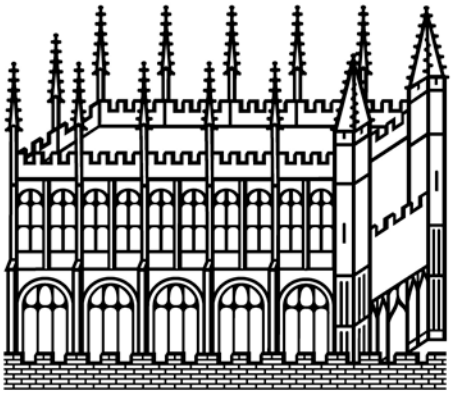

TRADITIONS OF LONDON,

HISTORICAL AND LEGENDARY.

BY WATERS,

AUTHOR OF

"RECOLLECTIONS OF A POLICE OFFICER," "THE SERF GIRL OF MOSCOW," "KIRKE WEBBE," ETC., ETC., ETC.

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TRADITIONS OF LONDON.

ANDREW LAYTON, THE HERBALIST.

"Jsu Cristi, Mary is Son,
Have merci on the soul of Andrew Layton."
Ancient Inscription in Bow Church, Stratford.

On a bright afternoon in March, 1410, John Bradby, or Badby, tailor, suffered death by fire in Smithfield, for contumacious belief in the Bible as interpreted by Wickliffe. He was placed in a cask, and therein ultimately burnt to ashes, the progress of the martyrdom having been marked by circumstances which it is necessary to the clearness of this narrative that I should briefly notice. I do so with some reluctance, as I do not love to revive such memories.

The Prince of Wales, afterwards Henry V., was present with a large retinue, and he, moved by the cries wrung from the victim when first touched by the fiery torture, commanded the execution to be stayed, and offered Bradby, upon condition that he instantly recanted his heretical creed, not only to save his life, but to grant him a pension of three pence per diem—a by no means contemptible annuity in those days. But it was the flesh only of the sufferer that was weak; the heroic spirit was constant, undismayed as ever. Bradby rejected the Prince's offer of life and competence, and the renewed work of death was consummated, amidst the subdued murmurs of a large portion of the crowd; few of whom probably sympathised with or comprehended the doctrinal opinions of the sufferer; but

all had human hearts, which so afflictive a spectacle could not fail to inspire with pity, regret, and indignation.

One of the most earnest in his murmured denunciations of the devilish cruelty of Holy Church, though not till the Prince had manifested a leaning to mercy's side, was Andrew Layton, who assuredly was not actuated by religious enthusiasm. Layton was a herbalist and apothecary of repute, whose place of abode and business was at the sign of the Rosemary, in Holborn, or Oldbourne, as it was then called, opposite New Street, now Chancery Lane. He was a tall, spare man, considerably under thirty years of age, though from his aspect he would have been taken for forty at least, a profound melancholy which never left him, save during spasmodic intervals of excitement, having long since effaced the bloom and freshness of life from his thoughtful and striking, if not strictly handsome, features. He was weakly framed, and of a timid yet aggressive temperament; his corporeal nerves refusing to sustain the mental energy which, when he was under the influence of passion, glared from his large, dark, melancholy eyes. It seems that he had money-dealings with John Bradby, and though not, one must suppose, to any great extent, the fact that the sufferer's death would subject him to pecuniary loss, may have lent force to, under the circumstances, the insane impulse which prompted him to hurtle his way through the intervening crowd, draw by permission Bradby a little aside, and vehemently urge him to accept the Prince's gracious offer. He spoke to ears rendered deaf to such counsels by faith-heard harmonies of heaven.

"Fool! dolt!" exclaimed Layton, breaking in his earnestness of angry contempt into tones not sufficiently subdued, "thou art sacrificing thyself for a dream, a bubble. The fiery cross of martyrdom is indeed a terrible reality, but its phantom-crown which thou ravest of, eyes extinguished by eternal death shall never see. As to devils, believe me, my poor friend, when I say that thou hast none to fear either here or hereafter, save the clerical fiends who are now clamouring for thy blood——"

The pressure of a heavy hand from behind upon his shoulder choked Andrew Layton's utterance, and turning quickly about, he found himself closely confronted by the scowling visage of Matthew Paviour, a wealthy goldsmith

and orthodox fanatic, zealous unto slaying for the putting down of heresies. He was probably an ancestor of that Paviour, town-clerk of London in Henry VIII.'s time, who according to Hollingshed, "hanged himself in a fit of proud indignation, rather than see the Scriptures set forth in the English tongue."

"So, so!" hissed Matthew Paviour in the herbalist's shrinking ear, "I have at last been favoured to hear the credo of Andrew Layton from his own lips. Hell has long gaped for thee, blaspheming dog, and therein shalt thou be hurled before many days are past; and through the same gate of fire as thy tailor friend. Stir not hence; or if thou dost, it is no matter: I shall know where to find thee." Having thus delivered himself, Paviour made his way to the side of his wife and daughter, who with other richly-apparelled dames occupied elevated seats, from which the spectacle of a murder, perpetrated in honour of Him who never spake but to bless, never stretched forth His hand but to heal and save,—could be enjoyed in quietude and comfort.

The fanatic goldsmith left Andrew Layton rooted to the ground with terror. From that moment he afterwards declared he was distinctly conscious of nothing during the progress of the execution, save that Matthew Paviour's baleful glance continued unswervingly fixed upon him; the thick smoke fitfully flashing into vivid flame of the rekindled fire, now obscuring, now bringing into red relief the sinister features, from which he could not by any effort turn away his fascinated gaze.

That paralysis of fear remained unbroken after not only prince and priest, but the mass of the common file, had left the accursed place, and till Paviour, having first spoken with an officer of the Bishop of Worcester's household, approached and sternly commanded him to follow. Then a cry of terror parted Andrew Layton's white lips, and he turned distractedly to flee. Paviour's sturdy grip seized and held him as with a vice, and recognising the impossibility of resistance, he essayed what abject supplication might avail. All as vainly; and he was fain to obey the iterated command of the fierce goldsmith, when Sir Richard Redmayne, a young soldier who had won distinction in the civil wars of the unquiet time, and who had been condescendingly chatting with Paviour's wife and daughter, interposed. The result was,

that at the urgent request of Sir Richard, the terrified herbalist was respited during pleasure—meaning, as Layton well understood, for so long as the knight's protection was extended to him. This piece of service rendered to his "good friend, Master Layton," Sir Richard rejoined the goldsmith's wife and daughter, whom he subsequently escorted to their residence in Chepe.

The interposition of Sir Richard Redmayne, though eagerly accepted by Layton, did not appear to excite in him the slightest emotion of gratitude. So far from that, the furtive glare of hate and terror with which he regarded both the knight and the goldsmith seemed deadliest when directed upon his rescuer;—a feeling which it was plain the supercilious soldier perfectly comprehended, and contemptuously excused.

The peril nevertheless from which he had been rescued, if only temporarily, was one from which the amplest recantation would not have shielded Layton. The previous year he had been accused before a high Church dignitary of wilfully mutilating a holy image, and though lavish protestation of boundless devotion to Holy Church, reinforced by a "free-will" donation in aid of her funds, procured his dismissal from the charge, he was emphatically warned that if again brought before the reverend tribunal, he would certainly be handed over to the secular arm for condign punishment. By condign punishment was probably meant a heavy fine with lengthened imprisonment, but Layton, it appears, attached a more fearful significance to the Bishop's threat: thence the fascination of fear which seized him upon finding that he had with unwitting rashness placed himself in the Church's power; thence also the maniacal hatred, inflamed, hardened, it is true, by other influences, which he ever afterwards cherished towards Matthew Paviour and Sir Richard Redmayne; both of whom, as he believed, held his life in their hands.

Andrew Layton closed his shop earlier than usual that evening, and was still some two hours afterwards sitting in gloomy reverie before the fading embers of a fire, which threw a doubtful flickering light over the panelled walls of a dingy back room, when Margaret Gorton, his foster-mother, who served him as housekeeper and drudge-of-all-work, came in to remove his untasted supper. Layton con-

tinued to gaze abstractedly at the decaying fire, not heeding the presence of the woman.

"It grows late," said Margaret Gorton, after clearing the table. "Should not the house be closed for the night?"

"Yes, certainly," said Layton, rousing himself. "Bar and lock the outer door; I shall to bed presently."

"Bar and lock the outer door before Sir Richard Redmayne leaves the house?" rejoined the woman.

Layton started up as if a serpent stung him. "How dared you," he exclaimed, "admit that licentious ruffian? Have I not forbidden——. True, true," he added, checking himself, "I had forgotten,—I had forgotten."

Margaret Gorton regarded her foster-son with a sad and partly scornful, partly compassionate expression. "You had forgotten," said she, "that when you returned from seeing John Bradby burned, you bade me not hinder Sir Richard Redmayne from seeing Rosamond Danvers. I obeyed, and they have been already more than an hour together. Hark!"

The music of a stringed instrument skilfully touched, accompanying a rich, manly voice in a French love-song, floated into the room.

Layton fell back into his seat with a cry of anguish. "Plagues! curses! be multiplied upon Sir Richard Redmayne," he groaned. "Fiercest flames of the hell-fire which is withering my own life, enfold, torture, consume him!"

After that wild outburst he was silent for some minutes; then with recovering calmness said he would himself fasten the street-door after their visitor, and Margaret Gorton having first trimmed and kindled a hand-lamp for her master's use, wished him good-night.

The sounds of music and merriment continued to float into the room at intervals, when the chords were struck with a bolder touch than usual, and the laughter swelled into hilarious joyousness. Starting up, Layton seized the hand-lamp; with swift yet stealthy steps hurried from the room, ascended one flight of stairs, and the curtain within being undrawn, looked through a borrowed light into the apartment, where in lover-like, confiding proximity to each other sat Rosamond Danvers and Sir Richard Redmayne, absorbed in the gaily-tender intercourse of which song and laughter were the gushing, natural utterances. To Andrew Layton

it was a vision of paradise from beyond the abyss, searing his very eye-balls; and as he turned darkling away, his staggering footfall and convulsive malediction startled the lovers, who, helped by a glimpse of a man's shadow cast by Layton's lamp, had no difficulty in comprehending what had occurred, and that it might be as well to at once bid each other farewell for the night.

A few minutes afterwards Sir Richard descended the stairs; was let out into the brilliant moonlight by Andrew Layton, to whom he gaily bade good-night, and then springing lightly over the chain supported by posts, which in those days separated the footpath from the horse-road of the unpaved streets, passed across to the opposite side, and disappeared down New Street on his way to the Temple, after pausing for a moment to lift his plumed hat and kiss his hand to the beautiful girl, who reciprocated his renewed farewell from the projecting balcony immediately over the herbalist's shop.

The fire of jealousy glowing in the veins of Andrew Layton needed not to be fanned into fiercer rage by openly breathed sighs of burning passion. "From that hour," writes Layton, "a resolve to be thorough in my revenge upon Sir Richard Redmayne became a part of my nature, from which I could no more have been divorced and live than from my fleshly heart and brain."

He did not, of course, mean by this passage that he from that hour resolved upon the *mode* of vengeance, which he afterwards elaborated. His state of mind was no doubt akin to that of Lear, when he exclaims:—

> "——— I'll do such things!
> What they are as yet, I know not;
> But they shall be the terrors of the earth!"

Future circumstances which he could not possibly foresee, or, *primarily*, in the slightest manner, aid to bring about, were required to render such a mode of vengeance possible.

No question indeed that the demon of revenge took firm, absolute possession of Andrew Layton's soul during the long vigil of that winter night. He did not retire to bed, as Margaret Gorton found him the next morning sitting with his hands upon his knees before the fireplace, gazing vacantly at the black embers, and "looking more like a ghost from

the grave than a living man." A glance at his foregone life-story will enable us to discern some, at least, of the imaged memories of the past, which in the dark night-silence trooped through his fevered brain.

Philip Danvers, at one time a man of considerable substance, had fallen into comparative poverty by the time his only child Rosamond, whose mother died in giving her life, had attained her ninth year, in consequence of his insane pursuit of the so-called science of alchemy—that craze of the middle ages—and was at length fain to patch up his broken fortunes by turning his attention to the study of the qualities of herbs and drugs. He did so, and with such fair success that his shop eventually did for him, though not to any magnificent extent, that which alchemy had miserably failed to accomplish—transmuted, namely, his copper deniers into silver shillings, his silver shillings into gold nobles. The means of life and of completing the education of his idolized child assured, Philip Danvers relapsed into his alchemaic dreams; and when suddenly struck down by always inopportune death, died dreaming that he was about immediately and infallibly to discover the grand secret: a truth, though not in the sense intended by the expiring dreamer.

Before, however, resuming his search after the philosopher's stone, Philip Danvers had secured an efficient substitute for himself in the drug shop. His apprentice, Andrew Layton, had, by the time his articles expired, thoroughly mastered the mysteries of the business, and to Danvers' proposal that he should remain with him till something better offered, at the slight salary he could afford, the young man at once and eagerly assented. Nothing "better," in Andrew Layton's opinion, ever offered; the business prospered under his assiduous care; and at the death of Philip Danvers, in the year 1408, passed into Layton's possession, charged with an annuity to Rosamond, then in her twentieth year, whom Danvers in his last will and testament solemnly consigned to the watchful guardianship of his successor.

That solemn injunction was not needed. From the first year Andrew Layton took up his abode with the alchemist, he had been thrall to Rosamond Danvers; boyish attachment, as the years flew on, hardened, flamed into virile passion; and for long before her father's death, he lived but in

her life; in her keeping had garnered up—mad husbandry! —every hope which threw its fairy light into the else blank, cheerless future.

Philip Danvers had seen, surmised nothing of all that; and one less blinded by misty day-dreams to what was passing around him in the actual world might have been excused for not suspecting that a grave, taciturn young man loved a gay-hearted girl, whose society he, as a rule, shunned rather than courted. True, Andrew Layton would at times sit for hours lost to all self-control, gazing with dumb entrancement as she exercised or practised the accomplishments of singing, playing, dancing, in which she was expensively trained. But then he would suddenly, scornfully as it were, wrench himself away from indulgence in such foolish idling, and with redoubled energy bend supple his energies to the fulfilment of his common-place, daily business labours. The casual onlooker might, I repeat, have been excused for not perceiving that the spur to that renewed, strenuous exertion was the very intensity of his love for the charming girl, between whose sunny laughing days, and the bleak, dark, death-in-life of poverty, close verging on privation, his incessant, untiring labour alone interposed.

That labour of love, the secret mainspring of which Rosamond Danvers had early divined, was utterly sterile, save in promoting her pecuniary interests. It neither touched her heart nor awakened her sympathy. Her mirth, indeed—girlish, heedless, not ill-natured mirth—her timid lover's awkward manifestation frequently provoked—and when, some twelve months after her father's death, Andrew Layton, yielding to a wild impulse, blurted out an explicit declaration of his passion, he was told in words, as plain and unmistakable, that his hopes were vain; the success of his suit then or thereafter impossible.

It was noticed that from that time Andrew Layton became flawed in temper, moody, irascible, and that he entered savagely, vindictively, in a spirit of scornful cynicism, into the bitter religious controversies of the day. This was so grievous a change to Rosamond Danvers, who with all her foibles seems to have been a well-principled, pious maiden, that she earnestly strove to lure him back to the paths of peace and orthodoxy; going so far, perhaps, in her zeal, as to indirectly give renewed life to hopes she had not the

faintest intention to realise. Be that as it may, I distinctly gather that, till Sir Richard Redmayne chanced to make her acquaintance—where or how I can discover no hint—Andrew Layton had not utterly despaired of one day making Rosamond Danvers his wife. Thenceforth it was impossible to indulge in that dream. The gratified girl accepted the homage of Sir Richard with avowed delight, thinking, suspecting nothing, as she drank in the honey of his music vows, of the poison that might lurk in the enchanted cup! Passionate scenes of mutual reproach and anger passed between her and her lover-guardian, who not only persisted in asserting that the knight's condescendent advances to an unportioned maiden of humble birth could have but one motive, and that a vile one, but threw every possible hindrance in the way of the lovers' intercourse; finally going the length of forbidding Sir Richard Redmayne his house.

The reader can now appreciate the relative positions of Sir Richard Redmayne and Andrew Layton on the day of Bradby's murder; the motives which induced the wily knight to interpose in behalf of his "good friend, Master Layton," and the delirium of rage and hate which the finding himself, as a consequence of his own mad folly, in the power of Rosamond's triumphant lover excited in the breast of the spurned, buffeted herbalist.

Nevertheless Andrew Layton's peculiar moral organisation —that of wax to receive impressions; of adamant to retain them—rendered him as constant, unswerving in his love as in his hate. That love, untinged by a shade of anger towards its object, he manifested by such untiring, sleepless guardianship of his pure-thoughted but heedless ward, that, whatever might have been the primary object of Sir Richard Redmayne's courtship, the result was marriage with Rosamond Danvers, which marriage was privately celebrated at Saint Sepulchre's Church on the 7th of June, 1411, "the witnesses thereof being Andrew Layton, Margaret Gorton, John Boyce, and John Nunn."

The history of the Lady Redmayne for the next four years is a blank in the written record of her life; but viewed by the light of the following passage in Layton's diary, it is seen to have been a trite, world-old story, which he who runs may read:—

"September 6th, 1415.—This day I have had the Lady

Redmayne and her son brought to my house in a litter, she being too weak to walk. Her husband she has not seen for many months to her great sorrow, and the more so for her son's sake. He is now said to be at the wars in France with the king."

Sir Richard Redmayne had wearied of his beautiful toy: the contemned, abandoned wife had at length stooped from her imaginary height to the shelter of her old, true home! Verily, a common-place, world-old-story: common-place as crime: old as girlhood's simplicity and faith!

"Lady Redmayne's son, now in his fourth year," continues Andrew Layton, "is a sweet, delicate child, that at first sight I did not believe would reach to man's estate. This I kept to myself, his mother having woe enough in the present without borrowing from the future; and the more happy was that cautious silence, as I speedily saw reason to change my opinion of the boy's likelihood of prolonged life. The rumours, too, of how sorely the English in France were beset, and the great ravages amongst them by pestilence, so that the king, men said, would have no choice but to yield himself and all that remained with him prisoners to the French, greatly helped to increase the Lady Redmayne's malady; she fearing for the life or liberty of her pitiless, dissolute husband. The news, therefore, of the great victory seems to make her whole again. Of such strangeness is women; loving where they should hate—hating where they should love."

The great victory was that of Agincourt, fought on the 25th October, 1415, tidings of which reaching Henry Wotton by a king's messenger whilst on his way to Westminster to qualify himself for Lord Mayor, transferred the previously doleful civic procession into a triumphant military march, accompanied on its return by prelates, peers, knights, and a shouting multitude, on their way to chant a Te Deum Laudamus at Saint Paul's, in honour of God and the great victory.

Andrew Layton joined the exulting crowd near Ludgate, attracted mainly by a vague notion that he might hear tidings of Sir Richard Redmayne—"of his death mayhap." For that hope he pressed resolutely on to where rode the mass of civilian and warrior notabilities, and was rewarded for his pains by the sight of Sir Richard himself riding,

gallantly accoutred, by the side of Matthew Paviour, by that time richer than ever, and one of the city dignitaries. Sir Richard had arrived in England in company with the king's special messenger, and stood, men said, higher than ever in his sovereign's favour, for valiant deeds done at Agincourt.

The bitter rage swelling at the heart of Andrew Layton was coincident with a sudden thought which seemed to promise some slight gratification to his hungering hate; and he continued to push and edge his way through the crowd which presently thronged the cathedral till he had gained to within a few paces of the knight and goldsmith, who, no doubt by pre-arrangement, kept close by each other.

The Te Deum Laudamus had been sung; the banners, resplendent with the glory of England, momently lowered in haughty acknowledgment of the bishop's benediction, again waved triumphantly aloft; the trumpets renewed the Io triomphe, which to this day echoes in the hearts of Englishmen, and the crowd rapidly thinned; "so plucking up courage," Andrew Layton stepped in front of Sir Richard Redmayne, and with a low obeisance and subdued voice, but quite sufficiently loud to catch the goldsmith's ear, said:—

"I ask pardon, Sir Richard, but the Lady Redmayne craves tidings of you. She is at my poor house, ill in mind and body. Your son is also ailing, and——"

The fitful courage of the herbalist, withered up by the knight's glance of fire, could sustain him no further. He was stricken dumb, and could make no reply to Sir Richard's fierce demand of the purpose and meaning of such words addressed to *him!*

Receiving no answer, Sir Richard brushed Layton from his path with a backward sweep of his gauntleted hand, and passed on with Matthew Paviour. Directly they were out of sight, Andrew Layton crept away homeward so cowed, so fear-shaken, that he could not bring himself to speak of his meeting with Sir Richard Redmayne, lest, perchance, the forsaken wife, "being a woman of courageous spirit," should raise such public clamour for the recovery of her legal rights as might bring down her husband's vengeance upon his, Layton's, head.

Early in the evening of the fourth day following, a servitor of Sir Richard Redmayne called upon the herbalist to

say his master wished to see him immediately. The request was a command which Layton durst not disobey, and with a quaking heart he accompanied the messenger to the knight's presence.

Not at all, for a time, an awful or fear-inspiring presence! Sir Richard received his reluctant visitor with much urbanity, bade him be seated opposite himself in front of a blazing fire, commanded wine to be brought in, and talked for a while upon ordinary topics with gracious familiarity.

"The thin mask of courtesy," remarks Layton in his account of the interview, "impatiently worn by Sir Richard Redmayne, was soon abruptly cast aside, and my proud persecutor showed himself in his true colours.

"'And so, Master Layton,' it was thus he began to set forth his true purpose in sending for me,—'And so, Master Layton, you say that Fair Rosamond, otherwise Lady Redmayne, and her son, are abiding with you, and suffering both of them from failing health?'

"'That is true, Sir Richard,' I answered.

"'Really failing health? Such malady I mean as will speedily waft them to companionship with saints and angels?'

"'I say not that, Sir Richard. The mother will, I am pretty sure, with help of skilful tendance, soon recover her fine health—the sooner if her mind could be eased of its burthen of grief. Of the boy's well-doing, I can speak almost as confidently.'

"This answer I made with trembling, for the knight's words had cast over me the shadow of a great fear.

"'But thou being their apothecary and nurse,' said Sir Richard, 'mayest easily, *by skilful tendance*, hasten their flight to heaven——. Nay, fellow, do not start, and stare, and gibber at me as if I were a wild beast suddenly loosed at and about to worry thy lamb-like innocence.'

"'I—I do not comprehend, Sir Richard,' said I, stammering. 'I do not——'

"'Cur, thou liest,' he ragefully broke in. 'Thy white face, quivering lips and limbs, confess thou comprehendest that I mean—*Murder!* I like to out at once with the plain, fitting word. Ay, and that thou wilt do my bidding too.'

"'Never!—never!' cried I, distractedly.

"'Never; never. What, will then Andrew Layton prefer

rather to be *himself* murdered, and by the torture of fire, like his heroic tailor-friend? *Tut*, the cold sweat which at the bare mention of such a thing breaks out in beads upon thy forehead, gives the lie to such vain vapouring.'

"I could but gasp and stare; and remaining speechless, Sir Richard went on:—

"'But come, I am apt to be over-hasty and violent. Sit down, and let us, unheard,—as I have taken strict care, save by celestial witnesses, who have never to my knowledge appeared to give evidence before our Lord the King at Westminster—discourse of this matter. I promise, too, that thou shalt have fair play therein; be guided in thy last resolve by thine own free-will. To begin then, thou hast brought all this upon thine own head; hast been from first to last the artificer of thy own ruin—if ruin it be to fill thy wasted purse by imitating, upon the smallest possible scale, the great deeds which, performed upon the field of Agincourt, will glorify our race for a thousand years to come. We, to the great glory of God and our country, as the venerable bishop assured us at St. Paul's the other day, sent thirty or forty thousand Frenchman to paradise or perdition—the *lower* road was far thickliest crowded, I'll be sworn; and thou, forsooth, hast a scruple of conscience about despatching two unsmirched souls to heaven! Why, thou unconscionable rogue, the many pretty items scored down against thee by Matthew Paviour, and to be made effective use of at the first opportunity—that is, when I cast thee off—do not in their total reach to such a daring heresy as that!'

"I said something to the effect that public war for public right, wherein no one individual had personal malice towards his enemy, could not be confounded with private felonious murder.

"'Like all confirmed heretics, Andrew Layton, thou art a casuist. Still I doubt not that my logic will be presently found to have the sharpest edge. But we dally with precious moments. I repeat that thy present state, and mine also to a large extent, are thy own handiwork. Had youth and love been permitted to follow their own free course, thou might'st now have been the husband of Rosamond Danvers, whereas with such dragon-like watchfulness didst thou guard the Hesperides of my golden hopes, that to obtain fruition

thereof I was e'en compelled to have recourse to the priest! The sequel thou might'st have guessed beforehand. The yoke of marriage fastened upon me by thee, and which thy hand, guiding that of death, must—*shall* break, galled, maddened me. I hated my low-born wife; hated myself for stooping to the degradation of such a marriage. The child for a time stood between her and the development in action of the rage which filled my heart. Yet I never greatly liked him: he resembled his mother, and at my approach would shelter himself, weeping and affrighted, in her arms. At last a circumstance came about, which made the brat a partner in the hate I bore his mother. It is well known that I am wasteful,' continued Sir Richard with rising fury, 'that my patrimony has been long since spent. My dependence has always been upon my unmarried maternal uncle, Sir Thomas Medhurst, of Clare Hall, Buckinghamshire, and one of the largest landowners of the county. I wrote to him for assistance; by a fatal oversight dating the letter from the house at Stratford. Sir Thomas answered it in person during my absence, saw, and had many conversations with my traitrous wife—traitrous, if not by her words, by her equally-significant tears and sighs. He took a mighty liking to her; more to the child, whom the old dotard fancied resembled his deceased sister, my mother. He returned to Clare Hall without seeing me, and soon afterwards forwarded me a copy of his last will and testament, by which all the real estate and personals he might die seised and possessed of were devised to the eldest son of his unworthy nephew, Sir Richard Redmayne, charged only with a large annuity to his mother!'

"Here Sir Richard caught up a goblet of wine and emptied it at a draught;—his eyes seeming to blaze with fire.

"'Thus was I beggared!' he furiously went on, striking the table with his clenched fist. 'Thus was I beggared to enrich the objects of my loathing and contempt. I was for a time mad with rage, and your cursed Rosamond will long remember the day when the paper reached me, though she knew not its contents or purport. Is she wiser now?' he added, suddenly.

"'It is not within my knowledge that she is, Sir Richard,' said I.

"'It is well, though a few hours hence it will matter nothing whether she did or not. Sir Thomas Medhurst's infamous disposition of his property,' said Sir Richard, 'was made irrevocable by an accident which befell him a few weeks afterwards. He was thrown from his horse, and received such injuries, that, although he is likely enough to live thirty or forty years longer, his mental powers are so damaged that he could not, if he would, (men learned in will-law tell me) make any valid testamentary act. And those same learned men assure me, Layton,' added Sir Richard, seizing both my hands in his, and holding them with a grip of steel, whilst his blood-shot eyes flamed into mine with deadly meaning, 'and those same learned men assure me, Layton,——me, the heir-at-law,—that were the woman and her child dead,—all,—realty, personalty,—will at the old man's decease be mine —mine! Ha! what, thou beginnest to understand that to but attempt to juggle with, to baulk me, were to play with fire—to court swift, instant destruction,—to accept, in thine own words, carefully set down by Matthew Paviour, the dreadful cross, unsustained by even the hope of its phantom crown.'

"I spake not. My tongue clave to the roof of my mouth. And could I have spoken, of what help had been words?

"'The bare imagination of such a doom palsies thee with terror,' said Sir Richard, casting me from him; 'It is all of thine own seeking,' he added; 'but for thy mad meddling the other day, the goal, the prize might have been gained without the dire expedient of murder. I speak the truth, Andrew Layton. Since I left the woman, many plots have been half hatched in my brain, and one at length attained a promising maturity. This was to shut your Rosamond up for life under an easily-devised pretext in a Norman convent; the boy could have been as easily and securely disposed of. They would both have been for ever dead to the world, to my world, and I without fear of detection might have espoused rich Edith Paviour—an indispensable step in the retrieval of my fortunes; for as I told thee, Sir Thomas Medhurst may yet live many years. That project was already launched when thy cursed words in St. Paul's the other day, heard by Paviour, wrecked it at once. The wily goldsmith has already sifted the matter

thoroughly, ascertained that I was secretly married at St. Sepulchre's to Danvers' the alchemist's daughter; that I have a son as well as wife still living; and though as desirous as ever that Edith Paviour should be Lady Redmayne, he will be persuaded by nothing less than the evidence of his own eyes that Rosamond—whom he knew well by sight—and her son are really dead. Thy servant, Margaret Gorton, told the messenger he sent to inquire, that both mother and son were ill,—very ill, sick unto death, she feared. That lucky circumstance confirming thy words to me, in St. Paul's, pointed out how I might make these odds all even yet. A few hours, therefore, hence—for I will have no weak delays—Matthew Paviour *shall* with his own eyes see the lifeless bodies of—of the woman and her son. Thou hast skill in the fatal as well as curative qualities of herbs and drugs, and canst act out my command without causing pain or exciting suspicion. They will fall asleep on earth, to awake in heaven—a blessed change!'

"'Useless,' said again my tiger-hearted persecutor,—'useless, Andrew Layton, to moan, and sob, and wring thy hands. Nor heaven nor hell can shake my fixed intent. Thy choice is, to suffer death by torture of fire, or to do my bidding. Paviour thirsts for the blood of so foul a heretic. Ay, and mark me, Andrew Layton, shouldst thou by some miraculous chance escape the fangs of the Church, I will, shouldst thou fail or baulk me, stab, hew thee in pieces, with my own sword. Any pretence—my knighthood helping—for example, that thou hadst dared to cast dishonouring slanders on my wife—would fully excuse the slaying of such a plebeian heretic as thou art!'

"'On the other hand,' presently said he, with less rage,—'on the other hand, if thou dost my bidding, not only will I shield thee from the persecution of Holy Church, but give thee a large money reward. Thou need'st it much, I know; for amongst the many things set down, concerning Andrew Layton, by Matthew Paviour, it is written, that of late years he has grown careless of his business and is fast falling into poverty.'

"I answered, that if that was partly true, yet I owed no man aught, and that no reward could tempt me to the commission of so foul a crime. Thereupon Sir Richard

grew sterner, fiercer, said he had men in waiting to seize and bind me; and thus sore beset, and fearing that in his fury he might make an end of me on the spot, and excuse the deed in some such way as he had stated, I at last yielded to his masterful violence and left the place, bound to carry out his full intent, and with a part of the price of innocent blood in my hand.

"I know not how I reached home. The lamps and cressets which were still kindled in the evenings in honour of the king's victory, dazzled and danced before my eyes like Will-o'-wisps; my knees smote each other, I stumbled blindly along, and a cold sweat of horror bedewed my limbs. My mind, tossed between fears for my own life and horror of the crime I was put upon, could fix itself neither to defy the knight's threats nor to do his will. Yet it grew upon me strongly, that by giving away my own life I should not, of a surety, save that of Rosamond, since, were I once out of the way, there were many modes by which Sir Richard Redmayne might compass his design. This, I have since thought, must have been a suggestion of the devil;—which thought, I not believing in the devil, did not then cross me."

By what power soever swayed—suggestions of Satan or of his own craven fears—it seems plain that Andrew Layton finally resolved to save himself by the taking off by poison Lady Redmayne and her child. That resolve must, however, have been greatly shaken when he came into the presence of the unfortunate lady, "her countenance, to his thinking, never having looked so beauteous, her smile so sweet, as when she asked him for the cordial he had been wont to give her and the child at that hour of the evening to provoke sleep."

Andrew Layton hurried out of the chamber, and was gone so long "that Lady Redmayne was peevish thereat, and her son more than once asked for the sweet medicine."

The cordial, or sweet medicine, was at length brought, and given to the lady and child. The usual sedative effect followed, and both gradually sank into profound slumber. "Master Layton," says Margaret Gorton, "continued for a long time to look fixedly at them with a strange, feverish light in his eyes, and opening his lips only to say in answer

to me, 'they are ill, Margaret, ill to death, I fear, but to-morrow will tell.' "He then bade me good-night and went to his chamber, but the next morning, going therein, I saw he had not been in bed all night, which made my fears for Lady Redmayne and her son the greater, Master Layton being so well skilled in signs of death, and so loving-hearted to his old master's daughter."

About noon on the following day, Andrew Layton called at Saint Sepulchre's, and "with much tears and trouble of mind," bade the sacristan, Jonas Ball, send a priest, the rector, if might be, to his house, where the Lady Redmayne and her son lay *in extremis*. Next, as had been agreed between him and Sir Richard, Andrew Layton hurried to Paviour's house in Chepe, "made a great outcry and clamour there" which brought the goldsmith himself, to whom he said he had come to tell Sir Richard Redmayne, not knowing where else to seek him, that the Lady Redmayne and her son had received the last sacraments, and were dying. Matthew Paviour answered that he knew not where the knight then was, but would have him sought for, and bade Layton send him word if the lady or her son died.

That word was sent within three hours, and Paviour betook himself soon after to the house in Holborn; told Margaret Gorton he had not been able to find Sir Richard Redmayne; and expressed a wish to see the bodies.

Andrew Layton was in the death-chamber when the goldsmith entered. His stony stare, which seldom wandered from the dead lady's face, flashed with the same strange lurid light which Margaret had once before noticed, when Paviour placed his fingers upon the stilled pulses of the dead, and turned back the child's white linen robe to see the four moles forming a kind of circle at the back of the boy's neck. Other sign than that strange flashing glance, that he was conscious of Paviour's presence, Layton made not, nor did he appear to hear the goldsmith's commiserative comment upon Rosamond Danvers' ill-fated marriage and untimely death; having uttered which solemn common-places with proper gravity, and his errand being accomplished, Matthew Paviour went his way.

On the third subsequent day, the funeral, an obscure one, took place. The place of interment was Saint Sepul-

chre's grave-yard: Sir Richard Redmayne was present, and the attendants at the burial were the same as at the bridal ceremony—Andrew Layton, Margaret Gorton, John Boyce, and John Nunn; the last, a carpenter, was the undertaker. The rector, too, who pronounced the nuptial blessing on the bride, consecrated her corpse and that of her son to a glorious resurrection.

On the evening of the same day Andrew Layton received the full wage of his crime from Sir Richard Redmayne. Margaret Gorton, it was afterwards remembered, disappeared from the neighbourhood at once; and soon Andrew Layton, having let the house and business in Holborn, followed her example, and was not seen again in London till the following February (1416), and then upon occasion of the marriage of Sir Richard Redmayne with Edith Paviour, a brilliant affair, at which he contrived to make himself so rudely conspicuous by shouting, laughing, and otherwise comporting himself like a drunken maniac, which in a certain sense he undoubtedly was, as to kindle into activity the always smouldering wrath of the bride's father, by whose magisterial order he was sent to prison, scourged, and set in the stocks. The punishment he had wantonly provoked was borne by Andrew Layton with an exultant ferocity, so to speak: "I counted the prisonment, the stripes, the scoffs, as the ale-wife does the chalks she scores against the besotted tippler—to be cleared off with usury when the tale is complete. Besides which, it eased my conscience in the work before me."

Sir Richard Redmayne's second union was no happier than the first. The Lady Edith was of an exacting temper, and for the wealth she brought her husband expected to be treated with a deference which Sir Richard was less than ever disposed to yield to a plebeian wife. One son was born to them, and after dragging on impatiently together for a few years, Sir Richard, who, by that time, had dissipated in riotous living the whole of his wife's splendid dowry, passed over once more to France, and took part in the wars waged in vindication of the child-king Henry the Sixth's title to the throne of that kingdom. Having received a wound by a lance-thrust in his side, he returned to England, and again cohabited with his wife; Matthew Paviour agreeing to furnish further sums for their maintenance

upon the security of the reversion of the Buckinghamshire estates, it being certain that Sir Thomas Medhurst could not much longer survive.

Andrew Layton, who for a long time had led the life of a sort of unpurposed vagabond, wandering about the country from sheer restlessness of mind, finding his health to be rapidly failing, hired lodgings near Sir Richard's residence, soon after the wounded knight's return from France. He employed his leisure in gratuitously ministering to the ailments of the people in and about Stratford, and his skill in the healing art being much bruited about in the neighbourhood, was the means of placing him once more in personal communication with Sir Richard Redmayne, whose wound unskilfully treated at first, had ulcerated, or threatened to do so. Layton waited upon the knight at the first summons, and though he saw at once that Sir Richard's case was hopeless, he contrived to give him great present ease, thereby rendering himself necessary to the sufferer. "Nothing passed between us," says Layton, "concerning the death of the first Lady Redmayne and her son, save rarely by looks suddenly flashed upon each other, when something was said in our hearing which startled easily-affrighted conscience. Sir Richard, I soon found, suffered horribly from remorse, but most at those times when his wound caused him agony, he then fearing that he was hurt to death; as, in truth, he was, though no one said so, but the contrary. I was sure that if once told he must die, and soon, he would confess everything to a pardoning priest, by which *my* condemnation would be brought to pass, not by direct charge, as the priest cannot openly reveal the penitent's confessions, but by accusation of heresy or such like, easily put on, which would fit the purpose as well. Therefore I soothed him with good hopes of recovery, well knowing he would go soon and suddenly, the suddener for any great agitation, like the blowing out of a flickering candle-flame by a whiff of wind. In my veins, too, the fire of life burnt low, lower every day, but it would last, I felt sure, till the hour of vengeance and of justice struck; then the quicker it went out the better. And so meditating I awaited fretfully for news from Buckinghamshire."

Sir Richard Redmayne, his lady, and Matthew Paviour, also fretfully awaited news from Buckinghamshire. Sir

Richard had worked himself into a fancy, encouraged therein by Layton, that the air of his native county, combined with the exhilarating consciousness that he was at last proprietor of his maternal uncle's noble domain, that he actually grasped the prize for which he had pledged the eternal jewel of his soul, would act like a charm upon his bodily health. His lady pined for the social grandeur of the wife of a county magnate, and Matthew Paviour for reimbursement of the large sums he had grudgingly lent his imprudent son-in-law. And Andrew Layton knowing their wishes,—comparing the desire of their souls with the secret of his, felt the decaying flame of life leap up and burn with intensest fervency. "They pine for news,—*death*-news from Buckinghamshire," — he would exultingly exclaim when alone. "Ha! ha!—ho! ho! News,—death-news from Buckinghamshire, ha! ha!"

That news came at last: Sir Thomas Medhurst was dead; had died without having made, or attempted to make, any new disposition of his wealth, and Sir Richard Redmayne the heir-at-law was consequently possessor of the large estates and rich personals. Grief for the old man's death was not affected, and all was bustle and excitement in the house at Stratford, in preparation for setting out after the funeral had taken place for Clare Hall. Sir Richard's fancy that the succcession would benefit his bodily health seemed to be realised; and as for Andrew Layton, *he* appeared to be quite rejuvenated by the warm interest he took in Sir Richard's prosperous fortunes. *He* was also extremely busy the while, and once absented himself four days together, not only from Sir Richard's house, but the neighbourhood of Stratford.

It was something over a month from the receipt of the news of Sir Thomas Medhurst's death, that Sir Richard Redmayne, journeying by easy stages, reached Clare Hall, accompanied by his lady,—his son,—his proud father-in-law Matthew Paviour, and still indispensable Andrew Layton.

More indispensable than ever; the fatigue of the journey, slowly as it was performed, having thoroughly beaten down Sir Richard's wild hope, that the glow of triumph which had temporarily flushed his veins, was the warmth of reviving health and life. Still, sustained by a powerful

stimulant, administered by Layton, Sir Richard received, in great state, on the day but one after his arrival, the many neighbours who called to offer him their condolences and felicitations.

Several of them remained to dine, amongst whom was the Bishop of Worcester, a relative of Sir Richard's. The repast was of course a sumptuous, and equally of course a cumbrous, wearying one. It was observed that during its continuance Andrew Layton manifested intense excitement and restlessness, going out of the apartment repeatedly; and that on his return each time he scrutinized the countenance of Sir Richard with eager eyes, as if—it struck Matthew Paviour more than once—as if he there discerned, or feared he discerned, the signs of approaching death. The invalid knight himself alternately flushed and paled beneath the searching inquisition of his attendant, which Layton at last perceiving, and that he was drawing the eyes of the whole of the company upon himself, suppressed his emotion, or rather its outward indications, put on an indifferent bearing; and presently Sir Richard flagged, drooped again into seemingly incurious, morbid apathy.

Well, dinner had been some time over: the guests, as in our own days, were drinking wine, and discussing politics,—the chances of the war raging in France no doubt, possibly the fabulous achievements and satanic *liaisons* of Jeanne d'Arc, when Andrew Layton said something to his patron in a low voice, which had the effect of instantly arousing the drowsy faculties of Sir Richard, who glared at his attendant as if suddenly confronted by a frightful apparition. The energy thus manifested lasted but a few moments, and the knight, from whose wavering brain the half-formed image suggested by the words he had heard, seemed to have slipped away, relapsed into the lethargy which had gradually overtaken him, as the potent stimulant administered by Layton lost its power.

Seeing this, Layton proffered another draught of the same kind, which having swallowed, colour and light came back to Sir Richard's dull, pallid face, and his rekindled eye again questioned Layton's as to the meaning of the words he had just before whispered in his ear.

"The meaning, Sir Richard Redmayne, of the words I just now whispered in your ear," cried Layton in a loud,

piercing voice, which thrilled the hearts of all present, " is that your hours, nay your minutes, are numbered——"

" Ha!" gasped Sir Richard, " what sayest thou?"

" That it is doubtful," continued Layton, in the same high, piercing tones, " if you will leave this room alive, unless what I have to say shall so lighten your mind of the grievous load which weighs it down, as to enable your bodily faculties to rally. Another draught Sir Knight! If your mind can follow me I shall have hopes."

Sir Richard suffered the stimulant to be poured down his throat, and with his hand motioned Layton to go on.

" Yes, I may say to you, worshipful Master Paviour," said Layton, always with that thrilling, dominating voice, " I may say to your ladyship, to his lordship the bishop, to all this honourable company, that Sir Richard Redmayne's malady is one of the mind, even more than of the body. He believes himself to be a MURDERER! Yes, Matthew Paviour," continued Layton, with a yelling scream of devilish triumph, as he drew himself up to his full height and confronted his old enemy the goldsmith, who, with the rest of the startled guests, had been lifted to his feet with astonishment and vague dismay,—" Yes, Matthew Paviour, your gallant son-in-law believes himself to be in fact a murderer, as assuredly as he is one in design. He believes that I carried out his command to remove by poison,—by a subtle sleeping-draught, the lady Rosamond Redmayne and her son, in order that he might marry, as he *has* married, your dainty daughter! Look up—take heart, valiant Sir Richard. They were *not* murdered! And yet you saw them, Matthew Paviour, saw them both lying dead, did you not?" added Layton, pausing with gleeful chuckle in his terrible objurgation.

" Yes," said Paviour, presently, recovering somewhat from the stupefaction of dismay which had seized him, " Yes, I saw with my own eyes the first Lady Redmayne and her son lying dead."

" Liar! liar! and worse fool!" shouted Layton, " they were in a trance of sleep only, therein thrown by my heretical, damnable art and cunning; by which heretical damnable art and cunning, Matthew Paviour, thy daughter has been brought to shame,—thy grandson bastardised,—thy purse ruinously drained,—and these noble estates secured

to the son of the true, the only Lady Redmayne! What, O accursed persecutor! what were the fire with which thou threatenedst me,—what, even the hell flames to which thy piety consigned me,—to the torture which will consume thee if—if what I say be true:—Ha! Sir Richard!"

Sir Richard Redmayne had risen to his feet, and grasped Layton, with what for him was supernatural strength. His face was that of a corpse, but a light as of the first rays of renewed life shone feebly therein. Mightily he strove to speak; his ashy lips moved convulsively; but intelligible sound came not.

"The man Layton is clearly mad," exclaimed the Bishop of Worcester.

"It is true—it is true," said Layton, in reply to the mute interrogation of Sir Richard Redmayne. "You are the murderer of your wife and child in intention only. Now for the proof, and quickly, or you will be surprised at not finding them in Heaven, into which his right reverend lordship will no doubt by a twist of one of his keys readily admit you, being a relation. He must be quick, though, like myself."

Layton flung wide the door of the apartment; stepped out and called loudly upon Barton, the house-steward, to bring forward the Lady Redmayne and her son!

With what intense, voiceless emotion the assembled guests listened for a reply to that summons may be imagined, not depicted! The brief interval of silent, breathless expectation was broken by the sound of many feet ascending the great staircase: a few more fevered pulse-beats and Lady Rosamond Redmayne and her son appeared, accompanied and followed by the Rector of Saint Sepulchre's Church, London, Margaret Gorton, and other persons whose presence Layton had thought to be desirable.

"Behold, Matthew Paviour!" exclaimed Layton, breaking the dead silence, and pointing with outstretched arm to Lady Redmayne and her son, who had paused, in astonishment it seemed, at the entrance to the apartment,—"Behold the fancied dead restored to lusty life; whilst thou and thine, base hound——"

"My wife—my son!" broke with a mighty effort from Sir Richard Redmayne as he staggered forward with extended

arms to embrace them. He achieved but a few paces, then with a sharp cry—the snapping of the last frail chord that bound him to life—fell prone upon the floor—dead!

"Ite missa est," said Layton, after feeling for the stilled pulse. "The play is over my lord Bishop before absolution was given; and yet I warned you to be quick!"

* * * * * *

There remain but a few words to say. When Lady Redmayne and her son awoke from their death-like, tranced sleep, Layton, by relating what had passed between him and Sir Richard, convinced the unhappy lady that neither her own nor her child's life would be safe whilst her husband lived and believed that they lived also. It was therefore agreed that a sham funeral should take place, and she with her son be covertly conveyed to a convent which received boarders, near Winchester, Hants, where, under the name of Rosamond Danvers, she might reside in peace till the death of Sir Richard, his well-vouched-for repentance, or the attainment of his majority by her son, should enable her to reappear with safety in the world. Of her husband's proposed marriage with Edith Paviour, Layton was especially careful she should hear nothing; nor had she, up to the moment of her appearance at Clare Hall. The seclusion in which she had lived, rendered, in those non-newspaper days, this essential part of Layton's arrangement easy of accomplishment.

Andrew Layton had so managed that no question could be raised as to her identity, or that of her son; and there is no doubt that her son succeeded to the estates and personals. Of the Paviours I know nothing further; nor of Andrew Layton, except that he died not long after returning to his old lodging at Stratford—which with a maniacal wilfulness he persisted in doing; and, that as testified by the lines quoted at the head of this paper, inscribed probably at the instance of Lady Redmayne,—he was buried in Bow Church, Stratford.

COLONEL SILAS CLARKE: CAVALIER AND ROUNDHEAD.

"He stabb'd him dead on the nine-stane rigg,
Beside the headless cross;
And left him weltering in his blood,
Upon the nine-stane moss."

SURTEES.

THE name of Colonel Silas Clarke frequently occurs in the pamphlets published during the great Civil War. In the earlier period of the contest he is spoken of as a "godless, bloodthirsty malignant;" and in a sheet printed at Oxford in the year following that which witnessed the victory and defeat at Marston Moor, he is incidentally alluded to as "that traitor and murderer Silas Clarke, now with the Rebels."

This man was born somewhere in the ward of Aldgate, London, in 1620—(the year, by the way, in which the Pilgrim Fathers embarked for America)—and was left an orphan at thirteen years of age, his mother and last surviving parent having died in 1633, a few months after he was received into the Mercers' School. In 1638 he had left school, and was residing with his bachelor uncle, Captain James Clarke, at Newington Green, in the house at the end of the King's Walk, so called because Henry VIII. was in the habit of using it when on a visit to the ladies whom he privately entertained there. Captain James Clarke, a storm and battle grimed and hardened mariner, had passed the best years of his life upon the Spanish main, as the South Atlantic was then popularly termed, amongst "the Brethren of the Coast," whose self-appointed mission was to slay and spoil all Spaniards found south of the Line. Captain Clarke was one of the earliest of those daring corsairs, and, having prospered in his vocation, had returned to England to enjoy his well or ill gotten wealth in peace and security.

Of his nephew Silas, the sea-captain was extravagantly proud—proud of his handsome presence, and his personal daring, which, combined with rare physical strength, commanded the admiration of all who witnessed its display. Once, at a merry-making, in "the village of Hoxeton," Silas Clarke, then much under twenty years of age, "bent, for a wager, a stout straight bar of iron to a circle by the sheer force of his arms, to the great wonder of all who beheld it." Then, if hot-blooded, wayward, prone to mischief and excess, there glowed beneath the deadening superincumbent cloud of vice and folly, the fire of an ardent, generous nature, which ever, at the call of affection, or the appeal of weakness or misery, leapt into flame, and shed light and beauty over his sin-darkened soul.

The troubled politics of the time entered largely into the life of every man in England, and the side Captain James Clarke would take in a conflict where the middle class in both town and country were arrayed against the upper and lowest classes, could not be doubtful. He was a decided, though far from an enthusiastic, Parliamentarian, and his nephew, when the appeal was at length made by Charles to the sword, would, no question, have joined the Parliamentary levies but for circumstances to be presently disclosed, which at once ranged him upon the side of the King. He held a command in Prince Rupert's Horse, and speedily approved himself one of the most daring and successful soldiers in that service. He was slightly wounded in the fight at Chalgrove, where Hampden met his death, and it could not have been long after that affair when he made the discovery which caused him to transfer his services to the Parliamentarians, with whom, though it can hardly be said *for* whom, he fought against his former associates with a reckless, untameable energy, which won for him the admiring wonder, if not the sympathy or esteem, of his new Puritan comrades. Thus much I have thought it necessary to say by way of prologue to the subjoined autobiographic fragment, written by Colonel Silas Clarke himself, on the night preceding the decisive battle of Naseby :—

"In my Tent, on the Eve of Battle.

"Cromwell joined yesterday, with a thousand of his Ironsides, and to-morrow, thorough decisive battle will be

given to the Royalist troops. I returned an hour ago with the General from surveying the fallow-field where by day-dawn our forces will be drawn up to await the King's onset. I am to command a squadron of five colours of horse, and shall be with the left wing commanded in chief by Ireton. We shall be largely outnumbered, yet victory is sure. To-morrow the King's banner will be torn and trodden in the dust, and his licentious myrmidons slain or scattered. Ay, and to-morrow——Ha!

"I am the dupe of vainest fancies. Distempered blood pressing hardly on a weakened brain, the chirurgeon tells me, engenders illusions which have no existence save in the imagination. It may be, *must* be so——There again!

"I feel my pulse, which, in Prince Hamlet's words, seems to 'temperately beat time, and make as healthful music'—as it has of late, at least. Yet twice since I sat down to write—twice, a sickly brain, or a diseased vision, has fooled me!

"Can it be insanity? I could the whole matter, with every circumstance, again and again re-word, which, saith the poet-seer, 'madness would gambol from.' I will set it down in writing.

"The flapping in the night-breeze of the partly-upraised door-curtain of my tent caused me to look round, and there, in the brilliant moonlight, stood, or seemed to stand, at about a hundred paces off—Lucy Serle—as I saw her the last time we met in life—the same pale, mournful face, tender, beseeching eyes, and loose dishevelled golden hair. She beckoned me with uplifted finger; I sprang forward with a loud cry—and the form melted to air.

"The near sentinels whom my voice startled saw nothing—heard nothing, save the strains of a psalm, sung by some troopers, which the stillness of the night made faintly audible where we stood. I will take the chirurgeon's advice, and be let blood, if to-morrow that be not done by more effective lancets than his.

"Returning to my tent, I had scratched down two or three lines, when once more the flapping of the door-curtain caused me to look round suddenly. As I live and breathe, the same figure passed swiftly before the opening, with its uplifted finger still beckoning me! Again I rushed out, and again nothing was to be seen but the slow-pacing soli-

tary sentinels—the long rows of white tents—and the bright, silent, overarching stars!

"Reviewing the argument of our learned medicus, I am fain to hold by his opinion, though I understand it not well, that these visions are mere exterior manifestations or reflections, by the power of a heated imagination, of images deep-seated in a restless brain: and this, notwithstanding that *her* image burnt into my memory by years of fiery trial, wanted till to-night that upraised beckoning finger. For may not that be the embodiment, as one may say, of the prophetic assurance strongly borne in upon my mind since the moment it was decided to give battle to the King, that I shall to-morrow be called from this world of strife, and blood, and tears? Called *whither?* Ay, there's the rub. To rejoin her whose gesture seemed to invite my coming? Well, I shall know before the going down of to-morrow's sun.

"I cannot sleep; and how could I better employ these last precious hours than in clearing my reputation of the foul stains which calumny has cast thereon? Whilst I live, Malice shrinks from confronting me; its serpent-tongue dare only spit its venom in the dark: but once that I am dead, it will erect its brazen crest and hiss aloud in the public streets. There are many of my fellow-soldiers in whose good opinion I would fain live hereafter—Ireton, the chief amongst them, and to his and their generous consideration I address this plain unvarnished history of a wayward, wasted life—now, as a sentiment stronger than, superior to, reason, warns me, close verging to an untimely end. They will, I know, smile at the notion of my having seen apparitions, as above set forth. Let not that, however, persuade them that the disquieted imagination which, it may be, bodied forth and gave reality and distinctness to brain-shadows, has had power to colour or warp the simplicity of truth in which, standing upon the threshold of eternity, I pen, without favour to myself, or malice towards living man or woman, the following apology for grievously-maligned, because much-misunderstood, Colonel Silas Clarke, once one of Charles's soldiers, and now in arms for the Parliament.

"I am a Londoner by birth, and that birth was a very humble one. My father, whose person but dimly glim-

mers in my memory, was a worker in metals, and my mother, after his death, could hardly have supported herself and me by utmost diligence in embroidering, at which she excelled, but for occasional remittances from my uncle, Captain James Clarke. She was a stern, inflexible, just woman, and died soon after my fourteenth year.

"In religion, that stern good mother held with the strictest of the Puritans. To nurture, harden her son to valiancy in the great cause against the day of which the dawn was already visible to far-seeing eyes—when the sword of the Lord, wielded by the hands of faithful men, should smite the oppressor, and spare not for his jewelled mitre or his kingly crown—she would take me, when occasion permitted, to witness with my own eyes the cruelties inflicted upon both Papists and Puritans by sentence of the King's Court of Star Chamber. Thus it came to pass that I was present when a Scotsman, whose name does not presently recur to me, had his ears cropped, his nose slit, and the letters S. S. (Sower of Sedition) branded on his cheeks. And there and then, in my boy's heart, which swelled with indignant rage at the piteous spectacle, a silent vow was registered, that should the opportunity be ever given me, I would requite a hundredfold the cruel wrong-doer. Yet it is too well known, that when the time *did* come to pluck the regal ruffian by the beard, I elected to fight under his standard; helped, for awhile, with all my might, to bend the people of this realm into renewed subjection to his absolute rule. Ireton and others say that I have since fully atoned for that backsliding. Some slight amends, which to-morrow I will add to so long as flesh and steel shall hold together, I *have* made for conduct at which both friends and foes have marvelled, not knowing the true cause thereof; which simply was that a mightier subdued a less potent anger; that the straw on fire of boyish indignation paled before the red-hot steel of virile rage. This I have presently to show.

"Shortly after my mother's death Captain James Clarke arrived in England and settled at Newington Green, near London. I was a great favourite of his; and after having remained about four years at the Mercers' School, I went to reside wholly with him.

"My uncle was rich, and he could not have felt greater

pleasure in spoiling the Spaniard of his gold than he did in tossing it to me to squander as I list. That weakly-indulgent vanity lured,—I may truly say urged me to the wildest excesses; the maddest of mad-cap follies, and infinitely accursed consequence! *bought* me the close companionship of Amias Grantley, the only son of Sir Amias Grantley, a gentleman of comparatively poor means, but rich descent, who dwelt at the White House, Muswell Hill, a slight village four or five miles distant from Newington and overlooking Enfield, where Queen Elizabeth for a time resided in her youth.

"Amias Grantley was a few months my senior, of vigorous make, aristocratic presence, and haughty as Lucifer in his tiger-heart; though fawning as a beggar in speech when a purpose might be thereby served. My eyes were then too young, too easily dazzled by showy pretence, to detect the vileness hidden beneath the gauds of high birth and courtly manners. To admit, and to my great shame, the whole truth, I felt mightily uplifted by the gracious familiarity of the heir to so considerable a magnate as Sir Amias Grantley, and thought the honour of his society cheaply purchased by the sums I threw away in defraying the charges of our mutual riot. He was a frequent guest at my uncle's, but I never received an invitation to the White House. I used to wait for him outside the gate leading into the grounds—proof of the extent to which my nature was abased by condescendence to patronising companionship.

"The night hours swiftly pass, and if I could complete this writing, I may not linger over such details. Enough has been said to show the humiliating terms upon which I consorted with Amias Grantley. Nevertheless the independent defying spirit fed with my mother's milk and strengthened by her counsels was not dead within me. It slept only, and uneasily:—frequently upstarting into temporary life and vigour.

"Upon one of those occasions matters fell out as follows:—

"My mother, let me premise, had often taken me with her to private conventicles where non-conformist ministers hunted by Archbishop Laud and his satellites into holes and corners, preached the word to fearful followers. I had thus

a secret fellow-feeling with them, notwithstanding that that inherited instinct, as it may be termed, had no visible influence over my life. At the time I am now writing of Laud had been checked in his evil doings by the attitude of the House of Commons. Still his demoniac spirit ruled in many places, and especially in country villages, propertied, or nearly so, by powerful partisans of the court. This was notably the case in villages contiguous to Newington,—in Hornsey for example, a place nearly midway, but diverging from the direct road, between it and Muswell Hill, where, as I had often heard, one Ephraim Serle, a white-haired man of venerable aspect, ministered occasionally to a few scattered hearers. Ephraim Serle had been often pointed out to me, but I had never, myself, heard him preach. Well, one summer evening when, after vainly seeking Amias Grantley at Muswell Hill, I sauntered deviously homeward, my steps were arrested near a mean house, about half a mile from Hornsey Rise, by the marvellously sweet singing of a female voice in one of the psalms of David.

