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of fires and fragments, was succeeded by a booming roar, as if an earthquake had raised his voice from the abysses of the silent waters, and then there was a numerous plashing noise of many things falling around us into the sea, but that too soon passed, and then there was darkness and silence.

“ At that moment a cold wet hand caught hold of mine, which was hanging over the boat's side—and a man from the sea cried in a homely Aberdonian voice, ‘ For Christianity, will ye no tak me up ? ’ The officer heard him, and relenting from his firm and merciful purpose, ordered him to be taken on board—‘ Na, na,’ cried the Scotchman, ‘ tak my bag first,’ and he held up to me a small haversack which I grasped and lifted in ; but in the same instant, an undulation of the sea came rolling from the whirlpool where the ship had sunk—the boat rose on the swell, the fated wretch lost his hold and sank beneath her for ever ! ”

After a short pause Mr Coball expressed his pleased Providence to rescue us next day from our perilous situation—a ship bound for the Isle of France had seen the glare

ness and solemnity—and the smoke from the devoted vessel appeared like the shrouded form of some incomprehensible and tremendous phantasma, ascending from the sepulchres of the ocean to the dominions of omens and powers.

“ We looked at the spectral sight with terror and in silence—The orphan was clinging to my knees—at last the fire began to break out. The flames first showed themselves at the cabin windows—in a moment they whirled up the rigging—the sails blazed, and the ship was for the space of a minute like some unblest apparitional creation of sorcery.

“ ‘ It is all over,’ said the officer, and his voice sounded hollowly over the mute and echoless ocean. ‘ The fire is in the gun-room ! Ha !’

“ At that instant a vast sheet of flame filled the whole air, and like an angry demon unfurling his wings, scattered meteors and malignant fires among the stars. The black forms of many things appeared like motes in the sunbeam for a moment in the blaze. I distinctly saw an apparition of many like men with outspread

mentary and indescribable vision

of fires and fragments, was succeeded by a booming roar, as if an earthquake had raised his voice from the abysses of the silent waters, and then there was a numerous plashing noise of many things falling around us into the sea, but that too soon passed, and then there was darkness and silence.

“ At that moment a cold wet hand caught hold of mine, which was hanging over the boat’s side—and a man from the sea cried in a homely Aberdonian voice, ‘ For Christianity, will ye no tak me up?’ The officer heard him, and relenting from his firm and merciful purpose, ordered him to be taken on board—‘ Na, na,’ cried the Scotchman, ‘ tak my bag first,’ and he held up to me a small haversack which I grasped and lifted in ; but in the same instant, an undulation of the sea came rolling from the whirlpool where the ship had sunk—the boat rose on the swell, the fated wretch lost his hold, and sank beneath her for ever !”

After a short pause Mr Coball added, “ It pleased Providence to rescue us next morning from our perilous situation—a ship bound for the Isle of France had seen the glare of the

burning during the night, and steering towards it when the wind freshened, came up to us by daybreak, and took us all on board. As the orphan (whose name is Charles Bayfield) still hung about me, I undertook, if possible, to return him to his friends. He is a singularly sharp boy for his years, and in the Aberdonian who had so strangely preferred a bag to his life, he had recognized one of his mother's servants—the contents of the bag were in consequence adjudged to belong to him, and assigned to my custody. They consisted of the letters I have mentioned—besides several packets of valuable pearls and other costly trinkets, which may help me to discover his friends. But I hope the Mr Rupees of this neighbourhood is the same gentleman of that name, who by the letters appears to have been the executor of the deceased Colonel Bayfield, the child's father."

Our conversation after this became general. Mr Coball mentioned several things, the knowledge of which he had acquired from the letters in the bag, and which convinced me that the Mr Rupees he was in search of could be no other than our Nabob. But I became uneasy

when he stated that by some of the letters it appeared Colonel Bayfield had died very rich, and that the bulk of his fortune was in the hands of his executor, from whom his widow had not been able to obtain any satisfactory information concerning it. I did not, however, divulge what I feared, but only advised Mr Coball to see the Nabob as soon as possible, adding, "If you find the assistance of any friend necessary, make no scruple of calling on me, for you have both interested my feelings and awakened my curiosity." I then took my leave.

Thus it came to pass, that what with the Laird's affairs, and this new adventure, I, good easy man, who never meddled with any other body's business—for my innocent curiosity can never be called meddling—had as much toil for my feet, work for my hands, and talk for my tongue, as Mrs Soorocks herself—mine, however, was owing to the purest and most disinterested motives, while her visitations sprung from a prying disposition and an unaccountable desire to have a finger in every pie baked in the neighbourhood—the neighbourhood did I say! —I might well say the country—I have indeed

often wondered that she did not remove herself to the multifarious field of Glasgow, but her reason was excellent,—“Because,” said she, “nobody in a populous town cares for one another, and I would die if I did not ken something about my neighbours—It’s no a field for dispensing the workings of grace, or the exercise of a mind void of offence, for I love to do good, especially to my friends in affliction.” How blind some people are to their most obvious defects!



CHAPTER XXV.

FATIGUED with my long walk, the heat of the day, and the influence of my dinner, I had thrown myself on the sofa to indulge in a short siesta, before going, as I had promised, to tell Mrs Soorocks the result of my journey to Renfrew. I had not, however, stretched out my limbs many minutes when that indefatigable personage herself was announced.

“ I thought,” said she, as soon as she had entered the room, “ I would spare you the trouble of coming to me, for although I was just curious to hear the discoveries that ye hae made, I could better spare hearin o’ them, than refrain frae telling you o’ the tribulation we are baith likely to be put in for the pains we hae taken, out o’ a sense o’ religion, to help the Laird in his jepordies.”

“What tribulation? What has happened?”

“O, the swine’s run thro’t!” exclaimed she; “no sooner had I told the auld gaumeril that Nawaubpore was a perfec gentleman, and was disposed not only to treat him with mitigation, but to allow him to live on the estate upon easy terms for the remainder of his life, than he began to hum and haw, and to wish that he hadna geen authority to you to bespeak ane o’ the Miss Minnigaffs to marry him—Did ye ever experience such black ingratitude?”

“You do not say so, my dear madam—if he draws back, what shall I do? I have pledged my honour for him to Miss Shoosie.”

“I see nothing for it but to tak her yoursell,” said Mrs Soorocks laughing.

“It is no laughing matter to me, Mrs Soorocks, after the praises I have bestowed on Miss Shoosie, which, though they carried no offer, might yet perhaps, by the help of Edinburgh advocacy, be screwed into as much as, if it did not draw damages, would draw from my pockets the fees both of advocate and writer, and worse than all, make me be talked of as a perjured wretch in all the boarding-schools of Athens; even though

the case should happen to be accurately reported in that amusing periodical, *Shaw and Dunlop's Decisions of the Court of Session.*"

We were here interrupted by my servant coming into the room, saying that the ladies of Barenbraes wanted to speak a word wi' myself in private.

"They'll be comin to consult you anent takin the law o' me," said my visitor, endeavouring to smile; and she added, "Oh but this is a treacherous world! Howsoever, ye can go, sir, and see what they daur to say, and I'll bide till ye're done wi' them. I redd ye, sir, tak tent that ye say naething to put up their birses, for when angered they are perfect wild-cats."

I accordingly left her and went to the ladies, who had been shown into the drawing-room, and were sitting on the sofa, with pink silk scarfs, like twin cherries on one stalk. Miss Shoosie was doing amiable with bridelike bashfulness, her eyes perusing the carpet, while she played with her shoe toe with the point of her parasol. Miss Girzie had less of downcast modesty in her appearance. Her parasol lay across her knees, and was resolutely grasped at the ex-

tremities, while her countenance indicated both fortitude and intrepidity.

“ We have come, sir,” said she, “ having considered the proposal ye made to my sister yesterday——”

The “ ye maun tak her yoursell,” of Mrs Soorocks still ringing in my ears, I exclaimed, “ Proposal, ma’am ! I made no proposal !”

“ Sister !” cried Miss Girzie, “ sister, is it possible that you could be mistaen ?—but I told you that it was ower gude a godsend to come to our door, especially as Auldbiggings has done sae lang without a wife.”

This speech relieved me in one respect, that is, in as far as I thought myself implicated ; but, considering what Mrs Soorocks had told me of the alteration in the Laird’s views, I began to feel as if I had only got out of the frying-pan into the fire ; nevertheless, I mustered self-possession enough to say with some show of gaiety,

“ Well, ladies, and what is the result of your deliberation ?”

“ I told my sister,” resumed Miss Girzie, “ that there could be no objection to Mr Mailings as a man, which was quite her opinion ; but

I thocht it wouldna be prudent of her to give her consent to an acceptance of his hand, until we both knew what sort o' settlement he was disposed to make upon her."

"Settlement! Miss Girzie," cried I, glad to find any loophole—"Settlement—surely, ladies, you must have long known the embarrassed state of Mr Mailings's affairs—Were times to mend, as we hope they will do, doubtless he may have it in his power to make a settlement; but really, under existing circumstances, anything like a regular settlement ought not to be expected."

"Is't possible," replied Miss Girzie, "that you cou'd suppose my sister wou'd marry ony man without a provision for a family? I'm sure she shou'd ne'er hae my consent to such indiscreetness."

Glad to find the venerable spinster in so sturdy a humour, I grew a little bolder, and said,—

"Whatever your sentiments, Miss Girzie, may be, I have always had a very high opinion of the disinterestedness of your sister, and will say so before herself, there where she sits; but

man's heart and hand regarded as of no value, unless the hand be filled with glittering trash !”

The tone in which I expressed myself, had so sounded through all the house, that Mrs Soorocks came rushing into the room, crying, “ Gudeness me, have they flown upon you too ?”

At the sight of that lady the two sisters rose, and, making a formal courtly courtesy, moved towards the door, while she returned the recognition by another so profound, that she seemed to have fairly seated herself on the floor, setting up at the same time a guffaw, that made them tottle out of the room with short nimble steps, supporting each other, as if some horrid monster was bellowing at their heels.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WHEN I had told Mrs Soorocks of what had passed with the ladies, and related to her the conversation I had held with Mr Coball—when we had mingled our opinions respecting the demand which was likely to come so suddenly on the Nabob, and when I saw the interest which the doubtful situation of that gorgeous personage had excited in the eager sympathy of my visitor, I ordered tea for her, that we might discuss at leisure the course we ought to adopt in a case so singular and important ; but before the kitchen, anglice tea-urn, was brought in, the Laird made his appearance, evidently dressed for some occasion of ceremony.

His coat and waistcoat were of the same snuff colour ; the latter with flaps after the manner, but of greater amplitude than the style of the

court dress; his breeches of black silk, rather short and scanty, were adorned at the knees with heir-loom buckles of Bristol stones, set in silver; his stockings were also silk, of a bluish tinge, and a cottonial dimness, the effect of many lavations; his shoes, cleaned by his man Jock, though jet black, yet were more of a lacklustre clothly appearance, than of the satin-like brilliancy of Day and Martin; contrasting finely, however, with the radiance of his richly-chased massive Patagonian silver buckles; he wore his best wig well powdered; a demi-forensic structure of a middle and anomalous architecture, between the prim tye-wig, with Ionic volutes over the ears of a snug and debonair citizen, and the wig of wisdom, luxuriant with corinthian curl, which distinguishes the upper end of a Lord of Council and Session. In the one hand he carried his Sunday hat; a fabrication of the last century, silky and sable—the sides half looped up towards the crown, indicated that it had been formed in that equivocal epoch when the aristocratic cock, yielding to the progress of taste and the march of intellect, was gradually relaxing into the philosophical fashion which

ornaments the craniological organization of the present enlightened age ; the other hand grasped his tall malacca cane, crowned with gold and shod with brass. A tassel of black silk, which dangled from the whole above his hand, by its centrifugal force, swept the air with magnificent oscillations as he came staffing his way into the centre of the room.

The first impression of this ceremonious appearance led me to think that the old gentleman had so adorned himself for the purpose of paying a visit of gratitude to the Nabob ; and Mrs Soorocks, it would seem, had formed the same opinion, for before even the common salutations were exchanged, she said,—

“ Dear me, Mr Mailins, ye can never be going to Nawaubpore’s at this time o’ the day ? he’ll be at his dinner—eating his dishes gude for the liver complaint—to be sure, he may excuse the intrusion of an auld-fashion’d man, a hame’art gentleman, who has never seen the world, nor gallanted, like him, wi’ the yellow ladies, in yon palaces o’ delight in Indy.”

“ Dinna lift me before I fa’, Mrs Soorocks,” replied the Laird, evidently not entirely pleased

with her observation ; adding, “ I am not going to Nawaubpore, but to pay my respects to Grey Stane.”

“ Grey Stane, Laird ? I didna ken that you and the family were on visiting terms,” said Mrs Soorocks. “ Mrs Luggie is certainly a pleasant woman, and they say Miss Jenny, who cam last week frae the boarding-school at Edinbro’, is grown a perfec beauty, and can play on the spinet, and paint red cabbages and kail blades upon paper. It was a better world when a laird’s doughter learned to play on the spinnin’ wheel, and kent the wholesome use o’ kail blades ; but nae dou’t your visit’s a curiosity to see the beauty ?”

“ Ye’re a woman o’ sagacity,” replied the Laird, “and I’ll no deny the truth among frien’s; for ever since ye pointed out to me the disconsolateness o’ my situation, without a help-meet, I hae been seriously thinking that I wou’d be the better o’ a wife.”

Here I interposed, exclaiming, “ My gracious ! Mr Mailings, did you not authorize me to carry a proposal to the ladies of Barenbraes ?”

“ And,” cried Mrs Soorocks, “ when I show-

ed the need that ye stood in o' somebody to take care o' you, did I not tell you that Miss Shoosie was the fittest woman in a' this country side for that purpose?"

"But ye ken," said the Laird, addressing himself to us both, "that my heart grewed at the thocht o' ony ane o' the twa reisted auld frights—crined in the flesh, wi' hides like the skin o' a pouket guse, and hues like——denty lions I mean."

"But, Mr Mailings," said I, "I have done my duty, and fulfilled the sacred trust which you confided to me—Miss Shoosie has consented to accept your hand, and share your fortune; and although her sister has some scruples of a mercenary nature, yet your faith and troth are pledged, and to retract now would be most dishonourable."

"Dishonourable!" exclaimed Mrs Soorocks, "it wad be even-doon perfec perjuratioun—if Dr Lounlans were at hame, and siccan a sinfu' abomination to be committed within the bounds o' the parish, he wad set the session wi' its seven heads and ten horns upon you, and ye hae had some experience o' what it can do. Oh, Mr

Mailings, ye havena the heart within ye to betray the love o' a young woman. Whare div ye think ye'll gang when ye dee?"

The Laird, raked by this cross fire, fell into confusion, and instead of parrying the attack, replied with humility,

" I aye thocht that a man had a richt, at least for ance in his life, to please himsell."

" Please yoursell to be sure," said Mrs Soorocks, " but wi' a discretion—And what discretion wou'd there be in a feckless auld man to marry a gallopin', gallantin', gigglin' Miss in her teens, and to forsake a sober, douce, sensible, agreeable, judicious woman?—I may weel say to you, as Mause, in Patie and Roger, says to Bauldy,—

' Vow and loup back ! was e'er the like heard tell ?
Swith tak him, Deil, he's ower lang out o' ——.'

I'll no attempt to metre't, but it means the ill place. Deed, Auldbiggings, ye had better repent and sin no more, or ye'll maybe hae Miss Shoosie's death laid to your door, for she's a kind gentle creatur, and canna miss but to die o' a broken heart ; and what'll come o' ye then,

when, like the ghost in William and Margett, her spirit appears at your bed fit, with a lily hand and a sable shroud?"

"But," rejoined I, "it is not to the session only he shall answer—it is not only before the injured spectre o' Miss Shoosie that he will lie quaking at the dead of night—he must answer to me. I will not submit, after having been so entreated to negotiate the marriage, to see it so lightly broken off, and for what?—a young girl that has nothing but flesh and blood to recommend her!—Mr Mailings, I consider myself exceedingly ill used."

"Na!" cried Mrs Soorocks, "I canna see hoo ye can be aff fechtin a duel wi' him—and a bonny sicht it would be to see him brocht hame on a barn door, after getting his head shot aff, and Jock, poor cretur, greetin', and following the mournfu' procession, carrying the head by the lug, as if it was no better than a sheep's gaun to the smiddy to be sing't."

The consternation of the Laird was continuing to increase, and looking first at me, and then at his ruthless tormentor, he exclaimed,—

“ Have I fallen into the hands o’ the Philistines ?”

