverence upon the clear, decisive mind of his companion.

"That's better," said the Boss, as he dropped into the vacant chair before the fire and watched Abe laying out the two metal plates, with the horn-handled knives and abnormally pronged forks. "Take your mining boots off, Bones; there's no use of filling the cabin with red clay. Come here and sit down."

His gigantic partner came meekly over and perched himself upon the top of a barrel.

"What's up?" he asked.

"Shares are up," said his companion. "That's what's up. Look here," and he extracted a crumpled paper from the pocket of the steaming coat. "Here's the 'Buckhurst Sentinel.' Read this article—this one here about a paying lead in the Conemara mine. We hold pretty heavily in that concern, my boy. We might sell out to-day and clear something—but I think we'll hold on."

Abe Durton in the meantime was laboriously spelling out the article in question, following the lines with his great forefinger, and muttering under his tawny moustache.

"Two hundred dollars a foot," he said, looking up. "Why, pard, we hold a hundred feet each. It would give us twenty thousand dollars! we might go home on that."

"Nonsense!" said his companion; "we've come out here for something better than a beg-

garly couple of thousand pounds. The thing is bound to pay. Sinclair the assayer has been over there, and says there's a ledge of the richest quartz he ever set eyes on. It is just a case of getting the machinery to crush it. By the way, what was to-day's take like?"

Abe extracted a small wooden box from his pocket and handed it to his comrade. It contained what appeared to be about a teaspoonful of sand and one or two little metallic granules not larger than a pea. Boss Morgan laughed, and returned it to his companion.

"We shan't make our fortune at that rate, Bones," he remarked; and there was a pause in the conversation as the two men listened to the wind as it screamed and whistled past the little cabin.

"Any news from Buckhurst?" asked Abe, rising and proceeding to extract their supper from the pot.

"Nothing much," said his companion. "Cock-eyed Joe has been shot by Billy Reid in McFarlane's store."

"Ah," said Abe, with listless interest.

"Bushrangers have been around and stuck up the Rochdale station. They say they are coming over here."

The miner whistled as he poured some whiskey into a jug.

"Anything more?" he asked.

"Nothing of importance except that the Blacks have been showing a bit down New Sterling way, and that the assayer has bought a piano and is

going to have his daughter out from Melbourne to live in the new house opposite on the other side of the road. So you see we are going to have something to look at, my boy," he added as he sat down, and began attacking the food set before him.

"They say she is a beauty, Bones."

"She won't be a patch on my Sue," returned the other decisively.

His partner smiled as he glanced round at the flaring print upon the wall. Suddenly he dropped his knife and seemed to listen. Amid the wild uproar of the wind and the rain there was a low rumbling sound which was evidently not dependent upon the elements.

"What's that?"

"Darned if I know."

The two men made for the door and peered out earnestly into the darkness. Far away along the Buckhurst road they could see a moving light, and the dull sound was louder than before.

"It's a buggy coming down," said Abe.

"Where is it going to?"

"Don't know. Across the ford, I s'pose."

"Why, man, the ford will be six feet deep to-night, and running like a mill-stream."

The light was nearer now, coming rapidly round the curve of the road. There was a wild sound of galloping with the rattle of the wheels.

"Horses have bolted, by thunder."

"Bad job for the man inside."

There was a rough individuality about the inhabi-

tants of Harvey's Sluice, in virtue of which every man bore his misfortunes upon his own shoulders, and had very little sympathy for those of his neighbours. The predominant feeling of the two men was one of pure curiosity as they watched the swinging, swaying lanterns coming down the winding road.

"If he don't pull 'em up before they reach the ford he's a goner," remarked Abe Durton resignedly.

Suddenly there came a lull in the sullen splash of the rain. It was but for a moment, but in that moment there came down on the breeze a long cry which caused the two men to start and stare at each other, and then to rush frantically down the steep incline towards the road below.

"A woman, by heaven!" gasped Abe, as he sprang across the gaping shaft of a mine in the recklessness of his haste.

Morgan was the lighter and more active man. He drew away rapidly from his stalwart companion. Within a minute he was standing panting and bareheaded in the middle of the soft muddy road, while his companion was still toiling down the side of the declivity.

The carriage was close on him now. He could see in the light of the lamps the raw-boned Australian horse, as, terrified by the storm and by its own clatter, it came tearing down the declivity which led to the ford. The man who was driving seemed to see the pale, set face in the pathway in front of

him, for he yelled out some incoherent words of warning, and made a last desperate attempt to pull up. There was a shout, an oath, and a jarring crash, and Abe, hurrying down, saw a wild, infuriated horse rearing madly in the air with a slim, dark figure hanging on to its bridle. Boss, with the keen power of calculation which had made him the finest cricketer at Rugby in his day, had caught the rein immediately below the bit, and clung to it with silent concentration. Once he was down with a heavy thud in the roadway as the horse jerked its head violently forwards, but when, with a snort of exultation, the animal pressed on, it was only to find that the prostrate man beneath its fore-hoofs still maintained his unyielding grasp.

"Hold it, Bones," he said, as a tall figure hurled itself into the road and seized the other rein.

"All right, old man, I've got him;" and the horse, cowed by the sight of a fresh assailant, quieted down, and stood shivering with terror. "Get up, Boss, it's safe now."

But poor Boss lay groaning in the mud.

"I can't do it, Bones." There was a catch in the voice as of pain. "There's something wrong, old chap, but don't make a fuss, it's only a shake; give me a lift up."

Abe bent tenderly over his prostrate companion. He could see that he was very white, and breathing with difficulty.

"Cheer up, old Boss," he murmured. "Hullo! my stars!"

The last two exclamations were shot out of the honest miner's bosom as if they were impelled by some irresistible force, and he took a couple of steps backward in sheer amazement. There, at the other side of the fallen man, and half shrouded in the darkness, stood what appeared to Abe's simple soul to be the most beautiful vision that had ever appeared upon earth to eyes accustomed to rest upon nothing more captivating than the ruddy faces and rough beards of the miners in the Sluice. It seemed that that fair delicate countenance must belong to a wanderer from some better world. Abe gazed at it with wondering reverence, oblivious for the moment even of his injured friend upon the ground.

"Oh papa," said the apparition, in great distress. "He is hurt; the gentleman is hurt;" and with a quick feminine gesture of sympathy, she bent her lithe figure over Boss Morgan's prostrate figure.

"Why, it's Abe Durton and his partner," said the driver of the buggy, coming forward and disclosing the grizzled features of Mr. Joshua Sinclair, the assayer of the mines. "I don't know how to thank you, boys. The infernal brute got the bit between his teeth, and I should have had to have thrown Carrie out and chanced it in another minute. That's right," he continued, as Morgan staggered to his feet. "Not much hurt, I hope."

"I can get up to the hut now," said the young man, steadying himself upon his partner's shoulder. "How are you going to get Miss Sinclair home?"

"Oh, we can walk," said that young lady, shaking off the effects of her fright with all the elasticity of youth.

"We can drive and take the road round the bank so as to avoid the ford," said her father. "The horse seems cowed enough now; you need not be afraid of it, Carrie. I hope we shall see you at the house, both of you. Neither of us can easily forget this night's work."

Miss Carrie said nothing, but she managed to shoot a little demure glance of gratitude from under her long lashes, to have won which honest Abe felt that he would have cheerfully undertaken to stop a runaway locomotive.

There was a cheery shout of "good-night," a crack of the whip, and the buggy rattled away in the darkness.

"You told me the men were rough and nasty, pa," said Miss Carrie Sinclair, after a long silence, when the two dark shadows had died away in the distance, and the carriage was speeding along by the turbulent stream. "I don't think so. I think they are very nice." And Carrie was unusually quiet for the remainder of her journey, and seemed more reconciled to the hardship of leaving her dear friend Amelia in the far-off boarding school at Melbourne.

That did not prevent her from writing a full, true, and particular account of their little adventure to the same young lady upon that very night.

"They stopped the horse, darling, and one poor

fellow was hurt. And oh, Amy, if you had seen the other one in a red shirt, with a pistol at his waist! I couldn't help thinking of you, dear. He was just your idea. You remember, a yellow moustache and great blue eyes. And how he did stare at poor me! You never see such men in Burke Street, Amy;" and so on, for four pages of pretty feminine gossip.

In the meantime poor Boss, badly shaken, had been helped up the hill by his partner and regained the shelter of the shanty. Abe doctored him out of the rude pharmacopœia of the camp, and bandaged up his strained arm. Both were men of few words, and neither made any allusion to what had taken place. It was noticed, however, by Blinky that his master failed to pay his usual nightly orisons before the shrine of Susan Banks. Whether this sagacious fowl drew any deductions from this, and from the fact that Bones sat long and earnestly smoking by the smouldering fire, I know not. Suffice it that as the candle died away and the miner rose from his chair, his feathered friend flew down upon his shoulder, and was only prevented from giving vent to a sympathetic hoot by Abe's warning finger, and its own strong inherent sense of propriety.

A casual visitor dropping into the straggling township of Harvey's Sluice shortly after Miss Carrie Sinclair's arrival would have noticed a considerable alteration in the manners and customs of its inhabitants. Whether it was the refining influence of a woman's presence, or whether it sprang from an emulation excited by the brilliant appearance of

Abe Durton, it is hard to say—probably from a blending of the two. Certain it is that young man had suddenly developed an affection for cleanliness and a regard for the conventionalities of civilisation, which aroused the astonishment and ridicule of his companions. That Boss Morgan should pay attention to his personal appearance had long been set down as a curious and inexplicable phenomenon, depending upon early education ; but that loose-limbed, easy-going Bones should flaunt about in a clean shirt was regarded by every grimy denizen of the Sluice as a direct and premeditated insult. In self-defence, therefore, there was a general cleaning up after working hours, and such a run upon the grocery establishment, that soap went up to an unprecedented figure, and a fresh consignment had to be ordered from McFarlane's store in Buckhurst.

"Is this here a free minin' camp, or is it a darned Sunday-school?" had been the indignant query of Long McCoy, a prominent member of the reactionary party, who had failed to advance with the times, having been absent during the period of regeneration. But his remonstrance met with but little sympathy ; and at the end of a couple of days a general turbidity of the creek announced his surrender, which was confirmed by his appearance in the Colonial Bar with a shining and bashful face, and hair which was redolent of bears' grease.

"I felt kinder lonesome," he remarked apologetically, "so I thought as I'd have a look what was under the clay ;" and he viewed himself approvingly

in the cracked mirror which graced the select room of the establishment.

Our casual visitor would have noticed a remarkable change also in the conversation of the community. Somehow, when a certain dainty little bonnet with a sweet girlish figure beneath it was seen in the distance among the disused shafts and mounds of red earth which disfigured the sides of the valley, there was a warning murmur, and a general clearing off of the cloud of blasphemy, which was, I regret to state, an habitual characteristic of the working population of Harvey's Sluice. Such things only need a beginning ; and it was noticeable that long after Miss Sinclair had vanished from sight there was a decided rise in the moral barometer of the gulches. Men found by experience that their stock of adjectives was less limited than they had been accustomed to suppose, and that the less forcible were sometimes even more adapted for conveying their meaning.

Abe had formerly been considered one of the most experienced valuators of an ore in the settlement. It had been commonly supposed that he was able to estimate the amount of gold in a fragment of quartz with remarkable exactness. This, however, was evidently a mistake, otherwise he would never have incurred the useless expense of having so many worthless specimens assayed as he now did. Mr. Joshua Sinclair found himself inundated with such a flood of fragments of mica, and lumps of rock containing decimal percentages

of the precious metals, that he began to form a very low opinion of the young man's mining capabilities. It is even asserted that Abe shuffled up to the house one morning with a hopeful smile, and after some fumbling, produced half a brick from the bosom of his jersey, with the stereotyped remark "that he thought he'd struck it at last, and so had dropped in to ask him to cipher out an estimate." As this anecdote rests, however, upon the unsupported evidence of Jim Struggles, the humourist of the camp, there may be some slight inaccuracy of detail.

It is certain that what with professional business in the morning and social visits at night, the tall figure of the miner was a familiar object in the little drawing-room of Azalea Villa, as the new house of the assayer had been magniloquently named. He seldom ventured upon a remark in the presence of its female occupant; but would sit on the extreme edge of his chair in a state of speechless admiration while she rattled off some lively air upon the newly imported piano. Many were the strange and unexpected places in which his feet turned up. Miss Carrie had gradually come to the conclusion that they were entirely independent of his body, and had ceased to speculate upon the manner in which she would trip over them on one side of the table while the blushing owner was apologising from the other. There was only one cloud on honest Bones's mental horizon, and that was the periodical appearance of Black Tom Ferguson, of Rochdale Ferry.

This clever young scamp had managed to ingratiate himself with old Joshua, and was a constant visitor at the Villa. There were evil rumours abroad about Black Tom. He was known to be a gambler, and shrewdly suspected to be worse. Harvey's Sluice was not censorious, and yet there was a general feeling that Ferguson was a man to be avoided. There was a reckless *élan* about his bearing, however, and a sparkle in his conversation, which had an indescribable charm, and even induced the Boss, who was particular in such matters, to cultivate his acquaintance while forming a correct estimate of his character. Miss Carrie seemed to hail his appearance as a relief, and chatted away for hours about books and music and the gaieties of Melbourne. It was on these occasions that poor simple Bones would sink into the very lowest depths of despondency, and either slink away, or sit glaring at his rival with an earnest malignancy which seemed to cause that gentleman no small amusement.

The miner made no secret to his partner of the admiration which he entertained for Miss Sinclair. If he was silent in her company, he was voluble enough when she was the subject of discourse. Loiterers upon the Buckhurst road might have heard a stentorian voice upon the hillside bellowing forth a vocabulary of female charms. He submitted his difficulties to the superior intelligence of the Boss.

"That loafer from Rochdale," he said, "he seems to reel it off kinder nat'ral, while for the life of me,

I can't say a word. Tell me, Boss, what would *you* say to a girl like that?"

"Why, talk about what would interest her," said his companion.

".Ah, that's where it lies."

"Talk about the customs of the place and the country," said the Boss, pulling meditatively at his pipe. "Tell her stories of what you have seen in the mines, and that sort of thing."

"Eh? You'd do that, would you?" responded his comrade more hopefully. "If that's the hang of it I am right. I'll go up now and tell her about Chicago Bill, an' how he put them two bullets in the man from the bend the night of the dance."

Boss Morgan laughed.

"That's hardly the thing," he said; "you'd frighten her if you told her that. Tell her something lighter, you know; something to amuse her, something funny."

"Funny!" said the anxious lover, with less confidence in his voice. "How you and me made Mat Houlahan drunk and put him in the pulpit of the Baptist church, and he wouldn't let the preacher in in the morning. How would that do, eh?"

"For heaven's sake don't say anything of the sort!" said his mentor, in great consternation. "She'd never speak to either of us again. No, what I mean is that you should tell about the habits of the mines, how men live and work and die there. If she is a sensible girl, that ought to interest her."

"How they live in the mines? Pard, you are

good to me. How they live? There's a thing I can talk of as glib as Black Tom or any man. I'll try it on her when I see her."

"By the way," said his partner listlessly, "just keep an eye on that man Ferguson. His hands aren't very clean, you know, and he's not scrupulous when he is aiming for anything. You remember how Dick Williams, of Englishtown, was found dead in the bush. Of course it was Rangers that did it. They do say, however, that Black Tom owed him a deal more money than he could ever have paid. There's been one or two queer things about him. Keep your eye on him, keep your eye on him, Abe. Watch what he does."

"I will," said his companion.

And he did. He watched him that night—watched him stride out of the house of the assayer with anger and baffled pride on every feature of his handsome swarthy face; watched him clear the garden paling at a bound, pass in long, rapid strides down the sides of the valley, gesticulating wildly with his hands, and vanish into the bushland beyond. All this Abe Durton watched, and with a thoughtful look upon his face he relit his pipe and strolled slowly backward to the hut upon the hill.

March was drawing to a close in Harvey's Sluice, and the glare and heat of the antipodean sun had toned down into the rich, mellow hues of autumn. It was never a lovely place to look upon; there was something hopelessly prosaic in the two bare, rugged

ridges, seamed and scarred by the hand of mankind, with iron arms of windlasses and broken buckets projecting everywhere through the endless little hillocks of red earth. Down the middle ran the deeply rutted road from Buckhurst, winding along and crossing the sluggish tide of Harper's Creek by a crumbling wooden bridge. Beyond the wood lay the cluster of little huts with the Colonial Bar and the Grocery towering in all the dignity of whitewash among the humble dwellings around. The assayer's verandah-lined house lay above the gulches on the side of the slope nearly opposite the dilapidated specimen of architecture of which our friend Abe was so unreasonably proud.

There was one other building which might have come under the category of what an inhabitant of the Sluice would have described as a "public edifice" with a comprehensive wave of his pipe which conjured up images of an endless vista of colonnades and minarets. This was the Baptist Chapel, a modest little shingle-roofed erection on the bend of the river about a mile above the settlement. It was from this that the town looked at its best, when the harsh outlines and crude colours were somewhat softened by distance. On that particular morning the stream looked pretty as it meandered down the valley; pretty, too, was the long, rising upland behind, with its luxuriant green covering; and prettiest of all was Miss Carrie Sinclair, as she laid down the basket of ferns which she was carrying and stopped upon the summit of the rising ground.

Something seemed to be amiss with that young lady. There was a look of anxiety upon her face which contrasted strangely with her usual appearance of piquant insouciance. Some recent annoyance had left its traces upon her. Perhaps it was to walk it off that she had rambled down the valley; certain it is that she inhaled the fresh breezes of the woodlands as if their resinous fragrance bore with them some antidote for human sorrow.

She stood for some time gazing at the view before her. She could see her father's house, like a white dot upon the hillside, though strangely enough it was a blue reek of smoke upon the opposite slope which seemed to attract the greater part of her attention. She lingered there, watching it with a wistful look in her hazel eyes. Then the loneliness of her situation seemed to strike her, and she felt one of those spasmodic fits of unreasoning terror to which the bravest women are subject. Tales of natives and of bushrangers, their daring and their cruelty, flashed across her. She glanced at the great mysterious stretch of silent bushland beside her, and stooped to pick up her basket with the intention of hurrying along the road in the direction of the gulches. She started round, and hardly suppressed a scream as a long, red-flanneled arm shot out from behind her and withdrew the basket from her very grasp.

The figure which met her eye would to some have seemed little calculated to allay her fears. The high boots, the rough shirt, and the broad

girdle with its weapons of death were, however, too familiar to Miss Carrie to be objects of terror ; and when above them all she saw a pair of tender blue eyes looking down upon her, and a half-abashed smile lurking under a thick yellow moustache, she knew that for the remainder of that walk ranger and black would be equally powerless to harm her.

" Oh, Mr. Durton," she said, " how you did startle me ! "

" I'm sorry, Miss," said Abe, in great trepidation at having caused his idol one moment's uneasiness.

" You see," he continued, with simple cunning, " the weather bein' fine and my partner gone prospectin', I thought I'd walk up to Hagley's Hill and round back by the Bend, and there I sees you accidental-like and promiscuous, a-standin' on a hillock." This astounding falsehood was reeled off by the miner with great fluency, and an artificial sincerity which at once stamped it as a fabrication. Bones had concocted and rehearsed it while tracking the little footsteps in the clay, and looked upon it as the very depth of human guile. Miss Carrie did not venture upon a remark, but there was a gleam of amusement in her eyes which puzzled her lover.

Abe was in good spirits this morning. It may have been the sunshine, or it may have been the rapid rise of shares in the Conemara, which lightened his heart. I am inclined to think, however, that it was referable to neither of these causes. Simple as he was, the scene which he had witnessed the night before could only lead to one conclusion.

He pictured himself walking as wildly down the valley under similar circumstances, and his heart was touched with pity for his rival. He felt very certain that the ill-omened face of Mr. Thomas Ferguson of Rochdale Ferry would never more be seen within the walls of Azalea Villa. Then why did she refuse him? He was handsome, he was fairly rich. Could it —? No, it couldn't; of course it couldn't; how could it! The idea was ridiculous—so very ridiculous that it had fermented in the young man's brain all night, and that he could do nothing but ponder over it in the morning, and cherish it in his perturbed bosom.

They passed down the red pathway together, and along by the river's bank. Abe had relapsed into his normal condition of taciturnity. He had made one gallant effort to hold forth upon the subject of ferns, stimulated by the basket which he held in his hand, but the theme was not a thrilling one, and after a spasmodic flicker he had abandoned the attempt. While coming along he had been full of racy anecdotes and humourous observations. He had rehearsed innumerable remarks which were to be poured into Miss Sinclair's appreciative ear. But now his brain seemed of a sudden to have become a vacuum, and utterly devoid of any idea save an insane and overpowering impulse to comment upon the heat of the sun. No astronomer who ever reckoned a parallax was so entirely absorbed in the condition of the celestial bodies as honest Bones while he trudged along by the slow-flowing Australian river.