"Gently I lifted the latch, and entered in. There were not more than about twenty persons present, chiefly aged men and women, and all of a humble class in life. The old man Serle stood at a desk with a Bible opened before him in readiness to begin his discourse, directly the psalm was finished. The girl-singer was placed where I could not see her face; but her sylph-like figure and auburn-bright, thick clustering hair bore witness that she was still in the golden dawn of youth, and her silver voice sounded in my tranced ear like music of the spheres.

"The singing done, I left the house, but lingered within ear-shot in the hope that it would re-commence by-and-by. It did *not* re-commence. My appearance amongst those lowly worshippers had alarmed the more timid of them, and after brief address and prayer the meeting separated. The house, or hut, was not the abode of Ephraim Serle, and when the others had all furtively departed, he came forth, accompanied by a tall gauky-looking young fellow,—Richard Warner, by name—and the sweet songstress, who walked somewhat apart, on the side of her grandfather Ephraim Serle.

"They did not see me till we were within a few paces

of each other. An ejaculation made up of surprise and fear broke from the old man's lips, and the girl turned upon me a startled glance of beseeching helplessness and disquietude. I lifted my hat, and replied to the venerable man's exclamation by a respectful courtesy; drawing up as I spoke on one side of the narrow way to allow them room to pass. My words and manner re-assured them. Ephraim Serle bowed gratefully, and the girl's angel-face flushing with rosy light gave eloquent testimony of the reality and depth of the terror from which my friendly greeting had relieved her. The grandfather, though then I knew it not, had already been twice pilloried, and otherwise ruthlessly punished by the Star Chamber. It was not, therefore, surprising that shadows startled them.

"As they were passing on their way, the skirt of the girl's dress caught in some brambles. We both stooped at once to release it. In doing so our hands came in contact; her soft spiritual eyes looked into mine, and a blushing, sunbeam smile parted her sweet lips.

"Should my days be lengthened to the extremest span that ever measured mortal life, the memory of that supreme moment will glow within my heart, unchilled by the frosts of age, undimmed by the all else obscuring years. It was a sudden passing from earth to heaven—a foretaste of the bliss ineffable reserved for redeemed souls. This will be called extravagance, yet it is the simplest truth, coldly expressed.

"Some ten minutes must have passed, and I was still faint, dizzy, weeping—ay, weeping—with the tumult of emotion, which swept through my beating brain, when the sounds of boisterous mirth—the out-laughing mirth of young men—challenged my attention. Presently a large mastiff dog came bounding past, and the joyous laughers neared me rapidly. I knew the dog: it was a savage brute belonging to Amias Grantley, which proud Sir came immediately after in sight in company with the two young Ponders, brothers of the beautiful Isabella Ponder, to whom I had heard that Amias was affianced; or to speak more strictly by the card, would probably be so ere many months were past.

"The young men were all three flushed with wine; Amias Grantley honoured me with a scarcely-perceptible

recognition,—his habit when under the observance of his patrician associates,—whilst the Ponders merely noticed the presence of that common fellow, Silas Clarke, by a supercilious raising of eyebrows, and a nudging of each other in the side with their elbows.

"I took cognizance of all that with my eyes and ears, but my mind was far away from them and their strutting follies. I fancy, however, that I must have looked their haughty insolence grimly enough in the face, inasmuch that their noisy laughter was stilled as they passed me, and did not begin again till the distance between us was considerable.

"I had not moved a step when it flashed upon me that they—that those half-drunken varlets—were going, and at a much quicker pace, in the direction taken by Ephraim Serle and his granddaughter. Evening, too, was falling, and the road lay through the wood which intervened between Hornsey and Muswell Hill. I would follow, and swiftly.

"It was well I did. Soon, as I pressed fiercely on, I heard the loud, sharp, savage barking of the mastiff dog, and, or fancy fooled me, the mocking laughter of the young men. A few moments more, and the scream of a girl broke the stillness of the quiet eve.

"Arrow from the twanging bow flew never to its mark with more vengeful velocity than I darted forward in response to that cry. I was always a swift runner, but never before or since so swift as then. I was quickly in sight of—soon amongst—the actors in the scene of violence and struggle which was going on.

"Now I do not believe that anything more or worse was deliberately intended by Amias Grantley, or the Ponders, than having a frolic with a low-born, beautiful girl, unprotected save by a canting old Puritan, and a gawky stripling of the same genus. The state of matters when I came up was this: The dog, by leaping at the old and young man, kept them from interfering; Amias Grantley was struggling with Lucy Serle for a kiss, and the Ponders, shouting gleefully, awaited their turn.

"I spoiled their sport. A well-planted kick crippled the dog for life; I caught Grantley with a grip of steel by the throat, wrenched away his grasp of the girl, lifted him from his feet, and dashed him on the hard ground. The

Ponders rushed to his rescue, and shared his punishment. Both of them I also caught by the throat,—a favourite trick of mine—knocked their two heads together till they rang again;—then threw them down beside their stunned and bleeding friend. I was always noted for great personal strength: my antagonists, morever, were taken by surprise. The exploit, therefore, was not at all an astonishing one. Besides which, at that moment, and in her sight, I could with ease have mastered twenty such adversaries.

"Ephraim Serle thanked me warmly; but the maiden, a sudden fit of trembling bashfulness prevented me from speaking to, or even looking at. It would seem, if I did, that I claimed her thanks for a service which a thousand times repaid itself. The old man bade me farewell, and all three went on their way. After a while I gathered courage to look after them. Too late! They had just disappeared at a turning of the path; and a pang of silly, but not the less bitter disappointment shot through me. Surely she might have vouchsafed some slight token,—a word,—a look of acknowledgment! And who might be that tall gawky youth? Not her brother, I felt sure:—her lover then!

"By that time the two Ponders had picked themselves up, and were raising Amias Grantley to his feet. I looked sullenly on, whilst they, by help of water from a brook hard by, restored him to consciousness, and sufficient strength to limp, with their assistance, slowly homeward. As he left the scene of his rude discomfiture, Amias Grantley favoured me with a glance of deadliest hate, which, if looks could kill, would have slain me on the spot. Contemptuously unmindful, in the rash confidence of youth and strength, that the humiliation he had suffered in the presence of the brothers of his betrothed was an offence never to be forgiven by the son of Sir Amias Grantley, I laughed to scorn his impotent rage as I deemed it. The future taught me its truer character.

"By force of an importunate constancy of love, the truth and fervour of which she could not but recognise, I won at last so far upon Lucy Serle as to visit at her grandfather's abode in Enfield, as a tacitly-acknowledged suitor for her favour. Yet the progress of my wooing was even then slow and wayward. Ephraim Serle favoured my suit, but

Lucy, according to the humour of the hour, seemed now pleased and attracted—now frightened and repulsed, by the ardency of my passion. Sometimes the direful fancy crossed me that she would have preferred Richard Warner, whom I could not help respecting as a worthy, gentle-hearted young man. He was an assistant of her grandfather in his ministry. Assuredly he loved her,—but that could hardly be otherwise.

"A whole year had glided by; we were again in the summer season, when the carking jealous cares which consumed me were put to flight by that first whispered word of love, murmured by the chosen one,—the echo whereof abiding like a slumbering strain of celestial music in the deepest recesses of the heart, a tone, a sigh, the rustling of a leaf, the play of sunlight, the hue of clouds, the slightest thing therewith mysteriously associated in the memory—will instantly evoke in changeless melody. Our trysting-place that evening was in a dell at Hornsey Rise, beneath a spreading chestnut tree, the odour of whose flowers was from that hour, to me, perfume of paradise!

"The camp is getting drowsily astir; and my lagging pen has still its chief work to do; I must be briefer, speedier, or I shall yet fail of my intent.

"Our marriage it was finally agreed should take place as speedily as might be after my uncle's return from Plymouth, Devonshire, whither he was gone to settle some shipping affairs in which he was largely concerned. He promised not to tarry long; but man proposes—God disposes; and at about the time he was looked for in Newington, I received a message stating that he had fallen dangerously sick, and that there was pressing need of my immediate presence in Plymouth. The news was afflictive in a double sense, but there could be no doubt that I must forthwith set out. The distance was great—a five days' journey, ride unrestingly as I might, and at the best I should be long—by a lover's reckoning, interminably long—absent. Then Lucy was gone with her grandfather from Enfield on a visit precisely whither I knew not, but she would be at the old trysting-place the next evening but one. I was debating how to send her tidings of what had taken place, when Amias Grantley called upon me. We had been for a long time friends again—not boon-companions as in former days

—Lucy having thoroughly weaned me from all such hurtful follies: still such close friends, that he had heard from my own lips of Lucy's acceptance of my suit, and had warmly congratulated me thereupon. I explained the difficulty which pressed upon me, and he at once offered to take a letter and forward it to Enfield, from Muswell Hill, by a servant. I thanked him; it was so settled, and in less than a hour I was on the road to Plymouth, on horseback.

"I found my uncle lying dangerously ill of Tertian fever; and though he recovered, his passage from death to life was slow and doubtful. Seven weary weeks crept lingeringly away from my arrival at Plymouth before he was able to bear the journey to London, and then we travelled at a snail's pace. I had despatched in the interim several letters by chance-channels to Lucy, but so troubled, out of joint was the time, that it was not certain one would reach her; and, except by special messenger, there was no reasonable hope of my receiving a reply.

"It was an unreasoned foreboding, therefore, which weighed upon me as we drew near to Newington Green. Strive as I might, I could not help connecting the drear and faded aspect of the place, bestrewed with the thick-fallen leaves of the dying year—so contrastive to its still lusty summer beauty when I left,—with my own then buoyant rose-coloured hopes, and the blank, shadowy terrors which now beset me!

"Our housekeeper, Mistress Erle, who knew of my whole course of wooing, avoided me for a while, and when I would and did see her, there needed no words to tell me that some frightful catastrophe had occurred.

"'Bear yourself, Master Silas,' she cried, bursting as she spoke into a flood of violent grief, 'bear yourself, Master Silas, as a man should—a wronged, outraged man—but still a man courageous and true to himself. Or, better, bear it as your brave mother did when stricken by adverse fortune.'

"Mistress Erle, it should be stated, had been my mother's personal friend. This was her title and commendation to my uncle's confidential service.

"'Lucy—Lucy Serle is—is dead!' I gasped, fighting

with all my strength against the faintness which assailed me.

"'Yes, dead to you, Silas,' said the woman. 'But Amias Grantley will best break the sad news. He is close by, waiting for your coming, as he has been for many days.'

"I saw Mistress Erle leave the room, and then I must have swooned, for when I again beheld her, Amias Grantley was present, and my face and throat were dripping with water.

"'And so,' I ejaculated, 'And so Lucy Serle is—is—dead!' Amias Grantley took my hands in his, pressed them fervently, and with tears in his eyes, tears in his voice, said,

"'Lucy Serle was married more than a month since to ——.'

"'You lie like a dog!' I screamed, upstarting. 'Lie!—lie!—lie! like the cur—the coward, the villain that you are!'

"'It is true,' said Mistress Erle, interposing between us. 'Lucy Serle was married much more than a month ago to Richard Warner. The husband and wife have still their abode at Enfield with old Ephraim Serle.'

"I stayed to hear no more, but with the leap and howl, as I was afterwards told, of a maniac—and I was nothing less—rushed from the room and house. The horse from which I had just before dismounted was saddled in a moment, and, impelled by whip and spur, flew with me along the road to Enfield as if pursued by the fabled Furies.

"Richard Warner was in the tiny room alone when I burst in, reading a Bible, by candle-light. He sprang up and sought to elude my clutch. Vainly! 'Speak,—speak!' I shouted. 'One word only—but one word—Yes or No. Is Lucy Serle your wife?'

"He did not answer—could not, perhaps, for my throttling hold: his face grew livid beneath that terrible pressure; and in my madness, if unchecked, I should certainly have strangled him. I was spared that crime. A swift step made itself heard,—a form of light and beauty,—light dimmed and beauty smirched,—but light and beauty still,

stood at my side, and a voice of music, though mournful as a requiem, said, whilst a light hand touched my arm,—

"'Harm him not, Silas! He *is* my husband,—and—and blameless.'

"The muscles of my arm, which as my grasp tightened upon Warner's throat seemed turned to steel, relaxed to the weakness of a child's beneath that thrilling, gentle pressure. I turned; read in her sad eyes and pallid cheek the sign and seal of a woful doom, however incurred; and with a loud cry of despair I hurried from the place. I remember nothing more till several months had passed away, but I was told that people found me in the gray of the morning, lying in a state of insensibility, and sorely bruised, somewhere upon Enfield Chase; my horse, from which I had fallen, standing beside me.

"Fears were entertained that my reason was irrecoverably lost. It proved not so, however: at least, physicians certified that I was again perfectly sane. I myself, however, have sometimes doubted the completeness of the cure. These visions, phantasies, for instance, *must* be, I think, the vagaries of an ill-poised brain, thrown off its balance by any circumstance which touches the old, still-bleeding, unmedicined wound.

"My bodily health was, however, as early as the following June, thoroughly restored; and by then the country was on fire throughout its length and breadth. It needed not the persuasions of Amias Grantley (who during my illness had been constant in his visits and kind offices) to induce me, spite of my good uncle's remonstrances,—not very strongly urged,—to join the ranks of the Royalists. I did so with a fierce alacrity. To me it was a war of hate and vengeance, waged against a lying, canting race of hypocrites and scoundrels, typified by Ephraim Serle and Richard Warner, the confederates by whose accursed machinations —despite of Lucy's 'blameless' applied to one of them— I undoubtingly believed my life had been blighted in its youthful, joyous prime. A commission was obtained for me in Prince Rupert's Horse, and thenceforth I drank, gamed, fought, with a recklessness and daring which won me distinction even amongst his wild, reckless cavaliers.

"Yet I hated, scorned, loathed myself, in my calm, lucid intervals, for combating on the side of a king I despised,

for a cause which I detested. One day, soon after noon, that I, being then in the neighbourhood of Wallingford, was sitting alone, moodily revolving black and bitter thoughts, a message came that a stranger desired to speak with me. I directed him to be brought in, and to my unspeakable amazement Richard Warner entered the tent. The rage which at the hateful sight kindled to flame, was as quickly subdued, extinguished.

"Richard Warner presented a letter, saying, calmly, as he did so, 'From Lucy.' I tore the paper open and read these words:—

"'Beloved Silas,

"'My grandfather is dead; I am dying, and may now speak all the truth: come thou and hear it from the lips of thine own, ever thine own, Lucy.'

"To which was added a seeming after-thought:—

"'Bear with Richard Warner; a just, faithful, all-sacrificing *friend* to me: a husband in name only.'

"Temporary leave of absence was readily obtained, and in the forenoon of the following day, I and Richard Warner rode into the village of Enfield.

"Warner went gently before me up one flight of stairs to the chamber where lay, reclining upon a mean pallet, the wasted form of Lucy Serle, dying, and at the point of death. She was pale, corpse-like, save for the divine life that still looked through the fast-darkening windows of the soul, which at my entrance recovered for a few moments their old radiance, flushing the worn face with tints of its once angelic beauty. A seraph-smile parted the white lips, which murmured faintly, 'Thou art come, dear Silas?'

"I could not speak, nor weep, though my heart swelled to bursting. I could only grasp her poor, thin hand, and, kneeling by her bedside, *listen!*

"On the evening of the next day but one that I left Newington for Plymouth, Lucy, having received no tidings of my departure, went to meet me at our favourite trysting-place beneath the chestnut tree. Not finding me there, she waited,—waited till darkness had fallen,—partial darkness only, for moon and stars were out—waited till horse and human foot-fall—all signs of life—had ceased; and was still expectant of my coming, thinking that some unlooked-for

accident detained me, when she saw Amias Grantley advancing towards her, and, in the distance, the brothers Ponder.

" She did not, could not, form in words what passed, save that she frantically appealed to him, to them, to Heaven for mercy; and called wildly upon me for help. There was no mercy, and no help! Heaven heard not, and I was far away.

"' My reason fled for a time,' continued the low, sweet voice, ' and when it returned I found that my grandfather had been seized and imprisoned, and should, they told me, suffer death for contumacy, unless I swore, never to the day of my death,—so ran the fearful oath,—to reveal what had befallen me to him or to you, Silas. My brain was still weak;—I believed him, and swore as he dictated upon the Holy Gospels. I returned here, and my grandfather was released. To Richard Warner, during an access of despair, I confessed everything, and to save me from public shame, —my grandsire's white hairs from descending with sorrow to the grave,—he proposed to go through the form of marriage with me; to become before the world my husband. I consented, since to you, Silas, I was lost for ever; and Richard Warner has since been to me the truest, faithfullest friend—a friend, dear Silas—nought else but friend.'

" It was strange how calm I felt whilst each word just written fell like molten lead upon my brain. A feeble cry of pain startled me from that unnatural calm. My hard hand grasping Lucy's had, as she spoke, pressed it with wounding force. The pain was momentary, and well she knew the significance of that convulsive pressure. ' Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord: I will repay,' she murmured; 'yet I could not die, beloved Silas, encompassed by your hard thoughts.'

" I continued to silently hold her hand in mine, watching the pulse grow feebler—fainter,—the sweet eyes duller —darker. It seems to me that I must have been in a trance twixt life and death; for though I recognised outward objects, their relation to each other seemed absurd, incomprehensible. The Enfield Church bells were ringing a merry peal; the fresh morning sun darted his bright life-giving beams into the darkened room; there was a stir of life and bustle in the streets. How should that be and she dying! It seemed monstrous!——

"Presently there was a quick tremor of the feeble pulse—a shudder of the mortal frame. 'Kiss me, dear Silas,' murmured the trembling lips. Then followed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,' accompanied by a blissful smile which, till the envious coffin shut it from sight, was seen to remain as bright and radiant as when the answering angel traced it there.

"In the evening of the next day Lucy Serle was buried in the grave-yard of Enfield Church, an ancient structure nearly opposite the palace, so called, of Elizabeth. A few minutes afterwards I shook hands with Richard Warner, and forthwith left the village, having one thing yet to do in the world.

"I was told when I reached the camp at Wallingford, that Colonel Grantley, that Colonel *Sir* Amias Grantley—his father (one of James's baronets) died some months previously—was with the Prince Rupert. I sought him in that presence, and, prefacing the blow by a few pregnant words, struck him with my gauntleted hand in the face. At that time I certainly could not have been in my healthy senses. It was the act of a witless fool—of a silly madman. Why, if I must needs intrude there, did I not strike him dead in the prince's presence?

"There was a great commotion. I was placed under arrest, and not liberated till I had pledged my word that I would neither challenge nor accept a challenge from Sir Amias Grantley. The prince and his familiars had made inquisition in the matter, found that it was an ordinary affair of gallantry, and decided that the king's cause could not be damaged by such foolish quarrels between his bravest soldiers.

"An hour after I was liberated from arrest I was galloping to the nearest *rebel* outpost. There arrived and received, I asked to be forwarded to Colonel Ireton. I had once, when he was a law-student in the Temple, had an opportunity of rendering him a slight service. He now returned it a hundred-fold. By his recommendation I was received into the Ironsides. It was not long before I earned and received advancement; and at Marston Moor I commanded two colours of horse.

"Yes, and at Marston Moor I had a chance of achieving the be-all and the end-all of my life. We had at last halted,

turned at bay before Newcastle and Rupert's numerous forces, which those tremendous captains observing, hesitated, and wisely, to attack us. At last, towards evening, General Cromwell, impatient of shilly-shally inaction, ordered us, his Ironsides, to move by a circuitous road upon Goring's right flank. The ground was hilly, rough, broken, and the royalist infantry were pressing on to assured victory, when Cromwell's squadrons rode up, charged, and scattered them with hideous slaughter.

"The victory was not yet won. Rupert's cavalry—returned from successful and, as it strangely chanced, *not* too far-pushed, pursuit of the Parliamentary Horse opposed to them—were gathering sternly in our front to try conclusions for the first time with the Ironsides.

"We had dismounted to breathe our half-blown horses, and my eager glance detected, away to the left of our line, Sir Amias Grantley's green-coated regiment. I hurried to the general, and craved leave to move my squadron further to the left, 'to where they could render the greatest service.' That true soldier comprehending that I must have a sufficing motive for making such a request, at once gave the required permission; and I took ground without delay immediately in front of the green-coats, whose colonel, Sir Amias, was easily distinguishable from where we were drawn up, by his dark, flowing hair and white-plumed steel cap.

"Our well-trained war steeds champed not the restraining bit with fiercer impatience than I felt till the first trumpet sounded. Tightening our horses' girths, we sprang as one man to saddle. At the next trumpet-call out leapt our swords, flashing in the setting sun; the third clarion blast loosed us upon our foes, who, no matter for what has been said and written to the contrary, did *not* abide the shock. They broke and fled amain before we reached them, Rupert himself amongst the earliest of the fugitives. Truly did the general write that 'God made them as stubble to our swords;' but the bloody harvest included not Sir Amias Grantley. I was close upon him in the headlong pursuit—another minute, and I should have cloven him through his steel cap, from crown to chine, when my gallant horse stumbled, and threw me heavily to earth. I did not sustain much injury, but Sir Amias had escaped—once more!

"Time wore on. We had assaulted Donnington Castle with but indifferent success, thanks to lordly, half-hearted Manchester; and it was rumoured that we were about to patch up a hollow compromise with the King. I cared not greatly for that, except that I might thereby be baulked of my promised vengeance; and I was casting about as to how in that case the sole hope and purpose of my life might be accomplished, when Richard Warner again, and as suddenly as before, made his appearance.

"He was the bearer of great news. Sir Amias Grantley, warned, perhaps, by the scarcely-scaped catastrophe at Marston Moor, had left the military service of the King for a civil appointment near the person of his Majesty; and, by way of qualifying himself for his new duties, was to be married on the next Tuesday, at Enfield Church, to the stately and beauteous Isabella Ponder—on the next Tuesday, it then being Saturday, so that I had quite sufficient time to make one amongst the wedding guests.

"Sufficient time, but none to spare; and leave of absence having been granted, I set forth at once, attired and armed as in those days befitted a well-to-do peaceful burgher.

"We—Richard Warner and I—reached Enfield on the Monday; not together, as that might breed suspicion; and I put up at a hostelry opposite the Palace, and not far from the church.

"There was much talk in the common room (in which I sat for a while to avoid singularity) of the grand doings to come off on the morrow, of which soon wearying, I retired to bed.

"I was awakened by the clamour of joy-bells; and being indisposed for a too early breakfast, I walked forth to the grave-ground—still followed by the incessant carillon of bells—mocking, exulting over *her* early tomb.

"By-and-by the bridal procession came on from Muswell Hill, with much bravery and show, and amidst great shouting. I stood in the church, well muffled, and marked the bride, haughtily yet blushingly, conscious of her superb beauty, and the bridegroom's rapturous admiration. He was handsome, too, that gallant bridegroom: I knew well that fine, youthful head soaring above its fellows—but not

the dog I should throw it to. And the brothers Ponder—the youths who kept watch and ward near the chestnut tree—were there; took part in the ceremony.

"'To have and to hold, for better for worse, in sickness and health, till death do ye part.' That solemn exordium points, they believe, to a long, blissful future. Slight fools!

"How I exulted in the rare loveliness of the bride—in the groom's ecstatic idolatry of that loveliness, of which *I* knew he was as far from the possession as from Heaven!

"Yes; for although the particular mode of execution which I had resolved upon might be frustrated, nothing could or should in that case prevent me from slaying him in the very presence of his maiden-wife. I felt sure of that—confident as of my own life.

"The evening of that day came slowly on; the few glad hours remaining to Sir Amias and Lady Grantley passed, it seemed to me, reluctantly away. At last night's curtain fell, gemmed with bright stars, but still affording sufficient concealment for our purpose in its uncertain, shadowy folds.

"Then I and Richard Warner, both well armed and mounted, took our way to Muswell Hill. There was no danger of missing the road. The White House was brilliantly illumined, and the loud bridal music to which gay hearts and lightsome feet within kept joyous time, was heard afar without.

"There were many villagers about the gate, attracted by the wedding festivities, and industriously gulping down the good ale with which they had been liberally supplied. Richard Warner and I drew up in the shadow of the tall elms upon the right of the entrance; and he dismounting, gave a sealed letter directed to Sir Amias Grantley, 'in pressing haste,' to one of the servants, with a request for its instant delivery. It purported to be a hastily-scrawled injunction from Prince Rupert, enjoining Sir Amias to immediately see and speak with the bearer, who was charged with a most important message from the King.

The device prospered; Sir Amias was presently seen crossing the lawn in haste towards the gate. I drew my shading hat lower over my face, and Richard Warner, stooping down, busied himself with his horse's hoofs.

"The servant who delivered the letter pointed me out to his master, and Sir Amias came up close to me. Instantly I seized him by the collar of his doublet: surprise, bewilderment paralysed his powers of resistance, and before one could count five, he was pulled up with Warner's help and flung across my horse's shoulders.

"'Hurrah! hurra!' I screamed with delirious triumph, and, setting spurs to my horse, I went off like the wind towards Hornsey Rise, quickly followed by Richard Warner and the shouts and clamour of the confounded lookers-on.

"'What—what,' gasped Sir Amias, who had not yet recognised me, 'what is the meaning of this outrage?'

"I bent down my lips to his ear—

"'Lucy Serle.'

"He spoke not again till I checked the speed of my horse, whose strength it behoved me to be sparing of.

"'Do you intend to murder me?' he faintly asked.

"'Yes, if to kill be to murder you, Sir Amias Grantley.'

"Richard Warner now came up, and a few minutes afterwards the gallop of horses in pursuit was heard.

"'The brothers Ponder, I have no doubt,' quietly remarked Warner; 'I noticed them upon the lawn.'

"We were sufficiently advanced, and hurried not our pace, which, the pursuers being still far behind, soon brought us to the chestnut tree at Hornsey Rise.

"I threw Sir Amias on the ground, and was upon my feet sooner than he; the avenging sword bared in my hand.

"'Draw, accursed miscreant,' I shouted; 'your hour is come!'

"He would have spoken. I struck him on the mouth with my sword-hilt.

"'Defend yourself: no words!'

"He glared around, saw that his brothers-in-law were pressing towards us up the hill. At the same moment a burst of the loud music reached us from the White House. The Elysium he had been torn from, the hell he was upon the brink of, must have flashed upon him in agonising contrast; there seemed a chance of regaining the one, and escaping the other, and quick as thought he drew his rapier and made a pass at me. *But* one! His weapon flew from his hand; and mine passed through his body,—

again !—again !—again ! I stabbed, hewed him to pieces—poured forth his impure blood upon the very spot where the inexpiable crime was committed. Justice was so far satisfied.

" The brothers Ponder recognising my voice had halted and gazed aghast at the retributive tragedy played out before their eyes; then, panic, conscience-stricken, turned and fled. Too late! Richard Warner and I were too swift for them in that race for life; and both fell upon the road, hurt to death, one by myself,—one by Richard Warner's till then unfleshed sword. So concluded Sir Amias Grantley's wedding day!

" There is nothing more to write, save to say that since then life to me has been without an object; that those flaws and starts of brain have since become more frequent —and—Ha !—As I live Lucy passed again before the tent-opening, beckoning as before! For the third time to night! I may be sure, then, that to-morrow I shall have looked my last upon the earth. Well, 'tis the common lot——

> ' To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
> Creeps in this petty space from day to day,
> To the last syllable of recorded time;
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusty death.'

Nay, by Heaven, my hour of doom is not so far off as to-morrow. It will strike on this ' to-day,' now brightly breaking in the East. Thy Will be done ! "

All I have to add is, that Colonel Silas Clarke *was* slain at the battle of Naseby;—that his body was searched out and conveyed away by Richard Warner; and that during the first or second year of Cromwell's Protectorate, a stone was placed at the head of a grave in Enfield churchyard, inscribed thus :—

EPHRAIM SERLE,
LUCY SERLE,
SILAS CLARKE.

AT THE SIGN OF THE STAR, FLEET STREET.

"The true story of the Dalleyne Family—and no less admirable than certain and remarkable—now first printed at the request of several persons of quality, and sold at Pope's Head Alley, over against the Sign of the Horse Shoe."

Copy of a printed placard, dated 1663.

THE above advertisement refers to a chapter in the domestic annals of London, which, even when stripped of the fine colouring and terrible "effects" superadded by the compiler of Pope's Head Alley, will, I think, be found to be both interesting and instructive.

We learn by the earlier passages, which are but faintly outlined, that Maurice Dalleyne was the son of a Frenchman who came to England in the *suite* of Henrietta Maria, consort of Charles the First, he, Maurice, being then a mere stripling. It is inferred that the father's position and mean of life must have been of a comparatively humble kind, from the fact that the young man was left at a very early age to scramble through life with no better help to fortune than a fair education and a small pension from the Crown, —which of course ceased when the civil war broke out. Maurice Dalleyne moreover had no personal advantages to compensate the lack of income, being "cross-eyed and lame from a hurt in the left hip-joint, when young, but thoughtful and intelligent beyond most of his degree."

Those physical defects of course prevented him from combating on the Royalist side as a soldier; but as he was known to have passed frequently to and from France and the Low Countries during the troubles, it was believed that he had been so employed in the King's affairs.

However that may have been, it is clear that Maurice Dalleyne emerged from those stormy days in by no means so closely-shorn a plight as more distinguished adherents to the Royalist cause, inasmuch that in 1657—about two

years before the Protector's death—he was a prosperous vintner carrying on business at the "Sign of the Star, over against Fetter Lane, Fleet-street," and so well esteemed of his neighbours that he presided as chairman at the liberal entertainment given by James Farr to his many friends, upon occasion of his opening the Rainbow Coffee House, near the Temple, during that year.

This would seem decisive of Maurice Dalleyne having been at that time, not only a man of substance, but of fair repute in society. Yet there had been for some time sinister rumours intermittently afloat concerning him. It was said there were bitter implacable feuds in his household,—that his wife had been more than once observed sobbing and moaning wildly, and as she hugged their only child in her arms, talking to the little Julie in a distracted way, as if only in her was centered a ray of hopeful life for the mother. Madame Dalleyne being a Frenchwoman, perfectly ignorant of the English tongue, the chance-hearers did not literally comprehend her passionate words, but interpreted them, and rightly interpreted them, by the expressive index of her eloquent, excited features. Then Dalleyne himself had of late become strangely distempered; giving away at times to writhing fearful passion, upon the least provocation, his rage, it was evident to close observers, being referable to some consuming hidden torture, which sought excuseful vent, as it were, in resenting the most trifling annoyance. Even James Farr's festal entertainment was marred by one of those paroxysms of wrath, called forth, as it seemed, by no provocation whatever. One of the guests happened to remark that worthy Master Dalleyne had favoured them with some of his choicest wine upon the occasion, whereupon Philippe Saint-Ange, a relative of Dalleyne's, remarked in a loud voice that the speaker was mistaken, inasmuch that "his good kinsman, Master Dalleyne had, to his certain knowledge, that in his cellar which would put them out of taste with all the wine on the table." At hearing those words Maurice Dalleyne turned deadly pale, then, flushed to the hue of fire, rose from his seat, his hands grasping a goblet as if he would hurl it at Saint-Ange (who was smiling diabolically the while), and after a few moments' mighty struggle with himself fell down in a fit and was carried out. "Saint-Ange," the writer of the

Pope's Head Alley pamphlet quaintly remarks, "means Holy Angel; which shows that sire-names, like other inheritances, are ofttimes marvellously ill-bestowed." It seemed therefore reasonable to suspect, as many did suspect, from the pre-cited circumstances, combined with others of a like significance, that there was a skeleton in the prosperous vintner's house, and a grimmer, ghastlier one, too, than usually intones its *tuâ culpâ* in the ears of well-to-do respectability.

Of this, Time, after his usual sure but slowly-sequential fashion, gave conclusive, terrible proof—a consummation which I shall enable the reader to more pleasantly and clearly arrive at, by seizing the threads of the story from the moment they first began running out of the general coil of life into distinct filaments, and following their combinations closely up till the finished pattern was worked out.

Well, then, in the summer of 1649, Maurice Dalleyne himself, as previously stated, a Frenchman by both birth and blood, during one of his many visits to France, made the acquaintance, under circumstances to be presently related, of Pierre Bernard, a farmer and money-lender, dwelling on the right bank of the Seine, not far from Rouen in Normandy. The family consisted of Pierre Bernard himself, his wife, his daughter Julie by a former marriage, and Philippe Saint-Ange, who was said to be Madame Bernard's nephew. Now this Pierre Bernard had a reputation for riches which the modest extent of his agriculture did not at all justify, but which nevertheless rested upon the indisputable fact that he was a lender of large sums of money at exorbitant interest, in connection with one Louis Adam, a notary of Rouen. Of Madame Bernard nothing was certainly known, except that about twelve years previous to 1649, Pierre Bernard, recently left a widower with one child, Julie, then under a twelvemonth old, after an absence of several weeks brought her and her nephew, whose age might have been four or five years, home with him, from Paris it was given out, of which city he was himself a native. Of surmises respecting Madame Bernard, who everybody admitted to be a singularly handsome woman, there was however no lack. From her style of conversation and her manners generally it was undoubtingly inferred that she had once moved in a far higher class of society than that to which she be-

longed as the wife of Pierre Bernard. Another rooted belief was, that the handsome, boisterous, rude-mannered Philippe Saint-Ange was, in truth, her own son; an allegation chiefly based upon his striking likeness to her, and her own doating fondness for the lad. A corollary to those shrewd guesses was, that Pierre Bernard's money—he not having commenced business as a usurer till after his second marriage—was the bribe he had received for espousing a compromised woman, and providing her and her illegitimate son with a permanent home.

This last guess was a strained and feeble one. A handsome and educated woman like Madame Bernard would not, the common sense of those babbling gossips might have taught them, have sought from any such motive to bribe an obscure country farmer into marriage by a large sum of money. No, the chain which fettered her to a man she hated and despised was forged by a sterner fear than that of encountering the scorn which points its finger at female frailty; and that chain she too well knew only Pierre Bernard's death, or her own, could break. His death! She had ceased to watch—to hope for it! The avenging years, as they passed over his iron head, sprinkled it indeed with gray, but scarcely touched his health or strength. This was the curse that was eating her heart away, and from which, as she had often told her husband, she would, but for her son, have long since sought refuge at the bottom of the Seine.

The contempt and hatred of Pierre Bernard for his wife were quite equal to hers for him; and his abhorrence of Philippe Saint-Ange was to the full as intense, but nothing like so strongly marked—a profound fear of that young man, as his sinewy frame and fierce indomitable will developed themselves, having grown and fastened itself upon the old man's mind. Pierre Bernard, I have to remark in this place, was rather a cunning than a courageous man, though not, when pushed to it, deficient in resolution. He was also—the reason whereof will presently be seen—much better educated than the common run of French farmers in those days, or in our own, it may be added without much risk of error.

A few words anent Julie Bernard, and the actors in the story must for the most part tell it themselves.

Julie Bernard, then, who must have been about thirteen years old when Maurice Dalleyne first met with her (1649), is described as a very interesting girl—pretty in face though remarkably pale except when under the influence of strong emotion, when the lighting up of her large dreamy eyes gave life and colour to her features. In disposition she was the most flexile of beings,—a characteristic as much due perhaps to deficient education and the stern tutelage in which she was held from her earliest years, as to any original defect in her moral constitution. It is however impossible to reconcile, or comprehend the contradictions of her conduct, so to speak, except by the hypothesis that she was intellectually weak,—almost infantine, even after she had reached the age of young womanhood. She seems to have been utterly incapable of resisting a strong pressure upon her will or understanding, from those to whom she was accustomed to look with respect and awe;—her step-mother notably, by whom she was ruthlessly guided and coerced. Her father, who loved her better than anything else in the world, except his money, she seems to have greatly feared, though much less so than she did Madame Bernard, who ruled her, not by corporal punishments, which M. Bernard would not have permitted, but by stern moral coercion, exercised through the medium of superstitious fancies; by warnings, threats, prophecies of calamity in this life and damnation in that to come. The woman's purpose in so acting will develope itself as we proceed; and when I add that Julie was of a singularly affectionate disposition, and had always evinced a strong if childlike admiration of Philippe Saint-Ange, I have, I think, said all that is essential to the comprehension of the part she was made to play in the singular drama, the last acts of which were destined to be played out at the Sign of the Star, Fleet Street, over against Fetter Lane.

The acquaintance of Maurice Dalleyne with this happy family was brought about by an accident, the particulars of which are not very lucidly given. He saved Julie from some peril, more or less imminent, of drowning in the Seine, a piece of service which won him the friendship of Pierre Bernard,—a friendship greatly heightened by a firm belief, on the Farmer-Usurer's part, that Maurice Dalleyne was a man of importance in England, who would, when the

Royalist cause came again into the ascendant (a contingency which could not be very long delayed), be magnificently rewarded for his services to the temporarily-defeated monarchy. Maurice Dalleyne subsequently asserted that he had no selfish purpose in view, in making those absurd boasts, and that he himself fully believed that when the King should enjoy his own again, his (Dalleyne's) poor services would not be forgotten.

"Furthermore," he goes on to say, "I was far from being in need of courting M. Bernard's favour. I was gaining quite sufficient money for my wants, and was content to wait for better things till the good time came about again. As to Julie, I merely thought of her with a kind of brotherly pity as a good, timid, frightened child, domineered over by a stern, saturnine step-mother, who evidently intended her to be the wife of Philippe Saint-Ange—a prospective arrangement which her childish demeanour did not prevent me from suspecting was far from disagreeable to Mademoiselle Julie. The notion of making her my wife never entered my head till three days before I did so; a clear proof to me that marriages are made in Heaven, or in the other place: it is difficult to say which.

"How the marriage nevertheless came to pass I will fully and faithfully relate, being moved thereto by a desire to stand well in the thoughts of all honest folk, and especially in yours, Master Farr, who in my present strait have so greatly befriended me.

"In the spring of the year 1653, died one James Gaviour, vintner, of the Sign of the Star, Fleet Street, owing, by reason of gaming and other follies, many persons, myself amongst the number. Leaving no family, his stock and business were to be sold, and consulting with worthy William Furneau of the Horns Tavern, Blowbladder (Newgate) Street, he counselled me to purchase the same; and when I objected that I was not a vintner, instructed me as to how that difficulty might be overcome. One obstacle, however, there was which could not be surmounted nor pushed aside, which was that I could not command sufficient moneys to purchase the deceased vintner's stock and face other unavoidable charges. After much casting about for means to supply the deficiency, it

occurred to my mind that Pierre Bernard being a rich man, might help me in the matter. I had chanced some years before to render him a service, through his child, and he had always professed a hearty desire to serve me should occasion offer. It was therefore determined that I should forthwith apply to him, William Furneau consenting to be bound with me for the sums required; so, furnished with the necessary legal documents, I set forth at once, took ship at Southampton for Havre de Grace, reached Rouen in safety, and without delay betook myself to Vertpré,—Pierre Bernard's place was so named,—which is about a league's distance from Rouen.

"It was growing dusk, and I walked briskly on, anxiously turning over in my mind the while how I should best set forth my request, which seemed to swell into unreasonable dimensions the nearer I approached the time for making it. Suddenly my steps were arrested by loud screams in a female voice. I was just then about two hundred yards past a place called Le Gros Caillou, and within double that distance of Vertpré. I listened anxiously for a moment, and that moment convinced me that it was Julie's voice which rang shrilly through the still evening air, and that the screams came from the basement floor of Pierre Bernard's dwelling.

"I hurried on at my best speed, not from my lameness a very swift pace, firmly clutching, as I ran, my stout, iron-shod walking-staff in my hand, reached the outer door—the latch yielded, and then how sad a sight presented itself!

"My old friend Pierre Bernard was struggling bravely, though without a chance, with Philippe Saint-Ange, who seemed beside himself with rage and drink. Madame Bernard stood apart with folded arms, marking with gleaming eyes and bitter smile the brutal victory of her nephew or son over the old man, whilst Julie, sobbing, screaming, entreating, praying, all in a breath, was striving with all her feeble strength to separate the combatants.

"Pierre Bernard's face was streaming with blood, and he reeled like a drunken man before the furious blows of his powerful assailant, who did not heed my entrance nor my angry summons to desist from his cowardly assault upon an aged man. Finding there was no other help for it, I swung my staff once round my head and brought it down

upon the athletic young scoundrel's right arm with all the force I could put to it. He was at once disabled, and with a fierce curse staggered backwards to the wall. Madame Bernard darted forward and examined the arm which I had struck.

"'The arm is broken!' she exclaimed. Then turning towards and confronting me with one of her stern, stony looks, she said, 'You will repent of that blow, Maurice Dalleyne, should you not have the grace to do so for other misdeeds; and when the time comes, do not forget that it was I who uttered that prediction. Come with me Philippe!'

"She supported the maimed young ruffian across the room, and I hastened to raise up poor Bernard, who had fallen on the floor in a fainting state. Julie had loosened his neckerchief and was wiping his bleeding face, weeping the while, of course, as if her heart was breaking; and for the first time it struck me that she, her father, Madame Bernard and Philippe Saint-Ange, were all dressed in holiday attire. Strange that, I thought. It was not, however, the moment to make any remark of the kind, and I requested Julie to fetch some cold water. As I spoke there was a vehement stamp of a foot on the floor, which the girl instantly recognising, glanced round with nervous haste. Madame Bernard had stopped at the threshold of the door leading into the kitchen, and placed her finger upon her lips, enjoining silence to Julie by that sign, and yet more sternly by the commanding expression of her eyes. Julie bowed her head in token of submissive compliance, and Madame Bernard disappeared.

"Pierre Bernard, though stunned and bruised, was not, I rejoiced to find, seriously hurt; and at the end of perhaps half an hour he was himself again, save that he was eaten up with choler, rage, and at the same time, I saw, shaken with fear, dismay.

"He thanked me very heartily, and said he would return with me to Rouen. As we were passing forth he said to Julie, whom he had more than once tenderly—forgivingly as it seemed to me—embraced, 'Tell Madame Bernard that I will not again trust myself within reach of her scélérat of a son (this was the first time I heard him call Philippe Saint-Ange, her *son*), and that if the officers of

justice find him here to-morrow morning it will be bad for him; *worse* for her!'

"We then walked away, he trembling violently and supporting himself upon my arm. 'If Providence had not sent you to my aid,' he said, after we had gone a little way, 'I should be now a dead man. All the labourers had left, and there was no one, as they believed, within hearing.'

"I said it seemed unlikely that Philippe Saint-Ange could have intended to proceed to such a murderous extremity, seeing that he used his fists only, and that Madame Bernard and Julie were present.

"'Perhaps not—perhaps not!' he gruffly muttered. 'But we will speak no further upon the subject till we are at La Croix Rousse, and my nerves are re-strung by a bottle of wine.'

"I was well content to hug myself in silent satisfaction for a while. I had done a commendable, one might almost say, a brave deed, the new consciousness of which simmering at one's heart is very pleasant. Beyond that, moreover, it now appeared certain that M. Bernard could not refuse me the loan of the ten thousand livres tournois, which had seemed, as I neared his house, to grow into such a prodigious sum to ask the loan of; and I determined in my own mind, instead of making use of William Furneau's bond, which might draw on an inconveniency at a future day, to ask for the money upon my own security, solely. Thus it fell out that with these comforting reflections, and mental reckoning up of the profits of the business in Fleet Street, when judiciously carried on, that evening walk to Rouen, slowly as we crept along, was one of the pleasantest and swiftest I have ever experienced.

"La Croix Rousse in the Rue du Nord is a well-conducted house of public entertainment, and the host, my friend Bertin, one of the civillest of his calling in Christendom; and the charges most reasonable. This, whatever Englishmen may pass that way will find correct. And he moreover, that is, M. Bertin, greatly affects our nation; for be it well understood, that although French by parentage and perhaps by birth, of which I am not well assured, I have always considered and borne myself as a loyal Englishman, which indeed I am, and, under favour of God, shall die.

"I am wrong to slip aside into these by-passages to the hindrance of my main purpose and endeavour. Returning thereto, I have to say that Pierre Bernard and myself were soon comfortably settled in a cosy apartment at La Croix Rousse, quaffing our host's good wine, and smoking some singularly-fragrant tobacco which I much enjoyed; for although, as I have said, a thoroughly loyal subject (with all proper respect and duty to his Highness the Protector, as to the Powers that be), I never held with the late King James of Blessed Memory, in that particular.

"When I perceived by the tranquil light rekindled in M. Bernard's dulled, unquiet eyes, and by his general aspect manifestive of corporal enjoyment and placid mentality,—so placid that he seemed content with watching the curling fumes of smoke, and nodding benignly to me each time he helped himself to wine—when, I say, that I had for some quarter of an hour or so perceived that my friend Bernard had reached that state of genial delectation, I, not however without some twinges of misgiving, entered upon the matter which had brought me to France, videlicet, the borrowing of ten thousand livres tournois.

"It certainly fortified me to observe that M. Bernard did not appear to be at all discomfited by the proposition. On the contrary, he listened with, it seemed to me, increasing placidity, answering however not a word; and as I discoursed and explained, nodded benignly each time, as before, when he lifted the goblet, which was often. Albeit his manner caused me a certain uneasiness, and by way of removing any lingering scruple on his part, I produced William Furneau's bond, and placed it on the table. Still he merely nodded and smiled benevolently through the smoke, vouchsafing not a word. I began to feel like one mocked, laughed at.

"'Hast thou quite finished, Maurice Dalleyne?' at length asked M. Bernard.

"'Hast thou quite finished, Maurice Dalleyne?' Heavens and earth, how that short sentence lowered me in the stirrups! I will explain, friend Farr. When a man, a Frenchman of course, with whom you are comparatively a stranger, who is not a relative, or a very very intimate friend and crony, and you not having set the example, permits himself to 'thee' and 'thou' you, it is certain that you have

fallen in his estimation to the position of an inferior. This was plainly my case: by asking for a loan, I had *ipso facto* lost my *status, vis-à-vis* M. Bernard.

"'Hast thou quite finished, Maurice (not *Monsieur*) Dalleyne?'

"'Yes, Monsieur Bernard, I have,' I replied, with a dignity which I vainly hoped he would comprehend and imitate.

"'It is very well,' said he, 'but I would not lend thee ten thousand liards (farthings) upon thy bond and thy famous Furneau's over the market.'

"'Monsieur Bernard,' said I, 'that is enough, and I take my leave with——'

"'Sit thee still and listen,' he interrupted. 'I will not, I say, *lend* thee ten thousand livres tournois, but, death of my life, I will *give* thee twenty thousand, and to-morrow if thou desirest it.'

"'Give, give! You will give me twenty thousand livres!' I exclaimed, as I wildly jumped up and embraced my friend in the bewilderment of surprise and joy; 'you will give me twenty thousand livres—my God!'

"'Peste!' interrupted M. Bernard, 'thou hast broken my pipe; and a pipe is a pipe: five livres gone at least. Never mind, the breaking of that young villain's arm compensates for a million of pipes.'

"'Yes, Maurice,' he resumed, after procuring and lighting another. 'Yes, Maurice, I will give thee twenty thousand livres to-morrow, and an addition thereto, moreover, which, in my judgment—and I love money too—is worth that sum thrice over.'

"'Ah, Monsieur Bernard!'

"'It is not a new idea, understand well,' continued my old friend. 'I have thought of it much; this evening has ripened the pear; and to-morrow, if possible, I will give thee twenty thousand livres, and my daughter Julie to wife.'

"'I—I marry Julie,' exclaimed I. 'Come, come M. Bernard, that, confess it, is a very poor jest. I, who am so much older than Julie—lame besides—and—and——'

"'Have a slight twist in the eyes,' he broke in with a merry laugh. 'Sacred blue, but that is nothing; or if anything, a beauty rather than a blemish. At least I have heard Julie herself say it is quite interesting when one is

used to it. It is true, however, that thou art not exactly a beau garçon; still thou art not amiss taken altogether, Maurice: very far from that.'

"'Did Julie really say so?' I asked.

"'Word of honour she did, and more than once. It is a market then?'

"'Not so fast, M. Bernard, if you please. I am deeply sensible of the honour you intend me; but surely Julie is partial, *very* partial, to Philippe Saint-Ange?

"A thunder cloud darkened M. Bernard's rugged countenance and fire sparkled in his eyes.

"'Thou art a fool, Maurice,' he exclaimed; 'a buzzard—an ass! A lamb would love the wolf, a hart the lion, as soon.'

"'Such things, M. Bernard, are not uncommon, when the lamb and the wolf, the hart and the lion, happen to be lads and lasses, men and women——'

"'It is finished, then,' savagely interrupted M. Bernard. 'There are others who will not refuse a good and pretty girl with a dowry of twenty thousand livres.'

"'You misunderstand me, M. Bernard. I do *not* refuse your generous offer. On the contrary, if Mademoiselle Julie is willing, I——'

"'Enough—enough,' broke in M. Bernard; 'I answer for that. It is a market. Give me thy hand upon it. Bon!'

"I have written down the foregoing, Master Farr, to make it clear to you that I used no artifice or cajolery—did not take advantage of the services it had been my chance to render M. Bernard and his daughter—to obtain Julie's hand in marriage.

"'And now, Maurice,' said M. Bernard, 'please to see that the door is fastened. I have that to say which must not be overheard.'

"I did as requested, and M. Bernard having put aside his pipe, and, though seated, grasped his staff and struck it firmly on the floor, as if to more strongly mark his earnestness and determination, spake as follows, or nearly so, seeming, as he warmed with the subject, to cast off the slough of country speech and manner, and revert, naturally, to the language and delivery of an educated Parisian:—

"'It is but just that I should deal frankly in all things with my future son-in-law,' said M. Bernard. 'I shall do so, and for more reasons than that of the natural justice of the thing. Thou must have seen that I and Madame Bernard are husband and wife in name only; that she hates me with a deadly malignity which is only controlled by fear.'

"'I have, it is true, remarked that——'

"'Do not interrupt me, Maurice. Listen only, and heedfully. Whether thou hast observed it or not, the fact is as I have stated it; as thou wilt presently readily believe. When my first wife died,' continued M. Bernard, 'I was in evil case. The business of farming had not prospered with me. I was not well skilled therein, my youth and early manhood having been passed in the office of a Paris notary. But for my marriage, strangely brought about be it said in passing, with Adèle Coutance, I should never have handled plough or spade. My affairs then being in such an unthrift condition, I determined upon revisiting Paris, and if I could find profitable occupation there, return to Vertpré only to wind up my affairs, dispose of the farm, and carry away my little Julie.

"'Arrived in Paris, I naturally paid a visit to the old office,—where situate or to whom belonging I do not choose to tell even thee at present. There was no employment for me there, but being well acquainted with two of the senior clerks, I frequently, whilst wearily "*battant le pavé de Paris*," dropped in to while away an idle hour.

"'One day whilst idling there, Madame d'Estreés—I do not, you understand, give you the true proper names—a Madame d'Estreés, I repeat, visited the office accompanied by her *soi-disant* nephew, Philippe Saint-Ange, a pretty boy about five years of age—perhaps something less. Both were habited in deep mourning, and Madame's business was a very important one—no less than to make final arrangements for receiving upwards of eighty thousand livres—nearly four thousand pounds of your English money—bequeathed to her by a M. Saint-Ange, lately deceased—her brother as she pretended before the world, but in truth her paramour, and the father of her son Philippe Saint-Ange.

"'Madame d'Estreés was then residing at a small house

about half a league beyond the Barrière d'Enfer, and as soon as the necessary formalities had been completed, directed that the eighty thousand livres, in gold and silver should be taken there—a most imprudent proceeding, as the notary urged—but to no purpose, Madame being peremptory in the matter. The money was sent in a fiacre, in charge of a confidential clerk whom I accompanied.'

"Here Monsieur Bernard paused and took a lusty draught of wine. No doubt he was mentally surveying the prudent limits within which it was desirable to restrain himself, even in his confidential communications with his future son-in-law. I do not, however, remember that this idea occurred to me at the time.

"'As I have told you, Maurice Dalleyne,' resumed M. Bernard, 'the house in which Madame d'Estreés dwelt—we will call it "Joli Séjour"—was somewhere about half a league beyond the Barrière d'Enfer. It was a pretty detached domicile, and Madame's only servant was Annette, a deaf cook and servant of all work. Well, the money was counted out, a receipt taken for it, and the clerk and I returned in the fiacre to Paris.

"'Let me confess,' continued M. Bernard, 'that the actual sight and handling of such immense riches as eighty thousand livres at that time seemed to be, dazzled, bewildered me. I could think of nothing else, and I will not deny that the devil (here M. Bernard, who was a religious, not to say superstitious, man, crossed himself devoutly)—that the devil proposed horrible schemes to me for obtaining a portion of those vast riches so much needed by me, and so exposed, so feebly guarded! By God's grace I was enabled to cast those evil thoughts behind me. Still a wild, preposterous idea beset and clung to me, that Madame d'Estreés might be prevailed upon to grant me the loan of about one-twelfth or less of her suddenly-acquired wealth, upon the security of the *bail* of Vertpré farm, which, as I found there was no chance for me in Paris, would enable me to work the land with advantage.

"'Certainly that was a wild, preposterous idea, entirely unknown as I was to the lady. Still, I repeat, it clung to, haunted me, and who shall say (here again rapid signs of the cross) that suggestions from the bottomless pit did not

shape and strengthen that wild, preposterous idea. Kyrie Eleison!

"'It is very sure that I could not keep away from Joli Séjour; that the house which contained eighty thousand livres in solid gold and silver had an irresistible attraction for me.

"'One day I found myself at the door of Joli Séjour, at about three o'clock in the afternoon; and resolving to finish at once with the affair, I knocked gently. There was no answer. I knocked again louder than before, waited, and finally lifted the latch. There was no one in that room —not even deaf Annette. I he-e-m'd, coughed, called out, not over-loudly perhaps—(you observe, Maurice, how frankly I speak with you)—and still receiving no reply walked in, and on, the devil—(sign of the cross)—fast regaining his former mastery over me. At last, still he-e-ming, coughing, calling out quietly, I found myself in Madame d'Estreés private room—*the* room in which the eighty thousand livres had been deposited.

"'Let me briefly describe what I saw there. The apartment was small but well furnished, and at one end was a recess before which hung a heavy dark cloth curtain. A table in the centre was covered with a sumptuous banquet elegantly arranged, and on the *buffet* was displayed the eighty thousand livres in gold and silver.

"'I was dazzled, overborne, and trembled in every limb, as if consciously upon the verge of a great misfortune, or a great crime, which is the same thing. Whilst still bewildered, terrified—terrified at myself and the fearful suggestions which beset me—I suddenly heard footsteps and voices. They were those of Madame d'Estreés and Annette, who had been in the garden and were now returning.

"'What should I do? To go out I must pass them; and what excuse could I offer for being there—for penetrating to a room wherein it could be proved I knew that an immense sum in gold and silver had been a few days since deposited? Should I not be seized as an intending robber interrupted in the commission of his crime? No doubt of it; and the thought sent a thrill of agony through my veins; the image of my little helpless Julie starting into life, as it were, before me at the same moment to add poignancy to that bitter anguish.

"'The footsteps rapidly approached; there was no time for reflection—deliberation; and urged by always unreasoning terror, I darted into the alcove and gently drew the concealing curtain before me.

"'This was hardly done when Madame d'Estreés and Annette entered the apartment. They brought flowers from the garden, which Madame arranged in vases upon the table.

"'"Everything is now complete," said the lady, "and do you, Annette," she added loudly in her servant's ear, "be sure to admit no one, on any pretence, whilst M. de Méricourt is here."

"'Annette nodded intelligence—I could see everything very plainly through a slit in the curtain—and was leaving the room when a loud fashionable knock was heard at the outer door.

"'"It is he,—it is the Chevalier," flutteringly exclaimed Madame d'Estreés. "Quick, admit him Annette!"

"'I now observed that Madame d'Estreés was *en grande toilette*, and certainly looked charmingly. She was also, I noticed, greatly agitated, and, first glancing in a mirror to assure herself that nothing was amiss in her appearance and dress, she hastily threw a cloth over the gold and silver coins ranged upon the buffet.

"'In a few moments M. de Méricourt entered the apartment with the assured, self-possessed air of a man of fashion and *bonnes fortunes*. He was received by the lady in a most gracious and yet it struck me an embarassed manner, and after some compliments and trifling both sat down facing each other at the banquet.

"'Whilst, Maurice Dalleyne, they are so engaged, I will in a few words inform you of the position which the lady and gentleman occupied in society and towards each other.

"'Adolphe de Méricourt was a handsome, fashionable *roué*, of high family, long since past his first youth, and who had years agone dissipated his patrimony, and was then living upon Providence, credit, and the chances of the gaming table. He had met Madame d'Estreés a few weeks previously, paid her some attentions, and inspired her with a genuine passion—as far as such a woman can feel a genuine passion—for his worthless, varnished self. She imagined that he believed in her pretended widowhood, &c.,

and thought to tempt him into marriage by her recently-obtained wealth,—by the actual display and sight of it,—so ran her absurd scheme. Madame d'Estreés, I must add, was bent upon restoring herself to society, and, much as she loved De Méricourt, was thoroughly determined not to be his mistress. I am bound to do her that justice. You are now, Maurice, able to appreciate the position of those two persons—the gay, haughty, profligate man *à bonnes fortunes*,—the fierce-willed, passionate woman.

"'At last the banquet is finished: then follows, on the gentleman's part, an attempt at dalliance, calmly, almost sternly repulsed by the lady. By degrees Madame's tone becomes so decided, so serious, that Monsieur is annoyed, piqued thereat, and asks her the meaning of such ill-timed prudery. A fiery outburst of temper checks him, and presently the word "marriage" is uttered by Madame d'Estreés. Marriage! The idea seems too absurd; M. de Méricourt bursts into a fit of laughter,—laughter expressive of contemptuous derision, when the lady, the ice being broken, withdraws the concealing cloth and shows him her piled riches.

"'"Marriage, my charming Estelle!" he exclaims as soon as he can sufficiently check his disdainful merriment.—"Marriage, and with thee! come, that is excellent."

"'"Yes, marriage with *me!* do not touch, approach, me, M. de Méricourt."

