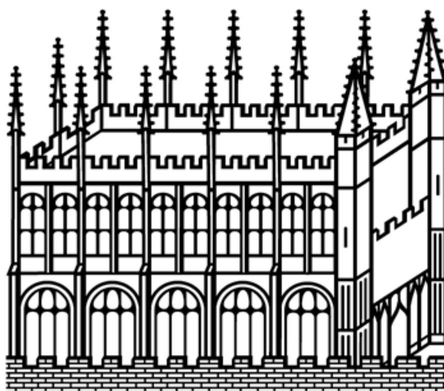

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FRIVOLITIES

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RICHARD · MARSH

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BY

RICHARD MARSH

AUTHOR OF
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OF TWO BACHELORS," "THE BEETLE: A MYSTERY," ETC.

LONDON
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1899

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FRIVOLITIES

The Purse which was Found

I.

THE first applicant arrived just as I was sitting down to breakfast. I went out to him in the hall at once. He was tall, thin, and distinctly seedy.

"I have called with reference to the advertisement of the purse which was found." I bowed. He seemed to hesitate. "I have lost a purse." He looked as if he had—long years ago. "I have reason to believe that it is my purse which you have found. I shall be happy to hand you the cost of your advertisement on your returning me my property."

"When did you lose it?"

My question seemed to escape his notice.

"I am a clergyman in the Orders of the

Church of England, and the inscrutable laws of the Divine Benevolence have placed me in a position which makes such a loss a matter of cardinal importance."

"Where did you lose it?"

"In town, sir—in town."

"In what part of town?"

"In the west, sir—in the west."

"Do you mean in the western postal district?"

"My topographical knowledge of this great city is scarcely sufficient to enable me to enter into such minutiæ." He assumed an air of candour which ill became him. "I will be frank with you. I do not know where I lost it. The shock of the loss was so great as to make of my mind a *tabula rasa.* I have an appointment at some distance from here in less than half an hour. Might I ask you to give me my property without any unnecessary delay?"

"With pleasure, on your describing it."

"Unfortunately there again you have me at a disadvantage. The purse was my daughter's, lent to me only for the day. I have not preserved a sufficiently clear mental picture to enable me to furnish you with an adequate description."

"But your daughter can?"

"Precisely, if she were in town. But she is not in town. And it is of paramount importance that I should at once regain possession of the property. If you will allow me to look at it I shall be able to tell at a glance if it is mine."

"I am afraid that I must request you to describe the purse lost before I show you the one I found."

He drew himself up.

"I trust, sir, that your words are not intended to convey a reflection?"

"Not at all. Only, as I have not breakfasted, and you have an appointment to keep, it might be as well if you were at once to communicate with your daughter, and request her to favour you with the necessary description."

"Excuse me, sir, but you mistake your man. I am a gentleman, sir, like you—a university man, sir. I came here to regain possession of my property; you are in possession of that property; until you return it to me I do not intend to quit this house." As he had suddenly raised his voice, and evinced symptoms of raising it higher, I opened the front door by way of a hint. On the doorstep stood one of

the unemployed, the remnant of a woollen muffler twisted round his neck.

"Beg pardon, guv'nor, I 've come for my purse."

"What purse?"

"You know very well what purse—the purse what 's advertised. You hand it over to me, and I 'm game to pay all costs. It 's mine. I lost it."

"Describe the one you had the misfortune to lose."

"It was a leather purse."

"Then that is not the purse I found."

"Shammy leather, I mean."

"Nor is it shammy leather."

"Covered with sealskin outside."

"Nor is it covered with sealskin outside."

"Just you take and let me have a look at it. I 'll soon tell you if it 's mine."

"Before the purse is shown to any claimant he must satisfactorily describe it."

"Very well; that 's all about it. If it ain't mine, it ain't mine. You needn't be nasty."

"I have no intention of being nasty."

"Then don't be. Because a pore feller loses his purse he don't need to be trampled on. You can be pore but honest."

With the utterance of this trite and, possibly, admirable observation the man strolled off, with his hands in his pockets. My clerical friend, who had lingered in the hall, endeavoured to take me by the button-hole. He addressed me in a confidential whisper.