Suddenly his conversation with his partner came back into his mind. What was it Boss had said upon the subject? "Tell her how they live at the mines." He revolved it in his brain. It seemed a curious thing to talk about, but Boss had said it, and Boss was always right. He would take the plunge; so with a premonitory "hem" he blurted out:

"They live mostly on bacon and beans in the valley."

He could not see what effect this communication had upon his companion. He was too tall to be able to peer under the little straw bonnet. She did not answer. He would try her again.

"Mutton on Sundays," he said.

Even this failed to arouse any enthusiasm. In fact she seemed to be laughing; Boss was evidently wrong. The young man was in despair. The sight of a ruined hut beside the pathway conjured up a fresh idea. He grasped at it as a drowning man to a straw.

"Cockney Jack built that," he remarked; "lived there till he died."

"What did he die of?" asked his companion.

"Three Star brandy," said Abe, decisively. "I used to come over of a night when he was bad and sit by him. Poor chap, he had a wife and two children in Putney. He'd rave, and call me Polly by the hour. He was cleaned out, hadn't a red cent; but the boys collected rough gold enough to see him through. He's buried there in that shaft;

that was his claim, so we just dropped him down it an' filled it up ; put down his pick, too, an' a spade, an' a bucket, so's he'd feel kinder perky and at home."

Miss Carrie seemed more interested now.

"Do they often die like that?" she asked.

"Well, brandy kills many; but there's more get's dropped—shot, you know."

"I don't mean that. Do many men die alone and miserable down there, with no one to care for them?" and she pointed to the cluster of houses beneath them. "Is there any one dying now? It is awful to think of."

"There's none as I knows on likely to throw up their hand."

"I wish you wouldn't use so much slang, Mr. Durton," said Carrie, looking up at him reprovingly out of her violet eyes. It was strange what an air of proprietorship this young lady was gradually assuming towards her gigantic companion. "You know it isn't polite; you should get a dictionary and learn the proper words."

"Ah, that's it," said Bones, apologetically. "It's gettin' your hand on the proper one. When you've not got a steam drill, you've got to put up with a pick."

"Yes, but it's easy if you really try. You could say that a man was 'dying,' or 'moribund,' if you like."

"That's it," said the miner enthusiastically. "'Moribund,' that's a word; why, you could lay

over Boss Morgan in the matter or words. 'Moribund!' there's some sound about that."

Carrie laughed.

"It's not the sound you must think of, but whether it will express your meaning. Seriously, Mr. Durton, if any one should be ill in the camp you must let me know. I can nurse, and I might be of use. You will, won't you?"

Abe readily acquiesced, and relapsed into a silence as he pondered over the possibility of inoculating himself with some long and tedious disease. There was a mad dog reported from Buckhurst, perhaps something might be done with that.

"And now I must say good morning," said Carrie, as they came to the spot where a crooked pathway branched off from the track and wound up to Azalea Villa. "Thank you ever so much for escorting me."

In vain Abe pleaded for the additional hundred yards, and adduced the overwhelming weight of the diminutive basket as a cogent reason. The young lady was inexorable; she had taken him too far out of his way already, she was ashamed of herself; she wouldn't hear of it.

So poor Bones departed in a mixture of many opposite feelings. He had interested her; she had spoken kindly to him; but then she had sent him away before there was any necessity; she couldn't care much about him if she would do that. I think he might have felt a little more cheerful, however, had he seen Miss Carrie Sinclair as she

watched his retiring figure from the garden gate with a loving look upon her saucy face, and a mischievous smile at his bent head and desponding appearance.

The Colonial Bar was the favorite haunt of the inhabitants of Harvey's Sluice in their hours of relaxation. There had been a fierce competition between it and the rival establishment termed the Grocery, which, in spite of its innocent appellation, aspired also to dispense spirituous refreshments. The importation of chairs into the latter had led to the appearance of a settee in the former. Spittoons appeared in the Grocery against a picture in the Bar, and, as the frequenters expressed it, the honours were even. When, however, the Grocery led a window-curtain, and its opponent returned a snuggery and a mirror, the game was declared to be in favour of the latter, and Harvey's Sluice showed its sense of the spirit of the proprietor by withdrawing their custom from his opponent.

Though every man was at liberty to swagger into the Bar itself, and bask in the shimmer of its many coloured bottles, there was a general feeling that the snuggery, or special apartment, should be reserved for the use of the more prominent citizens. It was in this room that committees met, that opulent companies were conceived and born, and that inquests were generally held. The latter, I regret to state, was, in 1861, a pretty frequent ceremony at the Sluice; and the findings of the coroner were sometimes characterised by a fine breezy originality.

Witness when Bully Burke, a notorious desperado, was shot down by a quiet young medical man, and a sympathetic jury brought in that "the deceased had met his death in an ill-advised attempt to stop a pistol-ball while in motion," a verdict which was looked upon as a triumph of jurisprudence in the camp, as simultaneously exonerating the culprit, and adhering to the rigid and undeniable truth.

On this particular evening there was an assemblage of notabilities in the snuggery, though no such pathological ceremony had called them together. Many changes had occurred of late which merited discussion; and it was in this chamber, gorgeous in all the effete luxury of the mirror and settee, that Harvey's Sluice was wont to exchange ideas. The recent cleansing of the population was still causing some ferment in men's minds. Then there was Miss Sinclair and her movements to be commented on, and the paying lead in the Conemara, and the recent rumours of bushrangers. It was no wonder that the leading men in the township had come together in the Colonial Bar.

The rangers were the present subject of discussion. For some few days rumours of their presence had been flying about, and an uneasy feeling had pervaded the colony. Physical fear was a thing little known in Harvey's Sluice. The miners would have turned out to hunt down the desperadoes with as much zest as if they had been so many kangaroos. It was the presence of a large quantity of gold in the town which caused anxiety. It was

felt that the fruits of their labour must be secured at any cost. Messages had been sent over to Buckhurst for as many troopers as could be spared, and in the mean time the main street of the Sluice was paraded at night by volunteer sentinels.

A fresh impetus had been given to the panic by the report brought in to-day by Jim Struggles. Jim was of an ambitious and aspiring turn of mind, and after gazing in silent disgust at his last week's clean-up, he had metaphorically shaken the clay of Harvey's Sluice from his feet, and had started off into the woods with the intention of prospecting round until he could hit upon some likely piece of ground for himself. Jim's story was that he was sitting upon a fallen trunk eating his mid-day damper and rusty bacon, when his trained ear had caught the clink of horses' hoofs. He had hardly time to take the precaution of rolling off the tree and crouching down behind it, before a troop of men came riding down through the bush, and passed within a stone's throw of him.

"There was Bill Smeaton and Murphy Duff," said Struggles, naming two notorious ruffians; "and there was three more that I couldn't rightly see. And they took the trail to the right, and looked like business all over, with their guns in their hands."

Jim was submitted to a searching cross-examination that evening; but nothing could shake his testimony or throw a further light upon what he had seen. He told the story several times and at long

intervals; and though there might be a pleasing variety in the minor incidents, the main facts were always identically the same. The matter began to look serious.

There were a few, however, who were loudly sceptical as to the existence of the rangers, and the most prominent of these was a young man who was perched on a barrel in the centre of the room, and was evidently one of the leading spirits in the community. We have already seen that dark curling hair, lack-lustre eye, and thin cruel lip, in the person of Black Tom Ferguson, the rejected suitor of Miss Sinclair. He was easily distinguishable from the rest of the party by a tweed coat, and other symptoms of effeminacy in his dress, which might have brought him into disrepute, had he not, like Abe Durton's partner, early established the reputation of being a quietly desperate man. On the present occasion he seemed somewhat under the influence of liquor, a rare occurrence with him, and probably to be ascribed to his recent disappointment. He was almost fierce in his denunciation of Jim Struggles and his story.

"It's always the same," he said: "if a man meets a few travellers in the bush, he's bound to come back raving about rangers. If they'd seen Struggles there, they would have gone off with a long yarn about a ranger crouching behind a tree. As to recognising people riding fast among tree trunks—it is an impossibility."

Struggles, however, stoutly maintained his orig-

inal assertion, and all the sarcasm and arguments of his opponent were thrown away upon his stolid complacency. It was noticed that Ferguson seemed unaccountably put out about the whole matter. Something seemed to be on his mind, too; for occasionally he would spring off his perch and pace up and down the room with an abstracted and very forbidding look upon his swarthy face. It was a relief to every one, when suddenly catching up his hat, and wishing the company a curt "good-night," he walked off through the bar, and into the street beyond.

"Seems kinder put out," remarked Long McCoy.

"He can't be afeard of the rangers, surely," said Joe Shamus, another man of consequence, and principal shareholder of the El Dorado.

"No, he's not the man to be afraid," answered another. "There's something queer about him the last day or two. He's been long trips in the woods without any tools. They do say that the assayer's daughter has chucked him over."

"Quite right, too. A darned sight too good for him," remarked several voices.

"It's odds but he has another try," said Shamus. "He's a hard man to beat when he's set his mind on a thing."

"Abe Durton's the horse to win," remarked Houlahan, a little, bearded Irishman. "It's sivin to four I'd be willin' to lay on him."

"And you'd be afther losing your money, a-vitch," said a young man, with a laugh. "She'll want

more brains than ever Bones had in his skull, you bet."

"Who's seen Bones to-day?" asked McCoy.

"I've seen him," said the young miner. "He came round all through the camp, asking for a dictionary—wanted to write a letter likely."

"I saw him readin' it," said Shamus. "He came over to me and told me he'd struck something good at the first show; showed me a word about as long as your arm—'abdicate,' or something."

"It's a rich man he is now, I suppose," said the Irishman.

"Well, he's about made his pile. He holds a hundred feet of the Conemara, and the shares go up every hour. If he'd sell out he'd be about fit to go home."

"Guess he wants to take somebody home with him," said another. "Old Joshua wouldn't object, seein' that the money is there."

I think it has been already recorded in this narrative that Jim Struggles, the wandering prospector, had gained the reputation of being the wit of the camp. It was not only in airy badinage, but in the conception and execution of more pretentious practical pleasantries that Jim had earned his reputation. His adventure in the morning had caused a certain stagnation in his usual flow of humour; but the company and his potations were gradually restoring him to a more cheerful state of mind. He had been brooding in silence over some idea since the departure of Ferguson, and he now proceeded to evolve it to his expectant companions.

"Say, boys," he began, "what day's this?"

"Friday, ain't it?"

"No, not that. What day of the month?"

"Darned if I know!"

"Well, I'll tell you now. It's the first of April. I've got a calendar in the hut that says so."

"What if it is?" said several voices.

"Well, don't you see, it's All Fools' Day. Couldn't we fix up some little joke on some one, eh?—couldn't we get a laugh out of it? Now there's Old Bones, for instance; he'll never smell a rat. Couldn't we send him off somewhere, and watch him go, maybe? We'd have something to chaff him on for a month to come, eh?"

There was a general murmur of assent. A joke, however poor, was always welcome to the Sluice. The broader the point, the more thoroughly was it appreciated. There was no morbid delicacy of feeling in the gulches.

"Where shall we send him?" was the query.

Jim Struggles was buried in thought for a moment. Then an unhallowed inspiration seemed to come over him, and he laughed uproariously, rubbing his hands between his knees in the excess of his delight.

"Well, what is it?" asked the eager audience.

"See here, boys. There's Miss Sinclair. You was saying as Abe's gone on her. She don't fancy him much you think. Suppose we write him a note—send it him to-night, you know."

"Well, what then?" said McCoy.

"Well, pretend the note is from her, d'ye see? put her name at the bottom. Let on as she wants him to come up an' meet her in the garden at twelve. He's bound to go. He'll think she wants to go off with him. It'll be the biggest thing played this year."

There was a roar of laughter. The idea conjured up of honest Bones mooning about in the garden, and of old Joshua coming out to remonstrate with a double-barrelled shot-gun, was irresistibly comic. The plan was approved of unanimously.

"Here's pencil and here's paper," said the humourist. "Who's goin' to write the letter?"

"Write it yourself, Jim," said Shamus.

"Well, what shall I say?"

"Say what you think right."

"I don't know how she'd put it," said Jim, scratching his head in great perplexity. "However, Bones will never know the differ. How will this do? 'Dear old man: Come to the garden at twelve to-night, else I'll never speak to you again,' eh?"

"No, that's not the style," said the young miner. "Mind, she's a lass of eddication. She'd put it kind of flowery and soft."

"Well, write it yourself," said Jim sulkily, handing him over the pencil.

"This is the sort of thing," said the miner, moistening the point of it in his mouth. "'When the moon is in the sky'—"

"There it is. That's bully," from the company.

"'And the stars a-shinin' bright, meet, oh meet me, Adolphus, by the garden gate at twelve.'"

"His name ain't Adolphus," objected a critic.

"That's how the poetry comes in," said the miner. "It's kinder fanciful, d'ye see. Sounds a darned sight better than Abe. Trust him for guessing who she means. I'll sign it 'Carrie.' There!"

The epistle was gravely passed round the room from hand to hand, and reverentially gazed upon as being a remarkable production of the human brain. It was then folded up and committed to the care of a small boy, who was solemnly charged under dire threats to deliver it at the shanty, and to make off before any awkward questions were asked him. It was only after he had disappeared in the darkness that some slight compunction visited one or two of the company.

"Ain't it playing it rather low on the girl?" said Shamus.

"And rough on old Bones?" suggested another.

However, these objections were overruled by the majority, and disappeared entirely upon the appearance of a second jorum of whiskey. The matter had almost been forgotten by the time that Abe had received his note, and was spelling it out with a palpitating heart under the light of his solitary candle.

That night has long been remembered in Harvey's Sluice. A fitful breeze was sweeping down from

the distant mountains, moaning and sighing among the deserted claims. Dark clouds were hurrying across the moon, one moment throwing a shadow over the landscape, and the next allowing the silvery radiance to shine down, cold and clear, upon the little valley, and bathe in a weird, mysterious light the great stretch of bushland on either side of it. A great loneliness seemed to rest on the face of nature. Men remarked afterwards on the strange, eerie atmosphere which hung over the little town.

It was in the darkness that Abe Durton sallied out from his little shanty. His partner, Boss Morgan, was still absent in the bush, so that beyond the ever-watchful Blinky there was no living being to observe his movements. A feeling of mild surprise filled his simple soul that his angel's delicate fingers could have formed those great straggling hieroglyphics ; however, there was the name at the foot, and that was enough for him. She wanted him, no matter for what, and with a heart as pure and as heroic as any knight-errant, this rough miner went forth at the summons of his love.

He groped his way up the steep winding track which led to Azalea Villa. There was a little clump of small trees and shrubs about fifty yards from the entrance of the garden. Abe stopped for a moment when he had reached them in order to collect himself. It was hardly twelve yet, so that he had a few minutes to spare. He stood under their dark canopy peering at the white house vaguely outlined in front of him. A plain enough little dwelling-

place to any prosaic mortal, but girt with reverence and awe in the eyes of the lover.

The miner paused under the shade of the trees, and then moved on to the garden-gate. There was no one there. He was evidently rather early. The moon was shining brightly now, and the country round was as clear as day. Abe looked past the little Villa at the road which ran like a white, winding streak over the brow of the hill. A watcher behind could have seen his squar eathletic figure standing out sharp and clear. Then he gave a start as if he had been shot, and staggered up against the little gate beside him.

He had seen something which caused even his sunburned face to become a shade paler as he thought of the girl so near him. Just at the bend of the road, not two hundred yards away, he saw a dark moving mass coming round the curve, and lost in the shadow of the hill. It was but for a moment ; yet in that moment the quick perception of the practised woodman had realised the whole situation. It was a band of horsemen bound for the Villa ; and what horsemen would ride so by night save the terror of the woodlands—the dreaded rangers of the bush ?

It is true that on ordinary occasions Abe was as sluggish in his intellect as he was heavy in his movements. In the hour of danger, however, he was as remarkable for cool deliberation as for prompt and decisive action. As he advanced up the garden he rapidly reckoned up the chances against him

There were half a dozen of the assailants at the most moderate computation, all desperate and fearless men. The question was whether he could keep them at bay for a short time and prevent them forcing a passage into the house. We have already mentioned that sentinels had been placed in the main street of the town. Abe reckoned that help would be on hand within ten minutes of the firing of the first shot.

Were he inside the house he could confidently reckon on holding his own for a longer period than that. Before he could rouse the sleepers and gain admission, however, the rangers would be upon him. He must content himself with doing his utmost. At any rate he would show Carrie that if he could not talk to her he could at least die for her. The thought gave him quite a glow of pleasure, as he crept under the shadow of the house. He cocked his revolver. Experience had taught him the advantage of the first shot.

The road along which the rangers were coming ended at a wooden gate opening into the upper part of the assayer's little garden. This gate had a high acacia hedge on either side of it, and opened into a short walk also lined by impassable thorny walls. Abe knew the place well. One resolute man might, he thought, hold the passage for a few minutes until the assailants broke through elsewhere and took him in the rear. At any rate, it was his best chance. He passed the front door, but forbore to give any alarm. Sinclair was an elderly man, and

would be of little assistance in such a desperate struggle as was before him, and the appearance of lights in the house would warn the rangers of the resistance awaiting them. Oh for his partner the Boss, for Chicago Bill, for any one of twenty gallant men who would have come at his call and stood by him in such a quarrel: he turned into the narrow pathway. There was the well-remembered wooden gate; and there, perched upon the gate, languidly swinging his legs backwards and forwards, and peering down the road in front of him, was Mr. John Morgan, the very man for whom Abe had been longing from the bottom of his heart.

There was short time for explanations. A few hurried words announced that the Boss, returning from his little tour, had come across the rangers riding on their mission of darkness, and overhearing their destination, had managed by hard running and knowledge of the country to arrive before them. "No time to alarm any one," he explained, still panting from his exertions; "must stop them ourselves—not come for swag—come for your girl—only over our bodies, Bones;" and with these few broken words the strangely assorted friends shook hands and looked lovingly into each other's eyes, while the tramp of the horses came down to them on the fragrant breeze of the woods.

There were six rangers in all. One who appeared to be leader rode in front, while the others followed in a body. They flung themselves off their horses when they were opposite the house, and after a few

muttered words from their captain, tethered the animals to a small tree, and walked confidently towards the gate.

Boss Morgan and Abe were crouching down under the shadow of the hedge, at the extreme end of the narrow passage. They were invisible to the rangers, who evidently reckoned on meeting little resistance in this isolated house. As the first man came forward and half turned to give some order to his comrades, both the friends recognized the stern profile and heavy moustache of Black Ferguson, the rejected suitor of Miss Carrie Sinclair. Honest Abe made a mental vow that he at least should never reach the door alive.

The ruffian stepped up to the gate and put his hand upon the latch. He started as a stentorian "stand back!" came thundering out from among the bushes. In war, as in love, the miner was a man of few words.

"There's no road this way," explained another voice with an infinite sadness and gentleness about it which was characteristic of its owner when the devil was rampant in his soul. The ranger recognised it. He remembered the soft, languid address which he had listened to in the billiard-room of the Buckhurst Arms, and which had wound up by the mild orator putting his back against the door, drawing a derringer, and asking to see the sharper who would dare to force a passage. "It's that infernal fool Durton," he said, "and his white-faced friend."

Both were well-known names in the country round,

but the rangers were reckless and desperate men. They drew up to the gate in a body.

"Clear out of that," said their leader in a grim whisper; "you can't save the girl. Go off with whole skins while you have the chance."

The partners laughed.

"Then curse you, come on!"

The gate was flung open and the party fired a straggling volley, and made a fierce rush towards the gravelled walk.

The revolvers cracked merrily in the silence of the night from the bushes at the other end. It was hard to aim with precision in the darkness. The second man sprang convulsively into the air, and fell upon his face with his arms extended, writhing horribly in the moonlight. The third was grazed in the leg and stopped. The others stopped out of sympathy. After all, the girl was not for them, and their heart was hardly in the work. Their captain rushed madly on, like a valiant blackguard as he was, but was met by a crashing blow from the butt of Abe Burton's pistol, delivered with a fierce energy which sent him reeling back among his comrades with the blood streaming from his shattered jaw, and his capacity for cursing cut short at the very moment when he needed to draw on it most.

"Don't go yet," said the voice in the darkness.

However, they had no intention of going yet. A few minutes must elapse, they knew, before Harvey's Sluice could be upon them. There was still time to force the door if they could succeed in mastering

the defenders. What Abe had feared came to pass. Black Ferguson knew the ground as well as he did. He ran rapidly along the hedge, and the five dashed through it where there was some appearance of a gap. The two friends glanced at each other. Their flank was turned. They stood up like men who knew their fate and did not fear to meet it.