"'"This is tiresome, Estelle," says the Chevalier! "Surely Cupid can legitimate our happiness without the help of Hymen!"

"'Madame d'Estreés draws back from the renewed advances of De Méricourt, and I see by her swelling veins and fiery eyes that a volcano of rage is flaming in her heaving bosom.

"'"Peste!" exclaims the irritated Chevalier: "this is too ridiculous. As to marriage, *ma belle*, that silly ceremony will next week unite me with Mademoiselle de Sartigues: so that——"

"'Those are the last words he will ever utter. The fierce, loving, outraged woman, snatches up a sharp-pointed knife, and with a movement of ungovernable passion stabs him to the heart. He falls dead without a struggle or a groan; so sure, so well-directed, has been the blow.

"'That which immediately followed thou mayst better imagine, Maurice, than I could describe. Madame d'Estreés was horror, fear-stricken, and for some minutes seemed to be incapable of comprehending the frightful catastrophe which had so suddenly occurred. The first sign of returning self-possession, the first sign that she appreciated the fearful consequences to herself of her desperate deed, was her hastening to fasten the door of the apartment.

"'I then shewed myself: a slight scream escaped her, checked by my menacing gesture. We were not long in coming to an understanding. I was in fact master of the situation. Her life was in my hands, and I confess to have made unscrupulous use of the opportunity. My terms were simple. The eighty thousand livres to be at once handed over to me, and Madame to be united to me in marriage on the morrow. This last stipulation you understand, Maurice, was intended to deprive her of the power of thereafter accusing or threatening to accuse me of having been an accessory to the murder. Upon those terms I agreed to conceal her crime, and, which was much more difficult, the unfortunate Chevalier's body. Madame had no choice but to submit, or, which was the same thing, believed she had not; and the bargain being settled, I tasked my wits to prevent the possibility of suspicion falling upon either of us. The removal and concealment of the body was the difficult and dangerous part of the affair, and how that was accomplished is a curious part of the business, which I must reserve for another day. To deceive Annette I left the house enveloped in M. de Méricourt's military cloak, and wearing his hat. The precaution was needed, for it having been ascertained by the Exempts that the deceased Chevalier intended to visit Madame d'Estreés on the day he did, they called to make inquiries, when Annette, with that accent and manner of honesty and truthfulness which can never be perfectly put on, assured them that she had herself seen the Chevalier leave the house, and that he did not again return. They were satisfied; and being told that Madame d'Estreés was ill in bed, pushed the inquiry no further. That official visit took place on the third day subsequent to De Méricourt's death, and on the evening of the fourth Monsieur and Madame Bernard were on their road to

Vertpré. The risk I ran,' added M. Bernard, 'was frightful: I would not incur such another for all the gold in the universe.'

"I had listened with dumb amazement, Master Farr, to the foregoing, not knowing what to say, or scarcely what to think of such a singular story. Clearly, however, if M. Bernard told all the truth he was not greatly to blame; nor was Madame B. so heinously as if she had committed homicide with malice prepense. Then the moneys were her own, which was a great relief.

"'I have now,' again went on M. Bernard, 'discovered to thee the why and wherefore of our domestic variances and wretchedness, and at the same time unburdened my mind of a painful secret. Madame Bernard must henceforth be a stranger to thee and especially to thy wife. Thou wilt take Julie to England. That is one of my chief reasons for wishing thee to be my son-in-law. Some of these days, and before very long perhaps, I may join you there. I should also tell thee that Madame Bernard knows or fears that I have lately made a will, bequeathing all I may die possessed of to Julie,—a fear or knowledge which, whilst it gives likelihood to thy opinion that they could not this evening have intended to kill me outright, accounts for the mother's anxious determination to have her son married to Julie without delay, which marriage once effected, my life would not be worth a week's purchase.'

"'I have long been convinced that it was her wish to wed Julie with Philippe Saint-Ange.'

"'There can be no question of that. The fierce young ruffian's brutal attack upon me was the consequence,—the unpremeditated consequence, I am inclined to believe,—(he was. you saw, half drunk) of my firmly-expressed determination to at all hazards prevent my child from incurring the moral pollution which marriage with his mother's son would involve.'

"'Had you interrupted the ceremony, then? I noticed that you were all in gala dress.'

"'No—no—; not quite that. This is what has happened: I went early this morning to Montrouge, to obtain payment of an overdue bond, as I have resolved upon getting in all moneys due to me as quickly as may be, and not purposing to return till to-morrow. I had actually engaged a bed at

the Tête Noire, but a sort of vague foreboding of evil came upon me, and I determined upon returning to Vertpré at once. It was well I did. My way, as you know, led past Les Ormes, and there, death of my life! whom should I find in a guinguette but Julie, Philippe Saint-Ange, and Madame Bernard, the two former dancing with a lot of rustics, and the mother looking on with saturnine delight. I quickly spoiled their mirth. Seizing Julie, I reproached her bitterly, and we came away together. Yet, poor child, she was not so much to blame, curbed, controlled as I have weakly permitted her to be beneath the iron rule of that stern woman.

"'Philippe and his mother followed; he, as I could hear by his fierce execrations,—checked but not silenced by Madame Bernard till we reached Vertpré,—was in a towering rage. Arrived within the house, he flew at me, in a manner of speaking, with an insolent claim of Julie for his wife! My contemptuous reply was answered by a fierce blow, and—you know the rest.

"'And now,' added *père* Bernard, 'and now this long explanation being finished, I shall re-light my pipe. Moreover as one does not give a daughter in marriage every day in the year, we will have another bottle of Bertin's capital wine.'

"The capital wine did not, however, render M. Bernard livelier, more jocund. On the contrary, he grew more and more depressed.

"'My position is full of peril, Maurice Dalleyne,' he said, after a long silence. 'Battle à l'outrance is now declared between me and Madame Bernard, supported by her son. Julie, however, once safe in England, I shall know how to take care of myself. I would have had Philippe Saint-Ange turned out of my house long since by the officers of justice, but that it would drive his mother to desperation, in which case, perhaps——. True, I have a grim, ghastly hold on her, as one may say, an evidence of her crime in my possession, which she, poor fool, with all her boasted cunning, believes would infallibly consign her to the scaffold. Still she knows that dead men tell no tales, and that were I once out of the way——. In any case Philippe Saint-Ange is crippled for a while: you have done me that great service, Maurice Dalleyne.'

"M. Bernard had become by this time pitiably downcast; a dark presentiment pressed heavily upon him; he ceased his disjointed talk, and I was in no mood for taking up the discourse. At last it was time to go to rest.

"'Maurice Dalleyne,' said Pierre Bernard, as we were about to separate, 'should death suddenly overtake me, or whether it overtake me suddenly or not, be sure to make instant prize of the long iron-bound chest you may have seen in the lumber room. It has a deep false bottom, and it is there I keep my money and securities. That is a secret which Madame Bernard is not likely to discover: she would certainly not rummage for it there. But you will be away in England, so that——. Well, Julie will be safe; and for myself I must trust in God. Good night.'"

Maurice Dalleyne did not himself sleep well that night, being sorely tossed in mind by what he had seen and heard, and as to what might be the upshot of it all. Nevertheless to refuse a young, gentle, well-dowered wife, with large expectances besides, would be, he reflected, the extremest folly; which so far satisfactory solution of his perplexities come to, he fell into a doze which lasted till the morning was well up.

He would hardly have fallen into that comfortable doze, and M. Bernard's foreboding disquietude would have given place to instant, unappeasable fury, had they known *all* that passed during the previous day,—all that was passing, plotting against their peace whilst they were holding counsel together at La Croix Rousse.

An hour before Pierre Bernard, on his return from Montrouge, surprised his household at the guinguette, Julie and Philippe Saint-Ange had been actually married by a Benedictine priest-monk! M. Bernard had misunderstood the fierce demand addressed to him by the half-drunken bridegroom. Philippe Saint-Ange had claimed Julie, not *for* his wife, but *as* his wife! What immediately followed, the reader is acquainted with; but he has yet to sound the dark depths in which the soul and conscience of Madame Bernard were plunged and stifled.

She well knew that such a merely ceremonial, unconsummated marriage, contracted without her father's knowledge and consent, Julie being a minor, would be cancelled by the authorities both of the State and of the Church, or rather

declared to be in itself null and void. She comprehended also that the brutal ruffianism of her son had created an impassable gulf between him and M. Bernard, who she believed to be as implacable, inexorable, as herself. Rather than Philippe Saint-Ange, by whom he had been so outraged, should participate his wealth, he would disinherit his own child. That, judging him by herself, she felt sure of. Moreover, her fertile brain had, before the assault took place, whilst they were walking home from Montrouge, conceived a mode of action, by which her own and her son's purpose could be ultimately better answered, and which might possibly draw after it another and dearer consequence —that of obtaining for her a hold upon her husband, with a grasp as torturing as that with which he held her in hateful bondage.

The "finger on the lip," sternly imposing silence upon Julie, was the first move in her new game; a game which was eagerly and skilfully carried out.

As before stated, Madame Bernard withdrew with her son to an inner apartment, and Messieurs Bernard and Dalleyne soon afterwards left the house, the former leaving word that he should not return that night.

Thus poor Julie, a some five hours' bride, was left alone with her tears, her weakness, her terrors; her remorse for the past in having deceived her father, her despairing apprehension of the future! She dared not, without invitation, intrude upon her husband and his mother, nor strive to catch the purport of the low-toned colloquy she heard going on between them, though more than once her timid footsteps drew near the inner door to listen, and as often, startled by something—nothing, she hurriedly regained her previous distance.

Strange and cruel to be thus debarred her husband's presence; and he too wounded, suffering! And how much more strange and cruel that he should leave the house, as he did, with Madame Bernard, by the back entrance, without vouchsafing his bride, his wife, one word of explanation; without exchanging with her one word of tenderness, regret, compassion! Poor Julie could but weep and wonder; and she ceased not weeping, wondering, whilst the dark night fell, and the stars came slowly, sparsely forth, marking the course of the dense black clouds fleeing before

the piercing night-wind, which, spring-time though it was, chilled her blood, and was yet powerless to cool the fever of her brain. A sad bridal-eve, poor child!

At last, and when it was near upon midnight, Madame Bernard returned, *alone*. She chid Julie for weeping, for sitting alone there without fire, when she ought to have been in bed; so severely chid her, that the timid, terrified girl dared not ask for her husband, though the words, as the latch lifted, leapt unbidden to her lips.

"It is, however, as well perhaps," said Madame Bernard, "that thou art not gone to bed, for I have that to say to thee, the saying of which may not be delayed. Kindle a fire, and place supper on the table. I shall return in a few minutes.

"Julie," said Madame Bernard, "I have a confession to make, a grievous error to remedy and atone for. Thou heardest thy father declare a few hours since that he would never consent to thy marriage with Philippe——."

"Hélas, yes, but——"

"Silence, chit! The consequence of that inexorable determination which I could not have foreseen is, that your marriage to-day, being merely a ceremonial one, is invalid. Silence, I command! Exclaiming and weeping will avail nothing. The doubt having been awakened in my mind, that, failing your only parent's sanction, you being a minor, the ceremony of to-day was not a binding one, I insisted that Philippe should leave the house without seeing, without speaking to you. That was only doing my duty as a Christian woman and mother. But it was not *all* my duty. I was bound to consult the Church itself as to the binding force of the vows pronounced to-day by you and Philippe. I have done so, by laying before the Reverend Father who joined your hands in ignorance of your parent's refusal to sanction the union, the whole of the circumstances. The holy Father's opinion was given unhesitatingly, and at my request he has drawn it up in a regular, canonical form."

Madame Bernard then handed to the unfortunate girl a document purporting to be a declaration by the authority of the Holy Roman Apostolic Church, that the marriage of Philippe Saint-Ange and Julie Bernard was, under the recited circumstances, absolutely null and void. The audacious forgery went on to declare that it would be a mortal

sin for either of the parties concerned to speak of a pretended marriage which, though it had no validity, and had originated in mistake, would, if the matter were bruited abroad, bring scandal upon the Church. The paper was sealed as well as signed, with a view, of course, to its greater, more solemn authority with the meek, weak-willed girl.

Julie read it through blinding tears; mastered its meaning, and then with a bubbling cry of anguish threw herself into Madame Bernard's arms, and fainted.

Madame Bernard carried her to bed, ministered to her tenderly, and by morning-light had so completely re-established her ascendancy that Julie vowed upon the holy Evangelists never to revert, even mentally, if she could avoid it, to her ceremonial marriage with Philippe Saint-Ange, and never, never to bring scandal upon the Church, and thereby peril her own soul by making mention of it to any living soul. More even than that,—Madame Bernard, who had long known her husband's desire to have Maurice Dalleyne for a son-in-law, had prepared the mind of Julie for shrinking, self-sacrificing acquiescence in that proposal, should it be made to her. The arguments by which Philippe Saint-Ange had been induced to relinquish for a time his legal hold upon Mademoiselle Bernard may be easily imagined. He had never really loved Julie.

We may now again take up the thread of Maurice Dalleyne's narrative.

"I rose late," he says, "which was not quite seemly in a bridegroom expectant, but M. Bernard noticed it not; and after a hearty breakfast we set forth for Vertpré, where we arrived at about noon. Philippe Saint-Ange had left, we found, and would not, his mother said, return for many a day, which was pleasant to hear. M. Bernard had a long conference with his daughter, which seemed to have greatly ruffled him, as if there had been a struggle in which, though he was finally the victor, it was not without the exercise of a strong and resolute will. This was not flattering to me; but M. Bernard, who said it was all right, and that we would go and speak to the Priest at once, was not, I saw, in a humour to be questioned. I e'en therefore digested the mortification I felt by reflecting that young demoiselles are privileged to exhibit capricious humours, and that it would be my own fault if she did not better affect me when

another year should have gone by than she did now that we were comparative strangers to each other."

Maurice Dalleyne dwells at considerable length upon the incidents and bravery of the wedding, which we may pass over, except to say that he and Julie Bernard were declared to be man and wife by the officiating Priest at the Cathedral of Rouen on the 9th of May, 1653; that on the following day he and Madame Dalleyne embarked in an English vessel, "Ezra Dawkins, Master," for Southampton; had a fair voyage; and on the ninth day after leaving the Seine "reached London in safety and content, and took present lodgings with my good friend William Furneau at the Horns Tavern."

The twenty thousand livres tournois obtained by Dalleyne with his wife smoothed all difficulties with respect to the purchase of the business at the sign of the Star, Fleet-street. He took almost immediate possession, and never had cause to repent his bargain. There is an important matter which I have omitted to speak of earlier and in the right place. Besides his wife's actual dowry and the certainty that she would inherit all her father's riches, there was good warranty for expecting that other moneys would before long fall to Madame Dalleyne. The subject was mentioned for the first time in Maurice Dalleyne's hearing, at the wedding breakfast, by Pierre Bernard himself, who, said he had good reason for believing that Julie's aunt, Madame Coutance, who would never part with a sou whilst she lived, had made a will, devising all her property, which chiefly consisted of moneys at usury, to her niece Julie. "For her sole use," added Pierre Bernard, laughing; "no husband or other person to have the slightest control thereof." Madame Bernard, who had comported herself with a kind of stern reserve, at hearing that looked mightily pleased, and said briskly that it was a wise thing for Madame Coutance to do, and she was heartily glad of it. "I heeded not the words at the time, but I have since," writes Maurice Dalleyne, "too well understood their devilish significancy."

Maurice Dalleyne's marriage seems to have been a happy one, all things considered. He was tenderly attached to his young wife, and she felt for him esteem and friendship, if no warmer sentiment. A daughter was born to them in the second year of wedlock, and all things betokened a

prosperous day of life to be followed by a calm and peaceful evening, when, says Dalleyne, "suddenly, and as from a clear, summer sky, the thunder burst which has blasted my home, and, if the mercy of God interpose not, will destroy me utterly."

Correspondence between friends and relatives in days when post-offices were not, could not have been very active. It is not surprising therefore that during three years subsequent to Julie's leaving France, she heard only twice directly from her father. Those letters breathed a despondent tone, deeply tinged with religious terrors, and in January 1657, Dalleyne having affairs to transact in France, and being urged by his wife, determined, spite of the inclement season of the year, to visit Rouen and Vertpré.

He did so, and found M. Bernard in apparent health, save for a lassitude of body and a despondency of mind which he could not shake off. Madame Bernard was temporarily absent at the time on a visit to her son, who was serving, it was said with honour, in the armies of Turenne. Dalleyne remained a few days only at Vertpré, and left before Madame Bernard returned.

It struck Madame Dalleyne soon after her husband's return to Fleet-street, that he appeared ill at ease, discomposed, scared, so to speak, either by something that had occurred or that he feared would happen; and after much pressing she elicited his version of the cause of that disquietude.

He had been to Rouen on the last day of his visit to M. Bernard, and returning to Vertpré in the evening to bid his father-in-law good bye, as the vessel in which he was to sail was moored on the far side of the Seine, and would drop down the river with the tide towards midnight, he found that gentleman habited as if for a journey. To Dalleyne's expression of surprise, M. Bernard replied that he should accompany him a part of the way at all events, as he meant to sleep in Rouen that night. Of course there could be no objection to that; and after drinking a bottle of wine between them, during which M. Bernard casually mentioned that Madame Coutance was dying, and that consequently the legacy to Julie, which was a fat one, would soon fall in, they left the house together. The night would have been totally dark, but for a faint starlight, and

as it was they were obliged to feel their way carefully along some portions of the ill-kept road.

"Thy father," said Dalleyne, "would persist in talking of Philippe Saint-Ange. He fancied he had seen him the evening before not far from Vertpré, at hide-and-seek as it were, and that too in company with Jeanette something, a good-looking Rouen wench he was intimate with when a youth, and to whom it was at one time reported, thy father told me, he was married."

"You mean Jeanette Lebrun," said Madame Dalleyne. She added, colouring violently, "But the rumour that they were married was totally false."

"So I understand; but as I was saying, thy father had got it into his head that he had seen Philippe Saint-Ange and her together on the previous evening. And I tell thee, dear Julie," continued Dalleyne with excitement, "that a similar fancy occurred to me, if it *was* a fancy. We were passing the copse beyond *Le Gros Caillou*, and I could have sworn that I caught a momentary glimpse of Philippe Saint-Ange standing within the shadow of a clump of oaks. I saw, or fancied I saw, the face only, the body being concealed by the thick dwarf shrubs thereabout. So certain was I that Saint-Ange was lurking there, that I darted forward to confront him. I am not, as thou knowest, the swiftest runner in the world, and when I reached the spot I could see nobody, hear nothing! I made some excuse to thy father, not wishing to add to the uneasiness which his suspicions that Saint-Ange was lurking in the neighbourhood caused him; and well knowing moreover that he was already well on his guard. Besides, I might have been, and probably was, mistaken."

"I am sure thou wert, Maurice; for what possible motive could Saint-Ange have for visiting, much less for lurking about, Vertpré, and especially during his mother's absence?"

"I know not; and however that may be, I cannot banish the circumstance from my mind, nor the vague alarm with which it fills me. But let me finish. The path leading to the bridge of boats which crosses the Seine, turns off at no great distance from *Le Gros Caillou*, to the right from the high road to Rouen. There I parted with thy father, not without reluctance and hesitation, though the lights of Rouen were visible, and the road is not very lonesome. He

however, would not permit me to go on with him, and his last words were a blessing upon thee, dear wife. I hope we shall soon hear from him," added Maurice Dalleyne, and there the subject dropped.

A week or thereabouts afterwards, a letter was received, subscribed Estelle Bernard, addressed to Monsieur Dalleyne, and requesting to know if M. Bernard had accompanied him to England. Madame Bernard had returned to Vertpré on the evening but one following that of M. Dalleyne's departure, and had ascertained that her husband left his house at the same time, habited as if for a journey, in company with M. Dalleyne. As M. Bernard had not since been heard of, she concluded that he was in England with his daughter and son-in-law, and she, Madame Bernard, requested to be assured of that without delay.

Maurice Dalleyne's worst fears were confirmed; and after brief consultation with his wife he at once set off for Rouen. At Vertpré he found Madame Bernard and Philippe Saint-Ange, but no Monsieur Bernard, who had not yet been heard of. The mother and son expressed unbounded astonishment at hearing that he had not accompanied Dalleyne to England, and Saint-Ange let drop expressions hinting at a horrible crime which it would be nobody's interest but Dalleyne's to commit.

"What is that you dare insinuate?" demanded Dalleyne. "Liar and villain that you are."

"I insinuate nothing," retorted Saint-Ange. "I simply say that the man who will exclusively benefit by M. Bernard's death—for it is well known there is a will in the possession of Louis Adam which bequeaths all his wealth to Madame Dalleyne—was the last person seen with him, and that he has not been heard of since. *Voilà tout.*"

Madame Bernard interposed, rebuking her son for his absurd suspicions, and the quarrel terminated.

The inquiry set on foot by the authorities, and zealously urged by Dalleyne, and as it appeared, by Madame Bernard and Philippe Saint-Ange, brought to light only the following meagre facts:—

Joseph Lebon, a young man who had made a rendezvous with his sweetheart near the spot where the path to the bridge of boats turned off from the main road, saw M. Bernard and a lame gentleman shake hands and separate there,

M. Bernard going on towards Rouen, and the lame gentleman taking the path towards the river. About ten minutes afterwards M. Bernard came back walking very fast, and proceeded on the path towards the bridge of boats. Another and taller person, whom Lebon did not know, whose face he did not indeed see, presently followed in the same direction, at about, he should think, between two and three hundred paces behind M. Bernard. This evidence gave significance to a fact which had not been esteemed of importance, namely, that a fur cap, resembling that worn by M. Bernard on the evening that he left Vertpré, had been found upon the shelving shore of the Seine, cast there by the tide. The bridge of boats was not always guarded at night, and it was thought probable that in attempting to cross, particularly as it was proved that he had taken a considerable quantity of wine, M. Bernard had fallen into the river and been drowned.

Maurice Dalleyne had his own suspicions upon the subject, but as no corroborating proofs seemed to be obtainable, he thought it prudent to hold his peace. Philippe Saint-Ange had also, or assumed to have, *his* suspicions, and he fixed from time to time insolent, scrutinising looks upon Dalleyne's face, which made the vintner's hot blood tingle to his finger ends. No good, however, could result from a quarrel, and again he thought it prudent to hold his peace. The end was, that the authorities decided that for the present matters must remain in *statu quo.* It was probable that M. Bernard was drowned, but till his death had been established either by positive evidence or the lapse of time, the disposition of his property, as settled by the will in M. Adam's possession, could not take effect.

The journey of Dalleyne to France was not, however, barren of results. Madame Coutance was dead, Julie was her heir, and Dalleyne would take back with him for her signature, the legal documents necessary to enable her to receive the large sums bequeathed to her.

This was a great god-send; but so expansive is the capacity for appropriating riches, that Maurice Dalleyne, who well remembered M. Bernard telling him that he kept his cash and securities in the huge chest in the lumber room, could not possibly bring himself to leave it behind. Madame Bernard and her son, thus argued his covetousness, "search-

ing, rummaging everywhere for the hiding-place of the absent gentleman's accumulations—M. Adam having declared that no moneys were in his hands—would be sure to ultimately discover the false bottom, and appropriate the contents."

What could be done to avert so grievous a loss? To ask for the chest upon any pretence would excite curiosity, suspicion! Still something should be ventured where so much was at stake; and so the day before he was to leave, Maurice Dalleyne, with as cool an air of unconcern as he could assume, said,—

"Between ourselves, Madame Bernard, there are one or two old articles, worthless in themselves, but prized by her, for heaven knows what reasons or associations, which Julie requested me to bring her if you should have no objection."

"What worthless old articles does she mean?" asked Madame Bernard.

"Well, let me see: one is the parrot-cage in the front room; another a small work-table with a shattered leg."

"Julie is quite welcome to those valuable articles," said Madame Bernard: "Anything else?"

"Why yes, there were three articles, if I remember rightly: let me think. I have it! the ungainly old iron-bound chest in the lumber room."

Madame Bernard's eyes, he remarked, glittered merrily at the mention of the old chest.

"O, for that," she said, "Julie is not only welcome to the old chest, but it will be a capital riddance of useless lumber. Say," added Madame Bernard, blandly, "Say nothing of these trifling requests to my son: he is, you know, morbidly suspicious, and sees giants in every furze bush."

Maurice Dalleyne perfectly agreed in the propriety of that suggestion: never had Madame Bernard appeared to him in so amiable a light before. Really it might be that, after all, she would prove to have been a greatly-misunderstood, if not grossly-slandered, lady.

The parrot-cage, the damaged table, the huge chest, were quietly conveyed on board the Pearl cutter, and the chest was stowed snugly away in the hold under the personal superintendence of Maurice Dalleyne himself. He felt that he was in luck,—an especial favourite of fortune; and notwithstanding his sincere grief for the sad fate of poor Ber-

nard, he experienced an exultation of spirit that *would* break out in the joyous old royalist song—

" Vive Henri quatre,
Vive ce roi vaillant,
Ce diable à quatre
A le triple talent
De boire et de battre
Et d'être vert galant.
Vive————"

He was 'brought up,' in sailor phrase, very unpleasantly.

" Ah, my brave Dalleyne," croaked a voice which no doubt belonged to the individual whose heavy grasp was upon his shoulder, " You are gay this fine morning. It is well, and I wish I had your spirits. Perhaps however the voyage to your England will put a little life into me."

It *was* Philippe Saint-Ange who thus accosted Maurice Dalleyne.

" Voyage to England!" echoed the latter gentleman. " *You* surely are not going to England?"

" Surely I *am* going to England ! and, sacred blue, why not my dear boy? I want to embrace dear Julie."

Remonstrance would have been useless, absurd; and Maurice Dalleyne, suddenly jolted down from the seventh heaven to common earth again, grimly resigned himself to the genial prospect of companionship with Philippe Saint-Ange, not only during the voyage but for an *ad libitum* period at the Star, Fleet-street, afterwards.

Maurice Dalleyne had arranged with the master of the Pearl to land him and his luggage upon a part of the English coast where there could be no danger of having it overhauled. This was easily managed in those days; and the huge chest, his great anxiety, was at length safely deposited in the exultant vintner's cellar.

Yes, and at the same time Philippe Saint-Ange domiciled himself in the same habitat—meaning the house, not the cellar; and by, to lookers-on, some mysterious conjuring or other, seemed, after one or two interviews, to have obtained absolute command over Madame Dalleyne, who yet avoided his presence whenever it was possible to do so, as she would a tiger's.

Maurice Dalleyne's pre-occupied mind did not take serious cognisance of that mystery; it was fully absorbed by

glowing anticipations of the treasure hidden in the false bottom of the chest. That handled, realised, he would speedily reckon with Philippe Saint-Ange.

The chest was strongly bound with iron; the lock was an immense one, it would be folly to attempt finding a key to fit it, and the vintner determined to wrench the chest open with a crowbar. He purchased one, and it was sent to his house in due time. That cursed Philippe Saint-Ange was present when it was delivered, took it into his hand, poised it, and asked Dalleyne, with a sinister laugh and sneer, but that might be fancy, what in the devil's name he was going to do with such an implement as that.

The vintner's nerves were so shaken by the words and manner of Saint-Ange, that he did not that night venture into the cellar in quest of his yet untold riches.

He was firmer the next night, and when all the household, himself excepted, had retired to rest, Maurice Dalleyne crept softly down into the cellar, furnished with a lamp and the crowbar. How nervous he still was! More than once he could have sworn he heard a cautious foot-fall not very distant from his own! He listened: threw the light of the lamp in all directions. There was nothing, and he proceeded with his task.

The strap-lock was, I have said, very strong and massive, and Maurice Dalleyne was awkward in the use of his crowbar, which was not, moreover, an instrument precisely adapted to the work in hand. Nevertheless he persevered, tore and wrenched away, finally ascertained by slightly lifting the lid, that his toil had been successful; and that nothing more than the false bottom of the chest interposed between him and the sight and clutch of the glittering coins.

He had re-trimmed his lamp, wiped his beaded forehead, and now gently, quietly lifted the lid of the chest. Almighty God! a corpse lay extended there—a dead body, whose features could not be distinguished, but clothed in the habiliments of Pierre Bernard!

A vertigo seized Dalleyne. The whole place whirled round; the vaulted roof descended upon his head, a thousand lights danced before his eyes, the dead corpse half rose in the chest, gibbering at him with its white teeth and formless face; and with a loud cry he fell senseless on the ground.

How long he lay in that trance of horror, Maurice Dalleyne knew not; but reviving consciousness was accompanied by a vague remembrance—sensation might perhaps be a fitter word—that he had not been *alone* during its continuance: that some one had aided his restoration to life.

When, however, self-possession had been fully recovered, the fearful scrutiny of the miserable man discerned no human being there. Still there were positive indications, if his beating brain mistook or misinterpreted them not, of the recent presence of another person. The lamp was standing upon the end of a cask, though he was as certain as one in his state of mind could be, that it had been in his hand when he fell to the ground! And there was a taste of wine in his mouth, which confirmed a vague impression that some had been poured down his throat whilst he lay in a state of reviving, semi-insensibility. However all that might be, it was imperatively necessary to ascertain at once if any one except himself was then in the cellar; and resolutely nerving himself to the task, Maurice Dalleyne crept with lamp in hand round the dismal vault—peered into dank, cobwebbed recesses, and behind casks.

Only darkness there; and he eagerly concluded that, like the fancied pursuing footfall when he was descending the cellar steps—his actual possession of the lamp when he fell—and the smack of wine upon his tongue or palate—were mere illusions of the imagination. There was immense relief in that conclusion, weakening as it did in some degree an instinctive dread that he was in the bloody toils of Madame Bernard and her equally unscrupulous son—enmeshed therein by devilish art beyond hope of extrication; and helping to give colour and consistence to a thought, which as he stealthily stole up-stairs to bed, glanced through his mind like a beam of light.

The face of the corpse was assuredly not that of a man recently dead, and might it not be that of the Chevalier de Méricourt, slain in a fit of jealous passion by Madame Bernard? Unquestionably it might. Nay, as memory recalled the conversation with Pierre Bernard at La Croix Rouse, the new idea that had fastened upon Dalleyne's mind acquired irresistible force. Pierre Bernard had said he would one day tell him how he had managed to conceal and carry

away the body of the Chevalier, and what likelier mode could have been adopted than that of depositing it in a chest which would pass as part of Madame d'Estreé's luggage? And, moreover, did not Pierre Bernard say that his wife would never rummage *that* receptacle in search of his hoarded moneys! The thing was clear as sunlight, and there could not be much doubt, either, that Bernard's wealth was still hidden in the false bottom, as he, the owner and depositor, had alleged.

Well, but how to reconcile with these presumptions the fact which he had certainly noticed before delirium seized him, namely, that the habiliments of the corpse were those of Pierre Bernard, or closely resembling them! And suppose Madame Bernard knew the corpse of her victim to be concealed in the chest, was it not preposterous to imagine that she would have voluntarily placed it in his, Dalleyne's, possession, believing, as her husband asserted she did, that its discovery would at any moment ensure her conviction for De Méricourt's murder?

These reasonings—these swiftly-successive flashes of light and gloom—the abiding gloom remaining but the darker, denser, for the ephemeral gleams of light, had passed through Dalleyne's mind by the time he reached his chamber, which opened from the same passage or corridor as did that of his visitor Philippe Saint-Ange. As he touched the handle of the door, he heard—he was sure he heard—that of his intrusive guest gently, creakingly, close. He could not be mistaken; and rendered desperate by fear and rage, he determined, at all hazards, to ascertain if Saint-Ange had really been dogging his steps and doings during those awful night hours.

"I knocked hurriedly at his chamber door—soon louder, bolder, and demanded speech of Monsieur Saint-Ange, with angry importunity. At length, and after he had made it seem to my ear—the practised, specious villain—that he had been whisperingly counselled to answer,—he yawned forth a drowsy 'Who is there?' to which I not immediately replying, he went on, still in a yawning, scornful tone, 'What is this to-do, *pêre* Dalleyne?' (The insolence of *pêre* from him to me!) 'Dost thou know,' he added, as I still spake not, being in some sort ashamed, and fancying that possibly the tremor of my nerves had thrown my hearing

ajar, 'Dost thou know, *père* Dalleyne, that this night-walking is pregnant with grave suspicion! That it betokens uneasiness of conscience—a secret burthen on the disquieted soul, which permitteth not of healthful rest?'

"I stayed no further parley, but hurried away to my solitary sleeping room. Here I must explain that my wife and I had not for several nights occupied the same chamber: she, for some consideration of health regarding the child, as she said, having chosen to sleep in another and airier apartment on the top floor of the house. I had given way without much question to this fancy—my thoughts being so much bound up with the chest-treasure; but now the pretended whispering in that villain's room, strengthening other faintly-heeded fancies, sent a thrill of criminal jealousy through my veins!

"The proof was easy—at hand, and I flew up-stairs to my wife's new sleeping chamber. The door was on the jar. I entered without noise, and drew aside the bed curtain. The child only was there, sound asleep, and the bed had not that night been pressed by any other form!

"Shall I ever forget the horror and distraction which at that dreadful moment shook me well nigh to dissolution? The universe seemed to be crumbling around me. All joy or hope in life—all faith in goodness and in God, slipping from my hold, and in their place a hellish rage for dire, instant revenge, possessed and coerced my will.

"Re-descending the stairs with frantic speed, having bethought me of the sword kept for the terror of robbers, in the counting-room, I, before reaching the place, had to pass a small back apartment, or more properly closet, which had been fitted up as an oratory for my wife, she being a Papist,—since, although his Highness, the Protector, permitted no overt persecution of those religionists, it was only on condition that their services and devotions should be privately performed.

"As I, then, was about to pass the oratory, the door of which was partly open, the sound of bitter moaning and half-stifled sobs struck upon my ear and stayed my steps. It was the voice of my wife, who, kneeling before a rudely-carved image of the Virgin Mary, was so absorbed by her prayers and grief, that she heard not my approach, and continued to bemoan her sad estate, and beseech pardon for

some dreadful crime, unwittingly committed, as I gathered, by the suppliant sinner.

"Only so far, I, standing there dumb with a new consternation and surprise, comprehended that heart-burst of sorrow and remorse; and the dominant thought at the moment in my mind cruelly interpreted my sweet, simple, pure-minded wife's emotion into a remorseful confession of the guilt—unpremeditated guilt it might be—but the guilt of an adultress!

"That impious suspicion found instant vent in furious words and imprecations, before which Julie—who at the first sound of my voice sprang to her feet—staggered back as from actual blows, presently sinking down, and for a time in wordless agony and horror, by the side of a crucifix which she clasped with both hands and piteous helplessness.

"There was no admission, no sign of guilt towards *me*, in the wild, despairing, remorseful expression of her pale, swollen face, and streaming eyes. That woe-graven, pitiful, beseeching aspect, subdued my senseless rage at once, or rather turned it against myself.

"'Julie,' I exclaimed, 'Julie, my own beloved, faithful wife, forgive the wild, the wicked words, that have passed thy husband's lips, I must have been mad, beloved, to——'

"'Touch, approach me not, Maurice Dalleyne!' she shrieked, shrinking away with horror from my proposed embrace. 'Touch me not, as you prize your immortal soul and mine! I—I am *not* your wife. A gulf wide as eternity—deep, fathomless as hell, divides us for ever—ever—ever! Christe Eleison! Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis,' she added, re-clasping the crucifix, which she had momently loosed, and again lifting up thereto her blood-shot eyes.

"It was manifest that my wife was stricken with insanity, and, rallying my faculties, I bethought me of summoning our servant woman, and with her assistance getting poor Julie to bed. I left the oratory with that view, but before the woman could be awakened my wife shot by me in the passage, gained her chamber, and instantly drawing bolt shut herself up from me, from all the world, with her remorse, her terrors, her despair,—the source of which I knew not till many days were past.

"The fears with which I was myself beset were surely

hard enough to bear without this new burden of disquietude! For a long time I implored my wife, if not to admit, at least to speak to me; the only answer to which were distressing, riving moans and sobs as if her very heart was breaking. These at last awoke the child, which forthwith contributed its shriller wailings; so perceiving further entreaty useless, I sought my bed, and fell, after a while, into unrefreshing slumber, wherein the ghastly facts and fears of the previous two hours were reproduced with fantastical variations. One notion especially pervaded the fevered phases of my dream. This was, that the chest having been left open, the cellar-man, going down into the vault, as his custom was in the early morning, would assuredly discover the terrible secret. I awoke in a cold sweat: the gray light of the morning was streaming through the casement, and there were sounds of persons moving about below. Leaping out of bed, I huddled on my clothes, and hastened to the cellar, furnishing myself on my way with a hammer and nails from the counting-room. The lid of the chest was down: I dared not lift it; and having securely fastened it by nailing, I came away, scarcely daring to look about me.

"I have read, that whom God has determined to destroy, he first deprives of reason. Full surely I must have been so doomed, forasmuch that the simplest common sense should have taught me that the proper course to take was to immediately inform the authorities of the hideous discovery I had made, with all the circumstances connected therewith. It is always true, however, that conscience, without further circumstance of God's wrath or warning, doth make cowards of us all, and the guilty knowledge that I had sought to secretly possess myself of wealth, which, though morally belonging to my wife, had not as yet legally passed to her, no doubt clouded my judgment, and cowed my spirit.

"Ay, and that detestable passion of covetousness ceased not to possess me, and after the lapse of a few days only drove me to again,—but with greater circumspection as to opportunity—search for the hidden treasure. This time I turned the chest over on one side (for my life I had not dared re-open the lid), and cut a wide opening in its bottom. There was nothing there! not a coin of the smallest value!

not a security of any kind! I was the victim of a malevolent destiny!—the veriest fool of fate!

"After this my life for many weeks was a continued and ever-increasing agony. The insolence of Saint-Ange was unbridled, rampant: his demands upon my purse ruinous, and yet, coward that I was, I dared not challenge, by a refusal, the outspoken interpretation of the devilish sneer which always accompanied and enforced those extortions. My mind, I felt, was giving way, and I must have gone mad but for the crowning blow which had the effect of at length arousing the resistance of despair. What that was, and how it come about, you, my friend, know full well:—well as you know that I am now in consequence a ruined man, who has lost wife, fortune, friends—with, at most, two admirable exceptions, and who, thus unwifed, outcast, beggared, has moreover to endure the scorn, the unreasoning, pitiless scorn of a public that believe me to be one of the vilest of malefactors—nay of murderers, though by some quirk or defect of law that crime cannot be now legally urged against me! Thus abandoned to calamity—calamity sharpened and made heavier by self-reproach, I should esteem death to be a blessing, were it not that through humble faith in Him who conquered death, and carried away Captivity, captive, I trust to be yet set free from the body of this living death. Amen!"

This "Amen" is the last word I shall directly quote from Maurice Dalleyne's "faithful narrative"—the remainder of the story, as well as some previous gaps therein, requiring to be written, if I would bring this Tradition within reasonable limits, with less prolixity of phrase and detail.

Madame Bernard and her hopeful son had been really as much surprised and perplexed by the Sieur Bernard's mysterious disappearance as Maurice Dalleyne himself. It was quite true that Saint-Ange had been skulking about Vertpré as described by the missing gentleman, and that it was he whom Dalleyne glimpsed in the copse, near *Le Gros Caillou*. True also that M. Bernard having caught sight of him, had turned back to rejoin his son-in-law. Philippe Saint-Ange, moreover, was the individual whose face Lebon did not see, who followed after the terrified old man, with what fell intent cannot be doubted, though proof thereof was

never of course, obtained. But further than that, Madame Bernard and her son knew nothing of Pierre Bernard's movements or fate since his evanishment from Vertpré. Saint-Ange had not ventured to follow his intended victim so far as to the bridge of boats; and the conviction seems to have ultimately forced itself upon the minds of the wife and step-son, that Pierre Bernard had really fallen or been pushed into the river. That he might have fallen therein, was, apart from any directly active criminal agency, far from an improbable catastrophe;—the bridge of boats having been a kind of floating *swing*-bridge; and the custom being, as evening drew on, and passengers came to be few and far between, to unmoor and swing round the centre boats or railed, floating platforms, to allow of the unrestricted passage of small vessels during the night. M. Bernard was not perhaps aware of that circumstance, and, urged on by blind, hasting Fear, might have been unawares precipitated into the water.

This hypothesis was certainly not reconcilable with Maurice Dalleyne's assertion that the bridge was closed when *he* passed, which could not have been many minutes before the Sieur Bernard attempted to cross over. But Madame Bernard and her son attached no value to that declaration,—which might, however, have been, one would suppose, easily verified or confuted,—forasmuch that they entertained a vague but real suspicion that Maurice Dalleyne had been accessory to his father-in-law's death; a suspicion confirmed in their minds by the utterly fruitless, though strict, indefatigable search for Pierre Bernard's missing hoards. What more likely, they must have reasoned, what more likely than that Bernard, alarmed by the reappearance of Saint-Ange, had determined to at once leave Vertpré for England, carrying with him easily exchangeable securities for that wealth;—and this with the knowledge of Maurice Dalleyne! To be sure, Pierre Bernard, on the evening of his disappearance, had left his companion with the apparent intention of proceeding alone to Rouen;—but that circumstance, were *all* known, might be perfectly consistent with Maurice Dalleyne's guilt.

The mouldering tenant of the chest, I must here explain, had long since ceased to be a bugbear to Madame Bernard. The death of her former servant, Annette, had relieved her

from any apprehension of being accused before Justice of having killed a man whom nobody living except her husband;—and he to a certain extent was an actor in that tragedy,—had so much as seen her with, upon the evidence of an unrecognisable skeleton! Madame Bernard had also for some years been aware that the chest was the hiding-place of her husband's money and securities; and both she and her son had been exasperated to fury at finding that the hoard which had so long dazzled and fevered their imaginations had disappeared, no one could say whither!

So far the motives and conduct of Madame Bernard and her son are coherent and comprehensible, but the reasoning upon which they based their subsequent doings is not so apparent. My own opinion is, that the two unscrupulous, but not over clear-headed conspirators had no primarily-settled scheme whereby their purpose—that of fleecing Dalleyne and his wife—might be the most readily accomplished; and that the expedients resorted to by them were the haphazard, hasty suggestions of reckless minds, which, looking only at the prize to be won, were afraid of permitting themselves to be scared therefrom by too closely scanning the feasibility of the means to be employed to that end. Nothing, indeed, in the regions of reality, whatever may be the case in those of romance—nothing, I say, is so blind, so illogical, as crime. Of this a thousand modern instances might be readily given; all more or less vividly illustrative of the old, well-worn apothegm, "Quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat." But I must not pause thus in my story.

The trump card of Madame Bernard and her son in the game of hazard to which they had committed themselves was undoubtedly Julie's marriage with Saint-Ange previous to her union with Maurice Dalleyne. Yet even that card it behoved them to play with great caution and skill, or it alone would ensure and precipitate their defeat. The truth was, that Philippe Saint-Ange, carried away by ungovernable passion, had, some months previous to his mock-marriage with Julie, secretly espoused Jeannette Lebrun, a young and handsome couturière of Rouen. I do not think Madame Bernard was aware of that momentous incident in the life of her libertine son when she assisted at the ceremonial which purported to unite him indissolubly with her step-daughter; but of course when it *did* come to

her knowledge she could not but recognise that the success of her devilish scheme was thereby terribly jeopardised. It was, she saw, imperatively necessary to guard against the possibility of Julie's marriage with Jeannette's husband from reaching the ear of the latter young woman, for although the pretty mantua-maker was quite willing to keep her and Philippe's mutual secret till her husband inherited his step-father's riches, which she was cajoled into believing would certainly be the case unless the aged and ailing old usurer should be offended by hearing that Philippe had contracted what *he* would deem a degrading mésalliance, Jeannette was not a person to permit her legitimate claims to be set aside or ignored with impunity. It might, to be sure, have been just possible to have put the young woman quietly out of the way, but Saint-Ange happened to really love her, as much at least as such a nature as his could really love any one, and that expedient was consequently not resorted to,—possibly was never seriously entertained.

This serpent in Madame Bernard's path required, therefore, wary walking; and it was this clearly-provable marriage of Saint-Ange with Mademoiselle Lebrun which prompted the satisfaction Madame Bernard expressed at hearing that Madame Coutance had bequeathed her money strictly to Julie. She had early discerned the expediency of capitulating, so to speak, with Madame Dalleyne, when the time came for decisive action, by agreeing to bind themselves to conceal her marriage with Saint-Ange, upon condition that Madame Coutance's legacy, or as much thereof as could be obtained, was made over by Julie to them, though under what decent pretext that could be done does not appear to have engaged their attention. It was only to be in the last resort that the screw would be boldly put upon Dalleyne himself; and his wife and all she had brought claimed openly from him in the name of the law, —a hazardous move no doubt, but as it would be played in England, the confederates hoped that if all went well, they should reap and secure the substantial harvest of their crime before any inkling of the matter reached the true Madame Saint-Ange, or any one of the honest, worthy people, her relatives, that were cognisant of her marriage.

As to the chest and its ghastly tenant, Madame Bernard was no doubt glad to get quietly rid of the thing; and

though she must have well comprehended Dalleyne's motive in making such a request, I am half disposed to believe that the use to which Saint-Ange afterwards turned the horrifying gift was, partly at all events, an afterthought of his own, since no one could possibly have calculated beforehand upon the infirmity of mind and will which converted such a mere scarecrow into an instrument for the subjugation of Dalleyne to their purposes. Still some misty notion of the end such a horrible possession on his part might subserve, must have been floating in the minds of Madame Bernard and her son, or why had they wrapped round, not clothed, the crumbling corpse in some of Pierre Bernard's ordinary habiliments? They might have argued that they themselves would incur no additional risk, or any risk at all indeed, and that the fact of being the depositary of such a frightful object, unwittingly, no doubt, but not provably so, might have some effect in intimidating Dalleyne into acceptance of the contemplated compromise, should Julie prove restive and intractable.

Saint-Ange, who was not deficient in natural shrewdness, quickly discerned, after his arrival at the Sign of the Star, that the vintner's mind was disturbed by the consciousness of guilt, and very adroitly, it must be confessed, he worked that knowledge or suspicion. It was his felt-dulled, pursuing footfall that the trembling Dalleyne heard, when he crept down the cellar-stairs, crowbar in hand; and it was he who, when the vintner, seized with delirium at the horrible sight which unexpectedly presented itself, lost consciousness, restored him by the stimulant of wine to his senses, and replaced the lamp upon the cask. Dalleyne's death just then would not, to use a modern phrase, have suited his book, Jeannette being in the land of the living; forasmuch that, as his vanity not too absurdly suggested, considering the decided partiality she had in former years evinced towards him, Julie would, in that event, insist upon being openly recognised as his lawful wife, which would not do at all.

He need not have disquieted himself upon that score. Madame Dalleyne's terror and distraction of mind, as the reader will have anticipated, was caused by an intimation from Saint-Ange that the declaration of the nullity of her marriage with him, said to have been obtained of the

officiating Priest by Madame Bernard, was utterly opposed to the law of the Church, if not, as he broadly hinted, an absolute forgery, and that consequently she, Julie, was his lawful wife in the sight of God and man; an intimation *softened* when he perceived the frightful effect his words produced upon the unfortunate woman, by an assurance that he was not indisposed to waive his legal rights, and to conceal from Maurice Dalleyne and the world that such rights existed, upon certain conditions to be thereafter discussed and agreed upon.

Philippe Saint-Ange was, however, of too irascible, too fervid a temperament to play a long, quiet, cautious game for the large stake at issue. Emboldened by the terror with which he inspired both the vintner and his wife, he, as before remarked by Dalleyne, passed all bounds in his domineering insolence; and, especially when in his cups, (and he was seldom out of them,) he indulged in the most audacious, though indirect, thinly-cloaked menaces. This at last became insupportable, and Dalleyne mustered up sufficient courage to refuse the so-called loan of a considerable sum demanded of him to supply his tyrant's riotous waste. This occurred on the evening previous to the opening dinner at the Rainbow coffee-house, and no doubt prompted the remark which, comprehended by no one but Dalleyne himself, caused the excitement of brain which resulted in a temporary paralysis of the vintner's faculties.

Dalleyne was freely blooded by the medical gentleman summoned to his aid; and so weak did the attack leave him, that he was forbidden to leave his bed for several days, or burden his mind with any kind of business. That enforced interval of rest and quiet was of vast service to him. Gradually his mind grew clearer, stronger. The blinding mists of a vague, formless terror ceased to darken and confuse his reasoning powers, and by the time he was sufficiently convalescent to leave his chamber, he had definitively resolved that, come what come may, he would make a clean breast of the whole affair to his friends William Furneau and James Farr, and govern himself by their counsel. This resolution was confirmed by Madame Dalleyne's conduct during his for some hours dangerous illness, and the arrival at his house of Madame Bernard. His wife, even during the first alarm, when it was thought he was

dying, had passionately refused to come near him, though her grief for his sufferings and danger was manifestly as sincere as it was violent and uncontrollable. Madame Bernard, he moreover ascertained, had at once asserted her old influence over Julie, and the twain had held several long and secret conferences with each other. What could be the power which had withheld, at such a crisis, a wife from the bedside of her husband? Could it be that she, that Julie, really believed—and the thought had often before glanced darkly through his mind—could it be that his own wife believed, as Saint-Ange had dared to insinuate, lately almost to assert, that he had stained his soul with the blood of her father? And was that crafty serpent, Madame Bernard, come over to England for the purpose of hardening, confirming her in that monstrous belief? This seemed to be the only possible solution of the mystery; and strong in his innocence, Maurice Dalleyne would confront his slanderers without further hesitation or delay.

When he went down-stairs for the first time he found upon the table a short note from Madame Bernard, curtly informing him that if he thought himself sufficiently strong to receive a communication from *l'infortunée*, whom he called his wife, of a very distressing nature, she, Madame Bernard, was commissioned by Julie for that purpose.

"L'infortunée, whom he called his wife!" If he could bear the shock of words like those, he was shock-proof! He did, with a mighty effort, helped by a draught of wine, bear up against it, and presently the checked pulse resumed its beatings, the blood, driven back to the heart, flowed again through his throbbing, burning veins. He sent to say that he would see Madame Bernard at once.

That lady soon presented herself, entering the room with a stately, determined air and manner, frigidly saluted the frightened vintner, and no doubt emboldened by his timidity, entered at once with a kind of severely judicial accent upon the business that brought her there.

The story of Julie's "unquestionably valid," if unconsummated, marriage with her son, previous to the ceremonial farce gone through between her auditor and M. Bernard's daughter, was related with quiet distinctness, and copies of the proofs of that previous marriage were placed upon the table. Of her own agency in the matter she was careful to

say nothing, leaving it to be inferred that she was, at the time of the second marriage, as ignorant that Julie was her son's wife, as M. Bernard himself.

"And now," resumed the audacious woman, addressing the thunder-stricken vintner in a tone of contemptuous candour, "And now, Maurice Dalleyne, having told you the worst, I have to say for myself, for ourselves, that we had no wish to press this unfortunate affair to extremity. Beggared as we are by the as yet unravelled mystery of my husband's disappearance, and with him his long-hoarded wealth, our sole motive, in coming here, to be quite candid with you, was to avail ourselves of Philippe's undoubted legal right to the possession of Julie, to enforce a good money-bargain, as the condition of keeping the secret; Madame Coutance's legacy, which I find has been received, enabling Julie to bribe high. She, however, will hear of no such compromise, and insists, with a turbulent earnestness which is really not very complimentary to you, of being at once and for ever separated from Maurice Dalleyne. She insists also, I am bound to add, upon being permitted to enter a convent, but whether my son will allow her to do so, or whether she will continue in the same mind in that particular, the future will decide.

"You perceive, Maurice Dalleyne," proceeded Madame Bernard, seeming to gloat over the torture inflicted by each stab of her serpent-tongue upon the still speechless vintner, —"you perceive, Maurice Dalleyne, that you are entirely in my son's power, as to money-matters, at all events, *supposing* that certain dark suspicions pointing to a frightful crime are without foundation, though it has struck me that some portion of the shuddering horror with which Julie appears to regard you may be owing to her participation in those dark and terrible suspicions. Be that, however, as it may, there can be no doubt, I repeat, that, as regards money-matters, position in the world, you are helpless, bound hand and foot, and at the absolute mercy of my son, of the man upon whom you once committed a brutal and dastardly assault, which you may remember I remarked you would live to repent, should you live to repent of nothing else. The bequests to Julie are bequests to *Philippe's wife;* and by the terms of the marriage-contract Julie's dowry is secured to her, though her husband—mark you, her husband

—is to have the usufruct thereof. Still, if matters can be quietly and speedily arranged; if, for example, the Coutance legacy is paid over to my son, and Julie leaves England with me, whether for a convent or not, as her husband may determine, within a week, we will say, from to-day, we shall not be hard with you. If, however, misled by evil counsellors you——"

The hissings of the serpent tongue suddenly ceased. Maurice Dalleyne had fainted, and after summoning assistance, Madame Bernard swept from the apartment, her nostrils dilated, her cheeks a glow, her eyes on fire with vengeful triumph.

But the end was not yet. Dalleyne soon regained his senses, and immediately, with nervous haste, lest, as he said, reflection should call up coward fear, sent for James Farr, and forthwith disburdened his mind of the perilous stuff that had so long weighed upon it. William Furneau was subsequently sent for and consulted, and the advised result was an application to the authorities of the ward to institute an inquiry into the circumstance of Dalleyne having a mouldering human corpse in his house; and a firm determination to resist the Frenchman's marital claim upon Julie and her property till it was established by due course of law.

The inquiry by the civic authorities, which was immediately gone into, excited, as may be supposed, a great commotion. Nothing, however, came of it in a legal sense. The skeleton, it was ascertained, was that of a man who had been many years dead, and could not consequently be that of M. Pierre Bernard. As to its being that of one De Méricourt, which assumption rested solely upon an improbable story, or rather an inference from an improbable story, said to have been related to Maurice Dalleyne by a non-producible and probably dead man, such a conjecture, so supported, could have no possible legal significance. And thus, as far as the authorities were concerned, the matter ended. It did not so end with the London people. A strong flood of prejudice, swelled by all kinds of absurd rumours and suspicions, set in against the unlucky vintner. Friends fell away as if he had been plague-smitten. Even William Furneau, after reading Dalleyne's detailed narrative of all the circumstances, showed symptoms of doubt in

the truth of the story, and James Farr was, amongst the faithless, faithful only found. The moral ruin of the persecuted vintner was complete.

His material downfall seemed to be as inevitable and close at hand. Madame Bernard and her son, defied and driven to bay, boldly confronted the situation, and proved beyond question the prior marriage of Julie to Saint-Ange. The infamous step-mother's agency in the affair, the cruel fraud she had practised towards Julie, came out, however, during the investigation; Madame Bernard not caring in fact to deny it. Finally, and after much negotiation, terms were agreed upon to the following substantive effect: Julie was to retire to a convent; Dalleyne retained the usufruct of the dowry he had received with her; and of course his and her child; whilst all other moneys and property, including the Coutance legacy, to which Pierre Bernard's daughter was or would be entitled, passed absolutely to her lawful husband, Philippe Saint-Ange.

The darkest hour is that before the dawn. The negotiations and the preparation of the deeds necessary to give legal effect to this compromise consumed much time, spite of the spurring impatience of the winners of the game, who were in a fever of terror lest, by some mischance, a hint of Saint-Ange's first espousals should reach the Dalleynes. Their fears were prophetic. The captain of the Pearl cutter, trading between Rouen, Havre, and London, had occasionally frequented the Sign of the Star since he brought the proprietor of the establishment to England, and being in London at the time of the inquiry instituted by the civic authorities, took naturally much interest therein, and strongly sympathised with Dalleyne, whom he believed to be a grievously-persecuted man.

Having returned to Rouen whilst negotiations between the parties were going on, the captain, finding himself one evening in presence of a large company at La Croix Rousse, favoured them with his version of the strange business, which was erroneous in this—that he asserted, as he no doubt believed, that Julie herself was eagerly desirous of exchanging her lame, and rather elderly, husband Dalleyne, for handsome, if somewhat wild, Philippe Saint-Ange, who, on his part, was influenced almost as much by love for her, as for money, in the strenuous fight he had made to regain

her society. Such a story, concerning a family domiciled within a short distance of the city of Rouen, was sure to be much talked of and commented upon there; and the upshot was, that the next day but one Madame Saint-Ange, née Lebrun, betook herself on board the Pearl, and questioned the captain as to the truth of what she had heard. He easily convinced her of that truth, and she, in return, announced herself to be the true wife of the recreant Saint-Ange. The warm-hearted seaman, as much delighted as amazed, prevailed upon her to furnish him with the legal proofs of that assertion, and, moreover, to accompany him forthwith to London by way of Calais, to avoid the delay of a long sea voyage. They reached London in excellent time, and the prize for which Madame Bernard and her son had so foully played, was suddenly snatched beyond their reach, at the very moment their hands were stretched forth to clutch it.

Are words required to picture the despair and rage of the baffled felons? the rapture, the thankfulness to God of Maurice Dalleyne, of his wife, rescued, as if by miracle, from a living tomb, and given back to her leal-hearted husband, to her beloved, darling child? Who cannot in imagination hear the sobbing strings of those two loving hearts, swept over by the delivering angel's hand?

If, when sorrows come, they come not single spies, but in battalions, so do, sometimes, joys. It was so in this instance. A few weeks after the discomfiture and flight of Madame Bernard and her son, Pierre Bernard himself turned up, looking as hale and hearty, his daughter thought more so than ever! And the explanation of his disastrous disappearance was a very simple one after all. Perceiving by the lengthened life-shadows pointing with solemn warning towards the east, to where the new day would arise out of eternity, that he was fast approaching the setting-sun, he determined, in accordance with the faith and custom of the time, to prepare himself for that new and eternal day by a pilgrimage to Rome; having first deposited his realised wealth with the eminent notarial Paris house, with which he had been in his youth connected. He had accomplished that pilgrimage, and had now come to settle in London with or near his only child for the remainder of his days.