“ Philistines !” cried Mrs Soorocks ; “ Surely ye’re an uncircumceesed as weel as a man-sworn deceiver. Had I no mollified Nawaub-pore, there would hae been less daffin’ in your head the night ; for instead of dressing yoursell out like a squire o’ high degree, and singing,— ‘ I kiss’d and I prattled with fifty fair maids,’ to mak conquests o’ bits o’ lasses, ye would hae been sitting in your forlorn chair, confabbing wi’ Jock, about whether by rope, or gun, was the easiest way o’ deeing. But I’ll go to the Nabob this precious minute—I’ll let him ken what a false deluding man ye are—I’ll tell him o’ the plague ye were to the kirk session, before Mr Firlot got ye to right that amiable ill-used woman your first wife, and the wrongeous mischief ye would noo do to the sweet girl whom Providence has made me an instrument to choose for your second.”

This last threat finished the Laird ; he lay back in his chair with his eyes fixed on one of the bell cranks, his arms hanging as it were

powerless by his sides, and every feature of his face relaxed with helplessness.

“ I canna,” said he, in soliloquy, “ warstle wi’ this—I hae lang thole’t the consperacy that has sookit my rents—I hae endur’t the loss o’ my first love, Annie Daisie—I quietly submitted to my first wife till it pleased Providence to quench her—I hae seen the lands o’ my forefathers mouldering awa—I hae known the terrors o’ the law, and the judgment o’ a wadset—I hae had sickness o’ heart, and the rheumatics, and the toothach—weel may I say wi’ the play-actor in the show that I allowit in our barn,—

‘ But it’s this too solid flesh which makes the calamity of life,
For who would bear the pangs of despised love—
The oppressor’s wrong—the insolence of law ?’

The deevil take Hugh Caption, and all the other ills that flesh is heir to—I’m ruin’t beyond redemption—Mrs Soorocks, and sir—I gie myself up into your hands—be pitiful, if ye can.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

AFTER the departure of the Laird and Mrs Soorocks, I set myself quietly down to read the newspapers of the morning. Lugged as it were forth from my accustomed privacy, I felt myself involved within the influence of a vortex, pregnant with events to the worthies of my immediate neighbourhood. Changes, at least for a while, are lightsome ; and really I confess, that I was not a little tickled with the surrounding aspect of affairs ; Miss Shoosie, Miss Girzie, and Mrs Soorocks on one side, threatening matrimony against the Laird, and his man standing “ in defense,” on the other ; while the Nabob Dominie Tansie, and myself, put now and then a finger in the pie ; keeping ever and anon a watchful eye on trig Leezie, that Abigail, running blackfoot between the skirmishing parties.

Half abstracted in these picturesque ruminations, I had just commenced an immeasurable leading article, the first sentences of which were redolent of Mavrocordato, Ulysses, Lord Byron, and the Greek Committee, when I was roused from my reveries by the thunder of the Nabob's chariot at my door.

I was much surprised at this avatar, and no less at the friendly and familiar courtesy with which the Great Man addressed me.

“ I have come,” said he, “ to talk to you about a very comical affair, in which I may stand in need of some assistance, and you are the only man of any sense in the county.”

“ Then you have never been in Greenock, I presume ?”

“ O yes, I have though ! A very good sort of a town—plenty of punch, and much jaw—quite edifying to hear the excellent character every one there gives of his neighbour—they have some fun too among them—one John Esdaile has long served them instead of Joe Miller—but I have no time at present to send for my friend the bailie ; besides, he's not very port-

CHAPTER XXVI

AFTER the departure of the Laird Soorocks, I set myself quietly down to read the newspapers of the morning. Lured forth from my accustomed privacy by the events involved within the influence of the Laird, I was not a little tickled with the aspect of affairs; Miss Shoosie, Mrs Soorocks on one side, the money against the Laird, and her "in defense," on the other; Dominie Tansie, and myself, pointing a finger in the air, keeping a watchful eye on Leezie, the young man when the skin

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abstracted in these picturesque ruminations, had just commenced an immeasurable article, the first sentences of which were of Mavrocordato, Ulysses, Lord Byron, the Greek Committee, when I was roused by the thunder of the Nabob's door.

I was surprised at this avatar, and no less so by the friendly and familiar courtesy with which the Man addressed me.

"I am," said he, "to talk to you of a political affair, in which I may be able to give you some assistance, and you are well known to my sense in the county."

"I have never been in Greenock, I

thought! A very good sort of punch, and much jaw-work for the excellent character of his neighbour—they are among them—one John Eschlin instead of Joe Miller at present to send for his sides, he's not very p

and her, but in order to the d—l; my husband I did not think ill luck would have she was advised to go to Bengal and to Europe; when, if she had been after her husband, she might have got married; but she was lost at sea, and it was not long before she was on board perished, and she was buried in the air to the Colonel. I have been with me for some time, and I think, I am a impostor, as I think, I have been with Mrs Bayly, and the vessel was not long before she had saved her son, and she was intended to adopt; and she had a great lubber-Charles, and who was not I saw in the arms of India, than an Arab is only, considering the [I saw the child, it may be like the

able, and I have left all my elephants in Bengal, where I had one that could have carried him."

I was here so shocked at this personality, that I almost fainted. I entreated him to forbear, and endeavoured to recall him from the digression into which he had so much the habit of falling, although he might have excused the objectionable expression by making an apology, as is usual in such occasions.

"Why, the business," said he, "is nothing less than a claim on more than half my fortune. I had a friend in India, one Tom Bayfield, who rose to the rank of Colonel in the Company's service; he married one day a very pretty girl, the daughter of my old chum Dick Campbell—they were very happy, and got three children between them—Tom was a devilish clever fellow, made upwards of ten lacs—and died suddenly—I was in Europe at the time, but in making his will he left me his executor, and, failing his own children, his heir—for I had lent him a helping hand when he was only a cadet. Somebody, however, put mischief into the widow's head against me, as if her children had been cheated by this settlement, and she wrote

me such vixen letters that I told her, but in polite terms, that she might go to the d—l; although out of regard for her husband I did intend to adopt her son. Well, as ill luck would have it, on receiving my letter, she was advised by some of her nincompoop relations in Bengal to ship herself and family for Europe; when, if she had staid till a decent time after her husband's death, she would certainly have got married again—but the ship was lost at sea, and it was supposed that every soul on board perished, so that I administered as heir to the Colonel. But the deuce is in't, there has been with me this afternoon a confounded impostor, as I think, who says that he was in the ship with Mrs Bayfield and her family; that the vessel was not lost, but burned; and that he had saved her son Charles, whom I had intended to adopt; and what do you think? he brought a great lubberly boy, whom he called Charles, and who was no more like the babe that I saw in the arms of the Ayah when I left India, than an Arab is like a Caffrè; but certainly, considering the time that has elapsed since I saw the child, it may have grown up to something like the size of the

impostor's brat. Now, what would you advise me to do in such circumstances? I don't want such proofs as the old Humbugs and Vakeels in Edinburgh would require; but before a man parts with one half of his property just now, and makes up his mind to leave the other at his death, it is but reasonable that he should know what he's about, and to whom he either gives the one, or leaves the other. My friend Dr Dewai came home with a large fortune, a writer's wife in Dundee palmed herself on him as his near relation, and got the old fool to leave her a legacy of ten thousand pounds; but when he died, and her husband had got the money, it turned out that her mother had been his mother's chambermaid, and so got acquainted with the secrets and connexion of the family.—How d—d foolish I should look, if it were discovered after my death that I had been as silly as Dewai! I never knew such a silly fellow as Dewai. When I was resident at Lucknow, he was surgeon to the Residency.”——

Apprehensive that the Nabob was again digressing from the matter in hand, I brought him back to the point, by asking if he had exa-

mined the stranger as to any evidence in his possession of the facts he affected to state.

“ O, to do the fellow justice,” replied the Nabob, “ his story is plausible enough ; and he says he has some letters of my own to Mrs Bayfield ; but which, out of regard for the boy he calls Charles, he will only show in the presence of witnesses.—I like the fellow for his caution. I want, however, you, and that very sensible lady, Mrs Soorocks, to come over in the morning, and tiff at Nawaubpore to-morrow, when we shall meet the fellow, and will be able to say something more about it. ’Tis a d—d hard case, however, to be plucked so unexpectedly, and that too by one whom the unconscionable sea has given up, as it would seem, for the express purpose. It puts me in mind of a story which once happened in Calcutta. An officer was going up the country, and somewhere above Cossembazar, his budgerow was upset, and the Doudies all drowned ; he was himself ashore at the time, and so escaped. When he found what had happened, his business being urgent, he got to the nearest village, where he procured some kind of conveyance to a station, and proceeded

by Dawk. The vessel, however, was picked up; and as he had not been heard of, it was presumed he had perished with the rest. So his agents in Calcutta immediately mounted black waistcoats, and entered a probat to his will. But lo and behold, they received a letter from their late friend, dated at Agra, stating that as he had lost all his *Shraub* by the upsetting of his budgerow, he would thank them to send a fresh supply."

Here I found it necessary again to interrupt the Burrah Sahib, by saying, that I would not fail to be with him at the time proposed—asking him at the same time, if he would take something after his ride.

"Thank ye, my good sir," said he, "I'll take a glass of Brandy Pawney, as the evening's hot."

I immediately ordered the brandy and some spring-water fresh from the well. While preparing the beverage, he resumed—

"The would-be-genteel coxcombs of Calcutta scout Brandy Pawney as vulgar, but we old sportsmen of the Mafussil know better than that comes to.

“There’s my worthy friend old Sir Thomas. When he came round to Calcutta, he took up his quarters with old Frank at Barrackpore. Now the old peer always kept lots of the very best wines, chiefly French, and other thin potations, that did not at all suit the tone of Sir Tom’s stomach; and still, by way of kindness, Frank used to press him to drink every wine on the table. The Knight was obliged to comply from politeness; but often, while swilling the well-cooled stuff, he would sigh for his old friend the brandy-bottle. One day he got to Calcutta, and slipping quietly on board of a Drughy, he pushed off for the ship which had brought him round from Bombay, and declared to the captain that he was apprehensive of a gangrene in his bowels from the gallons of sour trash he had swallowed; and though it was only two o’clock P. M. the brace of them sat down, and finished their gin-tumblers a-piece, which the gentleman declared was the saving of his life.—O, it’s a famous thing Brandy Pawney. Dr Jock, my worthy friend, recommended it both by precept and example.—By the by, Jock sent me out some of the d—d black draught

he's so fond of, when I some time ago felt myself bilious and queery; but as I was well before it arrived, I thought it a pity such good stuff should be thrown to the dogs; so I ordered a dose of it for my best China pig, for it was then slightly indisposed, as a Cockney would say—And do you know it poisoned her? She died within the hour—D—d lucky I did not take it myself.”

Here the Nabob having finished his tumbler, rose, and requesting me not to forget my appointment, adding that he would send his carriage to fetch Mrs Soorocks, bade me good night.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

I WENT by times next morning to the residence of Mrs Soorocks ; but on approaching the house, discovered many signs which indicated that the Lady could not conveniently accompany me. It was washing-day, and the little grass-plat within the sweetbriar-hedge between her house and the high-road, was covered with all manner of female and household drapery. Ropes fastened in various directions to the iron-railing, the lilac-trees, and the bolts and bars of the window-shutters, were festooned with shifts, sheets, and night-gowns, fixed on by split pieces of wood feruled with tin ; napkins and towels were spread upon the rose and gooseberry bushes ; and the large table-cloth, so admired at her New-year's-day festivals, for its damasked views of Amsterdam in Holland, and other

foreign cities, hung upon a special cord, like a mainsail, between the lime and the rowan-tree across the path leading to the front door. Access at one entrance being thus shut out, I was obliged to go round to the back of the house, the great scene of the operations of the day.

In front of the wash-house, with kilted petticoats, our old acquaintance Leezy ravishingly "lap and flang" in a washing-tub, the spray of which enveloping her in a mist, made her appear like a tutelary goddess amidst the spouting tritons of a Parisian fountain.

Deep within the steamy-shade of the wash-house, the full round physiognomy of the cook, like the moon in a mist, loomed through the rising vapours; and in the darkness beyond, Jean Japples, the hired washerwoman, stood elevated on a tripod, like another Medea over the cauldron, renovating the contents of it with an ex-broomstick.

Not seeing Mrs Soorocks, I turned round to inquire at Leezy for her mistress; but at the same moment, the lady herself made her appearance, in dishevelled morning garments, with a watering-pan in her hand. On seeing

me, she set it down; and coming forward, begged that I would walk into the house. I explained, however, on the spot, the object of my visit, and the wish of the Nabob that she would accompany me; “but I see,” said I, “that it is a pleasure I cannot expect to-day.”

“It’s vera true,” was the reply; “for we’re thrang, and in confusion wi’ our summer washing; it’s just extraordinar what a family files in the course o’ half a year, forbye the plague o’ sma’ claes atween hands—but it’s a trouble you men are never fash’d wi’, and some of ye even laugh at us drudging-women. My dear Mr Soorocks used to say, in his jocosity, that twa washings were equal to one white-washing, twa whitewashings to one flitting, and twa flittings to one fire.—Really, I’m fash’d that I canna go wi’ you, and I wad fain stretch a point, if it were possible, for the Nabob’s cold collations are vera nice, and he’s himsell so much o’ the gentleman.—But, dear me, is na that his carriage coming along the road—It’s no in possibility to come up to the door, and I hae naebody to gang to the yett to speak to that gran fitman.—Leezy, put yoursell right—step out o’ the boyne as

fast as you're able, and say I'm dressing ; for I maun go noo, since he has sent the coach on purpose."

Accordingly, while Leezy went round to the gate, taking time to adjust her own apparel, which was no more in a state to receive visitors, than that of her mistress, Mrs Soorocks went into the house, and in less time than could reasonably have been expected, (she is a clever woman,) returned adorned for the visit.

As soon as we were seated in the carriage, I related with some degree of minuteness, what the Nabob had told me of the state of his feelings towards the family of Colonel Bayfield.

"Weel," said the lady, at the conclusion, "I aye said that Nawaubpore had a generous heart, for a' his vanity and ostentation ; but it will be a dreadfu' thing if a man like him—so kind a neighbour, and who may be a blessing to the country-side—should be impoverished by an impostor. I'll no soon forget the genteel way he pardoned, at my intercession, that daized remnant Auldbiggings ; and maybe in requesting me to be present this day at the precogni-

tion, it may be put in my power to return his condescension."

"But surely, Mrs Soorocks, if the case is clearly made out that the boy is the son of Colonel Bayfield, you would not think of intercepting the just intentions of Mr Rupees?"

"It's a word o' power—It's no in the course o' nature, sir, that a ship burned at sea, and all hands on board perished, should send forth a leevin' witness to contradict the fact."

"True; but it would appear that all on board had not perished."

"Now that's what I'll no credit; and I'll gie you the reason of my misdoubt. Wha's the testimony?—A land-louper that naebody kens onything about.—Ah, sir, if ye had sic experience of the devices of man that I hae had, ye wadna be sae credulous. A man swim out o' the deep like a Robinson Crusoe, w' a wind for a day, to claim awa' the biggest bit o' a gentleman's fortune—it's just a thing for jaycocks, and the likes o' Sir Walter, a no' a shonnie-claver o'; but among jaycocks & intermeddlers, it will be seen through, as a man's name is forgotten in sin, and brought forth a miracle."

“ There are many circumstances in the story,” said I, “ singular and almost improbable, I admit. But Mr Coball, the stranger, appeared to me a man of unaffected sincerity—warm in his feelings, and simple in his manners.”

“ Simple manners ! Verily, verily, that shows how an author may be versed in books, but scant of experience respecting the multifarious crookednesses of a wicked world. Did ye no hear o’ the leasin’ makin’ that I was made the innocent victim o’, nae farther gane than last year, when the ne’er-do-weel wi’ a blackit face came through the kintra, makin’ a wally-waeing about how he was blawn up in a bombshell by the Algerines. I had my doots o’ the story when he cam to my door, though he made it be as very true like a tale, as your condisciple from the uttermost ends o’ the earth tells his ; but no to be thought a’thegither hard-hearted, I put doon a sixpence in his book o’ beggary, wi’ my name til’t, and what do ye think the graceless Gehazi did ? He gaed to Widow M’Plooky’s public, and waur’d the sixpence on gills ; so waurin’ the sixpence on gills, he forged ten shillings before my sixpence, makin’ it look in the book like half-a-guinea.

Then he gaed to Mrs Scuitles, and she seeing my name doon for ten shillings and sixpence, and knowing me for a woman o' moderate means, and o' a sifting and discerning spirit, she put doon hersel for a whole guinea. Syne he gaed to auld Leddy Roughills, and she, no to be behint hand, gied him another guinea; and then he ventured to my lord's, wha wi' his dochters could do nae less than double the example. But as he was on his way to the Nabob, the drink, for of course he had been dry by the way, took his head, and he fell on the road at the toll, where he was kent, and there brought to light, for in dighting his face, he dighted aff the cork coom, and stood before the toll-keeper a bare-faced malefactor. Think what I was obliged to endure, wi' the wite o' being such a simpleton as to gie him such a lovegift largess; ye see what it is to believe stories o' folk blawn up in the air, and what ye're like to get for your pains."