"Pardon me, sir, but circumstances over which I have no control have temporarily crippled my resources. Since, from motives which I understand, and which I honour, sir, you prefer to continue to be the custodian of my family property, might I with confidence ask you to oblige me with a small loan till I am able to place myself in communication with my daughter?"

"You might not."

"I fear that I am already late for my appointment. The only way to reach it in time will be to take a cab. May I, at least, ask you to enable me to pay the fare?"

"You may not."

He sighed.

"I believe you said you had not breakfasted? Neither, sir, have I. You will hardly believe it, but it is a positive fact that I, a clergyman, a master of arts of my university, have not tasted food for more than four-and-twenty hours. If,

sir, you will suffer me, a humble stranger, to join you at your morning meal——"

"Good-day, sir."

He sighed again. Then, putting his hand up to his mouth, he asked, in a sepulchral whisper:

"Will you lend me sixpence?"

"I won't—not one farthing."

Then he went, shaking his head as he passed down the steps, as if the burden of this world pressed on him more weightily than ever. He was still descending the steps when a cab dashed up, from the interior of which an elderly gentleman flourished an umbrella.

II.

"Hi! Is this 25, Bangley Gardens, where they advertise that a purse was found?"

I admitted that it was.

"Was it found in Regent Street on Wednesday afternoon—silver monogram 'E. L. T.'—containing between nine and ten pounds in silver and gold?"

I said that it was not.

"Sorry to have troubled you. Throgmorton Street, driver. Push along."

I was closing the door when I was hailed by

a woman, who remained standing at the foot of the steps. She was a young woman, evidently of the artisan class. She wore an air of depression, and carried a baby in her arms.

"Was the purse which was found mine, sir?"

"What was yours like?"

"I lost it in the Mile End Road on Saturday night, sir. My husband's wages was in it—twenty-four and sixpence. He see the advertisement in the paper, and sent me round to see. Leather it was—leastways, imitation—red, and the clasp was broken."

"I am sorry to say that your description bears no kind of resemblance to the one which is in my possession."

She looked at me for a moment, scrutinizingly, as if desirous of learning if what I said was credible; then, without another word, moved off.

I had succeeded in closing the door just as there came another rap upon the knocker. I reopened it, to find myself confronted by another of the unemployed.

"I ask your pardon, guv'nor, but seeing an advertisement about a purse as was found, I thought I'd just come round to see if it might happen to be mine. Mine wasn't a

leather purse, nor yet it wasn't a shammy leather, nor yet it wasn't one of them seal-skin kind of things."

As soon as he said that I suspected that this was a friend of the other unemployed, from whom he had recently gathered certain data.

"Mine was more one of them sort of bag kind."

"What bag kind?"

"Well——" He fixed me with his gaze. If he had been acquainted with the fact that images are photographed upon our eyes, I might have suspected him of an intent to decipher the image of the purse in mine. "Was this here purse you found tied round the top?"

"Was yours?"

He read the answer in my eyes.

"No, I can't say as how mine was; but I thought as how this here one you found might have been—some purses are, you know."

Unless I erred he was endeavouring to consider what sort of purse that purse might be, his knowledge of the varieties of that article being limited. He taxed my patience.

"If you have lost a purse, my man, be so good as to describe it without delay. I can't stop here all the morning."

"Well, as I was a-saying, it was one of them sort of bag kind."

"Then it's not the one I found."

Without more ado I slammed the door in his face. I went in to breakfast. As I was sitting down there came a single knock. Saunders turned to leave the room to answer it.

"One moment, Saunders. I don't know if I mentioned to you that, the day before yesterday, I found a purse?"

"No, sir."

"Well, I did, and I'm beginning to wish that I hadn't. I've inserted an advertisement in to-day's papers to the effect that the owner may have it on applying to me. I've had five applicants within five minutes—three of them rank impostors. I'm rather inclined to think that the person who has just knocked is one of them come back again. I doubt if he ever had a purse in his life—he certainly never had the one I've found. Tell him if he doesn't take himself away at once I'll send for the police."