There was a wild medley of dark figures in the moonlight, and a ringing cheer from well-known voices. The humourists of Harvey's Sluice had found something even more practical than the joke which they had come to witness. The partners saw faces of friends beside them—Shamus, Struggles, M'Coy. There was a desperate rally, a sweeping fiery rush, a cloud of smoke, with pistol-shots and fierce oaths ringing out of it, and when it lifted, a single dark shadow flying for dear life to the shelter of the broken hedge was the only ranger upon his feet within the little garden. But there was no sound of triumph among the victors ; a strange hush had come over them, and a murmur as of grief —for there, lying across the threshold which he had fought so gallantly to defend, lay poor Abe, the loyal and simple-hearted, breathing heavily with a bullet through his lungs.

He was carried inside with all the rough tenderness of the mines. There were men there, I think, who would have borne his hurt to have had the love of that white girlish figure, which bent over the blood-stained bed and whispered so softly and so tenderly in his ear. Her voice seemed to rouse

him. He opened his dreamy blue eyes and looked about him. They rested on her face.

"Played out," he murmured; "pardon, Carrie, morib—" and with a faint smile he sank back upon the pillow.

However, Abe failed for once to be as good as his word. His hardy constitution asserted itself, and he shook off what might in a weaker man have proved a deadly wound. Whether it was the balmy air of the woodlands which came sweeping over a thousand miles of forest into the sick man's room, or whether it was the little nurse that tended him so gently, certain it is that within two months we heard that he had realised his shares in the Conemara, and gone from Harvey's Sluice and the little shanty on the hill forever.

I had the advantage a short time afterward of seeing an extract from the letter of a young lady named Amelia, to whom we have made a casual allusion in the course of our narrative. We have already broken the privacy of one feminine epistle, so we shall have fewer scruples at glancing at another. "I was bridesmaid," she remarks, "and Carrie looked charming" (underlined) "in the veil and orange blossoms. Such a man, he is, twice as big as your Jack, and he was so funny, and blushed, and dropped the prayer-book, and when they asked the question you could have heard him roar 'I do!' at the other end of George Street. His best man was a darling" (twice underlined). "So quiet and handsome and nice. Too gentle to take care of

himself among those rough men, I am sure." I think it quite possible that in the fulness of time Miss Amelia managed to take upon herself the care of our old friend Mr. Jack Morgan, commonly known as the Boss.

A tree is still pointed out at the bend as Ferguson's gum-tree. There is no need to enter into unsavoury details. Justice is short and sharp in primitive colonies, and the dwellers in Harvey's Sluice were a serious and practical race.

It is still the custom for a select party to meet on a Saturday evening in the snuggery at the Colonial Bar. On such occasions, if there be a stranger or guest to be entertained, the same solemn ceremony is always observed. Glasses are charged in silence; there is a tapping of the same upon the table, and then, with a deprecating cough, Jim Struggles comes forward and tells the tale of the April joke, and of what came of it. There is generally conceded to be something very artistic in the way in which he breaks off suddenly at the close of his narrative by waving his bumper in the air with "an' here's to Mr. and Mrs. Bones. God bless 'em!" A sentiment in which the stranger, if he be a prudent man, will most cordially acquiesce.

TWO PLOTS.

A CONFESSION IN TWO CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

A WEEK ago to-day I was married to the charmingest, prettiest, and dearest girl in Britain, and to-night I am the most miserable man within the four seas. My wife and I are both perfectly well, no relative has died, I haven't lost any money, and yet I am wretched. *I have been found out by my wife;* and at present she is crying her pretty blue eyes out upstairs, while I am alternately cursing my weakness and anathematising my fortune down here. I cannot help thinking that I have a sort of an excuse if Tossy would only listen to me; and I set down here the whole history of our misfortune in the mournful hope that she may consent to read this, although she may not be willing to hear me speak.

One night last summer I closed the volume that had been delighting me with the talk of the famous Eighteenth-Century men and women, and as I lay back in my chair in the dusk I seemed to hear the

voices still speaking. I heard the deep tones of the political prophets, the eager arguments of the philosophers and theologians, and the light jests of the careless wits. I heard the softer tone of female voices and the merry tinkle of feminine laughter; and as I heard them a vast longing came upon me. If the ghosts of bygone conversations still had such delights for me, should I not feel a vivider joy when the words came from hearts that were yet beating, when the gay jest and sparkling wit flashed from busy brains not yet the spoil of the grave, when the airy laughter and bright smiles illumined lips that were still rosy with life? I had dwelt too long in the printed world; I was becoming stiff and straitened between the boards of my books. Now I should mingle with my fellow-men; now take part in the conversations that perhaps would engage the attention of some peaceful student like myself in the future.

I should awake into the Nineteenth Century. I had spent a considerable period in the years before the Christian era; had seen the A. D.'s in their teens; had got lost in ages so dark that no candle would burn in them; and latterly had been wandering about in the Eighteenth Century. Why not now turn my attention to the present inhabitants of the *νῆσοι Βρεταννικαι* which I had known since the days of Ezekiel and Aristotle?

I had lived pretty much alone in the world, so far as contemporaries went. Parents or brethren I had never known; but my father had left me to

the care of his brother, and the latter had discharged the trust by having me educated at a private school in England, allowing me to take a leisurely degree at Oxford, and finally leaving me his fortune, which he had acquired in some original way connected with ginger. I had seen him once or twice, but for the greater part of his life he resided at Calcutta. I had always been of a retiring disposition; and the possession of a comfortable fortune, which was managed by my uncle's lawyers, only placed it in my power to gratify my taste for quiet reading and study. I had my name entered at one of the inns of court, and had eaten my dinners; but I had no intention of practising at the bar. I should have said that my name is Theodore Lancey. It is very curious to look back on my former life now. I seem to have been almost a hermit.

I had, and still have, a friend named Fitzjames. He is quite young, never having been out of the Nineteenth Century; but, in certain respects, I have found that he is considerably older than I am. Fitzjames prides himself upon being a young man who knows about things—if not a young man of the world, then nothing. It seemed to me that an individual with a special knowledge of the kind he claimed to possess would be of more use to me than priests to Herodotus. He would be the very man to introduce me to my fellow-beings. I accordingly told him of my wishes. "So you've come to air at last," he said; "well, I'm glad to hear it, and I'll show you round all right. What you've

got to do first is to learn the name of the ruling sovereign, and the dates of the reform bill and the ballot act. I'm going to run up north to Strathblane Hydropathic Establishment, and if you like you can come with me. These affairs are all the go nowadays, and you'll see lots of character there, and we can take a run round Scotland afterwards."

Quite innocent of knowing what hydropathic establishments were, I consented, and in about a week after my resolution I found myself in the Strathblane Hydropathic Establishment. We arrived late in the afternoon, shortly before dinner, and Fitzjames conducted me after a hasty toilet to the drawing-room of the house. The room, which was very large, was very full, and to my excited eyes seemed at first full only of ladies. I subsided quietly into a corner behind a book, while Fitzjames disappeared elsewhere. I felt very much abashed by my intrusion into this large company, where everybody seemed to know someone else; and I began to feel the first twinges of that unmerciful nervousness into which the presence of ladies throws the unaccustomed swain. As I peeped through my spectacles, taking notes of the social customs of the day as I persuaded myself, I felt how helpless I should be if turned adrift in such a place alone. "Ah," thought I, "if the old ladies only took snuff and carried canes; and if the young ladies only wore high-waisted short gowns and high combs, I should feel more at home, and should be able to address them with a high-flown

compliment and a low bow." The company was certainly heterogeneous. Elderly ladies who bore the water-mark of spinsterhood abounded; kindly looking matrons were there; old gentlemen who looked as if only the near prospect of dinner kept them from going to sleep; fresh, bright young ladies, such as in all my centuries I had never seen since Nausicaa; and slim young fellows that reminded me of the foppish Alcibiades. Fitzjames I presently descried conversing, nay even chatting, at his ease and comfortably with what seemed to be a delightful family-party of ladies. "For," as he afterwards explained, "that's the way one has to do here, you know; you're a fool if you're stiff." I thought (parenthetically) that it was the way I should like to do everywhere, if I only got the chance of such pleasant companions. And, after all, I discovered that Fitzjames was an old acquaintance of these same ladies, and indeed I am firmly convinced that their presence had something to do with Fitzjames's choice of his first stopping-place in Scotland.

The summons of the gong was responded to by a general stampede of the occupants of the drawing-room, and I was swept along with the rest to the dining-hall. A compassionate waitress piloted me to the seat apportioned me at the table, and almost immediately Fitzjames dropped into the chair beside me. Dinner at a hydropathic establishment is always a serious matter, and those who are knowing seem to devote all their attention to it for

the time. Our neighbours were not interesting and our vis-a-vis seemed to be too much engrossed to repay advances. It was during dinner that Fitzjames told me that he had met some friends of his, the two Miss Delavels and their Aunt Miss Scott, who were spending a short time in Scotland. We could descry the ladies at the other end of the long table at which we sat; and I thought Fitzjames was a lucky fellow to stumble upon such charming acquaintances so soon. He offered to introduce me to them after dinner, but when that time came I was so overpowered—it is a humiliating confession—with bashfulness that I couldn't summon up courage to enter the drawing-room, but kept uncomfortably vibrating betwixt the billiard-room and the reading-room, which seemed entirely surrendered to the male sex. Fitzjames did not seem to have noticed my behaviour, for he made no allusion to it; he probably forgot my existence.

The next morning, after enjoying the more specially hydropathic features of the place, I strolled into the reading-room to glance over the newspaper before breakfast. There were two or three ladies similarly waiting, and shortly afterwards I noticed Fitzjames's friends, the Delavels, enter the room. I don't think they saw me, for my face was hidden behind a newspaper; but my attention was attracted by the sound of my own name—Lancey. It was the younger and more piquant-looking of the sisters, and the one whom I secretly feared the more, who spoke. I dare say a bolder man than I, simi-

larly situated, would have simply plucked aside the paper, and so warned them of his presence. But I was startled by the mention of my own name, and felt myself crimsoning in the most ridiculous manner. I had no desire to hear what was said about me; I claim that for myself. If I could have melted into thin air or in any way possessed myself of some fernseed I should have gone out of earshot at once; but to discover myself boldly, knowing that I should thereby draw upon myself the eyes and interest of these two girls, was more than I had nerve to do. It was pitiful weakness, I admit; but what then? I was a stranger to my century. The conversation was not loud, but I couldn't help catching stray phrases; "Isn't it jolly—the famous T. Lancey, you know—in the papers—well known player—saw his name in the book—and Mr. Fitzjames—splendid game at tennis—introduce him today." I smiled a little to myself; they had made a mistake. If there were really a famous T. Lancey, I certainly was not he; but I should like very much to know what Fitzjames had said. The breakfast gong interrupted my meditation; and as the young ladies left the room before I did, I was not discovered.

After breakfast Fitzjames conducted me to see the place, *videlicet*, the pleasure grounds, which was his pleasant way of expressing going to find the Misses Delavel, in order to fulfil an engagement to play lawn-tennis with them. Before we found them I told him what I had overheard, and he

seemed to see in it an immense joke. "Why," said he, "I do believe they are confounding you with Tom Lancey, of the Bayswater Tennis Club; a tremendous don at tennis; champion, and all that. That's awfully good. These girls are just mad about tennis; and Miss Lilian, the young one, thinks, I verily believe, that a man's not worth looking at unless he can play tennis." "But," said I, "I can't play tennis; I've only seen it once, and I never had a bat in my hand. You must put them right before you introduce me." I am now sure that had I not happened to stumble over a stone I should have seen a sparkle of devilry in Fitzjames's eyes as he replied—"Oh, that doesn't much matter. Wouldn't it be rather fun to pretend you *are* Tom Lancey, just a little bit? Miss Tossy (that's Lilian's pet name) will be awfully nice to you at first; and of course we'll not be able to carry the joke very far. Besides, they made the mistake first." I positively shuddered at the idea of being mixed up in a jest to be played off upon young ladies; but Fitzjames wouldn't listen to me, and boisterously laughed all my objections to scorn. He said it would make the introduction ever so much easier, and, assuring me that he would see me through it, reduced me to a miserable acquiescence. I plaintively reminded him that I didn't know a single technical term in the game. But he assured me that didn't matter.

"All you've got to do is not to make any jokes about 'deuce,' or 'love;' you mustn't say anything

amusing about 'being in court;' you must avoid all literary allusions to 'love that hath us in the net;' or 'they also serve who only stand and wait;' and forget, if possible, the Prince of Wales's motto; and on no account mention the 'coign of vantage.' Further, you must say *racquet* and not *bat*. If you trespass any of these rules, your reputation as an old player is gone."

This was very awful. I didn't see that it was at all probable that I should ever be tempted to say any of the things Fitzjames mentioned; but I foresaw a very unhappy predicament for myself.

I had not much time for thought, however. We had reached the tennis-lawn, and Fitzjames at once introduced me to Miss Scott and her nieces. Fortunately for me they had their sett made up by another young fellow, and I had nothing to do with the game beyond expressing my opinion that it was simply charming and splendidly healthy. I pleaded "letters" as an excuse to leave the ground almost at once, but a promise was extorted from me to return before luncheon. I hurried to the house, dashed off a short note to somebody in order to discharge my conscience, and anxiously plunged into the depths of "Laws of Lawn-tennis," which I had seen in the reading-room. I understood no very great quantity of what I read, but I was determined to master some of it, and I did. There were several people in the room, and as I entered I caught a suppressed whisper of "the great tennis-player," that drove the blood to my cheeks. Every-

one seemed to have fallen a victim to the same mistake, for an old gentleman, seeing me with the "Laws," said something about "congenial literature." I was becoming seriously concerned, and wished passionately that I hadn't consented to countenance the jest, even for a moment. I longed for courage enough to disclaim the honor of being "T. Lancey, the great tennis-player;" but I did not know how to begin; while the idea of plunging first thing into explanations with unknown ladies positively blanched my cheeks.

I was then innocent enough to believe that I must keep my promises; so after waiting within doors as long as I decently could, I returned to the lawn. A new sett was going on, and the younger Miss Delavel was resting on one of the chairs under the trees. She signified, in that wonderful tacit way ladies have, that I was to go to speak with her; and despite my shyness, I felt not altogether unwilling. She began the conversation by expressing her sorrow that I was so late, as another sett had been begun and might not be finished before luncheon; and she was just on the point of launching into a discussion upon tennis, when her aunt called her to go with her into the house. "I shall be back in plenty of time for our sett, Mr. Lancey," she exclaimed as she went. This in reply, I presume, to a look of disappointment, which, however, had no reference to the future sett.

I remained and looked at the game. It was undoubtedly a buxom exercise. Talk of Nausicaa

and her maidens playing ball! there was no such debonnair grace there as I now beheld before me. Of all the exercises of the human form divine, lawn-tennis is the most beautiful. The trim costumes, the coquettish hats, and the saucy shoes in which it is necessary for ladies to play, tend splendidly to set off the lithe grace of every attitude into which the young forms bend. And when the cheeks are delicately flushed with the exercise, the eyes bright with eagerness, and perhaps a stray curl danced from its straight confinement: what more enchanting picture could be desired? I was delighted; I forgot my unhappy plight. I longed for Greek vases, on which to depict the free grace and the flowing curves of the lithe forms; Greek vases alone were suitable for such a relief.

The sett was keenly contested and long, and Miss Lilian Delavel had returned some time before it was finished. I found, to my intense surprise, that I got on fairly well in conversation with her. I didn't miss the powder and patches of last century so much as I expected, and indeed had mainly to signify my assent to all her rhapsodies about lawn-tennis. She seemed to be very enthusiastic on that point.

"I am very glad you can play, Mr. Lancey; people who can't are *so* stupid, don't you think? I'm sure I should never like anyone who couldn't play, so you see, Mr. Lancey, you are fortunate in being able."

This was too much. "I assure you, Miss Delavel, I really cannot."

"Now, Mr. Lancey, please don't. Mr. Fitzjames told us you would probably pretend not to know much about it. But I know all about it; I've seen your name in the papers scores of times."

"But really, I protest, Miss Delavel; I haven't..."

Here I was interrupted by the arrival of the players, who apologised for having played so long, and advised us to lose no time in beginning.

Fitzjames said he would give me his racquet; he had an engagement. I believe it was merely to smoke a cigarette and to avoid playing with the tyro. But a substitute was speedily found in young Miss MacBrier. I was in anything but a comfortable frame of mind; I felt convinced that I should do something absurd, and that my false reputation would take away all excuse for it. I was glad, in a dim sort of way, that Miss Lilian was to be my partner against Miss Delavel and Miss MacBrier.

"We play in this court, Mr. Lancey," said Miss Lilian. "Oh, do you always hold your racquet like that?"

"Well, no," I answered guiltily, and somewhat taken aback. "I—I usually hold it like this." I should have said that I never held a racquet in any way before, but I was startled.

"Because, you know," she continued, "some crack players *do* play with the curve downwards."

"But, good heavens! you don't really suppose..."

"I dare say we'll teach you, Mr. Lancey"—this with a roguish smile and shake of the head. "Minnie is going to serve; shall I take first?"

"Certainly, just as you please; but where am I to go?"

"Why, there, of course, Mr. Lancey; don't be ridiculous."

I had no intention of being more ridiculous than I could help, but I felt distinctly uncomfortable. Fitzjames must have been indulging in a considerable latitude of statement about me, and the young ladies seemed determined to remain in their first error. It was a disagreeable predicament. As I stood glaring through my spectacles at the trim figures beyond the net, I have no doubt they were just as gracefully animated as they had been in the previous sett, but now I only saw that they looked as if they knew perfectly well what to do with their racquets, and that Miss Minnie Delavel was on the point of sending a ball. I was infinitely relieved to find that my partner was to "take," as she put it; and I breathed a mental prayer that I might not have much to do.

The first ball seemed to fly with horrid velocity, and I looked with apprehension at my partner. It stopped, however, in the net. The next serve came over all right, not so swift, and Miss Lilian sent it easily back; and for two or three flights, I was thankful to know, the ball didn't come near me. I felt that my safety was only for a moment, and sure enough my time came. I saw the ball shoot from Miss MacBrier's racquet, and fly straight towards me. In that awful moment I thought a great deal; not of my sins, but of the humiliation

that was about to come upon me before the unusually large number of spectators that had suddenly assembled. I shut my eyes, and, to quote Spenser, "let drive" at the ball. I certainly hit it; for with the concussion my racquet was half turned in my hand.

"Well, played, Mr. Lancey," cried my partner, "that was splendidly placed; and however did you get such a screw on?"

Miss Delavel had failed to send back the ball, which I had apparently sent over the net; and, it seemed, we had scored fifteen to love.

How pleasant it was to be praised by Miss Tossy! how contemptible it was to be praised undeservedly! Oh that I had boldly avowed that it was a chance, a happy accident, and that I had no credit for the shot! had Miss Tossy been a man I should have done so; but to a lady—! Alas! I merely smiled a smile that was meant to be deprecatory, but only succeeded, I am afraid, in being sickly, and answered:—

"Not at all, Miss Delavel; I am sure you could have done ever so much better," but Miss Tossy only shook her racquet at me from her own court and said: "And you said you didn't play!"

"But I protest . . ." I got no further, for Miss Minnie was on the eve of sending a serve to me. May the heavens be praised! both that and the next serve went into the net, and the game stood love-thirty.

"You see," said my partner, "Minnie was

trying to give you an extra-difficult service." Oh, baseness of deceit again! I tried to look as if I were quite ready for the most puzzling serve in Minnie's *repertoire*. What madness! in what century had I left my brains? I *knew* I should never hit another ball, and yet I weakly sought to gain a temporary credit in Miss Tossy's eyes.

The next serve my partner missed, and we were fifteen-thirty. It was again my turn. I tried to be resigned, but I was horribly agitated. Miss Minnie had determined to try me with what I afterwards learnt is called a "lob." The ball rose slowly in the air, describing a lofty parabolic arch. It seemed actually to hang in the air. I could hear my heart beating, for I felt that a supreme moment had come. I must either hit that ball or live forever an impostor in the eyes of the nicest girl I had ever seen. I drew my breath quickly; I felt alternately hot and cold; a sort of mist rose over my spectacles. As the ball fell I smote desperately at it, with an energy that I was far too agitated to control.

A shout of laughter from the spectators brought me to myself with a jerk. Whither the ball had gone I did not know; but, from the direction in which the people were all looking, it seemed to have flown into a shrubbery about one hundred yards behind our opponents. Miss Tossy turned to me.

"Why, Mr. Lancey, are you always so severe upon lob faults? It's too bad of you taking such a swipe. Fault, Minnie!"