With the foregoing sentence ends the story of the Dalleyne

family, as set forth by the scribe of Pope's Head Alley; a somewhat impotent and lame conclusion, inasmuch as it leaves us in the dark as to whether Pierre Bernard did or did not attempt to cross the Seine by the bridge of boats, and lost his fur cap in the river. And nothing is said of the after-fortunes or misfortunes of Madame Bernard, of Monsieur and Madame Saint-Ange. We know, however, from other sources, that Maurice Dalleyne rose to exalted civic dignity, and at the Restoration was graciously countenanced and esteemed by Charles II. for his loyal services during the civil wars; countenance and esteem the more readily manifested, there cannot be much doubt, for the excellent reason that wealthy Maurice Dalleyne did not want anything of the Merry Monarch of England and crowned pensioner of France.

THE DEVIL'S GAP.

"Jonathan Crouch was, it is believed, the last permanent tenant of the Devil's Gap."—*London Gazette*, 1756.

I MAY avoid disappointing a certain class of minds by at once stating that the Devil's Gap was nothing more than an archway and tenement, situate at the west end of Great Queen Street, Lincoln's-inn Fields. It was taken down in 1756, in consequence of its dilapidated condition, which dilapidated condition was, I believe, mainly attributable to the catastrophe involved in the final unravelment of the somewhat-tangled web of circumstance which I am about to place before the reader.

At the commencement of the reign of Charles the Second, of scandalous memory, and about ninety years previous to its final demolition, the Devil's Gap wore a look of dull, grimy substantiality; and the tenement which the archway supported was in part occupied by Jonathan Crouch, Attorney-at-law, whose office was lighted backward by a glazed door leading out upon a lead-covered platform, enclosed by a low wooden railing, whereon a laundress, who occupied some portion of the tenement, had the privilege of drying clothes. Whether Mr. Jonathan Crouch was tenant-in-chief or a lodger I know not, but he merely had his office at the Devil's Gap, his private residence being at No. 12, Great Queen Street. The Crouch family, at the time I am writing of, consisted only of Mr. Crouch and his son Job, a tall, lanky, taciturn youth, about two-and-twenty years of age, Mrs. Crouch having died when her only son was but a few months old.

Jonathan Crouch, though very far indeed from being a niggardly man as regarded his own personal requirements, was known to be rich; a comfortable fact which he had realized by indefatigable attention to his own business, utterly careless as to whose else—that of the nation individually or collectively—might go to the dogs. Steadily,

serenely, during Charles the First's disputes with his last Parliament; amidst the drums, tramplings, shoutings, victories, defeats, of the Civil war did Jonathan Crouch continue to weave his webs in that dingy Devil's Gap—to catch, squeeze the life-blood out of the vainly-wriggling victims, whether Royalists or Rebels, that got enmeshed therein, sublimely indifferent the while as to who won or who lost, so that *he* won; and equally content to receive the costs of a writ, whether issued in the name of his Highness the Protector, or of his Majesty the King.

No wonder that he waxed rich—pursy, too, in a double sense, he being not only, as I have hinted, a bon-vivant, but endowed with a suave, oily self-complacency, upon which other people's sorrows, griefs, reproaches, curses, made no more impression—to use quite a novel simile—than water thrown upon a duck's back, if so much.

A personal introduction will, however, enable us to form a better judgment of the man than would many descriptive words without it. I present him therefore to the reader, as he sits in that Devil's lair of his, on a fine morning in the month of May, 1666. The apartment or office is roomy, and has a remarkably neat and orderly appearance. The strongly-bound volumes on the shelves are ranged in exact order, the bundles of papers on the table are tied with red tape, which is *not*, by the way, a modern invention or discovery; and Jonathan Crouch, himself, seated at the table, is quite a picture of spotless neatness and rotund respectability. His dress, a dark, claret-coloured velvet, rich, but not expressed in fancy, his skull-cap of the same material, are without spot or stain; how carefully trimmed, too, is the man's dark brown beard, and how well its fringe sets off the bright jolly face—a face just now joyously lit up by two keen gray eyes, which seem to sparkle with unusual mirth—mirth that shakes the attorney's fat sides, and overflows his lips in a rich chuckle, which he cares not to restrain, for no one is within sight or hearing except Job, whose place is on the other side of the lofty leather screen stretched across the further corner of the apartment.

What can be the meaning of that exuberant mirth; and, above all, what is Jonathan Crouch about—what is he *doing* just now? Queries these which have evidently excited the curiosity of one who must be thoroughly familiar with the

attorney's moods of mind, as witness the pale, inquisitive face which raises itself from time to time above the high folding screen, cranes forward to make out, if possible, what is going on, and at the slightest movement of the attorney in that direction pops down again out of sight in a twinkling.

It is easy enough to see what Jonathan Crouch is doing, though hard to comprehend its meaning. There is a lighted lamp upon the table. Immediately before him are a woman's dimity pocket, a gauze handkerchief striped blue round the edges, a number of letters, some of which are partially burnt, and a burnt piece of parchment, closely written upon, about the size of one's hand, and evidently the remnant of a much larger piece. In his hand Jonathan Crouch holds the last issued number of the *London Gazette*, the size of which is about twelve inches by nine, and reads therefrom, for perhaps the twentieth time, the following advertisement.

"Dropt, on Friday last, at about three o'clock in the afternoon, a wrought dimity pocket, wherein were two guineas and fourteen shillings and sixpence in silver, wrapped in a gauze handkerchief, strip'd round the edges with blue; also several letters and other documents—seen to be taken up by a man in a blue livery, with brass buttons. If he will bring it to Jonathan Crouch, Gentleman, Attorney-at-law, No. 12, Great Queen Street, Lincoln's-inn Fields, he shall have three guineas reward, and keep the money he found, as the papers, which are of use only to the owner, are chiefly wanted. The gentleman who saw the pocket taken up is very positive he will know the man again if he does but see him."

After reading this advertisement for, I say, perhaps the twentieth time, Jonathan Crouch compares the fragment of thickly-scribed parchment, with a complete skin of the same material, as thickly written upon; chuckles as he does so with irrepressible glee; rubs his fat hands; then, as if it occurs to him that something is still wanting to be done, that the device he is engaged upon might be a trifle bettered, he holds the fragment of parchment to the lamp-flame, and burns it away slightly more here and there.

It is certainly not surprising that that pale, spectre-face, halo'd with flaming red hair, should peer anxiously

above the screen every other minute in vain endeavour to decipher the meaning of such strange vagaries! Those vagaries are, however, suddenly brought to an end. A step is heard ascending the stairs, and at the sound Jonathan Crouch shuffles the uninjured skin of parchment into a drawer, extinguishes the lamp, carries it to a side table; then resumes his seat, schools his features into an expression of decorous gravity, and is ready to say in an indifferent business-tone, in answer to a tap at the office door—"Come in, if you please."

"I hoped it might be you," adds the attorney respectfully, addressing the new comer, a goodish-looking man—showily dressed in a blue and gold frock—who looks as if he was but partially recovered from last night's debauch. "Things have taken a lucky turn. Please be seated."

A long anxious conference ensues between Jonathan Crouch and his visitor, during which the pale face of Job frequently re-appears above the screen, its owner evidently hearkening with both his ears to the low-toned dialogue, the purport of which he but dimly comprehended, and which dialogue must, moreover, be postponed in these pages till other incidents in the life of Jonathan Crouch have been placed before the reader, who would else fail to seize its audacious cunning and significance.

The earliest of those incidents takes us back some seven-and-twenty years, to a brilliant Sabbath morning in spring, when Jonathan Crouch was in the heyday of youthful manhood, and the leprosy of a sensuous selfishness had not yet wholly overgrown and perverted the inner spiritual life by which he became a living soul. He had arrived from London at his birth-place, the village of Godalming, Surrey, upon a visit which he knew would have life-long consequences, both to himself and a young woman of the name of Charlotte Morrison, with whom he had "kept company" from boyhood, and had long since engaged to marry, as soon as he should have achieved a position in the world sufficiently assured to warrant such a step.

The circumstances were shortly these. Crouch was the only son of a small farmer, who had died insolvent, or nearly so, some eight years before, leaving to Jonathan the equity of redemption of a farm, so heavily encumbered that its sale, together with the stock thereon, little more than

sufficed to pay the father's debts. The mortgagee who became the purchaser, was Stephen Ryland, a London lawyer, who observing, during his business-interviews with young Crouch, that he was a sharp-witted, active youth, as well as a capital penman, offered to take him into his office, with a promise that if he proved diligent and otherwise capable he, Stephen Ryland, would help him, in the fulness of time, to the status and dignity of an attorney-at-law. Jonathan Crouch *having* approved himself to be diligent and capable to a high degree, Ryland not only redeemed that promise, but had lately offered his zealous and efficient clerk a share in the business carried on at the Devil's Gap, and the hand of Sarah Ryland, his niece, a maiden of mature age, and unlovely, to use a mild epithet, in figure, face, and temper.

Jonathan Crouch, instead of forthwith closing with so tempting an offer, temporised and obtained a few days' delay before giving a decisive answer in so momentous a matter. Eager as he was in the race after riches, he could not readily resign himself to abandon Charlotte Morrison for Sarah Ryland. Charlotte was the daughter of a wheelwright in Godalming, reputed to be a man of some substance, she herself being not only "very comely, but blessed with a quiet mind and pleasant manners," and had besides received a good education, for the time and her degree in the social scale. She was just, too, in the fresh dawn and roseate flush of youth, four or five years younger than Jonathan Crouch himself, whilst Sarah Ryland was nearly double that number of years his senior. So far, therefore, as the two maidens were concerned, the exchange was altogether to the disadvantage of Crouch. True, an immediate partnership in, and eventual succession to, the old lawyer's practice and property weighed heavily against mere comeliness of person, amiability of disposition, and pleasant manners; but, for all that, Jonathan Crouch determined to see Charlotte Morrison once more before finally making up his mind; and especially he resolved to come to a distinct understanding with her father as to the sum of money he was disposed to pay down for her dowry. Should that be of an amount that would enable Jonathan Crouch to commence business for himself with the certainty of being able to wait till his own keen wits and restless energy had

secured a lucrative practice, he would reject old Ryland's offer; if not, why inclination must yield to interest, and he would take Sarah Ryland to wife.

This, then, was Jonathan Crouch's state of mind on the Sunday morning in the spring of 1639, when he reached Godalming, and presented himself at John Morrison's house. He had sent no intimation of his proposed visit, and was not, therefore, surprised to find that Charlotte was away at Guildford, on a visit to a relative. He was, upon reflection, rather glad it was so. If John Morrison, upon being frankly questioned as to the portion he could give his daughter, did not come up to the figure which he, Crouch, had mentally settled to be the lowest he could prudently accept, his peremptory repudiation of the long-standing engagement with Charlotte would not be hindered or embarrassed by her presence.

Now John Morrison was not at all anxious to have Jonathan Crouch for a son-in-law. Very far, indeed, from being so. Whether he had so early fathomed the cold, stony depths which gleamed through the young man's keen, hard eyes, or that he believed Charlotte's comeliness and worth would ensure a higher price in the matrimonial lottery, I cannot say, but no sooner did his visitor propound the question to solve which he had come to Godalming, than the wheelwright replied with blunt directness that Charlotte Morrison would not have sixpence till her father's death, and then whatever he might have to leave would be strictly settled upon herself. Perceiving that John Morrison was thoroughly in earnest, Crouch immediately declared that in that case his engagement with Charlotte was at an end, an announcement received by the damsel's father with a grim smile of satisfaction, which he took no pains to conceal. An hour afterwards Crouch left Godalming, on his return to London, having first written and confided to sure hands a letter to Charlotte, in which, simulating the anguish of a despairing lover, he threw "the fault, the sin, the crime of sundering two attached youthful lives," upon the broad shoulders of John Morrison.

Although it is clear, from circumstances in after years, that Charlotte Morrison was completely imposed upon by Crouch's specious cant, it is equally certain that his desertion did not greatly affect her peace of mind, inasmuch

as the village beauty was married, within a few weeks of the union of Sarah Ryland with the young attorney, to Oliver Mainwaring, the second son of Richard Mainwaring, widower, and a merchant of London city, trading largely with the American Plantations. Mr. Mainwaring was grievously offended by the match, which appears to have been very suddenly brought about, and remained, to the day of his death, constant in his refusal to have any personal intercourse with his son, or that son's wife. He, however, allowed the rash pair a sufficient, though modest, maintenance, and they ultimately settled at Godalming. In other respects the marriage was an unfortunate one. Four children died in early youth; the fifth and last—a girl, thought to surpass her mother in personal comeliness—was saved with great difficulty. Then the father, weighed down and soured in mind and temper by the death of his children, the fast-failing health of his wife, straitened means, and despair of recovering his former position in society, gradually abandoned himself to habits of low dissipation, which hurried him to his grave at the age of forty-eight, and when his only surviving child, Caroline, had barely reached her nineteenth year. John Morrison died many years previously in but poor circumstances, the misconduct of a son having consumed his means and shortened his days. Sad close to a life, of which the noon had been cheered and brightened by, perhaps, extravagant joy and pride in the sweet promise of his blooming child!

The last arrow from the quiver of calamity destined for the unfortunate family was not even yet sped. The widow, having written to her father-in-law soliciting an advance of her late husband's stipend, received in reply a brief intimation from Richard Mainwaring, the eldest son, to the effect that his father had been for some months absent in America, and it being probable that the allowance made to his son Oliver would be discontinued, or, at all events much diminished, nothing could be done in the matter, and certainly no money could be advanced till Mainwaring senior's return to England. This cruel announcement snapped the last frail ligature which bound the unhappy woman to life, and she was carried to the grave within a few weeks of her husband's death.

Now Jonathan Crouch, who, as heir to Stephen Ryland,

had recovered possession of the paternal farm, going frequently to Godalming upon business connected with that property, was, consequently, well informed of the sad fortunes of the Mainwaring family, and had several times been heard to express much concern thereat. The sincerity and strength of the attorney's sympathy Mrs. Mainwaring rated very highly, it being, as I have before intimated, her unshaken opinion, that the rupture of their boy-and-girl engagement had been solely attributable to her father's dislike of Jonathan Crouch, and not at all to that person's fickleness or cupidity.

Thoroughly convinced, therefore, of the willingness of the astute lawyer to serve her, she had often, during her last illness, bethought herself of applying to him for advice in the settlement of her affairs, and especially to charge him with the interests of her daughter Caroline. It was not, however, till the fatal and speedy termination of that illness was authoritatively announced that she could bring herself to do so.

A message was then forwarded to London, to which Mr. Jonathan Crouch promptly responded in person. He could not but have been deeply shocked by the premature and melancholy death of one whom he had wooed, and, as far as her inclination was concerned, had won, in the long-vanished season of hope and youth; and his willingness to accept the legal guardianship of Caroline Morrison, and in all things to watch over and protect her interests was warmly, and, no doubt at the moment, sincerely expressed. The requisite instrument or deed was forthwith drawn up and signed, and all papers left by Oliver Mainwaring were at once placed in the friendly attorney's hands.

Upon looking over those papers a few days after Mrs. Mainwaring's funeral, Jonathan Crouch found a will regularly attested, by which Oliver Mainwaring had bequeathed all the real and personal property he might die possessed of to his wife, with succession to their daughter Caroline.

Hardly worth while, thought Crouch, for a man not possessed of a rod of land, or a pound sterling in personals, to incur the cost of such an instrument. He, nevertheless, as a matter of business, mentioned the existence of the will in a letter he addressed to Richard Mainwaring, apprizing him of the death of his sister-in-

law, and the evil case, in a pecuniary sense, which the daughter Caroline would, he feared, find herself in when the affairs of her late parents came to be wound up. This Richard Mainwaring, whom Crouch knew well, both by person and reputation, had, during the last two or three years, abandoned himself to the most riotous excesses, emulating and, if that were possible, exaggerating in his conduct the follies and vices of a corrupt court, and court-aping aristocracy. Those excesses had greatly incensed his father, who had more than once been heard to declare that he might yet one day disinherit his eldest son in favour of the less-offending younger brother — a threat which *now* Richard Mainwaring might snap his fingers at.

About a month after the delivery of the letter by Crouch, Richard Mainwaring called at the Devil's Gap, and requested a private interview with the attorney. It did not for a moment escape the vulpine scrutiny of that gentleman that his visitor was greatly agitated — an agitation rendered more significant by his manifest efforts to appear careless and indifferent.

Mr. Richard Mainwaring had called to inquire after the welfare of his niece Caroline, and convey to her, through Mr. Crouch, a money present. Was she quite well?

Caroline Mainwaring was in fine health when the attorney last saw her; about ten days previously.

Richard Mainwaring was happy to hear that. By the bye did not Mr. Crouch mention in his letter something about a will which had been left by his deceased brother?

Most likely he did. There certainly was such a document.

Could Mr. Crouch favour him with a sight of that will?

Certainly he could; though not at the moment. If he had brought it from Godalming, which he was not quite sure of, as he had attached no real importance to the last will and testament of a person who had nothing to bequeath, it was somewhere amongst his, the attorney's, papers; and he would, at the earliest opportunity, cause it to be searched for.

Richard Mainwaring agreed that the testament could have no legal value; still, if there was any bequest which he could prudently, from respect to his brother's memory, carry into effect, he should be happy to do so.

Jonathan Crouch rejoined, that such an intention greatly honoured Mr. Richard Mainwaring; manifesting, as it did, a generous and feeling heart. The attorney repeated, that he would look over his papers, and if he had not the will in his actual possession would obtain it forthwith, and forward his visitor a copy without delay.

Mr. Richard Mainwaring would rather peruse the original. It had not, he supposed, been executed in duplicate.

Certainly not: Mr. Crouch was quite certain upon that point. Since, then, Mr. Richard Mainwaring wished to peruse the original will—upon which he might remark, in passing, he had not the slightest intention of taking out probate—he would, perhaps, call at the office on the morrow, at any hour most convenient to him.

Mr. R. Mainwaring would do so at about noon: with that understanding he took leave, his mental perturbation not in the least calmed by the foregoing colloquy with Jonathan Crouch.

The excitement which the attorney had with difficulty concealed whilst Richard Mainwaring was present, strikingly revealed itself the instant he found himself alone; the silent drudge behind the screen, whose tongue, conscience, soul, he believed to be at his own absolute disposal, not being recked of. His keen eyes sparkled with arrowy light, and his hands trembled with eagerness as he searched out the will, and ran over its contents. That done, the document was carefully put away, and Jonathan Crouch himself was out of the place and off in the direction of the City without loss of time. He already scented the quarry from afar.

After an absence of some four hours Jonathan Crouch returned to the Devil's Gap in a state of even greater excitement than when he left. He had obtained information, the use to be made of which had but as yet confusedly dawned upon his eager, subtle brain. That intelligence, in its chief items, may be shortly written down.

Mainwaring senior was dead; had died at Baltimore, Maryland, after a brief illness, *about a month previous to the death of his son Oliver*, to whom, by a will executed in triplicate, and forwarded separately to trustworthy friends in England, he, repenting of the harshness with which he

had resented a marriage that, cheerfully recognised, might have proved a blessing to the family, devised the whole of his real property—the net rental of which was something like three thousand per annum. The elder brother, Richard, who had forfeited his father's favour by persistently yielding himself up to shameful debaucheries, was to have one moiety of the personals only; though "after that should be squandered, as it assuredly soon would be," Oliver was enjoined to settle upon his brother a sufficient annuity to save him from absolute want. This will would be forthwith proved by the executors named therein, and no doubt could be entertained that Caroline Mainwaring, by virtue of her father's will, was a wealthy heiress.

Astute and audacious in the pursuit of riches as Jonathan Crouch may have been, the complicated web of wiles by which he proposed to enmesh and blindfold, whilst subduing to his purposes, both Richard Mainwaring and the unconscious heiress, must have severely tasked even his powers of inventive fraud. It was, however, fully elaborated in all its details when Richard Mainwaring called a second time at the Devil's Gap.

"Are we quite alone, Mr. Crouch?" asked Mr. Mainwaring.

"That is the scratch of my son's pen which you hear behind the screen," replied the attorney, with a suave calmness, in strong contrast with the fevered features, restless glance, and twitching lips of the new comer. "There is nothing relating to the matter concerning which you inquired of me yesterday that *he* may not hear, I presume?"

"We must be strictly private, Mr. Crouch," said Mainwaring; "strictly so."

Jonathan Crouch bowed smiling acquiescence, and ordered Job to leave the office. He was immediately obeyed, as Richard Mainwaring took care to assure himself, by stepping towards, and peering over, the top of the screen.

Returning to the seat placed for him by the attorney, he said, "Excuse me, Mr. Crouch, but it is imperative that the conference we are about to enter upon should be private and confidential; rigorously *confidential*. Is that understood?"

"Clearly understood: private and confidential; *rigorously* confidential. Go on, Mr. Mainwaring."

"Have you found the will I inquired for yesterday?" asked Richard Mainwaring.

"I find that I must have left it at Godalming," said the attorney; "and I have forwarded a note to your niece, Caroline Mainwaring, requesting her to send me *all* her late father's papers by the bearer. I shall be sure, therefore, to have it in my possession before many hours have passed."

"My niece has implicit confidence in you, I believe?" asked Mainwaring.

"Implicit confidence, I am most happy to say. Her excellent mother, when dying, enjoined her to place the fullest trust in me: she does so; and it is hardly necessary to add, that that solemn trust will be conscientiously fulfilled," added Jonathan Crouch, replying to the searching look fixed upon him, with a placid honesty of expression which seemed to rebuke and silence the proposal trembling upon his visitor's lips. Doubt of the attorney's corruptibility disturbed, however, but for a few moments Richard Mainwaring's confident calculation. He had been cognizant of too many illustrations of conscientious fulfilments of solemn trusts, as understood by Mr. Jonathan Crouch, for that.

"It will save time and many words," said Richard Mainwaring, "if I come boldly at once to the *real* business which has brought me here. You were in the City yesterday, Mr. Crouch, and had an interview with Mr. Travers, one of the executors named in a will executed by my father at Baltimore, Maryland, America."

"I *was* in the City yesterday," blandly echoed Mr. Crouch. "I *had* an interview with Mr. Travers, one of the executors named in a will made by your father at Baltimore, in the State of Maryland, America. Which will," continued the attorney, "you have omitted to add, was signed two days prior to your lamented father's decease; which event took place—and this you are no doubt aware is the great fact in the case — one month before your brother Oliver died. Allow me to add, that I think you, Mr. Richard Manwaring, have great reason to complain of

your worthy father's will; very great reason to complain, which might avail you were reason a good plea in law," added Jonathan Crouch, with a slight sneer.

"You did not mention to Mr. Travers that my *brother* had left a will?" observed Richard Mainwaring.

"Well, I think I did *not* mention that circumstance to Mr. Travers. It was hardly worth while, you know," added the attorney, with a glimmer of the eye, which might mean something, nothing, anything.

"I *know* you did not mention my brother's will to Mr. Travers," said Richard Mainwaring; "and from that circumstance I gather that we shall presently come to a right understanding with each other."

"I sincerely hope we may come to a *right* understanding, Mr. Mainwaring. Pray go on, sir."

"I take the law of the case to be this," said Mainwaring, "that had my brother died intestate, leaving issue a daughter only, I, as the nearest heir-male, would inherit the freehold property, which it seems Oliver, having survived my father about a month, died legally seised and possessed of. Had that been so—I mean, that were no will of Oliver's to be found, Caroline would be entitled to a moiety of the personals only."

"That is a sound exposition," said Jonathan Crouch; "I will read you a case in point from Coke, which I was looking over when you came in. This——"

"Curse Coke and his case!" interrupted Richard Mainwaring, with passion. "It is mere slavering folly to dodge and beat about the bush in this way. In so many words, what share of the booty will Mr. Attorney Crouch require to destroy the will which either is now, or presently will be, in his uncontrolled possession—a will, the very existence of which, I understood him to say, Caroline Mainwaring is ignorant of?"

With the exception of a smile of quiet derision, that for a moment glinted across the attorney's face, and as instantly vanished, Jonathan Crouch evinced not the slightest emotion or surprise at the audacious proposition thus suddenly hurled at him as it were.

"You expected some proposal of the kind," continued Richard Mainwaring; "and now, briefly, your answer!"

"I *did* expect some proposal of the kind from you, Mr. Richard Mainwaring," said the attorney. "In sooth, my experience of mankind has been so large and varied, that I can pretty well guess beforehand what course of action, in a given condition of things, an individual known to me personally would be likely to pursue. Besides, there can be no question that you, sir, have been grossly wronged, and would naturally, therefore, desire to resort to such means of redress as may present themselves. Caroline Mainwaring is *not* aware that a will was found amongst her father's papers; for so slight a value did I attach to the document, that I have never mentioned it to the dear girl. It might have excited vague hopes which, till yesterday, I had not the faintest hope would ever be realised," added Jonathan Crouch, with smiling, steadfast inquisition of the flushed and changing countenance of his auditor; "and which, even now, if natural equity could take the place of strict law, would only partially—very partially, in a comparative sense—be accomplished."

"Some accursed deceit or devilry lurks, I am pretty sure, under those smooth words, Mr. Crouch," angrily exclaimed Mainwaring. "Curse it all, can't you speak out plainly to the point, and in plain words! How much shall I give to see this infernal will destroyed in my presence—in my presence; please to mark that?"

"Since you are so absolute," retorted the attorney, "be pleased to make a plain proposition yourself."

"The moiety of the personals devised to me."

"Ah! And that would be——?"

"Five thousand pounds, or thereabout."

"Five thousand pounds, or thereabout; not an illiberal offer, upon my word. And now, Mr. Mainwaring, be pleased to listen to *my* terms. I have decided that if, to serve you, I consent to act extra-legally, as one may say in this matter, I must not forget what is fairly due to my ward as well as to myself. I accept the five thousand or thereabout for my own agency in the affair, to be secured by bond; and you must further bind yourself, by a like instrument, to give your niece Caroline a perpetual rent-charge of one thousand pounds per annum upon the landed property devised to her father by the will of Main-

waring senior. That is, I think, an equitable scheme, and fairly redresses the testamentary wrong, of which, I repeat, you have just reason to complain."

It is needless to further pursue this conversation. It will suffice to state that after the subsidence of a storm of vengeful rage on the part of Richard Mainwaring, at what he was pleased to term the infamously extortionate terms enforced upon him, the affair was finally settled upon the basis laid down by Jonathan Crouch. On the morrow the bonds were to be executed and the will was to be burned.

Upon Richard Mainwaring presenting himself at the "Devil's Gap" at the specified hour, he found the attorney in a state of great consternation. His messenger had dropt the parcel containing the papers that had been sent for in the street! They had been kept, it seemed, in a dimity pocket, wrapped up in a gauze handkerchief, and Caroline Mainwaring had given the pocket and its contents to the attorney's envoy, with a message that she was not aware of the existence of any other papers than those contained therein.

And these were lost, dropt in the street! Jonathan Crouch was half beside himself, with angry vexation, and had at once discharged the booby by whose criminal carelessness the mishap had occurred. To cry or curse would not, however, mend the matter. He had already sent an advertisement for insertion in the forthcoming number of the *London Gazette;* a copy of which he read to terribly wroth Richard Mainwaring, who, moreover, was evidently impressed with a strong notion that he was being in some way duped by the crafty, unscrupulous attorney.

"Should it prove so!" he exclaimed, with gnashing rage, "should it, I say, turn out, Master Crouch, that you are playing traitor with me, I will have your life in revenge, if I hang for it. By the Eternal God I will!"

The fierce sincerity of the threat shook for a moment the attorney's nerves, and his shining face paled perceptibly. Perceiving this, Richard Mainwaring iterated the menace with yet fiercer vehemence. The repetition seemed to weaken its first effect, and Crouch coldly replied, that *if* he had intended, or to speak frankly, if it were his interest "to play traitor," Mr. Richard Mainwaring's bluster would not scare him from his purpose.

Mainwaring soon cooled down; the cunning circumstantiality of the alleged loss helping vastly to restore his confidence in "the honour amongst thieves," reliability of his astute confederate; and a semblance of amity was restored between the two worthies.

We now return to the scene at the "Devil's Gap," when, on the table before Jonathan Crouch, were a dimity pocket, a gauze handkerchief, a fragment of burnt parchment closely written upon, a number of letters, &c.—and Job Crouch was craning over the screen in curious wonder at his respected father's doings. Richard Mainwaring, it will be necessary to state, was this time so absorbed by the business immediately in hand, that he forgot to assure himself that he had no other auditor than the attorney himself.

"The intention of the finders"—remarked Crouch, after running over some essential details—"the intention of the rascally finders was, no doubt, to keep the money, and, to avoid a chance of detection, burn the papers. My advertisement has, therefore, been barely in time to furnish me with the means of proving to you, Mr. Mainwaring, that a will *was* executed by your brother Oliver, and is destroyed, or nearly so. You can now sign and seal the bonds; and the affair for the present will be concluded."

"That a will executed by my brother Oliver is destroyed, or nearly so," rejoined Mainwaring. "True; there can be no doubt of that, and it strikes me that I am thereby placed in a position to insist upon less onerous terms than those you would have imposed upon me, Mr. Jonathan Crouch."

"Not a bit of it, Mr. Richard Mainwaring. Permit me to observe, that in this instance your law is strangely at fault. This fragment, proving the destruction, by accident, of the will, secondary evidence of its contents will be admitted as of course; which secondary evidence we have in abundance. For example, this original draft of the will, scarcely you observe at all injured,—fortified by my parole evidence, and that of the attesting witnesses, whose names and places of abode I have not forgotten, that the will substantially corresponded with the said draft, would amply suffice; your signature and seal *must* therefore be attached to these bonds before this precious piece of parchment and draft can be destroyed."

"The draft is to be burned at once!"

"That is of the essence of the arrangement."

"Be it so, then, in the devil's name. Let us finish at once."

"The fellow," thoughtfully mused Jonathan Crouch, as Richard Mainwaring's sounding steps descended the stairs, "the fellow evidently believes that he still has me on the hip—that I shall never dare to enforce these bonds. I saw that profound reflection dance in his eyes, and pucker his lips half a dozen times. A very clever fellow is Richard Mainwaring, in his own conceit. And yet, forsooth, if I 'play traitor,' he will slay me! Well, threatened men live long;—besides, there are means—*Tut*, I am getting womanish. Job," added the attorney in a sharp, loud voice, "Job, a word with thee."

A fold of the screen moved noiselessly back as if running upon viewless wheels, and Job, coming softly forward, awaited in submissive silence his father's further commands.

A young man of a remarkable, and, so to speak, contradictory, physiognomy was Job Crouch. The face one might call handsome; the forehead denoted intellect, and the bright penetrating brown eyes would have given fitting expression to a kind and manly soul. But the Maker's work had been smirched, defiled by evil instincts generated in the foul moral atmosphere which he had breathed from childhood upwards; and thus it was that the mind-germs, which, under healthy culture, might have developed into wisdom, sincerity, and kindliness, had been depraved into cunning — false-seeming — servility! To his father Job was the most submissive of slaves,—an automatic instrument, upon which the strong will of Jonathan Crouch played what tune he pleased. It might therefore be that the son's moral shames were exaggerated to the observer by anxiety to suppress all indications of feeling that would incur the father's displeasure or ridicule. For the rest the young man was a pattern of out-of-door decorum; had never spent a carolus or half a one in dissipation or pleasure, and was about as much a stranger to the world outside attorneys' offices and courts of law, as the English of the present day are of the world of China.

"Of course," said Jonathan Crouch, presently addressing

his son — "Of course, thou understandest all about the transaction I have concluded with the fiery numskull that has just left the office?"

"Tolerably well now," answered Job; "though I was sorely puzzled at first."

"Thou art aware that my ward Caroline Mainwaring is the legal possessor of three thousand pounds a year, besides a goodly sum in personals, by virtue of the will now safely locked up in this office."

"To be sure, to be sure. You are very clever, father, wonderfully clever!"

"But that which thou hast yet to learn, Job, is the prime item of all. This:—that I intend thee to marry Caroline Mainwaring and her three thousand pounds per annum."

"Me? Eh! What!" wildly exclaimed Job, flushing to a red heat. "You intend that I shall marry your ward and three thousand a year! Surely I must be crazed or dreaming. Oh, but you are jesting," he added, submissively. "A capital jest, too, I declare!"

"I am quite serious, Job. Thou shalt go at once to Plews, the tailor, and order him to have ready for thee by Saturday eve one of his handsome suits of apparel, and of the newest fashion. Dost hear?"

"Yes,—that is, I almost doubt if I do correctly."

"And on Sunday, Job, thou shalt go with me to pay a first visit to thy future wife; one of the most beauteous maidens in all Surrey."

"Saints and angels!"

"I having first prepared for thy friendly reception, of course. Thou dost not object to marry a charming girl and three thousand a year?"

"Object! Not I, indeed. But, father, are you sure that a charming girl with three thousand a year, and pretty personals, will marry *me?*"

"Not if she knew herself to be the possessor of three thousand, or even of three hundred a year! It isn't likely; notwithstanding thou art by no means an ill-favoured youth—very far from that, although it would certainly have been an improvement, if the hue of thy hair were that of those linen cheeks instead. Marry, they are red enough now, though I had not believed thee to be given to blushing over much."

"I must have blood in my veins like other young men, I suppose," timidly suggested Job, as if the fact might be doubtful.

"No doubt, Job—no doubt. I need hardly tell thee, that it is of the essence of the device with which I have hooked Richard Mainwaring, to keep his niece ignorant till she is legally Mistress Job Crouch, that she inherits under a will, presumed to be burned by said Richard Mainwaring?"

"I see that plainly, father. Clever, wonderfully clever!" added Job, rubbing his hands gleefully.

"It is always, however, well to have two strings to one's bow, and should the damsel prove refractory, I shall be able to make another and better bargain with Master Mainwaring, and have the consideration money paid down too before the real will shall be destroyed."

"Clever — amazing clever — but bold, venturesome — audacious even, I should say, if I might take the liberty to use such a word."

"Not so much so, Job, as it may seem at the first blush. The straitened circumstances which embittered, and in fact shortened, the lives of her parents have impressed Caroline Mainwaring with a shuddering dread of poverty; a very natural sentiment which I shall sharpen to-morrow by demonstrating to her that she has not a penny in the world to call her own. That impression well graven on her mind, I shall hint to her that there is a bright side to the gloomy picture, and, proceeding in cautious, delicate, wind-about phrase, explain, that my only son has seen her long since, and often when she knew it not; that I know perfectly well, though he has not yet avowed it in words, that he is hopelessly enthralled by her personal graces, and that I, in a principal degree moved thereto by a tender respect for the memory of her departed mother, will not withhold my consent to her union with thee, if hers be frankly accorded."

"God! It takes one's breath away!" ejaculated Job. "Clever though, audacious clever."

"This is not all, Job," continued Jonathan Crouch with a grave self-complacency, such as a man might manifest who was propounding a grand philanthropic scheme for the general benefit of the human race. "In the event of a

silly girlish fancy,—all girls have silly fancies, and that of Caroline Mainwaring's is, I have heard, one Charles Barton, the thriftless son of a yeoman, who was beggared by the great Rebellion,—in the event, I say, of such a silly fancy proving an obstacle to our success, we must appeal to her filial piety, which is very strongly marked, to her respect for the dying behests of her mother."

"Saints—but this passes!—Yet, how, father?"

"In this wise. I have several letters here written by her mother. Thy faculty, Job, of imitating writing passes, as thou sayest. Well, I shall presently draft a paper which thou must heedfully copy in the mother's hand, purporting to be a solemn injunction of the late Mrs. Mainwaring, addressed to Caroline, enjoining, adjuring her not to wreck her life, as her mother did hers, upon the rock of poverty; but to accept the offer, the most generous offer, which she knew would be made to her of the hand of Mr. Job Crouch, and further, to conform herself as to the *time* when the marriage shall take place, and other essential matters connected therewith to the wishes of Mr. Jonathan Crouch, her, Mrs. Mainwaring's, truest friend. After what flourish this must be done," added the attorney—"and it will require much skill and delicacy of touch in the composition—I shall consider presently."

"Saints! Judges!" exclaimed bewildered Job. "How my head spins round! Nevertheless, three thousand a year of real estate, and pretty personals——"

"Is a prize!" interrupted Crouch senior, "which in this eager, pushing world can only be surely won with loaded dice. And now be off to the tailor's."

The Devil's Gap shall be untenanted, voiceless, for us, good reader, till Tuesday morning in the following week. On the intervening Sunday, Jonathan and Job Crouch had spent the greater part of the day with Caroline Mainwaring; the next afternoon the attorney had returned to Godalming for the purpose of opening negotiations in form, and armed with a fervent protestation of changeless love dictated by himself, but penned and subscribed by Job. It excused the hastiness, and therefore seeming impropriety of such a declaration, under the plea that Mr. Jonathan Crouch was obliged to almost immediately undertake a voyage to the New World, and, sensible of the great perils attendant

thereon, was desirous of finally settling all concerns of earth that lay near his heart, before encountering them. Mr. Jonathan Crouch did not return from Godalming on that evening, and was now, Tuesday morning, momently expected at the Devil's Gap by his son Job.

Hardly the same Job whom we last parted with as he left the office to order gallant apparel of Plews, the tailor! You cannot look in his face for a moment without perceiving that a great change has come over him. There is a light in his eye, a fitful flush upon his varying cheek, not seen before, whilst ever and anon a gloomy expression shoots athwart his face, like a dark thunder cloud passing over and blotting out an expanse of sunshine—which seems made up of grief, remorse, despair! Yet whether in light or gloom, the young man's aspect appears to more truly image his soul as God created—not as circumstance and habit had stained, defaced it. The true explanation of the vast change perceptible in Job Crouch is that a pure, genuine, ardent love for Caroline Mainwaring has been kindled at his heart, the fires of which gleam through and wither up the noisome growth of debased instincts that had overgrown and perverted his better nature.

He is in his accustomed seat: there is a partly-finished writing before him, and a pen in his hand. But he sees not the paper, does not feel the pen: he is far away down there in Godalming, basking in the bright presence of Caroline Mainwaring: the next moment, hurled back upon himself, as it were, by conscience, he contemplates, with shuddering introspection, his own utter unworthiness to mate himself with a being so gentle, holy, beautiful!

"It would be profanation, blasphemy!" he presently starts up, and cries aloud; "a deed to call down God's instant vengeance upon me and mine! And yet she was very kind, seemed even, or my fancy mocked me, to take pleasure in encouraging me to cast off the boyish bashfulness, as she deemed it, which tied my tongue; whereas it was but shame, loathing of myself. Mirrored in her fair purity and truth, how vile, how black I showed! Yet I am not, I think, irrecoverably lost. Caroline would redeem my soul from perdition; and it is just possible that——. I need not take her money. No, not even for her love would I incur that infamy. Its touch would sear my hand. No—

no—no——. Ha! you are returned, sir. I did not hear your step. Well, Caroline Mainwaring, of course, refuses to unite herself with the foul leper that has dared insult her with a request so gross, so infamous?"

Jonathan Crouch did not answer for some moments. He scarcely recognised his son—his son's tone and words, that is to say, addressed to *him*. He did not, however, give vent to the angry reply which arose naturally to his lips. It would, he saw, be folly to do so; and, with ready adaptation to circumstances, he said, jocosely,—

"Thou hast, I perceive, been studying heroics this morning, Job; but the quotation I have been favoured with does not, I must inform thee, happen to be an appropriate one. Caroline Mainwaring accepts—aye, gratefully accepts—the offer of thy hand in marriage."

"Do not mock me, father; do not, for the love of Heaven."

"I mock thee not, fond boy, unless the truth mocks thee. Caroline Mainwaring, I say, accepts thy hand in marriage—gratefully accepts it. What wouldst thou more? I have, moreover, arranged that thou shalt pay her a visit at Godalming with me, this very afternoon."

The limits assigned to this paper forbid me to dwell longer upon these conversations. Love-stricken Job was easily persuaded to believe a statement which lifted him far above the earth, and compromising with conscience by a fervent vow to devote himself with all his soul and with all his strength to the true service and welfare of his future wife, he made preparation to accompany his father to her presence.

It was quite true that Caroline Mainwaring had accepted the offer of marriage made to her by Job Crouch—with infinite reluctance accepted it—partly constrained by a depressing sense of her destitute condition, but more, much more, by the moral compulsion of her mother's supposed last commands; finally yielding that cruelly-extorted consent in a passion of piteous tears.

Still, before the attorney left Godalming she had so far calmed down as to promise that she would receive his son with the respect and kindness to which his generous, disinterested affection entitled him at her hands, and that the weakness which he, Mr. Jonathan Crouch, had witnessed should not insult one to whom she felt the deepest gratitude.

Caroline Mainwaring kept her word; and, blinded, entranced by the extatic sense of an immeasurable happiness, Job Crouch left Godalming with a half-fearful hope that he was not wholly indifferent to her.

It had been arranged that the Crouches, father and son, should repeat their visit on the next day but one, Thursday, when all preliminaries to a strictly-private marriage, which, under the lying pretence invented by Jonathan Crouch, it was agreed should be celebrated without avoidable delay, would be definitely arranged. It happened, however, that some matter of form connected with the licence required that Miss Mainwaring should be personally communicated with on the following day, Wednesday; a duty which Job Crouch having very readily taken upon himself, he left London for Godalming early in the afternoon to fulfil.

First interposing a few explanatory sentences, we will precede him thither.

It was quite true, as intimated by Jonathan Crouch to his son, that Caroline Mainwaring and Charles Barton had, with the full consent of the young lady's parents, indulged in "a silly fancy" for each other for some years. But those years only deepening, as they flew by, the poverty of both families, it was agreed that the union of the young couple must at all events be deferred till that far-off, indefinite time should arrive when a freak of fortune, or a miracle of industrial success, had assured them something like a competency. Finally, and for some time before Mrs. Mainwaring's death, the engagement had been formally put an end to, with the sad acquiescence of the lovers, and Charles Barton determined to cross the Atlantic, and cast in his lot with the Puritans of New England.

It fell out that the emigrant ship, in which Charles Barton had secured a passage, was to sail on the very Saturday proposed as, though not finally agreed to be, the wedding-day of Caroline Mainwaring and Job Crouch. On the previous Wednesday, that is, the day upon which the bridegroom expectant left London for Godalming to arrange some formality in connection with the licence, self-exiled Charles Barton was to call on his former mistress to take a final farewell.

He did so, and both he and Miss Mainwaring, putting strong constraint upon themselves, maintained for awhile

the aspect and demeanour of a calm resignedness. For a while, only; some chance word, some pressure upon a too sensitive chord of memory, set free the restraining bonds, and a flood of passionate regrets burst forth from the overcharged hearts of the unhappy lovers, who at last, completely overcome by emotion, sobbed aloud in the fulness of a sorrow which admitted of neither remedy nor hope.

Charlotte Mainwaring was the first to regain partial composure. "This is folly, Charles, if not worse," she brokenly exclaimed; "my faith, in obedience to my mother's last commands, is plighted to another, and we must part at once, for ever——"

The sound of a staggering footfall arrested her words, and glancing round, she saw Job Crouch standing in the open doorway, his face cold and white as stone, his eyes gleaming with unnatural light, his ashen, quivering lips vainly striving to form in words the thought which struggled for utterance. She, too, was dumb, paralyzed by surprise and alarm.

"No—no—no!" at length gasped Job Crouch; "you shall not part. I—I will save you. You, Caroline, are rich, but know it not. I—I have been a villain, but am not so lost to honour, to truth, as to——

Job Crouch fell heavily on the floor in a swoon.

* * * * *

Somewhat late in the evening of the next day but one, Job Crouch sought out Mr. Travers, one of the executors named in the elder Mainwaring's will, and placed in his hands that of Oliver Mainwaring, with a brief recital of some of the circumstances already known to the reader, having first stipulated that his father's character should not unnecessarily suffer damage.

The first thing astonished Mr. Travers did, after his visitor's departure, was to despatch a note to Mr. Richard Mainwaring, requesting to see him immediately upon a matter of pressing importance. The message was, after some delay, answered in person, and Mr. Travers noticed that Richard Mainwaring was much heated and flustered with wine. Mr. Travers hesitatingly initiated the unpleasant announcement he had to make by asking if he, Mr. Mainwaring, had heard anything lately of the people at the Devil's Gap?

"Nothing of much importance," said Mainwaring, "except that a hint has reached me that Job Crouch has applied for a licence to wed my niece Caroline. I do not, however, believe that he has done any such thing."

"Job Crouch marry Caroline Mainwaring!" exclaimed Mr. Travers. "Why, that may account, then——. Yet, no——. Mr. Mainwaring," continued Mr. Travers, plunging at once *in medias res*, "it is my very unpleasant duty to inform you that a will, respecting which, it is alleged you have made criminal overtures to Jonathan Crouch, has been this evening placed in my hands—a will of your brother Oliver——'

A screaming curse broke in upon and silenced the speaker, and before he could add another word, Richard Mainwaring had vanished.

Jonathan Crouch was alone in his office at the Devil's Gap that evening; Job having been almost continuously absent during the previous two days. That, however, did not surprise the attorney, who was in a high state of exhilaration at the successful working out of his plans. Job's wedding would take place in a few days, and then the magnificent stakes for which they had played so boldly would be definitively won. Magnificent stakes indeed! He would look over the will once more, just to ascertain a point he was not quite sure of, whether, namely, there was remainder to the children—a provision which would greatly affect the division of the spoil between himself and Job, though of course, all would, in the natural course of things, ultimately revert to his son. How was it that the will was not in the secure receptacle wherein he had himself placed it? Where could it be then? Drawer after drawer was ransacked,—bundles of paper were undone, and hastily shuffled over in vain: the will could not be found; and a sickening apprehension crossed the attorney's mind that Richard Mainwaring might have contrived to enter the office at night-time, and abstract the precious document. Yet that could not be; the locks, the fastenings had not been tampered with. Perhaps Job had removed the will: yes—yes, that must be it! "And here, luckily he comes up the stairs, in a desperate hurry too.—Good God!—you—you——"

"Fiend! devil!" screamed Richard Mainwaring, as he burst into the office, and literally leaped at and clutched

the terrified lawyer:—"The will—the will you pretended to destroy—give it me, or I will have your heart's blood."

"I—I have it not," gasped the attorney—"I swear that——"

"Liar! Traitor! Devil!" roared Mainwaring, whom the struggle seemed to perfectly madden: "I will have your life for this."

No further words, save curses, were spoken during the frightful contest which ensued between the two desperate men. It was quickly apparent that Mainwaring, who was much the most powerful man, was bent upon forcing Crouch through the slight, glazed door leading out upon the leads, as described in the beginning of this paper. He at length so far succeeded; the door was burst through, and the terrific struggle transferred to a flat platform some fifty feet above the ground, and fenced round by a dwarf wood railing. The cold sweat of a mortal terror oozed from every pore of the attorney's body as he fought, tore, wrestled with frenzied but unavailing strength to wrench himself from the hold of his ferocious foe. And there was no help to be hoped for save in that frenzied, failing strength; no passer-by could in a dark night, faintly pierced through by a few stars, see the frightful fight for life going on up there; and to call out, the murderer's choking clutch prevented him from doing. Nearer—nearer he was borne to the wooden railing, and at length, with a mighty effort of despair, he gurgled a scarcely-articulate supplication for mercy. It was understood, however, as the mocking curse of his pitiless enemy gave token. Another moment, and he was pressed against the railing, which yielded at once, and with the rending of the wood he would have fallen over into the dark void, but that Mainwaring could not free himself from the attorney's desperate hold. Furiously, madly, he strove to do so, and failing that, endeavoured to draw back his victim to the level of the platform. It was all too late. Vainly, with one knee sustained against the balustrade, did he make mightier efforts to draw the attorney back than he had to cast him over. The portion of wood-work which supported him for a while snapped short; he toppled over, and, locked in each other's death-clutch, Richard Mainwaring and Jonathan Crouch shot through the void, and were dashed with tremendous vio-

lence upon the flinty pavement beneath. Mainwaring was killed upon the spot. Jonathan Crouch survived several hours in great agony, but sufficiently sensible to relate what had occurred.

* * * * *

Job Crouch is supposed to have emigrated to New England; and it is certain that Caroline Mainwaring succeeded to the large property devised to her by her father's will, and that she married Charles Barton; with which satisfactory items of intelligence concludes the story of "The Devil's Gap."

THE FLOWER OF ISLINGTON.

"As it fell out on a long summer's day,
Two lovers they sat on a hill;
They sat together that long summer-day,
And could not talk their fill."—*Percy's Reliques.*

THE year 1685, as most of us know, witnessed the accession of James the Second, the battle of Sedgemoor, and the Bloody Assize, presided over by Jefferys. Won with difficulty and much loss by the royal troops, including the Life Guards and Blues, fighting against the undisciplined peasants of Somersetshire, many of whom were armed with scythes, flails, bludgeons, only, and totally destitute of artillery, the King's victory, nevertheless, was held, in the apprehension of the vast multitude whose bounded scope of thought invariably accepts a great present success as an irrevocable fiat of fate, to have extinguished the liberties of England for ever. His Majesty determined to render that conviction ineffaceable by stamping it into the national mind with the iron impress of terror! fear! therein anticipating, by considerably more than a century, Les Idées Napoléoniennes: and who, let me ask, believing in Eternal Justice, can doubt that the ultimate catastrophe will be the same in both cases?

The coming on of that inevitable catastrophe was in England early apparent. Discerning eyes saw the divine rays of Freedom, impiously supposed to have set for ever, flashing upon the dark political horizon, and gradually lighting up, with the prophetic glory of a Great Future, the pale faces of a temporarily panic-stricken nation, whilst yet the King and his satellites were drunk with the blood of their victims, and exulting in the belief that, the army and the bench being with them, they had at last, and once for all, subjugated the people of these islands to the condition of the serfs of the Continent. With this epoch of blood and tears, of gloom and glory, the incidents of the tradition I am about to transcribe are closely associated—one of the minor actors therein will indeed be found to be an historic

figure consecrated to a mournful immortality in the deathless pages of Macaulay—a quite sufficient excuse it will, I hope, be conceded for the few phrases of opinion with which I have presumed to preface the story of "The Flower of Islington."

It may perhaps help to the clearness of the narrative if I first set forth in dramatic fashion the names of those who played the various parts.

SIR JOHN ARCHDALL, BART.,
A Roman Catholic, and adherent of the King.
HENRY ARCHDALL, his Son.
ELIAS DUNNE,
A Protestant and propertied rebel, who fought at Sedgemoor.
MRS. ARNOLD,
A Roman Catholic Widow in straitened circumstances, but upon intimate terms with Sir John Archdall.
LILIAN ARNOLD, her Daughter.
MABEL TOWERS,
Distantly related to Sir John Archdall, Bart.
MRS. ELIZABETH GAUNT,
A missionary of mercy to the afflicted and oppressed of all creeds and parties.
SCENE: Little St. John's Wood, Islington.

In those days Londoners spoke of "the silence and repose" of Islington as world-wearied men now speak of the secluded nooks and tarns of the Lake District. The habitations which dotted its pastoral and woodland surface served rather to mark than break or mar that silence and repose. In one of these, called Mary Place, situate in a glade of Little St. John's Wood, and not discernible till you were close upon it, had for some years resided Mrs. Arnold and her daughter Lilian. Their dwelling did not at all answer to modern notions of a "Place," being nothing more than a small wooden house, designed with taste, and the meanness of the material in some degree veiled by vine- and rose-trees. The establishment was as modest as the abode, consisting only of a woman and lad of all work. Mrs. Arnold and her daughter were not only thus lowly placed but had fallen from a height, the very considerable property of the family having been forfeited to the Crown, and Mr. Arnold's heart broken, during the previous reign for some real or supposed complicity in one of the "plots"

with which that humiliating chapter in our annals is so thickly crowded. In their palmy days the Arnolds had been upon terms of intimacy with Sir John Archdall, who then, as now, lived in good style at the village of Chelsea; and, to the baronet's honour, he had not shunned the widow and daughter of his deceased friend since their fall. He had often visited them, of late with great frequency, in company with his son; with what predominant motive will presently appear.

Of the widow herself, it is enough to state that though a devout member of the ancient Church, she appears to have been wholly free from sectarian bigotry and bitterness—strong proof in those days of a pure and gentle mind. She was, moreover, honoured with the friendship of Mrs. Elizabeth Gaunt, a lady of the Baptist persuasion, and—infinitely greater title to respect—a votary of that highest religion which regards the whole earth as one vast cathedral of God, and all that dwell and worship therein with pure intentions as redeemed, blessed souls. It may be thought somewhat out of place, but I cannot help remarking here that the mission of mercy to which Mrs. Gaunt devoted her life and means was the visiting of gaols, and generally to console and succour all unfortunates whom adverse circumstances or kingly rage visited with suffering and peril. "I did but relieve a poor family, and here I am!" were the last words which rose to heaven from her trembling lips as the flames by which she was consumed at Tyburn gathered round her. Surely it is proof of an inexplicable perversity of the human intellect and heart that the regal ruffian by whose personal order this cruel and cowardly murder, and hundreds, besides, of a like character, were perpetrated, could afterwards truly boast of unshrinking devotion to his person and authority of thousands of brave and generous men, aye, and of gentle, pure-minded women, too!

Thus much for the present in respect of the widow Arnold and her admirable friend. Of the daughter, Lilian Arnold, it will suffice in this place to state, that her age, at the period I am writing of, was about nineteen; that her beauty, always described by superlatives, consisted as much perhaps, in its expression of a sensitive, timid sweetness, gentleness, reliance, as in its material form and colour, which was, however, of a rare perfection—namely, exquisite

fairness of complexion; abundant and beautiful brown hair; deep blue eyes, fringed with dark lashes, revealing profoundest depths; and a figure cast in one of Nature's happiest moulds.

Possibly some of the charm of expression which is said to have so interested, haunted the beholder, was owing to the frequent shadow as of a resigned sadness, which fell suddenly, like a veil, over her sweet face. The source of that growing sadness was not a sentimental or an imaginary one. For some time it had seemed to her that a filmy shade was slowly gathering and deepening over her eyes, menacing her, unless it could be dissipated by the physician's art, with ultimate blindness. The medical advice taken was at first reassuring. Nothing could be seen exteriorly, and it was declared that the occasional mistiness of sight experienced by Lilian was owing to causes unconnected with the structure of the eye, which causes, as she grew in years and strength, would, in all probability, cease to operate. That consolatory dictum had, however, lately been disputed by Dr. Ferly, an eminent practitioner, whom Sir John Archdall had persuaded Mrs. Arnold to consult. Dr. Ferly was of opinion that a filmy, for the present almost inpalpable, substance *was* gathering over Lilian's eyes, which might or might not be dissipated without the aid of a surgical operation. If, he added encouragingly, the disease could not be arrested save by a surgical operation, the actual removal, when the time arrived for doing so, would be attended with slight danger, and, in all probability, would prove completely and permanently successful. Meanwhile, as the curative appliances to be previously essayed required, for their possibly successful action, that the patient's mind should be kept free from irritation and excitement, Dr. Ferly enjoined Mrs. Arnold to speak encouragingly to her daughter, as he himself would. Sufficient unto the day was the evil thereof, and the dreaded evil, moreover, might never come to pass.

The character and position of Mrs. and Miss Arnold being now set forth with sufficient clearness, I would at once directly introduce them to the reader, as they in sad silence sat in the tiny front room of their pretty domicile, in the last week of July, 1685, when the sultry day had drawn to a close, and the earlier stars were glinting through

the forest foliage, amidst which Mary Place lay *perdu*, as it were, but that it is essential I should first say a few preliminary words anent Sir John Archdall and his son.

The baronet and Henry Archdall had passed the afternoon of that sultry day at Mary Place, and the painful emotion excited by the talk which had filled up the hours of his visit was visible, long after their departure, in the pale face of Mrs. Arnold, the tender, suffused eyes, and varying cheek of Lilian. The substance of the theme upon which Sir John had been dilating with unctuous exultation, and to which his auditors listened with pity and compassion, not unmingled with indignation and horror—reverently loyal subjects, in principle, though they were—was the battle of Sedgemoor, fought on the 5th of the month, and the horrible murders which followed. The ultra-royalist baronet could see nothing in those pitiless doings but the action of retributive justice—the smiting, by the arm of the Lord of hosts, of impious subjects that had dared rebel against their anointed king. His son, though he said little, manifestly had not the slightest sympathy with his father's views and opinions. A contemplative, dreamy, handsome, fragile youth was Henry Archdall, presenting a strong contrast, both morally and physically, to his hard-headed, stern-willed, robust father. Nevertheless, he was the apple of that father's eye; the only source of healthful life which remained to temper and soften the baronet's morose asperity and bigoted intolerance. He only had survived of six children, all the rest having died of consumption in the first flush of youth; and the lasting dread which poisoned existence for Sir John Archdall, was that Henry, too, might be destined to fill an early grave. That dread, springing primarily and mainly from fatherly love, was strengthened by kinsmanly hate. Should Henry Archdall die, the baronet's estates, strictly entailed upon heirs male, passed to a nephew, whom he hated with an intensity equal to that of the fear which never for a moment ceased its whispered suggestion, that in that nephew he beheld the man who would one day sit in the place left vacant by the death of his only remaining son.

Not long since Sir John Archdall had accidentally discovered that his son was profoundly stricken with love for Lilian Arnold; and he firmly believed that with the tram-

pling out of the feverish hope born of that passionate love, the feeble flame of life would be extinguished. Had Mrs. Arnold known this, she would not have been so much surprised at the baronet's numerous visits during the previous three or four months, and his super-friendliness and condescension. But she suspected nothing of the kind; neither did Lilian. In fact, the young gentleman's timid, undemonstrative manners, his shy taciturnity when in her presence, had caused her to think, when she thought at all upon the subject, which was seldom, that he accompanied his father with some unwillingness in his visits to Mary Place, and would much rather be passing his time with companions of his own sex, tastes, and station. Poor Henry Archdall!

I may now revert to, and unswervingly follow up the direct current of the story. Mrs. and Miss Arnold were, I have said, sitting in sad silence in the front room of Mary Place after the departure of Sir John Archdall and his son: that sorrowful silence remained long unbroken, and night was falling in darkness and storm when Lilian knelt to receive her mother's blessing previous to retiring to her chamber. As she did so, a female voice was heard calling from without, and the front wicket was violently shaken. The unseasonable summons was answered by the serving lad, who presently ushered into the room Mrs. Elizabeth Gaunt, accompanied by a woman-servant. The motive of the visit was quickly explained. A large reward had been offered by the Government for the capture of Elias Dunne, a captain in Monmouth's rebel army, who had been wounded at Sedgemoor. He had sought and found shelter at the house of Mrs. Gaunt, who was acquainted with his family; but the pursuit waxing hot, and knowing no spot that would be so little obnoxious to suspicion as the hiding-place of the hunted fugitive as Mrs. Arnold's house, she had come to beg of her to receive and conceal Captain Elias Dunne for a while.