"You have certainly assigned, Mrs Soorocks, very good and sufficient reasons for doing nothing rashly; I have, however, no apprehension that Mr Rupees will suffer himself to be easily deceived."

“ He’ll no be alloo’d were he ever sae willing, if I hae ony voice—It wou’d be even-doon *compos mentos* to give ear to the tale o’ a Jonah frae the whale’s belly ; but *whisht, whisht*, for here’s the house, and there’s ane o’ the *heathens* leadin’ Mr Caption’s whuskey to the *stables*. Weel, I’m glad o’ that ; indeed it wasna to be thocht that a man o’ judgment and *sensibility* like Nawaubpore, would be content on *sic* an occasion wi’ the like o’ you, or even me, to bear witness.”

CHAPTER XXIX.

ON being shown into the library, we found already before us Mr Coball, with a small red-leather brass-nailed trunk in his hand, and the boy at his side seated on a sofa. The Nabob was at the writing-table opposite, with Mr Caption at his right hand. The reception of Mrs Soorocks was particularly gracious, nor had I cause to complain of any deficiency of heartiness in mine.

The proceedings were opened by a summary statement of the whole story from the Nabob, who on this occasion showed both his shrewdness and good sense as a man of business; he made no digressions, but concluded with requesting Mr Coball to produce his vouchers.

The red case was accordingly unclosed, and the letters laid on the table. The Nabob took

them up one by one ; and having looked at them carefully, was on the point, as I thought, of acknowledging at once their authenticity, when Mr Caption said, who probably thought the same thing :—

“ It is not enough to be certain as to the writing—look at the paper, the seals do not appear to me as if they were exact impressions of an original seal.”

The Nabob knit his brows, but made no answer.

Here Mrs Soorocks stepped forward, and lifting one of the letters, looked at the seal, and said—

“ It’s my opinion this is no wax at a’, but fiddler’s rosett, wi’ gold foilzie in’t, and oh it is waff paper.—Nawaubpore, ye wad never write your letters on huxtry tea-paper.”

The Nabob, smiling, shook his head, and Mrs Soorocks looked to me with a triumphant countenance.

“ Any dishonest servant,” said Caption, “ might become possessed of such papers, admitting, for the sake of argument, that they may be genuine.”

“ True,” replied Mr Coball ; “ but such letters do not appear, from anything in their contents, to have been worth the stealing.”

“ Hoo can ye tell what a covetous-minded servant wad think worth stealing ?” cried Mrs Soorocks eagerly. “ I had a servant-lass that stole one of Mr Soorocks’ Greek books. What use could a Greek book be to her ? But she confessed that she did steal it.—There’s no telling what dishonest servants will do.”

The Nabob interposed.

“ The letters are mine,” said he ; and turning to the lady, added jocularly, “ As to the wax, I know it well, I bought it at Hazaribaug ; and the paper is Chinese, I brought from India with me. Moreover, on reference to my Dawk-book now before me, I find that the dates agree.”

“ But,” he added, addressing himself to Mr Coball, “ it is strange that you should have obtained possession of these letters only—Have you nothing else ? for they prove nothing as to the identity of the boy there.”

“ With these letters,” replied Mr Coball, “ were several valuable trinkets, and two packets of pearls.”

“ And what have you done with them ?” cried Caption eagerly.—“ ’Tis easy to say so.”

“ He’ll hae made awa’ wi’ them,” said Mrs Soorocks, in half a whisper to me.

“ No, madam,” replied Mr Coball, who had overheard her ; “ they are here,” and he laid the packets and trinkets on the table.

Caption was evidently confounded, while the Nabob’s countenance brightened.

“ But I canna see,” resumed Mrs Soorocks, “ hoo a when gew-gaws can prove that black’s white, or, ony mair than the letters, mak it a bit clearer that this bairn’s no anither.”

“ Certainly not, madam,” said Mr Caption firmly—“ Certainly not, you are quite right.”

“ I thocht I wad be sae,” said Mrs Soorocks, and she looked significantly.

The Nabob in the meantime was examining the trinkets ; and I observed that he noticed a necklace with particular attention.

Mr Coball at this crisis took out of the trunk a small neat pocket memorandum-book, and presented it open to the Nabob, saying—

“ I think this must have been a diary which Mrs Bayfield was keeping of our voyage—the

last entry is the date of the very day preceding that night on which our calamity happened."

"I acknowledge," said the Nabob, at the first glance, "that the writing appears to be Mrs Bayfield's."

"But what does that prove?" said Mr Caption.

"You will find," said the stranger calmly, "that my name, James Coball, is mentioned in a list of the passengers at the beginning."

Here Mrs Soorocks begged to look at the list.

"To be sure," said she, "there is the name of a James Coball; but whar's the proof that ye are that James Coball, or that ye are a James Coball at a'?"

The stranger looked confused.

"Yes," cried Caption, "where is the evidence of that fact?"

No immediate answer was given; but after a short pause, Mr Coball answered—

"I think sufficient evidence has been produced, to convince any honest man that there is truth enough in my story to induce the executor of the late Colonel Bayfield to examine the whole circumstances, although there is not

enough to make the heir in possession of Colonel Bayfield's property surrender to this boy; but when I add, that several of those who were saved with us in the boat, and particularly the officer, to whom we were all so much indebted, are alive, and I believe are at this time in England, it would seem to me that beyond a decent investigation of the facts there would be little honour or honesty in resisting the claim."

The Nabob looked at me and said—

"He's an honest man, after all."

"Dinna be deceived, Nawaubpore," exclaimed Mrs Soorocks; "for there's mair depends upon this matter, than being beguiled wi' a blackened ne'er-do-weel as I was, ye ken, last year."

The Nabob turned to Caption.—"Ought we not immediately to institute an inquiry to find those witnesses?"

"No, sir," replied Caption, with a professional smirk—"No, sir, the *onus probandi* lies with this gentleman, who hath spontaneously placed himself *in loco parentis* to the infant."

"Ye're a man o' observation, Mr Caption," cried Mrs Soorocks, her countenance brighten-

ing with satisfaction—"Ye're a man o' observation. I'll say naething concerning the sincerity o' lawyers' bosoms; but I aye thocht there was something in your head, whatever ill-natured folks might say to the contrair."

The lawyer took no notice of this remark, which, like most of the good lady's compliments, cut both ways, but resumed—

"It is not to be expected that the respondent is to furnish the pursuer with evidence; even the Jury Court would hardly require anything so unreasonable."

"But, Mr Caption," said the Nabob, "it may turn out in this case that I am both plaintiff and defendant; and all I require is full and sufficient proof; for another heir may make his appearance. I wish I had Craigdarroch with me to set us on a proper train; but, d—n him, he's doing patriot just now, and humbugging the nincompoops of the Stewardry. If we had him even fresh from one of his election-dinners, I should be content, for I have known him after a hard drink, and before going to bed, give a clearer and sounder opinion than any of us see-

thren could after a light supper and a sober sleep. He once conducted a case for me——”

“Na,” interrupted Mrs Soorocks, “if he’s a man o’ that discernment, he’ll do us some credit in the Parliament-house, and that’s mair than can weel be said of a’ ‘the chosen five-and-forty.’”

The Nabob here rejoined,—

“This business, my dear lady, promises no good to your friend the Laird; for, in duty to myself, it will be necessary to foreclose his mortgage immediately.—Caption, you will take no notice of my note of last night, desiring you to stay the proceedings against Mr Mailings.”

“Very well, sir,” replied Caption—“misjudged lenity, as I said; but as your order was in writing, you will be pleased instruct me in writing to the contrary effect.”

“Oh, Mr Roopy,—(Nawaubpore, as I should say,)”—exclaimed Mrs Soorocks, “haud your han’, and be melted to tender mercies, or what will become o’ the puir auld man? Work he caanna, and want he maunna—he’ll be a burden upon us all, and little do you ken o’ the woe ye may bring upon a most excellent woman; for

he's on the point of marriage wi' Miss Shoosie Minnigaff, ane o' the amiable leddies o' Barenbraes. She'll dee o' a broken heart, if she does na lay violent hauns on hersell."

This sad and gentle appeal, instead of producing the desired effect on the Nabob, only served to make him burst into an immoderate fit of laughter.

"Married! the old guddah! and to one of those cameleopards too! Who the devil contrived this hopeful union? It must have been yourself, Mrs Soorocks; for it never could have entered into the heart of man—of any man—to marry a crane—an adjutant is corpulent, compared to her. Why, my good lady, if the worst comes to the worst, he can only simply be starved; but if your benevolent scheme were accomplished, he would be starved, and pecked to boot.—But this long sederunt, as you would call it, Mr Caption, will go well nigh to starve us all, so I shall order dinner.—Mr Cobtail, in you, as soon as possible, procure the necessary evidence. You may rest assured, that there shall be no unnecessary or vexatious delay in it"

Shoosie ; and in consequence, it was agreed that the ceremony thereof should be deferred till the following day.

On the day following, accordingly, I went to her house, and we walked leisurely on together.

“ I’m thinkin’,” said she, as we got on the *inverness* of the high-road—“ I’m thinkin’ that the *man*, if we were to forsake him now, would be a perfect object ; but I feel that we are agents, raised up as it were like babes and sucklings, to bring him out o’ the house o’ bondage, the which, in my opinion, is the debtor’s-hold in the tolbooth, if waur than captivity were not to be his lot.”

“ I agree, ma’am, in all you say. It is most consolatory to think that we are both afforded an opportunity to show how mankind are capable of doing a disinterested action.”

“ I’ll mak’ nae rouse o’ mysell,” replied the lady ; “ but I ken the secrets o’ my own breast ; and tho’ I dinna wish to lightly your loving-kindness towards Auldbiggings, I hae a notion it may be something like a bit spunk o’ curiosity that has helped to heat the zeal o’ your disinterestedness ; for I have remarked—I mean

nae offence—that ye hae a particular pleasure in lookin’ into the catastrophes o’ ither folks. For my part, I am thankfu’ to walk wi’ a humble heart and a contrite spirit; for if good come o’ my sma’ endeavour, sure am I that nane o’ the merit thereof can be attributed to me.”

Thus piously discoursing, we plodded onward to the door of Barenbraes; and as it was agreed between us, I entered first, and thus opened the business:—

“Ladies, I have brought with me a person whom we have all great reason to esteem. Ever since she had the misfortune to incur your displeasure, she has been the most wretched of womankind,—she comes to confess a fault, to acknowledge a sin, and if you require it, even on bended knees, to kiss the hems o’ your garments——”

“In a figurative sense,” interrupted Mrs Soorocks.

But I waved my hand to her to be quiet, and continued:—

“Miss Girzie, I have long respected your prudence, and valued your excellent sense; so

I told our mutual friend here, that although her offence was of very great enormity——”

“Enormity! her assurance was large,” cried Miss Shoosie.

“Yes, Miss Shoosie, her imprudence was large, indeed, but her repentance is without measure——”

“In a certain sense,” said Mrs Soorocks.

“But,” continued I, “it would be idle to waste words on ladies of your piety, were I to attempt to urge that this was a case for the exercise of the Christian grace of forgiveness. If Mrs Soorocks be hasty in temper, and rash in tongue, you know, Miss Girzie, that you have the failing of sometimes giving provocation; and Miss Shoosie, mild as ye are, which my friend Mr Mailings regards as the greatest grace of your gentle sex, yet you know that there are times when the best of us may err, and even when you yourself——”

“If,” interrupted Miss Shoosie, “Mrs Soorocks has come to beg my pardon, she’ll find that I’ll no be insensible to the dishonour she has brought upon hersell.”

“She comes to beg your pardon; but you

must not use such words as dishonour when we are treating of peace.—Mrs Soorocks, do you ask pardon of the ladies?—Ladies, do you on your part acknowledge that faults are on both sides? For, in the exercise of a sound discretion, reciprocal concession is what I would recommend to all.”

“ Weel, leddies,” said Mrs Soorocks, “ since it maun be sae, what can we do but submit? tho’ I think, Miss Shoosie, ye give baith the sore stroke and the loud cry; howsever, since it’s a’ past, and we’re frien’s again——”

“ Friends !” cried Miss Girzie, with an English accent—“ Friends ! we may forgive what’s past, but I see no obligation for us to be friends.”

“ Come, come, ladies, neighbours should be neighbour-like,” said I; “ and, Miss Shoosie, if you knew the cause that has brought Mrs Soorocks here to-day, instead of standing so far aloof from reconciliation, you would embrace her in your arms, and press her to your heart. She has been explaining to me the mournful situation of Mr Mailings.”

“ It’s no my fault,” interposed Miss Shoosie; “ for if ye had waited to hear what me and my

sister were going to say the other night, you would never have thocht us such mercenary women as to have broken off with a gentleman like Mr Mailings for the lucre o' gain."

"Na," said Mrs Soorocks, "considering the jeopardy that you and Miss Girzie are in, o' a sudden retribution frae your sister, Leddy Chandos, like a thief in the night, ye wad hae been waur than mad had ye made a hesitation; for oh, it rins before me, like the shadow o' a forthcoming judgment upon ye, Miss Shoosie, the terrible day that the cry o' Justice, wi' the scales in her ae hand, and the sword in her ither, will be heard afore your door, and plack and bawbee to the uttermost will be required aff ye. I canna imagine, leddies, what makes you swither."

"We dinna swither; but we would act prudently."

"Ca' ye't acting prudently, in your situation, to risk the loss of a most estimable man's affections for what canna be modesty, Miss Shoosie? you surely hae lived ower lang in the world to ken what modesty means between fifty and threescore.—Leddies, leddies, I maun use the

freedom o' an auld frien' wi' ye—yere tyning your time. Just come ower the night, and tak' your tea wi' me, and I'll send for Mr Mailings; and as Nawaubpore's a Justice o' the Peace, I dinna misdout his coming, and we'll get the marriage put out o' haun'——”

Miss Shoosie cast down her eyes as she replied,—

“ I could never think of such a rash step.”

“ Oh! Mrs Soorocks,” exclaimed Miss Girzie, “ it's what I never could alloo,—twa clandestine marriages in my father's family—oh no !”

“ You are quite right, Miss Girzie, it would make folk expect a third.”

“ But,” said Mrs Soorocks, “ noo, when I think o't, it might occasion malicious insinuations, to the great damage and detriment of Miss Shoosie's fair fame, considering the well-known and long-tried affection subsisting between her and the Laird; so I'll no insist; but come to your tea, and I'll hae Mr Mailings o' the party, when we can arrange a' about the booking and the buying o' your bridal braws, since ye will hae a regular marriage.”

Having thus established peace, and arranged,

as I had supposed, the business of the evening, and being regaled with the ladies' home-made wine, Mrs Soorocks and I bade them adieu, and bent our steps towards Auldbiggings. Before we had, however, reached the bottom of the avenue, we observed Jock coming from the house, like an ostrich at full speed, his arms swinging in the air, and his skirts streaming behind. As he drew near, horror and consternation were legible in his countenance, and in one hand he held a letter, which he gave to me, before he could collect breath to explain the burden of his haste. As the shortest means of discovering the motive of his speed, I opened the letter, and read as follows:—

“ TO MALACHI MAILINGS, Esquire of Auldbiggings.

“ SIR,

“ I am instructed by my client, Mr Walter Rupees of Nawaubpore, to beg your attention to my last, dated 3d current; and further to state, that if satisfaction is not rendered thereto *quam primum*, diligence will immediately issue.

“ I am further instructed, with respect to the matter of the interest due last money, and *toties quoties* called for, to request an answer *quam primum*.

“ I am, Sir,
“ Your obedient Servant,
“ HUGH CAPTION.”

By this time Jock had recovered his breath, and said,—

“ Weel, ye see the last trumpet’s now blawn, —what’s to be done?—is’t no possible to get a respite till the lottery be drawn?—The Laird’s just gane bye himsell—he’s toddlin’ but and toddlin’ ben the house, whiles wringin’ his hauns, and whiles makin’ murgeons as if he was speakin’.—It was a better world when gentlemen werena fash’d wi’ law.—I’m sure the ten commandments are worth a’ the King’s statutes, and ye’ll no fin’ a word in them about payin’ o’ debts, e’en an ye were able.—I’m just wud to think o’ the mischief that this law—law—law has brocht upon poor Scotland!—But oh! I’m glad to see you and Mrs Soorocks,—ye’ll be a great cordial to him under his calamity; and

oh, mem, dinna mak' your charity on the present occasion a bit and a buffet wi't; but speak him kindly; for oh, he's helpless, and far past the power o' Jenny Clatterpans and me to gie him ony comfort, even though we baith fleech-ed him, and clapped him on the shooters, yin at every side, to tak anither tumbler o' toddy; for hath not Solomon said, in the words of Robbie Burns,—

‘ Gie him strong drink until he wink,
That's sinkin' in despair ?’