"Gracious powers," thought I, "they think I

meant to put it out of court." I thought they were laughing at me, but it seems my play was a legitimate joke. I cannot help it now; I must be a tennis-player whether I will or not. I am like Autolycus in the 'Winter's Tale.' 'If I have a mind to be honest, I see fortune would not suffer me.' Thanks to fortune, the next serve to me was into the net again, and we had forty to our opponents' fifteen. Miss Tossy, however, again failed in returning the serve to her, and we stood thirty-forty.

I was almost completely callous when I knew that I was to "take" again. I should probably find some escape, I seemed to be a favorite of the Gods; and though I should perhaps die young on that account, what mattered it, so long as I maintained my position as a man of skill in the eyes of Miss Delavel? the ball came whizzing over, struck the ground near my feet, and bounced away I should say about a foot below my racquet.

"What a *shoot*, Minnie!" cried my partner. "I see you weren't prepared for that naughty girl's shoot, Mr. Lancey. You were too confident."

I didn't understand then what a shoot was, but I saw that somehow my miss had not seriously damaged my reputation as a player.

"That's deuce," called out Miss Delavel.

"I beg your pardon?" said I, involuntarily.

"It's deuce; we were thirty-four, you know, and we scored this time."

I was relieved; it was a technical term, and indeed Fitzjames had warned me of it.

"Play, Tossy!" said Miss Delavel, and the ball came skimming over the net. Tossy did play it, and back it went into the left corner of Miss MacBrier's court. The latter was taken by surprise; she had not expected to have the return, and with a little shriek she dived wildly at the ball.

"Well taken, Miss MacBrier; but I am afraid it's out," cried Fitzjames, who had recently reappeared on the scene, while the ball came flying over my head. I was resolved now, and sprang desperately upwards, brandishing my racquet at the ball. I missed.

"Oh, Mr. Lancey, I thought you were going to hit it, and it was out of court," said my partner.

Saved again! It was little short of miraculous. If I had hit the ball I should have done wrong, apparently; and goodness knows I had done my best to hit it. Well it was my fate to deceive. I couldn't help it, I was doomed to be "T. Lancey, the great tennis-player;" so I said as confidently as I could, "Of course it was, Miss Delavel; there was no fear of my hitting it."

In one sense the answer was true enough; but for the sense it conveyed to my partner—oh that Miss Tossy had said and done to me what Macbeth said and did to the soldier who told him of the approach of Birnam Wood!

"That's vantage to us," she cried, "I *do* believe we'll win. Go on, Minnie." Minnie did go on, and I was *not* surprised that my feeble poke resulted in returning the ball just between our adversaries,

who each left it alone, under the impression that the other was about to take it.

"That makes game," remarked Miss Tossy. "Thank you very much; you played awfully well, in spite of a strange racquet."

I merely bowed. I felt a glow of shame on my cheek; and even that, I bitterly thought, would be attributed to my exertions and not to its true cause, thanks to my miserable good luck. Just at that moment the luncheon-bell rang; and from henceforth for ever thanks be to the stern punctuality of hydropathic establishmens, and to the unaffected appetite which everyone has at luncheon time in these places, I was reprieved. We were all apparently disappointed that our sett had come to a premature conclusion; but, as the ladies were going to drive that afternoon, it was agreed that we should finish it on the Monday forenoon, the next day being Sunday. I assured the young ladies that it would give me much pleasure. Wretch that I was, that very moment I had sworn to myself to devise excuses to avoid ever playing again.

CHAPTER II.

THERE is a constant process of change going on in the positions that the guests occupy at table in hydropathic establishments. The fresh comers are usually placed at the bottom of one side of one of the long tables in the dining-hall, and gradually, as

guests of longer standing depart, and as they begin to feel what Dr. Chalmers might have designated the propulsive force of a new arrival, they work their way to the top, round it, and by degrees make their way down the other side, to the bottom again. Thence they are transferred to another of the long tables and repeat the process, until they reach the ultimate limit at the doctor's right hand. It thus happens that while one's right and left hand neighbors are always the same till one or other leaves the house, those who are opposite are different every day. On this eventful day, therefore, it came to pass that Fitzjames and I, who were on our way up the first side of the table, found ourselves at luncheon directly opposite Miss Scott and her two charming nieces, who were on their way down the second side. I hardly knew whether to be glad or sorry, for the shadow of deceit that hung over me blighted all the pleasure I might have taken in the conversation of a bright young girl. Of course lawn-tennis was one of the first topics, and I was on the rack lest I should betray myself. Fitzjames, however, came to my rescue and managed to turn the talk in other directions, though he assured me afterwards that it was as good as a comedy to see me fencing with Miss Tossy. The same interposition protected me at dinner-time; and as all the young people adjourned in the evening to dance in the recreation room, the subject of tennis was shelved. I took care to have no mistake made about my dancing; and emphatically avowed my inabil-

ity. However, Miss Tossy, who seemed to be as enthusiastic about dancing as about tennis, insisted upon teaching me a new and not very difficult polka-step in the hall; and afterwards, when we tried it in the dancing-room, I got on wonderfully.

The next day was Sunday, and I breathed more freely. The girls, who had very delightful little notions about Sunday behaviour, preferred not even to talk about tennis, and so I was free from one fear. Fitzjames and I went to church with them, and on the way thither Miss Tossy, Miss Scott, and I had quite an interesting conversation about the religion of the ancient Peruvians. Perhaps I had more than my share of the talk; but neither of the ladies would say they were tired, and Miss Scott especially thanked me for my improving information, which, she was good enough to say, was so different from the Sunday conversation of other young men. After luncheon we sat in the garden under the trees near the tennis-lawn. I felt delightfully triumphant as I looked at the last; like a debtor not liable to arrest on Sunday. Miss Tossy noticed my glance, and, with a merry little laugh, cried, "No, Mr. Lancey, you mustn't! I know you are dying for a game, but remember what day it is!" Ah, if she only knew! Again, miserable hypocrite, I had to affect grief for what filled me with unspeakable satisfaction. We had a delightful afternoon. Gentle Miss Scott and her two pretty nieces proved a most sympathetic audience for stories from the mythologies of different

countries, which Miss Scott allowed to be quite suitable for Sunday, as being connected with religion. How I came to speak of such a subject I don't know; but I felt astonishingly fluent and unconstrained, and even Fitzjames, who lay on the grass with his pipe a little to leeward, remarked that I was "in it" that afternoon. If "it" meant a highly comfortable frame of mind, I certainly was. I completely forgot lawn-tennis and all connected with it; for me there was no to-morrow with inevitable exposure. Oh, that every day were Sunday!

I need not have feared. The ladies had come to the end of their stay at Strathblane, and were going to take a brief tour through the Highlands before meeting their father, Colonel Delavel, at Edinburgh on the following Saturday. Curiously enough, Fitzjames had discovered that we were going by exactly the same route, and had persuaded Miss Scott, who was a little nervous about travelling without an escort, that it would be for everyone's advantage to allow us to join and assist her party. We were to start the next forenoon before lunch, "but," said Miss Tossy, "I think we'll be able to finish our sett before we start; don't you hope so, Mr. Lancey?"

If the guilt of silently assenting be less black than that of verbally expressing concurrence, I am entitled to the slight advantage. I saw myself plunging deeper and deeper in the mire. I longed to tell Miss Tossy all, but dared not. Coward, I lulled

my conscience with sophistries. What need to open her eyes now? A short week and we should part, probably never to meet again; then why cloud the happiness of that week? She had said she could never like anyone who couldn't play tennis; it was too much to resign all chance of Miss Tossy's smiles and good opinion. How I envied that other T. Lancey; would I were he, and a justifiable hero in Miss Tossy's eyes.

On Monday morning I awoke in low spirits. I sprang up, and oh, joy, I was on fortune's cap the very button! it was raining heavily. Blessed climate of Scotland, there would be no tennis. But the trial of wearing a dismal countenance to hide a joyful heart was almost as bad, and even now I cannot think of that morning's greetings without feeling my cheeks burn with shame. The rain continued all the morning, but shortly after we got into the train the sun struggled through the clouds, and we had a fine afternoon and evening. We had quite a considerable tour marked out for our week, and never shall I forget these delightful days. Fitzjames was a splendidly capable man to travel with, and managed everything, while to me, as a bookman, was intrusted the duty of exhuming the interesting items from the fat green guide-book for the general benefit. I don't suppose guide-books usually move any sentimental regards in the hearts of their possessors, still less when they are heavy and fat, but I cherish an affection for that guide-book that is undying, and never see its corpulent

form without feeling as though I beheld an old friend. I felt less nervous than ever, and Miss Scott, Miss Tossy and I got through an enormous quantity of talk. Thanks to the incidents of travel and to Miss Scott's presence, lawn-tennis did not often come upon the tapis, but, when it did, it gave me a twinge as though my conscience had toothache.

Saturday duly found us in Edinburgh. I had been somewhat nervous about the Colonel. Miss Tossy had assured me more than once that papa would be very pleased to see me, and thank me for all my trouble. But there is always a lurking uncertainty about young ladies' papas. Colonel Delavel, who was waiting for us in the Royal Hotel, was not one of your truculent old fellows, with blood-shot eyes and loud voices, but was as quiet and retiring as was consistent with an erect, martial figure and a heavy white moustache. He received me very kindly. "Very glad to see you, Mr. Lancey. You've been looking after these two young baggages, I hear. I hope you got on better then I do." I assured him it was a great pleasure, etc. "By the way," he went on, "I wonder whether you are any relation to old Jeremy Lancey in Calcutta, 'Ginger Jeremy,' we used to call him." "Yes, Colonel, he was my uncle." "What! you're old Ginger's nephew! I'm delighted to see you. Why, you must be young Theodore Lancey, that got all. . . . My dear boy, shake hands again."

This was all right; this was a charming sort of "papa." Before the arrival of Fitzjames, who had

walked from the Waverley station, we were on the best of terms. The Colonel insisted on our taking rooms at the Royal ; indeed, he secured rooms for us himself before we could make any objections, which neither of us had the remotest intention of doing. We stayed in Edinburgh three or four days, enjoying peerless weather, and charmed with that most beautiful of cities. The Colonel was in great spirits and trotted round with us to all the lions. Miss Scott seemed to consider her responsibility as extinguished by the Colonel's presence, and she generally remained with him while we younger four indefatigably ascended all the stairs and steps and steep paths that led to anything to be seen. Fitzjames, with an admirable consistency, generally led the way with Miss Delavel, while Miss Tossy naturally fell to my lot. I gradually grew less and less nervous and tongue-tied in her society, and often found myself talking to her with the utmost sang-froid, and even exchanging mild jests with her. But it was not all pleasure. I was too deeply involved in iniquity to escape punishment, and every time lawn-tennis was mentioned I felt as though I had received a stab. I avoided the subject as much as possible in conversation, and yet sat up at night reading all the available literature on the game, for which I wrote to my bookseller in London. I gradually acquired a tolerable theoretical acquaintance with the terms of the game, but I was always in agonies of alarm lest I should make some utter and irretrievably ludicrous blunder

when I ventured to speak on the subject. May my worst enemy never be in such torture! But I was still fortune's favourite, and even my reluctance to speak on the subject was regarded as peculiar delicacy on the part of "T. Lancey, the great player," in not wishing to bore papa or Aunt Margaret with a selfish topic. With the Colonel I was in high favour, and he found me an unobtrusive listener to all his old stories, in not a few of which "Jeremy Ginger" was a figure.

When we left Edinburgh, the Colonel to take his girls down to his place in Herts, and Fitzjames and I to further travel, I received a most cordial invitation to visit the Delavels immediately on my return south. For a moment as I looked at Tossy's blue eyes and pouting lips I leaned to assent, but when she exclaimed, "Do come, Mr. Lancey, and we'll have some splendid games of tennis," I shuddered at my danger and made my excuses as well as I might. I thought that Tossy looked disappointed, and, had not all the others been present, I believe I should have flung myself on her mercy and revealed all. The Colonel insisted, however, on my promising to visit them at Christmas, and I consented. There could not surely be any tennis at Christmas time.

I did not relapse into the bygone centuries when I returned to London. I had found my contemporaries so very pleasant that I resolved to take up my permanent abode in the nineteenth century, and revisit my former haunts only occasionally. Fitzjames gave me much help in bringing myself down

to date, and indeed I began to like him more than I had ever done before. He knew the Delavels, and was always willing to talk about them, and it is a great assistance to friendship when two fellows like to talk about the same people. He used sometimes to rally me about my tennis, and cry that it wasn't fair of me finding my way into ladies' favour under false colours. I never could summon up courage to tell him how serious a matter it was to me, and by-and-by he forgot all about it. I practised tennis very diligently, for though I knew, of course, that I could not continue under my present character, as a champion, still Miss Tossy had said she didn't think she could like any one who couldn't play, and I resolved to emerge from that category at all hazards. I joined a suburban club, and several times I went to see the real T. Lancey play; and when I saw what Miss Tossy had thought me able to perform I almost swooned. The glaring difference was too frightful.

Christmas week came at last, and with it a cordial note from the Colonel, repeating his invitation. The note ended with a regret that there would be no tennis, unless I insisted upon playing in the snow, but he dared say they would be able to make me forget my passion for a week or so, with other amusements.

Bumaloe Hall was a fine old country-house, rechristened by the Colonel. It was attached to a small estate, and contained all the devices for securing comfort that an old colonial could imagine.

The house was filled with Christmas guests, and, as I expected, Fitzjames was one of these. I received a hearty welcome ; the Colonel was kindness itself, and the young ladies were, if possible, prettier than ever. Lilian, I thought, looked especially bewitching, and I imagined I perceived just the faintest little blush on her cheeks as she shook hands with me.

The blackness of my deceit loomed darker and darker in my mind's eye the longer I thought of the Delavels' kindness, and I resolved to discharge my conscience as soon as possible and take the consequences. I felt that I could make my confession only to Miss Tossy ; with the others my tennis character had not been so prominent. I arrived in the afternoon two days after Christmas, and in the evening there was to be a ball at Bumaloe Hall. Fitzjames, among his other good offices, had impressed upon me the necessity of learning to dance, if I were going to remain in this century, and while we were waiting for the guests from outside, I found that my step exactly suited Miss Tossy's. She would not give me many dances, and I was forced to content myself with two waltzes and "the lancers," for "squares" were not entirely banished from the Bumaloe programme.

My two waltzes with Miss Tossy were simply delicious ; but at "the lancers," we found we were an odd couple, all the sets being completed. I was not very sorry, and we strolled into the conservatory to escape from the heat of the dancing-room.

We talked of our travels in Scotland and of all the little incidents that had made them so pleasant. Tossy innocently remarked, "Isn't it curious, Mr. Lancey, that we have never contrived to finish that sett at tennis? I *do* so long to see you play properly, you know. You have been playing a good deal in London, haven't you?" I thanked my stars that to this question I could truthfully answer "yes;" there were not many questions about tennis that I could answer truthfully. "Yes, I've heard a good deal about you. Bab Fraser told me all about that tournament, and how splendidly you beat Mr. Martin." This was becoming awful. I had seen that tournament, and I had seen the real Lancey (I was all sham) defeat Martin, a feat that I was hopelessly incapable of. The error must be cleared up now, at once. I should seize the opportunity; that conservatory should be the scene of my confession. But, alas! as I began, my cursed nervousness came upon me like a flood. "Miss Tossy, Miss Delavel, I should like—I mean, I must say something about that tennis. I'm not—that is—you mistake what—"

I had stammered thus far when I was interrupted by the sudden appearance of Miss Delavel and Fitzjames. The former looked exceedingly rosy, while the latter walked coolly up to Tossy, kissed her, and said, "Well, sister Tossy, may I take a brother's privilege?" For an instant the girls looked at each other, and then Tossy rushed at her sister, crying, "Oh, Minnie, I'm so glad!" There wasn't time for any domestic felicitations, however,

for "the lancers" had come to an end, and the dancers began to make their way into the conservatory.

I was glad as any one at the news of Fitzjames's engagement to Miss Delavel, but I could not help wishing that he had chosen another time for declaring himself. As it was, after desperately screwing up my courage, I had been interrupted in disburdening my conscience; and who could tell when I should have another opportunity of speaking to Miss Tossy alone? For the next few days I was in utter agony. Fortunately, none of the people in the house had ever seen the real Lancey, and they accepted me as the genuine article. They put intricate questions to me about tennis, and it was a constant strain upon me to avoid committing myself to anything. I haven't the least doubt, however, that many of my opinions have since then raised serious dissensions in various local clubs; but after all, these commotions could be nothing compared with the troubles within my own bosom. I used to steal away from the merry groups whenever the talk threatened to approach lawn-tennis. And when escape was impossible I was compelled by the grim dread of exposure to force aside my shyness and nervousness, and try to lead the conversation into other channels. Fitzjames was struck with the change. "I say, old fellow," he said to me, "you are coming it strong. I never heard you talk so much in my life before; and where, in the name of Joe Miller, do you get those extraordinary stories of yours?" But I didn't tell him that under the

driving pressure, when memory failed, invention had to provide the anecdote that was to stave off lawn-tennis. When the pressure was removed, I was more nervous than ever, and had several brief *tête-à-têtes* with Miss Tossy without venturing to approach *the* subject. For some reason Miss Delavel's engagement was not generally published ; and the fact that I had been admitted to a family secret only made my concealment the more heinous, while it gave me sometimes an opportunity for conversation with Miss Tossy, for Fitzjames used to exert his ingenuity to bring about circumstances in which he and I might accidentally be told off to look after the sisters. That once done, the internal arrangements of our square party were stereotyped. On one of these occasions we had been skating, and were returning from the pond by the path through the woods. Miss Tossy, apropos of a letter she had received, asked me some questions about tennis, and then without waiting for a reply, went on, " Oh, by the way, Mr. Lancey, you were going to tell me something about lawn-tennis the other night, in the conservatory, you remember ? "

To have a pretty young lady remember for three days what he had said to her is a compliment fitted to turn any average young man's head. And seeing that the pretty young lady in this case was looking specially bewitching in some sort of fur arrangement, that there was no one else in sight, and that I had to return to London in a couple of days, what wonder that I forgot all about my good reso-

lutions, and, neglecting this magnificent opening for my confession, stammered out :—

"I remember, Miss Delavel; but before that—I mean I have something else, Miss Lilian—wouldn't you like to be like your sister—that is—oh, Tossy, I have loved you ever since I saw you at Strathblane! Will you be my wife?"

If any one wish to see a beautiful girl look her very best, let him get her to consent to be his wife in the frosty light of a winter sunset; for I vow I never saw Tossy looking more lovely than when she shyly promised to share my life. I am not going to attempt to reduce to the painful distinctness of grammatical sentences the conversation that ensued, and that made us both miss afternoon tea. For some all too brief moments I was the happiest of men. But there was still the lurking adder to sting me in my joy. Nestling her soft cheek against my coat, Tossy murmured: "And I'm so proud of your lawn-tennis too; I really think it was that that made me like you first."

"What, Tossy, *like?*"

"Yes," said Tossy, mutinously; "it was 'like,' for I didn't love you till long after, sir; but I don't believe I should *ever* have cared for you if you hadn't been such a good player."

A cold shudder passed over me as I listened. Good heavens, what had I brought upon myself! I quailed before the revelation that must ensue. Had I a right to clasp that form in my arms in such deceit? yet how could I mar the sweetness of "our"

first moments with any horrible confession? How I cursed my weakness, my folly, my deceit! and yet, had I not won a wife?

A man who has just been accepted is generally bold enough to face a raging lion, much less a gentlemanly "papa." And before the glory of my afternoon's walk died away in me, I had an interview with the Colonel. He guessed my object and helped me out a good deal, and seemed as relieved and satisfied as I was when the interview was over. I only wish all men found "the papas" as agreeable. I arranged, of course, to stay a few days longer than I had originally intended; and though my conscience often interrupted my peace, Tossy and I had a variety of other subjects than tennis to talk about. The Colonel was to return to India in April, and after much persuasion and argument it was agreed he should see both daughters provided with a special protector before he sailed. We were to be married on April 16.

The interval passed, I suppose, at the rate of one day every twenty-four hours; and as I had naturally a good deal to do, including the bringing out of my book on "Comparative Mythology," it passed with tolerable rapidity. The Colonel came up to London to look after his affairs, but his town house had no tennis-lawn; and by continued good luck I escaped having to reveal my duplicity; for I had doggedly argued myself into the determination to keep silence on the point for the present. It would be exceedingly bad taste to obtrude such disagree-

able matter on the few weeks yet left before our marriage. Besides, it would be so much easier after we were married; there should be no difficulty in confessing to the wife of one's bosom.