"Your being a Catholic," urged Mrs. Gaunt, perceiving that the proposal perfectly scared and dumbfounded the widow,—"your being a Catholic, my excellent friend, and well known to be on friendly terms with Sir John Archdall, preclude the possibility of suspicion, in such a case, attaching to you. Your servants, too, are thoroughly trust-

worthy. My last hope rests on you," added Mrs. Gaunt, "and should that fail me, Elias Dunne, who is even now without awaiting your decision, will be in custody before many hours are past, will be hanged before a week has gone by."

Aided by the tears and entreaties of Lilian Arnold, Mrs. Gaunt finally prevailed. Captain Elias Dunne, a fine young man of martial, prepossessing aspect, though pale and weak from his wounds, was brought in, assured of safety, as far as Mrs. Arnold could assure it, and conducted to his resting-place for the night.

Some five or six days at Mary Place sufficed to restore the health and spirits of Captain Elias Dunne. The absence of all inquiry, the strict privacy, the calm solitude of his retreat stimulated the reaction of youthful life and courage against by-gone terrors, and soon the very idea of danger almost passed from his mind. No doubt the society and conversation of Lilian Arnold—whose implicit faith in the efficacy of a Novena, or nine days of set prayers to the Virgin, for her all-powerful protection of the fugitive, which she was engaged in, lifting her above all fear of the occurrence of such a calamity as his capture—helped to sustain and invigorate the young soldier's spirits. It was, at all events, a cordial of which he never wearied; and always when the weather permitted, and it was certain that neither Sir John Archdall nor his son would visit Mary Place, he and Lilian passed the livelong summer day either in the garden, or upon a grassy knoll in the immediate vicinity, Mrs. Arnold accompanying, whilst he, Othello like, recounted his ventures and hair-breadth 'scapes in the deadly ambuscade and tented field. Especially the story of Sedgemoor kindled to flame the admiration of heroic daring latent in Lilian's, as in every woman's heart; and she never wearied of the enthusiastic soldier's graphic descriptions of the night march of the peasant-levies upon the Royalist camp—of the stubborn valour of the men, remedying, for a time, the cowardice and incapacity of Gray and Monmouth—the bloody repulse of Oglethorpe and Sarsfield—of the furious charge of the English Guards and veteran Scotch regiments successfully withstood by the "Rebels" with their scythes and butt-ends of muskets when their ammunition failed; finally, of the strong pro-

bability that, even after the shameful flight of their leaders, those gallant rustics and miners would have made a drawn battle of it, had not the Protestant bishop of Winchester volunteered the loan of his carriage-horses to drag up the cannon which mowed them down in masses!

No doubt there must have been much in the manner of the speaker; in the charm of a secret consciousness which it inspired, that he sought chiefly, by those glowing narratives, to enchain *her* interest, to awaken *her* sympathy. The immediate accessories to his wooing must also have favoured the young soldier. The sylvan solitude and peace around, the very season of the year, when the grand old trees, flashing with gorgeous beauty in the autumnal sunlight, were, at the same time, eloquent, in the sighs of the tremulous, falling leaves, of the brevity of life and loveliness. At all events, the wooing was successful, and Lilian Arnold gave her heart, in but fair return—so Elias Dunne said and swore, and *then*, no doubt, sincerely said and swore—for one that had long before been hers.

The troth-plight was exchanged with the full sanction of Mrs. Arnold, and it was arranged that the wedding should take place as soon as the political storm, then raging, had passed over, and the amnesty, which time always assures to the less prominent of unsuccessful rebels, permitted Captain Elias Dunne to again dwell under his own vine and fig-tree, none daring to make him afraid—the vine and fig-tree meaning, in this instance, five or six hundred rich freehold acres in Wiltshire. I cannot help thinking that worthy Mrs. Arnold must have been considerably influenced by that circumstance; and I incline the more readily to this opinion, forasmuch as she made no difficulty on the score of religious belief—professing herself perfectly satisfied with her son-in-law elect's assurance that Lilian's faith must, there could be no manner of doubt, be one day his own. Who, indeed, *could* be proof against an angel's teaching!

One stipulation Lilian Arnold strongly insisted upon: this—that should the secret dread that she would ultimately become blind be realised—a dread which, spite of her mother's, spite of the physician's rebuking assurances, incessantly pursued her—or if decided symptoms that that

calamity would overtake her showed themselves, the engagement should be considered at an end. Elias Dunne demurred vehemently to such a restriction; Lilian would, in the supposed event, be but the dearer, the more precious to him; and she, overcome by the passionate fervour of her lover's protestations, consented, with tears of joy, to waive, for his sake, that scruple.

I have already said I cannot find that either Mrs. Arnold or her daughter had any suspicion of the strong love entertained for Lilian by Henry Archdall, and that nevertheless they took care to conceal from Sir John and his son that Mary Place had another inmate. Now this extreme anxiety to hide their treasure-trove could not have arisen from any fear that the baronet or his son would have betrayed the rebel soldier's hiding-place to the Government. With all his faults of temper and character, Mrs. Arnold must have felt confident that Sir John would rather cut off his right hand than do so; and as to Henry Archdall turning informer, the notion was absurd, preposterous. And yet both Mrs. and Miss Arnold were nervously anxious that Henry Archdall, especially, should not see Elias Dunne—should not know that a handsome young soldier was domiciled at Mary Place. I do not quite understand this—but give the story as I find it. It may have been that the awakening of love in her own heart rendered Lilian more clear-sighted to its symptoms in another.

The excessive caution exercised by the Arnolds defeated, as often happens, its own purpose. Henry Archdall was entirely penetrated, when at Mary Place, with an absorbing consciousness of Lilian's presence, in itself the fulness of a quiet bliss to the dreamy young man, which he cared not to ruffle by a sound, a word, much less by prying inquisition of her actions, motives, sentiments—a precious leaf of life which, nevertheless, when absent from her, he pined yet dreaded to turn. Sir John, on the other hand, governed by no such fantasy or influence, and keener-sighted than his son, had soon, from a number of slight indices, singly considered, suspected that some secret doings connected in some way with Lilian, were going on at Mary Place. With him once to be in doubt was once to be resolved, and in a very short time he contrived to seize the heart of

the mystery—to see, unseen himself, Dunne and Lilian together—to witness their looks and words of sanctioned love.

The baronet's measures were promptly taken. Dunne he recognised from the description published of him, and by some words he overheard. To ensure his capture and death required but a word, a hint, to the blood-hounds of the Government. That course was not, however, open to Sir John Archdall. To adopt it would not only fatally compromise Mrs. Arnold, but the grief and indignation of Lilian, certain to be passionately manifested, would reveal the secret of her preference to Henry Archdall—a knowledge which would, in all human probability, destroy him. It consequently behoved the baronet to be wary as resolute—circumspect as daring—to seem the innocent flower, and be the serpent under it. He would be so, and the mode of action was, as I have said, speedily elaborated in his scheming brain.

The very next day he called at Mary Place, accompanied by Mabel Towers, a relative who, with her maiden aunt, Mrs. Towers, had been staying with him for some time at his house at Chelsea. He had not before introduced the young lady to the Arnolds, who received the visit with surprise—surprise succeeded by terrible consternation when Sir John, whose manner, from the moment of his arrival, seemed to indicate much anxiety, mentioned to Mrs. Arnold that he knew, from a sure source, that Mary Place might be, at any hour, visited by the officers of justice in quest of one Elias Dunne, late an officer in Monmouth's rebel army, who, the Government had been informed, was concealed somewhere in Islington——"Good God! she has fainted," added Sir John, with well-affected dismay; "my fears, then, were prophetic!"

Restored to consciousness, the terrified lady confessed everything to Sir John Archdall—how and by whom she was induced to harbour the wounded rebel, and the result as regarded Lilian. The baronet listened with grave attention, as if all she said was new to him; and, having heard her out, remarked, that she was grievously to blame for having placed herself in so fearful a strait, it being well known that the king was even more pitiless towards those who sheltered rebels than to the rebels themselves. The

time was, however, past when warning might have availed, and now prompt, as well as prudent, action could alone save the fugitive rebel, Mrs. Arnold, and possibly Lilian herself, from a fate too horrible to think of.

"I must see this Dunne immediately," he added; "and he must leave Mary Place at evening-fall."

Mrs. Arnold consented, and forthwith sought the fugitive. Lilian had, she found, already informed him, as distinctly as her tears and terror would permit, that the whereabout of his hiding-place was suspected by the Government—an announcement which, bursting suddenly upon him, like thunder from a cloudless sky, had so shaken his nerves, that he looked pale and fear-stricken as Lilian herself. He gratefully accepted Sir John's offer of his services to extricate him from his perilous position, "for my imprudent friends' sake, Mr. Dunne," and expressed his willingness to leave Mary Place that instant if it was thought desirable that he should do so. Sir John's lip curled with a sardonic smile at the young soldier's eagerness to be gone from the home and society of Lilian—a smile which deepened in its saturnine significance when, upon the baronet inviting the scared rebel to accompany him to the front room that he might be introduced to a lady whom it was essential to interest in his favour, Elias Dunne hastily shook off Lilian's trembling hold of his arm, and, without a word to her or Mrs. Arnold, followed his new protector's lead.

Mabel Towers, a gay, high-spirited girl, of considerable personal attractions, appeared to receive the baronet's communication with surprise, but, nevertheless, at once expressed her willingness to aid the escape of Captain Dunne from the toils of his enemies, and answered for her aunt's active acquiescence in any project that might be devised with that view. As wily Sir John had hoped, the handsome rebel found favour in her sight, and to the baronet's proposal that Mr. Dunne, disguised in a servant's livery, should accompany Mrs. and Miss Towers to Yorkshire, whence, if so minded, he might easily pass over to Holland, the young lady readily agreed, observing, moreover, that the day which had been fixed upon for their departure from Chelsea might be anticipated. "In truth," she added, with a faint blush, "we might set out to-morrow morning,

if to do so would lessen the peril to which Captain Dunne is exposed."

Captain Dunne's grateful acknowledgments were expressed with a fervour that heightened the young lady's colour to celestial rosy red, and tinged with the same hue the now pale Flower of Islington. That vague, undefined emotion of alarm or jealousy passed away from the mind of Lilian, leaving no trace behind, when the main details of the enterprise having been arranged, she and her lover took tender leave of each other towards evening-fall, after, as the custom is, exchanging vows of eternal love, constancy, devotion.

Elias Dunne set forth from Mary Place alone, reached the appointed rendezvous in safety, and on the next day but one left London for Yorkshire in liveried attendance upon Mrs. and Miss Towers.

The party reached Scarborough without accident or the incurrence of suspicion, and Captain Dunne, having first cast his servant-slough, was announced to be a cousin who had come to spend a few months with his Yorkshire relatives.

The position of Elias Dunne in the Towers family would have tried the constancy of a more sincere-souled man than he. Mabel Towers was a handsome, elegant, accomplished young woman; not, certainly, possessed of the personal or moral graces of Lilian Arnold, but exceedingly attractive nevertheless, and endowed with a vivacity of temperament that was of inestimable value in combating the gloom and *ennui* arising from compulsory idleness and confinement. Cleverly had Sir John Archdall set his snare, and it was with slight surprise, though much delight, that he heard from Mrs. Towers, about a month after she and her niece left London, that there was little or no doubt of its complete and speedy success. He had now to win Mrs. Arnold to his views, and he might then recall Henry from Hampshire, whither he had sent him under the pretext of superintending some improvements of a large property he possessed in that county.

He himself had but once visited Mary Place since Mr. Dunne left, and that merely to apprise Mrs. Arnold that he had contrived, by indirect agency, to turn the Government officials off the scent after the rebel officer, and that she

need, therefore, be under no apprehension of a visit from them.

When, therefore, he did again see Lilian, a few days after receiving Mrs. Towers's letter, the alteration that a few weeks had wrought in her struck him the more forcibly. The filmy substance overgrowing her eyes had made such rapid progress, that already she could but dimly distinguish objects close at hand, and could not read the largest print. There was no longer any doubt that she would have to submit to a painful surgical operation, and this alone might have accounted for the evident deterioration of her health, for her wasting form, her pallid cheeks, and the dejection of spirit which oppressed her. Sir John, however, learnt from Mrs. Arnold that a more potent influence for evil was at work. The tone of the brief letters Lilian had received from Elias Dunne had grievously disquieted her. It seemed to her that there was no earnestness, no heart in them, and the jealous feeling which had darkened her mind for a moment during Dunne's first interview with Mabel Towers, returned and fastened itself thereon. Her mother combated that feeling with all her might of persuasion and reasoning, without sensible effect, and Dr. Ferly feared that Lilian's health would be fatally undermined if the injurious impression could not be effectually and speedily removed.

Mrs. Arnold now consulted Sir John as to how this might best be done. Her own half-formed notion was to write in her own name to Captain Dunne, apprising him of the unhappy effect his letters, combined with his absence, had produced upon Lilian's sensitive spirit, and conjure him to write in such a manner that she would no longer be able to suspect that his sentiments towards her had undergone, or were about to undergo, a change.

"A most repulsive task for the mother of such a child to impose upon herself," added Mrs. Arnold, with tears, "but one that I may not shrink from, unless, indeed—unless, indeed," she added, hesitatingly, "you, Sir John Archdall, would confer so great a favour as to hint by letter to your relative, Mrs. Towers, that you fear, suspect, imagine that Lilian's health is suffering from a ridiculous feeling of jealousy, and requesting her to write you, confidentially,

such a letter as, shown to Miss Arnold, would, at once and for ever, dissipate the idle fancy."

"I must see the gentleman's letters before making up my mind that it is an idle fancy," replied Sir John Archdall.

The letters were shown to him, and he, of course, at once declared his firm opinion that Miss Arnold had rightly interpreted the recreant rebel's language. "This opinion of mine corroborating that of Lilian, and, I can hardly doubt, yours also, disturbs you, Mrs. Arnold," said the baronet. "I have that to add which, I would willingly flatter myself, will, in some degree, console you for the fellow's heartless fickleness. Let me premise," he went on to say, taking the mother's hand in his with respectful, kindliest sympathy, "that dear Lilian's health is, I am quite certain, in no real danger. Hear me out, my dear madam, before exclaiming so wildly. I mean that the knowledge, the positive knowledge of Dunne's baseness will not injuriously affect her for any length of time. Rely upon it, that suspense, suspicion once merged in certainty, indignation, contempt, aiding womanly self-respect and pride, will quickly heal alike weakened health and wounded affection."

"You deceive yourself, or kindly wish to deceive me," exclaimed Mrs. Arnold. "Lilian would never rally from the blow. Men—especially men no longer young—can hardly be expected to appreciate its cruel force upon one so young, so sensitive, so gentle."

"No one," replied Sir John Archdall, "*should* have a keener apprehension than I of the fatal results which a disappointment of the heart may, under certain conditions, inflict upon a gentle, sensitive nature. Those conditions or circumstances are, happily, not those which surround Lilian. *Her* physical organization has been, in its essentials, healthily developed; no predisposition to fatal disease lurks in her veins, to be either excited to virulent action by mental distress, or extinguished by the elixir of an assured felicity. Natural pride, outraged self-respect would, moreover, as I have said, afford her effectual aid. My son, now," continued the baronet, with grave emphasis, "my son, now, is differently circumstanced. He has reached a crisis of his youth when the latent malady which consigned

his brothers to untimely graves will either be roused into fatal activity, or gradually die out with increasing years and strengthening virility. My words perplex you," he added; "they will do so the more when I add that Henry's life is in Lilian's hands."

"Sir John Archdall!"

"Be patient for a while," continued the baronet. "I have much to say which deeply concerns us all. Henry and Lilian, you and I, may hereafter date the salvation or ruin of our dearest hopes, aye, of our very lives, from this hour."

The baronet then proceeded to inform Mrs. Arnold of the discovery he had accidentally made of his son's deeply-rooted, ineradicable love for Lilian; and dwelt upon the terror constantly brooding at his own heart, engendered by a thorough conviction that the rejection of that love by its object would—aye, and before many weeks had passed—render him a childless, broken-spirited man. His words, clothed with the eloquence which truth and earnestness supply, visibly affected Mrs. Arnold.

"Henry," continued Sir John Archdall, "has never breathed a word in mortal ears of the ardent passion which, believe me, is destined either to wither up the seeds of early death lurking in his veins, or to consume his life. I chanced upon the discovery thuswise: Henry inadvertently left a diary or journal, which he has for some months kept, in the library. I had several times noticed that when writing therein, he appeared to be under the influence of strong excitement; that his face was paler, his eyes—which were often wet with tears—were brighter, more spiritual than usual; that his whole being vibrated, as it were, with the ebb and flow of a mighty, uncontrollable emotion. I had now an opportunity of ascertaining the source of that emotion, and eagerly availed myself of it. His journal or diary was, I found, almost exclusively filled with letters addressed to Lilian Arnold—letters palpitating, so to speak, with such unspeakable tenderness, devotion, passion, that dullest eyes would see they were written in the blood of the youthful lover's own heart. Though all unused to tears," continued the baronet, in a husky voice, "I wept, as I read, with pity, grief, and boundless sympathy; and a vow passed my lips to exert every

influence I could command, to avail myself of every resource within my reach to bring about the realisation of my son's supreme hope. I shall fulfil that vow," added Sir John, "pursue that purpose whithersoever it may lead me."

The baronet's communication, whilst it strongly excited the womanly concern of Mrs. Arnold, a concern tempered, softened, we may be sure, by maternal pride, restored, at the same time, her self-possession, and it at once occurred to her that Sir John Archdall's sinister interpretation of Captain Dunne's letters was solely prompted by his wish that Lilian should espouse his son.

Now to that union Mrs. Arnold felt the strongest objection; one reason being that she did not believe Henry Archdall would, under the most favourable circumstances, live long; and as the family estates were strictly entailed, and Sir John's personal expenditure was profuse, not to say extravagant, it was quite possible that the young man's widow would be early left in comparatively indigent circumstances, whereas Elias Dunne would be able, in any case, to provide handsomely for his wife. Then Lilian was strongly attached to her accepted lover, whom Mrs. Arnold could not, would not believe to be guilty of unfaithfulness or caprice. Thus reasoning, she deemed it wisest to at once gently, but firmly, intimate to Sir John Archdall that, much as she esteemed his son, deeply as she regretted that he had rashly given himself up to a hopeless attachment, it was quite out of the question that he could, in any event, become the husband of Lilian.

The wrath of Sir John Archdall at receiving so peremptory a rebuff was unbounded, and at first expressed with almost savage violence. Finding, however, that his furious objurgations availed nothing to shake the mother's resolve, he constrained himself to comparative calmness, and finally took leave with an emphatic warning that he should return again in a few days for the purpose of making one last effort to win Mrs. Arnold to his views. In the mean time it was agreed that Lilian should, for the present, at all events, hear nothing of the matter.

A week elapsed before Sir John Archdall again made his appearance at Mary Place; a mournful week to Mrs. Arnold. Another letter had arrived from Elias Dunne, which she had not dared read to her daughter, so obviously,

even in her partial judgment, was it the composition of a man impatient of the yoke which his engagement with Lilian imposed, and anxious to provoke a decent excuse for putting an end to it. Besides this fee-grief, peculiar to herself, a sorrow, in which thousands participated, had fallen upon her and Lilian. Their friend, Mrs. Elizabeth Gaunt, had suffered at Tyburn for a simple act of charity. The circumstances, as related by Lord Macaulay, were briefly these. One Benton, who had fought at Sedgemoor, sought Mrs. Gaunt's protection, and she procured him a boat in which he was conveyed to Gravesend, whence he passed over to Holland. For some reason he returned, and took refuge with John Fernley, a barber, in Whitechapel. A reward of one hundred pounds was offered for the capture of Benton, but the poor barber, though in debt, and threatened with a jail by his creditors, was proof against temptation. Benton, on the other hand, finding that the Government was more anxious to hunt out and punish the harbourers of rebels than the rebels themselves, purchased immunity for himself by informing against Fernley and Mrs. Gaunt, who were both, upon his information and evidence, seized and sentenced, Fernley to be hanged, Mrs. Elizabeth Gaunt to be burnt, which sentences were forthwith executed.

Mrs. Arnold was stunned, overborne by the dreadful news, and a fearful sense of the peril she had herself challenged, by secreting Elias Dunne, flashed upon her apprehension with the doleful tidings of her friend's cruel death —she, the friend whose persuasons had induced her to give shelter to the proscribed rebel.

Sir John Archdall found the widow in that startled state of mind—a very fit one for his purpose. He inquired anxiously after Lilian's health; was informed that she had been, for several days, wholly confined to her chamber; and then the conversation, reserved and sad from the first, seemed to naturally glide into the circumstances attending the execution of Mrs. Elizabeth Gaunt. The baronet not only dwelt, with graphic force, upon every incident of the horrid tragedy, but dilated in slow and solemn phrase upon the numerous efforts that had been made by eminent persons to obtain from the king but a commutation of the woman's awful doom. "His Majesty," said Sir John, "was

deaf as the grave to every entreaty. He might pardon rebels, but traitorous encouragers, secreters of rebels, whenever or wherever discovered, should die the death, without regard to age, sex, or condition."

An ague of terror shook Mrs. Arnold as she listened, with suspended breath, in every limb, and blanched her features to the hue of a corpse. The baronet's words, combined with the menacing significance of the look he fixed upon her, convinced the terrified lady that she herself, and, possibly, Lilian, were specially pointed at as those who, if discovered, would assuredly perish, "without regard to age, sex, or condition." She could not speak—was scarcely able to retain sufficient life and strength to sit upon her chair, and, but for a vehement effort of will, she must have swooned outright.

Sir John Archdall, perceiving that his well-meditated programme was so far successfully carried out, assumed a milder tone and bearing.

"Do not," he said, "unnecessarily alarm yourself, Mrs. Arnold. The situation in which you and Lilian have been placed by heedless acquiescence in the prayers or counsels of the woman who perished yesterday, is a grave, a terrible one; still the dread menace may not, if you are wise, be realised."

"I and *Lilian?*" ejaculated the mother, distractedly.

"You and *Lilian.* The state of matters is this: a reward is offered for the apprehension of Jane Sturmey, Mrs. Elizabeth Gaunt's servant, who accompanied her mistress to this house when that ungrateful miscreant, Elias Dunne, was brought here. Should she be captured, there can be no doubt that she will, like Benton, save her own vile life by denouncing the secreters of rebels—you and Lilian amongst the number. Interrupt me not with senseless lamentations," cried Sir John. "What is done, is done, and we must now look to the future—the immediate future, which lowers so threateningly over us. It happens," he continued, "that I know Jane Sturmey's hiding-place, and can, if I choose to do so, lay her by the heels before the day is three hours older. That being so, I can also, if I elect to so jeopardise my own safety, cause her to be quietly conveyed out of the kingdom. I mean that I should probably succeed in doing so; the penalty of

failure being, of course, the forfeiture of my own life, in addition to the lives of yourself and Lilian."

"Save us! save Lilian!" cried the widow, falling upon her knees before the baronet. "God will bless, reward you!"

"I will endeavour to save you and Lilian at the hazard of my own life," said Sir John, raising the half-frantic lady, "if you will in return save me and mine. You cannot expect that I will incur such fearful risk for one who should deliberately persist in consigning my only son to an early grave."

The baronet's point was gained, at the cost of how much, or if of any, deceit and lies I cannot say, though it is quite possible that the whole story, as regarded Jane Sturmey, was a pure invention. He had succeeded, whether by fair or foul means, in overcoming, by the mastery of fear, Mrs. Arnold's repugnance to accept his son as Lilian's future husband, and that with him was all in all. Mrs. Arnold—no doubt the more readily from having no longer any doubt of Dunne's perfidy—promised to be wholly guided by Sir John as to the mode of bringing about the desired result, and he left Mary Place with the understanding that he was to return on the morrow, when the details of the plan to be followed could be calmly discussed, he having, in the interval, despatched Jane Sturmey, under sure guidance, to Holland.

That essential condition was in course of rapid and successful accomplishment, if Sir John Archdall might be believed, when he arrived early the next day at Mary Place. Proceeding to at once discuss the plan of operations, it was agreed that Mrs. Arnold should forthwith write to Elias Dunne, in reply to his last letter, freeing him, in Lilian's name, from the contract they had unwisely entered into, the said letter to be written in a tone which should convey an impression that the rupture of the engagement was cheerfully acquiesced in by her daughter; and a polite assurance was moreover to be given, that both Mrs. and Miss Arnold would continue to feel a friendly interest in Captain Dunne's welfare.

So far there was no difficulty; but how to win over Lilian, how even break the matter to her, in the sad state of her mental and bodily health, with sufficient tenderness,

gave them pause. Sir John at last proposed that Dr. Ferly should be so far taken into their confidence as to be able to indicate the cause and time of action that would be least likely to dangerously affect his drooping patient. Mrs. Arnold had scarcely signified her ready assent to this proposal, when the physician arrived at Mary Place; probably by previous arrangement with Sir John. Be that as it may, his coming was very opportune, and his detailed report of Lilian's condition was listened to by Mrs. Arnold and the baronet with the most painful interest.

Miss Arnold was suffering, he said, from low, nervous fever, induced in a considerable degree, no doubt, by the natural depression consequent upon the loss of sight, but to a yet greater extent, he suspected, by some mental hurt, to which his art was impotent to minister.

This was sufficient hint upon which to speak, and Dr. Ferly was forthwith placed *au courant* of the Lilian-Dunne-Archdall complication. The learned physician listened with marked attention and sympathy, and, in response, thus, in substance, delivered himself:—

"The revelation of her lover's baseness would, in her then state, fatally aggravate the nervous fever under which Miss Arnold was suffering. Brain fever, accompanied by inflammation of the eyes, might supervene; and if her life, thanks to a naturally sound physique, should be saved, her sight might be permanently lost. Dr. Ferly was further of opinion that some means should be devised of cheating her into a belief in Dunne's unchanged, unchanging constancy and affection. Such a belief would do more, he declared, than all the resources of the pharmacopœia, to restore her ebbing vitality, and bring about such a state of general health as would deprive the operation of couching of all real danger; an operation which, so rapid was the development of the overgrowing film-tissue, might, other things being favourable, be attempted with every prospect of complete success, in a few months from that time. Once restored to sight, and animated by the blissful feeling which the recovery of a faculty so precious could not fail to excite, the truth might, without incurring the slightest permanent danger to Miss Arnold's health or peace of mind, be quietly disclosed to her. The storm which snapped the sapling's slender stem merely ruffled the leaves

of the vigorous oak; a similitude," added the physician, "which is not so extravagant as may be supposed; the difference in power of endurance between Lilian Arnold crushed beneath the weight of one of the most afflictive deprivations that can befall humanity, and Lilian Arnold restored to sight, snatched from the depths of despondency to healthful, exultant life, being hardly susceptible of exaggeration."

Enlightened and warned by the physician's counsel, Sir John Archdall and Mrs. Arnold, at the end of several hours passed in anxious consultation, decided that the letter to Captain Dunne before spoken of, having been first sent off, Sir John was to concoct one, purporting to come from that gentleman—addressed to Lilian, of course—and of a nature to completely dissipate all suspicion of his infidelity or fickleness, which device was to be renewed so long as the state of Lilian's health rendered recourse to the expedient necessary or desirable. The scheme thus far settled, Sir John Archdall left Mary Place in high feather.

The letter pretendedly from Elias Dunne had a marvellous effect upon Lilian's spirits. She rallied surprisingly, and maternal affection induced Mrs. Arnold to again and again repeat a device which had such a vivifying effect upon her beloved child. This led to a fresh difficulty. Sir John's faculty of youthful lover-like composition soon became exhausted, Mrs. Arnold could make no hand of it at all, and finally the baronet, having managed to obtain unsuspected access at all times to his son's diary, copied bodily the passionate effusions therein addressed to Lilian, with such changes of phrase only as were absolutely necessary. Those letters were listened to by Lilian with transports of delight. The ardency, the enthusiasm of love which breathed in every burning line could not be doubted or mistaken, and the veiled eyes of the deceived maiden glowed with darkened flame, the recovered roses of her cheek flushed to a deeper hue, and her again rounding form thrilled as she listened, with the proud consciousness of reigning supreme queen over the heart of her affianced lover. The danger of thus strengthening, sublimising, as it were, Lilian's love for Dunne, was lost sight of by the mother in her joy at beholding the happy effect of those

glowing missives upon her daughter's health, whilst Sir John Archdall appears to have imagined that when the time came for an *éclaircissement*, Lilian would be the more readily reconciled to the exchange of lovers, by discovering that the music vows she had drank in with so much delight were the love-breathings of Henry Archdall instead of Elias Dunne!

The sequel of the story will best test the value of that opinion. Meanwhile month after month sped past; Lilian had become totally blind, though she was else in perfect health, when the greatest calamity that can befal an affectionate child suddenly fell upon her. Mrs. Arnold, who for several years had suffered from palpitation of the heart, uttered a sharp cry of pain whilst speaking one day with Sir John Archdall in Lilian's presence, pressed her hands with convulsive force upon her left side, staggered, fell upon the floor and expired, before she could enunciate an articulate sentence, a prayer to God, or a blessing upon her child.

The wind is tempered to the shorn lamb, and Lilian's bitter grief for the loss of her mother gradually softened to a resigned sadness; a sadness which itself, medicined by the Lethean balm shed from the wings of the fleeing hours, would, ere many months were fled, become a memory only. That time was not, however, yet, and sedulous care was needed, lest the blind maiden's health should give way before the new sorrow by which she was assailed. Sir John Archdall, who, by a will dated but a few months previously, was appointed Lilian's guardian, heartily addressed himself to that labour of love. A respectable person was engaged as housekeeper at Mary Place, but who—an indispensable condition with Sir John—could not read writing, and the baronet himself kindly undertook to act as the orphan girl's reader and amanuensis. Mr. Dunne's letters, Lilian was apprized by a line he feigned to read to her from one, would, in future, for reasons of safety and secrecy, be addressed under cover to Sir John Archdall, Bart., of Chelsea; which Sir John Archdall, Baronet, soon wearying of reading as well as copying the lover epistles, supplied in unfailing abundance by the diary (beginning, moreover, to doubt the wisdom of doing so), invented a letter from Mr. Dunne, which hurriedly set forth that re-

newed pursuit obliged him to suddenly pass over to Holland, and that he greatly feared, not only because of the greater distance and intervening sea-passage, but, for other imperative reasons, it might be a considerable time before he could again communicate by letter with his beloved Lilian. This was a grief to the maiden, but it carried no sting with it, and soon, drying her tears, she noticed that Mr. Dunne did not seem to be aware of her mother's death. The remark called up a blush of confusion upon Sir John's veteran cheek, which he was glad Lilian could not see. When inditing this last letter he had forgotten that had he really forwarded the note dictated by Miss Arnold, Dunne would have known every particular connected with her mother's decease, and that, however hurried for time, he could not but have alluded sympathizingly to the daughter's bereavement. Recovering himself with characteristic readiness, Sir John remarked that it was plain Miss Arnold's last note had not reached Captain Dunne. He had probably been for some considerable time away from Scarborough, at hide and seek, and waiting for means of getting safely over to Holland. Lilian agreed that it must be so, and the subject dropped. Slight, unimportant as this conversation may appear, its influence upon the after-fortunes of the speakers was incalculable; so impossible is it to foresee the ultimate consequence for good or evil of the most apparently trivial, unpregnant circumstance.

Sir John Archdall *did*, about that time, receive a letter from Scarborough, announcing the private marriage of Mabel Towers and Elias Dunne; and expressing a confident belief that the royal pardon would, before long, be extended to the gallant bridegroom.

And now a few words of Henry Archdall. Since his return from Hampshire he had been an almost daily guest at Mary Place, and the constant shadow there of Lilian. Uncognizant, unsuspicious of the deceit practised upon her, he, for the first time since he saw Lilian, felt penetrated, filled with a deep, silent joy; a joy, which, had he cared or known how to analyze, he would have found to mainly spring from an unconscious conviction, so to speak, that Lilian's heart, if not his own, had not been given to another. It had in some way become known to him that

a youthful accomplished soldier, escaped from Sedgemoor, had secretly resided for several weeks at Mary Place, and a jealous suspicion had, in consequence, been excited in his mind. But the stranger was gone; his name was never mentioned by Mrs. Arnold and her daughter, and Lilian's genial gaiety of heart had never been more strikingly manifest, spite of total loss of sight; a calamity which, after all, *might* prove to be irremediable. Nay, she evidently took pleasure in his, Henry Archdall's, conversation —once avowed in words that she did!

The dreamy, imaginative young man related the particulars of that exciting incident to his father, to whom, by the way, he had some time before openly avowed his attachment to Miss Arnold, in nearly the following words :—

"We were sitting near each other, upon the brow of the grassy slope, from which the view Lilian used to admire so much is best obtained. It was the hour, too, when the view is at its loveliest. The woods were still warm in the dying light of a gold and purple sunset, which, slowly fading, seemed yet to triumph in the sheen and sparkle of the tiny stream which runs through the rich, green meadow where cows were quietly grazing. Over the tops of the trees a crescent moon was rising, and the stars, day's funeral lamps, were lighting slowly in the palely-darkening sky. I myself felt the influence of the scene in unusual power. This was doubtless chiefly owing to Lilian's presence, and as I endeavoured to paint what I felt to her inward sense I was conscious that my words assumed a tone of tenderness—of passion, even—which I am usually sedulous to avoid. Nevertheless Lilian not only did not evince the faintest displeasure at the unwonted warmth of my expressions, but when, having checked myself by a strong effort, I, after pausing for a few moments, resumed in a calmer, cooler tone, she exclaimed, 'Speak, Mr. Archdall, as you did just now. I fancied the while that I was again listening to——to——' She hesitated, and a faint blush arose upon her cheek. 'That I was again listening,' she immediately went on to say, 'to letters which my mother used to read to me, so wonderfully similar in tone, in turns of expression, in fanciful imagery, seemed your utterance to words deep-graven on my heart and memory. Pray go on; I could listen all night unweariedly.' I could not, for

very joy, and presently remarking that a heavy dew was beginning to fall, I proposed that we should at once go into the house. Lilian sighed, then murmured gentle acquiescence; and the most blissful hour of my life had passed away. What augury do you, sir, draw from Lilian's words?" asked Henry Archdall of his father, whose face, whilst he was speaking, had been persistently averted.

"The happiest augury," replied Sir John. "Still, I advise you, Henry, to continue to impose the strictest reserve upon yourself till after Lilian shall have been restored to sight, and she has thoroughly recovered from the pain and shock inseparable from such an operation. When does Dr. Ferly say it will be performed?"

"In about a fortnight."

"Good. Your probation, my dear boy, will not be a very protracted one."

The baronet then changed the subject, and father and son soon after separated for the night.

The operation of couching Lilian Arnold's eyes was performed with entire success at the time appointed. There was no doubt that her sight was perfectly restored, although for some time longer she would be compelled to wear a bandage over her eyes, to be gradually removed as those sensitive organs re-acquired power to bear the light.

A month elapsed before that consummation was fully achieved, and the last thin bandage finally removed. Wondrous, bewildering happiness to Lilian! The visible world of God, the old familiar haunts and faces, with one blank exception, were renewed to her, and fresh, bounding life rioted in her throbbing veins.

The letters—her lover's letters! She could read them herself now. This was almost her first thought, and she made immediate search for them. Alas! they were nowhere to be found: her mother must have burned or otherwise destroyed them. The disappointment was a terrible one, and Lilian would not be comforted. No letters now arrived from her banished lover. She knew the reason, certainly, and would learn to wait in faith and patience. Hard task for the sensitive, loving girl, especially now that her guardian, Sir John Archdall, had begun to drop absurd hints of possible unfaithfulness on the part of the absent one—guarded hints, but sufficiently intelligible—and that

Henry Archdall had put on an air of expectancy—of hopeful expectancy—which she could not misunderstand. Still she would bear all patiently. Doubt of her lover's constancy, since she had heard those truthful, glowing letters read, had never cast the slightest shadow on her mind. He would soon return to her; of that she felt assured. Rumours anticipative of the King's downfall, or, at all events, of the curtailment of his tyrannous power, were everywhere rife, and the bolder sort were talking almost openly on the subject. Patience, and all would be well.

Such being Lilian Arnold's state of mind, the joy with which she read the following note, brought to Mary Place by a special messenger early one morning in the month of August, 1686, may be better imagined than described:—

"My dear Mrs. Arnold,

"You and dear Lilian will be, I know, rejoiced to hear that the fugitive Elias Dunne, who owed his life to your generous protection, has at last received the King's unconditional pardon. We, that is, I and my aunt Towers, arrived last evening in London; Captain Dunne we expect every hour, and the dearest wish of his heart, I know, as it is of mine, is to pay our first visit to Mary Place. You may therefore expect to see us at about two o'clock this day. That God may in all things bless you, my dear Mrs. Arnold, and speedily restore to your charming daughter the blessing of sight, is the heartfelt prayer of your sincere friend, "MARION."

I have before observed that not the shadow of a doubt of Elias Dunne's perfect constancy rested upon Lilian Arnold's mind. The foregoing note was, consequently, read and interpreted by the light of that unquestioning conviction, and not the faintest suspicion of its real import appears to have crossed her mind. The note confirmed the surmise of Sir John Archdall that tidings of her mother's death had not reached Captain Dunne, and the note further corroborated her own previously-formed opinion, that, since he had gone over to Holland, her lover had been unable to communicate directly or indirectly with England. No misgiving, therefore, not the slightest,

damped poor Lilian's rapturous joy, and as soon as the tumult of emotion by which she was for a time bewildered, overborne, had sufficiently calmed down, she busied herself—and found therein immense relief—in preparation for her lover's coming—simple household preparations, including change of dress for herself. At length all was ready; the shadow of the garden-dial drew near the appointed hour, and Lilian, trembling with excess of happiness, bade the housekeeper proceed to a vantage ground at a little distance, and give notice, by lifting her hand, of the approach of the expected guests.

The signal was not long waited for, and Lilian Arnold, supporting herself with difficulty in the outer doorway of Mary Place, waved her kerchief in recognition of Elias Dunne, who, the moment he caught sight of her, hurried forward, closely followed by his wife Marion and Mrs. Towers. In the distance appeared Sir John Archdall and his son, the former hurrying on with frantic speed, and calling vehemently upon Mr. Dunne to stop. That gentleman, not comprehending the exigent motive of the breathless baronet's appeal, disregarded it, and the next minute was in Lilian's presence.

"Dear Lilian!" he exclaimed, with emotion, and holding out his hand.

The maiden caught it, drew her supposed affianced lover a few steps into the room, and then, with a burst of sobbing ecstacy, threw herself into his arms. "Elias, beloved Elias!"

Surprise and consternation were in a moment painted upon every countenance there, most strikingly upon Sir John Archdall's, accompanied, in his case, with the pallor of guilt.

"There appears to be some strange misapprehension here!" exclaimed Mrs. Marion Dunne, with flashing eye and cheek. "Pray, recollect yourself, Miss Arnold."

Startled by the tone of voice more than by the words, Lilian raised her head from the shoulder upon which her streaming face was buried, and looked in Miriam's haughty face.

"What may this mean?" she murmured, yielding mechanically to Mr. Dunne's withdrawal from her embrace.

"Let me speak with Miss Arnold alone," exclaimed Sir John Archdall.

"The meaning is very simple," said Mrs. Dunne, in reply to Lilian. "The gentleman you have so strangely received is, as of course you must be aware, my husband."

"Yes, my dear Miss Arnold," exclaimed Elias Dunne. "Permit me to introduce you to my wife——"

A sharp scream broke from Lilian, checked by a mighty effort, the unhappy girl at the same moment pressing her hands upon her heart, as if to keep down, to stifle its convulsive throbbings.

"Is it possble!" exclaimed Mrs. Dunne, "that you were not aware that I have been several months married to Captain Dunne?"

"No—no—no!" gasped Lilian. "I——I——Oh, God!

The shock had been too sudden, too violent. A sharp cry again escaped her, followed by a stream of blood, which jetted profusely over Henry Archdall, as he caught the swooning girl in his arms.

* * * * * *

Two years have passed away; the wicked King has, by timely flight, escaped his royal father's fate William's Dutch troops—advancing slowly, timidly, apprehensive as they were, spite of the popular welcome, that the English army commanded by Churchill might at the last moment declare against them—have reached London; the Revolution is an accomplished fact; the Restoration, with its crimes and shames, abolished for ever; and the national pulse beats high with a thrilling sense of recovered freedom and security. It being thus with the nation as a whole, we cannot doubt that individual sorrow was in numberless instances mitigated by the general joy. Not so at Mary Place: the grief which brooded there was too profound—the desolation too utter, remediless! Lilian Arnold was dying—not of wounded affection, but of lingering physical decline, consequent upon the rupture of a lung blood-vessel. Her love for Elias Dunne had completely passed away before the knowledge of his ingrate fickleness, and a few months only after the discovery or avowal of his marriage it was settled that, should Dr. Ferly succeed in restoring her to health, she would be Henry Archdall's wife. Upon that supreme expectancy the devoted lover had lived,

feeding the tremulous flame of life with golden hopes that long kept their brightness in the very shadow of Death, falling darker and darker with every succeeding day upon the wasting face and form of his beloved Lilian. The last hours meted to the dying girl on earth were cheered by his tones and words of infinite sympathy and tenderness. They were seated close by each other, hand clasped in hand, on the brow of the slope before mentioned; a calm, roseate summer's day was drawing towards its close, and he had just finished reading "Lycidas," when a murmured prayer flitted from her pale lips, and her head sank upon his shoulder. Instinctively he felt that the dreaded moment of parting was come, and he uttered a loud cry of despair, which at once brought Sir John Archdall, and Dr. Ferly, who chanced to be at Mary Place, to the spot.

"The strife is over," said the physician. "Our Lilian is in heaven!"

Henry Archdall did not long remain behind. Ere the year had returned full cycle he was buried by her side in Islington grave-yard, and Sir John Archdall had shut himself up with his agony, remorse, contrition, in a French Benedictine convent.

THE THREE JEWS OF ALDGATE.

"Here lies the body of Daniel Saul,
Spitalfields' weaver, and that's all."
Epitaph in Stepney Churchyard.

It was not till 1650 that Jews were permitted to settle in London, and the locality then assigned to them was Duke's Place, Aldgate. Amongst those who earliest availed themselves of the grudgingly-conceded privilege was the family of David Levy, dealer in precious stones, rare spices, and other Oriental products, and reputedly a person of large wealth. His wife was living, and he had one surviving child, a son, named Daniel. The family's housekeeping was, to outward appearance, penurious in the extreme. No servant was kept, and, except on business, no one, even of their own nation, visited at the house. David Levy died 1670, his wife a few years later, when Daniel succeeded to the uncontrolled possession of the property and business. Daniel Levy's reputation as a keen trader did not stand nearly so high as his father's had. His skill as a judge of precious stones was questioned, and he was thought to be much too rash a speculator. This latter opinion was mainly based upon the fact that he had added the business of importing silk—one in which he was wholly unskilled—to his already sufficiently-extensive ventures. These injurious criticisms, reports, guesses, were, it must be understood, confined to the especially keen-witted and knowing ones of the commercial world with whom Daniel Levy came occasionally into business-contact; the mass of the London trading community never doubting that he was carrying on a lucrative and expanding commerce. It is necessary to here state that Daniel Levy had been induced to engage in the silk speculation by one Daniel Saul's glowing representation of the immense profits to be certainly realised in that trade. Saul, originally a working Spitalfields' weaver, had been for

several years employed as clerk in the splendid establishment of Mr. John Chevenix Pendergast, silkman of Cheapside, and successor, three times removed, to Bradborne, the great silkman, at whose house Charles I. dined in 1635. Saul left the service of Pendergast for that of his fellow-Israelite, Levy; and soon after his new master was fairly launched in the business of silk-importation, succeeded in obtaining for him a large slice of his old employer's custom.

Daniel Levy, who had married a comely Jewess without a penny, had issue of his marriage three sons, David, Ephraim, and Benoni. Mrs. Levy died soon after giving birth to Benoni, but the sire lived on in faithful widowhood till his sons were respectively twenty-nine, twenty-six, and twenty-four years of age, when he, too, was gathered to his fathers, and the three sons were at liberty to quietly ascertain whether they were, as common fame gave out, merchant princes, or as special rumour hinted, penniless paupers.

The three brothers, that is to say, were *legally* at liberty to make inquisition of their deceased father's affairs; but it happened that the two senior sons, David and Ephraim, agreed in opinion that an inquiry, which certain half-sentences of Saul's during their father's last illness (confusedly explained to mean nothing if he observed that they were noticed) had suggested, might reveal abysses only to be bridged over, if at all, by bold-fronted audacity and cunning, ought not to be participated in by their timid-tempered, somewhat scrupulous younger brother.

Having thus decided, David and Ephraim Levy, on the morrow of their father's funeral, set about the all-important inquiry without consulting or communicating with Benoni upon the matter. Their first step was to summon Daniel Saul, their late father's only and close confidant, and question him of the things which concerned their peace.

Saul at once relieved them of the labour of further inquiry. The deceased Daniel Levy, he coolly informed his new masters, had been like *his* father David, hopelessly insolvent all his business-life. The debts, which they would find accurately posted up in the ledger, now amounted to within a trifle of thirty thousand pounds—the available assets, not, of course, including those hypothe-

cated for their full value to certain impatient creditors who would not be refused or delayed—might reach, if prudently realised, the sum of five thousand pounds!

David and Ephraim Levy glared at their candid enlightener and at each other in dumb dismay. Ruin so complete, irretrievable, stunned, stupified them.

Daniel Saul having said his astounding say, remained silently observant of its effect upon his auditors.

David, the most fiery-tempered of the brothers, first found his tongue.

"What end may Daniel Saul," he exclaimed, wiping the hot perspiration from his forehead, "what end may Daniel Saul propose to gain by mocking us with such gross falsehoods? Assets, prudently realised, about five thousand pounds, eh? Whereas the precious stones which I saw with my own eyes but a few months since are worth four times that sum."

The ebon eyes of Daniel Saul sparkled with real or well-simulated irony. The look of Saul, when he was animated, generally wore, the brothers had remarked, an aspect of dual significance—original simplicity or singleness of mind it might be, struggling with, and piercing through, a low cunning, generated by many years of sharp and peculiar business-practice. Ephraim, indeed, who was of a somewhat sceptical turn of mind, was more than half disposed to believe that the cunning expression revealed the original, ingrained bent of mind; that of honest simplicity its artificial, and not always carefully-worn, mask. Still the young Israelite was by no means sure that his suspicions did not wrong the tried and trusted friend, rather than servant, of his late father.

"Can you really be serious?" replied Saul to David Levy. "True, it was your father's unswerving policy to keep his sons completely in the dark as to the true condition of his affairs, fearing, as he justly did, that the natural garrulity of youth might else, in an unguarded moment, bring us all to cureless ruin. Still I can hardly understand how you could both, especially how you, Master Ephraim, could have been hoodwinked by your father's device—astute, well-managed as it certainly was.

"What in the name of Beelzebub are you talking of?"

"You, Master David," coolly returned Saul, "were speak-

ing of the six rubies and four opals which your father was wont to occasionally display with so much pardonable pride to silk-growers and buyers, never to lapidaries or others skilled in such wares. It was a rare notion," continued Daniel Saul, "and did wonders for the credit of the firm. Rich, indeed, must that man be," he added, with a coarse chuckle, "who can afford to keep twenty thousand pounds at the very least — he having been, you know, offered fifteen thousand pounds over and over again for the rubies alone—lying idle in precious stones."

"Yes," presently resumed Saul, heedless of the elder brother's interrogative malediction; "yes, a rare notion. One might call it a sublime flight of genius were it quite original, which it can hardly be said to have been. You have, no doubt, read the story of the great foreign merchant who paved the floor of his counting-room with silver pieces of eight, each of which returned him, *in credit*, a hundred fold its value. My late respected patron's device was, I suspect, borrowed, in part, from that of the great foreign merchant, though there was a great difference between them, namely, that your good father's glittering bait for fools was not a costly one—the famous rubies and opals being, in sober fact, my dear young masters, skilfully-cut coloured crystals; nothing more, upon my life!"

"Thou king of liars!" shouted David Levy, springing up as if about to lay violent hands upon Saul. His rage was rebuked by calmer Ephraim.

"What will it avail," said the younger brother, "to curse or maltreat the mere herald of ill news. Besides, it is easy to ascertain if Saul is jesting with, or attempting to deceive, us. Let us at once examine, by fair daylight, these stones or crystals. It is true we are not expert judges of such things; still, we can surely distinguish precious stones from coloured glass."

"No doubt, no doubt," interposed Daniel Saul, with some eagerness; "if you closely examine and handle the false jewels by fair daylight, which you have never, by any chance, been permitted to do."

"And you, Daniel Saul, I now call to mind," exclaimed David Levy, with returning rage, "were always officiously vigilant in preventing that close examination."

"My duty commanded that vigilance, Master David; so

perilous a secret required to be jealously guarded. Besides, a disagreeable truth is always known too soon."

"I do not go along with you in that," said Ephraim Levy. "It may be wise or profitable to cajole others, but only an idiot would fool himself. Enough, however, of this. Let us see these sham jewels."

"Daniel Saul left the room without further remark, and presently returned with the jewel-case in his hand. An adept in reading faces might have gained some knowledge of the diverse emotions which agitated those three silent, eager Jews at that moment. The elder brother rose up as Saul entered, and, with rigid hands grasping the edge of the table, fixed flaming eyes upon the jewel-case, regardless of, or insensible to, other objects. Ephraim did not move from his chair, and keenly marked the aspect and demeanour of Saul—a scrutiny which that worthy did not seem able to support: his flurried glance was averted from the silent questioner; his sallow cheeks grew sallower, and his hand trembled so much that it was with some difficulty he inserted the key in the lock and opened the casket. That done, the contents were instantly seized by David Levy, held to the light, and doubt was at an end.

David Levy fell back into his seat with a groan and a curse. Ephraim, mastering all outward sign of dismay, save that of his colourless face, exclaimed,—

"It is, then, no idle jest of thine, Daniel Saul, as I had partly hoped. These are, indeed, unmistakeable counterfeits, and not, it appears to me, very clever ones, either."

Saul's shaking hands replaced the sham stones in the jewel-case, he neither looking up nor speaking the while.

"The thing is altogether strange, incomprehensible," resumed Ephraim Levy. "Often, very often, has our father, when vaguely hinting at unprosperous ventures, referred to those precious stones as a means of deliverance for himself and his sons, should evil fortune continue to pursue him. A bitter mockery that, if some robber *has not stolen the true jewels and replaced them with counterfeits.*"

Daniel Saul locked the casket as the youngest Jew ceased speaking; then, as if nothing had been said that required notice or comment on his part, left the room to replace the casket in the receptacle from which it had been taken.

He was absent a few minutes only—a brief passage of time which had, however, sufficed not only to restore his self-possession, but had enabled him to assume a stony, imperturbable, boldly-defiant air, in singular contrast with the usual cunningly-servile expression of his face.

That bold, defiant aspect at once convinced Ephraim Levy that he had to do with one who, having reviewed his position and chances, felt himself secure and confident from hostile purposes, and that it would consequently be the rashest folly to irritate and warn such a man by hurling at him mere impotent suspicion. Nevertheless, Ephraim Levy and Daniel Saul, as both in after-days declared, perfectly comprehended that from that moment they were engaged in a duel *à l'outrance* with each other, which could have no pause or rest save by the discomfiture and ruin of one of the combatants.

"If the fire of a naturally hot temper," said Daniel Saul, in a tone as hard and resolved as his countenance, "had not been all but extinguished in me by the chill of life-long poverty, the words you, Master Ephraim, uttered as I left the room, would have bred strife between us. I told you I have always been aware that your father's pretended rubies and opals were coloured crystals, and you insultingly hint a belief that some thief must have stolen the true jewels and replaced them with counterfeits."

"I merely hinted at the possibility of such a crime," replied Ephraim.

"Which is an offence as gross towards me as a more direct charge. If your words have any base of sincerity, your proper course is to make public accusation in the matter, forthwith. Announce to the world, through the newspapers, that the late David Levy's jewels, of much over twenty thousand pounds value, have been stolen, and offer a reward for the discovery of the culprit."

"You interpret a few hasty words in too serious a sense," said Ephraim Levy; "and if I really entertained the suspicion I lightly expressed, I should not, you may be sure, be anxious to proclaim that we are beggars in the market-place. Pray let us be friends. We have need of wise counsel."

"The counsel of an Achitophel would avail nothing in this accursed strait!" exclaimed David Levy with passion.

"Whether to hang or drown ourselves appears to be about the only choice left us."

"It requires no Achitophel," said Daniel Saul, who permitted himself to be easily mollified. "It requires no Achitophel to advise in the very simple matter before us. Hang or drown yourselves forsooth! gird up your loins *I* say for a stout struggle with Fortune, and if you conquer not, it will be a proof that you lacked skill or courage for the encounter; the chances of victory being so greatly in your favour."

"The chances in our favour with five thousand pounds and some coloured crystals wherewith to face debts amounting to thirty thousand!"

"Yes, greatly in your favour. True, you have only about five thousand pounds in present possession, but you have the command of twice thirty thousand of other people's moneys. Listen calmly for a few moments. The credit of the house never stood higher with foreign silk-growers and spinners than now: the market will, there is not a shadow of doubt, be a rising one for the next three or four years, during which, if you play boldly enough, you may win thrice the amount of the debt incurred by your father."

"Or treble the amount of that debt."

"Certainly that is possible; and even in that case there will be the resource of that fast-peopling Abdullam, the American States, where young men that have been worsted in the Old World may, if they take moneys with them, begin life anew in security, and with fair promise of success. Please also not to forget," continued Daniel Saul, "that the parents of Rachel Samson, whose portion will not be less than ten thousand pounds, are desirous that she should wed your brother Benoni."

"And that Benoni would prefer taking Leah Saul to wife," remarked David Levy.

"If your brother ever entertained that silly wish, he must now be thoroughly aware that its gratification is simply impossible. Leah is comfortably placed with Madam Pendergast, and has no thought of marriage, poor child."

"Not even with Lionel Pendergast?" sneered Ephraim. "Pray," he added, "has pretty Leah been baptized yet?"

"Not yet," coolly replied Saul. "Mrs. Pendergast has, you know, an uncontrollable passion for gathering the wandering sheep of Israel into the fold of the Christ of her Church, and Leah inclines to her faith."

"Or that of her youthful, wealthy son!"

"As you please," rejoined Saul; "though it is not for us who wear the faith of Abraham about us as we do our best garments—for show on Sabbath and ceremonial days—to condemn any one who chooses to barter a false pretence for the reality of solid riches, if he or she have the opportunity of doing so."

"Quite true," said Ephraim Levy; "and pray let us talk of business matters."

They did so talk till even-tide; the ultimate result being the semblance of perfect unity of purpose in the course to be pursued. Two prime conditions of the pact were, that the outer world, and especially the Samson family, should be cajoled into a conviction that the new firm of Levy Brothers found themselves richer, much richer, than had been anticipated, and that Benoni Levy should himself be impressed with that belief. Benoni was too weak a vessel to support the weight of so perilous a secret; and there were other reasons for mistrusting him, with which the reader will be presently acquainted. All seemingly essential matters having been decided upon, the three Israelites separated with words of mutual good will upon their lips, and a hell of rage, hate, and demoniac triumph burning at their hearts.

The demoniac triumph glowed only in the blood of Daniel Saul. He believed that the felonious device, which a concurrence of unexpected chances had induced him to hazard, would secure riches for himself, and the marriage of his daughter with wealthy young Pendergast. He coveted riches for Leah well nigh as ardently as for himself. She was, indeed, the only source of healthful moral life remaining to him. *Her* future, as shaped by his hopes, brilliant with the splendour of wealth and worldly honour, was a day-dream as precious to his inflamed imagination as his own coming life, when he should not only be actually rich, but gaining, realising, hoarding heaps upon heaps of gold by rigid saving, and cunning usury, practised in a cheap dingy den in the Minories, which he had occupied

since Leah left him for the Pendergasts. His daughter would flaunt her splendour openly in the dazzled eyes of the multitude, he the while garnering up gold, quietly, secretly, till he was at least as rich as——. But no, Daniel Saul would not even in imagination set bounds, however large, to his future acquisitions. He *would* be fabulously rich, or nothing but Daniel Saul, Spitalfields weaver, and that's all. He had set his life, his all, upon the hazard of a die, and would boldly bide the venture.

A perilous venture, based upon nothing but the momentary success of a lie! The deceased Levy's jewels were *real;* that is to say, he did possess, when living, the veritable rubies and opals which the crystals counterfeited, as well as those counterfeits, which, by the by, though called crystals by Saul, must, I am inclined to believe, have been fabricated of some better adapted substance or substances. I am not, however, versed in the mysteries of gem manufacture.

The true state of the case, as revealed by subsequent legal investigation, was this, or nearly this. The deceased Levy, who had a passion, one might call it a superstitious passion, for the retention of those particular gems, the absolute parting from which would, to him, have been the sign and seal of final ruin, had nevertheless been obliged to frequently pawn them, in strict confidence, for large sums, generally, if not always, with Mr. Pendergast, through the intervention of Daniel Saul. Once, it doubtfully appears, they were pledged with one Luizi, a wealthy Lombard. I say doubtfully, because Saul himself was not, it seems clear, cognizant of the circumstance.

Now the ostentatious display of so much concrete wealth, so to speak, having become a habit with Levy, senior, its cessation whilst the gems were in pawn—and once Mr. Pendergast held them over a year—might have been attended with bad consequences, and, at Daniel Saul's suggestion, the counterfeit device was had recourse to. There was little fear of detection, as the jewels were only shown to those who had been similarly favoured scores of times, and whose listless glance and smile of admiration and envy was a mere matter of business. Very likely, too, some ingenuity was exerted in hindrance of any close in-

spection. Be that as it may, no suspicion of imposture was, in any instance, entertained.