Saunders vanished. There was the sound of voices—one of them belonging to Saunders, the other, undoubtedly, to that member of the unemployed. He seemed to be shouting at Saunders, and Saunders, in a dignified way,

seemed to be shouting back at him. Presently there was a lull. Saunders reappeared.

"Well, has the fellow gone?"

"No, sir. And he says he isn't going."

"Did you give him to understand that I should send for the police?"

"He says he should like to see you send for the police. He says that the police will soon show you if you can rob a poor man of his purse. He's a most impudent fellow. As for the purse which you found being his, sir, I don't believe he knows what a purse is. He's a regular vagabond!"

"I quite agree with you, Saunders—quite! That is my opinion of the man precisely."

"There are five other persons who wish to see you. Three of them have cards, and two of them haven't."

He held out three cards on a waiter, taking my breath away.

"Five, Saunders! Where are these people?"

"In the hall, sir."

"I won't see anyone till I've had my breakfast. I'm not going to have all my habits disarranged simply because I happen to have found a purse. I ought to have stated that no applications were to be made till after twelve;

I never dreamt that people would have come at this time of day. Show the people with the cards into the drawing-room, and leave the others in the hall. And, Saunders, it would be a little obvious, perhaps, to remove the hats and umbrellas from before their very faces, but keep a sharp eye on them!"

I glanced at the trio of visiting-cards, as, once more, I made an attempt to continue my meal. "Mrs. Chillingby-Harkworth, Pagoda Mansions, S.W.," "Colonel Fitzakarley Beering," "George Parkins." The idea of a number of entire strangers being turned loose in my drawing-room was one I did not relish. I felt I ought to have stated that applications in writing would alone have been attended to.

I had imagined that, by not taking my find to the police-station, I should be saving myself trouble. I perceived that my imagination had been at fault. I had had no notion that such a number of people had lost their purses. A constant fusillade was being kept up on the knocker. I might have been giving a fashionable assembly, and requested the guests to arrive in time for breakfast. All at once there was a violent ringing at the drawing-room bell.

In came Saunders with a stack of cards on a tray and some telegrams.

"Well, Saunders, many people here?"

"More than twenty inside the house, and I don't know how many there are outside—I know the pavement's getting blocked. The drawing-room is full, and the hall is crammed. Queer ones some of them are; they don't look to me as if they were the sort to lose their purses. And now the lady whose card I brought up to you has rung the bell, and says that she insists on seeing you at once."

"Show her up, and, when I ring, show her down again. Then send them up one after the other. I'll get rid of them as fast as I can. And, Saunders, if ever you find a purse lose it again directly, and don't breathe a word of it to anyone!"

III.

In came a lady, looking every inch a Mrs. Chillingby-Harkworth—tall, portly, middle-aged, richly dressed. As she eyed me through a pair of long-handled spy-glasses her volubility was amazing.

"May I inquire your name, sir?"

"Burley is my name, madam."

"Then, Mr. Burley, I have to inform you I was never treated with so much indignity before. I come here in answer to an advertisement, at great personal inconvenience to myself, and I am shown into a room with a number of most extraordinary characters; and one person, who, I am sure, was the worse for drink, asks me the most impertinent questions, and when I appeal for protection to another individual, he tells me that he has enough to do in attending to his own business without interfering with other people's, and I have positively to ring the bell twice before I can receive any proper attention."

"I am sorry that you should have suffered any unpleasantness in my house. May I ask if you have lost a purse?"

"I can't say I have—at least, not for years. I only lost one purse in my life, and that was when I was quite a child—I've always taken too much care of my things to lose them. But the friend of a niece of mine, who was staying with me a week or two ago, took her little boy to the Zoological Gardens, and she lost her purse. She hadn't the faintest notion where or how, and when I saw the advertisement I thought I would call and see if it was hers."

"May I ask you to describe the purse which your friend lost?"

"My good sir, I can't do anything of the kind. I only saw it for a moment in her hand as she was going out. You mustn't ask me to perform impossibilities."