Time passed on. The 16th of April arrived, and we were married. Just a week ago to-day. We have to content ourselves with a very short honeymoon, for we must return to see the Colonel before he sails for India. Tossy wished to visit Edinburgh again, and here in Edinburgh we arrived two days ago. What misery it would have spared me if only the last visit to Edinburgh had seen me in my true colors; it was reserved for the occasion to unmask me! This evening, after dining at six, I went out to post a note from Tossy to her father, while she stayed behind to look at the London papers which had just arrived. When I returned she greeted me with a curious little laugh, and exclaimed: "Isn't this funny, Theo? here's quite a long account of a tennis-match played yesterday by Mr. T. Lancey against Mr. Martin. They don't seem to know that Mr. T. Lancey was quite otherwise engaged."

I saw at once that Nemesis had run me down. The time for explanation had come, and, instead of having the advantage of making a voluntary confession, I was driven to it; and Tossy would never believe that I had intended to confess. I suppose my horror must have appeared in my face, for Tossy looked quite frightened.

"What is the matter, Theo—it's just a mistake, I suppose?"

"I can explain it," said I, in a hollow voice. "I'm not that T. Lancey."

"Then there are two great players of that name? how odd!"

"No, Tossy, you have been mistaken about me all the time. I'm not a tennis-player at all."

"Oh, Theo, what do you mean? I saw you playing myself."

"I never had a racquet before in my hand," and desperation aided me. I related to Tossy in a few words the whole miserable history, not sparing myself. Poor Tossy looked at first incredulous and almost amused, but then her expression changed, and she buried her face in her handkerchief. When I had finished I was too humiliated to plead for myself; but when I attempted to take Tossy's hand, she drew it away, and turning her back upon me, said:—

"So, then, you have been deceiving us all this time, and you can't play one bit? And I was so proud of your being such a good player, and wrote to everybody, and . . . ."

Here a sob interrupted poor Tossy, but she recovered herself, and went on, still with face averted:—

"I think it was horrible of you to marry me like that, under false pretences; and papa will be very angry; and I don't believe now that I'm really married to you at all; I—I thought you were quite different."

Here Tossy fairly broke down, and ran from the

room with her handkerchief before her eyes. I had been unable to say a word for myself; I was too wretched. I followed Tossy upstairs, but she had locked the door of her room, and told me to go away and not speak to her, which I was sorrowfully constrained to do, for a man cannot well expostulate with his wife from the public corridor of an hotel. I could only return in misery to our sitting-room. Is this, then, the issue of Fitzjames's hateful joke? have I wrecked my life's happiness for that? would Tossy ever love me again? or would she insist on living apart from me? are all my dreams of sweet home life with my dainty little wife merely idle dreams and nothing more? I feel crushed, and yet cannot repine at the severity of my sentence. A week married, and I am sitting here thus, and Tossy in tears upstairs!

I could write no more, but laying down my pen and hiding my face in my hands, thought bitterly of the loss of our happiness. As I sat thus the door opened, a light little figure entered the room, two soft white arms stole round my neck before I could turn, and Tossy was in my arms, laughing and kissing me by turns, and looking as bright and saucy and merry as ever.

"You dear old goose," she said, with an "interruption," "did you really think that I didn't know all that before? I knew perfectly well all about your trying to pass off as a great tennis-player. Fitzjames told us. And the idea of thinking I would

care for anyone simply because he could play tennis ! oh, you stupid old dear. And you deserved to be punished for never confessing, though I could hardly help laughing at your doleful tale, poor old man, and had to run away , but I'm sorry you took it so much to heart, and now I shall reward you. You may kiss me if you like ! "

SHE LOVES AND LIES.

CHAPTER I.

LATE in the autumn, not many years since, a public meeting was held at the Mansion House, London, under the direction of the Lord Mayor.

The list of gentlemen invited to address the audience had been chosen with two objects in view. Speakers of celebrity, who would rouse public enthusiasm, were supported by speakers connected with commerce, who would be practically useful in explaining the purpose for which the meeting was convened. Money wisely spent in advertising had produced the customary result,—every seat was occupied before the proceedings began.

Among the late arrivals, who had no choice but to stand or to leave the hall, were two ladies. One of them at once decided on leaving the hall. "I shall go back to the carriage," she said, "and wait for you at the door." Her friend answered, "I shan't keep you long. He is advertised to support the second resolution; I want to see him and that is all."

An elderly gentleman, seated at the end of a

bench, rose and offered his place to the lady who remained. She hesitated to take advantage of his kindness, until he reminded her that he had heard what she said to her friend. Before the third resolution was proposed his seat would be at his own disposal again. She thanked him, and without further ceremony took his place. He was provided with an opera-glass, which he more than once offered to her, when famous orators appeared on the platform; she made no use of it, until a speaker known in the city as a shipowner stepped forward to support the second resolution.

His name (announced in the advertisement) was Ernest Lismore.

The moment he rose the lady asked for the opera-glass. She kept it to her eyes for such a length of time, and with such evident interest in Mr. Lismore, that the curiosity of her neighbours was aroused. Had he anything to say in which a lady (evidently a stranger to him) was personally interested? There was nothing in the address that he delivered which appealed to the enthusiasm of women. He was undoubtedly a handsome man whose appearance proclaimed him to be in the prime of life, midway perhaps between thirty and forty years of age. But why a lady should persist in keeping an opera-glass fixed on him all through his speech was a question which found the general ingenuity at a loss for a reply.

Having returned the glass with an apology, the lady ventured on putting a question next. "Did

it strike you, sir, that Mr. Lismore seemed to be out of spirits?" she asked.

"Can't say it did, ma'am."

"Perhaps you noticed that he left the platform the moment he had done?"

This betrayal of interest in the speaker did not escape the notice of a lady, seated on the bench in front. Before the old gentleman could answer, she volunteered an explanation.

"I am afraid Mr. Lismore is troubled by anxieties connected with his business," she said. "My husband heard it reported in the City yesterday that he was seriously embarrassed by the failure."

A loud burst of applause made the end of the sentence inaudible. A famous member of parliament had risen to propose the third resolution. The polite old man took his seat, and the lady left the hall to join her friend.

. . . . . .

"Well, Mrs. Callender, has Mr. Lismore disappointed you?"

"Far from it; but I have heard a report about him which has alarmed me: he is said to be seriously troubled about money matters. How can I find out his address in the city?"

"We can stop at the first stationer's shop we pass, and ask to look at the directory. Are you going to pay Mr. Lismore a visit?"

"I am going to think about it."

CHAPTER II.

THE next day a clerk entered Mr. Lismore's private room at the office, and presented a visiting card. Mrs. Callender had reflected, and had arrived at a decision. Underneath her name she had written these explanatory words: "On important business."

"Does she look as if she wanted money?" Mr. Lismore inquired.

"Oh dear, no; she comes in her carriage."

"Is she young or old?"

"Old, sir."

To Mr. Lismore, conscious of the disastrous influence occasionally exercised over busy men by youth and beauty, this was a recommendation in itself. He said, "Show her in."

Observing the lady, as she approached him, with the momentary curiosity of a stranger, he noticed that she still preserved the remains of beauty. She had also escaped the misfortune, common to persons at her time of life, of becoming too fat. Even to a man's eye, her dressmaker appeared to have made the most of that favourable circumstance. Her figure had its defects concealed, and its remaining merits set off to advantage. At the same time she evidently held herself above the common deceptions by which some women seek to conceal their age, she wore her own grey hair; and her complexion bore the test of daylight. On entering the room

she made her apologies with some embarrassment. Being the embarrassment of a stranger (and not of a youthful stranger) it failed to impress Mr. Lismore favourably.

"I am afraid I have chosen an inconvenient time for my visit," she began.

"I am at your service," he answered a little stiffly; "especially if you will be so kind as to mention your business with me in a few words."

She was a woman of some spirit, and that reply roused her. "I will mention it in one word," she said smartly. "My business is gratitude."

He was completely at a loss to understand what she meant, and he said so plainly. Instead of explaining herself, she put a question.

"Do you remember the night of the eleventh of March, between five and six years since?"

He considered for a moment. "No," he said, "I don't remember it. Excuse me, Mrs. Callender, I have affairs of my own to attend to which cause me some anxiety—"

"Let me assist your memory, Mr. Lismore; and I will leave you to your affairs. On the date that I have referred to you were on your way to the railway station at Bexmore, to catch the night express from the north to London."

As a hint that his time was valuable the shipowner had hitherto remained standing. He now took his customary seat and began to listen with some interest. Mrs. Callender had produced her effect on him already.

"It was absolutely necessary," she proceeded, "that you should be on board your ship in the London docks at nine o'clock the next morning. If you had lost the express, the vessel would have sailed without you."

The expression of his face began to change to surprise. "Who told you that?" he asked.

"You shall hear directly. On your way into the town, your carriage was stopped by an obstruction in the high road. The people of Bexmore were looking at a house on fire."

He started to his feet. "Good heavens! are you the lady?"

She held up her hand in satirical protest. "Gently, sir! you suspected me just now of wasting your valuable time. Don't rashly conclude that I am the lady, until you find that I am acquainted with the circumstances."

"Is there no excuse for my failing to recognize you?" Mr. Lismore asked. "We were on the dark side of the burning house; you were fainting, and I—"

"And you," she interposed, "after saving me at the risk of your life, turned a deaf ear to my poor husband's entreaties, when he asked you to wait till I had recovered my senses."

"Your poor husband? surely, Mrs. Callender, he received no serious injury from the fire?"

"The firemen rescued him under circumstances of peril," she answered, "and at his great age he sank under the shock. I have lost the kindest

and best of men. Do you remember how you parted from him—burnt and bruised in saving me? he liked to talk of it in his last illness. 'At least' (he said to you) 'tell me the name of the man who has preserved my wife from a dreadful death.' You threw your card to him out of the carriage window and away you went at a gallop to catch your train! In all the years that have passed away I have kept that card, and have vainly inquired for my brave sea-captain. Yesterday I saw your name on the list of speakers at the Mansion House. Need I say that I attended the meeting? Need I tell you now why I come here and interrupt you in business-hours?"

She held out her hand. Mr. Lismore took it in silence, and pressed it warmly.

"You have not done with me yet," she resumed with a smile. "Do you remember what I said of my errand, when I first came in?"

"You said it was an errand of gratitude."

"Something more than the gratitude which only says 'thank you,'" she added. "Before I explain myself, however, I want to know what you have been doing, and how it was that my inquiries failed to trace you after that terrible night."

The appearance of depression which Mrs. Callender had noticed at the public meeting showed itself again in Mr. Lismore's face. He sighed as he answered her.

"My story has one merit," he said; "it is soon told. I cannot wonder that you failed to discover

me. In the first place I was not captain of my ship at that time; I was only mate. In the second place, I inherited some money, and ceased to lead a sailor's life, in less than a year from the night of the fire. You will now understand what obstacles were in the way of your tracing me. With my little capital I started successfully in business as a ship-owner. At the time, I naturally congratulated myself on my own good fortune. We little know, Mrs. Callender, what the future has in store for us."

He stopped. His handsome features hardened—as if he was suffering (and concealing) pain. Before it was possible to speak to him, there was a knock at the door. Another visitor, without an appointment, had called; the clerk appeared again, with a card and a message.

"The gentleman begs you will see him, sir. He has something to tell you which is too important to be delayed."

Hearing the message, Mrs. Callender rose immediately.

"It is enough for to-day that we understand each other," she said. "Have you any engagement to-morrow, after the hours of business?"

"None."

She pointed to her card on the writing-table. "Will you come to me to-morrow evening at that address? I am like the gentleman who has just called; I too have my reason for wishing to see you."

He gladly accepted the invitation. Mrs. Callender stopped him as he opened the door for her.

"Shall I offend you," she said, "if I ask a strange question before I go? I have a better motive, mind, than mere curiosity. Are you married?"

"No."

"Forgive me again," she resumed, "at my age, you cannot possibly misunderstand me; and yet—"

She hesitated. Mr. Lismore tried to give her confidence. "Pray don't stand on ceremony, Mrs. Callender. Nothing that *you* can ask me need be prefaced by an apology."

Thus encouraged, she ventured to proceed.

"You may be engaged to be married?" she suggested. "Or you may be in love?"

He found it impossible to conceal his surprise, but he answered without hesitation.

"There is no such bright prospect in *my* life," he said. "I am not even in love."

She left him with a little sigh. It sounded like a sigh of relief.

Ernest Lismore was thoroughly puzzled. What could be the old lady's object in ascertaining that he was still free from a matrimonial engagement? If the idea had occurred to him in time, he might have alluded to her domestic life, and might have asked if she had children. With a little tact he might have discovered more than this. She had described her feeling towards him as passing the ordinary limits of gratitude; but she was evidently rich enough to be above the imputation of a mercenary

motive. Did she propose to brighten those dreary prospects to which he had alluded in speaking of his own life? When he presented himself at her house the next evening, would she introduce him to a charming daughter?

He smiled as the idea occurred to him. "An appropriate time to be thinking of my chances of marriage!" he said to himself. "In another month I may be a ruined man."

CHAPTER III.

THE gentleman who had so urgently requested an interview was a devoted friend—who had obtained a means of helping Ernest at a serious crisis in his affairs.

It had been truly reported that he was in a position of pecuniary embarrassment, owing to the failure of a mercantile house with which he had been intimately connected. Whispers affecting his own solvency had followed on the bankruptcy of the firm. He had already endeavoured to obtain advances of money on the usual conditions, and had been met by excuses for delay. His friend had now arrived with a letter of introduction to a capitalist, well known in commercial circles for his daring speculations, and for his great wealth.

Looking at the letter, Ernest observed that the envelope was sealed. In spite of that ominous

innovation of established usage, in cases of personal introduction, he presented the letter. On this occasion he was not put off with excuses. The capitalist flatly declined to discount Mr. Lismore's bills, unless they were backed by responsible names.

Ernest made a last effort.

He applied for help to two mercantile men whom he had assisted in their difficulties, and whose names would have satisfied the money-lender. They were most sincerely sorry—but they too refused.

The one security that he could offer was open, it must be owned, to serious objections on the score of risk. He wanted an advance of twenty thousand pounds, secured on a homeward-bound ship and cargo. But the vessel was not insured; and, at that stormy season, she was already more than a month overdue. Could grateful colleagues be blamed if they forgot their obligations when they were asked to offer pecuniary help to a merchant in this situation? Ernest returned to his office, without money and without credit.

A man threatened by ruin is in no state of mind to keep an engagement at a lady's tea-table. Ernest sent a letter of apology to Mrs. Callender, alleging extreme pressure of business as the excuse for breaking the engagement.

"Am I to wait for an answer, sir?" the messenger asked.

"No; you are merely to leave the letter."

CHAPTER IV.

In an hour's time—to Ernest's astonishment—the messenger returned with a reply.

"The lady was just going out, sir, when I rang at the door," he explained, "and took the letter from me herself. She didn't appear to know your handwriting, and she asked me who I came from. As soon as I told her I was ordered to wait."

Ernest opened the letter.

"Dear Mr. Lismore,—One of us must speak out, and your letter of apology forces me to be that one. If you are really so proud and so distrustful as you seem to be, I shall offend you. If not, I shall prove myself to be your friend.

"Your excuse is 'pressure of business.' The truth (as I have good reason to believe) is 'want of money.' I heard a stranger, at that public meeting, say that you were seriously embarrassed by some failure in the City.

"Let me tell you what my own pecuniary position is in two words. I am the childless widow of a rich man."

Ernest paused. His anticipated discovery of Mrs. Callender's "charming daughter" was in his mind for the moment. "That little romance must return to the world of dreams," he thought—and went on with the letter.

"After what I owe to you, I don't regard it as repaying an obligation—I consider myself as

merely performing a duty when I offer to assist you by a loan of money.

"Wait a little before you throw my letter in the wastepaper basket.

"Circumstances (which it is impossible for me to mention before we meet) put it out of my power to help you—unless I attach to my most sincere offer of service a very unusual and very embarrassing condition. If you are on the brink of ruin, that misfortune will plead my excuse—and your excuse too, if you accept the loan on my terms. In any case, I rely on the sympathy and forbearance of the man to whom I owe my life.

"After what I have now written, there is only one thing to add. I beg to decline accepting your excuses; and I shall expect to see you to-morrow evening, as we arranged. I am an obstinate old woman—but I am also your faithful friend and servant, Mary Callender."

Ernest looked up from the letter. "What can this possibly mean?" he wondered.

But he was too sensible a man to be content with wondering. He decided on keeping his engagement.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT Doctor Johnson called "the insolence of wealth," appears far more frequently in the houses of the rich than in the manners of the rich. The

reason is plain enough. Personal ostentation is, in the very nature of it, ridiculous. But the ostentation which exhibits magnificent pictures, priceless china, and splendid furniture, can purchase good taste to guide it, and can assert itself without affording the smallest opening for a word of depreciation, or a look of contempt. If I am worth a million of money, and if I am dying to show it, I don't ask you to look at me, I ask you to look at my house.

Keeping his engagement with Mrs. Callender, Ernest discovered that riches might be lavishly and yet modestly used.

In crossing the hall and ascending the stairs, look where he might, his notice was insensibly won by proofs of the taste which is not to be purchased, and the wealth which uses but never exhibits its purse. Conducted by a man-servant to the landing on the first floor, he found a maid at the door of the boudoir, waiting to announce him. Mrs. Callender advanced to welcome her guest, in a simple evening dress perfectly suited to her age. All that had looked worn and faded in her fine face, by daylight, was now softly obscured by shaded lamps. Objects of beauty surrounded her, which glowed with subdued radiance from their background of sober colour. The influence of appearances is the strongest of all outward influences, while it lasts. For the moment, the scene produced its impression on Ernest, in spite of the terrible anxieties which consumed him. Mrs. Callender, in his office, was

a woman who had stepped out of her appropriate sphere. Mrs. Callender, in her own house, was a woman who had risen to a new place in his estimation.

"I am afraid you don't thank me for forcing you to keep your engagement," she said, with her friendly tones and her pleasant smile.

"Indeed, I do thank you," he replied. "Your beautiful house and your gracious welcome have persuaded me into forgetting my troubles for a while."

The smile passed away from her face. "Then it is true?" she said, gravely.

"Only too true."

She led him to a seat beside her, and waited to speak again until her maid had brought in the tea.

"Have you read my letter in the same friendly spirit in which I wrote it?" she asked, when they were alone again.

"I have read your letter gratefully, but——"

"But you don't know yet what I have to say. Let us understand each other before we make any objections on either side. Will you tell me what your present position is, at its worst? I can, and will, speak plainly when my turn comes, if you will honour me with your confidence. Not if it distresses you," she added, observing him attentively.

He was ashamed of his hesitation, and he made amends for it. "Do you thoroughly understand me?" he asked, when the whole truth had been laid before her without reserve.

She summed up the result in her own words.

"If your overdue ship returns safely, within a month from this time, you can borrow the money you want without difficulty. If the ship is lost, you have no alternative (when the end of the month comes) but to accept a loan from me or to suspend payment. Is that the hard truth?"

"It is."

"And the sum you require is twenty thousand pounds?"

"Yes."

"I have twenty times as much money as that, Mr. Lismore, at my sole disposal—on one condition."

"The condition alluded to in your letter?"

"Yes."

"Does the fulfilment of the condition depend in some way on any decision of mine?"

"It depends entirely on you."

That answer closed his lips.

With a composed manner and a steady hand she poured herself out a cup of tea.

"I conceal it from you," she said; "but I want confidence. Here" (she pointed to the cup) "is the friend of women, rich or poor, when they are in trouble. What I have now to say obliges me to speak in praise of myself. I don't like it—let me get it over as soon as I can. My husband was very fond of me: he had the most absolute confidence in my discretion, and in my sense of duty to him and to myself. His last words before he died, were

words that thanked me for making the happiness of his life. As soon as I had in some degree recovered, after the affliction that had fallen on me, his lawyer and executor produced a copy of his will, and said there were two clauses in it which my husband had expressed a wish that I should read. It is needless to say that I obeyed."

She still controlled her agitation—but she was now unable to conceal it. Ernest made an attempt to spare her.

"Am I concerned in this?" he asked.

"Yes. Before I tell you why, I want to know what you would do—in a certain case which I am unwilling even to suppose. I have heard of men, unable to pay the demands made upon them, who began business again, and succeeded, and in course of time paid their creditors."

"And you want to know if there is any likelihood of my following their example?" he said. "Have you also heard of men who have made that second effort—who have failed again—and who have doubled the debts they owed to their brethren in business who trusted them? I know one of those men myself. He committed suicide."

She laid her hand for a moment on his. "I understand you," she said. "If ruin comes——"

"If ruin comes," he interposed, "a man without money and without credit can make but one last atonement. Don't speak of it now."

She looked at him with horror. "I didn't mean *that!*" she said.

"Shall we go back to what you read in the will?" he suggested.

"Yes—if you will give me a minute to compose myself."

CHAPTER VI.

In less than the minute she had asked for, Mrs. Callender was calm enough to go on.