Blyth was I when I saw you comin'; but when ye gang to the house, dinna let wot that ye hae seen me, or ken onything about what's gaun to happen; for our Laird was aye proud, and this misfortune has made him a perfect turkey-cock for pride,—he storm'd at Jenny Clatterpans and me for our kindness, and push'd us awa, and wonder'd hoo we daured to be sae familiar wi' our master; crying out—a wee de-leerit as I thocht—that had it no been for the poortith come upon him, we would never hae been sae upsetting; and he wyted it a' on the liberty and equality speerit o' the times, and the

taxes, and the high wages, that were grindin' the rightfu' gentry frae aff the face o' the earth, —Noo, dear sir and mem, I beg and beseech that ye'll speak him kindly, and mak' much o' him, for oh, he's grown thin-skinned!—Mrs Soorocks, he canna thole a taunt noo!"

This sad account of the Laird's condition, had the effect of embarrassing us both; and on leaving the simple and faithful creature, we proceeded towards "The Place," without exchanging a word, or making a single comment on what we had heard,

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approaching the door. Jenny Clatterpans was standing there, and from time to time she looked towards the garden. The other maid was in the same room, and every now and then she looked in the same direction. The aspect of both was not troubled, nor did her countenance wear a more tranquil expression; but both in countenance and both betrayed something which manifested assentance to their feelings.

When Mrs. Sorrowful sat exactly as I did, it was impossible to determine by anything in her countenance, but she abruptly left me and went towards the maids. At the same moment she turned round, and discovered the lady walking to and fro in the garden, with her hands behind her, her eyes perusing the grass of

the walks, and his whole figure, by the bend and by the solemnity of his air, indicating the perplexity of his spirit.

I went immediately towards him, none displeased at that moment to be relieved from the presence of Mrs Soorocks. I put on the blithest face I could assume, and tuned my voice to cheerfulness as I drew near to the dejected old man. But although he saw me coming, and nodded in his wonted familiar manner as I approached the walk which he was pacing, he soon relapsed into his reverie, and moved along unconscious of being so observed.

I stopped some ten or fifteen yards from him ; I looked forward, and the distress of his mind, though visibly mingled with a strong ingredient of absurdity, was yet such as could not be seen without sympathy.

As he walked along the dark unmowed grass, he paused suddenly, and stooping forward, he pulled a rose.

“ It’s my ain yet,” said he with a smile, as he turned round, and smelling it, held it out towards me.

“ It has grown in my forefathers’ land,” he

added ; “ I set it mysell—I made the hole for’t wi’ my ain very fingers—I watered it wi’ the china jug, that was my father’s punch porringer, as I hae heard my kind mother say—and what can be a man’s ain, if that bush and bud be na mine ?”

Then he moved some four or five paces, and tearing the flower into pieces, he scattered the petals around, and knitting his brows and clenching his hands, he rushed with his left hand extended, as if he entreated and deprecated some afflicting power, revealed in form only to himself. It is the peculiar characteristic of all grievous emotions to move and gesticulate with the left arm, as in like manner it is for those of power and exertion to indicate their predominance by the energy and emphasis of the right,

When that brief paroxysm had subsided, he returned leisurely and sedately towards the spot where I was standing.

“ Is there no a possible o’ ony kind, by the which this may be eschewed ?”

He seemed to think by the expression, that I must of course be acquainted with the cause and sources of his trouble, and had his pertur-

bation been less obviously painful, perhaps I might have played a little with his perplexities, but his look was so vacant and infantine, that it was impossible to regard him with any other sentiment than pity.

“ I understand,” said I, “ that the Nabob has resolved to follow out his determination. I am sorry for it, but his own condition half pleads in extenuation of his rigour.”

“ It was a luckless day,” was the answer, “ when the thread of my life was ravelled wi’ his knotty thrums—my lot and station, though lanerly, was lown—I had nae law fashin’ me, but only an uncertainty about a bit heritable bond, that in a sense wasna worth the speaking about.—Noo, I’m driven to desperation.—There’s that limb o’ Satan, Caption, greetin’ in the king’s name—there’s John Angle, the surveyor, demanding a compensation—and there’s that goolden image o’ Nebuchadnezor, Rupees—Oh, oh, and alas ! if I wasna preserved, I wud droon mysell.—My book I canna write—to work I’m no able—the curse o’ Gilbert, when he was a beggar man, has overtaken me ; for

when the three pound in the desk-head is spent and gone, I'll no hae a penny left for a morsel —I'm a destitute creature—I'm a forlorn auld man—I'm a verra object—Oh, I'm an object!"

I endeavoured to console him as well as I could, but the sense of desolation was so strong upon him that the endeavour was ineffectual.

"It's a terrible thing," cried he, "for a man to be miserable.—O, Adam and Eve, ye hae muckle to answer for.—If I was young, I would be a sodger. Were my mind composed, I could write an instructin' book. Had I been bred a tailor, I could have made claes; but I canna even sing ballats; for Heaven in its displeasure made me wi' a timmer tune. I can do naething but beg. I'll no can lang even gang frae door to door; for I'm auld, and I hae an income in my leg—I'll hae to sit on a stane on the road-side, wi' a ragged hat on my knee, and my bare grey head in the shower—Heaven preserve me, will I be sittin' beggin' at my ain yett!"—

The last sentence was uttered with a tone of horror that made me shudder, and I said,—

"Mr Mailings, do not give way to such

frightful presentiments ; I beseech you to be more composed."

" I'll be put in a prison," cried he—" I'll be fastened doon wi' an airn chain in the debtor's-hole—but what will they mak' by that ? for I hae naething—the dyvor's bill can do nae gude to a failed and broken-hearted auld beggar man—To be sure, I might steal cocks and hens, and be sent to Botany Bay ; but what could I do there.—O dear, I wish I was in another world, for my use and part in this world is done now."

He then walked away from me, and continued for several minutes pacing another part of the garden. Sometimes he halted and raised his hand, as if he were arguing with himself ; anon he quickened his pace, and at last he turned briskly round, and came rushing towards me with exultation in his countenance.

" I hae found a redemption," he exclaimed. " I'll marry Miss Shoosie Minnigaff. She has goold in goupens. I hae heard my mither say there wasna sic a plenished napery-kist as the ane at Barenbraes in a' the west o' Scotland ; and if I dinna like her, ye ken, she'll hae the

means of providing hersell wi' a separate maintenance."

So intense had been the distress of the old man, that I really felt as it were relieved, when he proposed to adopt this sinister and sordid expedient; and in consequence—it may be not in a spirit of the purest morality—I applauded his resolution, and began to commend the merits and qualities of the lady with many a magnifying augmentative.

At this juncture, Mrs Soorocks joined us; it was evident by her manner as she approached, that the servants had very sensibly affected her compassion, and her exhilaration was at least equal to mine, when I told her that the Laird had resolved to marry Miss Shoosie.

"It's a wark—" said he, however, with a sigh.

"And of mercy to yoursell, Laird, that ye'll alloo. But no to mak mair clishmaclaver about it, I expect my friend Bailie Waft frae Paisley in the afternoon; so ye'll come ower, and tak your tea and a crack wi' him, and I'll send for the leddies, and we'll soon get a' settled."

"It's a soor drogue, mem," replied the Laird; "but the ill and the ail need the dose—I canna

but say, that it's a most extraordinary thing that a man hasna a choice o' his ain in choosin' the wife of his bosom. That weddings are made in Heaven, it's ill to believe, if I'm ordained to be brocht to sic a puir pass as this comes to!—to think that ever I should hae been brocht to marry such a gray gull as Shoosie Minnigaff—it's an iniquity—it's a cryin' sin—it's a sellin' o' me to the Ismaelites—D—l tak baith law and gospel, I'll no marry her yet."

"But consider," cried Mrs Soorocks, "there's Mr Caption——"

"Whare?" cried the Laird, starting and looking round.

"And Mr Angle," resumed the lady, "demanding, as I am told, twenty golden guineas for his curiosity."

"He may thank the government," replied the Laird, "that it's an impossibility to get them. Wasna the guineas put doon and hidden frae the light o' day, and the sight and reach o' man, in the bottomless dungeons o' the Bank o' England, like prisoners doomed to everlasting captivity, a' to let the King raise money by a stamp-act on bank-notes, by the which——"

Here the old man was getting on his hobby, when Mrs Soorocks interfered—

“Hoot toot, Laird, we dinna want to hear o’ your standard unit the noo, when we’re speakin’ o’ marriage—so ye’ll just come to your tea, and meet your blooming bride. Leave a’ the lave o’ the trouble to folk that understand thae matters better than yoursell.”



CHAPTER XXXII.

At the time appointed, and punctual to the hour, I was at the door of Mrs Soorocks. My friend Leezy admitted me with a pleasant and significant smile. I was desirous of saying something to her on the occasion ; but the parlour door being open, I could only smile in return, and walk forward.

On entering the room, I was delighted to see the Laird in full dress, and the two ladies of Barenbraes, all there before me. Miss Shoosie was sitting far aloof, with downcast eyes, and looking interestingly bridal, to the best of her ability. The air of Miss Girzie was more disengaged ; and she was seated beside the Laird, seemingly on terms of easy conversation. Mrs Soorocks herself was busy spreading and cutting down the greater part of a large loaf.

As the entertainment was of a pre-nuptial character, it was of course of more than wonted ceremony; and accordingly the tea-table displayed a more than usual show of short-bread, puffs, and seed-cake, to which were added, the delicacies of jellies and marmalades.

A little behind Mrs Soorocks, and not observable on first entering the room, her cousin, Bailie Waft, was seated, refreshing himself after his walk with a glass of whisky and water, sweetened with Muscovado sugar.

“Dear me, Bailie,” exclaimed Mrs Soorocks, looking round, after I was seated, “what have I been about?—no to gie you a lime, when I hae got five left o’ the half-a-dizzen that was sent to me by the carrier frae our frien’ Mrs Puncheons. What dainties thae West India folk in Glasgow enjoy! They weel ken hoo to mak turtle-soup wi’ Madeira wine, and no like the lady o’ their Port, that boiled a whole turtle-fish wi’ barley, and was feared to eat it, thinkin’ it wasna wholesome because it didna turn red in the shell like a partan.”

So saying, she rose, and opening her cupboard-door, took out a lime from five lying in

a small china-plate, shrivelled on the skin, and as brown as walnuts.

By the by, Mrs Soorocks' cupboard was what, in Renfrewshire, is called a dining-room press, being one of those domestic Museums peculiar to the royal county, and as hers was an example of the kind, it well deserves to be particularly described.

The folding-doors disclosed an arched niche, with pilasters on each side. The shelves were scolloped in the edges, the whole painted of a bright green, and the edges of the shelves and the capitals of the pilasters were gaudily tricked and gilded.

On the bulging centre of the first shelf lay inverted a large punch-bowl, on the bottom of which stood one of lesser dimensions, out of which rose a curious cordial-bottle with two necks. The bowl was flanked with a row of long-shanked wine-glasses, with white spiral ornaments in the stalks, and at the extremity of each wing stood a tall urn-like china-pot with a lid. In the obscurity behind the glasses, you might discover a row of china-plates on

their edges ; and above each, on a brass-nail, hung as many custard-glasses by their handles.

On the second floor, the curiosities were somewhat reversed. The shelf receded in the middle, and sweeping forward on both sides, projected over the trays, which below were adorned with the tall spiral-stalked glasses already described ; on each of these projections, two middle-sized punch-bowls were inverted, the bottom of each surmounted with a china tea-pot of an antic and fantastical form ; in the centre was a vacant place, generally occupied by the silver tea-pot then upon the table : at each side of it usually stood a lofty porcelain tower of tea-cups and saucers—but one of them was at this time demolished, and placed on the tray for the use of the company, A variety of minor bijouterie and wine-glasses filled up the interstices.

The centre of the third shelf again projected, and on it stood a stately crystalline structure, consisting of several stories of syllabub glasses, crowned with a large and lofty shallow goblet, which at the New-year's festival of Mrs Soorocks, when the whole power and splendour of

her cupboard were made effective, was usually occupied with a venerable preserved orange—a gift of some years antiquity from one of her nieces, confected a priori to her own wedding. On each side of this glittering and fragile pile, stood a miscellaneous assemblage of marrowless cups, cracked cream-pots and ale-glasses, flanked by two enormous goblets, with the initials of the late Mr Soorocks engraved thereon. Like many of the other things, they were never used, save on the great annual banquet so often referred to; on which occasion, the one was filled with ale and the other with porter after dinner.

The tea-urn having been brought in, Mrs Soorocks said—

“As ye’re the young leddy, Miss Girzie, ye’ll mak’ the tea;” and so saying, she rose from her chair at the tea-table, and then came and seated herself beside the Laird, while I drew my chair close to the left of Miss Girzie; her sister also moved in echelon upon her right.

Miss Girzie having lifted one of the little silver tea-cannisters, began to take out the orthodox quantity with a spoon, by one spoonful for

the tea-pot, and one for each guest. During this process I heard the intended bride whisperingly say—"Girzie, dinna be wasterfu', shake the spoon, and no heap every ane as if it were a cart o' hay."

Tea being made, the task of handing it round was imposed upon the Laird, he being, as Mrs Soorocks observed, the young man of the company, though this chronologically was not exactly the fact.

During the time the entertainment was being served, our conversation was of a general and ordinary description. Bailie Waft talked political economy, and argued with the Laird against the corn laws; Mrs Soorocks expatiated on the felicity of the married state; while I said agreeable things to Miss Girzie, interspersed with exhilarative allusions in parenthesis to her sister.

So passed the time till tea was finished; and when the equipage was removed by Leezy, and the door shut, Mrs Soorocks thus began the prologue to the matrimonial theme:—

"I have long wished to see such a meeting as the present. Time wears out all things, and

lairds and ladies are like the flowers that bloom, and plants that perish—creatures of a day, and butterflies o' the sunshine. It has often been a wonder to me how year after year should have passed away, and the affection so long nourished in secret atween—I'll no say wha—should never hae come to an issue."

The Laird hemmed sceptically, and Miss Shoo-sie looked for her pocket-hole, that she might no doubt be ready with her handkerchief.

"But," continued Mrs Soorocks, "whatever is ordained will sooner or later come to pass; and seldom hae I ever had in my life a pleasanter reflection, than in seeing here twa young persons made for one another."

The Laird looked with the tail of his eye towards Miss Shoosie, and seemed as if he smelt senna, or mandragora; while she drew her hand over her face bashfully, as if to conceal the depth of her emotions.

The Bailie interposed—

"There's nae need, cousin, to mak thrown-up warp o' the web we hae in han'; the young couple understand one another; and if the yarn has been raveled for a time, it's weel redd noo.

The only thing that I would object to is the delay, and for twa sound and substantial reasons—first, it's an auld byword and a true, that delays are dangerous; and under the second head, I would speak o' economy, and anent the expense o' what extravagant wasterfu' women ca' bridal brows."

"In that," said I, interrupting him, "I agree with you, Mr Waft; on this occasion, such expenditure is quite unnecessary."

"But," rejoined Miss Girzie, "wouldna my sister, Mrs Soorocks, don't you think, require a riding-habit for the wedding-jaunt?"

"It's verra true," was the answer, "that mony a young leddy that ne'er was on a horse's back, nor expects to be, gets a riding-habit at her marriage, the which is put to nae ither use after, than to be made up into claes for some o' the bairns; and in that respect, there might be something to be said for your sister getting ane; but all things considered——"

Here the Laird groaned from the depths of his spirit, and the Bailie quietly interposed—

"But if there is no marriage-jaunt, and I see no need of such a thing, where is the need to

mak an outlay for a riding-habit at all?—'Deed, my friends, if you'll be ruled by me, you'll mak up for your lost time, and declare a marriage at once, without farther summering or wintering about the matter."

"Oh," cried Miss Girzie, lifting her hands, and spreading her fingers, "is't a possibility!"

Miss Shoosie heaved a sigh. The Laird rose from his seat, and walking with his hands behind his back to the window, raised another in responsive echo; while Mrs Soorocks, before commencing operations, gave me a sly nod, as much as to intimate her ability and readiness to carry on the attack.

"Laird," said she, "I'm no ane that is for hurrying on a solemn business in a rash manner. Before we come to speak of the wedding seriously—tho' we're only joking yet——"

The Laird interrupted her tartly, and looking round with a particularly sinister expression of countenance, concluded the sentence by adding—"And I houp ye'll be lang sae."

"Weel, weel, Laird," replied the lady, "ye know it's all your ain doing; tak your wull o't; it depends entirely on yoursell."

“ On me ?” cried the Laird—“ My gracious ! whae ever heard the equal o’ that ?”—Then he muttered in an under tone, “ If ever there was a lee, that’s ane.”

“ Lee !” said Mrs Soorocks, catching the Laird’s *aside*—“ Every joke’s a lee o’ its kind.—But come, help yoursell to a glass o’ my old wine ; for ye seem to be in an unco low key, Laird. Ye see the Bailie requires neither precept nor example wi’ his tumbler, when the mercy’s afore him.”