It may be that a dim idea of some future profitable fraud glanced, whilst making the suggestion, across a mind which, since it could reason, had been ever brooding over present poverty, and a possible Dorado of future riches; but it is not, I think, likely that the particular fraud, subsequently perfected by Daniel Saul, could even in inchoate shape have then been conceived. As previously hinted, the concurrence of singularly favourable circumstances—the absence of any allusion to the jewels, mock or real, in the papers of the deceased—a fact rigidly verified by Daniel Saul, urged him, nothing loath, to the venture, upon which, he truly said, his life, his all, was set. It is almost needless to remark that the frightful consequences of that fraud could not have presented themselves as a possibility to Daniel Saul's mind. This, however, is a trite circumstance — the text of innumerable homilies. Very seldom, indeed, will crime confine itself to the particular pattern first sketched out by the criminal. The serpent-seed once sown develops into forms—branches out into a luxuriance unguessed of by the sower. In an ethical sense this is, no doubt, very superficial; but, at all events, the suggestion is a charitable one, and in this case of Daniel Saul both true and pertinent. Moreover, it somewhat reconciles the developed devilry of the man with his deep, unselfish love of his child, and other humane qualities attributed to him, no doubt upon sufficient grounds, though, assuredly, they are not apparent in the portion of his life which I am now transcribing. It is not to a Daniel Saul, Spitalfields weaver, and that's all, that the world applies its copper-plate axiom of, "De mortui," et cetera.

The jewels were pledged with Mr. Pendergast when Daniel Levy died; and in the custody of his confidential clerk there were, at the same time, large sums of money, for the greatest part recently received. Now the sons having been kept in total ignorance of their father's monetary affairs, and as Saul alone could enlighten them upon the subject, the confidential clerk would have incurred little or no risk by confiscating a large portion of those moneys to his own use. That comparatively modest felony

did, in fact, as he afterwards confessed, commend itself at first to his mind by its safe simplicity; but further reflection changed, or rather enlarged, that purpose to the audacious one finally determined upon.

Daniel Saul's first move in carrying out that enlarged purpose had been to see Mr. Pendergast, to whom he said that his deceased master had directed him to redeem the jewels with the first moneys that came to hand; and had also expressed a wish that his sons should not be informed that they had ever been pledged—a request which Saul hinted was not so much prompted by a purse-proud feeling, strong in death, as by a fear that the example might suggest to his heirs a facile mode of raising money which, with their inexperience of the world, they might abuse to their own ruin. Mr. Pendergast, who was confined to his chamber by long-continued illness, readily promised not to drop a hint upon the subject, and Saul having disbursed the sum borrowed upon the jewels, with interest thereon, took them away, hastily leaving the house in such a flurried state of mind that he forgot to inquire after his daughter Leah. Had he done so of Mr. Pendergast he would probably have been replied to by herself, she having been, during his interview with that gentleman, in an immediately adjoining apartment, the door leading to which was partially unclosed, preparing a posset-drink for the invalid, and had heard every word that passed. Not, however, attaching the slightest importance to the conversation, Leah Saul did not mention the circumstance to her father, who consequently believed that his conference with Mr. Pendergast had been strictly private as well as confidential.

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Upwards of nine months have passed away since that conference. Mr. Chevenix Pendergast is dead—the firm of Levy Brothers enjoy a fair commercial reputation—Daniel Saul is established in the Minories, and in a much better house than he had previously dwelt in (his daughter Leah residing with him since the death of Mr. Pendergast), whither he is followed by the sleepless suspicions of Ephraim Levy. His business is that of a dealer in the precious metals, and money-lender; and his pretext for leaving the service of Levy Brothers was, that a distant

relative, resident for many years in Holland, had very unexpectedly bequeathed him a legacy, considerable enough to enable him to exchange the status of clerk for that of merchant. Daniel Saul did not encourage much questioning upon the subject, and as it was known that he really did return from Holland in possession of large funds, after a few weeks' absence, the fact of the legacy was not doubted, save by Ephraim Levy, and *his* suspicions, constant, ineradicable as they were, had, for a time, no tangible basis. A chance discovery gave them shape and colour. In his minute and constant search amongst his father's papers, Ephraim Levy lit one day upon a soiled scrap of writing in the elder Pendergast's hand. It was evidently part of a torn note, and Ephraim Levy, with some difficulty, made out the following broken sentences:—

"The advance of four thousand pounds for two months expired . . . . . advise you to sell gems, the great value of which would——"

This was a lightning-flash upon the thick darkness of the ruby and opal mystery! The note had no question been addressed to his deceased father; and to Ephraim Levy's quick apprehension it was equally clear that the true rubies and opals had been pledged with Mr. Pendergast for four thousand pounds, payment of which was demanded by the said note. The silk-mercer was not a man to lend four thousand pence, much less four thousand pounds, upon coloured crystals. One doubt obtruded itself. The scrap of paper bore no date, and the money might have been borrowed upon other precious stones which had subsequently been disposed of in the way of business.

Suspense was unendurable, and the excited young man hurried off forthwith to the Minories in quest of Saul. The money-lender was not at home; would not be, Leah Saul informed her breathless questioner, for several hours. Ephraim Levy turned away with fierce impatience, but had not gone far when a wilier plan for getting at the truth than by coarsely questioning Saul dawned dimly upon his mind. Leah, who had so long resided, and in such close intimacy, with the Pendergast family, would probably have heard something of the kind of jewels that had been

pledged, no doubt by her own father. He would, at all events, return and speak with her.

"I *am* troubled in mind," he said, in reply to Leah. "An unexpected call has been made upon us for a heavy sum, which must be immediately met, or our credit will be rudely shaken. Your father, we thought, might be disposed to help us over the difficulty, and he will return home some hours too late. It is very unfortunate. We have ample security to offer," added Ephraim Levy, "but it is, you will easily comprehend, as important that it shall not be known we have borrowed money upon certain gems well known to be in our possession, as it is to borrow it without delay; and I know no one, except Daniel Saul, upon whom we could rely for inviolable secrecy in such a case."

"Are the gems you speak of the same which the late Mr. Pendergast more than once advanced large sums upon? because, in that case——" Leah Saul checked herself; the conversation she had accidentally overheard between her father and Mr. Pendergast suddenly recurring to memory.

"What gems do you speak of?" exclaimed Ephraim Levy: "the six rubies and four opals, mayhap?"

"Yes," said Leah; "and as you are acquainted with the fact that Mr. Pendergast *did* lend your father large sums upon those gems, I cannot have done very wrong in mentioning the circumstance."

Ephraim Levy said he did not take her meaning, and, in explanation, Leah related the conversation she had overheard the last time those precious stones were redeemed.

"That, I remember, was, as you say, a day or two after my father's death," said Ephraim Levy, his eyes the while fixed upon the floor to hide their fiery light from Leah Saul. "But Pendergast, senior, has died since then, and his son may not be disposed to renew the loan, or, if he were, it might be unwise to rely upon his silence."

"I have no doubt that Mr. Lionel Pendergast would renew the loan upon the former terms," said Leah; "and I have never heard that, in money matters, his discretion and honour could not be safely relied upon. He was fully cognizant of the former loans."

"Surely Mr. Pendergast consulted a lapidary as to the

value of the gems before advancing such a large sum upon them?"

"He may have done so in the first instance, though I doubt it. The last time, I remember, neither he nor his son opened the casket. They had confidence in your father and in mine," she added.

"You have removed a great weight from my mind," said Ephraim Levy, "and if the money cannot be raised in time by a less objectionable mode, and I have some hope that it may yet be, I will apply to Lionel Pendergast. And now," he continued, "be pleased to grant me another favour. We felt, you can easily believe, a natural repugnance to appear as borrowers before a man towards whom we lately stood in so different a position——"

"A man who was lately your servant," interrupted Leah, with a quiet smile. "I quite understand that."

"And, understanding it, you will not be surprised at my asking you not to mention what has just passed between us to your father. As we shall not require to ask him for the advance, he need not be informed of our necessities."

Leah promised that she would not touch upon the subject to her father or any one else. "The more willingly," she added, "as I shall thereby avoid rebuke for the slip of tongue which inadvertently betrayed what it *might* have been important, or at least right, to conceal."

When Daniel Saul returned home that evening he found Leah arrayed in her richest attire, and flushed, radiant with the moral intoxication which the incense burned before grace and beauty by a worshipper whom love has compelled to stoop from a social height to render that homage, can hardly fail to excite in the most evenly-balanced female mind.

Daniel Saul gazed with love and admiration at his daughter, and, tenderly embracing her, said—"I can interpret thy beaming looks, Leah. Thou art expecting a visit from Lionel Pendergast."

"Yes; I received this humbly-repentant missive from him about an hour since. Read it."

Saul's face lightened with a triumphant, good-naturedly contemptuous smile as he ran over the glowing lines, and the expression of Leah's differed only from his in the intensity of its triumph. Both Saul and his daughter had

so innate, so profound a reverence for riches, that they could not help feeling a disdainful pity for a man who could cast them at the feet of a girl, even though that girl was Leah Saul.

"Thou art a fortunate damsel, Leah," said Daniel Saul, adding, as he kissed and left her, "and well deservest thy good fortune."

It thus fell out that the visit of Ephraim Levy to his house was not so much as mentioned to Daniel Saul. It had, probably, passed from Leah's mind, jostled out by the afterwards received communication from Lionel Pendergast.

It yet wanted half an hour before Lionel Pendergast would arrive; a half-hour during which a crowd of memories, not all of a pleasurable kind, must have swept through the Jewish maiden's brain: a brief retrospect will reveal them to us as clearly as she, by speech, could have done.

Mrs. Pendergast, a lady of sincere, if somewhat eccentric, piety, having taken a fancy to pretty Leah Saul, determined to spare no pains to effect her conversion to Christianity, and Mr. Pendergast consenting, the young Jewess was received into the wealthy silk-man's house as the *protégée* and companion of Madam Pendergast, and as carefully educated as if she had been her own daughter.

Leah Saul, guided by her crafty father, played her cards with great skill, listened to her patroness's polemical divinity with the most charming candour and willing-to-be-convincedness, and finally intimated to her overjoyed spiritual teacher that she would openly avow her changed convictions by receiving baptism directly she reached the age when a child became emancipated from parental control.

It is quite probable the girl was sincere in making that declaration, or at worst, persuaded herself that she was, though the excusative flourish about parental control must have been pure fudge, forasmuch as Daniel Saul, who, to quote Sidney Smith's humorous illustration, resembled the blank leaf between the Old and New Testaments, separated from the one, and not joined to the other, would not have objected to his daughter publicly professing the faith of Islam, if that profession would make her

great—that is, rich. At all events, whatever may have been the spiritual value Leah Saul attached to the rite of baptism, she had a profound respect for the mundane efficacy of that of marriage, and had fully resolved that ablution at the font should but slightly precede the altar-ceremony which united her in the bonds of holy wedlock with Lionel Pendergast, sole heir to his father's wealth.

The danger that Lionel Pendergast, a youth of strong passions, might form an attachment to the youthful Jewess was not perceived by Mrs. Pendergast till the mischief was done, and irreparable; or at least deemed by her to be so; and after a while the facile dame was brought to look forward with complacency to her son's union with converted Leah Saul, when his father's death, which could not be long delayed, had removed an insuperable obstacle thereto.

The affair stood thus at Mr. Pendergast's decease, and the young Lionel came into possession of his father's property. The goal seemed to be gained; the glittering prize within triumphant Leah's grasp. Illusion! Neither she nor her father had taken into account the romance-dispelling effect upon a sensuous-minded young man of finding himself suddenly become uncontrolled master of his own actions and great wealth. Day after day, week succeeding week, month following month, did Leah Saul await, at her father's residence, whither, for decorum's sake, she had removed at the elder Pendergast's death, the renewal of her once ardent lover's addresses, the fulfilment of his passionate vows. He came not, and immersed, as she heard, in the dissipations of the metropolis, seemed to have forgotten her very existence.

At length, however, a healthy reaction, following a sharp fit of illness, took place in the mind of Lionel Pendergast. The image of Leah, radiant, beauteous as when transfigured in the rays of young Love's dawn, piercing through and exhaling the coarse fumes of vulgar excess, arose upon his imagination, and he was no sooner pronounced convalescent than he dispatched the missive to Leah—impatiently expected by her, thanks to a message sent by good Mrs. Pendergast—the receipt of which, by both father and daughter, we just now witnessed.

Lionel Pendergast's suit was accepted, and an early day named for the solemnization of the marriage. Unhappily

the temporary fickleness of her lover had engendered consequences which reconciliation with his placable mistress could not immediately remedy. Benoni Levy and Leah Saul had long known each other; and he had some two years before sent her a written declaration of changeless love, ending with an offer of marriage. Now as long as there was a chance of her becoming Mrs. Lionel Pendergast, Benoni Levy might as well have whistled jigs to milestones, and expected them to get up and turn partners, as hope to make Leah Saul his wife. When, however, she could no longer trust in that chance, the irritated young beauty consoled and amused herself by covertly stimulating the devotion of young Levy; not, perhaps, with any serious intention of marrying him—the Levys were too poor, she knew from her father, to permit of that, except in the last resort—but as a salve to her wounded vanity, and above all because it enabled her, or would do so, to fling back with usurious interest the scornful pity which proud Rachel Samson had once, in Leah's hearing, expressed for that poor and pretty weaver's daughter.

Well, Leah Saul had perfectly succeeded in rekindling the fire of passion smouldering in the breast of Benoni Levy to ardent flame; and not very many days before Lionel Pendergast's missive reached her she had listened complacently to Benoni's fiery declaration that he was ready to break all bonds that fettered him to Rachel Samson, cast her fortune to the winds, brave the anger of her relations and his own, and dare the worst that in the future might befall, if Leah Saul would but promise that that future should be shared with her.

Her father's precepts, and the chill of early poverty, had well nigh withered up all of disinterested unworldly romance that had been latent in the mind of Leah Saul; yet it was not possible for a girl to listen to an appeal so sincere and fervid without emotion. Leah, spite of her practised self-command, could not avoid manifesting that sympathizing emotion, and she knew that Benoni Levy left her with the full conviction that he had virtually gained her consent to be his wife.

It was now imperatively necessary to dispel that illusion; and how this should be quietly done, so as not to give occasion for injurious gossip that might reach the jealous

ear of Lionel Pendergast, must have had a large share of the thoughts which agitated Leah Saul whilst awaiting the arrival of her rich, repentant suitor. She had finally decided to see Benoni Levy on the morrow, or following day, frankly avow the determination she had come to, and conjure him, by his regard for her, no longer to indulge in a fantastic dream which *could* never be realised, when a loud knocking at the outer door broke in upon her meditations, and a minute afterwards Lionel Pendergast was at her feet.

Meanwhile Ephraim Levy had reached home, and was fiercely pondering the discovery he had at last made of Saul's astounding villany. How he should best turn that discovery to account, both in the way of vengeance and the recovery of the stolen jewels, was the question to be solved. Vengeance, legal vengeance, upon the robber, would not be difficult of attainment; and (precious element of hell-fire in the retributive justice that could consign him to the gallows!) Daniel Saul would find that it was his daughter's—his beautiful Leah's tongue that had hounded justice upon his track—*her* hand that had raised the gallows he would swing from. Still merely hanging the robber would not recover the stolen treasure, and never had the firm of Levy Brothers been in more pressing need of a few thousand pounds than then; and they had been robbed of twenty thousand! Damnation!

After all, was the villain's conviction so sure? Leah had said that she doubted if the elder Pendergast had ever had the jewels valued, and that the last time they were pledged neither Pendergast senior nor junior so much as looked at them. Lionel Pendergast would probably confirm that statement, and where, then, would be the legal proof that the true gems were obtained by Saul two days after Daniel Levy's death? To be sure he would not have paid thousands of pounds to redeem bits of glass, but might he not pretend that the cheat was the device of his deceased master, who, repenting thereof upon his deathbed, gave order that the money fraudulently obtained of Mr. Pendergast should be as quickly as possible restored! When dealing with so astute a knave as Daniel Saul, the utmost caution was required to ensure success; and the first thing to be done was to ascertain where he had dis-

posed of the jewels. That he had sold them to Dutch dealers Ephraim Levy did not doubt, and surely it would not be difficult for a clever man, desirous of purchasing rubies of great price, to discover the present owners of such remarkable gems. "Not in the slightest respect difficult," concluded the vengeful soliloquist, "and that knowledge once obtained I have thee, Daniel Saul, upon the hip."

The very next day Ephraim and David Levy despatched a confidential agent to Amsterdam, with directions to spare neither cost nor labour in discovering the purchasers of the stolen gems.

The two brothers were talking the matter over for the hundredth time on the morrow's eve, when Benoni Levy rushed into the room in a state of frenzy, feebly interpreted by maledictions upon all womankind, and notably Leah Saul!

"Daniel Saul's daughter has been fooling thee," sneered Ephraim Levy.

"Fooling, mocking, maddening me! Within a fortnight she will be the wife of Lionel Pendergast. I shall go mad! My brain burns as if flame had passed over it!"

"Leah has really hooked him at last, then," said Ephraim. "That is unfortunate," he added, exchanging a dark look with David, "it would be difficult in these days to hang Pendergast's father-in-law!"

Benoni did not hear this strange speech. His thoughts were far away, and the storm of rage and resentment being followed by an access of womanish grief, he bowed his head upon the table, and wept aloud.

His brothers continued the while their low-toned conference; and when poor Benoni had recovered the use of his faculties, Ephraim abruptly proposed that as Leah Saul was no doubt acting under the compulsion of her father in wedding with Lionel Pendergast, an attempt should be made to carry her off, and leave her no option but to marry Benoni Levy, the man of her choice!

"The damsel will not be obdurate in such a case," added Ephraim, "and there will be very little difficulty in carrying out the enterprise. Such things are done every day."

Flexile-minded Benoni Levy yielded slowly, reluctantly, to the overbearing insistence of his brothers, and was at

last brought to solemnly promise that he would boldly play his part in the affair, the details of which David and Ephraim undertook to arrange.

"Benoni really believes we are going to help him to marry Leah Saul," said Ephraim, as soon as he and David were alone. "The poor fellow will be sadly disappointed. We shall blunder wretchedly," he continued, in a brisker tone, "if we do not so effectually damage Saul's daughter in young Pendergast's opinion as to end all chance of her marriage with him."

"Yes!" said David, "and, moreover, so damage Benoni Levy in Rachel Samson's eyes as to give *Ephraim* Levy a chance of winning that lady and her ten thousand pounds. True!"

Benoni's preliminary part in the proposed abduction was to write to Leah soliciting one last interview at a place named. The letter stated in pathetic terms that he had resigned the precious hopes which he had too long indulged in, and was about to leave England for at least a year, at the expiration of which he hoped to be so far cured of his present infatuation as to be able to espouse the lady whom the two families were desirous should be his wife. He could not, however, would not go into exile without *once* more seeing the idol of his affections, &c., &c., &c. This effusion was shown to his brothers, and no doubt was entertained that it would have the wished-for effect.

The place of meeting had been chosen by Ephraim, and the plot succeeded to admiration. Lionel Pendergast reached the spot in excellent time, and was quietly placed in ambush by the agent employed to pour the leprous distilment of jealousy in his ear. A few minutes later Rachel Samson and her father gained *their* place of observation and concealment, and the eloping lovers were alone wanted to make up the number of actors in the tragi-comic farce.

They were not long waited for. A carriage drawn by four horses rapidly approached, drew up a little distance off, and out jumped Benoni Levy, hastening to the exact trysting-place. Leah presently came upon the scene; Benoni caught her in his arms; hurried off in the direction of the carriage, and before the astonished girl could express her terror and bewilderment by so much as a scream, Lionel Pendergast had rushed from his hiding-

place, collared Benoni Levy, and was hurling at her a torrent of bitter, indignant reproaches. Mr. Samson and daughter came forward at a severe dignified pace. Poor Leah, perceiving the nature of the trap into which she had fallen, fainted outright, and was borne off to the nearest habitation. A paper fell from her dress as they carried her away, which Lionel Pendergast seized and eagerly perused. It was Benoni Levy's note, praying Leah to grant him a parting interview.

That same day's post had brought a letter to Levy Brothers from their agent in Holland, setting forth information in legal form of the sale of the rubies and opals by Daniel Saul for large sums to the several individuals named in the enclosed papers.

Ephraim and David Levy, after brief deliberation, determined to forthwith follow up the blow they had dealt Leah Saul, by the arrest of her father upon a charge of felony. A warrant was readily granted, and Daniel Saul was hurried off to prison. At the hearing, on the following day, the case was postponed till witnesses could be brought from Holland; whilst so plausible was the explanation volunteered by the prisoner, that the magistrate consented to liberate him on bail. To the astonishment of the Brothers Levy, Lionel Pendergast immediately offered to become bail to any amount, and, as a matter of course, his security for the prisoner's future appearance was accepted. The fortunate accident of Benoni Levy's note dropping from Leah's dress and being picked up and perused by Lionel Pendergast, had not only frustrated the design of the plotters, as far as he and Leah were concerned, but had swept away every vestige of jealousy and suspicion from his mind. Leah, who now seemed dearer, more precious to him than ever, drew from him a promise that he would spare no sacrifice or effort to rescue her father from the peril which beset him. He kept his word. The Dutch lapidaries to whom Daniel Saul sold the jewels, when informed that their presence was required in England, told the messenger that they had sold the gems in question, and that all they knew of their customer was that he paid them honestly.

The criminal charge being, therefore, necessarily abandoned, the Brothers Levy arrested Saul on mesne process

for the value of the jewels, and to escape from prison he got himself made bankrupt. Our story ends a few days after Daniel Saul was released from jail, utterly broken down in spirit, and partially reconciled only to hateful life by his daughter's brilliant marriage, which, at the instance of the hot-blooded, wilful bridegroom, was solemnized on the day originally fixed upon. Another source of satisfaction to Saul's malevolent, vindictive spirit was, that the firm of Levy Brothers, the rottenness of which had been revealed by the jewel disclosures, had been declared bankrupt. He would drain that cup of sweetest vengeance to the last drop, come what come may. The opportunity of doing so was not denied him.

The fiat in bankruptcy had been formally opened in Re Levy Brothers, the messenger from the Court had taken possession, the house was closed, and Ephraim Levy, abandoning himself to a proud, impious despair, determined to curse God and die. He retired to a back apartment immediately after the arrival of the bankruptcy messenger, armed with a small phial containing poison, and a sharp poniard, undecided, probably, which to make use of. The entrance of his brother David must have caused him to hastily conceal the poniard beneath the pillow of a sort of couch-bed he was sitting upon: the phial he could conceal in his hand. His brother left the room, was absent but a few minutes only, and found, on his return, the unhappy Ephraim leaning back upon the bed with the emptied phial in his grasp. Instantly comprehending what had taken place, David Levy uttered a loud cry of anguish and dismay.

"Grieve not, brother," said the dying man; "death, to me, is an escape, a refuge——"

The door gently opened and a clerk looked in—"Daniel Saul is below," said he, "and requests to see the Brothers Levy upon matters of importance."

"Bid the accursed villain begone——"

"No—no—no!" exclaimed Ephraim, interrupting his brother, and raising himself upon the couch, whilst fire flashed from his eyes; "bid him come in at once. I shall have time and strength," he murmured, as the door closed. "I *will* have time and strength."

Daniel Saul entered the room with a slow, heavy step,

and a hard, yet sickly smile gleaming over his harsh features. Appearing not to observe David Levy, he fixed his gaze upon Ephraim, who as steadfastly regarded him. It was astonishing, David Levy afterwards remarked, how like each other they looked at that moment.

"I have called to felicitate you, Ephraim Levy," said Saul, "upon the results of your proceedings against me—bankruptcy—ruin—beggary!"

"Come nearer, Daniel Saul, I do not hear you plainly."

Saul moved a step nearer to the couch, and hastily drew back again. He seemed to be falling under the influence of a vague, nameless dread, and stood fixed to one spot—speechless—dumb! For his life he could not have uttered another syllable of the taunts he had been rehearsing, to that white, stony face.

"I am dying, Saul," said Ephraim, with a ghastly effort at a smile, "and would fain exchange forgiveness with thee. Thou shouldst not bear malice in presence of the grave. And, after all, what great harm has befallen thee? The accursed jewels are thy daughter's, if not thine. Leah has contracted a great marriage. Why, man, life closing thus untimely, darkly upon me, is for thee of brighter promise than ever."

Still Daniel Saul spake not, moved not.

"In truth," continued Ephraim, "I was wishing to see thee, and alone. Stand further off, David, out of hearing. Saul," he continued, "thou surely wilt not, at such a moment, refuse me a trifling service. Thou knowest that the bankruptcy messenger will seize all, that my brothers will be questioned upon oath as to their possession of missing valuables. Thou wilt not be suspected, and I have that beneath this pillow which I will freely entrust to thee spite of all that has passed. Come, shake hands, and receive it."

Daniel Saul, resolutely shaking off the strange fascination which held him spell-bound, as it were, stepped towards the couch, and extended his hand. It was seized as by a vice in Ephraim's left, whilst his right groped beneath the pillow.

"A priceless treasure, Daniel Saul," hissed the moribund. "Priceless! This, accursed robber! THIS!" Ere the last word had died upon the murderer's lips, the

avenging steel had been driven to the hilt in Saul's body. There needed no second blow.

"Ha! ha!" gurgled in Ephraim Levy's throat as he fell back upon the bed. "Quits, at last!" He was dead.

Daniel Saul survived several weeks, but never for long together regained the use of his reasoning powers, the idle comments of his shattered brain most frequently referring to the last fearful scene with Ephraim Levy. He was also extremely fond of repeating the epitaph printed at the head of this paper, and at length prevailed upon his daughter to promise that it should be engraved upon his tomb-stone; and she was weak or superstitious enough to keep the absurd promise.

Let me not forget to mention that in one of his latest lucid intervals he implored Leah to persuade her husband to restore the jewels to the surviving Brothers Levy, David and Benoni. She answered that she had already done so, and that the brothers would receive them directly they were free of the Bankruptcy Court, an assurance which seemed to give him great comfort. Leah was with him when he died, and knew that he was dying. His end was not peace.

THE MURDER AT THE SWAN INN, KNIGHTSBRIDGE.

"'T is a damned house, that Swan. That Swan, at Knightsbridge, is a confounded house."—*Otway.*

THE foregoing denunciation of the Swan Inn, Knightsbridge, placed by Otway in the mouth of Sir David Dunce, in "The Soldier's Fortune," refers to the equivocal character of the house as a rural resort of the unfaithful wives, mistresses, and *dames aux cammelias* of those days, the name of whom must have been Legion, if example in high places had any influence, when the lady to whom "Venice Preserved" was dedicated held supreme sway at Court.

Forty years after Otway had miserably perished, the Swan—which, like the nation, had become more decorous, if not more saintly—bore the character of a respectable, well-conducted establishment, and was about the last place where the occurrences I am about to relate would have been expected to take place. Truly "a damned house," notwithstanding, and in a more terrible sense than that intimated by Sir David Dunce. The Knightsbridge Swan of the present day I may observe, *en passant*, flaunts its plumage a little beyond Sloane Street, occupying the site, but bearing, since it came to town, not so *very* long ago, quite a different reputation to that of its notorious rural ancestors. And now to the story.

Near the end of the first quarter of the eighteenth century, the landlord of the Swan was one Samuel Whitchurch, which is all the description I can give of *him*. His wife, Charlotte Whitchurch, has a more strongly-marked individuality. She is depicted as a fat, fierce virago of a woman, of strong antipathies, and strong sympathies; constant in her likings as her dislikings—an idiosyncrasy which found fatal play in the succession of terrible events of which the Swan, during her landladyship, was the theatre.

At that time the Knightsbridge stage-coach to London started from, and returned to, the Swan, giving, with the numerous mounted travellers that used the house, ample employment to Peter Swartz, ostler, and John Larkin, horse-boy, or stable-helper. Larkin was simply a dull, heavy country lout; but Swartz had peculiarities which it is necessary to describe.

In person he was short, stout, strongly made, bull-headed, and bull-necked; his face, thickly pock-marked, was bloodless, except the nose, which was of an extraordinary size, and flame-coloured. He was of mixed origin—Dutch father, English mother—and his place of birth was somewhere in the neighbourhood of Clare Market, London. Peter could neither read nor write, but was accounted uncommonly knowing in horse-flesh; he drank enormously, but, except twice or thrice a-month, when he swallowed liquor till he became downright mad drunk, was always in, and capable of, his work. Peter, moreover, was one of the landlady's especial antipathies, and would have been turned adrift a hundred times had he not been so great a favourite with the coach people and many others who put up, or baited at, the Swan, on account of his skilful management and care of horses. Another powerful motive for retaining the services of Peter Swartz was, that the landlord of the Old Fox (now The Fox), a rival establishment, was known to be desirous of luring the popular ostler, and the custom he would be sure to bring with him from the Swan.

A few months before this narrative, in strictness, according to its heading, begins, an extraordinary state of things had arisen in connection with Peter Swartz and Susan Haines, principal chambermaid at the Swan. In the midst of the ostler's wildest drink-frenzies, a look from her, an uplifted finger, would subdue his rage in an instant, and, trembling in every limb, he would skulk away like a beaten hound. Only the ostler and chambermaid themselves could understand this; and they refused all explanation—he with savage sullenness, and she with a firmness or obstinacy which was proof against a threat of dismissal if she did not vouchsafe *some* enlightening hint upon the subject. Everybody saw it was not esteem, respect, affection for Susan Haines, nor genial influence of any kind that subjected Peter Swartz's will to hers. He hated her,

it was abundantly manifest, with all the virulence of his debased nature; and had more than once been heard to mutter that, sooner than live the slave's life he had lately lived much longer, he would do something desperate—kill himself, or——. The witnesses who deposed to having heard these muttered expressions, all declared that what "or" referred to was intimated by a look of diabolical ferocity, but never expressed in words, at least not in articulate words. The truth was, and it may as well be stated thus early, that the chambermaid had detected Swartz in the commission of a felony which, in those good old hanging days, would have sent him to Tyburn; and although she had solemnly promised — instant restitution having been made—to conceal his crime, he nothing doubted that, if openly defied, she would proclaim his guilt to the world. Hence his fretful rage, his threats of suicide, his "or"——

The situation of the Swan not only secured a good road-side, traveller trade, but from the house being so entirely in the country, and, in addition to nicely laid-out grounds of its own, commanding open and extensive views on all sides, induced many persons in delicate health, or who were desirous of quiet and retirement, to make a prolonged stay, especially during the summer months. To promote the comfort of this profitable class of customers, private, well-furnished apartments at the back of the premises had been provided, the occupants of which, whilst within reach of the various *agrémens* that a well-conducted inn affords, might, if they chose, avoid its vulgar bustle and noise, and all contact with its miscellaneous frequenters. Amongst those exceptional patrons was Captain Halkin, a gentleman something over fifty years of age, and a soldier of service, who had fought under Marlborough in Anne's great wars. Invalided in consequence of a severe wound received at the battle of Malplaquet, he had sold out of the army, and, thanks to the zealous solicitation of Colonel Gillespie, who had been an eye-witness of his gallantry before the enemy, he was awarded a pension by the crown of seventy pounds a-year. The produce of the sale of his commission he had lent, by the advice of his lawyer, at fifteen per cent. per annum, to Messrs. Dodson and Co., the eminent distillers, unmindful or ignorant of that truest of all commer-

cial axioms, that large interest is only another name for bad security.

The income thus derived, added to his pension, not only sufficed for the modest wants of Captain Halkin himself, but enabled him to fulfil the dearest wish of his heart—that of giving his son and only child a University education. Captain Halkin had been many years a widower, and his son, Kyrle—so named after the captain's deceased sister's husband, who had no children of his own, and was prospering in America—had passed his twenty-first year when Captain Halkin, finding his health benefitted by a short sojourn at the Swan, being, moreover, pleased with its situation, and the landlord's moderate charges, determined to take up his abode there for a permanency.

A model lodger and guest the retired veteran proved to be: quiet, easily satisfied, and finding no fault with either bed or board; neither extravagant nor mean; having a kind word for everybody, and being a punctual paymaster to boot. His son, too, upon whom he seemed to perfectly dote, was a young man of exemplary conduct—modest, reserved, and, it was said, gifted with rare intelligence. He had resided with his father at the Swan about a month only when he left for Sussex College, Cambridge University, which he entered in April, 1722.

Whilst his son was with him, Captain Halkin kept strictly to his private apartments, never, by any chance, appearing amongst the general frequenters of the inn. Soon, however, after Kyrle's departure, the social nature of the man induced him to put his dignity in abeyance for a while, and he was to be found almost every evening taking his jug of ale, or of claret, in the public room, to the huge delight of its frequenters, who never wearied of listening to "the captain's" highly-spiced narratives of fearful episodes of the war in which he had himself been personally engaged—narratives that uplifted the very hair of rustic Knightsbridge with sympathetic, fascinating horror. He was, besides, an admirable mimic, and could keep the table in a roar with humorous, but always good-natured imitations of peculiarities, in voice and manner, of some amongst the assembled company.

An incident occurred in the beginning of the winter

1722–3, which capped his reputation for coolness and daring. The roads about Knightsbridge, as the nights grew long, were infested with foot-pads, three of whom, acting together, soon became the terror of all belated travellers. Late one evening Captain Halkin was returning, merry with wine, from a visit to the house of a recent acquaintance, and as he was passing the end of Bell Lane heard loud, piercing screams in a woman's voice. Like all gentlemen at that period, Captain Halkin wore a sword, and instantly hastening, at the top of his speed, in the direction of the woman's cries, quickly found himself, at a sharp turn of the lane, in presence of three ruffians, who had robbed, and were maltreating, a young woman and her father. One of the fellows instantly discharged his pistol at the new comer, the bullet of which slightly grazed one of the captain's ears; it was requited by a sword-thrust, which went clean through the footpad's right shoulder. A second shot was aimed at Captain Halkin, which not taking effect, the two unwounded ruffians ran off. The other was secured, and he "peaching" upon his accomplices, they were both captured, and in due course hanged, so that, thanks to Captain Halkin, the roads about Knightsbridge were safe again o'nights. Thenceforth he was the hero, not only of the Swan, but of the neighbourhood for miles round; and any one that should have dared to wag his tongue in disparagement of the general favourite, would have been in imminent danger of the horse-pond, if of nothing worse.

There was one dissentient from the general chorus of wondering admiration, which dissentient was that drunken vagabond, Peter Swartz. From the first week, one might say from the first day, of Captain Halkin's domiciliation at the Swan, Peter had conceived an inveterate dislike of the new lodger. Whenever that gentleman came in Peter's sight, in crossing the inn yard, or whiling away an idle ten minutes in watching the departure of the stage-coach, the ostler's eyes fixed themselves upon him with a sinister, yet stupid, puzzled expression; and for long afterwards, Peter Swartz would seem to be dubiously debating with himself, whether of the past or the future it was impossible to say, but certainly with reference to Captain Halkin.

Captain Halkin observed the odd behaviour of the man,

and took some pains to conciliate his good opinion. It was trouble thrown away; Peter Swartz *would* not be gained over. Even a compliment to his reputation as a judge of horses failed to soften his savage surliness.

"I *don't* know a hoss by looking at a hoss," snapped Peter Swartz, in reply to Captain Halkin. "Nobody knows a hoss by looking at, or handlin, a hoss. Oh, ay! I can tell somewhere about the age of a hoss—whether he've a been to prayers or not, or is touched in the wind, and all that! but that aint knowin a hoss. Experience of a hoss is the only way of comin to know what a hoss really is. I've a knowed hosses that was fust along as gentle as lambs, all at once let out at a fellow with their heels, and fix their cussed teeth in his shoulder like born devils. It's a hundred times harder," added Swartz, with fierce, menacing significance, and as if all he had previously said was but meant as an excuse for, or introduction to, what he was now saying, "It's a hundred times harder still, Captain Halkin, to judge of *men* than it is of hosses. A man may seem to be upright and downstraight, and everything as he should be, and you may summer and winter the fellow half a dozen times over before finding out that he's nothing—but—a—a—damnable——"

Peter's harangue was suddenly cut short. The landlady, looking from a window into the yard, saw by Captain Halkin's face that that drunken varlet Swartz was, in some way, annoying him. Out she at once rushed in direful wrath, and Peter fled amain, pursued by volleys of uncomplimentary epithets, to the shelter of the stables. The Captain affected to treat the man's insolent familiarity with careless contempt; but it was noticed that he never afterwards, by any chance, spoke to Swartz, and sedulously avoided going near him.

The Captain had been an inmate of the Swan something over a year when a letter arrived to his address, bearing the city of London post-mark. It was delivered to him in his private room, the bell of which was rung a few minutes afterwards with furious violence. Captain Halkin requested that a saddle-horse should be instantly got ready, his presence being required in London. The horse was scarcely saddled when he strode into the yard, mounted, and rode off at a swift gallop.

It was late in the evening when he returned, seemingly flushed with wine. He said nothing, but Susan Haines noticed that his hand trembled very much as he took the bed-candle from her. A week elapsed before he again left his chamber, and when he did, he was a changed man. His face was colourless, his keen gray eyes were subdued, darkened; his figure was shrunken: a dozen years—years of calamity, of grief, seemed to have been added to his age.

"I was summoned to London," he said, in reply to the landlady's look of surprise and distress, "to witness the death of the best friend I ever had."

This was an untruth. The letter which had caused his hurried departure was from his lawyer, and announced the failure of Dodson and Co., the suicide of the principal partner, and that there would be hardly a shilling in the pound for the creditors.

The suddenness and severity of the blow stunned Captain Halkin, and it was some time before he could distinctly measure its terrible consequences to himself and his son. It was soon, however, too plain that he had nothing left but the government pension of seventy pounds a-year with which to face an expenditure of thrice that amount. He was in debt, too, at Cambridge; and Kyrle had but a few days previously sent him some bills which it was desirable to pay forthwith. He had not half the sum in his possession; and then, how were Kyrle's future expenses at the University to be met? He must, of course, sell his pension, and that he immediately set himself to accomplish. Even there baffled, undone! By the prudential foresight of Colonel Gillespie, the royal warrant had been so framed that the pension could *not* legally be sold, alienated, mortgaged, or hypothecated in any manner whatsoever.

Kyrle must then, it seemed, quit the University—abandon all hope of seeing the time when, with his fine talents worthily cultivated, he could enter, under singularly favourable conditions — thanks to the powerful patronage of Colonel Gillespie and other influential friends—upon a life-career in which he could not fail to win wealth and social eminence. Never! never! never! His father would more willingly follow him to the grave. Captain Halkin was not, moreover, yet at the end of his resources; the

Cambridge debts could be discharged by the sale of a few personal trinkets, for which he had no real use. That done, he would have time to calmly scan the future, and to avail himself of the hopefullest chance that might present itself of ascertaining the worst consequences of the misfortune that had befallen him. The money was accordingly forwarded to Kyrle, but no intimation reached the young man of the loss sustained by Dodson and Co.'s bankruptcy.

About a week afterwards Captain Halkin having occasion to cross the inn yard after dusk, heard his own name more than once mentioned by Swartz, who, with John Larkin, was in the stable rubbing down, by the light of a lantern, the smoking horses just taken from the stage-coach. Desirous of ascertaining why Swartz was so repeatedly taking his name in vain, the Captain stealthily approached the stable-door, and heard the ostler again repeat, with drunken iteration, that he was quite sure he had seen Captain Halkin many and many a year before, but where, he could nohow call to mind. He should, however, some day, he was certain. It would, he said, no doubt pop into his nob all at once; an observation with which the helper, as in duty bound, fully agreed.

The following afternoon Captain Halkin, who had taken a larger quantity of claret than usual, fell asleep in a back apartment on the ground-floor, which was permitted to be used by special customers only. No one had been there that afternoon but himself, and he, according to his own reckoning, must have slept seated at, and with his head upon, the table several hours. He did not, at all events, awake till evening had set in, and after shaking himself, rubbing his eyes, and realizing the situation—it is his own story I am now telling—he took up his purse from which he had taken the money to pay for the magnum of claret he had emptied, or nearly so, and which had been lying on the table whilst he slept. It seemed very light, he thought; and no wonder, for on examining it he found that six guineas in gold were gone, and a few pieces in silver only left. The discovery confounded him, positive as he was that the guineas were safe in his purse when he fell asleep. The door of the apartment, which was flung wide on account of the heat of the weather, opened upon a common

passage, along which, not only the indoor domestics, but the yard servants frequently passed. What then should be done?—how was he to set about the discovery of the thief without warning him or her by premature outcry? After a few minutes' reflection he determined to consult Susan Haines, the chambermaid; he knew her to be trustworthy, and she would give shrewd counsel.

Susan Haines was accordingly summoned, and informed of Captain Halkin's loss. The poor woman was thoroughly scared, and could offer neither counsel or suggestion. Such a thing had never happened at the Swan before, and the disgrace would be indelible.

"And," said Susan, combating with difficulty strong indications of hysteria, "and I—I myself not only passed by the open door, but looked in about half an hour ago, and did not see you, sir, I declare I did not; and you are certain you had not left the room?"

"Quite certain, Susan; it was already nearly dark, you know, half an hour since, which accounts for your not having observed me, especially as I was sitting at the further end of the table, with my head, which only could be visible from the door, resting upon it."

Susan agreed that that accounted for her not having seen him, but she was as far off as ever at so much as guessing who could be the thief.

"Susan," said Captain Halkin, "I have no wish, God knows, to injure the house by making a noise about the robbery, but I am determined to find out who the robber is. Where," he added, with stern abruptness, "where is Peter Swartz, and how has he been occupied this afternoon?"

"He has been occupied in getting tipsy all day, and must be dead drunk by this time."

"I have a strong suspicion, Susan, that he is the thief. Nay, hear me out! It has come back upon my mind," he continued, "like the faint recollection of an indistinct, half-forgotten dream, that I saw Peter Swartz enter this room, or, more correctly, that I was drowsily conscious of his having entered this room whilst I slept. Do you understand me?"

Susan replied that she did not exactly; but thought the best plan would be to seek out the drunken scamp at once.

Captain Halkin requested her to do so, but to make no outcry or disturbance until, at all events, his suspicions were confirmed. Susan agreed, and immediately hurried off in quest of the supposed culprit.

She pretty well knew where to find him: whenever Swartz had got what he called his skinful, and felt it impossible to drink any more, he was in the habit of skulking off to a lumber-room, not twenty yards distant from the apartment where Captain Halkin had fallen asleep, to snore off the effects of his potations, undisturbed. There, sure enough, Susan found him, extended at length upon the floor, dead asleep. The woman shook, called to him; he was insensible, deaf as wood, and in her impatient anger she kicked him in the side, eliciting thereby the chink of money. The sound, aware as she was of the generally coinless condition of the ostler's pockets, goaded her to renewed exertion, and by dint of cuffs, kicks, and vicious tugs at his hair, she succeeded in awaking him.

"What money is that in your pocket, you drunken villain?" fiercely demanded the chambermaid; in reply to which query, Peter put a hand into each pocket, and from one drew out six golden guineas!

With difficulty suppressing a scream that would have brought the whole establishment to the spot, Susan, directly she could get sufficient breath, showered a torrent of incoherent abuse upon the astounded ostler, winding up with the pleasant assurance that he would certainly take a ride to Tyburn before the year was out, Peter listening thereto in dumb bewilderment, and gazing the while upon the six guineas in his hand.

At last he found words to request Susan to calmly explain the meaning of it all, in language that he could understand. The chambermaid, who, from the naturalness of Peter's manifestation of astonishment, had begun to believe that he must have taken the money during the delirious stage of drunkenness, and had forgotten all about it, explained the matter calmly and fully, the effect of which explanation was to convince Peter himself, that the thing must have occurred as she suggested, and the more certainly that he himself had a dim recollection of having gone into the room and seen the Captain asleep, with his head resting upon the table.

Yes; but what was to be done? Judges and juries would never believe that he did not know what he was about when he filched six guineas from a gentleman's purse, leaving a few comparatively valueless pieces of silver therein. He would be hanged to a certainty. The frightful peril he had incurred sobered poor Swartz completely, and he begged for mercy in the most piteous terms. Susan, as I have before said, really believed that he did not know what he was doing when he stole the money, and upon his solemnly swearing upon a Bible, which she fetched for the purpose, that he was innocent in intention, and would reform his wicked life, she promised to intercede for him with Captain Halkin, and, moreover, to keep the affair a profound secret.

"It is well," said Captain Halkin, after attentively listening to the chambermaid's story, and receiving back his six guineas; "and I ratify the promise of secrecy you have made for me. Only let Swartz distinctly understand that that promise shall only stand between him and Tyburn gallows so long as he shall deserve mercy at my hands."

The relative positions of Captain Halkin and Peter Swartz towards each other, and the petty but observant community amidst which they dwelt, have now been sufficiently defined to enable us to see that the Captain was not only held in high favour as an amiable social companion, but esteemed as an undoubted gentleman of high character and ample means; whilst Peter Swartz was in a fair way of being unanimously adjudged to be an utterly worthless, drunken scoundrel.

And with each succeeding day Swartz sank lower and lower in general estimation. The toad-under-harrow kind of life to which he had been subjected since he had unaccountably made free with Captain Halkin's purse goaded him to desperation, and he finally consummated the ruin of his character by breaking into the cellar of the inn at dead of night, and madly drinking till he brought on a violent attack of delirium tremens; a disease then called and treated as ordinary inflammation of the brain.

The loquacious insanity common to that terrible malady vented itself in outbursts of cursing rage, directed chiefly against Captain Halkin and Susan Haines; alternated with fierce avowals of a determination to be hanged, if he *must*

be hanged, for a robbery worth committing, not for two or three paltry guineas.

Such ravings naturally gave rise to grave comment, and the general conclusion arrived at was, that Peter Swartz was a person to whom theft, if not more serious crime, had become familiar; and the landlord of the Swan was urged not to keep such a fellow in his house. Peter accordingly received, as soon as he had recovered from the attack of delirium tremens, notice to leave at the end of a month. Swartz thereupon made application for employment at the Old Fox Inn; but his character for honesty having become tainted, it was at once and peremptorily refused, and the only prospect before the unfortunate ostler was that of being turned penniless and homeless into the streets in mid-winter. We cannot wonder, therefore, that his fevered, cankered mind grew familiar with desperate thoughts, which from time to time found sullen vent in threats and curses, at hearing which men shook their heads, and predicted that such an evil life would have a shameful end.

The man's craving for drink continued insatiable; and before the month's warning had expired he could hardly have been a responsible being, although his routine day-duties seem to have been gone through with as usual. Especially in the stillness and darkness of night he was subject, or for some purpose affected to be subject, to the strangest illusions; one of which was, that he had a double —a second self—which when he himself was lying asleep in the stable-loft walked abroad. He could not be disabused of this fancy. One morning he solemnly assured Larkin, the stable-helper, that he had been awakened at about midnight, when the wind was unusually high, by the yard-gate banging violently to, and that, on looking out of the loft-lattice, he distinctly saw himself, dressed as usual, getting over the garden wall in the direction of the fields. Larkin laughed, and persisted that he must have been dreaming. Susan Haines, to whom the stable-helper repeated what Swartz had been saying, was of the same opinion till about an hour afterwards, when a smith of the name of Kerr, whose dwelling was not far from the Swan, came into the yard, and in her hearing asked Swartz why on earth he had been wandering about the fields in the dead of night? The ostler muttered some unintelligible

reply, and walked quickly away to another part of the yard. To the question put to him by the astonished chambermaid, Kerr replied that he could not be mistaken as to having seen Swartz pass his window between twelve and one that night: he, Kerr, had been sitting up with a sick child, and had just before extinguished the candle preparatory to getting into bed, when Swartz passed swiftly by, some twenty yards distant, but distinctly visible in the moonlight. He wore, added Kerr, the same bright red waistcoat he has now on, the same oddly-shaped hat, and then who has such an unmistakable nose as Peter Swartz?

Susan agreed that the nose was unmistakable, and concluded in her own mind that either Swartz walked in his drunken sleep, or that he prowled at such hours about the premises with some evil design.

The morning was about two hours older when the latter conjecture seemed to receive confirmation.

Mr. Meredith, an elderly Welsh gentleman, whose chamber adjoined that of Captain Halkin, having been unusually wakeful for him the previous night, declared that he had distinctly heard stealthy steps crossing the Captain's room, and that presently an effort was made to open the small casement in the partition between the two rooms, by which a borrowed light was admitted to his, Mr. Meredith's chamber. The Welsh gentleman loudly demanded who was there, the only answer to which was the prompt reclosing of the casement, and the hurried but still stealthy retreat of whoever it was that had partially opened it.

Captain Halkin did not sleep at the Swan that night, business of importance having detained him in London; and when, upon the landlord examining his room, the door was found to be locked, the lock untampered with, and the casement carefully closed as usual; that not a sign, in short, of any one having entered the chamber could be discovered, it was concluded by all but Mr. Meredith himself that he must have merely dreamt of the nocturnal visitant; a decision strengthened by two weighty considerations — one, that he had gone to bed very jolly; the other, that, upon his own showing, he must have dropped asleep immediately after the occurrence which had so much alarmed him, and slept soundly till somewhat late in the morning. It could hardly be be-

lieved that such an incident, had it really taken place, would have had so little effect upon the nerves of an elderly gentleman who was known, from his own conversation, to have a large sum of money with him, that he not only forbore to raise any outcry, but subsided into sound, tranquil slumber immediately afterwards! This reasoning did not, however, satisfy Mr. Meredith, though he admitted its plausibility; and he mentally resolved that as he must sleep one more night in the house, he would not only be wakeful but well armed.

In the afternoon Captain Halkin came from London to fetch papers, but remained a few hours only, his business in the city necessitating his immediate return thither. He listened attentively to Mr. Meredith's story, and expressed his full concurrence in the opinion that he had been dreaming. The chambermaid afterwards seized an opportunity of privately telling the Captain what she had heard, seen, and surmised of Peter Swartz's night wanderings. Captain Halkin looked grave and thoughtful after receiving Susan's communication; but after some minutes' reflection advised her to keep her suspicions confined for the present to her own breast. They *might*, perhaps, wrong Peter Swartz, who, he was half inclined to believe, was, after all, rather imbecile, crazed with drink, than radically vicious. He would, moreover, himself warn Mr. Meredith to be on his guard during the coming night; and the next he should himself be the occupant of the apartment through which any one seeking his must pass.

His horse was saddled and at the door when Captain Halkin bethought him that he had promised to speak to Mr. Meredith before he left for London. He found that gentleman had already retired to his chamber, in which a fire had been lit; the weather being chilly, and Mr. Meredith not feeling quite so well as usual. They talked of the real or imaginary occurrence of the previous night; and perceiving that the Welsh gentleman was really, as darkness drew on, suffering from nervous apprehension, offered the loan of his pistols for the night. Mr. Meredith thanked him, but he had already borrowed a pair of the landlord, which he was just about to load—an operation in which the Captain assisted him. They then drank a few glasses of wine together; and Captain Halkin,

having taken friendliest leave, set off on his return to London.

Mr. Meredith's spirits were wofully depressed, and drinking freely did not raise them. The wine, he thought, had an odd taste, but that could only be fancy, or perhaps his palate was somewhat deranged. By-and-by he found that he should have some difficulty in keeping himself so widely awake as he had intended. Vainly he essayed to shake off the drowsiness fast creeping over him, by stirring the fire and walking briskly about the room. It would not do, and presently he fell, dressed as he was, across the bed, fast locked in sleep.

Leaving him for a while to that last slumber, let us seek out Peter Swartz, and mark the progress of the story, which the Recorder of the Old Bailey told the unfortunate wretch, a few months afterwards, was a tissue of the stupidest, most barefaced lies that ever passed a convicted felon and murderer's lips. The following is that story in action.

I have before intimated that, in consequence of his continued addiction to drink, Peter Swartz had never got rid of the delusions incident to delirium tremens. Being quite aware that such was the case, he might have succeeded in persuading himself that the second self, which had appeared to him, was nothing more than the coinage of a distempered brain, but for Kerr's astounding declaration that *he* had observed him crossing the fields at about the same time that he, Swartz, had seen the apparition climbing over the back garden wall! Exerting an almost superhuman resolution, the haunted ostler, on the following night, refrained from drinking to excess, and kept strict watch, with the firm determination to question, and, if possible, to grapple, bind, the supposed "double," should it make its appearance within questioning or grappling distance.

The night was bright and dark by turns, the full moon being now hidden by dark, dense clouds which swept across the face of the sky—now reappearing in unveiled splendour.

Midnight had passed, and the folks of Knightsbridge were slumbering in the small hours of the morning when Swartz, who was watching from a stable-window, saw the

shadow of a man passing swiftly along the face of the white-washed wall of an out-building in the direction of the back entrance to the inn. At that moment the moon was, as it were, blotted out of the heavens by a black, opaque cloud, and the substance reflected by the shadow Swartz could not discern in the thick darkness, earnestly as he strove to do so. The ostler was no craven; so, tightly grasping a stout cudgel he had taken care to provide himself with, he stole quietly forward towards the spot where the gliding shadow had disappeared from the whitened wall.

Surely he must have been mistaken! Nothing was to be heard; and when the moon presently shone forth again, nothing having life was to be seen! The door leading into the house was closed, and complete stillness reigned around, with the exception of the occasional rattling of ill-fitted windows, as gushy blasts of wind beat fitfully against them.

Yet was Swartz positive that it was a man's shadow he had seen, and gathering courage from impunity, he peered into every nook and hole thereabout that might have afforded a hiding-place. The search proved fruitless, and Swartz was beginning to half believe that his eyes must have played him false, when a cry, a human cry, sharp, brief, stifled, as that of one suddenly smitten by mortal agony, terminated as instantly by death. The cry came from within the house, and Swartz listened with suspended breath for its repetition, in order to assure himself that his ears had not fooled him as his eyes seemed to have done. It was not again heard, and Peter, after lingering for some time about the spot, was slowly returning to the stable when his ear caught the sound of the back door of the inn being cautiously, gently opened from within. The ostler sprang back into a concealing recess formed by the outbuildings, and thence fixed his straining gaze upon the opening portal.

There was no mistake this time. From out the opened doorway slowly emerged poor Swartz's double, in unmistakable reality — the queer hat, the red waistcoat, the patched breeches and loose knee-strings were those of Peter Swartz; the face, too, though shadowed by the broad flapping hat—except the huge unshadowable nose—was

his own! The moon just then palely shining through a but partially obscuring cloud, enabled Swartz to see himself, as in a dust-dulled mirror, with dim distinctness, so to speak, and a cold, quaking horror seized the ostler, causing the hairs of his head to stand erect, and his knees to smite each other!

Recovering, in some degree, from the panic-terror excited by a phenomenon so inexplicable, portentous, whilst the apparition was carefully closing the door behind him, and relocking it, Swartz observed that the figure wore a short cloak, which he was sure had not been reflected by the shadow on the lime-washed wall, and something bulky seemed to be concealed beneath the cloak. The sharp cry of mortal agony heard a few minutes previously recurred to his mind at the same moment, and soon screwing his courage to the sticking place, Swartz sprang forward, cudgel in hand, resolved to solve the hideous mystery at any hazard to soul or body.

The "double" recognised that he was seen and pursued by a start of surprise and an instantly accelerated pace, soon exchanged for a run in the same direction that Swartz had seen him take the previous night. He did not turn his head, nor make any reply to the ostler's challenge, and Swartz, wonderfully emboldened by the hurried flight of the spectre, if spectre he were, followed swiftly and grappled him by the leg, as he was scaling the garden-wall. A fierce kick with the free leg, accompanied by "curse thee for a meddling, drunken fool!" in *Peter Swartz' own voice*, caused the again horrified ostler to loose his hold so suddenly that the fugitive toppled over and fell heavily on the other side, letting fall from under his cloak as he did so, several bags which, from the sound they gave forth upon striking the ground, seemed to be filled with coin. Reassured, spite of hearing himself cursed in his own voice, by such evidences, of a merely bodily foe, mortal prowess, and vulgar robbery, Swartz in his turn scaled the not very lofty wall, tumbled down beside of and grappled the apparition, as it groped about for the money-bags. This could not be suffered, and the sharp stroke of a dagger, or other pointed steel weapon, followed by a curse as before, but not this time in Swartz' voice, decided the struggle. The ostler

fainted from pain and loss of blood, and when he recovered consciousness—how long afterwards Peter had no means of judging—he was lying on the ground, his clothes deeply stained with blood from the wound he had received, and near him, glittering in the by that time constant moonlight, were many gold coins, which the bursting of one of the canvas bags had scattered upon the ground.

A man of sound, unshattered brain, would have at once proceeded to rouse the sleepers in the Swan Inn; informed them of all that had occurred; and appealed to the evidence of the gold coins and the severe wound he had received in proof of the truth of his story. Peter Swartz not being unfortunately a man of sound, unshattered brain, did nothing of the kind, and with difficulty managed instead, after collecting all he could readily find of the scattered coins, to drag himself over the wall, and regain his stable sleeping place, with the intention, he afterwards declared, of first hiding the gold he had got possession of, and then rousing the servants at the Swan. Unhappily, the liquor which he had with so much difficulty refrained from, there offered itself invitingly to his thirsty, burning lips; and after drinking himself into a state of frenzy, he returned in that condition to where the money-bags had burst, found more gold pieces, and then, what with the loss of blood and the stupifying effect of the fresh air upon the large quantity of liquor he had swallowed, fell into a state of semi-insensibility, retaining barely strength enough to crawl towards a partially cut hay-stack, cover himself up with loose hay from the bitter cold, and fall dead asleep with the burst bag, and the coins he had last scrambled up, in his bloody clutch.

It appears from Susan the chambermaid's sworn deposition, that she slept but little that night, her mind being disturbed by vague fears for the safety of the Welch lodger Mr. Meredith; and that towards, as she supposed, two o'clock in the morning, she heard or fancied she heard, several doors stealthily opened and closed; as, however, the wind blew in fierce gusts along the passages, she, after a while, persuaded herself that she must have been mistaken as to the causes of the sounds she heard, and again dozed off into troubled, dreamy sleep. Awaking again,

just as the cold rays of the wintry morning were stealing through the chamber lattice, the chambermaid immediately rose, and still haunted by a dread presentiment, hurried down stairs, then into the stable-yard, and enquired for Peter Swartz. No one had seen him since the previous evening, and the chambermaid requested John Larkin to go with her to Mr. Meredith's room.