"I now possess what is called a life-interest in my husband's fortune," she said. "The money is to be divided, at my death, among charitable institutions; except a certain event——"

"Which is provided for in the will?" Ernest added, helping her to go on.

"Yes. I am to be absolute mistress of the whole of the four hundred thousand pounds"—her voice dropped, and her eyes looked away from him as she spoke the next words—"on this one condition, that I marry again."

He looked at her in amazement.

"Surely I have mistaken you," he said. "You mean on this one condition, that you do *not* marry again?"

"No, Mr. Lismore; I mean exactly what I have said. You now know that the recovery of your credit and your peace of mind rests entirely with yourself."

After a moment of reflection he took her hand, and raised it respectfully to his lips. "You are a noble woman!" he said.

She made no reply. With drooping head and downcast eyes she waited for his decision. He accepted the responsibility.

"I must not, and dare not, think of the hardship of my own position," he said; "I owe it to you to speak without reference to the future that may be in store for me. No man can be worthy of the sacrifice which your generous forgetfulness of yourself is willing to make. I respect you; I admire you; I thank you with my whole heart. Leave me to my fate, Mrs. Callender—and let me go."

He rose. She stopped him by a gesture.

"A *young* woman," she answered, "would shrink from saying—what I, as an old woman, mean to say now. I refuse to leave you to your fate. I ask you to prove that you respect me, admire me, and thank me with your whole heart. Take one day to think—and let me hear the result. You promise me this?"

He promised.

"Now go," she said.

CHAPTER VII.

THE next morning Ernest received a letter from Mrs. Callender. She wrote to him as follows:—

"There are some considerations which I ought to have mentioned yesterday evening, before you left my house.

"I ought to have reminded you—if you consent to reconsider your decision—that the circumstances do not require you to pledge yourself to me absolutely.

"At my age, I can with perfect propriety assure you that I regard our marriage simply and solely as a formality which we must fulfil, if I am to carry out my intention of standing between you and ruin.

"Therefore, if the missing ship appears in time, the only reason for the marriage is at an end. We shall be as good friends as ever; without the encumbrance of a formal tie to bind us.

"In the other event, I should ask you to submit to certain restrictions which, remembering my position, you will understand and excuse.

"We are to live together, it is unnecessary to say, as mother and son. The marriage ceremony is to be strictly private; and you are so to arrange your affairs that, immediately afterwards, we leave England for any foreign place which you prefer. Some of my friends, and perhaps some of your friends, will certainly misinterpret our motives—if we stay in our own country—in a manner which would be unendurable to a woman like me.

"As to our future lives, I have the most perfect confidence in you, and I should leave you in the same position of independence which you occupy now. When you wish for my company, you will always be welcome. At other times, you are your own master. I live on my side of the house, and

you live on yours—and I am to be allowed my hours of solitude every day, in the pursuit of musical occupations, which have been happily associated with all my past life, and which I trust confidently to your indulgence.

"A last word, to remind you of what you may be too kind to think of yourself.

"At my age, you cannot, in the course of nature, be troubled by the society of a grateful old woman for many years. You are young enough to look forward to another marriage, which shall be something more than a mere form. Even if you meet with the happy woman in my lifetime, honestly tell me of it—and I promise to tell *her* that she has only to wait.

"In the meantime, don't think, because I write composedly, that I write heartlessly. You pleased and interested me, when I first saw you, at the public meeting. I don't think I could have proposed what you call this sacrifice of myself, to a man who had personally repelled me—though I might have felt my debt of gratitude as sincerely as ever. Whether your ship is saved, or whether your ship is lost, old Mary Callender likes you—and owns it without false shame.

Let me have your answer this evening, either personally or by letter, whichever you like best."

CHAPTER VIII.

MRS. CALLENDER received a written answer long before the evening. It said much in a few words.

"A man impenetrable to kindness might be able to resist your letter. I am not that man. Your great heart has conquered me."

CHAPTER IX.

THE weeks passed, and no news was received of the missing ship. With the marriage license in Ernest's possession, they waited until the day before the shipowner's liabilities became due. Mrs. Callender's lawyer and Mrs. Callender's maid were the only persons trusted with their secret. Leaving the chief clerk in charge of the business, with every pecuniary demand on his employer satisfied in full, the strangely married pair quitted England.

They arranged to wait for a few days in Paris, to receive any letters of importance which might have been addressed to Ernest in the interval. On the evening of their arrival a telegram from London was waiting at their hotel. It announced that the missing ship had passed up channel undiscovered in a fog, until she reached the Downs on the day before Ernest's liabilities fell due.

"Do you regret it?" Mrs. Lismore said to her husband.

"Not for a moment!" he answered.

They decided on pursuing their journey as far as Munich.

Mrs. Lismore's taste for music was matched by Ernest's taste for painting. In his leisure hours he cultivated the art, and delighted in it. The picture galleries of Munich were almost the only galleries in Europe which he had not seen. True to the engagements to which she had pledged herself, his wife was willing to go wherever it might please him to take her. The one suggestion she made was, that they should hire furnished apartments. If they lived at an hotel friends of the husband or the wife (visitors like themselves to the famous city) might see their names in the book, or might meet them at the door.

They were soon established in a house large enough to provide them with every accommodation which they required.

Ernest's days were passed in the galleries; Mrs. Lismore remaining at home, devoted to her music until it was time to go out with her husband for a drive. Living together in perfect amity and concord, they were nevertheless not living happily. Without any visible reason for the change, Mrs. Lismore's spirits were depressed. On the one occasion when Ernest noticed it she made an effort to be cheerful, which it distressed him to see. He allowed her to think that she had relieved him of any future anxiety. Whatever doubts he might feel were doubts delicately concealed from that time forth.

But when two people are living together in a state of artificial tranquillity, it seems to be a law of nature that the elements of disturbance gather unseen, and that the outburst comes inevitably with the lapse of time.

In ten days from the date of their arrival at Munich the crisis came. Ernest returned later than usual from the picture gallery, and for the first time in his wife's experience shut himself up in his own room.

He appeared at the dinner hour with a futile excuse. Mrs. Lismore waited until the servant had withdrawn. "Now, Ernest," she said, "it's time to tell me the truth."

Her manner, when she said those few words, took him by surprise. She was unquestionably confused; and, instead of looking at him she trifled with the fruit on her plate. Embarrassed on his side, he could only answer, "I have nothing to tell."

"Were there many visitors at the gallery?" She asked.

"About the same as usual."

"Any that you particularly noticed?" she went on. "I mean, among the ladies."

He laughed uneasily. "You forget how interested I am in the pictures," he said.

There was a pause, she looked up at him and suddenly looked away again, but he saw it plainly; there were tears in her eyes.

"Do you mind turning down the gas?" she said. "My eyes have been weak all day."

He complied with her request the more readily, having his own reasons for being glad to escape the glaring scrutiny of the light.

"I think I will rest a little on the sofa," she resumed. In the position which he occupied, his back would have been now turned on her. She stopped him when he tried to move his chair. "I would rather not look at you, Ernest," she said, "when you have lost confidence in me."

Not the words, but the tone, touched all that was generous and noble in his nature. He left his place, and knelt beside her and opened to her his whole heart.

CHAPTER X.

"AM I not unworthy of you?" he asked, when it was over.

She pressed his hand in silence.

"I should be the most ungrateful wretch living," he said, "if I did not think of you, and you only. Now that my confession is made, we will leave Munich to-morrow, and if resolution can help me, I will only remember the sweetest woman my eyes ever looked on as the creature of a dream."

She hid her face on his breast, and reminded him of that letter of her writing, which had decided the course of their lives.

"When I thought you might meet the happy woman in my lifetime, I said to you, 'Tell me of it,

and I promise to tell *her* that she has only to wait. Time must pass, Ernest, before it can be needful to perform my promise, but you might let me see her. If you find her in the gallery to-morrow, you might bring her here."

Mrs. Lismore's request met with no refusal. Ernest was only at a loss to know how to grant it.

"You tell me she is a copyist of pictures," his wife reminded him. "She will be interested in hearing of the portfolio of drawings by the great French artists which I bought for you in Paris. Ask her to come and see them, and to tell you if she can make some copies. And say, if you like, that I shall be glad to become acquainted with her."

He felt her heart beating fast on his bosom. In the fear that she might lose all control over herself, he tried to relieve her by speaking lightly. "What an invention yours is!" he said. "If my wife ever tries to deceive me, I shall be a mere child in her hands."

She rose abruptly from the sofa,—kissed him on the forehead—and said wildly, "I shall be better in bed!" Before he could move or speak, she had left him.

CHAPTER XI.

THE next morning he knocked at the door of his wife's room, and asked how she had passed the night.

"I have slept badly," she answered, "and I must beg you to excuse my absence at breakfast-time." She called him back as he was about to withdraw. "Remember," she said, "when you return from the gallery to-day, I expect that you will not return alone."

. . . . . .

Three hours later he was at home again. The young lady's services as a copyist were at his disposal; she had returned with him to look at the drawings.

The sitting-room was empty when they entered it. He rang for his wife's maid—and was informed that Mrs. Lismore had gone out. Refusing to believe the woman, he went to his wife's apartments. She was not to be found.

When he returned to the sitting-room, the young lady was not unnaturally offended. He could make allowances for her being a little out of temper at the slight that had been put upon her; but he was inexpressibly disconcerted by the manner—almost the coarse manner—in which she expressed herself.

"I have been talking to your wife's maid while you have been away!" she said. "I find you have married an old lady for her money. She is jealous of me, of course?"

"Let me beg you to alter your opinion," he answered. "You are wronging my wife; she is incapable of any such feeling as you attribute to her."

The young lady laughed. "At any rate, you are

a good husband," she said satirically. "Suppose you own the truth? Wouldn't you like her better if she was young and pretty like me?"

He was not merely surprised—he was disgusted. Her beauty had so completely fascinated him when he first saw her that the idea of associating any want of refinement and good breeding with such a charming creature never entered his mind. The disenchantment of him was already so complete that he was even disagreeably affected by the tone of her voice; it was almost as repellent to him as the exhibition of unrestrained bad temper which she seemed perfectly careless to conceal.

"I confess you surprise me," he said coldly.

The reply produced no effect on her. On the contrary, she became more insolent than ever.

"I have a fertile fancy," she went on, "and your absurd way of taking a joke only encourages me! Suppose you could transform this sour old wife of yours, who has insulted me, into the sweetest young creature that ever lived, by only holding up your finger—wouldn't you do it?"

This passed the limit of his endurance. "I have no wish," he said, "to forget the consideration which is due to a woman. I have but one alternative: I must leave the room."

She ran to the door as he spoke, and placed herself in the way of his going out.

He signed to her to let him pass.

She suddenly threw her arms round his neck, kissed him passionately, and whispered, with her

lips at his ear, "Oh, Ernest, forgive me! Could I have asked you to marry me for my money if I had not taken refuge in a disguise?"

CHAPTER XII.

WHEN he had sufficiently recovered to think, he put her back from him. "Is there an end of the deception now?" he asked, sternly. "Am I to trust you in your new character?"

"You are not to be harder on me than I deserve," she answered gently. "Did you ever hear of an actress named Miss Max?"

He began to understand her. "Forgive me if I spoke harshly," he said. "You have put me to a severe trial."

She burst into tears. "Love," she murmured, "is my only excuse."

From that moment she had won her pardon. He took her hand, and made her sit by him.

"Yes," he said, "I have heard of Miss Max, and of her wonderful powers of personation—and I have always regretted not having seen her while she was on the stage."

"Did you ever hear anything more of her, Ernest?"

"Yes, I heard that she was a pattern of modesty and good conduct, and that she gave up her profession, at the height of her success, to marry an old man."

"Will you come with me to my room?" she asked. "I have something there which I wish to show you."

It was the copy of her husband's will.

"Read the lines, Ernest, which begin at the top of the page. Let my dead husband speak for me."

The lines ran thus :—

"My motive in marrying Miss Max must be stated in this place, in justice to her—and I will venture to add, in justice to myself. I felt the sincerest sympathy for her position. She was without father, mother, or friends; one of the poor forsaken children, whom the mercy of the foundling hospital provides with a home. Her after-life on the stage was the life of a virtuous woman: persecuted by profligates; insulted by some of the baser creatures associated with her, to whom she was an object of envy. I offered her a home, and the protection of a father—on the only terms which the world would recognize as worthy of us. My experience of her since our marriage has been the experience of unvarying goodness, sweetness and sound sense. She has behaved so nobly, in a trying position, that I wish her even in this life to have her reward. I entreat her to make a second choice in marriage, which shall not be a mere form. I firmly believe that she will choose well and wisely—that she will make the happiness of a man who is worthy of her—and that, as wife and mother, she will set an example of inestimable value in the social sphere that she occupies. In proof of the heartfelt sincerity

with which I pay my tribute to her virtues, I add to this my will the clause that follows."

With the clause that followed, Ernest was already acquainted.

"Will you now believe that I never loved till I saw your face for the first time?" said his wife. "I had no experience to place me on my guard against the fascination—the madness some people might call it—which possesses a woman when all her heart is given to a man. Don't despise me, my dear! Remember that I had to save you from disgrace and ruin. Besides, my old stage remembrances tempted me. I had acted in a play in which the heroine did—what I have done! It didn't end with me, as it did with her in the story. *She* was represented as rejoicing in the success of her disguise. *I* have known some miserable hours of doubt and shame since our marriage. When I went to meet you in my own person at the picture gallery—oh, what relief, what joy I felt, when I saw how you admired me—it was not because I could no longer carry on the disguise. I was able to get hours of rest from the effort; not only at night but in the daytime, when I was shut up in my retirement in the music-room; and when my maid kept watch against discovery. No, my love! I hurried on the disclosure because I could no longer endure the hateful triumph of my own deception. Ah, look at that witness against me! I can't bear even to see it!"

She abruptly left him. The drawer that she had opened to take out the copy of the will also con-

tained the false grey hair which she had discarded. It had only that moment attracted her notice. She snatched it up, and turned to the fireplace.

Ernest took it from her before she could destroy it. "Give it to me," he said.

"Why?"

He drew her gently to his bosom, and answered, "I must not forget my old wife."

THE SIEGE OF BERLIN.

We were going up the Champs Elysées with Doctor V——, gathering from the walls pierced by shell, the pavement ploughed by grape-shot, the history of besieged Paris, when just before reaching the Place de l'Etoile, the doctor stopped and pointed out to me one of those large corner houses, so pompously grouped around the Arc de Triomphe.

"Do you see," said he, "those four closed windows on the balcony up there? In the beginning of August, that terrible month of August of '70, so laden with storm and disaster, I was summoned there to attend a case of apoplexy. The sufferer was Colonel Jouve, an old Cuirassier of the First Empire, full of enthusiasm for glory and patriotism, who, at the commencement of the war, had taken an apartment with a balcony in the Champs Elysées —for what do you think? To assist at the triumphal entry of our troops! Poor old man! The news of Wissembourg arrived as he was rising from table. On reading the name of Napoleon at the foot of that bulletin of defeat he fell senseless!

"I found the old Cuirassier stretched upon the floor, his face bleeding and inert as from the blow of a club. Standing, he would have been very tall, lying he looked immense; with fine features, beau-

tiful teeth, and white curling hair, carrying his eighty years as though they had been sixty. Beside him knelt his granddaughter in tears. She resembled him. Seeing them side by side, they reminded me of two Greek medallions stamped with the same impress, only the one was antique, earth-stained, its outlines somewhat worn ; the other beautiful and clear, in all the lustre of freshness.

" The child's sorrow touched me. Daughter and granddaughter of soldiers, for her father was on MacMahon's staff, the sight of this old man stretched before her evoked in her mind another vision no less terrible. I did my best to reassure her, though in reality I had but little hope. We had to contend with hæmoptysis, from which at eighty there is small chance of recovery.

" For three days the patient remained in the same condition of immobility and stupor. Meanwhile came the news of Reichshofen—you remember how strangely? Till the evening we all believed in a great victory—20,000 Prussians killed, the Crown Prince prisoner.

" I cannot tell by what miracle, by what magnetic current, an echo of this national joy can have reached our poor invalid, hitherto deaf to all around him ; but that evening, on approaching the bed, I found a new man. His eye was almost clear, his speech less difficult, and he had the strength to smile and to stammer :

" ' Victory, victory ! '

" ' Yes, Colonel, a great victory.' And as I gave

the details of MacMahon's splendid success I saw his features relax and his countenance brighten.

"When I went out his granddaughter was waiting for me, pale and sobbing.

"'But he is saved,' said I, taking her hands.

"The poor child had hardly courage to answer me. The true Reichshofen had just been announced, MacMahon a fugitive, the whole army crushed. We looked at each other in consternation, she anxious at the thought of her father, I, trembling for the grandfather. Certainly he would not bear this new shock. And yet what could we do? Let him enjoy the illusion which had revived him? But then we should have to deceive him.

"'Well then, I will deceive him!' said the brave girl, and hastily wiping away her tears she re-entered her grandfather's room with a beaming face.

"It was a hard task she had set herself. For the first few days it was comparatively easy, as the old man's head was weak, and he was as credulous as a child. But with returning health came clearer ideas. It was necessary to keep him *au courant* with the movements of the army and to invent military bulletins. It was pitiful to see that beautiful girl bending night and day over her map of Germany, marking it with little flags, forcing herself to combine the whole of a glorious campaign—Bazaine on the road to Berlin, Frossard in Bavaria, MacMahon on the Baltic. In all this she asked my counsel, and I helped her as far as I could, but it was the grandfather who did the most for us in

this imaginary invasion. He had conquered Germany so often during the First Empire! He knew all the moves beforehand: 'Now they should go there. This is what they will do,' and his anticipations were always realised, not a little to his pride. Unfortunately, we might take towns and gain battles, but we never went fast enough for the Colonel. He was insatiable. Every day I was greeted with a fresh feat of arms:

"'Doctor, we have taken Mayence,' said the young girl, coming to meet me with a heart-rending smile, and through the door I heard a joyous voice crying:

"'We are getting on, we are getting on! In a week we shall enter Berlin!

"At that moment the Prussians were but a week from Paris. At first we thought it might be better to move to the provinces, but once out of doors, the state of the country would have told him all, and I thought him still too weak, too enervated, to know the truth. It was therefore decided that they should stay where they were.

"On the first day of the investment I went to see my patient—much agitated, I remember, and with that pang in my heart which we all felt at knowing that the gates of Paris were shut, that the war was under our walls, that our suburbs had become our frontiers.

"I found the old man jubilant and proud.

"'Well,' said he, 'the siege has begun!'

"I looked at him stupefied.

"'How, Colonel, you know?'

"His granddaughter turned to me, 'Oh yes, Doctor, it is great news. The siege of Berlin has commenced.'

"She said this composedly, while drawing out her needle. How could he suspect anything? He could not hear the cannon nor see that unhappy Paris, so sullen and disorderly. All that he saw from his bed was calculated to keep up his delusion. Outside was the Arc de Triomphe, and in the room quite a collection of souvenirs of the First Empire. Portraits of marshals, engravings of battles, the King of Rome in his baby-robes; the stiff consoles, ornamented with trophies in brass, were covered with Imperial relics, medals, bronzes; a stone from St. Helena under a glass shade; miniatures all representing the same becurled lady, in ball-dress, in a yellow gown with leg-of-mutton sleeves and light eyes; and all—the consoles, the King of Rome, the medals, the yellow ladies with short waists and sashes under their arms in that style of awkward stiffness which was the grace of 1806.—Good Colonel! it was this atmosphere of victory and conquest, rather than all we could say, which made him believe so naïvely in the siege of Berlin.

"From that day our military operations became much simpler. Taking Berlin was merely a matter of patience. Every now and then, when the old man was tired of waiting, a letter from his son was read to him—an imaginary letter of course, as

nothing could enter Paris, and as, since Sedan, MacMahon's aide-de-camp had been sent to a German fortress. Can you not imagine the despair of the poor girl, without tidings of her father, knowing him to be a prisoner, deprived of all comforts, perhaps ill, and yet obliged to make him speak in cheerful letters, somewhat short, as from a soldier in the field, always advancing in a conquered country. Sometimes, when the invalid was weaker than usual, weeks passed without fresh news. But was he anxious and unable to sleep, suddenly a letter arrived from Germany which she read gaily at his bedside, struggling hard with her tears. The Colonel listened religiously, smiling with an air of superiority, approving, criticising, explaining; but it was in the answers to his son that he was at his best. 'Never forget that you are a Frenchman,' he wrote; 'be generous to those poor people. Do not make the invasion too hard for them.' His advice was never ending: edifying sermons about respect of property, the politeness due to ladies, in short quite a code of military honour for the use of conquerors. With all this he put in some general reflections on politics and the conditions of the peace to be imposed on the vanquished. With regard to the latter, I must say he was not exacting:

"'The war indemnity and nothing else. It is no good to take provinces. Can one turn Germany into France?'