For some time after this, there was a visible embarrassment in the manner of all present. Mrs Soorocks, however, was the ruling spirit of the hour, and she presided with undismayed equanimity.

After taking off his first glass, the Laird was persuaded by his active hostess to a second, and to a third ; but still matters looked, to use her own expression, “ unco dowie.” She then tried him on a new tack.

“ Ye believe, Laird,” she said, “ that whatever is destined to come in at ane’s door ’ill no gang bye them ?”

“Doubtless,” answered the Laird, “there is nae arguing against that.”

“Weel, if ye come that length, I maun just tell ye my mind, that for mony and mony a lang year it has aye struck me, somehow or ither, that Providence, Laird, destined Miss Shoosie there and you for ane anither. I’m persuaded you’re mair than half o’ that opinion yoursell?”

“Doubtless, strange wheemsies will enter intil leddies’ heads,” replied the Laird, turning his face half away from the speaker, like one half unwilling to listen to unwelcome intelligence—“It’s neither your duty nor mine to dive sae deep into the hidden secrets o’ nature.”

“Na, but, Laird, just hear me a moment,” said Mrs Soorocks, lifting up nuts from a china-plate on the side-table—“seeing is believing all the world over. Now, ye see, if I was to take a pair of these nuts, and say to mysell, there’s me and there’s Mr Rupy, as I throwed them into the fire, ye wad see the ane fizz, and flee away frae the ither up the lum, or out at the ribs, like a bomb-shell; for, ye observe, it’s no in the course o’ nature that the like o’ him and

me should ever come thegither ; but on the contrair—sae deeply am I impressed wi' the truth o' what I am saying—that I could wager my life maistly, that were I to put in these twa, and say, as I do noo, ' there goes you, Laird, and there goes Miss Shoosie,'—(all the time Mrs Soorocks was suiting the action to the word,)—ye wad observe them burn to a white aizle lovingly together."

The two nuts, according to Mrs Soorocks' prediction, burned together lovingly.

" It's gay curious, I allow," said the Laird ; " but dinna expect to throw cantrips in my een wi' ony o' your glaumrie. Whether I take or rejec, it maun be a free-will gift."

" Maist certainly," was the reply of Bailie Waft ; " and from what I've seen and heard about ye, Laird, I aye jealoused where your guid taste wad land ye."

Mrs Soorocks, though sorely put to her mettle by the Laird's obduracy, yet was determined not to leave the well-foughten field without gaining her point ; so, with Mr Mailings's consent, she mixed for him a tumbler of punch, " the rum of which," as she told him, " having

been procured from Cornel Archy of Greenock, was of a suavity as mild as its vender."

The general jocularities were meanwhile on the increase, Mrs Soorocks from time to time urging the gentlemen to use their freedoms with her bottles, and do a little for the good of the house; and, though tardy to relax, the Laird's features at length brightened up with congenial sympathy. The Bailie became garrulous, and hinted away from time to time to Miss Shoosie on the pleasures of housekeeping. Miss Girzie argued briskly with Mrs Soorocks for and against the propriety of irregular and clandestine marriages, but with a tone of concession gradually softening into conciliation; while the Laird, continuing to wax still more cheerful and bold, boasted of his youthful sprees, and, as he snapped his thumbs, sang aloud a verse of the old ballad,—

“ The carle he came ower the craft
Wi' his beard new shaven. ”

“ Na,” cried Mrs Soorocks, “ if it's come to that wi' ye, Laird, it's time we should bring ye afore a magistrate, and hae your vows honour-

ably ratified.—Bailie Waft, I tell ye to put him to the question.”

Here the Bailie rose, and endeavouring to wipe the flush from his brow with his handkerchief, looked as grave as the occasion would let him, and said, “Mr Mailings, is this lady,”—pointing to Miss Shoosie,—“your wife?”

“Ony lady’s my wife,” said the Laird, “that will condescend to tak me.”

The Bailie then turned to Miss Shoosie,—“Do you, madam, acknowledge this gentleman for your husband?”

“Confess, confess,” cried Mrs Soorocks, “and dinna spoil our ploy.”

Miss Shoosie simpered, and said, “Sister, I canna refuse ony langer.”

Here there was a general clapping of hands, and the health of Mr and Mrs Mailings was drank in bumpers by all but themselves. The bride acknowledged the courtesy with solemn propriety, and the Laird answered with a loud laugh; but there was a ring in its sound wild and sardonic. Another tumbler, however, soon restored the hilarity; and in a few minutes after,

supper, which Mrs Soorocks had prospectively prepared for the occasion, was announced.

The fete passed over with all due humour and conviviality. The Laird warmed more and more towards his bride, and said many sweet things across the table, as much to the amazement as the amusement of the company. Bailie Waft waxed eloquent in Glasgow stories, and forgot himself at length so far as to lose the solemnity of his official situation in jocose song-singing.

At a late, or rather an early hour, the happy party arose from table, and under a moon

“ Ploughing the azure depths, and looking down .
With sanctified benignity on man,”

sallied forth for The Place, the bride hanging tenderly on the bridegroom's arm.

After taking off a glass of the Laird's canary, to the future felicities of the enamoured couple, we at length wished them a good night. The Bailie and myself, talking of matrimonial comforts, conveyed Miss Girzie weeping to her now solitary home.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

EARLY next morning I went over to Mrs Soorocks, to assist her in the reveilie of the young couple ; but on approaching the door, she chanced to observe me from the parlour window, and let me in herself.

“ O,” said she, in a voice of serious alarm, “ what have I no got to tell you !”

I was thunderstruck at the earnestness of her exclamation, and cried,—

“ My gracious ! has the bridegroom run away ?”

“ Waur than that, waur than that ; meikle hae ye to answer for.—Nawaubpore yestreen, when we were at our daffin’,—blind mortals we are, and little ken the perils o’ our situation—Nawaubpore, as I was saying, sent ower his London newspaper to read ; but I was so taen up, that I neglecket it till this morning, and what do you think was the first thing that met

my consternated eye—the marriage o' Dr Lounlans, and to whom?—guess."

"I hope your suspicions have not been verified?"

"Verified! they have been dumbfounder'd. He's married, and married to Miss Clawrissy Chandos, the great heiress, and failing her mother, the rightfu' leddy o' Barenbraes.—Now, think o' that and weep."

"This is indeed extraordinary news!"

"It's a thunderclap," said Mrs Soorocks. "It's an earthquake—I think I fin' the world shooglin beneath my verra feet. We thocht the Nabob wad be an oppressor, but what has the puir Laird to expect frae the hauns o' Dr Lounlans, on his mother's account! Na—I canna think at a' about Mrs Mailings. Na, it was never ordained that she shou'd hae been married!—O, sir, what have ye no to answer for!"

"Upon my word, Mrs Soorocks," replied I gravely, "it has been all your own work; I have been but an innocent spectator. I took no particular part in the business. You first suggested it to me; I remember very well the

time and the place. It was in the avenue of Auldbiggings. Me, Mrs Soorocks! no one can impute any blame to me."

"Weel! after that," cried the lady, "I'll be surprised at nothing that man may say. But, hoosever, I shake myself free o' them, and let you and them settle it as ye may; for I hae lang promised Mrs Puncheons a visit, and I'll be aff to Blythswood Place this blessed day. I declare I dinna ken whether I'm standin' on my head or my heels; surely it's all a dream, and a vision o' the night-season: Shoosie Minnigaff married! the thing's no possible, tho' it has taen place afore my ain een."

"But, my dear ma'am, let us be calm—let us consider what is the next best to be done."

"Consider yoursell; what have I to consider?" exclaimed the lady; "I wash my hands—I have had nothing to do with it from the beginning to the end. They'll be a cess upon us baith—they'll be on the parish—Oh, oh, oh!"

At this moment a knock was heard at the door, and Mrs Soorocks giving a hasty glance out, cried—

“Whare shall I hide mysell?—here’s puir misfortunate Girzie.”

And she immediately began to compose herself, so that by the time that dejected maiden was admitted, she had mustered fortitude enough to break the doleful tidings to her thus with gravity, composure, and decorum.

“Have you had any letters by the post, Miss Girzie, for I have gotten the newspapers?”

“No,” said Miss Girzie, “not *this* morning;” dwelling, as I thought, rather emphatically on *this*, which excited my attention.

“Your sister is a lucky woman,” rejoined Mrs Soorocks—“a most lucky woman indeed—she has just been married in the verra nick o’ time.”

“I hope she’ll be happy,” replied Miss Girzie, composedly.

“But do ye ken what has happen’d? Dr Lounlans is married.”

“We expected that some time ago, you ken.”

“But wha has he married?” cried Mrs Soorocks. “No less than—your niece and deadly enemy, Miss Clawrissy.”

“ So we have been informed.”

“ Informed !” exclaimed Mrs Soorocks; “ and whan were ye informed ?”

“ Yesterday morning by the post, in a most kind letter from Dr Lounlans himself.”

“ And did you know of that last night ?— Girzie Minnigaff, you and your sister have long been known as twa sordid wretches ; but such deception, ye deceevers, to practise on a worthy gentleman ! I think it’s reason enough for a divorce ; at ony rate, it canna fail to bring a judgment upon you.—And what’s to become o’ you, Miss Girzie ?”

“ It was agreed between my sister and me, that I shou’d live with her.”

“ What did ye say, Girzie Minnigaff ?”

“ It was agreed between me and my sister, that I shou’d bide wi’ her at Auldbiggings.”

“ It’s a confess’d plot,” cried Mrs Soorocks, turning to me ; adding, “ So, sir, a bonny haun ye hae made o’t ; the Laird’s to be burthen’d wi’ the twa ; but bide a wee till I get my hat and shawl, and I’ll gang ower wi’ ye, were it for nae mair than to bid the misfortunate couple fareweel, before I leave hame.”

In a little time we had rung the Laird's door-bell, and Jenny ushered us into the parlour, till she had informed her master of our arrival. I was afraid from the bickering which was recommencing between my two female wards, that some mortal rupture was threatening to take place. But at this critical juncture the young couple came into the room, seemingly on much better terms with one another than I had ventured to expect. The lady had herself informed him of the event, at which, instead of expressing any feeling of apprehension for the consequences, he was only confirmed in stronger feelings of dislike against the reverend doctor, vituperating the whole body of the clergy, and considering the ambition of his adversary as dictated by insolence, to mortify himself.

Mrs Soorocks, who had neither anticipated the felicity of the new pair, nor the complacency with which the Laird appeared to regard his lot, said, "But, Mr Mailings, tak thocht, remember ye're a ruin'd man ; ye hadna left yoursell the means to maintean you alone, how do ye think that ye can maintean other two?"

"I have made my calculation," said he ; "I'm

going into Edinburgh. I'll publish my book in numbers, and mak a monthly income by that. Miss Girzie's to bide wi' us, for, as my dawty here says, (chucking Mrs Mailings under the chin,) the house that can haud twa, can haud three; the fire that can warm four feet, can warm six; the same pot that boils for two, can boil for three, so that, you see, no to be entering into particulars, Miss Girzie can leeve wi' us at no expense, and she'll be company to her sister, when I'm in my study concern'd wi' my work."

Mrs Soorocks clapt her hands together, and turning up her eyes, said, with an ejaculatory accent, "Who cou'd have thocht o' this!"

Breakfast was then announced, and which, considering the calibre of the respective parties, passed off with so much propriety, that my conscience began to be a little appeased. It really appeared to me that the part which I had taken in the business, (for I no longer now affected to deny, even to myself, that I had been instrumental to the completion of the marriage,) was rather commendable; so much are we prone to judge of the rectitude and proprie-

ty of even our own actions by their results ; and the same sentiment seemed to strike Mrs Soorocks, for when we were returning from Auld-biggings after breakfast, she whispered to me—

“ Weel, sir, I think we haena made sae verra bad a job o’t after a’, only what’s to become o’ them?—we maun try what can be done by working on the tender mercies o’ Dr Lounlans ; and I hope Mrs Lounlans will be found to hae bowels o’ compassion ; and if she has, I’m sure she’ll be the first o’ her kin, by the mother’s side o’ the house, that ever had ony. Cou’d ye hae ever imagined that the twa deceitfu’ creatures would hae had the sense to do as they did yestreen ? I’ll ne’er put trust in the countenance o’ womankind again.”

Much more of the same sort on both sides passed between us till we separated, having previously arranged that we should watch the return of the Doctor, and endeavour to complete our good work, by soliciting him to allow the three Graces, as Mrs Soorocks called the Laird, the bride, and bride’s sister, to enjoy the remainder of their days at Barenbraes.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ON returning to my own house, I was somewhat surprised to find, that during my short absence, Mr Loopy, of the respectable house of Loopy and Hypothec, writers in Glasgow, had been calling, urgent to see me ; and had mentioned to my housekeeper, he had several places in the neighbourhood to visit—among others Auldbiggings.

As there had been for some time a rumour through the country of an expected dissolution of Parliament, I was at no loss to guess, from the connexions of my old friend Loopy, the probable motive of his civility in calling upon me, with whom he had no particular ostensible business ; but I could not account for the circumstance of his intended visit to the Laird,

who in his political predilections had ever been opposed to those of the present ministry.

Having given up the day to idleness, it occurred to me, that perhaps I might be able to intercept the worthy man of business, either on his way to or from The Place, and induce him to take a quiet dinner with me, for I have ever found his shrewd conversation particularly racy and relishing. Accordingly, after giving orders for the leg of my last-killed five-year-old to be dressed, I sauntered along the high way towards Auldbiggings ; seeing nothing of the lawyer till I was at the bottom of the avenue, where his post-chaise was waiting—the approach to the house being in such a state with ruts and stones, that the postilion did not venture to take his carriage and horses to the door.

I went up to the house ; but long before I reached the entrance, everything indicated that there was indeed a change of administration within.

Jenny Clatterpans, bare-footed and bare-legged, with her petticoats kilted, and her hair falling in masses from under her cap, was standing on a stool whitewashing the lintels of

the lower windows with an old hearth-brush; her whitening-pot was a handleless and cripple tureen. The cook, ghastly and piebald with soot and whitening, was rattling with the remnant of an old blanket in her hand, in the midst of a numerous assemblage of all manner of kitchen utensils, brazen sconces, pewter trenchers, that might for magnitude have been shields to Ajax, copper lids of departed fish-kettles, a warming-pan, damasked with holes in the lid, and the handle of which had been lost beyond the memory of man, a brass basting ladle, a superannuated tormentor, a bright copper tea-kettle, the spout of which had long become loose by many scourings, but still it was the pride and glory of the shelf on which it was wont to stand, flanking a long array of various sorts of brass candlesticks which were lying on the grass around it. Beyond her, at a picturesque distance, lay a mound of feather-beds, pillows, and bolsters, which Jock, without his coat, was manfully thrashing with a flail, raising such a dust that he could only be seen at intervals like a demon in the clouds of a whirlwind.

As it was impossible to think of interrupting so many indications of a radical reform, I walked into the house, intending to go up to the old gentleman's study, but the lobby was so crowded with old casks, tubs, and firkins, empty bottles and boxes, that I with great difficulty made my way to the foot of the stair, on which the bride and her sister were endeavouring to bring down a large wrosted wheel, which, from the death of the first Mrs Mailings, had been removed from the kitchen, and placed upon the great napery ark that stood at the stairhead, being the first stage on its way to the lumber garret.

Having assisted the ladies to bring this wool-len mill round the turn of the stair, I at last reached the room where the Laird and the Lawyer were seated, engaged so earnestly in conversation, that neither of them hardly observed me enter. Their topic was the impending general election, and it soon appeared that Mr Loopy was not canvassing for the vote, but for "the purchase of the superiority of Auldiggings." "Three hundred pounds," Mr Loopy was saying as I came in, "and of money down too."

no trouble but to count it—it is a very large sum for my client to give.”

“ But your client, Mr Loopy, is a capitalist, and kens hoo to mak his outlay productive,” rejoined the Laird; “ when he bad you offer me three hundred pounds, he was thinking o’ my agricultural distress; but this is no sic a rainy day as to cause me to sell my hen below her marketable value. It’s but the second, ye maun ken, o’ my honey moon, and when will a man be croose if he’s no then? and isna my wife yin o’ the heirs-portioners, as ye wad ca’t, in law, o’ the estate o’ Barenbraes? But noo when I think o’t, Mr Loopy, I’ll no sell at a’, for it may be a mean hereafter to help me to get a post in the government, or a cadetcy to Indy for one of our younger sons—Three hundred poun’, Mr Loopy! I wadna tak three thousand’: the superiority is 120 pun’ scots, auld valuation, and it wadna be kittle to mak a piecing, as ye weel ken hoo, that wad gie ye the poore and capacity o’ twa votes instead o’ ane.”

“ But, Laird, how could I be aware of that circumstance?” replied Mr Loopy; “ however, that it does make a difference, I admit, yet

you should consider that votes are taking a value; for you know," and the answer returned to me in verification of the fact - that the great landholders in the county are spending large sums of money in the various elections, and are actually giving them away for nothing, like the drug in the market, and a...