Larkin readily consented; they entered the inn, went up-stairs together, and in a few minutes cries of fear and horror resounded through the house, arousing the startled sleepers to a knowledge of the dreadful discovery that Mr. Meredith had been foully murdered during the night, and his portmanteau, boxes, &c., as well as those of Captain Halkin, broken open, and pillaged of whatever valuables they had contained.

As soon as the landlord, landlady, and others, had in some degree rallied their scared senses, the body of Mr. Meredith was uplifted from the floor where it lay, literally in a pool of blood, and placed on the bed. It was seen that the unfortunate gentleman had not undressed himself; and a cursory examination of the body revealed two wounds in the breast, inflicted by some sharp instrument,—a knife or dagger. A pointed knife belonging to the inn, which Mr. Meredith had used at supper, the blade of which was covered with blood, was found on the floor, and one of the loaded pistols lay on the bed. The trigger had been pulled, without effect, probably from its having flashed in the pan. A leathern portmanteau had been forced open, and the wearing apparel it had contained was lying scattered about. Captain Halkin's valise had been similarly forced and plundered.

Conjecture was busy with these details, when a surgeon arrived, who presently announced that Mr. Meredith still lived, though grievously wounded, and insensible from loss of blood. The chamber was thereupon cleared of the crowd of lookers-on, and the proper remedies having been applied, the sufferer was restored to life and consciousness, though for a brief time only. The loss of blood had been so great, that, although no vital part had been directly wounded, it was only with the help of powerful stimulants seconding the efforts of a determined, vindictive WILL, strong even in death, that he survived to disclose the

manner of his murder, and the name of the murderer, to a magistrate, hastily summoned to receive his dying deposition.

That deposition was in substance nearly as follows:—

Overcome by an irresistible drowsiness, for which he could not account, he, Arthur Meredith, had fallen asleep upon the bed with his clothes on, and must have slept five or six hours, when he slowly, and at first confusedly, awoke to find that a man was in the chamber, and busy with his portmanteau. The moon was shining into the room, but the robber's back being towards his, he did not see his face. Although suddenly aroused from profound slumber by so fearful an occurrence, Mr. Meredith had never, he declared, felt, after the first shock of the surprise was past, more perfectly calm and self-possessed. The loaded pistols were on a table near the bed, and quietly stretching forth his hand, he grasped one, cocked it, levelled, and pulled the trigger. It merely snapped, and the robber, turning quickly about, startled by the sound, revealed the remarkable features of the ostler—Peter Swartz!

The sight thus obtained of the man's face was distinct, though but momentary, as the moon seemed to suddenly go out, and the kneeling ruffian instantly springing up, closed with his victim in a death-grapple. Mr. Meredith's hand, feeling for the second pistol, hit upon the knife he had used at supper; he seized it, and must, he was sure, have inflicted at least one wound upon the assassin, before his own arm was seized with mastering force, and he felt himself twice stabbed in quick succession. Consciousness then left him, and he remembered nothing more till recalled by the surgeon's skill to brief and feeble life. In reply to a question put by the magistrate, he said his portmanteau contained about two hundred gold Jacobuses.

After completing his deposition, Mr. Meredith sank rapidly, and ere another hour had elapsed, he was a corpse.

The instant the name of the robber and murderer had been pronounced by the dying man, search was made for Peter Swartz. He was not in his usual sleeping place, but the bed-clothes and floor were dabbled with blood; and further search discovered a considerable number of gold Jacobuses, cunningly concealed, most of which were stained

in like manner, as if they had been grasped by bloody fingers. A trace of blood, moreover, flowing, as *we* know, from the wound Swartz had received, led over the garden-wall, and to the spot where burrowed the unhappy wretch, fast bound in drunken slumber! He still slept heavily, and when pulled from under the hay, responded only to the kicks and curses by which he was assailed, by clutching the gold in his hands with a fiercer grasp, and muttering indistinctly of having stabbed, or been stabbed by, somebody.

To awaken the murderer, as they said, to a sense of his position, and restore him the use of his legs—more truly to in some measure gratify their own rage—his captors dragged Swartz to the yard, and pumped upon him till the surgeon interfered, and rescued him from brute, unreasoning violence.

As there could be no doubt of his guilt, Swartz, after brief questioning by the magistrate who had taken Mr. Meredith's deposition, to which he answered only by the dumb show of a bewildered, drunken stare from his blood-shot eyes, was pinioned, and dispatched in a cart to London. A few hours afterwards he was safely lodged in Newgate; his mute bewilderment and astonished stare continuing to be the only indication that he at all recognised what was going on, or in the slightest degree comprehended why the cart in which he rode was followed to the gate of the jail by the hootings and curses of an infuriate rabble. It was supposed that his faculties, such as they were, were still under the influence of the benumbing stupor of drunkenness.

A knife was picked up near the spot where Swartz was found, the blade of which had been recently ground to a fine sharp point. It belonged to the Swan and to the same set as did that which had been found in Mr. Meredith's chamber. The blade and haft were clotted with blood, and no one could doubt that it was the weapon by which the murder had been perpetrated.

Still, the most active, persevering search failed to discover where the missing Jacobuses—some hundred and fifty in number—had been secreted. The tracing of blood proved, or seemed to prove, that Peter Swartz could not have crawled further than the lair wherein he was discovered; and the disappearance of so large a quantity of

gold puzzled everybody, till Mrs. Whitchurch, the landlady, whom only the faintest-hinted possibility in favour of Swartz greatly irritated, suggested a solution of the difficulty, which was at once unanimously accepted as the true one.

Peter Swartz, she said, must have had an accomplice waiting without to assist in carrying off the booty, and he, taking a natural advantage of the murderer's condition, had helped himself to the lion's share! It was further assumed, as a patent fact, that, finding himself disabled by the wound inflicted by the murdered gentleman from effecting his escape, Swartz had sought temporary refuge from terror and despair in the oblivion of drunkenness.

The evidence, and especially Mr. Meredith's declaration made *in articulo mortis*, seemed to so thoroughly establish Peter Swartz' guilt, that he was fully committed for trial at the close of the first and last examination at Bow Street; the "stupid rubbish" (I quote the examining magistrate's expression),—"the stupid rubbish" which he upon that occasion found strength and words to offer in defence about a "double" or "second self," that he had pursued and been wounded by, exciting only a storm of derisive execration from the auditory in the police court.

So fatally, indeed, had his drink-shaken mind lost whatever tenacity of grasp it might once have possessed, that he himself almost yielded to the belief that the occurrences on the night of the murder, which have been previously narrated, must have been a continuous, coherent delusion, arising from *delirium tremens*.

"But supposing," he would suddenly ask the jail-chaplain, who from the first day of Peter's arrival in Newgate had been zealous in persuading him not to die with a lie in his mouth,—"But supposing I did walk in and murder Mr. Meredith in my sleep, where did I get the false keys with which I opened and reclosed the doors at the back entrance to the Swan?"

"Where, obdurate wretch!" sternly retorted the reverend man,—"Where, obdurate wretch, you obtained the knife you carefully sharpened! You cannot," he added, "save your neck from the gallows; but you will assuredly condemn your soul to the pains of eternal death by persistence in a lie!"

With this exhortative denunciation, occasionally varied in terms, the conferences between poor Peter and his spiritual adviser usually terminated.

Captain Halkin returned to the Swan on the fourth day subsequent to the murder. He looked unusually pale, and listened to the fuller details of the crime, as they gushed in an unbroken stream from the landlady's lips, with a painful interest. His own loss was a trifle, some nine or ten guineas only, but he was grievously distressed to be compelled to believe that the madness engendered by excessive indulgence in drink should have pushed poor Peter Swartz to the commission of a crime so fearful. The unfortunate wretch should in any case have the support of counsel on his trial; he himself would bear the cost of that.

Chorus of exclamations thereupon, eulogistic of the captain's unequalled benevolence and generosity, but at the same time deprecatory of the exercise of those fine qualities in behalf of such a consummate villain as Swartz—a fellow, too, who, Susan the chambermaid had at last admitted, had previously robbed the captain of six guineas!

Nevertheless, Captain Halkin persisted in his determination that the unfortunate and, he feared, guilty man, should have the assistance of counsel. He himself, moreover, would visit Swartz in company with an attorney and ascertain if top or tail could be made of the strange story told by the prisoner at the police office.

There was another person anxious to discover if "top or tail" could be made of that strange story. Sharman, a Bow Street runner of that day, had not listened to it with the scoffing incredulity manifested by everybody else present. He had, besides, been struck by a sort of dubious opinion timidly hazarded by Swartz, and only heard by himself, that the voice of the " double " the second time it cursed him, and when he received the stab, sounded like that of a gentleman lodger at the Swan,—a Captain Halkin.

After Peter Swartz' committal to Newgate, Sharman, having maturely pondered all the circumstances of the case, determined, though he was not professionally concerned in the affair, to pay the Swan and Captain Halkin a visit. He did so; and, having finished his inquiries,

asked to speak with the landlord. Being, as was customary, referred to the landlord's much better half, Sharman held a serious conference with that lady.

Referring to the fruitless search after the missing coins, and declining to accept Mrs. Whitchurch's conjecture as a satisfactory explanation thereof, he observed that the murdered gentleman had mentioned the late visit paid him by Captain Halkin; that they had drunk together, and that his visitor had loaded the pistols, or assisted to do so. Now one of the pistols had snapped, and the other was found to have no priming in the pan. The powder certainly *might* have fallen out, and it *might* not have been put in. Then, as to the unaccountable drowsiness which had suddenly seized upon Mr. Meredith, and the strange taste of the wine he was drinking, not observed till Captain Halkin was with him. All these were circumstances that ought to be rigorously sifted.

The landlady was indignant that such calumnies should be hinted to the prejudice of so honourable a man, so true a gentleman, as Captain Halkin. The officer had best inquire the captain's character of any one that knew him, and he would find his injurious surmises treated with the contempt and ridicule they deserved. Sharman admitted that Captain Halkin bore a very high character in the neighbourhood: he had before satisfied himself on that point. For all that, he was extremely desirous of testing the wine that had been left in the bottle Mr. Meredith was drinking from on the evening previous to the murder, and which, he understood, had, by the coroner's advice, been preserved.

Finding the "runner" obstinate, unpersuadable, the landlady bounced out of the bar-room to fetch the said wine. Some abominable quibble, it seemed to her, was being concocted to throw doubt upon that miscreant Swartz' guilt, and at the same time to asperse the fair, unspotted fame of Captain Halkin! How could she know what the London runner might put into the wine after taking it away. They were queer customers, those runners, folks said, who ought to know. Captain Halkin might have powerful enemies, of whom the officer was the agent or catspaw. Be that as it may, Mrs. Whitchurch would not aid him to save that villain Swartz from the gallows,

and malign Captain Halkin. She would see his coffin walk first; and not having been born yesterday, in a wood, was neither to be scared by an owl or an officer.

Thus reasoning, and thus resolved, Mrs. Whitchurch opened the cupboard where the three-parts emptied bottle of wine had been deposited, and snatched it up; but so cold and slippery were her fingers, that it instantly dropped through them, and was smashed to atoms on the stone floor. Mrs. Whitchurch called a servant to mop up the mess, and, having seen that done, she sailed back to Sharman, and informed him of the accident. The officer, who was very wrath, forthwith left the Swan in high dudgeon, after threatening Mrs. Whitchurch that he would compel her to answer before a magistrate for her conduct.

Nothing came of his threat. Further inquiries were, indeed, instituted, but Mr. Meredith's dying declaration that Peter Swartz was the murderer was so explicit and positive, and the other proved circumstances made assurance so doubly sure that he could not have been mistaken —it was not thought advisable to throw a colour of doubt, by giving countenance to really unwarrantable suspicion, upon a question which did not admit of two opinions. "The strong testimony borne by every one that knew him to the high character and generous disposition of Captain Halkin, who had himself been moreover robbed by the murderer, and had forgiven him," concluded the report, "is alone a sufficient refutation of the laboured inferences drawn by Sharman from very slight and shadowy premises."

The private inquiry set on foot at the instance of Sharman having thus evaporated in a bottle of smoke, it was fixed that Swartz' trial should take place at the ensuing Old Bailey Sessions, then close at hand. I should here state that Captain Halkin does not seem to have been aware that he had been wholly exonerated from suspicion by the before-quoted confidential report, forasmuch as, as after circumstances sufficiently proved, he all along believed himself to be under the sleepless surveillance of the criminal authorities—though that surveillance was intangible, exercised by persons who took care to conceal from him their vocation and actual purpose.

Captain Halkin confronted the occult espionage to which he fancied himself exposed with the bold air of a man con-

scious of innocence, and indignant that that innocence should be for a moment called in question. More than that, the wrong done to himself should not, he resolved, prevent him doing right, if right could be done, to Peter Swartz. Constant, therefore, to the intention he had from the first announced, he engaged the services of an active attorney, and with him, by magisterial permission, visited Swartz in Newgate.

In the cracked brain of the prisoner two ideas, or rather germs of ideas, were gaining strength and development. One, that it was certainly Captain Halkin's voice which cursed, Captain Halkin's arm which stabbed him on the night of the murder. The other, originally suggested, perhaps, by Sharman, that it was Captain Halkin's unspotted character that prevented people from suspecting him, and that could he, Peter Swartz, only recall to mind where and under what circumstances he, many years ago, had seen the captain, and who the captain really was, he would, the half-crazed prisoner believed, speedily change places with himself.

This being the state of the poor fellow's mind, his behaviour during the visit to the jail of the lawyer and Captain Halkin will be understood. To the attorney's questions he answered not a word, except when angrily pressed, and then only by an indifferent, inapplicable "Yes" or "No." His attention was wholly concentrated upon Captain Halkin, who, the attorney observed, seemed much annoyed and agitated by the man's eager scrutiny; as, whilst mechanically rubbing his forehead with one hand, and fixing his eyes unswervingly upon the captain's face, the prisoner, himself perplexed in the extreme, murmured to himself, "I cannot call it (or him) to mind,—cannot,—though God help me if I could,—it might save me—but no—I cannot —cannot for my life."

The interview was a brief one; Captain Halkin and the lawyer both agreeing that nothing could be done for such a besotted, idiotic brute. The attorney added that it would be simply throwing away good money to give counsel even a "watching" brief in such a case. Captain Halkin *would*, however, keep his word in that respect, and counsel was retained.

The trial lasted but about a quarter of an hour, and of

course a verdict of "Guilty" was returned. The prisoner himself paid very little attention to what was going on; its result had long been to him a foregone conclusion, unless he could recall to mind, and his memory seemed to have utterly given way, who Captain Halkin was, and especially his former crime; for he felt certain it was in connection with some fearful crime he had seen or known him. Now, Captain Halkin happened to be seated, wedged in amongst the crowd, directly in front of the dock, full in view of the prisoner, who, during the examination of the witnesses, as at the interview in Newgate, continued to mechanically rub his forehead, and with glaring eyes riveted upon the captain's face, to mutter over and over again with parched, bloodless lips, "I cannot remember,—shall not, I fear, God help me, till too late,"—and so on.

The sonorous mockery of asking what he had to say why sentence of death should not pass against him according to law startled him, nevertheless, into a shuddering appreciation of the actual circumstances, and he stammered forth more incoherently than on the previous occasion, the story of the "double," &c., &c.

He was allowed to say it out, and then the recorder, after characterising it in the words I have already quoted, pronounced formal sentence of death; the tone of his address indicating a strong doubt that he was morally justified in condemning an atrocious criminal to so comparatively merciful a punishment as hanging, who, if strict justice were done, would be burnt to ashes at the stake.

The Privy Council, upon the recorder's report, confirmed the judgment to die, by the hanging Peter Swartz by the neck till he was dead; and an immense crowd assembled on the appointed day to witness the execution. It was no ovation offered by the flaunting felony of London, as in the cases of Jack Sheppard and Sixteen-Stringed Jack—to scoundrels who had taken high degrees in crime — that greeted poor Swartz as the cart which conveyed him to Tyburn creaked slowly along to the place of doom. A hurricane of filthy execrations assailed him the whole way, and it was as much as the escort could do to prevent the mob from carrying out the law's mandate of death with their own hands.

Peter Swartz remained perfectly impassive in the pre-

sence of the raging tumult. No emotion excited thereby flushed or shadowed his spectral face, as he stood calmly upright in the cart; and the speculation of his eyes, Sharman, who accompanied him, noticed, was purely introspective, as if he was still searching his memory for the lost name of Captain Halkin.

At last the fatal triangle was reached, the cart placed under the drop, the noose adjusted, and in a few minutes all would be over. The glaring glance of Peter Swartz searched the crowd in all directions: suddenly it became fixed, and Sharman saw that it rested upon Captain Halkin, who, impelled by a morbid restlessness of mind, or some deeper-seated fascination, had placed himself where he could have a clear view of the execution. A gleam, a flash of light suddenly kindled the eyes of Peter Swartz—the fact, of which he had so often questioned memory, was revealed at that terrible moment. "Stop, stop," screamed the wretched man, feeling, as he must have done, that the cart was beginning to move—"stop, for God's sake! yonder —the man yonder is James Gordon—James Gordon, who murdered——"

The cart passed from underneath, and the palpitating voice was choked by death.

The execution had been hurried and its ghastly horror increased by the carelessness or stupidity of the driver of the cart—a new hand at the business—who struck the horse before the doomed man had given the signal, or the hangman in chief had drawn the concealing cap over his face.

Albeit that the convict's frenzied words rose shrilly above the brutal roar of the populace, Sharman seems to have been the only person that clearly heard them, and to his mind they conveyed no distinct intimation. True, that, following Swartz' eager glance, his eye had rested upon the pallid face of Captain Halkin, and he felt no doubt that he was "the man yonder" whom Swartz too late recognised to be James Gordon. Yes, but who was James Gordon! The name dwelt not in the officer's professional memory; he would, however, make inquiry of his brother officials, and meanwhile keep Gordon, alias Halkin, under strict and secret surveillance.

That inquiry suggested that Captain Halkin might be

one Gordon, who, very many years before, had committed a daring murder, under peculiarly horrifying circumstances, at Hockley-in-the-Hole, a suspicion strengthened by the fact that Peter Swartz, who, as already mentioned, was born and abode, during boyhood, in the vicinage of Clare Market, was known to have frequented Hockley-in-the-Hole in company with the market butcher-boys, who systematically trained dogs to fight, in that classic locality, with those of their professional brethren of Newgate Market.

No judicial proof, worth a button, in support of the officer's suspicion, could, however, be obtained. The murder at Hockley-in-the-Hole had been so suddenly accomplished, and the escape of the murderer—whose name was only known from an exclamation of one of his victims—so immediate and untraceable, that no one could be found who so much as pretended to remember the features of a man that had been seen but for one brief, terrible moment, nearly a quarter of a century since.

The endeavour to establish the identity of Captain Halkin with James Gordon was consequently abandoned, or more correctly, perhaps, adjourned. Circumstances had, however, come incidentally to the knowledge of the authorities which induced them to watch the motions of the captain with redoubled vigilance.

Still nothing seemed likely to come of it. Halkin was evidently upon his guard; he never left the Swan except during the day for a short walk; and but that his gay good humour had given place to a sort of sullen despondency, there was nothing in his doings or demeanour to sustain the suspicions to which he was exposed. Letters from his son—unscrupulously opened and resealed, by authority, before delivery—fully accounted for that deep despondency. The burden of them all was money, money, money—or leave to forthwith quit the University, the last supply having proved utterly inadequate to the young man's requirements. That "last supply," it was seen by an item of University news, incidentally alluded to, must have been forwarded about a week after Meredith's murder; a time when it was now known to justice that Captain Halkin had no money, or, at least, no considerable sum of money at his disposal.

The state of affairs thus disclosed, though hazily, might

have suggested to duller-brained men than Sharman and his confrères some such an expedient for getting at the truth as that which they finally, with help of Mr. Menzies, the friendly and zealous sheriff, resorted to.

An old, grizzled, but still hale and vigorous brother campaigner chanced one day to fall in with Captain Halkin as he was taking his daily walk. The rencontre fell out thus wise. Captain Halkin came suddenly upon a man sitting upon a hedge-bank, in a retired part of the neighbourhood, who, at seeing him, started like a guilty thing, and springing to his feet, seized a kind of havresack lying beside him, and made as if to flee. A second glance at the new comer seemed to, in some degree, reassure him, and he stammered out an inquiry as to whether he was on the right road to Staines. He had to repeat the question, Captain Halkin regarding him the while with keenest scrutiny.

"Tom Fuller, as I am a living man!"

Tom Fuller was transfixed with surprise and terror at finding himself thus suddenly recognised, and, "Who—who are you?" trembled from his lips.

"No other than your old comrade, Captain Halkin."

Fuller widened his mouth and eyes, and clasped his hands in wonder and astonishment—a pantomime which naturally caused him to let fall his havresack, the contact of which with the hard ground elicited a heavy metallic sound, instantly recognised to be that of a large quantity of gold, as Captain Halkin's suddenly flaming eye and flushing cheek bore involuntary witness.

Fuller must have been struck with the expression of his old comrade's face, as he hastened to say, with an interrogative doubtfulness of look and tone contradictory of his words, that he was not only rejoiced to again meet with his former illustrious captain, but was quite sure he had nothing to apprehend from him.

The "illustrious captain" replied, that he could only confirm that assurance after having been fully informed of what it might be Mr. Fuller was especially apprehensive of. Fuller replied that he was mainly afraid of bailiffs; but to Captain Halkin he would acknowledge, in strict confidence, that a trumped-up accusation of having cheated the nephew of a nobleman at cards, had caused his name to be placed in the "Hue and Cry," a copy of which he,

with remarkable frankness, produced and placed in the captain's hand, pointing out as he did so, the paragraph which offered twenty pounds reward for the apprehension of Thomas Fuller, formerly a lieutenant in the Royal service. Retirement for a while to the vernal shades of the country was, in such a disastrous state of affairs, imperative. Could, *would* Captain Halkin help his ancient comrade at so sore a pinch?

Captain Halkin professed himself unable to decide offhand in so grave a matter; choosing first to run, soliloquizingly, through the for and against of so committing himself. This, undoubtedly, must have been mere acting; the purpose of which was to dissipate any shadow of a suspicion of his own trustworthiness that might have arisen in Fuller's mind. He must have deemed it essential to do so, as he had marked the apprehensive dismay manifested by the ex-lieutenant when the accidental falling to the ground of his havresack revealed that he was in actual possession of a heavy sum in gold. It cannot, however, but strike one that Captain Halkin's natural sharpness of mental vision must have been blunted by his insane eagerness to obtain that gold, or he could scarcely have been so grossly duped, consummate actor in such affairs as Fuller is said to have been.

Be that as it may, Captain Halkin, as they slowly took their way in the direction of the Swan, thus, according to Fuller's version, mainly delivered himself:—

"He had formerly known Lieutenant Fuller as an officer in Queen Anne's service; and if at that time evil tongues made free with his name, it was no more than they did with that of the Duke of Marlborough, the imputation in both cases being pretty nearly the same—the fraudulent obtainment, namely, of money. He, Captain Halkin, was not obliged to be acquainted with the recent life and conversation of ex-Lieutenant Fuller, or that his name was in the "Hue and Cry," for, as his old comrade alleged, a trumped-up offence. And what if Fuller now wished to pass under the name of Johnson! Many persons of quality had adopted the same expedient. Upon a review, therefore, of all the circumstances, Captain Halkin thought he would be fully justified, and quite safe, in befriending his friend Fuller, who, he suggested in conclusion, would be quite as

secure, nay, more so, if introduced and vouched for by himself, at the Swan, Knightsbridge, as at any other place that could be named.

Much needful counsel remained to be urged by Captain Halkin before the pair reached the Swan; the most insisted upon item whereof was that Fuller should make ostentatious proclamation, as it were, of his poverty; the chief reasons for doing so being that robberies of wealthy travellers have been perpetrated at the Swan; and that the cost of your entertainment will be less; especially so! he adds, with a vain attempt at indifference of tone and manner, if you offer to sleep in the bedroom, in which, as you may have heard, one Meredith was not long since murdered. No one has since dared to sleep therein; but an old soldier like you will hardly be afraid of ghosts, and I know that to break through the silly prejudice attaching to the room, the landlady will be glad to let you sleep therein gratis. Tom Fuller promptly replied that it was just then such cursed low water with him, that he would face all the ghosts in Christendom for the cost of a magnum of claret. Preliminaries being thus adjusted to their mutual satisfaction, their course lay plain before both gentlemen.

A course brief as plain! The goal and gulf to which, consciously and unconsciously, the two plotters were bound having been reached on the night of the 17th of March, just four days after Fuller's arrival at the Swan, and his occupancy of the "murder" bedroom.

It is plain to me, and will presently be so to the reader, that a vague, torturing sense of peril, of impending ruin, must, during those four days, have enfeebled the intellect of Captain Halkin. Instinctively he must have felt himself to be upon the edge of an abyss, which to successfully overleap would be a miracle,—and yet, take the desperate spring he must! A letter from his son, received on the second day after his meeting with Fuller, warned him that if a large sum was not forwarded forthwith, he, Kyrle, would be obliged to leave Cambridge, furtively, a dishonoured man! How, so goaded, *could* such a man as Halkin coolly measure the chances of the desperate leap to which he was inexorably urged!

Accident strengthened his wavering courage: Fuller came —rather was hooted home in the evening of the 17th, from

the Old Fox, in a state of beastly drunkenness; not so hooted because he was beastly drunk, but that he had no money to pay his score. Halkin, moved, he made it appear, by the fellow's asseverations, reinforced by a profusion of hiccupped oaths, that he had not, for the moment, a farthing in the world, discharged the debt, and Fuller staggered up-stairs to bed. Soon afterwards, Halkin slipped quietly out of the general room, and swiftly gained his own bed-chamber, whence looking into his friend's, he saw Fuller lying helplessly drunk upon the floor. He saw, also, that the key of the havresack, suspended round his neck by a ribbon, was dangling from Fuller's waist-pocket. Easy then, by-and-by, to obtain a few minutes' possession of that key, and replace it without a chance of detection; and who, if the drunken beast should next day complain of having been robbed of a large sum in gold, would attach the slightest credence to such a statement! Besides, were not the officers of criminal justice in quest of Johnson, *alias* Fuller. Not then in a position he to raise an outcry for a loss in which no one would for a moment believe! The stars were propitious, and that very night Captain Halkin would seize occasion by the forelock.

One precaution would render assurance doubly sure. Fuller was not so dead-drunk but that he from time to time stretched forth his hand for a bottle that stood by him and sucked thereat. A few drops of a potent agent, with which Captain Halkin was always provided, gently poured therein, would effectually seal up the drunkard's senses for the next seven or eight hours at least. That little manœuvre was dexterously managed. Captain Halkin had the satisfaction of seeing his friend Fuller stretch forth his hand for the bottle, seize it, and as the glug-glug in his throat bore witness, or appeared to do so, swallow a considerable quantity. Tom Fuller's unconsciousness, for a sufficient time, of all things passing around him, was, therefore, an accomplished fact, and Captain Halkin hurried away.

His absence had been so brief, and his re-entrance, like his exit, so quietly effected, that no one seemed to have noticed that he had left the room. It was, however, observed, and subsequently much commented upon, that the heavy gloom which had of late weighed down his spirits,

seemed upon that evening to have been suddenly lifted; that he was again the gay-hearted, boon companion of former days, with the difference that he drank as he was never seen to drink before. "The captain's rollicking spirits that evening," remarked a correspondent of *The Post Boy* newspaper, "seeming to be rather the frothy ebullitions of the liquor he swallowed than the natural wellings forth of a genial jovial nature." It may be, however, that this was an afterthought of the *Post Boy's* correspondent.

Captain Halkin retired at his usual hour, the general company broke up soon afterwards, and by twelve o'clock the house was quiet, its indwellers, with few exceptions, sound asleep.

One of those exceptions, the only one he himself believed, is Captain Halkin. He does not, however, feel sufficiently confident in that belief till between the hours of one and two, when he silently rises and partially dresses himself. He then peers into the next chamber, and, favoured by a sufficient starlight, ascertains that Fuller remains helplessly recumbent upon the floor; his eager, sensitive ear, moreover, assures him that the stertorous breathing of slumbering drunkenness has completely ceased; that the sleep of his ancient comrade is indeed twin-brother to that of death —calm, still—all but pulseless!

Captain Halkin's soundless steps returns towards his own bed, from under which he pulls a trunk, and takes a coat therefrom; not to put it on, but to rip open the back inside lining, which conceals a mask so skilfully manufactured that it could be flattened without injury to its feature individuality. This mask he carefully assumes and adjusts, and, glancing in the chamber-mirror, starts back with unreasoning, instinctive horror. The glass, illumined by the watching stars, presents to him the face of the unfortunate whom he had seen killed at Tyburn; he himself having been the real pronouncer of the bloody sentence; the veritable executioner by whom life had been wrenched from Swartz' quivering carcase!

It will not do to permit his thoughts to darken that way, and Captain Halkin, summoning his faculties for the accomplishment of the work in hand, completes his toilet, and creeps towards his prey.

His purpose will be easily achieved. The discharge of a

cannon close to his ear would not awake the sleeper, and the captain, possessing himself of the havresack key, quietly proceeds to secure his booty—a rich one!—one hundred and seventy odd heavy gold pieces, all of which are soon securely pouched; the havresack is relocked, the ribbon to which the key is attached replaced round Fuller's neck, and the burglar steals forth of the chamber as softly as he entered it. He intends leaving the Swan by the back entrance, and, after depositing the gold in a secret place, return to bed and feign sleep till his usual hour of rising.

Meanwhile, the supposedly drunken, opium-drugged man cautiously rises to his feet, and with stealthiest footfall follows the unapprehensive robber. He has not far to go. As Captain Halkin's right hand grasps the handle of the door opening out upon the passage or corridor, Fuller springs upon him, pinions his arms, shouting, yelling, as he does so, with ferocious triumph.

That shouting, yelling, is promptly responded to by the flinging wide of the door which Halkin was in the act of opening, and the bursting into the room of two officers—one of them Sharman—who have been lying in wait in the passage.

The thunder-smitten criminal comprehends in one dread moment of time that he is lost—that resistance, denial, subterfuge, will be useless, absurd. After one frantic outburst of despair, the soldier-spirit of the man gradually regains ascendancy, and he submits with sullen, defiant despair to his fate. By dawn of day he is in Newgate, the occupant of the same cell, by chance or design, to which Peter Swartz had been consigned.

Now comes a passage in this strange history, which, judged of by modern notions, would seem to be utterly incredible. There cannot, however, be any doubt entertained of its strict truth.

Captain Halkin was lodged in Newgate early on Saturday morning on the 17th of March. It chanced that the magistrate at Bow Street did not sit either on that day or the following Monday, and the three days' respite from public exposure thus afforded gave Captain Halkin leisure and opportunity to elaborate a scheme for the fulfilment of the only hope which, since his arrest, dwelt in his thoughts.

His own doom was death. In that respect, he nourished no illusions, as clearly appears from the letters he forwarded within an hour of his arrival at Newgate to Colonel Gillespie, and two other influential gentlemen, whose names are not given. All he cared for was to prevent Kyrle from knowing that his father had justly incurred, and would assuredly suffer, a felon's fate. This was not so difficult to manage in those days as now, when newspapers give the wings of the morning to every occurrence or rumour likely to interest the public; and in Halkin's case there were peculiarly favourable circumstances. He ascertained that a vessel (*The William and Mary*) was to sail from the Thames for America on the Monday or Tuesday next. Now, if he could be permitted to send for his son, explain to him that the failure of the distillery company had utterly deprived him of money-means, and that it was therefore imperatively necessary that he, Kyrle, should immediately leave England upon a mission of pressing importance to his uncle at Boston, Captain Halkin felt little doubt that, as he would manage it, his son, remaining in America, would only hear, at the end of some six or eight months, that his father had been cut off by sudden illness. He explained his views more at large to the two anonymous gentlemen who, at his earnest solicitation, visited him without delay (Colonel Gillespie being temporarily absent from London). He promised that if they would exert their influence to enable him to gratify the supreme desire of his soul, he would save the authorities much trouble by placing a written, circumstantial confession of his guilt in their hands; not only his guilt in reference to the murder and robberies at the Swan Inn, Knightsbridge, but with respect to antecedent offences which it was desirable, for the public interest, should be truthfully made kn wn. All he asked was that a trusty messenger should be forthwith despatched to Cambridge for his son, and that he, Captain Halkin, be permitted an interview with him on his arrival in London in a private house, as near Newgate as might be wished. It would be easy to guard him so effectually, without his son being cognizant of his being guarded, as to preclude the possibility of escape. Besides, he would give his word of honour as an officer and a gentleman that he would make no attempt at escape, but quietly return to Newgate at the hour to be agreed upon.

The "word of honour" of a confessed assassin and burglar would not, one would think, have been held to have much binding force; and yet, in this instance, the contrary seems to have been the case. The two gentlemen professed, and, no doubt, felt, entire reliance upon the prisoner's honour, and promised to use their interest with the gaol authorities to obtain their assent to Halkin's extraordinary request. Meanwhile a messenger would be at once despatched to Cambridge with a letter to Kyrle; and to make sure that the envoy should not, by design or inadvertence, reveal the truth, he, the envoy, should not himself know that the writer, the sender of the letter, was in prison.

So far there was no difficulty, but upon applying to the authorities, the friends of the prisoner found that they had overrated their influence. The very notion of assenting to the felon-prisoner's request was contemptuously poohpoohed, and Halkin, informed of the official refusal, was in despair. Fortunately Colonel Gillespie returned to town early on the morrow (Sunday), had an immediate interview with the prisoner, and so zealously exerted his powerful influence, that Halkin's prayer was reluctantly acceded to.

The place fixed upon for the meeting of the father and son was an apartment on the first floor of No. 7, Ludgate Hill. It could be so closely watched from without, that any effort at escape would be certainly defeated.

As evening fell, handcuffed Captain Halkin emerged from the gaol gate and entered a coach (though the distance to be traversed was two or three hundred yards only), one guardian seating himself beside him, one mounting the box, and others keeping close to the coach, which, by order, proceeded at a foot pace, from which precautions it is pretty clear that the authorities did not place implicit reliance upon the "word of honour" of the assassin of Meredith and Peter Swartz.

No. 7, Ludgate Hill, is soon reached, and Captain Halkin, relieved of his handcuffs, is left to himself in a handsomely-furnished room. Wine and other aids to conviviality are on a sideboard, and at nine precisely an ample supper will be served. It yet wants half an hour by the

dial to the time fixed for Kyrle's arrival, and Halkin, whose every movement is watched by the officers from just without, after a shuddering glance at a mirror which shows him a white, haggard face, drinks hastily and largely of the wine, till, in fact, the white, haggard face is flushed—the dulled eyes bright, sparkling. No matter that they are kindled by factitious fire, so that the flame die not out till eleven o'clock.

Kyrle Halkin and his father have met, and passed an evening of real enjoyment on the part of the son, of wonderfully simulated gaiety on that of the father.

Never, it is stated by Sharman, who, habited as a menial, waited upon them, never did Captain Halkin appear more jocund, hilarious—fuller of pleasantry and anecdote. He even volunteered a favourite song; but, for all his bravery, broke down at the line, "When thou art old there 'll be grief for thee,"* and burst into tears. The son thought it was loving fear for him on account of the perils of the voyage to America that made his father weep, and spoke blithely of the matter, and of how little danger, now-a-days, there was in crossing the Atlantic in a stout ship. "It was a cruel scene," adds Sharman, "to them that understood it."

It is over, that sad last supper; the father and son tear themselves from each other's convulsive embrace; Kyrle, who has a sealed parcel in his hand, directed to his uncle, hurries down-stairs, enters a coach in waiting to convey him to Gravesend, to which place the *William and Mary* has already dropped down, and is rapidly driven off. His son gone—for ever gone from him—Captain Halkin's fortitude gives way, and a hurricane of grief, remorse, despair,

* Probably Robert Greene's exquisite song:—

"Mother's wag, pretty boy,
Father's sorrow, father's joy;
When thy father first did see
Such a boy by him and me,
He was glad, I was woe,
Fortune changed made him so.
When he had left his pretty boy,
Last his sorrow, first his joy.
Weep not my wanton, smile upon my knee,
When thou art old, there 's grief enough for thee."

sweeps through, and seems to rend his being. "A piteous sight," exclaims Sharman: "I could not help feeling compassion for him, villain and murderer as I knew him to be."

Foolish weakness that, which may not be long indulged in. The hand of the dial is upon the stroke of eleven, and the officers enter the room to say that it is full time to be moving. Those harsh tones act as a trumpet-call to the veteran soldier's pride, his courage; which rekindled fires dry up his tears, re-string his nerves, and he holds out his hands for the reception of the handcuffs with the stern calmness of a stoic or a martyr.

On the following morning he places his written confession in the hands of Colonel Gillespie. It is a prolix, wordy document, from which much of the foregoing narrative has been gleaned; and it will only be necessary for the illumination of the obscure passages in that narrative, to extract a few brief paragraphs from the unhappy man's confession:—

"The wild waywardness of my youth and early manhood was controlled, purified by as true a passion as ever kindled the pulse, or glowed within the heart of man. I met Agnes Lee at High Barnet Fair. She was a rustic lass, uneducated, save by the magical teachings of a delicate organization; but of a beauty dazzling, marvellous, divine. I knew that my father would rather that I mated with a daughter of the king of fiends than with a peasant wench, and I wooed, won, married Agnes Lee in the name of James Gordon. Then followed a heaven of rapturous bliss—lightning-like in its vividness, its swift flight—and in the utter blackness by which it was succeeded, swallowed up. My father summoned me to Carlisle upon affairs of moment, and I left my wife in the care of her aunt, at the village of Cock Foster. Months passed away before I could return thither, which I at last did quite unexpectedly by Agnes or her aunt. My wife was not at home, and the terrified aunt shook in every limb as if a spectre from the grave confronted her when I entered the house. I did not much heed her for the moment, for there was a cradle in the room—in that cradle our child, Kyrle—so named at my request. Half an hour may, perhaps, have passed before I again bethought me of inquiring why Agnes was from home. The aunt, who always disliked me, had, by

that time, nerved herself to defy me, and she replied that Agnes was away for her pleasure! For her pleasure! Yes; and then the woman, with a ferocious exultation such as the apparitors of the Holy Inqnisition may feel when torturing their victims, went on to say, that, believing herself abandoned by me, Agnes had renewed a former intimacy with one Endell, whom she had foolishly jilted for my sake. Ay, and they were at that moment together in London, enjoying the gaieties of the town.

"I need not attempt to depict the storm of rage which such an announcement excited in my breast; enough to say that, having first carried off my child to a place of safety, I, guided by a slight clue which the aunt had inadvertently afforded, hastened to London, traced Agnes and her paramour from one place to another, till I at last came up with them at Hockley-in-the-Hole, whither they had gone to witness some sword-playing. I drank madly during that frantic search; but had it not been so, the sight of Agnes seated by her seducer's side, with his arm passed round her waist, would have fired my blood to flame. I was beside them at a bound, and my dagger pierced his throat—her heart! There was a loud outcry, but before the mob of spectators could comprehend what had happened, I was off, and, thanks to the precautions I had taken, successful pursuit was hopeless, impossible. I soon afterwards entered the army, and no one would have imagined that Lieutenant Halkin was the homicide of Hockley-in-the-Hole.

"The unfortunate Swartz must have been present at that stern deed of justice, and retained my features confusedly in his memory; I felt sure of that, and dreaded every day to be denounced by him, a dread which excited the deadliest hatred in my breast against him. That rage is gone, quenched in his blood; and the poor fellow's death sits heavier at my heart than even Meredith's.

"I will not, however, affect a pious contrition that I do not feel, true as it is that I am not now, was not at the time of their perpetration, upheld by an excusing estimate of the crimes for which I am to die: I felt impelled by an irresistible fate, necessity; and had no thought of the possibility of turning back from my bloody purpose. No man, let me add—disbelieve it who may—no man who

reads these lines can feel a stronger detestation, a more shrinking horror of such crimes than I felt of myself, as, with coward steps, I stole towards Meredith's and Fuller's chamber; I certainly *wished* to be only a successful robber, but I knew that I should not hesitate at murder if murder were necessary to the success of robbery, or to my own safety. Let me add, to spare the authorities the trouble of instituting an useless inquiry, that the imitative mask I wore was manufactured by myself; the hat and clothes were also adapted by my own hands. I have always had a skill in such things. I cannot explain why I put on the mask-likeness of poor Swartz, when I went to rob Fuller: I fancy that my brain had been for some time at fault.

"The play is played out; the dark curtain about to fall upon the last scene of life; but I shall not die, like Peter Swartz, amidst the jeers and curses of the rabble; and the only hereafter I believe in, or care for, is to be remembered with affection and esteem by my son—a foolish weakness, since the manifestation of that affection and esteem will find no echo in the grave where I shall rot in cold obstruction; yet I would not, if I could, shake off this weakness.

"After all I merely disappear, somewhat untimely, from a world it was no privilege to be born into, and which may be quitted without very poignant regret. Ay, and without fear, too; I, at least, feel none, holding, as I do, that a retributive future is a dream of fools; that death—

"'———if measured right,
Is but a soundless sleep, a long good night.'"

About two hours after Colonel Gillespie left Newgate, Halkin was found lying on the cell floor, dead. He died by his own hand and by poison. So thoroughly were his last wishes carried out by his influential friends, that the only newspaper notice of his death I have been able to find is this:—

"The man arrested for a robbery at the Swan Inn, Knightsbridge, and lodged in Newgate on Saturday last, yesterday committed suicide by poisoning himself."

No. 1, BOWLING-INN ALLEY.

"Carstairs, once the belle,
Pale Fear sent to h—ll;
For the Parson and Snob,
Red Fire did the job."—*Street Ballad.*

Bowling-Inn Alley is an obscure locality at the back of the Rolls Chapel, Chancery Lane, which claims the honour of having been the birth and breeding place of Mary Ann Clarke, the daughter of a labourer, wife of a bricklayer, and mistress in chief to His Royal Highness Duke of York and Right Reverend Bishop of Osnaburgh. Further back in its moral, or immoral, history, I find a tragic page, which I have freely rendered in the following paper.

In the year 1747, Mistress Patience Carstairs and Margaret Dent, a lass of nineteen, had been resident at No. 1, Bowling-Inn Alley, something over a dozen years. Margaret called herself, and was called by others, Mistress Carstairs' granddaughter. They had, however, no blood affinity with each other, the girl being the daughter of a son of Peter Carstairs by a prior and almost as unhappy a marriage as that he contracted with Patience Rowley, now, and very many years since, Patience Carstairs, widow.

The widow was a tall, large-boned woman, still in the enjoyment of all her faculties, though her scanty locks were whitened by the snows of more than eighty winters. At least it was so reported, and her age could hardly be much less, forasmuch as it was a frequent boast of hers that she had seen and conversed with the famous John Bunyan a few days before his death, at his friend's, Mr. Strudwick, the grocer, at the Star, Snow Hill. She was then a wife and mother; and the author of the Pilgrim's Progress died there, we know, in 1688. A hard, penurious woman she had become in her old age, grudging herself and Margaret Dent the commonest necessaries, though her house property, chiefly situate in Chancery Lane, was considerable. No. 1, Bowling-Inn Alley, also belonged to her,

and as its tenants were, for the most part, of a class which made it a rule never to pay rent — if payment could by any means be avoided—Patience Carstairs moved into the dilapidated tenement herself, and let all but two rooms on the first floor, and a small attic, to weekly lodgers. Amongst these, in 1747, was Josiah Grossmith, a shoemaker, his wife, and his, not *her*, son, a deformed youth, who occupied the ground-floor. I conclude, that when the following events occurred, only the two families inhabited No. 1, Bowling-Inn Alley, no mention being made of other lodgers. The back-room on the first floor was Mrs. Carstairs' sleeping place, and Margaret Dent's chamber was the tiny attic.

Two supreme terrors darkened the life of Mrs. Carstairs. One, a horrible dread of death—the other of being robbed. The realization of the first she hoped to indefinitely postpone by instant recurrence, whenever attacked by the slightest illness, to the skill of William Stone, apothecary, Fleet Street—the sole extravagance she was ever known to indulge in. The second great, though immeasurably lesser terror, she strove to combat by constantly giving out that her money was deposited, immediately after it was received, in Child's banking-house, close by Temple Bar.

According to Margaret Dent, her reputed grandmother had been very good-looking in her young days; her comeliness having been her sole dowry when she married Peter Carstairs, a widower of abundant means, who died suddenly, when their son Charles, and sole issue, was about twenty years old. Charles Carstairs had made choice of a sea-life, and *his* only surviving son, by a French Creole, whom he married at Martinique, still followed his father's profession. This Philip had once called, Margaret told the Grossmiths, upon his grandmother, Mrs. Carstairs. A furious altercation ensued between them, at the end of which the sailor rushed out of the room and the house in a state, apparently, of frenzied passion, and Mrs. Carstairs took to her bed, which she did not leave for several days. Margaret, at the entrance of the young man, went out of the room; she could only, in consequence, hear that the quarrel was a violent one, but could not catch its purport, except that it related, in some way, to Mrs. Carstairs' husband, respecting whose sudden decease the girl hinted to

her gossip, Mrs. Grossmith, she remembered to have heard her mother say strange murmurs were afloat at the time of his death.

The interview, to whatever it related, had so shaken Mrs. Carstairs in mind as well as body, that had not William Stone's anodynes quieted her nerves as speedily as they did, spiritual assistance would have been called in to exorcise the terrors with which Conscience, scared from uneasy slumber by a vivid apprehension of the near approach of death, afflicted her shrinking soul. This device for cheating the devil by parsonic aid at the last moment of expiring life was much relied upon by Mrs. Carstairs, who had been long noted for the gross, but very common superstition which looks upon religious rites as a sort of magical charm, of all-potent power, if duly administered, to pass the guiltiest recipient to Heaven. Had Mrs. Carstairs been a Catholic, she would have trusted to the holy oil and the viaticum; as it was, she proposed to confide in the bread and wine of the Church of England sacrament. The dread hour when she must have recourse to that saving rite was, she hoped, still far off, spite of her fourscore years.

It was *not* immediately close at hand, and Mrs. Carstairs meanwhile clutched her worldly wealth with a grip which became closer, firmer, with each passing day. Margaret Dent had previously been sufficiently supplied with food, though of a coarse quality—now she was also pinched in quantity; and a feeling of bitterness was excited in her mind, which was freely ventilated in the ear of the Grossmiths by many a dark hint and whispered surmise.

It was from Margaret's babbling tongue that the shoemaker and his family became acquainted with the curious fact that, drudge-of-all-work as the girl was, Mrs. Carstairs never, by any chance, permitted her to touch her bed, much less to make it. Ill, suffering as she might be, the old lady, in that particular, ministered to herself, Margaret not being allowed to remain in the room the while; and never did Mrs. Carstairs go out without carefully locking her chamber door.

If, however, Margaret may be believed—and there seems no reason to doubt her truth in this or any other instance—this caprice of her grandmother did not excite her curio-

sity in the least: she attached no meaning to it, and it was only once, if her memory deceived her not, and then amidst a flood of other gossip, that she casually mentioned the circumstance. Evidently a very incurious girl; a peculiarity which must have been shared by Josiah Grossmith, who could not, when the ascertainment of the truth in the matter became of importance, after a diligent ransack of his memory, arrive at more than a dim recollection that he had once heard something of the sort from Margaret Dent.

On the afternoon of Christmas day, 1747, Mrs. Carstairs, who had daintily dined off a richly-stuffed goose, sent to her, ready prepared for the spit, two days previously, by some unknown friend, was seized with violent pains in the stomach and bowels. Margaret Dent was also affected, but in a very slight degree.

Mr. William Stone, who was immediately summoned to the rescue, pronounced the old lady to be suffering from colic; or, to use his technical jargon, 'flatulence and nausea being, in addition to *tormina*, amongst the symptoms, the disorder was more accurately named, "ileus," or "the iliac passion."'

The apothecary's learned argumentation did not in the slightest degree shake Mrs. Carstairs' conviction that she had been poisoned, and, in compliance with her frenzied prayers, Mr. Stone administered powerful emetics: these had the effect of gradually alleviating the sufferings of his patient, and it was not very long before he was able to declare that all danger was at an end. Mr. Stone did not for a moment participate in the horrible suspicion entertained by Mrs. Carstairs: he had a quite sufficient reason for not doing so. Mrs. Carstairs, with unprecedented generosity, had made a present of the remains of the goose to the Grossmiths, who were very poor—all three of whom had partaken thereof—picked the bones thoroughly clean, without experiencing the slightest evil results. This fact being accepted by Mr. Stone as unquestionable, no further test of the presence of poison in the gift-goose was attempted, and the stuff brought off the old lady's stomach by the emetics was thrown, unexamined, away. It is probable that William Stone was not a skilled analytical chemist.

Mrs. Carstairs was not so easily satisfied; and after

gloomily pondering the affair through the night, arrived at a fixed belief that an attempt had been made to destroy her, and that that attempt would be renewed again and again till it succeeded, unless the culprit could be discovered and consigned to the gallows.

Clearly the first thing to be done in furtherance of that purpose was, to ascertain who had brought the evil gift to No. 1, Bowling-Inn Alley, directed to Mrs. Carstairs, formerly of Lamb's Conduit Street.

This important query was easily replied to; the basket containing the goose had been brought by one John Last, a ticket-porter, who was always to be met with in Fleet Street. John Last being sought for, was soon found, and, in answer to Mrs. Carstairs, said, the parcel had been given to him in Fetter Lane, not very far from the Holborn termination of said lane, by a man whose face he could not see, not only because it was pitch dark, but that the said face, the weather being bitterly cold, was closely muffled up. The man gave him a shilling, and bade him deliver the basket as soon as possible. John Last added, that though he could not see the man's features, he noticed *that his dress was that of a sailor;* at hearing which Mrs. Carstairs cried out, with hysteric passion, "O God, my wicked grandson! I feared so——"

Controlling herself with a force of will astonishing at her age, she dismissed the ticket-porter with a small gratuity, he naturally much wondering at the emotion displayed, no hint of the suspicion entertained by Mrs. Carstairs having been given him.

Directly she was alone with Margaret Dent, the aged widow gave free vent to a torrent of merciless invective; of bitterest hate, scorn, *fear*, hurled in a voice to which rage gave factitious strength, against Philip Carstairs.

The idea of prosecuting, of hanging the miscreant, glanced through her mind, and found vindictive expression at her lips, only to be instantly rebuked, rejected. No—no—no! It was the crowning curse that she could not, *dared* not, hang Philip Carstairs, were his guilt to be made manifest beyond doubt or cavil.

Margaret Dent naturally supposed her words to mean that she dared not, in a moral sense, cast to the winds the tie of blood by prosecuting to death the child of her only

son; and, with the hope of calming her agitation, recurred to the fact of the Grossmiths having partaken of the goose without injury to themselves, as an irrefragable proof that it could not have been poisoned. Mrs. Carstairs vehemently controverted that inference. She had sent the Grossmiths only solid pieces—the legs, and part of the skeleton—but none, none of the stuffing! It was in the stuffing, of course, that the poison was contained. In corroboration of that opinion she pointed out that, whilst she herself, who had eaten heartily of the stuffing, suffered horribly, Margaret, who had scarcely partaken of it, had hardly been affected.

There was something in that, Margaret thought; and Mrs. Carstairs was raging on with unabated volubility when a heavy footfall was heard ascending the stairs, the effect of which was to instantly seal her lips, turn her person to the rigidity of a statue, and glue her gleaming eyes upon the door of the room, which presently, flung rudely open, gave admittance to Philip Carstairs himself.

Mrs. Carstairs screamed, and tottered behind Margaret Dent. She seemed to imagine, in the first flush of surprise, that her grandson was about to compass her death by open violence. The young man, who must have been keeping Christmas in very jolly fashion, was evidently flustered with drink—his speech was thick, and he kept his feet with some difficulty.

"I am come," he began, "I am come, you wretched old beldame, for the last time, to—— to——"

The "wretched old beldame," whose panic had vanished at the sight of her grandson's spirituous condition, silenced him with a stern gesture, and whilst her gaze did not swerve for a moment from his face, peremptorily commanded Margaret Dent to leave the room—to go to her chamber, and remain there till called down.

Instead of ascending to her attic chamber, Margaret Dent, incurious as she might be on ordinary occasions, crouched down, placed her ear at a crevice in a panel of the door, and listened with suspended breath.

For a while she heard nothing but a few silly, half-incoherent phrases stuttered by the full half-seas over sailor: then beginning slowly, calmly, and gradually rising into rapidity and rage, Mrs. Carstairs launched at the young

man the frightful accusation with which the reader is familiar, following it up by wild laughter, and taunting challanges to now—now—now! repeat the infamous calumnies with which he had, on a former occasion, insulted, outraged her.

At first, it seemed that Philip Carstairs treated his grandame's objurgation with good-humoured contempt; he laughed outright—a genial, hearty laugh, in singular contrast with that of Mrs. Carstairs; but finding that she was mad, or serious, he, too—the devil of rage driving out, for a while, the devil of drink—gave vent to a storm of abusive rage, concluding with a threat, that if some request of his was not complied with on the morrow, he would clear scores with her once for all.

Margaret Dent but partially heard, and but indistinctly comprehended, the purport of Philip Carstairs' words; yet had she heard and understood quite enough to take all colour from her cheeks, and strength from her limbs, so that she could scarcely climb up-stairs to her chamber, which reached, she fell insensible upon the bed.

Mrs. Grossmith came to seek her after the lapse of about an hour. Startled by the ghost-like face of the girl, who had not long regained her senses, Mrs. Grossmith asked her if the sailor had killed her as well as her grandmother?

"Do not cry out like that, girl," added the woman, fancying that Margaret took her brutal question seriously: "Mrs. Carstairs is not dead yet; and her grandson only struck her with hard words, so far as I can understand."

"Hard, bitter words," she continued, a swarthy glow darkly lighting up her pinched, sallow features—"Hard, bitter words, which will, she is horribly afeard, send her to settle some queer accounts in the next world, before her books have been regularly balanced in this. What I mean is, that since Mr. Stone came and told her she was very ill indeed, your grandmother has been raving about a parson, and other things that don't seem to sit quite easy upon her mind; so Grossmith being gone for the parson, and I wanted below, in my own place, you must get up and wait upon the old woman yourself: it won't be for long, it strikes me, that you 'll have to attend upon her," she added, with a coarse chuckle, as she left the room.

There was a world of agony in the old lady's eye, as Margaret Dent's shrinking look met hers. Interpreting that agonized expression by what she had heard pass between her and Philip Carstairs, Margaret knew that the sailor's fierce breath had blown to flame the fiery arrows of remorse, lodged inextricably in her brain and heart long since, but which Time and Impunity had dulled and blunted.

Her mind was wandering, but the beckoning hand welcomed Margaret, who, hastening to her, clasped that hand in both hers, and burst into tears; a proof of sympathy responded to by a few human water-drops which trickled through the dying woman's burning eyes, adown her parched, withered face.

She motioned for the medicine left by the apothecary, and, having taken the prescribed quantum, slowly subsided into troubled slumber, muttering the while incoherent threats, curses, prayers—the memories and fears of a bad life, unblessed death, and terrible judgment to come.

She still slept when Grossmith returned, bringing with him the Rev. Mr. Hargood, a young clergyman, unknown to either Mrs. Carstairs or Margaret Dent, instead of the minister of St. Bride's church, whom he had been requested to seek.

"The reverend rector was not to be found," said Grossmith, in reply to an expression of surprise from Margaret, "and as I knew from Stone," he added, "that an eternity of weal or woe depends upon the use that may be made of the few hours—perhaps not one—which stand between your relative and that dread eternity, I besought this gentleman to minister to her spiritual needs instead."

The man uttered those words in a loud, and always dissonant voice, as if with the express design of making them heard by the slumbering woman. Finding that she only turned uneasily in the bed, he proposed that she should be at once forcibly aroused out of a sleep from which she might else awake in hell! Margaret Dent opposed herself to this, and the Rev. Mr. Hargood agreed with her: "I will keep watch with the young woman," he blandly observed, "till the venerable patient shall awake of herself."

Grossmith had told this Hargood—of whose previous history more presently—that Margaret Dent would be

quite sure to inherit the whole of Mrs. Carstairs' property, consisting of valuable houses, and large sums lodged in Child's bank—she never, by any chance, keeping more than a trifling amount at home—if the old lady could only be persuaded to make a will; her grandson, one Philip Carstairs, having mortally offended her by hinting at his discovery—so far as he, Grossmith, could understand the cause of quarrel—of dark, punishable deeds in her past life. Hargood easily read the simple character of the girl; and being fully conscious of his own personal and mental advantages, at once conceived a plan of improving the situation for his own benefit. The opportunity afforded by the *tête-à-tête* to which he had adroitly invited himself, was, therefore, eagerly seized upon, first, to piece out the hints which Grossmith had let fall relative to the former criminality of Mrs. Carstairs as a means of obtaining power over *her*. If he did not very well succeed in that particular, he was abundantly successful in insinuating himself into the good graces of the flattered, foolish wench. He had ample time to do so, as the winter night had long set in, and the sad, white moon had shone upon the flushed brow of the simple girl, and the handsome, expressive features of the practised man of the world, some three or four hours when Mrs. Carstairs' hand-bell challenged the attention of the watchers.

Margaret Dent started like a guilty thing, lit a lamp with trembling hands, and hurriedly obeyed the summons, followed by the Reverend Hargood, whom she introduced with a brief explanation of how it had come to pass that he was there in place of the rector of St. Bride's.

Mrs. Carstairs had awoke perfectly sensible, comparatively calm, and with a reviving hope of prolonged life fluttering at her heart. Hargood saw that she had wonderfully rallied, and did not doubt that for this time she would be quits for the fright. He shaped his course accordingly, promptly expressing his great satisfaction to find that Mr. Stone's gloomy prediction was not likely to be verified; the confident expression of which opinion won greatly on the favour of Mrs. Carstairs, and procured him a general invitation to call upon her whenever his spiritual duties permitted him to do so. That invitation was softly repeated by Margaret Dent when she was taking leave of

the reverend gentleman, to whom she had secretly given the address of Philip Carstairs, he requesting it for the benevolent purpose of seeing that misguided young man, and expostulating with him upon the senseless, wicked threats he had hurled at his aged grandame.