"He dictated this with so firm a voice, and one felt so much sincerity in his words, so much patriotic

faith, that is was impossible to listen to him unmoved.

"Meanwhile the siege went on—not the siege of Berlin, alas! We were at the worst period of cold, of bombardment, of epidemic, of famine. But, thanks to our care, and the indefatigable tenderness which surrounded him, the old man's serenity was never for a moment disturbed. Up to the end I was able to procure white bread and fresh meat for him, but for him only. You could not imagine anything more touching than those breakfasts of the grandfather, so innocently egotistic, sitting up in bed, fresh and smiling, the napkin tied under his chin, at his side his granddaughter, pale from her privations, guiding his hands, making him drink, helping him to eat all these good forbidden things. Then, revived by the repast, in the comfort of his warm room, with the wintry wind shut out and the snow eddying about the window, the old Cuirassier would recall his Northern campaigns and would relate to us that disastrous retreat in Russia where there was nothing to eat but frozen biscuit and horseflesh.

"'Can you understand that, little one? We ate horseflesh.'

"I should think she did understand it. For two months she had tasted nothing else. As convalescence approached our task increased daily in difficulty. The numbness of the Colonel's senses, as well as of his limbs, which had hitherto helped us so much, was beginning to pass away. Once or

twice already, those terrible volleys at the Porte Maillot had made him start and prick up his ears like a warhorse; we were obliged to invent a recent victory of Bazaine's before Berlin and salvoes fired from the Invalides in honour of it. Another day (the Thursday of Buzenval I think it was) his bed had been pushed to the window, whence he saw some of the National Guard massed upon the Avenue de la Grande Armée.

"'What soldiers are those?' he asked, and we heard him grumbling beneath his teeth:

"'Badly drilled, badly drilled.'

"Nothing came of this, but we understood that henceforth greater precautions were necessary. Unfortunately we were not careful enough.

"One evening I was met by the child in much trouble.

"'It is to-morrow they make their entry,' she said.

"Could the grandfather's door have been open? In thinking of it since, I remember that all that evening his face wore an extraordinary expression. Probably he had overheard us; only we spoke of the Prussians and he thought of the French, of the triumphal entry he had so long expected, Mac-Mahon descending the Avenue amidst flowers and flourish of trumpets, his own son riding beside the marshal, and he himself on his balcony, in full uniform as at Lützen, saluting the ragged colours and the eagles blackened by powder.

"Poor Colonel Jouve! He no doubt imagined that we wished to prevent his assisting at the defile

of our troops, lest the emotion should prove too much for him, and therefore took care to say nothing to us; but the next day, just at the time the Prussian battalions cautiously entered the long road leading from the Porte Maillot to the Tuileries, the window up there was softly opened and the Colonel appeared on the balcony with his helmet, his sword, all his long unused but glorious apparel of Milhaud's Cuirassiers.

"I often ask myself what supreme effort of will, what sudden impulse of fading vitality had placed him thus erect in harness.

"All we know is that he was there, standing at the railing, wondering to find the wide avenues so silent, the shutters all closed, Paris like a great lazaret, flags everywhere, but such strange ones, white with red crosses, and no one to meet our soldiers.

"For a moment he may have thought himself mistaken.

"But no! there, behind the Arc de Triomphe, there was a confused sound, a black line advancing in the growing daylight—then, little by little, the spikes of the helmets glisten, the little drums of Jena begin to beat, and under the Arc de l'Etoile, accompanied by the heavy tramp of the troops, by the clatter of sabres, bursts forth Schubert's Triumphal March.

"In the dead silence of the streets was heard a cry, a terrible cry:

"'To arms!—to arms!—the Prussians.' And

the four Uhlans of the advance guard might have seen up there, on the balcony, a tall old man stagger, wave his arms, and fall. This time Colonel Jouve was dead."

PATIENT KITTY.

CHAPTER I.

FRED RAYNOR and I were apprentices together, or what would have been called such in the good old times. We were in the house of Halland Brothers, general warehousemen, Gravel Street, City, and a very respectable house it was. There was nothing flashy about it; it was not what is nowadays genteelly called "enterprising"— a city term which covers some strange doings—but it did a good business in a safe, old-fashioned way. Its customs were so old-world that the younger of the two partners always slept on the premises, instead of leaving at four or five o'clock at latest, as others in his position do, for their villas in the country or by the sea. They made their money slowly, but very surely, as all folks must do who have a tolerably large connection, and are always getting discount for their ready money.

Our principals were, I believe, as kindly as they were honest; but in my humble sphere I was not at that time brought into much personal connection with them. The link between them and their

employés was Mr. Raynor, my friend's father, and their head clerk. He was as much respected by his inferiors as by the members of the firm, but I am not so sure that he was liked so well, at least by the junior clerks. He never said in words, of course, that because he was virtuous it behoved us to have no cakes and ale, but his virtue was so very patent, and also, let me allow at once, so perfectly genuine, that it not only reproved all dissipation, but even suppressed the harmless ebullition of our youthful spirits. He had also the unpopular habit of applying for subscriptions under the name of "our mites," in aid of missionary enterprise both abroad and at home; of the discouragement of Sunday trading; of the abolition of the liquor traffic; and even of the purging of Great Britain from the crying sin and shame of tobacco-smoking.

We did not mind giving our fourpenny pieces, though *that* was sometimes inconvenient, half so much as having to write our names down, as was always insisted upon, in these charitable lists. He would thank us for our donations in the most earnest manner, but at the same time would reflect upon our handwriting, in which "he was surprised to find so little improvement, considering the experience of which we had had the advantage during our engagement with Halland Brothers." At Clapham, where he lived, if not in the odor of sanctity, in an atmosphere of good report, he was President of its Teetotal Society, Vice-Chairman of its Band of Hope, Honorary Secretary of its Anti-Climbing

Boy Association, and, in short, the working member of all its Benevolent Institutions. He often assisted them very liberally, considering his limited income, with his purse ; but his gift of oratory was always at their service, and he poured it out in lecture hall, assembly, and school-room in lavish profusion. In those days a free pass to the pit of a theatre was a great boon to us ; but we did not so highly estimate even a platform ticket to a meeting in Zion Chapel, or to the Young Men's Improvement Hall, to hear old Raynor lecture. He was most generous in the distribution of these favors, and not to make use of the privileges thus offered to us was to give him great offence. Poor Fred led a sad life with some of us on this account.

"Confound you, Raynor! here's your governor sent me *another* ticket to hear him spout ;" or, "I say, Fred, will you *guarantee* me a rise in salary at Christmas if I sacrifice myself this time?" It was very hard upon the poor young fellow, for, as he justly said, "Well, *I* can't help it, you know. It's a precious sight worse for me than for you. I have to go to *all* these things. I sometimes wonder whether any one was ever preached to death."

He certainly suffered considerably ; for whereas during the delivery of the old gentleman's addresses his eye only occasionally wandered to one or the other of us, it always made the wretched Fred its starting point, and generally came back to him again after any peculiarly "powerful" appeal to our "nobler natures," as much as to say, "What do you think

of *that*, you young reprobate? Did not that search your very marrow?" Not that poor Fred was a reprobate, but that he had a natural taste for pleasure of all kinds, and did not by any means count the listening to these improving discourses as a pleasure. But at the same time he reverenced his father most profoundly, and thought him not only one of the best men alive, but gifted with extraordinary talents. "It is my own fault," he used to say, "that I don't like his lectures. Everybody whose opinion is worth having tells me they are first-rate. It is sheer stupidity, I know, that makes me fail to see their merits; but, thank Heaven, I do understand how good the old governor is, down to his very boots."

In this artless manner Fred Raynor used to confess to me his faith in his parent; but the world at large was doubtless scarcely aware of the feelings that did such honor to the lad's nature. The reason of this confidence in my case was that Fred was what we in those days used to call "sweet upon" my sister Kitty. Of course the thing ought never to have been "dreamed of" (only young people have no command over their dreams), for Fred had but ninety pounds a year, paid monthly, and poor Kitty next to nothing at all; but they made a fool's paradise of their own, and lived in it. Fred's behaviour under these circumstances was worthy of a better cause, or, at at all events, of a more feasible one. The frugalities he practised with the idea of eventually buying a furnished

residence and setting up housekeeping on a microscopic scale were tremendous, and reminded me of the asceticisms of the cloister. He drank ginger-pop with his dinner instead of half-and-half; started an hour earlier from his home at Clapham every morning, on foot, that he might save his bus fare to the office; and always kept his gloves in his pocket save when in the company of his divinity. To be sure he would "break out," every now and then, as habitual drunkards are said to do after months of abstinence, but by no means in the same way; he would indulge himself by buying some pretty little present for his darling, which gave her infinite pleasure save for the thought of the sum it must have cost him. But he always used to silence her by protesting that the money was "a windfall," and did not affect the great mass of his savings (about *2l.* 18*s.* 6*d.*) at all.

These windfalls grew to be pretty frequent after a little while, and with their frequency (though I did not associate the facts together very particularly at the time) I noticed that Fred, whose constitution was always delicate, got to have a thinner and more careworn appearance. Indeed, I remember saying on one occasion when he brought Kitty her first locket (and angered me by declining to accompany me to the play on the ground of having no money), that he looked as if he had starved himself to buy it. Moveover, when I did occasionally persuade him to go with me to any entertainment, he not only did not take the same interest in it as of yore,

which I could understand from his love-lorn state, but he used to fall asleep during the best part of it, such as the ballet, which I really could not understand. It was bad enough for one's friend to fall in love, but that he should do so with one's sister was a double misfortune, and desolated me as it were both ways, for Kitty and I, being orphans, lived alone together; and her attentions, which should have been exclusively devoted to me, were now divided between myself and Fred; while, as I have said, I lost my friend's companionship. This state of things went on for about a year—quite long enough to knit the two young people together very firmly, and to make me feel Fred to be quite "one of the family"—and then the bright little bubble burst. Mr. Jacob Raynor discovered what was going on, and stamped it out, as though it had been the foot-and-mouth disease instead of the tender passion.

For my part, considering the great benevolence of his character, I thought it was done rather brutally. There was to be a total cessation of all intercourse; the lovers were not even to write to one another for two whole years, when Fred would come of age. After that, said the old gentleman, if his son was still blinded by his folly, he might take his own course, though it would never have his father's approbation. I confess it seemed to me that Fred showed some lack of spirit in submitting to such harsh conditions; for since he did not mean to give Kitty up, and was not in the end to

have the paternal sanction, I could not see what advantage was gained by denying himself her society in the meantime. But his sense of duty, notwithstanding we felt sure that his employers would not have dismissed him for taking his own way in such a matter, forbade that course. He told me that he had expressed himself very strongly, though with great respect to his parent, and that it had taken all he knew to prevent an immediate rupture. "It is my father's love for me," he said, "which makes him so inexorable, since he cannot believe that my happiness lies where it does; while as to making me an allowance on which I could marry, it is the simple fact that he has not a guinea to spare, so we must not be too hard upon the governor."

"He would have guineas to spare," said I bitterly (for I felt for my poor Kitty), "if he did not throw them away upon the Ojibbeways and other unconverted tribes."

"Well, it is his own money, Frank," answered Fred gravely, "and he thinks he is doing good with it."

And Kitty of course took the same view of the affair as Fred did. She worked her fingers to the bone in making articles of fancy-work (in which she had a very pretty taste), and disposed of them for such prices as she could get, in order to have a little purse by the time those terrible two years should be over; and though I discountenanced her in so doing, I believe the constant employment saved her

a deal of fretting. The toil too seemed to do her no physical harm ; her blue eyes were as bright as ever, and her little mouth had always a cheerful smile for me that had far more of hope in it than of resignation. Her only happiness for the present, however (except what lay in looking forward), was, I verily believe, to hear me talk of Fred and his doings ; how the dear creature looked, what he said (and, in the case of message, even how he said it), and how he kept up under his disappointment.

Now, as a matter of fact, I had very little to tell her ; for though, of course, I saw Fred at the office, I saw him nowhere else. He would leave directly his work was over, and came in the morning as punctually as usual, but what he did with himself in the mean time I could not find out. From certain appearances, however, I had misgivings as to his course of life ; he had a wan and dissipated air, and would sometimes fall asleep over his ledger, in a way that seemed to me to hint at very late hours overnight. I thought it quite possible, knowing his natural love of pleasure, that he had overrated his own strength of character, and was striving to drown his sense of disappointment and injustice in the usual manner. Young as I was, and not, I am afraid, of too strict principles myself, I thought it my duty as Kitty's brother to hint my suspicions, but Fred assured me that they were groundless.

"I have no heart, my dear fellow, just now," he said, "for any amusement, whether harmless or

otherwise, and I find it best for me to be alone and at home."

I was bound to believe him, for I had never known Fred to tell a lie, but a week or two afterward I had good reason to conclude that he had deceived me. I was fond of a little gaiety myself, in which Kitty encouraged me—as I am now firmly persuaded in order that she might have the more opportunities for sitting up to work, for when I was at home I would not permit it—and on a certain occasion I had been to the Adelphi Theatre. As I was walking home, and passing the doors of a music hall, I could have taken my oath that I saw Frederic Raynor in the crowd that was emerging from it; the next moment I lost sight of him, but if I had spoken to him, I could not have been more sure of his identity. He was at the office at the usual hour, looking very much as if, after the music hall, he had been at the cider cellars (as the late supper houses were called in those days), but of course I had no right to dictate to him as to how he should spend his evenings.

"So you were at the Harmonium, my friend, last night," said I, half in banter, half in remonstrance.

"Indeed I was not," said he, looking me straight in the face, as was his custom. "I went home from the office, and remained there all the evening, except for half an hour, when I went out—" he hesitated, then added, "on business."

Then somehow I felt, not because of the music

hall, but because of his lying to me in that composed way, that Fred was going to the bad. At the same time I little guessed how very far he had advanced that way, and least of all the direction his erring steps had taken.

It was about six months after communications between Fred and my sister had been cut off, that for the first time since I had been in the employment of Halland Brothers, Mr. Jacob Raynor did not appear at his desk at his ordinary hour, or rather minute, for he was punctuality personified. We all concluded that he was ill, particularly as Fred was also absent, but the cause of their non-appearance was, as it turned out, much worse than anything we had imagined. Both the members of the firm were in their usual places, and when the time for closing arrived, word came to us that all the clerks were to remain, as there was something of importance to be communicated to them. Even then, few of us associated the matter with the Raynors, and perhaps one or two had qualms of conscience as to whether some peccadillo of their own more serious than common might not be the cause of so portentous an announcement.

I never saw Mr. Halland, the elder, so moved as when he began to address us.

"A great misfortune, my friends, has befallen us all" (we thought the house had failed). "Dishonesty, for the first time, as I believe, has crept in among us. One of our number, hitherto trusted on his own account, and much more so on account

of his relationship to another, has betrayed his trust. It is easy to say that such a wretched termination of a career that promised so brightly should be a warning to us all; but it is an example bought at a dear rate indeed, at the cost (for one thing) of a father's misery. I left our dear and long-tried friend, Mr. Raynor, this morning, well-nigh heart-broken; a man that will never be himself again. His son Frederic has falsified his accounts, with the object of procuring money, no doubt for the purpose of self-indulgence and dissipation."

What he said more I did not rightly understand. The announcement of Frederic's guilt fell on me like a blow and stunned me. I was pained and shocked upon my own account, for he had been my nearest friend, and until lately my most constant companion; but my great distress and wretchedness arose from the thought of poor Kitty. I pictured to myself how she would look that night when I should tell her, "Frederic is a thief: you must forget him."

I saw her large blue eyes staring at me in mute despair, and the work dropping from her little hands in horror—the work at which there was no need to toil in future, since he for whose sake she wearied herself had proved unworthy of her. Proved? No. It was not proved, and before that was done I would tell her nothing.

I asked to have a few words in private with my employers, a liberty which nothing but the urgent necessity of the case would have prompted me to

do ; for though I knew them to be just, their manners to their inferiors were somewhat austere, and I filled but a very humble place in their service. They gave permission at once, and I found myself alone with the two brothers. They looked at me very gravely ; my impression is that, having perhaps heard of my intimacy with Frederic, they expected me to confess to some connivance with his evil deeds. This made me feel more embarrassed than ever ; I stood speechless.

"What have you got to say, Mr. Clayton?" asked Mr. Halland coldly ; "our time is precious."

"Sir," cried I, scarce knowing what I said, "I speak on behalf of another, of my sister Kitty, who was engaged to be married to Frederic Raynor. She loves him with all her heart, and you were talking of broken hearts. Oh, pray have mercy upon her. Do not pass sentence upon Fred unless you are quite sure."

The brothers exchanged significant glances with one another.

"This is very sad," said Mr. John (the younger), gently ; "we did not know of it."

"No, sir," said I, "it was not talked about. Mr. Raynor disapproved of the match, but it was to take place next year, nevertheless."

"Ah, disobedience was to be expected of him," observed Mr. Halland. "Your sister, Mr. Clayton, has had a lucky escape."

"She will not think so, sir ; and it will kill her."

"My poor lad," said the younger partner, laying

his hand upon my shoulder, at which I burst into tears, though I strove to restrain them, "we are very sorry, sorry for her and sorry for you; you need not be ashamed of those tears, which do you honour."

"Frederic Raynor will not be punished," said Mr. Halland in a gentler tone; "or rather he will be left to the stings of his own conscience; for his father's sake we shall spare him all public shame. He sails for Australia next week. In a new land and under new influence there is still a hope that he may make amends for his sinful—nay, his criminal—act, and become another man."

"Oh sir, but are you quite sure he did it?"

"Yes, he confessed as much to my brother and myself this morning, and in his father's presence; it is a wonder that murder—parricide—was not added to his other crimes, for I thought it would have killed the old man."

"It will kill Kitty," cried I vehemently.

"No, no," said the younger brother; "it will not kill her if, as we doubt not, she is a good girl. She will see that this young man is not worthy of her, and in the end will make a better choice."

"Can I see him, sir?"

"No, my lad; it is his own wish that he should see no one till he sets sail. An interview with him would only pain you, for I see you have a tender heart. We must forget him, that is the kindest thing to be done on all accounts; and above all things let no one speak of him to his father."

"Could you ask him to write to Kitty?" said I simply. I had a selfish hope that I might be spared the telling of his disgrace with my own lips.

"We could, of course," said Mr. Halland; "but if you will take our advice, you will not ask it. He would only unsettle her by dwelling, perhaps, upon possibilities that may never be realized. We are very sorry for you. We shall think no worse of you, but better, for having spoken in his behalf; but his case is, in our opinion, a hopeless one. It will be best, much best, to represent it as being so to your sister."

Then I made my bow and departed in sad distress, only, ere I did so, Mr. John Halland held out his hand, which had never been done to me, or to any of the clerks, as I believe, before: an hour before it would have made me very proud, but there was small comfort to me now in any such mark of honour.

I found Kitty that evening, as usual, at her embroidery, in which kind of work she had really attained a great proficiency; she had called to me from the parlor as I came in, in a bright, cheery way which showed me that she had some good news to communicate, doubtless concerning increased prices paid to her by those who bought her work; but the smile faded from her face directly she caught sight of mine.

"There is nothing the matter with Frederic?" cried she, with agitation.

"Nothing as to health, darling; but in other ways,

alas! there is." And then I told her all. It was an easier task than I expected, from her never making the least interruption; but listening with pale face and rigid lips until the end—and even when I had done there was no outburst.

"Then you believe, Frank, that Frederic Raynor, your old friend, has been guilty of a fraud?" was all she said.

"My darling," cried I, "I have no choice but to believe it, though Heaven knows I would give all I have to think him innocent. He has confessed to it himself."

"Did you hear him? did you see him?" inquired Kitty, in quick, passionate tones.

"No, dear; but both the Messrs. Hallands were present when—"

"What do I care for the Messrs. Hallands?" she broke forth. "What do I know of them that I should believe it night because they say so, although the sun is shining? I do know Fred. He is good and honest, generous and kind. If your employers called your sister a thief would you believe them *then!* It would be more likely to be true than this is. It is they who are thieves, for they have stolen his good name."

I could not have dreamed that there was such force and fury in Kitty's gentle nature, as shone forth in her looks and tone; they did not spare even myself.

"You are a coward, and not worthy of such a friend, Frank. If I had been in your place, I would have said, 'You lie! you lie!'"

"My darling, calm yourself," said I as gently as I could, for I really feared that, in her extreme excitement, she would do herself some serious mischief. "It is a question of proof and fact. If a man confesses to a crime, there is an end to all doubts."

"Let him confess it to *me*," cried she; "let him tell me with his own lips, 'I have falsified my father's accounts; I have robbed the men who gave me bread.' And not even then would I say 'I believe it.' I would say 'you are mad, and know not what you say.'"