I now began to see the truth of Mr. Jones's visit to the East, and will be most gratified, as it never had occurred to me, that the helplessness that I found in India, & the result of his vote for the county, - as a consequence of the fact that every man in the country was so poor, and so immediately dependent on the Government, that every man's vote was a purchase, and not a right, and that the Government was the great power in the country, and that the people were the property of the Government.

The fact was, that the Government was the great power in the country, and that the people were the property of the Government. The Government was the great power in the country, and that the people were the property of the Government. The Government was the great power in the country, and that the people were the property of the Government.

those who kept aloof from either party, till the proper time, could not fail to realize the full value of their influence."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr Loopy, "it would be most abominable, and what no honest man like Mr Mailings could think of doing, to sell himself to the highest bidder—and besides, the general election is not expected before the fall, and a vote made at this time, will, in that case, be of no use, for the infestment must run year and day. But, Laird, to mak short work o't, notwithstanding all these disadvantages, I think I could almost promise—for my client is a liberal as well as a wealthy man—I could almost promise that he might be brought to go the length of five hundred pounds."

"I can say nae mair about it," replied the old man, "without consulting my amiable spouse, Mrs Mailings;" and he vociferated, "Dawty, come ben the house, dawty, and help me to mak a bargain wi' Mr Loopy."

The lady, however, did not immediately answer to the summons; her labours had dishevelled her dress, and discomposed her tempera-
ture; but when she had somewhat arranged the

former, and cooled herself with a towel or handkerchief, after being again called, she came into the room, followed by Miss Girzie, whose complexion was equally heightened by her share in the toil, and her dress even still more disarranged.

The Laird briefly stated, that Mr Loopy had come to buy, if he would sell, the superiority of Auldbiggings, and had offered five hundred pounds.

“ If he would speak about fifteen, it would be mair wiselike,” said the leddy, looking askance at the lawyer, who pushed his chair back, and regarded her with the utmost astonishment of features, gradually relaxing into a smile expressive of incredulous wonder.

“ Mr Mailings,” he exclaimed, “ oh, ye are a happy man to have such a wife; and when you come to have your children round your table like olive plants, she will indeed be a fruitful vine !”

“ Dawty,” said the Laird, quite delighted to hear such commendations bestowed on the lady of his love,—“ Dawty, let us be reasonable, and not rigorous.”

“Be just before you’re generous,” said his spouse.

“Think o’ wha’s to come after you,” rejoined Miss Girzie.

“Consider your small family,” cried I, “and your young son, that you intend to send to India.”

“‘Mony a laird’s daughter has been waur tochered than wi’ her father’s vote at a contested election, Mr Loopy,” interposed the Laird firmly; “your client may tak his five hunder pound and mak a playock wi’ a whistle in its tail, or he’ll either get heft or blade o’ my vote for sic a trifle. Five hundred pound ! talk o’ a thoosan’, and I’ll maybe hearken wi’ the hearing side o’ my head.”

“A thousand,” exclaimed Mr Loopy, starting up and affecting to move towards the door, “I never heard anything so unreasonable.”

“Weel, weel,” cried the Laird, “will ye split the——”

“Hold your tongue, Auldbiggings,” exclaimed Mrs Mailings, “and dinna mak yoursell a prodigal son; an ye wad part wi’ your patrimony in that gate, ye wad weel deserve to eat

draff wi' the swine ; na, na, a thousand pound is ower little !”

“ I wonder,” said Mr Loopy, still standing on the floor, “ I wonder, Mrs Mailings, that ye wadna say guineas, when ye think there's such fools in the world as wad gie a thousand pound, and for what?——”

“ For a vote,” said Miss Girzie, sedately, “ and ye ken the full value o't, Mr Loopy.”

The leddy shook her head significantly. “ I thank you for your gentle hint, Mr Loopy,” cried she ; “ and we'll no take ae farthing less than a thousan' guineas.”

The lawyer turned round, with a well-affected huff, and at that moment Mrs Soorocks made her appearance, puffing and blowing, crying out,—

“ I hope I'm in time,—I hope ye hae na concluded the bargain,—I hope, Mrs Mailings, ye'll protect your gudeman,—Mr Loopy, Mr Loopy, hoo could ye think after wheedling, as I hae heard this morning, auld Peter Kethcart out o' his bit laun, for little mair than the half o' its value, to say naething o' the superiority, to come fleeching here to beguile Auldbiggings ; know-

ing, as ye do, Mr Loopy, that it's a the residue left o' his patrimony,—but, leddies, when I heard he was here, I came running like a maukin, to snatch you as brands out o' the burning; for he has a tongue that wad wile the bird aff the tree !”

“ I'm no safe here,” rejoined Mr Loopy, with a smile, and turning to the Laird, he added, “ As I was instructed by my client to go a certain length, if you are willing to treat with me I shall be liberal; you shall have a thousand pounds for the superiority down, if you choose to take it; and further I am not empowered to go.”

The Laird was evidently on the point of accepting the offer, when Mrs Soorocks exclaimed,—

“ The superiority o' Auldbiggings sell't for a thousand pounds, that is sae weel worth double the money ! Oh, Miss Shoosie, Mrs Mailings, as I should ca' ye, tak that man o' yours into your bed-room, and gie him admonition,—it's no for a sma' profit that my friend Mr Loopy's scamperin' frae Dan to Beersheba.—”

“ I certainly think,” rejoined I, “ that Mr

Mailings ought to have some time to consider of the marketable value of his only remaining property."

Here Mrs Mailings cried,—

"It would be cheatry to bargain away a right and property that Mr Loopy's sae ready to gie a thousan' and fifty pounds for—na, a thousan' guineas!"

With that she turned round to the lawyer, and said, with a mim mouth, and a dulcet accent,—

"If ye'll call the morn, Mr Loopy, maybe ye'll hae an answer."

"Deed," rejoined the Laird, "it's my solid opinion, that if the qualification o' Auldbigings be worth a thousan' guineas at this time, it ought, wi' discreet management, to be soon worth a great deal more; because you see all trade is in a state o' panic and calamity, and folk will have nae other way o' making their bread, than by gettin' posts in the government; so that if a vote noo be worth sae mickle, what will it no be worth when mair customers for posts come to deal in the market; for you know, Mr Loopy, that there's a standard o' value by which

the price of everything may be measured, and all we want to know is, what this natural standard is?"

"I doot, Mr Mailings," replied the lawyer, "that, like the other political economists, ye run some risk o' mistaking the elwand for the cloth; but I observe you are not in a humour to deal with me to-day, so I will take Mrs Mailings's hint."

Accordingly, he left the room, and I followed, to beg his company at dinner, which, however, he declined at first; but seeing the confusion in which the house of Auldbiggings was, he said at the time, "Perhaps the Laird might be induced to join me;" and he would look in upon us in the afternoon, on his return to Glasgow.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ON returning into the room, I found the Laird alone. The ladies had retired to an inner apartment, to determine, as he informed me, in what manner he should deal with Mr Loopy.

“Isna my wife,” said he, “a clever wife? Weel does she ken how many blue beans it taks to mak five. Had I married her twenty years ago, I wouldna hae needed this day to stand in awe o’ lawyers and naubobs, and sic like o’ the clanjamphry—and she’s sic a pleasant young creature that she blithens my verra blood; I couldna hae thought it possible for matrimony to mak a man sae happy. It’s true, I had an experience before; but then my first was a forced marriage, whereas this, my second, has been a free-will offering—a’ o’ my ain instigation, the which maks an unco difference. I didna think,

when I tell't you in the garden that I would fain marry Miss Shoosie Minnigaff, that I had sic a sincerity o' sound affection for her, as a' my friends had sae lang discovered; but you know, it is written in the word, that we do not know ourselves; and behold, I am a living illustration of the text.—However, anent the thoosan' pounds for the superiority, what's your opinion?"

I told him that I considered it a great godsend; but remarked, that, as it was not sufficient to procure for him any effectual relief from his mortgages, it would be much better to give up the estate at once to the Nabob, and buy an annuity with the money on the joint lives of himself and Mrs Mailings.

“Had we no a prospect of a family, what ye counsel would be worth hearkening to.”

“I doubt, Laird, that's but a barren prospect; and, besides, you ought to consider the great wickedness of augmenting our national distress, by increasing the population of the country, already so redundant. I beseech you, Mr Mailings, to respect the admonitions of economical philosophy.”

“ Hoots, hoots—dinna talk sic Malthusian havers to me. The cause o’ our national decay, and agricultural distress, broken merchants, ravelled manufacturers, and brittle bankers, come a’thegither frae another well-ee. Were sic calamities ever heard o’ in this reawlm before the turnip farming came into vogue? Answer me that. Weel do I mind that it was in the ha’rst o’ that verra year, when the first peck o’ turnips was sawn in the shire, that the sough came through the kintra o’ the Ayr bank gaun to pigs and whistles. My auntie, wha was then in the lan’ o’ the livin’, and has since been sleeping in Abraham’s bosom, wi’ the rest o’ the patriarchs, said, on that melancholious occasion—and she was a judicious woman—that to gar sheep and kye crunch turnips, was contrary to nature, their teeth being made for grass and kail-blades; and that it would be seen, that the making o’ turnip-pastures would prove a sign o’ something. Never did I forgether words o’ warning, though I was then but a bairn, a very babe and suckling, in a sense; and I hae noted, year by year, that her prophecy has been mair and mair coming to pass; for, with the in-

growth o' turnip-farming, there has aye been a corresponding snasherie amang the looms and sugar-boggrits. Last year, I was in a terror for what was to happen, when I saw sae mony braw pairs that used to be ploughed for vittle to man, sown for winter to beasts."

"Your story, Laird," said I, "well deserves the attention of his Majesty's Ministers; for some of them, in my opinion, have been finding similar effects, as legitimately descended from causes equally proximate. But if turnip-fields were sown with corn, would the distress be abated?"

"How can ye misdoot it?—and the redundant population would be abated too,—for, as they haith come in wi' the turnips, wouldna they gang out wi' them?—Isna that a truth o' political economy?"

At this crisis the ladies returned into the room, and the Laird addressing himself to his wife, said,—

"Weel, dawty, hoo hae ye settled the government anent the price o' the superiority?"

"We hae disposed o' it a' to the best advantage," interposed Mrs Soorocks; "and ye need-

na trouble your head about it—We'll get Mr Loopy to lay out the money—for he's a clever man in his line—on a life-rent for you and Mrs Mailings; and ye'll gang intil Enbro', and live comfortable, like twa patriarchs. There, Laird, ye may spend the evening o' your days in lown felicity; and hammergaw frae morning to night wi' the advocates about corn laws and circulating middims; and my frien' Bailie Blackwood, he has a great respec for me—he'll, on my account, let you write in the Magazine for your amusement."

"Devil's in that woman," muttered the Laird aside—"She's a torment to me, and to every other body.—But, dawty," he subjoined aloud to his lady, "I hae a plan far better than the veesions o' life-rents that Mrs Soorocks would be-glammar us a' wi'—this godsend o' the thousan' pounds——"

"Thousan' pounds!" exclaimed all the ladies with one voice—"Ye'll surely never tak a farding less than the twa thousan'?"

"For which," continued Mrs Mailings sola, "Mrs Soorocks tells me we may get mair than two hunner and fifty pounds a-year, paid down

in bank-notes, without ony stress o' law, and wouldna that be a grand thing?"

"But if the banks break," cried the Laird.

"If the lift fa's, it'll smoor the laverocks," retorted Mrs Soorocks; at which the Laird bounced from his seat, and giving a stamp with his foot, exclaimed,—

"I'll be master in my own house—I'll be ruled by naebody—I'll hae a will o' my own; and I will—The devil's in't, if a man o' my substance is to be snuled in this gait."

He then turned round to his wife, and said, in a softened accent,—

"Dinna be frightened, dawty—I'm no in a pashon wi' you, but ye'll let me hae my ain way."

"And what's that way?" inquired dawty, in a tone which did not indicate an entire acquiescence in the doctrine of passive obedience.

"I've had a notion," said the Laird, addressing himself to me, "that there's a mine o' copper ore aneath the whinny-knowes; and don't you think it would be very advisable for me to work it, and pay off the wadsets wi' the profits?"

I participated in the alarm and consternation

of the ladies at the propounding of such a scheme. Miss Girzie clasped her hands in agony, and sat in a supplicating posture. Her sister stood erect, many inches taller than her wont, with her arms extended, and her fingers spread out like the leaves of the palmetto; while Mrs Soorocks burst into an immoderate fit of laughing, exclaiming, "Did ye ever hear sic a goose wi' a golden egg?—a copper mine!—I wonder, when ye were at it, that ye didna dream o' a Potosi."

"Weel, weel," said the Laird, nettled at the effect he had produced, "mak a kirk and a mill o't; but my plans will get justice some day."

At this juncture, a rattling voice on the stair drew off our attention from the matter in debate; and Jock, with his flail over his shoulder, and covered with feathers, as if he had been in a snow-storm, rushed into the room, crying,—

"Odsake, odsake, here's ane o' the Minister's lasses, wi' news that'll freeze your verra marrow. The minister's come hame wi' his bridal-wife; and they're awa in a cotch o' their ain—set a Minister up wi' his ain cotch—to had the infare at Barenbraes—Leddies—leddies—oh, my led-dy madam mistress, he'll tak possession o' the

house and heritage—and what's far waur, here's likewise the Nawbob in a' his glory, comin' nae doot to drive you and the Laird, like Adam and Eve, out o' this pleasant paradise and garden o' Eden, that it might be, for the sma' cost o' a little reparation."

Mrs Soorocks was the first who broke silence after this portentous announcement. Addressing herself to the ladies, she said,—

"Weel, cousins, havena ye found at last the true prophecy o' my words?"

"Cousins!" said I to Mrs Soorocks; "you told me they were only distant connexions?"

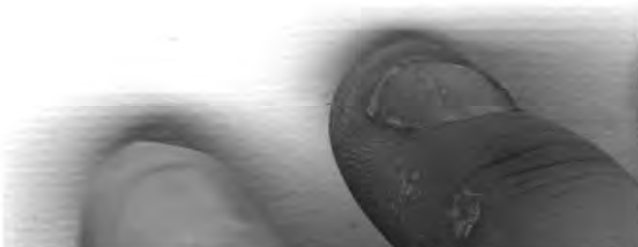
"But near aneugh," replied she actively, "to hae been a cess upon me, had I no got them otherwise provided for; and I thank you, sir, for the helping-hand ye hae been to me in the work."

I felt much inclined to exclaim with the Laird, "Devil's in that woman, she's a torment to me and to every other body;" but the sound of the Nabob's voice, as he forced his way up through the chaos of chattels, with which the staircase was encumbered, arrested the imprecation.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE Nabob came in with well-acted jocularity, and, totally regardless of his sulky reception, began to rally the Laird on his spirit in choosing so young and so blooming a bride. Nor was he less lavish of his compliments on the lady. On Mrs Soorocks, to whom he justly ascribed the entire merit of having designed and accomplished the match, his commendations were without end; nevertheless, in all this bustle of boisterous gesticulation, it was soon evident, that he had come for some other purpose than to felicitate the happy pair.

After the first rush and froth of his merriment had subsided, or run to waste, he began with his characteristic straight-forwardness, seemingly unconscious of the abruptness of the transac-



tion, to state, he had been informed that Mr Loopy was buying up the superiorities of sundry small parcels of land, with the design, as it was conjectured, of uniting them together, so as to enable him to dispose of qualifications for the county election. "And I hear, Mr Mailings," said he, "that the snaky rascal has been with you. Have you sold yours?—if you have, recollect the purchase-money is mine."

"We'll hae twa words about that," replied the Laird dryly.

"Is not my security over all the estate?"

"Deed is't; it's o'er the whole tot o' the lan'—but I may say, in the words of a reform in Parliament—'the whole land, and nothing but the land.'"

"If that be the case," cried the Nabob, piqued, "and that the superiority may be sold by itself, I think you ought to have given me the first offer.—A man has but the half of his estate, when he has not all the rights belonging to it."

"And for what should we hae gi'en you the

first offer?" exclaimed Jock with indignation, as he still stood in the middle of the room, feathered, cap-a-pie, and with his flail shouldered.

The Nabob looked with a tygerlike scowl; and going sedately towards him, seized him calmly by the collar, and walking him to the door, pushed him headlong out, tartly applying his foot, at the same moment, to the seat of Jock's honour. But Jock was not to be so touched with impunity. In the instant of his expulsion, he ran after Mr Loopy, and watching him just as he was stepping into the chaise, which was waiting at the avenue gate, he worked upon him to return.