"Perhaps your friend could describe it."

"Of course she could, if she were here, but she isn't; she's at the other end of the country. I've come to look at the purse which you have found, don't I tell you, and wasted a whole morning in doing so. I daresay I shall be able to form a pretty shrewd idea as to whether it is hers, as those who know me best will tell you. My sense of observation has always been exceedingly keen."

I shook my head.

"I am afraid that that is what I cannot do. According to your own statement you have not lost a purse. I am unable to produce the one which I have found until I am furnished with a satisfactory description by the actual loser."

She stared.

"Good gracious, my good man, you don't mean to say that after bringing me here, and after what I have gone through, you refuse to

show me the purse which you have actually advertised?"

I rang the bell.

"Possibly your friend will place herself in communication with me. Saunders, show this lady out."

I fancy she was so taken aback by my manner that for the moment she was speechless. Anyhow, she went, and regained the use of her tongue when she got outside. I heard her rating Saunders soundly as she went downstairs. A young man came next, with something about him which smacked of a provincial town.

"My name's Parkins. You've got a pretty crowd downstairs. I didn't expect this sort of thing, or I wouldn't have come. A lot of Johnnies seem to be on the prowl for a purse. Was the one you found plain leather, with a single pocket, and three fivers inside?"

"Not the least like it."

"Oh! The fact is, I'm up in town for an holiday, and the night before last I went on the razzle, and some Johnny boned my purse, and I thought you might have got it."

I do not know what he meant, or if he intended to insult me—he seemed to be a simple

sort of youth—but he was gone before I had a chance of asking him. He was followed by an elderly gentleman, whom I had reason to suppose, before I had got rid of him, was either a seasoned liar, or more or less insane. He seated himself—uninvited by me—crossed his legs, and nursed his silk hat and umbrella.

"I suppose it is a purse you've found?"

"Of course it is. Have you lost one?"

"It isn't a Gladstone bag?"

"A Gladstone bag?" I was a little dazed by my efforts to grasp the man's meaning, and the question was such an absurd one.

"I take it that if it had been a Gladstone bag I should have mentioned it in my advertisement. I am still able to distinguish between the one and the other."

"Nor a silk umbrella with a silver mount and a crest on top, like this?"

He held out the one he had been holding.

I stiffened my back, suspecting him of a humorous intention.

"My time is valuable, as, having just come from downstairs, you must be aware. May I ask if I am indebted for the pleasure of your presence here to the fact of your having lost a purse?"

"*A* purse? On my soul and honour, sir, in my time I've lost hundreds — hundreds! Positively hundreds!"

I believe I gasped—he spoke with an airy indifference as if that kind of thing were commonplace.

"As I was saying to some of those fellows downstairs, if there's a man in England who has lost more things than I have, I should like to meet him. It's a genius I have; as sure as I get a thing I lose it. And the more it costs, the more it's lost. As for purses, they're my strongest point. I suppose I lost more than a score last year, and already more than a dozen this. Only last week my wife bought a steel chain with a steel purse at the end of it. She chained it round me. If you will believe me, sir, the very next day I went to a Turkish bath and left it there—never set eyes upon it since. I take it it isn't that purse you've found?"

"It is not."

"Nor a large square trunk, iron-bound, weighing about two tons, which I left on the Boulogne Quay a fortnight last Thursday?"

"It is not that, either. Pardon me if I appear to interrupt you, but, since you seem

to have been unfortunate on so large a scale, I fear I must ask you to go home and have a list printed of the purses which you have lost at different times, and send it to me at your leisure. I shall then be able to perceive if it is one of them which I have found. But I beg you will not include in it any iron-bound trunks. Good-day."

I rang the bell; the man sat still.

"It isn't only trunks and purses which I lose — I lose everything. The day before yesterday I went into the City to buy groceries; filled two great parcels four feet square; had them put with me into the cab so that I might keep them well in sight; got out on the road to have a drink; when I had had it got into the wrong cab; never discovered the mistake till I reached my own doorstep. Those groceries haven't yet come to hand——"

"These anecdotes——"

"Excuse me, I'll tell you another thing I've lost. Six months ago I lost my wife. Took her for a run on the Continent; on the way home dined at a restaurant on the Boulevards; went out to buy a cigar; forgot all about my wife; left her eating an ice; came over by the night boat; never noticed she was missing

till I was between the sheets in bed." He paused, as if to meditate. "She wasn't a dead loss; turned up afterwards, as I 've reason to remember."