It was idle, of course, to reason with her after this, and I did not attempt to do so. I spoke of the probability of Raynor's writing to her himself before he left England; for I had made up my mind, in spite of Mr. Halland's advice, to ask him to do so. It was clear that no hand but his could open her eyes; and he was bound—alas! I could no longer say "in honour"—but in common humanity, to release her from her engagement.

"If he writes to say he is innocent," said I, "then I will believe him, though you and I should be the only persons to do so."

"He will not do that," answered the girl; "for he will know that I shall take his innocence for granted."

And so the matter was left. In the letter I addressed to Frederic Raynor, I adjured him to make a clean breast of the matter in which he stood accused, for my sister's sake. If he was guiltless he

had only to say so, and we two at least would continue to hold him innocent, though all the world should be on the other side. But if he had really disgraced himself, was it not his duty to confess it to us, that time might erase his image from my sister's heart, and leave it open to the reception of another? I put all this in as gentle language as I could, consistently with Kitty's interest, but I felt that they were hard terms. It was humiliation enough that he had already owned his crime to his employers, without my constituting myself his father-confessor; and it must be added that after that affair of the music hall I had not the confidence in his word which I now professed.

His reply was of an evasive nature; he did not write to Kitty at all; and only these few words to me, with neither commencement nor signature: "Kitty is quite free, and may her next choice be a less unhappy one. God bless you both."

Of course this was tantamount to an acknowledgment of his crime; but it was not precisely so, which I thought cruel. I saw that my poor sister was not even yet convinced by it; so, without saying one word to her, I went down to Clapham that very evening to see Frederic face to face. He had set off to Liverpool to go on board ship an hour before I arrived; and on my asking to see his father, I was informed that Mr. Jacob Raynor was too ill to speak with any one.

I said nothing of this to Kitty, but by some means or other she had found out where I had been, and

thanked me for all the pains I had taken on her account. "I have only one favour more to ask," she said, "in connection with this subject;" and when of course I answered, "It is granted, darling," she said, "Pray promise me never to speak to me of Fred again." She did not even ask for his last note, which I therefore kept in my own possession. In looking at it, as I sometimes did, though always with a keen sense of pain, it struck me how like the writing was to the elder Raynor's; this, however, I had often noticed before; it was the case even with the formation of his figures, and that (and the Devil) had doubtless put it into his head to falsify his father's books.

CHAPTER II.

UNDER no circumstances, it is probable, would the firm have prosecuted Fred; but the defalcations of which he had been guilty were not very serious, and only extended over eighteen months or so. They were discovered quite accidentally by Mr. Halland; though, had it been otherwise—that is, if Mr. Raynor himself had found it out—I did not believe he would have concealed his son's depravity for an instant. It shocked me to think that each of those "windfalls," of which the unhappy young fellow used to talk so lightly, had probably been a successful fraud upon his employers, and I no longer wondered at the haggard and weary looks which had

accompanied his introduction to crime. I should have desired Kitty to return those little presents to her, which I felt had not been his to give, but that in the first place, my lips were sealed upon all concerning him; and secondly, I knew those relics of her lost love were her greatest treasures. I never saw them, but when I came upon her suddenly sometimes, she would lock her little desk, and rise from it with such a look as a devotee might wear caught on her knees (by one of another faith) before a shrine. She did not mope nor show by any outward signs that her young hopes were withered; she even redoubled her solicitude, always great, for my home comfort; but I felt that life was in her case no longer a blessing to be enjoyed, but a long tedious road to be trodden with a burden, only to be laid down on that last milestone which stands at the head of our graves. Of course I hoped otherwise at first, that the poor girl would gradually forget the man who had thus trodden out the well-spring of her youth and happiness; but in the end I could come to no other conclusion.

In less than a year, though still comely, Kitty had lost the good looks which belong to girlhood, and only needed the garb of the pious sisterhood to enrol her with those who have given up the world and affianced themselves to Heaven. Instead of the work which she had so assiduously pursued for love's sake, she now gave up her leisure time to ministrations among the poor.

It was more than a month after his son's catas-

trophe before Mr. Jacob Raynor reappeared at the office, and when he did so he was scarcely recognizable. His hair, which had been iron grey, was now become snow white ; his erect form was bowed ; and instead of looking those who spoke with him in the face, he studiously kept his eyes averted from them, and generally fixed upon the ground. There was no need to speak of the disgrace that his only son had inflicted on him, for it could be read in his face, in his voice, and even in his very movements, which, heretofore somewhat stiff and pompous, had become vague and shambling. For my own part, I confess (though I could not but pity him) his presence was even less agreeable to me than before, though it had no longer any fears for me ; he never asked us for subscriptions to this or that benevolent object now ; never found fault with our caligraphy ; never administered little private lectures of his own, or invited us to attend his public ones. But I could not forget that if this man had been less unyielding in the matter of his son's affections, less stern in forbidding him both companionship and correspondence with the object of them, Fred would never have gone so fatally astray. He had, it is true, acted within his rights as a father, but he had exercised them, as it seemed to me, in a manner inconsistent with those professions of kindliness and good-will to all men, of the genuineness of which I was still far from doubting. Indeed, one of the most painful features of his case was that his occupation in the way of public well-doing seemed

to have gone simply through lack, not of will, but of "heart" for it; his backbone, as one of my fellow-clerks expressed it, appeared to have slipped out, and left him limp, yet with no one to lean on; and it was rumoured that at home he would now sit for hours muttering to himself and staring at the wall. He did his office work notwithstanding with his usual mechanical exactness, so that there was no need for his employers to extend to him the indulgence which would certainly not have been wanting however inadequately he might have served them.

Neither they nor their subordinates ever ventured to speak to him concerning his son, but it was somehow generally understood that the old man was saving all he could, and sending it from time to time across the seas for the benefit of the unhappy exile. I had no doubt that, now his expenses in the way of public charity had ceased, these savings were considerable; but I took no account of them in connection with my poor sister; if Frederic Raynor had grown ever so prosperous, whether by his own exertions or by his father's help, I could not have welcomed him as a brother-in-law; and I should have been sorry to hear of his return to England, because I knew Kitty loved him still. My affection for my sister must be my excuse for any hardness I may seem to have shown towards my former friend; and indeed, by reason of the change I saw in her, and of the indignation I experienced on beholding it, my very employment with Halland Brothers had become distasteful to me, from its

connection with her misfortune. Otherwise I had reason to be more than satisfied with the behaviour of the firm, who (doubtless from what I had told them on that unhappy day, though they never referred to it) had become unexpectedly alive to my merits, and conferred upon me considerable promotion. When I brought her the good news, Kitty congratulated me much more warmly than I had expected; it seemed to me that there was a certain unpleasantness in deriving prosperity from a source which, however indirectly, had been the ruin of her happiness; but her characteristic unselfishness (as I supposed) prevented the dear girl from looking on the matter with a jaundiced eye, but rather regarded it as the natural reward of good desert.

About four years after poor Fred's departure, during which time not one word had dropped concerning him from his father's lips, an important change took place in the office.

It had been, as I have mentioned, the custom ever since its establishment for one at least of the members of the firm to reside on the business premises, and they had up to this time been inhabited by the younger Mr. Halland; but circumstances now occurred (and very unexpected they were—namely, his marriage) which took him elsewhere.

Mr. Jacob Raynor was thereupon requested to take his place, and certainly in a very gratifying way. In order to keep up the rule of the house, he was to take possession as resident partner—a considerable sum, amounting indeed to 2000*l.*, being

paid over to him at the same time as his necessary qualification.

Indifferent as he had long become to most matters, this seemed to rouse the old man from his lethargy, though, curiously enough, without producing any exultation. He seemed to be impressed by the magnitude of his new responsibility rather than by its advantages, and went about with a more thoughtful face than ever, though his manner was no longer so absent and dreamy as heretofore. By his promotion a step was gained by all the juniors, and for my part I found myself the second clerk, the duties of which post brought me into immediate contact with the principals. Accordingly, on the very morning after Mr. Raynor had taken possession, I was the first to go into his private room (lately occupied by Mr. Halland junior) with the usual pile of office letters. This apartment was on the ground floor, but separated from the rest of the premises by a long stone passage, and insured an absolute privacy for all business interviews. I did not much relish my new employment, on account of its bringing me into connection with Mr. Raynor; but if I had known what was to come of it, I would rather have been a junior all my days than have gone through with such an experience.

The first object that met my eyes as I entered the parlor (as it was called) was the new partner sitting in his chair, with his head fallen forward on the desk before him in a pool of blood; a pistol was clutched in his right hand, with which he had

with terrible literalness blown his brains out, for they were scattered on the opposite wall.

It appeared afterward that he had not been to bed the previous night at all, but had sat up where I had found him, and shortly after daylight had committed the fatal deed : but at that time so overcome was I by the shock that I understood little beyond the fact that the unhappy man, whose life had been one at least of good intentions, and which had certainly been actuated by good principles, had put an end to his existence by his own hand. All business was of course suspended for that day, and I was obliged to tell Kitty what had occurred (and indeed I could hardly have kept so sad a secret to myself) to explain my return home at such an unusually early hour. All she said was, " God forgive him ! " and then, as if involuntarily, " My poor Fred ! " which showed whither the thoughts of her bruised heart were tending still.

I was of course a witness at the inquest, where the fact of Mr. Raynor's suicide was clearly proved, and attributed, as was natural, to perturbation of mind induced by his sudden change of fortune acting upon an enfeebled system.

The day after the funeral I was sent for by the surviving partners, when the following particulars were communicated to me. Mr. Jacob Raynor had shot himself from remorse. It was he, and not his son, who had robbed his employers, and poor Fred had known it, and sacrificed himself for his father's sake. All this was stated in a letter written by the

unhappy man before he destroyed himself. "I am the guiltiest wretch alive," it said, "and the most cowardly; and it was to save me from the fate which is now about to overtake me, that my Frederic accepted undeserved shame. He knew that I could never survive exposure, after my long and public professions of goodness and well-doing. They were not professions in a false sense, for I believed in the utility of what I advocated, but an overweening vanity consumed me; I wished to be looked up to, not only as the deviser and agent of good institutions, but as their patron; the money I stole from my employers was really dedicated to this end. I robbed that I might give the money away to deserving objects and gain a name for practical benevolence. If you think that a proof of madness you will be charitable indeed. The money was not much, though it might have grown to be so had not the discovery taken place so early. This pistol has been in my hand before; my son found it there and said, Let me bear the burden, father, and do you live on." That I let him do so was a far meaner act even than the robbery of my kind employers, yet I infamously survived it. I saw him leave his native land in shame and ignominy; I knew that he was parting forever from the girl he loved; I knew that I was plunging others into unmerited misery; but what was that to me, who did not spare my own flesh and blood? For four years I have dragged on a wretched existence, poisoned by the knowledge of my own vileness, and

made more wretched still by the good opinion men expressed of me; till at last you, my employers, heaped such benefits upon my unworthy head, that even I could no longer bear them. I know now the full meaning of that phrase 'as coals of fire' when applied to unmerited good-will, and I have found them insupportable. When you read this I shall be a dead man. The 2000*l.* you have given me in such mistaken kindness is untouched, and will of course return to you. I have earned nothing at your hands; but let a dying sinner appeal to you in favor of the innocent. My poor Fred! my poor Fred! forgive me, forgive—" The letter had no conclusion, but the bottom of its page was splashed and smeared with blood. I dropped it (it had been placed in my hands by Mr. Halland) with a gesture of disgust; but not because of its red *finis*. My soul was filled with loathing against the wretch who had sacrificed his only son rather than take the consequences of his own misdeed, and for the moment poor Frederic's wrongs outweighed with me those of Kate herself. What Roman, what Spartan of them all had ever performed a nobler act of self-denial than this, to give up his good name, his love, and his country, to save a father's character from well-merited disgrace! What injuries had this old man wrought all round! and amongst them this personal wrong, that he had caused me to doubt the honour of my dearest friend, and to desert him in the hour of need! And oh, what misery for all these years had my sweet, patient Kitty suffered!

Mr. Halland's grave voice interrupted these angry thoughts. "We have sent for you, Mr. Clayton," he said, "to put you in possession of the contents of that sad letter, because we thought that the revelation was due to you. It has been made known to no one else, and I need not say that we look to you, in the interests of a wronged and innocent man, to preserve the secret. We do not know how things may have gone with your poor sister—"

Here he paused and looked toward his brother, who struck in:

"Mr. Clayton could relieve us from some of our embarrassment in this matter by telling us frankly how things stand at home."

Then I told them, not without some bitterness, how Kitty's life had been wrecked by the blast of ill report, though even yet she did not believe it; how the few years that had intervened since Frederic's exile had been as half a lifetime to her; and that when she died, it would be this miserable wretch who had cut short her days.

"The man is dead," said Mr. Halland softly.

"Yes, sir, but his deeds live after him."

"Your wrath is just," put in the younger brother; "still, something may yet be done in the way of remedy. We shall telegraph this day to Frederic Raynor, to summon him to take his father's place here; it is at once the least and most we can do for him. If we can add, however, that your sister's heart is still within his keeping—"

"But supposing that his own feelings are

changed?" suggested Mr. Halland. "That would place the young lady in an embarrassing position."

"To be sure, I had forgotten that," returned the other with a touch of colour; he was known to have been happy in his choice of a wife, and when that is so, men are apt to believe in the fidelity even of their own sex.

"Whatever happens will never go beyond us three," observed Mr. Halland thoughtfully.

"Why not wire 'Are you free?' and prepay the return message. Then we shall know all in a few hours."

And this business method of treating a question of romance was at once adopted.

For my part, from mistrust in Fred, I had veered round to the most complete confidence in his faithfulness and devotion; but of course Mr. Halland's view had been the correct one. Why should it be taken for granted that this young fellow should be still "wearing the willow" for one whom he had himself absolved from her allegiance to him? For all we knew, indeed, he might be dead and buried as well as married. No return telegram reached the office that day, and I went home very ill at ease; I feared lest Kitty would gather from my manner that something had happened, and if it had been possible to make any excuse for my absence, I would not have seen her till next day. As it was, I dined in the City, and called again at the office in the evening—but there was no news.

On my return home I found a strange alteration

in Kitty's face. It was always pale enough now, poor soul ; it looked careworn, though never grief-worn. But now her sweet eyes were red and swollen, and her cheeks showed the traces of many tears. Unable to endure the spectacle of her misery, I bade her a hasty good-night, and was about to take up my bed candle when she suddenly put this question, " Have you no message for me, Frank ? "

" Message, darling ? No. What news did you expect ? "

" I did not say ' news,' " replied she in a strange tone of suppressed triumph. " It would be no news to me to hear that Fred was innocent. I knew that all along."

" Mr. Halland has been here, then ! " cried I in astonishment. " He has told you what has happened."

She shook her head, and from her bosom pulled out a telegram wet with tears. It was from Frederic, and had arrived an hour ago. " I am coming home, love." Not a word else. He had not troubled himself to add, " My innocence is established ; " it would have been two sovereigns thrown away.

At that moment a hansom dashed up to the door, and the next moment I heard the voice of the younger Mr. Halland asking the servant if I was at home. I knew at once that Frederic had sent his reply to his private house, and that this good man had driven over to me at once upon the receipt of it.

"It is all right, Mr. Clayton," whispered he, as he grasped my hand. "He comes home by the next steamer."

He came upstairs, and—well, to make it clear, I suppose, how matters stood, or perhaps it was a part of Fred's message that he had to deliver—he kissed Kitty; and we sat up talking till past midnight. But not a word did we ever tell her of that question, "Are you free?" which had been sent so unnecessarily across the world.

It was the intention of the firm, Mr. John told us, since they felt that a man with such an exceptional sense of duty as Frederic Raynor was invaluable, to put him in his father's place; while in the two months that must intervene before his arrival in England their attention would be devoted to the selection of a wedding present for their junior partner.

"My wife, Miss Clayton, will do herself the honour—for such she will feel it—of calling on you to-morrow," were his last words.

I had had no conception that "Johnny," as we clerks used to call him, was such a noble fellow.

The next day we were all summoned before the partners, and informed that a grave and terrible mistake had been made in the dismissal of Mr. Frederic Raynor, who had been proved wholly innocent of the crime laid to his charge. But not a word was said as to the actual offender; and though all sorts of surmises and suspicions were of course excited among my fellow-clerks, not one of

them ever dreamed of accusing that exemplary and public spirited man Mr. Jacob Raynor, for whom, indeed, a sympathy greater than ever was now aroused from the sense that he had been hurried to his death by the calumny that had exiled his only son. And here was manifested the wisdom of making Fred a partner, for in any lower position he would have been exposed to some painful interrogations concerning the true culprit, which now no one would dare to put to him when it was once understood that he wished to be silent on the point. It was felt by both his employers—or, as I may now say, by his co-partners—that the chief point to be aimed at for Frederic's sake was to keep that secret, for which he had already sacrificed so much, from the world at large. It may naturally be imagined that something like a renewal of springtide came to my poor Kitty (since she was so soon to be Frederic's) after the weary winter-time she had endured. But, strange to say, this was not the case. She had shown a natural exultation at the proclamation of his innocence, though she had required no proof of it herself; and also a certain ineffable joy when she first heard the tidings of his return. But now she once more lost her spirits, and became pale and silent as before.

"Why, Kitty," said I, not hesitating to rally her upon a point which a few weeks ago it would have been cruelty to touch upon, "it is a very poor compliment to Fred to wear those melancholy looks; he will expect a smiling welcome and the same bright

merry face that you were wont to greet him with."

Then she burst into tears and sobbed out that that was the very thing that made her sad; her brightness and her merriment, she felt, were gone, and her youth and beauty too. Fred was faithful, doubtless, but the girl who had won his love was no longer in existence, and only this sad substitute for her awaited him; here she pointed piteously to her changed self, with which it was likely enough, she said, he would be far from satisfied. Of course I told her that since the change, if change there were, had taken place on his account, it should only make her dearer to him; and even added, in my desire to comfort her, that it was to be hoped that Fred himself would not be quite the man he was; but my arguments made as little way with her as reason usually does with women. Indeed, her very trouble was curiously characteristic of the sex; for who, being male, could bear disappointment, and almost despair itself, for years, like a gentle saint, and then, when the sun shone forth at last, make himself miserable about the loss of a few pounds of flesh and the acquisition of a gray hair or two?

I will do Fred the justice to say that these defects in dear Kitty, if he ever noticed them, made no sort of difference in his devotion to her, which was as great on his return as it had ever been, though perhaps of a graver and more earnest kind. And it was astonishing, when this was made plain to her, how quickly the woman began to grow into the

girl, "as though a rose should shut and be a bud again." On their marriage-day the bridegroom, indeed, poor fellow, looked many years older than the bride, for the disgrace of his father had sunk deep in him; and even the great kindnesses of the Messrs. Halland had something of bitterness in them, inasmuch as they were reminders of it.

As for me, I had expected a little coldness from my former friend on account of my want of faith in him, but that idea was dissipated at the very first clasp of his hand. "How could you have thought me otherwise than guilty, Frank, when I as good as told you so myself by releasing Kitty from her engagement?"

"Yet *she* did not believe it!" said I.

"But then," returned he simply, "she is an angel." When I think of what she suffered, and how long and all alone (since she alone believed in him), and how she went on doing her duty (even to her brother) without heart or hope, I am quite of Fred's opinion. And this it is, I say (when the young couple rally me upon not taking a wife), which makes me so hard to please. It is also partly their fault that I remain a bachelor, for we all live together, and so happily that I do not desire a change; indeed, I openly accuse them of conspiring to spoil me and keep me single, that I may be always the bachelor uncle, who shall leave ten thousand pounds apiece to each of their children. As they have four at this present writing, it will be necessary for me to amass a considerable fortune to accomplish this.

I seldom talk to Fred (for divers reasons) about the times when we were junior clerks together; but I did ask him once to explain that mystery of the music hall, whence I certainly saw him emerge, though he so confidently asserted he had been at home all night. "Well," he said, "you might have seen me in the crowd about the doors, for I passed by there on my way from Chancery Lane, where I had been to leave a parcel."

"A parcel in Chancery Lane, at midnight! No, my dear Fred, that really will not do."

Then he laughed and blushed, and said, "Well, you needn't tell Kitty about it; but the fact is, when my poor father declined to consent to our marriage, I determined to save all I could, and began to work out of office hours at copying for law stationers—"

"Then those were the 'windfalls!'" interrupted I.

"Yes; when I had earned a pound or two, I could not help giving Kitty a percentage of it."

And that was why he had looked so haggard and weary; not from the stings of conscience, but through sitting up o' nights, driving the quill!

Upon the whole, I am inclined to think, quite apart from the prosperity that has at last befallen him, that Frederic Raynor was worth waiting for, and that Patient Kitty (as I always call her) has been well rewarded for her fealty.