"I take you a' to witness, leddies and gentlemen," cried Jock, as he returned with his man of business; "I take every ane o' you to witness anent my bottomrie. There's the panel that did the deed, Mr Loopy—deal with him, as he has written on the brod at the corner o' his planting—'according to the utmost rigour of law.' I'll be even wi' you noo, Nawaubpore, for a' the dule and sorrow that you and cleipy

Caption would sigh and wallywae about, for the bit clink I gi'ed wi' a harmless fishingrod to John Angle's brazen whirligig."

Whether Jock had informed Mr Loopy of the immediate cause of quarrel, as he brought him back to the house, did not appear by anything in the manner of the lawyer; but after some altercation, partly in good-humour, and partly sparringly, the assault which poor Jock had suffered was forgotten, and the man of business, with an equivocal deviation from the fact, reminded the Laird that he promised to sell the superiority to him; warning him to beware of dealing with any other.

"Hooly, hooly," cried the Laird; "ye ken, Mr Loopy, that if, for ceeveelity, I maunna, in my ain house, ca' that a lee, it would be the next thing till't, to say it wasna like ane. But since we hae gotten twa candidates on the leet, I'll play even-down justice wi' you baith—A thoo-san' pounds sterling for the superiority o' Auld-biggings—wha bids mair?"

"Eleven hundred," cried Mrs Soorocks.

Mr Loopy looked at her, and raising his out-

spread hands in mirthful amazement, said, with more sincerity, however, than he intended should be discovered, "And what would Mrs Soorocks do with a superiority?"

"Sell't to you for an advantage," replied the lady with a significant nod, and a smile to me.

"Eleven hundred pounds sterling for the superiority of Auldbiggings," resumed the Laird—"wha bids mair?"

"Twelve hundred," said the Nabob with a perplexed and embarrassed look, as if he was not quite aware of the consequences of the bidding.

"Mr Rupees, are ye really in earnest?" said the lawyer, with a slight inflexion of the voice, almost in the key of alarm.

"I'll bid thirteen hundred," said Miss Girzie, with a giggle; "for I hae heard o' a vote sell't for more than seventeen hundred pounds."

"Thirteen hundred pounds for the superiority of Auldbiggings—going for thirteen hundred pounds"—resumed the Laird, drawing his chair towards the table, and striking it with his snuff-box for a hammer.

“Nay, if ye’re making a diversion o’t,” said the lawyer, “I may as well give a bode too—so I say fourteen hundred, Mr Mailings—but mind I have no intention of standing to the bargain.”

“The devil!” exclaimed the Nabob; “then I say fifteen hundred, Mr Mailings, and I intend to stand by the offer.”

“Do as you like, Nawaubpore,” interposed Mrs Soorocks; “but, Laird, if ye get a better, ye’re free to take it; so I say saxteen hundred, Mr Mailings, and I intend to stand to the offer.”

Mr Loopy was every moment plainly becoming more and more excited; he endeavoured to appear calm and to smile, but his eyes were eager and restless, and his nether lip quivered. “This,” said he, “is the most extraordinary proceeding I ever witnessed. Surely, Mrs Soorocks, you can have no intention of buying; and, Mr Rupees, you could never think of giving any such money?”

“Sixteen hundred pounds sterling for the superiority of Auldbiggings! once”—shouted the Laird, chuckling with delight.

“ I beg, Mr Mailings,” cried the lawyer, “ that you would allow me to say one word.”

“ Sixteen hundred pounds sterling for the superiority of Auldbiggings—mind, Mr Loopy, it’s pounds sterling,”—was, however, all the answer he got.

“ Seventeen hundred, and be damned to it !” roared the Nabob.

“ Remember, Mr Mailings,” interposed the lawyer, in professional expostulation,—“ remember, you have no license to sell by public roup or auction.”

“ Seventeen hundred pounds sterling, Mr Loopy, for the superiority o’ Auldbiggings—will ye gi’e me another bode ?” was the Laird’s reply ; and rubbing his hands in ecstasy, he added, “ Seventeen hundred pounds, once—seventeen hundred pounds, twice—going, Mr Loopy—going.”

“ I know all this is but a joke,” rejoined the lawyer, “ and to humour you—I’ll go the length of eighteen hundred.”

“ And just for the joke too,” said Mrs Soorooks, “ I’ll bid nineteen hundred, Mr Loopy.”

“ I think,” cried Jock with a guffaw like a cataract, “ that it’s cheap at twa thoosan’.”

“ I’ll give the money for it, Laird,” growled the Nabob, “ and end this foolish competition.”

“ Many a droll sight and sale have I seen,” said Mr Loopy; “ but never one like this.— Mr Rupees, are you in your senses?”

“ If you are,” was the emphatic answer.

The lawyer made no farther observations, but turning to the Laird, said, in an accent which could not be misunderstood—“ Then I bid another hundred.”

From that the contest lay between him and the Nabob, till their respective offers reached six-and-twenty hundred pounds.

“ Going, once—going, twice!”—shouted the Laird.

“ Another fifty,” said Mrs Soorocks quietly, but slyly.

“ We’re all mad,” said the lawyer.

“ Twa thoosan’ sax hun’er and fifty pounds sterling,” said the Laird.—“ Mak it guineas, Mr Loopy, and the bargain’s yours.”

“Guineas be’t,” exclaimed the Lawyer; and in the same moment, the Laird struck the table, and roared out, “Thrice.”—The ladies all screamed and rushed upon him, while the Nabob made the house quake with his stump; but Jock, flourishing the flail in triumph, smashed a looking-glass into a hundred pieces, and fled.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

WHEN order was restored, the lawyer took out his pocket-book, and drew from it a ready prepared minute of an agreement for the purchase, with a blank in it for the money. He then went to the mantelpiece, where an inkstand with pens stood, and taking one of the pens, looked at it between him and the light, and afterwards touched it with the tip of his tongue.

“You are a noble hand at auctioneering, Laird,” said he, as he spread the paper on the table. When he had filled up the blank, he laid it before the Laird, who, in taking the pen, turned and addressed his wife, “Isna this, dawty, a gran’ hansell to our marriage?”

“Nawaubpore,” said Mrs Soorocks, “ye hae lost a gude bargain.”

The great man made her, however, no answer, but inquired, with more energy than the question required, if I thought the sale valid.

I excused myself from giving any opinion, by reminding him that I was no lawyer, upon which he wheeled abruptly, and without the courtesy of leave-taking, quitted the room ; and the lawyer soon after, having finished his contract, also retired ; and although I had come on purpose, I neglected to ask him to dinner as I had intended. Indeed, the sudden change which had thus taken place in the condition of the Laird, was so extraordinary, that it engrossed my whole mind ; nor was the good fortune which so crowned his marriage confined that day to the successful sale of the barren superiority. Before the lawyer had left us many minutes, and while Mrs Soorocks was with indisputable justice lauding herself for the part she had played in the bid-dings, the arrival of Dr and Mrs Lounlans was announced.

The Laird's complexion changed at the name to the ashy paleness of fear and aversion.

“ What's brought them here,” cried he, “ the cheatrie dominie ! Is't no aneugh that he has

reckit my wife and my gude-sister out o' their father's heritage, but he maun come in triumphing chariots to trample us in the mire? It's a bonny pass the world's come to—the heiress of a house like Barenbraes, and the dochter o' a baronet, to marry a dominie! No wonder that our auncient gentry are so fast weedit awa like cumberers o' the ground."

"Wheesht, wheesht, Laird," said Mrs Soorocks—"Harken—they're on the stair."

"I'll gar ding the door in their faces," exclaimed the indignant Malachi; but before he had time to put his threat in force, the Doctor entered, with his lady leaning on his arm.

The effect of this apparition—for, by its immediate impression, it may as such be described—was instantaneous. Miss Girzie sat with her hands elevated, and her elbows pressing against her sides. Mrs Mailings, with more self-possession, went forward to receive the strangers; Mrs Soorocks, who was seated beyond Miss Girzie, stretched forth her neck, and inspected the young lady with sharp and jealous eyes, her most peculiar and characteristic features; and the Laird sat twirling his thumbs, as if resolved

to take no heed whatever of his visitors. Every moment, however, he stole a glance at them: and in so doing, slackened his twirling, and then as often resumed it with redoubled vigour.— But the appearance of Mrs Lounlans was calculated to conciliate a kinder reception.

She was one of those unaffected and prepossessing young ladies, who, without any particular personal endowment, wear an air of so much good sense and natural gracefulness about them, as to attract confidence and esteem at the first sight. When she withdrew her arm from her husband's, and came forward to meet her aunt, Miss Girzie rose, and Mrs Scrocks put on a countenance of ineffable benignity.

Doctor Lounlans having introduced the ladies to one another, turned to the Laird, and said, "Our next friend here is Mr Mallings."

"They're a' friens that are na faes," was the answer; the sullen respondent endeavouring to sit erectly dignified, twirling his thumbs with accelerated velocity. Mrs Lounlans had evidently, however, been prepared for an uncouth reception; and being none dismayed by his ungracious mood and repulsive manner, lifted one

of his hands, and with much conciliation of accent, felicitated herself on being numbered among his relations.—“ My mother too,” she added, “ whom we have set down at my aunt’s —for we expected to have found them at home —was happy to hear of what has taken place, for she recollects you as one of her early friends.”

The Laird was subdued by the gentleness of this address, and looked up with a smile, half indicative of pleasure and of incredulity, while Mrs Soorocks said to the Doctor,—

“ And is’t possible that Leddy Chandos has ta’en actual possession ?”—and she added with a significant sigh, “ Oh, Miss Girzie !”

The Doctor replied, with more archness than belonged to his grave and habitual equanimity, “ You know, Mrs Soorocks, that the estate is entailed, and that Lady Chandos is the elder sister.” But observing that the sisters misunderstood him, he addressed himself to them, saying,—

“ Her ladyship waits impatiently to see you. Tired with her journey, and deeply affected with the many tender reminiscences of youth and childhood, which every object in the scene of



the early pleasures has revived, she found herself unable to come with us."

By this time, Mrs Lounlans had so far ingratiated herself with the Laird, that he drew a chair towards his own, and requested her to sit down beside him.

"Dawty," said he to his wife, "I think she has a cast o' thee; but it will be late in the day before she'll can compare."

Mrs Soorocks here again addressed the Doctor, inquiring if Lady Chandos was come "to spend her auld days among her forefathers?"—adding, "but I needna be surprised at it, for she was aye a sweet sentimental lassie, a perfect Clarissy Harlowe, though I maun say, it's no verra like a heroine in a novel to come and take possession—'Deed, Miss Girzie, I feel for you. It's just like the cuckoo dabbing a wallydraigle out o' the nest; but I'll reason wi' her."

"Give yourself no uneasiness on that head," replied the Doctor; "for to remove all anxiety from her sisters, she has settled the house and property on them during her life—She could do no more."

“But when she dies?” said the anxious and affectionate lady. The Doctor smiled, and then told her, that Mrs Lounlans had, before their marriage, confirmed and extended the settlement for her life also.

“Now, that’s Christianity, Doctor,”—and she justly commended the delicacy with which the settlement had been made, ascribing it all to his influence and advice.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE Nabob, though a vain and ambitious, was by no means an unprincipled man, and when the identity of his ward was fully made out, he set himself seriously to render him all due restitution and fair play. The expense, however, in which he had unfortunately allowed himself to indulge since his return from the East, did not admit of his doing this with any comfort to himself, without unavoidably trenching on the comforts of the poor Laird. In a short time notice was conveyed to Malachi, in as delicate a manner as might be, that he must prepare, as speedily as possible, to leave the home of his ancestors.

Perhaps none of the human feelings are more extensive or powerful in their operation than local associations; for early remembrances of the fields wherein we roamed—the school wherein

we were tutored, and maybe flogged—the river wherein we bathed, waded, or fished—the cherry-trees whose unripe fruit we plundered—the “old familiar faces,” that frequented parlour or hall—the dog which we were wont to caress—and the room wherein we slept, form in progress of time almost a part of our very existence, and find a chord that answers to their thrill, alike in the bosom of the cultivated and philosophic, as in the simple and untutored.

That to the Laird nature had not been prodigal of her intellectual favours, it were vain to deny ; and that a long course of indulgence in the caprices, which his station permitted him to exercise, had blunted moral perceptions which never were particularly vivid, admits not of a doubt ; yet even with his inveterate selfishness was occasionally mixed up a spice of the more ennobling ingredients of the human constitution. Though prepared by the storm which he had long felt brewing around him, for its some day, and that not far distant, breaking on his head, yet the tidings that he must leave Auldbiggings came to him like a sentence of death to the criminal, who through the investigation of his crimes

still perceives a loophole or two, by which the sunshine of mercy may possibly descend on his fated head.—But we must to action—and a truce to sentimentality, and “the influence of local attachment,” which we leave in the competent hands of the Reverend Mr Polwhele.

The Laird and I were taking a saunter about his premises ; and, observing the downcast, peevish melancholy of the old man, I lent in a word or two, by way of soothing encouragement.

“As Mrs Soorocks justly observed,” said I—

“Hang Mrs Soorocks !” interrupted the Laird pettishly ; “I dinna want to hear onything about her, or ony o’ the like ten-fingered intermeddlers. What signifies a’ that Mrs Soorocks has said or done, or can say or do, when I maun leave my auncient inheritance of Auldbiggings, and be driven out—an auld broken-doun man wi’ grey hair—into a wicked warld, without kenning where I am to find a hame, or where, I should rather say, I am to look for a grave to lay my banes in—for that date will no be lang !”

“You take a black view of matters, Laird,” said I, throwing as much cheerfulness into my

words, as my really touched feelings would permit. "What signifies it, if we have a snug roof to cover us, where we lodge? We have no abiding-place here, Laird."

"Abiding-place here, or abiding-place there, how can ye deceive me wi' sic havers, as trying to convince me, that we shouldna have a regard for the place where they were born, and bred, and brought up! Do ye see that saugh-tree at the corner o' the avenue? I planted that fifty year ago wi' my ain hand; I dibbled the yearth, and stappit it in there, a thing no half as lang as this walking-staff; and now it towers ower our heads by a hunder feet, and the birds o' heeवन higg their nests among its branches. I wadna touch that tree, come o't what wad—tho' it was to buy a coat to my back; but feint a hair wi' strangers ken or care about the like o' that; and it will maybe be sawn down next week, to gie the new-comers a veesy in that airt, towards that cursed Nawaubpore house o' theirs."

Trying to divert his mind from the train of feelings, which had taken possession of it with more than ordinary force, I asked him, "if he

intended that forenoon returning the visit of Dr and Mrs Lounlans."

"Deed wad I," answered he, "for I freely confess, he has behaved in a way I wad hae given him little credit for acting in towards Mrs Mailings and her sister. Yes, yes, I'll no be sae thravn as to deny he's having been kinder to me and mine, than we had ony reason to expect; but woe's the day for Auldbiggings, and a puir pass has the like o' a house such as ours come to—which in its time has feasted half the lords and leddies in the land—when we are reduced to accept of a godsend from the like o' sic hands as those of auld Jock Lounlans' son, that I was ance obliged to roup out o' house and hall, for not having left the needful to pay his just and lawful debts."

"Oh, but, Laird," said I, glad of any way by which I might break in upon his heavy thoughts, "ye surely cannot be displeased with him for repaying evil with good?"

"Evil wi' good!" exclaimed the Laird, standing still, and looking me in the face, leaning forward on his staff as he propped his back with his left hand, "and have ye turned against

me in my hour of adversity like all the rest, or hoo come ye to affront an auld man like me in the very whirlpool o' my calamities. I dinna gie a curse for Dr Lounlans, as they ca' him—set him up wi' Doctor!—nor ony o' his kith, kin, or generation, bodies that wad have been glad of a nievefu' out o' my faither's kitchen meal-ark. But them that were glad to find a way into Auldbiggings by the back door lang ago, now venture proudly up its front steps in broad daylight, and ring our door bell, as if they had been born and bred gentlemen. But what are we standing palavering here for? Let us away into the house,—for it will no be lang that I'll hae a house, so to speak."

When we entered the lobby, the Laird took off his hat—the unique article of dress, already described—and as he hung it up on one of a range of wooden pins, the extremities of which were quaintly carved into something grotesquely resembling cats' faces, he seized hold of me by the sleeve, and said,—“Hech-how, for sixty year—ay, sixty year, and mair siller, I have hung up my hat on that dividual same pin. That was aye called my pin—naebody that kent

it wad hae been sae forrit-some and impudent as to have made use of that piece o' wood for their hats, kenning that I reserved it for my ain peculiar use. If, whan I cam in, I fand anither hinging there—let it have been headpiece o' gentle or semple, nae matter—I just scuffed it doun wi' the head o' my staff, and left Jock to lift it up at his leisure, as he liket. Naebody daured to have used such liberty in Jock's presence.—But ye'll stop and tak a check o' dinner with me, as it's now wearing on to dining hours?"

I endeavoured to make the best excuse I could, and pleaded an engagement at home.

"Deed and ye'll no stir a fit the day out o' this place, without tasting o' the hospitality o' Auldbiggings; I'll likely never can ask ye again, and though I'm pressing ye the day, it's maybe we'll no have ony great thing to offer ye."