Whether the man was or was not mad, or whether he was merely amusing himself at my expense, is more than I can say. We had the greatest difficulty in getting rid of him. By the time I had interviewed another dozen applicants I came to the conclusion that, if I had to go through much more of that kind of thing, my brain would turn. One red-headed man came into the room with a huge portfolio under his arm. Before I could stop him he had unfolded it before my astonished eyes.

"I have here one of the finest works ever issued from the press. It is a universal gazetteer and general encyclopædia of information, and contains 22,000 more references than any other work of the kind which has been previously produced. It is most superbly illustrated, in the most lavish manner, by the greatest artists, two or more full-page illustrations to each part, besides innumerable smaller illustrations, splendid maps, and magnificent coloured pictures, which are quite worthy of being framed. It is issued in monthly parts

price sevenpence, and with the first part is presented a free gift——"

It was all I could do to prevent myself kicking him downstairs. He was not by any means the only offender in this direction. One young woman, after beating about the bush in a manner which, although I was becoming familiar with it, was none the less maddening, explained that she had come to solicit contributions towards providing a day in the country for some ragamuffins at the other end of the town.

IV.

The worst of it was that, though I scampered through the applicants as fast as ever they would let me, the number of them, instead of diminishing, increased. The clamour of their voices filled the house. Saunders and the maids were becoming alarmed—for the matter of that so was I. The people swarmed into the house like flies. The downstair rooms were full, the hall was blocked, the stairway choked, a continually increasing crowd was on the pavement. Everyone wanted to see me at once. Judging from the noise quarrels were frequent. I had heard of the astonishing number of the applica-

tions which are received for an advertised vacant clerkship; judging from results I might have advertised not for one clerk, but for half a dozen.

"I think," suggested Saunders, pale, though heated, "that we had better send for the police."

I had just disposed of a man who, after explaining that he had lost a purse something like twelve months ago, had assured the crowd, from the top of the stairs, that I was a colourable imitation of a thief, because I had declined to show him the one which I had found a couple of days before. He had been followed by an acidulated-looking female, who, I felt certain, was a tough morsel, and who was eyeing me, as Saunders spoke, as if I had been a convict at the least.

"Why? Are the people misbehaving?"

Saunders's face was more eloquent than his words.

"I don't believe there'll be much furniture left in the drawing-room if something isn't done. Cook's locked herself in the kitchen, and some of the people have gone downstairs—a pretty sort they are! If they aren't in the plate cupboard, they're in the pantry."

This was pleasant hearing. Before I could

speak the acidulated lady—proving that my diagnosis of her character had not been unfounded—answered for me.

"And serve you quite right too! I believe that the whole affair 's a swindle. You ought to be made to suffer. I don't believe you 've found a purse at all."

"My dear madam, I assure you that I have!"

"Then why don't you let any of the poor creatures who have lost their purses have so much as a sight of it? If you have found a purse, why don't you show it to them like an honest man?" I sighed—the logic of people who had lost their purses was wonderful. "As for me, I 'm not going through the farce of describing the purse I lost, because I know very well you haven't got it; but I 'll tell you this—I 've come all the way from Hackney, and I 've wasted a day, and I don't mean to leave this house till you 've paid me my expenses. I 'll teach you to play tricks with innocent people! And"—she suddenly raised her voice—"if other people take my advice they will insist upon having their expenses paid them too!"

Before Saunders or I could interpose she had thrown the door wide open, and was addressing

her, by now, excited audience, as if to the manner born.

"My good people, I am Sarah Eliza Warren, of Greenbush Villa, Hackney, and, like yourselves, I have been brought to this house by what seems to me to amount to false pretences. I don't believe that a purse has been found at all. If you take my advice you will do as I am doing—you will insist on being compensated for your loss of time, and for your out-of-pocket expenditure!"