"At the sign of the Salutation, Norton Folgate, you say, sweet Margaret," added the reverend gentleman, pressing and kissing 'sweet' Margaret's yielding hand. "I will be early there to-morrow, rely upon it. But, mind, not a word to the dear old lady up-stairs. She might resent my visit to Philip Carstairs as an uncalled-for interference in her private affairs, and my precious privilege of visiting here might be jeopardized."

It almost passes belief that the hallucinations of vanity, or the transfiguring illusions peculiar to 'Young Love's Dream' should have deluded such a girl as Margaret Dent into the extravagant notion that she had suddenly inspired Hargood with a genuine, disinterested, unquenchable passion. She was good-looking enough, to be sure, and the freshness of youth was brightened by a perennially-sparkling, cheerful temper—a combination of attractions that had long since led captive the shoemaker's son, James Grossmith, though he had never told his love, save by sheepish looks and boyish blushes when she chanced to speak to him, or he to her. But the girl's education was of the commonest sort, her manners those of a neat-handed, buxom servant-of-all-work; whilst the Reverend Hargood, who was not more than thirty years of age, and scarcely looked so much, was a very handsome, highly-educated person, of polished manners, astute intellect, and winning address. Yet so it was; and from that evening till the hour which stripped the mask from the heartless villain's moral features, and Margaret could no longer cheat herself with hope, the excited girl seemed to breathe an atmosphere of delirious delight, which no shadow of doubt or suspicion dimmed or saddened. Hear her own account of that intoxicating phase in her young life:—

"The only plea in excuse of my wretched folly is, that I could have imagined no unworthy motive for his pretending to love me, to woo me for his wife, not only by spoken words, but by letters; and, simple as I was, I knew that *written* vows and promises are always carefully avoided

by mere seducers. I had no expectancy, not the slightest, of fortune. Mrs. Carstairs, I well knew, felt a superstitious dread of making a will, and I was morally certain would depart this life intestate, in which case the whole of her property would go, as a matter of course, to the grandson; though I was not then aware—Mrs. Carstairs' vindictive dislike of the young man prompting her to conceal from everybody the, to her, hateful truth—that the house property, which was large, *could* not be willed away from him. Philip Carstairs, I may add, was as ignorant upon that important point as myself. There was no doubt, consequently, that I should be left penniless at Mrs. Carstairs' death, which, in the course of nature, could not be very distant. This conviction I often expressed to Hargood himself; the oftener—infatuated simpleton that I was—because he was sure to reply, that he loved me for myself alone—an assurance which ever drew from me plenteous tears of wonder and delight. I also recall with astonishment, that the dreadful apprehensions, the affrighting images of guilt and shame which the broken, obscurely-worded, but still frightfully-significant accusation flung, in my hearing, by Philip Carstairs in his trembling grandmother's face, were utterly banished from my mind, which had become too bright, too sunny for the intrusion of such dark shadows."

The foregoing passage, I may remark by the way, was penned long subsequent to the events I am now relating, and after the writer's mental powers had received some degree of cultivation.

The Reverend Hargood—I have not met with his baptismal name — was, as he had promised, early on the morrow at the Salutation, Norton Folgate, found Philip Carstairs there, and was soon in consultation with him. Before, however, setting down the main particulars which transpired of that and subsequent consultations, it may be well to more exactly inform the reader of what manner of men they were that held them.

The Reverend Hargood was a native of Coventry, and a clergyman of the Established Church. He had officiated as curate in that ancient and picturesque city; but from certain irregularities, to speak mildly, in his life and conversation, had been turned out of his curacy, with a cha-

racter which proved an insuperable bar to his restoration to the public exercise of his sacred functions. Josiah Grossmith, also a Coventry man, who had known Hargood well —much better than the disgraced clergyman suspected— by sight and reputation, not long since met him in London, and, whether from a mere idle curiosity, or a fancy that he might in some way turn the knowledge to account, took pains to ascertain the ex-curate's actual mode and means of life; the sum total of which knowledge—not attained without difficulty—was, that the Reverend Hargood lived, and at times lived handsomely, by his skill at the gaming-table. He was not, however, a brazen-faced, avowed blackleg or gambler; was never seen in the haunts of infamy which he nightly frequented, and where he passed by the name of Compton, in clerical costume, and was indeed only known to be in orders by a few of the prying sort, who had thought it worth while to fish out that fact for themselves. He was, moreover, strictly temperate as to drink, and scrupulously well dressed, however low at times in purse, whenever he appeared abroad by daylight. In brief, the Reverend Hargood was a man of keen wit, low morality, and depraved instincts; an infinitesimally small copy of Lucifer, the great archetype, and supreme illustration, according to theologians, of intellect uncurbed by a moral sense—of power divorced from conscience.

Philip Carstairs had been moulded in a very different mint. By no means remarkable for cleverness, though he had been fairly educated for those days, he possessed generous instincts, which habits of low dissipation had overgrown rather than depraved or destroyed. In his drunken fits he would, on slightest provocation, do the maddest things, such, for example, as openly threatening to drag his father's mother before justice to answer with her life for crimes of which he himself but half believed she had been guilty, and the faintest proof whereof was, he knew, unattainable. He had married early and imprudently; his besetting vice of drunkenness incapacitated him from filling the situation of master or even mate of a merchant vessel, and his pay as a sailor before the mast, barely sufficed for his own needs. His wife, whom he dearly loved, consequently was, with their two young children, reduced to a state of almost destitution; must, indeed, have gone upon

the parish for sustenance but for the kindness of *her* relatives—themselves needy people—with whom she lodged at Portsmouth, and where she was now anxiously awaiting the result of her husband's renewed application to Mrs. Carstairs for help in the grievous state to which they were reduced.

Such, in broad outline, were the two men who met each other, for the first time, at the Salutation, on the morning of December 27, 1747.

Hargood, after some introductory parleying, professed himself desirous of obtaining a promise from the hot-blooded young sailor that he would not again molest Mrs. Carstairs by his presence, much less by his threats; as her few remaining sands of life, if rudely shaken, would run out yet more swiftly than they would otherwise pass away. Mr. Philip Carstairs would at the same time distinctly understand that he, the Reverend Mr. Hargood, had not been specially commissioned, or even authorized, by the aged lady to see and expostulate with her wilful grandson. He was there solely in his calling as a minister of the Gospel of Peace: neither was he prepared to offer any bribe for the obtainment of the required promise that he, Mr. Philip Carstairs, would abstain from uselessly as sinfully disturbing the last days of his fast-failing, very aged relative. On the contrary, he had reason to believe that Mrs. Carstairs had already made, or was about to make, a will wholly in favour of a young woman, not a blood relative, he believed, and whose name had, for the moment, slipped his memory, but who had long resided with the old lady.

The sailor's reply was hot, fierce, resentful. "I swore and cursed like a madman, and let out hints which the smooth-phizzed, oily-tongued villain pretended not to heed at the moment, but which were carefully stowed away in his brain-pan as a means of by-and-by drawing on further disclosures. He did not stay very long on the first occa sion; my sea-oaths appearing to greatly shock and distress his religious feelings, and it was several days—five, I think —ere I saw him again. This time he was kinder, more familiar, and knowing well that I was hard aground, offered me the loan of two guineas, an offer that I eagerly snapped at, you may be sure. I ordered in some liquor upon the strength of such good-luck, and though Hargood did not

himself drink, he smiled benignly whilst I did, merely putting in a soft word now and then against the sin and folly of excess. When my blood had got well heated he began again about my grandmother's flinty-heartedness, as he was now fain to admit her determined denial of my claims upon her, and resolve to leave everything to Margaret Dent, must be called. Naturally I fired up again at this; stormed, raved, cursed as at his former visit; whilst he, in the pauses of my frantic rage, remarked that though he would never help me in any scheme of uncharitable, unchristian vengeance, yet if by availing himself of any secret I might be in possession of he could authoritatively admonish Mrs. Carstairs that offences—unexpiated, upon earth by repentance—the only proof of which repentance is restitution—the atonement by every means in the sinner's power for wrong done to those who had suffered from that wrong—would be fearfully visited in the awful future, —were he as a minister of religion enabled by me to take that tone, he did not doubt that he should succeed in procuring, by a kind of moral coercion, the execution of a will, the provisions of which would not, at all events, be grossly unfair towards myself and little ones.

"I was not," continues Philip Carstairs, "very forward to tell the fellow all I knew; nevertheless, he got a good deal out of me, and amongst it that I had left certain papers with my wife at Portsmouth which contained further particulars. I felt positive that all he could do would be to terrify the old beldame into doing an act of common justice; and I solemnly declare that I would rather have cut my tongue out than have said anything that could place her life or liberty in peril."

True as it certainly was that neither the life nor the liberty of Mrs. Carstairs was placed in serious jeopardy by the Reverend Hargood's success in pumping the young seaman, the knowledge so obtained had as certainly placed a weapon in the reverend gentleman's hand, which, adroitly wielded, would force her into executing a will in favour of Margaret Dent—that is of himself—and of which will he would, moreover, he determined, take care to be appointed sole executor. There were, however, many gaps, hitches, and contradictions in the story, which required to be remedied, and a visit to Mrs. Philip Carstairs at Portsmouth would, in

all likelihood, afford the means of doing so. First, however—must have mentally soliloquized the Reverend Hargood—first, however, it would be prudent to get Philip Carstairs off to sea. The hot-blooded sailor's presence in London might be dangerous, fatal even, when the discovery should first flash upon him that he had been infamously duped by his reverend friend, who had made use of his information to disinherit him, and permanently beggar his wife and children. It would be all the safer, too, if he never came back again, and such things as that had been often enough managed!

Whether those precise thoughts passed through the Reverend Hargood's plotting brain cannot, of course, be affirmed; but it could only have been substantially some such chain of reasoning that prompted the *action* taken by the reverend man without delay, hesitation, or remorse.

He had been in luck at the gaming-table lately; sufficient funds were not, therefore, wanting for the furtherance of his readily-elaborated scheme, the first move in which was to procure, by a considerable bribe—this was afterwards clearly proved—the situation of third mate for young Carstairs, on board the *Eagle*, John Kearn, master, bound, and to immediately sail, for the south-west coast of Africa, with a cargo of glass-beads, miniature mirrors, hatchets, rum, &c., to be exchanged for God's image carved in ebony in as large a number as the *Eagle* could, by ingenious economy of space, stow away. The terrible mortality on that coast, amongst the men-stealers as well as the men stolen, was well known, and if Philip Carstairs should escape the deadly pestilence, he might easily fall overboard and be shark-sepulchered at any hour of a dark night, without occasioning more than a passing remark. That it was really agreed between the Reverend Hargood and John Kearn, master, that he should never see England again, Philip Carstairs as fully believed, "as I do, that by God's great mercy and special deliverance I am now in London;" and he adds, in a pamphlet entitled "The Horrors of the African Slave Trade in Relation to English Sailors Employed therein," the reasons for that unshakable belief, which seem to abundantly justify it. The story is, however, beyond the scope of this paper, which will have little further concernment with Philip Carstairs, of whom we

will take personal leave on the afternoon of the day previous to his embarkation in the *Eagle*.

The Reverend Hargood had capped his benefactions by presenting him, on loan, with an additional five guineas to aid in his outfit, and enable him to send something to his wife. The young sailor's heart overflowed with gratitude for such rare, disinterested kindness, and he bitterly reproached himself for having harboured a thought to the prejudice of so benevolent, so excellent a man. He was in this state of genial exuberance, the flow of which had not been lessened by the good liquor he had drunk as parting glasses with old England, when he ran athwart Josiah Grossmith, with whom he had just the slightest possible ocular acquaintance, from having seen him on occasion of his, Philip Carstairs,' visit at No. 1, Bowling-Inn Alley. That, however, was quite sufficient excuse for seizing the shoemaker by the arm and insisting that they should drink together—at the inviter's cost, of course. Josiah Grossmith readily consented, and in a few minutes the pair were comfortably boozing in the tap-room of the White Horse, Fetter Lane. Philip Carstairs' grateful flow of soul continuing with unabated fluency, he confided to his companion not only the particulars of the Reverend Hargood's pecuniary munificence, but the disinterested determination he had come to of morally coercing Mrs. Carstairs into changing the terms of the will she either had made or intended to make, bequeathing everything to Margaret Dent, in his, the grandson's favour, to at least the extent of securing to him half the property, if not more. Grossmith, who was pretty well acquainted with the true state of the case, listened with unfeigned interest and surprise; but in words expressed only strong admiration of the reverend gentleman's character and conduct.

The last moment having arrived to which Philip Carstairs could limit his stay, he settled the score and left the place, Grossmith remaining to finish the ale which had been paid for but not drunk. The shoemaker had been so thoroughly absorbed by the sailor's communication whilst listening to it, and afterwards by pondering thereon, especially with reference to how the reverend gentleman's line of action would help or thwart his own, that he was not in the least aware that a man wearing the badge of a City ticket

porter had been regarding him for a long time with silent, searching scrutiny. Josiah Grossmith's voice was a very peculiar one—a kind of cracked counter—which, once heard, would be easily recognised again by the dullest ears. It was this peculiar voice that had first challenged the attention of the stout, well-knit individual wearing a ticket porter's badge; and every subsequent remark uttered in those singular tones confirmed the man's first impression, as was plain by the pantomime of shaking and nodding his head affirmatively to himself, simultaneously with an undoubting slap upon his thigh with the right hand.

Those indices of curious interest failed, I repeat, to attract the much-mystified shoemaker's notice; and having emptied the mug, Josiah Grossmith was leaving the room, when the ticket porter stepped briskly forward, and said, with some sternness—

"One word, sir, if you please. You no doubt remember giving me a basket with a goose in it, to deliver on Christmas-eve last, at No. 1, Bowling-Inn Alley. Now there has been a great fuss made——"

"I don't know what you are talking about," interrupted Grossmith, and hurried out of the room.

"That's a lie," growled John Last; "he knows, I'll be sworn, a great deal more than I do about it. I could swear to that voice amongst ten thousand. I shall see to this."

In order "to see to this," John Last hastened after Grossmith, and was just in time to see him turn out of Fetter Lane into Holborn. The porter followed, keeping his quarry well in view, and himself well out of view; the chase leading through Holborn Bars, Lincoln's Inn Fields, Great Queen Street, and Drury Lane, into Holborn again, by which time the shoemaker's pace had slackened, and his furtive glance backwards over his shoulder to ascertain if he was pursued become gradually less frequent, till it ceased altogether. Grossmith breathed again, and believing himself not to be followed, turned down Chancery Lane, and, to the utter amazement of John Last, finally entered No. 1, Bowlng-Inn Alley.

Last, though completely mystified, did nevertheless shrewdly suspect that there was something in that goose-business which required sifting to the bottom. A sort of

"deaf" rumour, to adopt a French idiom, which generally means that the rumour-bearer is deaf to more precise questioning upon matters which he hints at in a few guarded sentences and more significant nods, winks, hems, et cetera—a sort of deaf rumour had, I say, reached John Last, probably arising from some ill-understood comments of the apothecary, William Stone, that an attempt had been made to poison somebody at No. 1, Bowling-Inn Alley, by means of a Christmas present. Feeling himself, therefore, to a certain extent compromised, he resolved to act with prudence as well as vigilantly, to keep dark in the affair for awhile, and bide his time for an opportunity to quietly question the intelligent open-faced youth—but whose figure had been spoiled a little, not much, in the making up—to whom he had delivered the basket on Christmas-eve.

That opportunity quickly offered, and after two or three conversations, a sort of league was entered into between them to assist each other in certain possible contingencies, and meanwhile to keep silence upon past matters, for a time at all events.

"I never could have admitted," said James Grossmith, not many days afterwards, in reply to a question put to him by the Coroner of Middlesex, "I never could have admitted to John Last that my father must have been the person from whom he received the basket on Christmas-eve. I told him that I might soon want the help of some one to prevent the commission of a great crime, and we arranged a plan by which I could communicate with him without exciting the notice or suspicion of the dwellers in our house."

"That is true as far as it goes," added John Last, "but the whole truth is, that I thought it best to lie low, and sing small till I could get a true insight into what was going on at No. 1, Bowling-Inn Alley; so I gave in to the young man, who seemed much troubled in his mind."

The regular sequence of this narrative, which for certain reasons I have broken through by the insertion in this page of the two preceding paragraphs, takes us back to the day when the Reverend Hargood having returned from a flying visit to Mrs. Philip Carstairs at Portsmouth, called early in the evening at No. 1, Bowling-Inn Alley. Mrs.

Carstairs, who was not yet quite convalescent, was asleep, and the reverend gentleman was alone for some half-hour with Margaret Dent. "He was in buoyant mood, and discoursed, though in a low tone by reason of Mrs. Carstairs, with an ardency of love, a fire of passion that would have abashed, alarmed me, had not his vows been mingled with solicitations that I would at once name a day, a very early day, for our union in the holy bands of wedlock. Overcome, carried away by vehemence of entreaty, I *did* name an early day—that day se'nnight—for our marriage, which, as before settled, was to be a strictly private one. He feigned to be enraptured, and I, vain, silly noodle, believed him. Presently Mrs. Carstairs' hand-bell warned us that she was awake, and required her medicine. Hargood, suddenly calling to mind a matter of importance which, he declared, my presence had driven out of his thoughts, said he wished to have a strictly private conversation with her upon a matter deeply interesting herself, and which conversation could not be delayed. I delivered his message, and Mrs. Carstairs, with whom he had already become a great favourite, immediately acceded to his request. She had, I may remark, slept for several nights in a high-backed, roomy easy chair, a horizontal position causing her, for some reason I cannot explain, intolerable agony.

"Returning to Hargood, I told him of Mrs. Carstairs' acquiescence in his request, and as he entered her chamber, I pointedly left the parlour to go down stairs and sit with Mrs. Grossmith till the granted interview terminated. This I did knowing it would please him, from hints he had more than once thrown out to the effect, that, when engaged in the solemn duty of probing a sinner's conscience, nothing distressed him so much as the slightest apprehension that one word of what was intended only to be heard by the minister, the penitent, and by God, should by any chance strike a stranger's ear."

The smiling, radiant countenance of the Reverend Hargood, as he turned from waving a fond, temporary adieu to Margaret Dent, towards Mrs. Carstairs, might be likened to the eclipse of a bright luminary by a dark cloud suddenly passing over it, so cold, mournful, was his quickly-assumed aspect, as he drew near the old lady, and looked her sternly

in the face. Mrs. Carstairs was startled, yet more so when, disdaining apologetic preface, he told her, in a severe voice, that he was there to insist that she forthwith directed a will to be drawn, bequeathing the whole of her worldly wealth, real and personal, to Margaret Dent.

"To Margaret Dent! Oh, oh! The wind blows from that quarter, does it, Sir Parson?" retorted the old lady, rallying her courage and speaking with her old acerbity. "Well, Reverend Mr. Hargood, I have only to say that you will *insist* for a long time before you will persuade me to make such a will in favour of Margaret Dent."

"You will not only consent to make such a will, Patience Rowley—why, the mere sound of your maiden name starts you—you will, I say, not only consent to make such a will, but you will as speedily as may be give practical effect to that consent, after hearing the sad, solemn story, which I am here to toll, unhappy woman, into your dying ear. Interrupt me not," continued Hargood, drawing his chair close to hers, and speaking in her face, as it were, in low, stern tones, lest perchance Margaret Dent should return to the sitting-room, overhear the sad, solemn story, and be enlightened as to the main design it was intended to subserve,—"interrupt me not, Patience Rowley, *alias* Carstairs, till I have finished; then give me your decision by one monosyllable 'Yes,' or 'No;' all you will have breath to utter, unless your conscience is seared as with a red-hot iron. I will call it

COUSIN ESTHER'S STORY.

"Ah! the name itself strikes like a dagger; but again I command you to hear me out without interruption. More than sixty years agone, there lodged in an upper story of a house in Skinner Street, London, two cousins, Patience Rowley and Esther Beadon. They were both orphans, both young—Esther Beadon the youngest—both pretty—Patience it was agreed was handsome—and both poor, with no other means than their needles to win daily bread. The constant, ill-requited toil to which they were doomed soured, cankered the spirits of both those girls; Esther ultimately giving way to recklessness, and being ready to snatch at any means that but held out a show of promise to raise her above the hard necessity of work. Patience,

on the contrary, had too much of stern unyielding *will* in her mental composition to yield weakly to despair, and, determined never to be duped by illusions, looked keenly and closely at the world, in the hope of yet discovering an advantageous and honourable—in the legal marriage sense of honourable—market for her beauty. Silly Esther, endowed with no such iron armour for her virtue, listened eagerly to the common-place lying promises of a practised profligate, and after a few months' feverish respite from honest work, found herself again overtaken by poverty, now accompanied by shame! Esther, however, was not so perverted, her womanly instincts were not so brutified, as to permit of her throwing herself upon the streets, and she crept back to the old lodging in Skinner Street, to implore the forgiveness, the pity, the help of her cousin Patience Rowley. Well, that forgiveness, pity, help were not denied her; certainly help was not; and we will admit that this was meritorious in the unfallen cousin—though I, long accustomed in my clerical vocation to probe human hearts and find the plague-spot of selfishness where all without looked sound and fair, can discern motives far from the highest and worthiest in even that charitable deed of Patience Rowley.

"Well, the sinful Esther was received into her old home and set to her old work, but as the days, the weeks rolled away, a terrible fear overshadowed with a deeper gloom the cold dark hearth of those young needlewomen — a little stranger was coming that must not only be provided for—a grievous bitter charge upon their poor earnings—but whose very existence would brand them both, ay both, with open public shame!

"Now I cannot positively assert—I could not depose upon oath—what hidden motives prompted Patience Rowley's perpetual harping in her cousin's ears of the disgrace, wretchedness, starvation possibly, in consequence of the certain loss of patrons and customers, that would befall them *should a living child be born*, the existence of which could not, of course, be concealed. I only know that Patience Rowley did continually, persistently dilate upon that gloomiest aspect of their position to her shrinking, feeble-willed, impressionable cousin Esther; and I further know, that Patience Rowley did not once suggest that

baby-clothing should be provided, a nurse engaged, a midwife bespoken.

"Well, the hour of travail came; a man child was born *alive*—lustily alive; Patience, who was not in the chamber—she took excellent care of that—heard the child's vigorous cry—once—twice—thrice. She afterwards told Esther that she did; told her, too, that she heard the cries stopped—*forcibly*. She told the truth in that instance.

"How?—what does Patience Rowley murmur—that she was not her cousin's keeper? Dare she—But in mercy I forbear; and let her, I again repeat, keep silence to the end.

"The very next day the cousins met at breakfast, both agitated, trembling, pale—Esther weak to faintness—but no child, alive or dead, was to be seen, or had been seen in the house by any other eyes than Esther Beadon's.

"Esther was now completely in the power of her cousin Patience, or, at least, she was made to feel and believe so; and, only a few months afterwards, circumstances fell out which enabled the iron-willed, elder cousin to turn that power to cruel, terrible account.

"This occurred in the year 1686, more than sixty years agone—Patience being then in her nineteenth, Esther in her eighteenth year. It was truly a fearful time. The lives of men that had incurred the faintest suspicion of disloyalty to the bloody Stuart were held of less, much less, account than those of the beasts that perish. In that year, Patience—— Who 's there?" loudly exclaimed Hargood, breaking off abruptly in his narrative or story—"Who 's there?"

Hargood had thought he heard a short, suppressed cough from some one close at hand; but no one was, or could be, close at hand and hidden from view; so, having peeped into the front room and seen that nobody was there, Hargood, concluding that his fancy *must* have deceived him, resumed his seat and continued the story.

"In the year 1686, I repeat, handsome Patience Rowley chanced to excite the admiration of one Peter Carstairs, a man of property, who had passed his youth at sea. He was a man of temper rash as fire, and of a libertine spirit. Mr. Peter Carstairs followed Patience to her home, ascertained her position in life, persistently dogged her steps,

and finally succeeded in forcing his acquaintance upon her. He having been for a long time separated, by mutual consent, from his wife, by whom he had issue one child, the mother of Margaret Dent, Patience Rowley, I quite believe, had not the slightest suspicion that he was a married man. Her knowledge of the true character of her lover's wooing was obtained in a singular manner. The separated couple were, oddly enough, extremely jealous of each other; the husband from a morbid sensitiveness as to his HONOUR as a husband; and Mrs. Carstairs, who kept a pretty close watch upon her husband's movements, learning that he was engaged in an intrigue with a poor and pretty milliner of Skinner Street, of the name of Rowley, despatched a note, subscribed with her real name and address, informing Miss Rowley of the actual state of the case. I need not dwell upon the storm of rage and indignation with which Patience Rowley received that information. She was about to write, in indignant terms, to the man who had insulted her by his attentions, when Esther—always unlucky Esther—suggested that there, possibly, might be no truth in the statement made by the person calling herself Margaret Carstairs, and that, at all events, it would be well to be quite sure upon that point before sending Mr. Peter Carstairs to the right about. The ambitious elder cousin grasped eagerly at that straw, and it was agreed that Esther should at once proceed to the address given in the note, No. 28, Lamb's Conduit Street, taking the note itself with her as an introduction."

I must here break off for a moment to remark that the face, and the glaring eyes of Mrs. Carstairs were alternately whitened, subdued by fear, and flushed, kindled with defiance, as Hargood proceeded. That astute gentleman could not fail to perceive that those changes were manifested as the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of his narrative to the exact truth showed him to be well or ill founded in his knowledge of material facts. The mention of the address, 28, Lamb's Conduit Street, excited a derisive smile, and Hargood, who must have possessed a singularly tenacious memory, perceived in a moment that he had blundered.

"No. 28, Lamb's Conduit Street," he resumed; "no, I

mistake; that was the house to which Mr. Peter Carstairs took his *second* wife, Patience—the address given by the first Mrs. Carstairs was, King's Cottage, Pentonville.

"Esther Beadon, duly instructed and cautioned by her cousin, proceeded to King's Cottage, which she found to be a genteel, isolated house, standing amidst its own very prettily laid-out grounds. Mrs. Carstairs was out, but expected to return every moment, and Esther would not have been admitted to wait for her but for the exhibition of that lady's note to the servant, an elderly female, who, Esther could not help remarking, seemed to be strangely flurried. Esther was shown into a small back room, and as she had to wait a considerable time, the strange restlessness exhibited by the establishment—a very modest one, consisting of only the elderly female and a mulatto boy — became more and more strongly marked. Those two individuals seemed to be almost ubiquitous. Now the mulatto boy would boldly open the door and ask if the young woman wanted anything, eyeing her, as he spoke, with a sort of fierce curiosity; and two or three minutes afterwards he would be intently scrutinizing her through the window looking into the garden. The woman-servant watched her with the same restless jealousy, and poor Esther concluded that they suspected her of an intention to pocket some of the valuable nick-nacks upon the mantel-piece, a conjecture which seemed confirmed when, happening to turn her eyes in the direction of a narrow, glazed aperture which looked into the front apartment, and was screened on the other side by a crimson curtain, she saw a man's face—a handsome soldier-face—grimly regarding her, the crimson curtain being partially withdrawn to enable him to do so. Esther got up and was about to insist upon being let out, when a loud knock was heard at the front-door, and the soldier-face vanished at the sound, the proprietor thereof forgetting, in his hurry, to re-draw the concealing curtain. There was an instant bustle in the passage, the front-door was opened, some one entered and passed into the front-room, and Esther, who had approached the tiny casement upon tip-toe, saw that it was a lady that had come in, and who had thrown herself into the passionate embrace of the gentleman that had been eyeing her, Esther, with such un-

flattering inquisition. They were, doubtless, lovers, and daring only to venture one brief look, Esther stole softly back to her seat."

"You pretend to read that stuff from a Journal, do you not, Reverend Hargood," broke in Mrs. Carstairs. "Whose, may I ask?"

"Yes, literally from a *bonâ-fide* Journal, substituting only, as I read, the third for the first person. Whose, do you ask? Well, I will tell you presently, that is, when I have finished the story, which I can now, I think, do from memory.

"After about ten minutes the door opened, and the lady whom Esther had seen locked in the fervid embrace of the military gentleman in the front-room, entered, and presently proved that she was in very deed the separate, but still legal, wife of Mr. Peter Carstairs.

"All these particulars were faithfully related to Patience Rowley, who, after long meditating thereon, came to the conclusion that she was bound to send a note, again by Esther, thanking Mrs. Carstairs for her kind interposition. The younger cousin was also strictly commanded to keep her eyes and ears well open whilst in King's Cottage.

"She did, and in some way discovered that the soldier-gentleman and Mrs. Carstairs were going off together on the following evening towards Calais, in a swift conveyance, ordered for the especial purpose.

"'But we were quite mistaken, Patience,' added Esther, 'for the soldier-gentleman is Mrs. Carstairs' own brother, who is trying, by her help, to escape the pursuit and vengeance of the Government.'"

"That is a lie," screamed Mrs. Carstairs, sitting bolt upright in the easy chair,—"an accursed lie. Esther never told me so."

"It is the truth—the exact truth," rejoined Hargood, quite as fiercely. "I was told yesterday by Esther Beadon, who is not only living, but in full possession of her faculties."

"Alive!" gasped the old woman, "Esther Beadon alive, and in possession of her senses! It is come, then, at last—public exposure, infamy! Well, at least it is come late in the day: you and she may do your worst—I reck not." With that Mrs. Carstairs fell back in the chair, and only

once more gave further sign of interest or attention, save by the restless glancing of her eyes, till Hargood had concluded.

The announcement that Esther Beadon was alive was Hargood's great gun; why, will presently appear; but I may here observe that it was also a great lie. Esther Beadon had been dead many years. She died in a madhouse.

"Firm-willed, steel-hearted Patience Rowley," continued Hargood, "succeeded, after much struggling, many threats, and *reminders of the murdered child*, in subduing Esther Beadon's weak will to her devilish purpose. Peter Carstairs was informed that his adulterous wife was about to leave Pentonville with her paramour at such an hour, in such a vehicle; and it was asserted in a letter written by Patience Rowley, and still in Esther Beadon's possession, that the woman seduced the man, not the man the wanton wife.

"I will briefly pass over the catastrophe. Mr. Carstairs shot his wife dead in the very arms of her supposed lover. The brother escaped, and the two servants, interrogated before the coroner's inquisition, dared not for their own lives say that it was the rebel Captain Aston, Mrs. Carstairs' brother, who was bidding his sister a long farewell when the unfortunate lady was shot by her mistaken husband. Mr. Carstairs was tried for manslaughter, honourably acquitted amidst applause, and, about three months afterwards, espoused Patience Rowley.

"She thus gained the prize, foully as she had played for it, but happiness did not come with wealth. Captain Aston was never afterwards heard of: there was a rumour that he perished in a duel abroad; and no communication ever reached Mr. Carstairs from the servants that had lived at King's Cottage."

"Ha! ha! ha!" fiercely chuckled the old woman, "you don't know everything."

"I understand; you in some way bought their silence; but that is a trifling item in the vast sum of crime, for which, if you repent not, a fearful judgment—judgment close at hand—awaits you in the next world, should you escape punishment in this. But I must hasten to conclude this history of a felon-life. Mr. Carstairs, from the death of his first wife, was a miserable man. There was the stain

of blood upon his soul, and his new wife's viper-tongue aggravated his remorse and grief. Esther Beadon had been early packed off to a distant part of the country, supplied by her cousin with a bare sufficiency to sustain decent life, and enthralled to silence by the dread that, should she make revelation of the truth to Mr. Carstairs, a charge of child-murder would be brought against her.

"At length, however, the stings and arrows of accusing conscience goaded her on to defy the vengeance of her cousin, and one morning, when Charles Carstairs, upon whom his wicked mother doated, was home from sea, Esther broke into the room where Mr. Carstairs, with his wife and son, sat at breakfast, and disclosed all in a torrent of remorseful passion. It was impossible to doubt her truth, spite of Mrs. Carstairs' brazen denials. The knowledge that he had slain his *innocent* wife at the instigation of the woman that, with devilish malice aforethought, planned the murder for her own vile ends, proved too much for his weakened, now maddened brain. He was found dead in his bed-room a few hours afterwards: by 'the Visitation of God,' the inquest declared, but Esther Beadon hints that an agency from hell, not heaven, procured his death. I hope, however, almost believe, that that horrible surmise has no foundation in fact.

"Charles Carstairs," continued Hargood, "went immediately off to sea, and never again wrote or spoke of his mother. Mr. Peter Carstairs, however," added the reverend gentleman, "forgot, or had no time, before dying, to cancel a will he had made soon after his son's birth, and his property passed under it to his afflicted widow, Patience Carstairs."

I cannot help here remarking parenthetically, that there was much of exaggeration, ay, and of invention, in this Esther's story, as told by the Reverend Hargood. The insinuation, for instance, that Mrs. Carstairs poisoned her husband, who, no question, died, as the verdict stated, 'by visitation of God,' was a palpably clumsy invention. Still the narrative must have been mainly fact, or based upon fact, or it would have failed to daunt so bold a virago as Mrs. Patience Carstairs. It is, moreover, a singular circumstance, that the dread always uppermost in that bad woman's thoughts, was the reappearance of Esther Beadon

in possession of her senses. She verily believed that, should that event occur, she might still be dragged before a court of justice, and convicted of compassing the death of the first Mrs. Carstairs. So true is it that conscience makes fools as well as cowards of us all. Hargood was aware of that particular weakness, and adroitly enough availed himself of it.

The old lady spoke not, stirred not, gave no sign; and Reverend Hargood, presently resuming, in a tone of severe, indignant virtue, said—

"You now understand, Mrs. Carstairs, the motive of my insistence that a will shall be forthwith prepared and signed in favour of Margaret Dent. She is the granddaughter of the murdered wife of Peter Carstairs, and entitled by every principle of right, human and divine, to her grandfather's property. Let me add," continued Hargood, "that the whereabouts of Esther Beadon, who is in the enjoyment of comparatively vigorous health, is known only to me; that she sanctions and insists upon the arrangement I propose, so that if you consent to perform the act of natural justice required of you, you will live unmolested, and may die in peace—in such peace, at least, as your aroused conscience will permit."

"You request of me, Mister Reverend," said Mrs. Carstairs, huskily, "in consideration of your forbearance, that I bequeath all the personals now in Child's bank, and which I may die possessed of, to Margaret Dent."

"And the house property, of course."

"The house property also; you *will* have all, then?" and the old crone laughed.

"It is no more than Margaret's right."

"Have you any further demand to make?"

"None, except that I must be named sole executor."

"Ho! ho! you sole executor! What a heavenly-minded man! What a holy rebuker of sordid sinners! The Reverend Hargood, sole executor! Well, anything else?"

"Nothing, and—— Ah, that sound again!"

The Reverend Hargood could have sworn that he again heard the slight, suppressed cough of some one near. But no one could be near, and it must be fancy.

"Did you say you wanted nothing more?" said Mrs. Carstairs.

"Nothing more, except that the will be drawn and signed without delay: say to-morrow. I will have it properly prepared, and in such fashion as to make it irrevocable on the part of the testator. That is but just."

"Be it so; and now begone," screamed the aroused beldame, "and take my curse with you, and never after to-morrow let me see your face again: I will find a true priest when I require the aid of one."

The miserable woman's anathema did not at all ruffle the Reverend Hargood, who, at the moment it was uttered, was engaged with a device to ascertain in as seemingly careless, indifferent a mode as possible, if the cough he had heard, or fancied he had heard, might perchance have been elicited from the shaky lungs of some one concealed under the bed, the only place in the room which could conceal any one. That simple device was to drop a few coins on the floor, and when stooping to pick them up reconnoitre the said only possible hiding-place. He did so; and no one was there. Fancy then, no doubt; still a most extraordinary, inexplicable fancy.

The Reverend Hargood, after taking an even more than usually tender leave of Margaret Dent, and settling that he should go on the morrow to Doctors' Commons to bespeak the marriage licence, walked off to his lodgings, and thence to a gaming-den, in a state of full-blown jubilation.

On the following afternoon, an attorney, who had been instructed by Hargood, attended, with his clerk, to witness the execution of the will by Patience Carstairs, widow. The aged dame made no demur, listened even to the formal reading of the instrument with a smile, whether of derision or pleased acquiescence it was difficult to say, playing about her thin, dried lips, and signed and sealed with alacrity. Another most important stipulation Mrs. Carstairs pledged her word to, with, this time, a villanous and decidedly derisive smile—namely, as Hargood expressed it, "that to secure the affectionate attention and kind services of Margaret Dent upon her grandmother, so called, she, Margaret, should be kept strictly ignorant that she was that grandmother's heiress by indefeasible right. "Lead me not into temptation," added the reverend gentleman, "is the holiest, because the humblest prayer."

The next day Mrs. Carstairs declared herself to be much better, and expressed a wish to sleep in her bed again. "The bed is unfortunately so coarse and patched," she added, "that it chafes my back sadly. I have half a mind to order a new one; and a new mattress to match at the same time." William Stone, the apothecary to whom she said this, concurred with her, and promised to send an upholsterer who would be happy to carry out her wishes. Mrs. Carstairs thanked him, and requested that the upholsterer should be sent to take her order that day. That tradesman accordingly came a few hours afterwards to No. 1, Bowling-Inn Alley, agreed for the price of a best bed and mattress, and promised to send them in the next day.

"Do you wish me to take these old ones and allow you for them?" asked the upholsterer.

"No," was the answer, "I shall send them away when you bring the new ones, to a poor old acquaintance of mine; they are not worth much, but I do not like to sell old family articles: run down, Margaret," continued Mrs. Carstairs, "and ask Grossmith if he knows where poor old Mrs. Evans is living now; it is to her I mean to send the bedding. Mind, Mr. Upholsterer," she quickly added, "that your sizes are correct; you had better perhaps, measure again."

Margaret Dent being gone out of hearing, she added, "Pray oblige me by slipping this letter into your pocket, and the first post-office you come to."

The man nodded intelligence, and was gone before Margaret Dent returned with Mrs. Evans's address.

The old lady's strange whim of bed-changing was, according to her garrulous wont, mentioned by Margaret Dent to Mrs. Grossmith, and, as it happened, in the presence of Josiah Grossmith and his son. If the girl had noticed, she could not have, I will not say comprehended, but have remotely guessed at, the nature of the emotions which, as she spoke, took the colour out of the cheeks of her auditors, caused all three to simultaneously look upon each other, and, as instantly, impulsively avert their gaze from each other's faces. Margaret afterwards said, she but dubiously remembered having mentioned the proposed change of bedding to them. The poor girl was, in fact,

treading the empyrean just then, and common mundane things could but for a passing moment lift themselves up within the range of her notice.

It will have been noticed, that Mrs. Carstairs took care that Margaret Dent should not see her give the upholsterer a letter to post. That letter was addressed to Mr. Sandys, Attorney-at-Law, Gray's Inn; and it will be as well to give a copy of it in this place.

No. 1, Bowling-Inn Alley, Jan. 13, 1748.

DEAR SIR,

I have to request your assistance in a very great and pressing difficulty, which I will endeavour to state clearly and briefly. You have long known that I have, what you have called a maniacal propensity to hoard money. That propensity still governs me, and really, except the loss of interest upon such gold as I keep by me, and the fear I am always in of being robbed, no injury has hitherto accrued from its indulgence. Nearly all my personal property is now, however, I fear, in great jeopardy. I have only about sixty pounds at Child's—a show account, kept to give colour to the often-repeated assertion, that I keep no money by me—and I am so situated, that I dare not—a humiliating avowal, but the truth is the truth—that I dare not have it openly removed to a place of safety. In this particular part of my difficulty—the not *daring* to openly dispose of my own property—you cannot help me; and I must beg that, when you call upon me to-morrow, as I trust you will, the painful subject may not be broached. To proceed, however. You will smile to hear that I have now nearly six thousand pounds, sewed up in the bed and mattress upon which I lie; it consists of bank stock and bank bills, East India stock, Government scrip—a list of all which I enclose—and nine hundred and seventy-three pounds in gold (the precise gross sum you will find to be, apart from interest on the bonds, bills, and stock, five thousand four hundred and seventy-nine pounds). Now, in the removal of the bedding, if the greatest care be not taken, the presence of the gold will certainly be detected; and my request is, that you will send me, to-morrow, three or four *confidential* men to take the bed and mattress away,

pretendedly to the address I will give them, but really to your office. I wish you to be present, but not apparently known to the porters. Let them be here not later than half-past ten o'clock.

I am, your obedient Servant,
PATIENCE CARSTAIRS.

William Sandys, Esq.

The agitation evinced by Josiah Grossmith when he first heard of the bedding whim became, as night drew on, intense. His son, who had been for some time ailing (it was feared he was falling into a decline, his cough having lately become very obstinate and troublesome), watched his father with covert but closest scrutiny; and Mrs. Grossmith was nervous and excited, as a person might be who knew that the next few hours would decide for aye, the fortunes of his or her future life.

The son, obeying his stern father's coarsely-iterated command, retired to rest; and Mrs. Grossmith, after a flurried, questioning glance at her husband, tottered from the work to the bedroom. Grossmith, tossed to and fro with dark and troubled thoughts, remained seated by the fading fire till the stillest hour of night had come, and then, taking a lamp in one hand, and shading it with the other, softly ascended the stairs to the first floor.

The key of Mrs. Carstairs' parlour had been left by bewildered Margaret in the lock outside; it was not difficult to reach the inner chamber door, and, with the instrument brought for the purpose, gently remove its slight fastenings.

As he expected, Mrs. Carstairs, still under the influence of the strong opiate she took the last thing at night, slept soundly; and Grossmith was confirmed in his hope, that he should be able to effect his purpose of extracting the booty, which he had some time before assured himself, by what means I do not know, was concealed in the bedding, without awaking her. He went swiftly and silently to work; had finished with the bed, and sewed up again the rent or opening it had been necessary to make, and was commencing with the mattress, when a weak, half-stifled shriek caused him to look up, and he saw that Mrs. Car-

stairs had awoke, and was intently regarding him with a look of mingled horror, astonishment, and alarm.

The ready ruffian's instant gesture commanding silence, upon pain of instant death, had the desired effect; her lips seemed to move, but no sound passed them, and her fascinated gaze, unchanged in expression, remained steadily fixed upon Grossmith's face; whilst he, who, one can easily believe, was anxious to effect his object, if possible, without incurring the crime of murder, thus addressed her:—

"Hear me, madam; no personal harm shall befall you, if you will only consent to divide the treasure, for which you have no real use, hidden here. As some return, I will tell you a secret, that will enable you to defy your persecutor, Hargood. One-half, I ask no more, though all is within my grasp. One-half; answer me. I am a desperate man; consent, and swear besides, that what is passing shall never be divulged, and your life is safe; refuse, hesitate, and it is gone; answer me, will you?"

The wide-open eyes continued to stare upon him, but no answer was vouchsafed. He approached and shook her; the body swayed to and fro unresistingly, and looking closer, he saw that she was dead! The frail tie that bound the spirit to its earthly tenement had been abruptly snapped by fright, and Patience Rowley—Mrs. Carstairs—had been sped to her account without the aids to its favourable adjustment upon which she had so madly reckoned.

Grossmith started as if shocked by the work of his felon hands. Quickly recovering his usual callous audacity, he comprehended that such a catastrophe was the very best thing for him that could have happened. The old lady had died a natural death; at least she had not died by violence, or poison; and he had heard Stone, the apothecary, say, that it was most likely she would pass away in her sleep.

The booty, then, of which he had so long dreamed, for which he had dared so much—would have dared more—was his; a booty which nobody would miss, for no one but himself and his knew of its existence. Setting himself again eagerly to his work, he was quickly in possession of the entire hoard, and before two o'clock, his son, who had been watching him throughout, and who had determined, much as he feared his father, to interfere had violence been

attempted towards Mrs. Carstairs, saw him deposit the entire treasure contained in the bag, in a small dark cupboard underneath the staircase, a quite sufficiently secret hiding-place, he must have argued, for what no one would look for.

The place of vantage from which James Grossmith heard the colloquy between Hargood and Mrs. Carstairs, and witnessed his father's proceedings in the same chamber, was a loft, or unfloored room immediately overhead, and which he could reach by the back stairs. Lying along the rafters, he looked and heard, through a downward bulge, partly broken through, in the lath-and-plaster ceiling, which at that height would attract no notice from persons in the room. His, of course, too, was the cough which so mystified the Reverend Hargood.

Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Grossmith rose early the next morning; the son did, and knowing where a key which fitted the dark cupboard lock was to be found, he managed to place the bag and its contents in the safe keeping of John Last, the ticket-porter, unseen, or at least unmarked of any one; by whom it was conveyed to Mr. Sandys, of Gray's Inn, who was well known to be Mrs. Carstairs' confidential man of business. Mr. Sandys, who had a country place at Chelsea, was not, unfortunately, at the office, and did not, a clerk said, intend to come till he had called at No. 1, Bowling-Inn Alley, in compliance with a request received from Mrs. Carstairs the evening before. John Last explained, as had been agreed between him and James Grossmith, that Mrs. Carstairs having died suddenly during the night, he and the younger Grossmith, who had by accident become aware that the deceased lady kept so large a sum in so queer a hiding-place, thought it prudent, not knowing who else might possess the same knowledge and possibly turn it to evil account, to quietly take possession thereof, and bring it to Mr. Sandys: James Grossmith, he added, requested as his only recompense, for reasons of his own, that his part in the transaction should not be unnecessarily divulged. This the clerk readily promised, and gave Last a note, stating that he had received the property, to be given to Mr. Sandys, whom he would no doubt find at Bowling-Inn Alley on his return there.

The discovery by Margaret Dent that Mrs. Carstairs had

died during the night excited very little surprise or interest. Stone, the apothecary, was sent for, and he certifying that the death was a natural one, and expected by him to have long since occurred just as it now had done, an undertaker was sent for by the Reverend Mr. Hargood, who was very early at the house, and undertook to act for Margaret Dent, the deceased lady's undoubted heiress.

Josiah Grossmith was, we can easily believe, in a very satisfactory mental condition at finding that not a breath of suspicion as to the cause of death was whispered, and no inquiry made respecting any hidden hoard she might be supposed to have had. He could with difficulty, his trembling son noticed, keep his eyes off the cupboard 'neath the staircase; but that busy-body Hargood was flying through the house every two or three minutes in a state of half-frenzied excitement, and so many other gossiping bodies coming in and going out, that Grossmith determined not to indulge himself in a peep at his treasure till the house was closed at nightfall: meanwhile he regaled himself *ad libitum* with potations of ale.

All at once to that delicious calm succeeded sudden hurricane, and gloom, and thunder, and eclipse. Mr. Sandys had arrived, and Hargood came flying down stairs to say that an immense sum of money had been abstracted, stolen from the bed and mattress belonging to the late Mrs. Carstairs. You might literally have knocked down Grossmith with a feather, so astoundingly sudden, overwhelming, was the shock conveyed in those few words; big drops of perspiration broke out upon his forehead, and Hargood observed that his glaring eyes turned involuntarily towards the staircase cupboard. A suspicion flashed upon the reverend gentleman's brain, and took hold therein, that the lost thousands were there, had been abstracted by Josiah Grossmith very early in the morning, before any one but he and his family knew of Mrs. Carstairs' death.

"Did you know that the old lady kept her hoards in the bedding?" he asked, peremptorily.

"Not—not I," stammered Grossmith. "How could I have dreamed of such a thing? Not I."

"You, at least, know very well that Mrs. Carstairs would never permit Margaret to make, scarcely to touch, her bed?"

"Not I," repeated the shoemaker, still utterly confounded. "Not I, indeed. How should I?"

"O, but you did though; Margaret has declared you knew it."

"Well, I might have heard so; but if I did I had forgotten it."

Quite sure in his own mind that Grossmith was in possession of the enormous treasure-trove, and that it was temporarily lodged in the eye-compelling cupboard, Hargood, mentally resolving to go halves at the very least, flew up-stairs again only to find Mr. Sandys gone. A ticket-porter, it appeared, had brought him a note, after looking at which he muttered that there was some mistake about the lost money, and soon hurried away, taking Margaret Dent with him.

"Taking Margaret Dent with him!"

"Yes, the ticket-porter had also a note for her, which she almost fainted away at reading, and was hurried away through the side door by Mr. Sandys and the ticket-porter."

"D—n the ticket-porter," exclaimed the Reverend Hargood, surprised out of all clerical decorum by the alarming turn things seemed to be taking. Why, what the mischief was happening or going to happen?

Reflection calmed him. Nothing really injurious to himself could have happened, or be going to happen. The bark which bore his fortunes was safe anchored in Margaret's affection. He was safe there. Meanwhile, as he had Mrs. Carstairs' will in his pocket, he would just step over to Child's and ascertain about what balance they had in hand.

"Fifty-seven pounds six shillings," replied a clerk, after glancing at a large book.

"Fifty-seven pounds six shillings!" vociferated the Reverend Hargood. "Why, where the devil, then, is the old harridan's money to be found?"

The clerk could not say, but took the liberty to remark that the gentleman's language did not quite become his cloth.

"Curse the cloth!" exclaimed Hargood, rushing excitedly out of the bank. The universe seemed to be whirling to ruin, and he half doubted whether the sure and

firm-set earth was not about to open at his feet and swallow him up. Margaret gone off with a ticket-porter, leaving fifty-seven pounds six shillings behind her. Horrible!

Yes—yes, that old villain Grossmith had got the personals, six thousand pounds, the lawyer said, and they were secreted in that cupboard. A moiety of that, at least, was certain, if not all; and the law would give Margaret all! Of course it would. What an ass he must be to talk of moieties! The scoundrel should give up every penny, or be hanged. Then there was the house-property; that, at all events, would not vanish in smoke. To be sure not—certainly not; and thus comforting himself, Hargood, by the time he got back to No. 1, Bowling-Inn Alley, had subsided, or nearly so, into serenity.

Grossmith, who had not nearly recovered as yet from the moral shock his system had sustained, was still wiping his steaming forehead, and vainly striving to keep his eyes off the staircase cupboard.

A mode of solving his doubts about the contents of that cupboard suggested itself. The lock was a very common one, and he, the Reverend Mr. Hargood, piqued himself rather upon easily mastering superior ones.

"Grossmith," said he, "it's dull here; suppose we adjourn to a tavern for an hour or two."

Grossmith assented, after a little hesitation, and they made for the Cock, Fleet Street. Settled there, the shoemaker drank furiously, and before long was fast asleep Hargood gave a gratuity to one of the waiters to take care of the poor fellow, but not to awake him on any account, and himself came away.

The street-door at No. 1, Bowling-Inn Alley had been left, as usual, on the latch; so had the door of the shoemaker's apartment. There was nobody at home, and in a twinkling, aided by a pencil-case only, the cupboard-door was opened. Nothing there but about a bushel of coals. Mocked—baffled again!

He was still fumbling at the door, trying to re-lock it, when Mrs. Grossmith came in. Her husband had not told her that he had placed anything of value there; and though surprised to see the Reverend Mr. Hargood so oddly engaged, she made no remark, and the reverend gentleman presently left the house.

It was dark when Grossmith awoke from his long nap, considerably sobered thereby. He would go home now, fasten up the house, and feast his eyes with a deliberate inspection of his riches.

"Why are you bolting and barring the door so early, Josiah?" asked the wife. "It is only about six o'clock."

"You 'll see, presently, chuck," replied Josiah, gleefully. Finding that that infernal lawyer had not returned had greatly contributed to exhilarate his spirits.

The house secured, Grossmith marches up to the cupboard, puts the key in the lock, and finds the door is unlocked, and—one glance suffices—that the bag—the six thousand pounds—have been removed—are gone!

"When! where!" he gasps, darting his spectre-face round towards his wife—"where have you put it? Don't—don't," he adds, with a screech, "don't say you haven't moved it—that it has been taken—don't!"

"What do you mean?"

"Mean? Why, the money! the gold! Hell and Furies—the six thousand pounds!" gnashes through his foam-streaming lips. "Where is it? tell me, or I 'll murder you."

The terrified woman, as soon as she can speak, denies having seen the money, and hurriedly relates how she found Hargood at the cupboard, trying to re-lock the door.

A scream of rage echoes through the house; the door is unbarred quicker than it was fastened, and out speeds Grossmith with the frenzied determination to kill Hargood if he but hesitates to give back the six thousand pounds he has stolen. He is acquainted with the usual haunts of Hargood, and he hurries from one to another with the speed, fury, and soon with the brain of a maniac, for, at every place he rushes into and out of, he tosses off a large measure of brandy as though it were water. He cannot find the robber, but he will do so, if he has to hunt him to the ends of the earth; and he rages on in frantic, desperate pursuit.

In the meanwhile the Reverend Mr. Hargood, after much pondering on the perplexing state of affairs, *re* Hargood, Carstairs, and Dent, bethinks him of ascertaining for himself if the bedding had been ripped open and plundered. Arrived at No. 1, Bowling-Inn Alley, he finds

that all the Grossmiths are out, as usual; but he has observed a light in the first-floor, and he forthwith ascends thereto. There are two undertaker's men there, who have brought the shell for the deceased, and have just placed the corpse therein. They have not put the lid on, and will not do so till the next day, or the day after that, and the white, ghastly face seems to gibber at Hargood as he holds a lamp near it: it was, of course, the quivering of the flame which caused the illusion; he knows that very well, but the feeling was not a pleasant one, and he turns away towards the bed. The coffined corpse reposes upon two tressels, and there is a two-quart bottle of ardent spirits on a table, uncorked, for the undertaker's men to help themselves from. Those men are gone, but will return presently. They had forgotten to bring the coffin-mattress and pillow: they are gone to fetch those articles of coffin *luxe*.

The sight of the dead face, with its still staring eyes—it was too late to close them when Mrs. Carstairs was found to be dead—has turned Hargood a little sick, and he uncorks the large bottle of spirits to help himself to a reviving dram. It does revive him, and he turns to examine the bed and mattress. He is so employed when he hears one of the undertaker's men returning. Why does he ascend the stairs at such a furious pace—"Surely—ah!"

"The money—the money! the six thousand pounds!" screams Grossmith, as he leaps with the ferocity of a panther upon his prey. "The money, or I'll strangle you."

"I—I have got no money——"

"L-i-a-a-r!" howls his mad-drunk assailant, in a prolonged whoop of rage and triumph, as he compresses Hargood's throat with his iron fingers,—"L-i-a-a-r!"

The agony of suffocation lends Hargood, who is a muscular man, convulsive strength, and he hurls Grossmith from him. Only for a moment. Again he is grappled, his hair torn out by handfuls, and a horrible struggle ensues, during which neither combatant has breath even to curse. Here—there—they reel, stagger, are hurled, driven; the coffin is tumbled off the tressels, and its ghastly tenant rolls out upon the floor; next the two-quart bottle is dashed

in pieces, the lamp, falling with it, ignites the spirit, and the room is instantly a-blaze. "Almost instantaneously," says the newspaper report, supplied in substance by the undertaker's men, who had returned with the mattress and pillow—"almost instantaneously the room was one mass of blazing fire; the bedding lying loosely about, the window-curtains, the coffin, caught instantly, and fed the raging flames, amidst which two human beings shrieked, struggled, fought, tore each other, till they, too, helped to feed the fire, which continued to roar, and hiss, and dart its flaming tongues towards us, as if they were fiery living serpents, till the floor fell in, and the fire was smothered in a cloud of dust."

* * * * * *

It was at the inquest holden upon the charred remains of the men who had thus horribly perished, that the before-quoted statements of James Grossmith and John Last were made. There cannot have been the shadow of a doubt that Josiah Grossmith *was* the man from whom the ticket-porter received the Christmas present for Mrs. Carstairs; nor that that present was a poisoned one, though the prompt remedies adopted prevented a fatal issue.

The interests of Margaret Dent were carefully watched over by Mr. Sandys; and as Mrs. Carstairs' will had been, fortunately, executed in duplicate, the loss of the copy which had been burned with Hargood was of no consequence. There was no proof or suggestion that it had been obtained by threats or violence of any kind from the deceased lady—James Grossmith might, perhaps, have afforded some enlightenment upon that point had he chosen to do so—the validity of the instrument was not disputed, as far as the personals were affected, and upon reaching her legal majority, Margaret Dent found herself the uncontrolled mistress of over six thousand pounds sterling—the grandson, Philip Carstairs, taking the house-property of right. It seems unaccountable that the elder Grossmith could, for one moment, have believed that he would be able to successfully realize and appropriate the large amount of which, at such terrible risk, he had obtained possession. The gold he might have made use of, but, assuredly, any attempt to realize the bonds, stock, &c., must have led to instant detection.

Long before she came into actual possession of the legacy extorted from Mrs. Carstairs, Margaret Dent had exchanged the green and yellow melancholy of disappointed affection for the sparkling, rosy vigour of fine health of both mind and body. The shock of discovering that Hargood had a wife living, followed by that created by the frightful catastrophe of his death, had passed away, leaving behind only a feeling of devout thankfulness for her own providential escape from the toils of such a consummate hypocrite and villain. Before she reached her twenty-third birthday, she had become the wife of one John Passmore, a draper, carrying on a large business in Chepe. He was some half-dozen years her senior, but an amiable, honourable man, who in his and her mature years attained to the civic dignity of alderman. They had a large family, and Mrs. Passmore lived to boast that she was great-grandmother to twenty-seven boys and girls, all living, and well provided for.

James Grossmith and his step-mother vanished suddenly from No. 1, Bowling-Inn Alley, but of whither they went I find no trace. It is probable they separated, as there had never been much kindly feeling between them. Mr. Sandys, at Margaret's instance, made the young man a money present, with an intimation that an annuity of twenty pounds would be paid to him as long as he lived, in recompense of the part he had played in the drama I have hastily sketched; but he never claimed the fulfilment of that promise. It is likely that he died young, stricken down by illness of mind as well as of body. His father's horrible death, which he felt was indirectly brought about by his own agency, no doubt preyed upon his spirits. It may be, also, that unrequited affection for Margaret Dent, which affection was, no doubt, the determining motive of his recent doings, helped to break down his feeble health, and hurry him to a premature grave.

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