Jock here appeared with a towel below his arm, threading a transverse passage. "Hollo, Jock, I say," cried the Laird, "can we gie a stranger his dinner wi' us the day?"

"Brawly," answered Jock, rubbing down

is—dossy now with the fat o' his hand:—“that
 is a question to be after speering, maister—no
 day this day, nor any day o' the year, from
 June to January, I hould.”

“I'm glad to hear 't, Jock,” said Anidhing-
 clogs, with a smile half natural and half sar-
 some, in which pride and regret seemed equal-
 ly mingled. “have ye killed the auld bubbly-
 cock, as ye threatened this morning?”

“Killed him, ay, and what have killed him
 at he had twenty lives, afore I wad have left
 him to gang snothering awa' w' his cooher,
 and his big umbrellas o' a mill, parading afore
 the window o' any stranger, that wad ha'e im-
 pudence enough to set it within bounds, that
 have descended to us from o' auld, and that are
 our's yet, stick and stane, by a' the rules o'
 law and gospel.”

“Ain, Jock,” cried the Laird, acting the
 part in his valet's presence, “right now-a-days
 is minging, and ‘tramp’ is the word; we maun bow
 before our betters—our betters! the thing most-
 ly sticks in my throat—but it's a' ae woo—
 ‘tramp’s the word, Jock. But what for,” add-
 ed he, turning to me, “are we standing here,

condescending to hold a confab wi' a jackanapes of a servant? Haiste yere ways, Jock, but the house to the scullery, and get yere knives cleaned. We canna take them wi' us to sican a braw toun as Edinburgh, all spatted with red rust. But holt, Jock, look up to the clock in the stair, and tell me exactly what a clock it is."

Jock ran up a few steps, and, shading his eyes with his hand, answered, not without a scrutiny of the horologe, which showed he was not particularly an adept at noting the recorded flight of time,—“It wants, I think, maister, only nine minutes of three—nine, did I say? troth, I daursay it only wants seven.”

The Laird had at the same instant drawn from his fob a massy structure of embossed gold, whose face, chequered with Saxon figuring, proclaimed it a work not of this age, but probably the descended heir-loom of some long deceased progenitor, which had come to the Laird in the regular line of inheritance. “Now isn't a curious thing,” said he to me, “and Jock there can bear witness to the fact, that this watch has gane like a regulawter for thirty year, without ever needing a touch in

the handles? Nine minutes, did ye say, Jock? troth, wi' me it wants only seven. Where will ye find a piece of warkmanship like that now-a-days? But haiste yere ways to the parlour, for Dawtie will be wondering we are sae lang in coming in from our pleasant out-o'-doors excursion."

On coming away early in the evening, as Jock was chaperoning me down stairs, he gave a sly look, first up to the clock, and then in my face. I perceived there was something in the creature's noddle, so, as he was handing me my hat in the lobby, I said to him, "Jock, yon is surely a capital old watch of your maister's. He tells me you wind it up for him regularly. Has it never gone wrong for thirty years?"

"Thirty years," said Jock, with a loud guffaw, as he gave his hand a slap on his thigh—"Thirty year! say ye? that beats cock-feighting; the auld turnip wadna gang thirty hours without losing a quarter, less or mair. But I aye tak it out cannily frae aneath his head every morning, and set it to a moment. I wish ye a good night, sir; tak care o' your feet on the outer steps."



CHAPTER XXXIX.

PERHAPS if the faithful Jock had heard repeated the thousand-and-one appellations of his Majesty of the Celestial Empire, he might have been for a moment disturbed in the calm assurance of those thoughts, which reposed in his master, as indisputably the greatest of mankind; but certainly none other could have had the smallest chance in the competitorship, as we before have taken occasion to observe. Jock's ideas of terrestrial pomp, pride, and ambition, were grievously hampered in within the bounds of his native parish, in which the family of Auld-biggings, as he had heard his father and his grandfather asseverate, were in the old times a sort of petty despots in their day, "ruling the country from Dan to Beersheba," as Jock expressed it, "like a when Solomons, and suf-

fering for the cause, sword in hand, in the bluidy days of the martyrs."

It was very evident, however, now, that change of times had brought change of circumstances; and that the baronial power of Auld-biggings was so circumscribed, as to deny of its extending any protecting banner over the last of its adherents.

As I pondered on this, the thought of what was to become of poor Jock pressed on my mind; for the state of the Laird's circumstances rendered the possibility of Jock's transference with him to Edinburgh a matter wholly out of the question. I spoke of this to Mrs Soorocks, and begged her opinion as to the best political move for the faithful creature during the present distressing crisis.

"Silly body," said Mrs Soorocks, "what earthly thing is he good for, or capable of? He has been so long accustomed to his ain jog-trot, that it's a matter o' moonshine to him hew the world wags, provided he be able to keep himself snug and easy. As to recommending him to a flunky's place in Renthrew, Greenock, or Glasgow, or to mount guard wi' the spiey mush-

room-bonnetted heathens of Nawaubpore, is totally and entirely out of the question. I wish the poor cratur mayna dee in a ditch yet; for, like the auld rebel Jacobeets, he has stucken ower lang to a falling house; or the best that can come o't, is his landing on the parish, or begging his way (for Jock is weel liket) frae door to door through the world."

"Could the man not find a remedy in matrimony like his master, Mrs Sorrocks? It is a miserable thing to see the poor fellow cast on society utterly destitute. He is a feasible enough looking dog, and I dare say some widow's comfortable open door may be found for him."

"Weel," replied the lady, "isn't it strange that a body hasna at all times their wits about them? Ye have just hit the nail on the head. Bless me! and did such a thing never enter into my stupid head?—Cast him on the world when we have such a market for disposing of him!—I really canna see yet how you and me have overlookit this business till this time o' day. Widow, did ye say? Na, there is nae need of his ganging even that length, by way of saerifeese. There's Jenny Clatterpans, that has had a lang snug

time o't, and has a pose in her kist-nook, or I'm a mistaken woman. She'll be out o' place, too; and I doutna will grup like a drowning creature at ony comfortable down-sitting. I'll have her sent for this very blessed afternoon,—for there's no time to be lost; and I daur to say, that Jenny has mair gude sense than stand in the way of such a godsend of good fortune."

"Well, Mrs Soorocks," said I, "I leave the matter in your excellent hands, and have the strongest hopes that you will be able to bring the business to a speedy bearing; for, when Mrs Mailings is gone, I am afraid Jock's slender funds would speedily show themselves "like the morning dew, that soon vanisheth away."

Mrs Soorocks was not worse than her word, for the mercurial activity of the lady's constitution seemed expressly to have been given her, to counterbalance and remedy the listlessness of more saturnine neighbours;—the same call, which served as a parting one to the Laird and his lady, being appropriated at its conclusion to brightening up the promises and prospects of Jock's future life. Contrary, however, to expectation, Jenny at first rode refractory, and re-

sented her being evened to Jock as a high insult; but, calming down before the strong and subtle reasoning of Mrs Soorocks, she began at length to view the matter in another aspect.

“ Weel, weel,” said Jenny, as Mrs Soorocks afterwards told me, “ what is ordeened for ane will never gang past them; but onybody that wad, ance in a day, have telled me that our man Jock and me was to be buckled thegither, I should hae thocht had nae ither intention than of making a fule o’ me. But, for a’ that, I’m no denying that he is a good-natured soul; and, in gude keeping, might through time come to be a civileezed creature. A brokener ship nor that has come to land.”

Not long after parting with Mrs Soorocks, on that same day, I encountered Jock on the road, with a band-box in his hand, containing probably some article of female finery, for which, as he told me unsolicited, his mistress had sent him in to Renfrew. On questioning him on his future prospects, and what he intended doing after leaving the Laird’s service, he informed me, “ that he was just thinking of taking a stap ower bye to me, to see if I kent ony gentle-

man or nobleman in the neighbourhood in need of an active steady butler, for he wasna fond o' travelling far frae hame ; and a place o' the kind of the Laird's getting for him in Embrough, might lead him gude kens where—maybe up to Lonon, which he had nae brew o'."

I could not help smiling both at the humility of Jock's choice, and the confidence he seemed to express of the Laird's interest being able to procure for him any settlement of this sort ; but one minute's attention to the tones of Jock's voice, and a single glance at the poor fellow's uncouth and undrawing-room-like gestures, carried manifest testimony with them of the absurdity of such a proposition.

" Upon my word, Jock," said I, " it strikes me, that from the experience you have had in the world in the capacity of fac-totum to the Laird, you are well entitled to shy for evermore the trammels of servanthip, and commence head of a house on your own account."

" Me the head of a house !" cried Jock ; " Na, na, that will never sowther. I'm neither able in the capacity of purse or person for ony such upsetting, to say naething aboot being ye-

licated ; but I can baith read and vrite, for a' that."

" I'm sure, Jock, you have long had a sweetheart somewhere or other, that is the apple of your eye, and whom you long to make the wife of your bosom ? It is nonsense denying the fact."

" As sure as death," said Jock, with his utmost attempt at gravity and earnestness, " I never had ony sweethearts in my life—deil a yane—except a bit wench, Matty Primrose, that gied me the slip whan I least expected it, and followed a dragoon regiment that lay in Hamilton. She gaed away to the wars wi' her gudeman, and, doubtless, baith him and her are doun amang the dead men lang ago."

" I've heard, Jock, that Leezie and you have been drawing up of late—Is that true ?"

" Whae ? Leezy, Mrs Soorock's maid ! No a word o' truth in't, as I'm a leeving sinner. Na, na, she's ower young for the like o' me. I wad like a canny an' sedatt housekeeper. I wadna tak Leezie."

" Well, Jock, perhaps Leezie has other fish to fry ; but I'm sure you can have no earthly

objections to Jenny Clatterpans? If you and she were to come together, you would just find yourself as much at home as at Auldbiggings. How long have you been in the house together?"

"Let me see," answered Jock. "Jenny—let me see, has been about us, ae way and anither, about aughteen year. She was a gude while the errand lassie, but I spoke to the Laird to promote her to the charge of the kail-pat. Jenny and me aye gree very weel, but it wad be condescending in the like o' me to have onything to say to the like o' her—me that's been upper servant at The Place, ever sin' I was the height o' yere walking-stick. But I'll do whatever's thocht best; I'm no doure in the constitution, like some fo'k."

"Perfectly right, Jock. If I were in your place, I would at once see what could be done. Maybe, if you are not good at the courting, we may get somebody to help you a bit."

"I'll be obleeged to ye; but really, as I maistly never tried, there's nae saying hoo I might come on,—'faint heart never wan fair leddy,' as the spaewife ance vrote down to me,

when the leeing fief tell't me I wad hae three wives."

I could not help smiling at Jock's earnestness, as he deprecated the latitude to which the tether of the fortune-teller allowed him to range; and, as he added,—

"But, for a' that, I daur say your advice is holesome—Jenny 'll be packing up bag and baggage immediately, to gang away as soon as the Laird and his Leddy take the mail coach, to her native, somewhere awa doun aboot Paisley. She's weel connectit, as I've heard her say mysell; and, though its stooping doun, I maun confess, for the like o' me to lift up sae little as her, yet folk are obligated to bow their back to the times, and it's a great chance but my lottery-ticket may come out a blank."

"Keep up your heart, Jock," I said to him; "but whenever you get home, see what you can make of Jenny."

"I'll do that, sir; but it's time for me to be moving, for, if I dinna jealouse wrang, Geordie Joug, o' the Tanker and Tappit-Hen public, has a sheep's-ee after her; but I daur-say she wad never be siccan a fule as pit the

like o' me and Geordie Joug, wi' his ringle-ee, into a balance."

As Jock moved on with his paviour-like steps and uncouth habiliments, "whistling as he went for want of thought," his hat turned up behind, and the band-box of his mistress suspended from his left hand by a blue ribbon, I could not help more than once turning to look after him on the road, as I thought to myself, "There goes a veritable picture of Adonis,—the beau-ideal of a lover."

CHAPTER XL.

LITTLE remains to be added to this brief domestic tale, which we now hurry on to its conclusion, premising, however, that the united eloquence of Jock and his able advocate Mrs Soorocks, eventually succeeded wonderfully with Jenny Clatterpans ; and after being three times regularly proclaimed in church—an acquiescence with propriety and church-laws, which was more than his Laird and Leddy could boast of—Dr Lounlans joined them together as man and wife. To such as are interested in their welfare, we have the felicity of saying, that, assisted by Jenny, who is of a managing turn, Jock is now in a thriving way, their united funds having been sufficient to buy a cow or two, and a myriad of cocks and hens—the produce of which in the shape of milk, eggs,

butter, chickens, and cheese, enables them to enjoy all the necessaries, and a few of the luxuries of life. To add to their connubial bliss, we have the greatest satisfaction in adding, that Jenny has lately presented Jock with a fine boy, the very image of his father.

Stimulated by disappointment, yet under the pretext of doing justice to his ward, the Nabob prosecuted with ardour the claim which he had on the lands of Auldbiggings, till the old Laird, like a bird hovering round its desolated nest, and loath to take his leave, fairly finding himself driven to his wit's-end, and unable longer to retain possession, abandoned the home which for many a generation had been the pride and sanctuary of his ancestors, and moved with his Leddy and her sister to Edinburgh. By the purchase-money of the superiority, together with the income and gatherings of the two ladies, he is enabled to live in great comparative respectability ; yet he is said to have been at first much annoyed at finding himself only one of an immense crowd, thoughtless of him and busy with their own concerns, instead of the west country

Laird, "the admired of all admirers," and the sovereign of his own petty domain.

Regularly, whenever the season is over, the Laird and his Leddy revisit Barenbraes, reducing their establishment, and haining for the winter; for, like the other Athenian gentry, they make a point of returning to town when the Courts open. The Laird still talks of publishing his Memoirs, though we have not lately had opportunity of learning what progress he is making in that elaborate, curious, and erudite work, consistency having obliged him to cancel some parts, and remodel others, on account of his alteration of opinion, having become a strenuous advocate for free trade in corn, since he ceased to be interested in the fluctuations of agriculture. When the weather is calm and fair, he is sometimes met with in Prince's Street, with one of the ladies on each arm. They seem particularly fond of the windows of the picture shops, opposite which they may be frequently observed pausing; nor do they disdain taking a view of the "Hydras, Gorgons, and Chimæras dire," plastered up in front of the menageries on the Mound, when the newspapers announce any fresh im-

portation of natural curiosities. In general, however, he prefers to sit at home, watching the mutations of the clouds from his window, or the shapes of Saracens, and salamanders in the fire. In this pensive guise and solitary occupation, he is allowed to spend many an unmolested hour ; for the ladies are great forenoon visitors, talking much of their sister Lady Chandos, and but rarely alluding to their niece Mrs Lounlans, of whom, when they do chance to make mention, one of them makes a point of sighing, as it were to indicate how much they feel for her imprudence in having marred their pedigree by marrying so far below her own station.

We had almost overlooked the amiable dominie, Mr Tansie—so fares it often with unobtrusive merit in this busy and bustling world—but the reader may not find it unpleasant to be told, that, with the equanimity of one of Plato's disciples, he keeps the silent tenor of his way, “teaching the young idea how to shoot” for his livelihood, contented with a situation whose privacy enables him to indulge in his philosophical day-dreams, with but few wants to supply, and having these amply satisfied.

A pleasant time for him is it during his Christmas vacation—the season of long starry nights, and wintry devastation—to pay his annual visit to the metropolis, when he never fails, as in duty bound, to pay his respects to the Laird, and the Ladies; constantly carrying with him, from the faithful Jock to his master, some little token of his grateful remembrance, in the shape of a seasonable goose, or a pair of well-fed ducks, in the corner of his portmanteau.

I was much pleased with Mr Tansie's description of the Laird's town residence, and the remarks to which it gave rise in his unsophisticated mind.

“They dwell,” said he, “in a fine double house, with two entrances. One opens to a common-stair that leads to the upper flat and attics, which certain of the lower orders inhabit. The other is a genteel door with pillars and architraves, such as befit the porch of a house for a family of rank and pedigree.

“You cannot go amiss in looking for the house, for it has a brass plate on the door, with ‘Malachi Mailings, Esq. of Auldbiggings,’ on't at full length; the which to observe caused me

much perplexity, for I could not divine what the Laird had to do with a sign. That doctors, advocates, and writers to the signet, should have recourse to such brazen devices to make themselves notorious, and to bring custom, seems not unreasonable ; but for landless lairds, and freeholders of parchment, to set themselves up as a titular nobility, and expect fame and renown by inscribing their teetles as they call them, on brass, is, to say the least o't, not the way that Horace took to raise himself a monument ; but I dare say it is done by the quondam Laird, our friend, in a spirit of bravery, for I was told that he still refuses to sign or assent to any legal surrender of Auldbiggings to the Nabob, though he may be brought to trouble for his contumacity."

FINIS.

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