I plainly perceived that further argument was useless. The idea of compensating that motley gathering for effecting a burglarious entry on to my premises was one which was too terrible to contemplate.

I threw up the window.

"Police! police!" I shouted.

A solitary policeman was in sight. Considering that the street in front of my house was rendered practically impassable by the concourse of people and of vehicles, the wonder was that the whole force had not been on the spot an hour ago. His attention had been attracted by the crowd; he was hastening towards it. Some fifty to sixty persons endeavoured to explain the situation as he advanced. He waved them

majestically from him as only a policeman can. As he came near the house I shouted to him:

"I'm the owner of this house! I require your assistance, constable! I want you to turn these people out!"

The effect of my words was spoilt by the opening of the drawing-room window, which was immediately under the one at which I was. Half a dozen men and women thrust their heads out. They simultaneously addressed the constable. Under the circumstances he did the best thing he could have done—he blew his whistle.

V.

There ensued a scene of considerable excitement. Never tell me again that policemen do not come when they are wanted. As soon as that whistle was blown blue-coated officials began to appear in all directions. A policeman running is a sight to be seen—so the general public with leisure on its hands seemed to think, because each came attended by a tail of stragglers. What the neighbours thought of the proceedings Heaven only knows. People stood on the doorsteps, heads were thrust out of every window. Bangley Gardens had never

before experienced such an occasion in the whole course of its history.

The behaviour of the persons who had lost their purses—or wished me to believe that they had—was disgraceful. Judging from the sounds they were wandering over the house wherever their fancy led them. A scuffle seemed to be taking place on the stairs, another in the hall, and there was plainly contention in the drawing-room. Mysterious noises in the basement. Eight or nine excitable people had forced their way into my room, and, headed by "Sarah Eliza Warren," were addressing me in a fashion which, to say the least of it, was lacking in decorum. Meantime the original policeman was standing with his hands in his belt, waiting for the support of his colleagues before taking any steps whatever to save my property from being looted.

"Constable!" I screamed, "I am the owner of this house, and I shall hold you responsible for any damage that is done to my property. Come inside, I tell you, and turn these people out."

He apparently paid no heed to me whatever; I was not the only one who was screaming. The people at the drawing-room window were

behaving as if they had just broken loose from Bedlam. From what I afterwards ascertained it seems as if some of them imagined that they were in for a colourable imitation of the original affair of the Black Hole of Calcutta.

Suddenly I became conscious that the proceedings in my immediate neighbourhood had positively increased in liveliness. Turning, I perceived that Saunders was engaged in what looked very like a bout of fisticuffs with still another member of the unemployed; he had detected him in the act of pocketing a silver statuette. Regardless of who was standing in the way I rushed to his assistance. I struck out at somebody—somebody struck out at me. What immediately followed must have borne a strong family resemblance to the "divarsion" which marked the occasion of that immortal "Irish christenin'."

"What's the meaning of all this? Who's the owner of this house?"

Never was anything more welcome than the sight of the stalwart, blue-coated figure of the representative of law and order standing in the doorway. I tremble to think of what would have happened if his arrival had been delayed much longer.

"I am—what's left of him."

"Then, if you're the owner of the house, what are all these people doing in it?"

"Perhaps you will be so good as to ask them; they have certainly not been invited by me."

A voice was raised in explanation—the voice of "Sarah Eliza Warren."

"We've been made the victims of a scandalous hoax, policeman, and if there's a law in the land this person ought to be made to suffer. He's lured people by false pretences from all parts of the country, and I, for one, don't mean to leave this house till he has compensated me for the loss and suffering he has caused me."

"More don't I," chimed in, of all persons, that felonious member of the unemployed.

"Officer, I give that man in charge for theft; my man has just caught him in the act of appropriating my property."

The man began to bluster.

"What are you talking about? Who do you think you are? You rob a poor bloke like me of a whole day's work, and then won't give me so much as a ha'penny piece to make up for it! A nice sort you are to talk of robbery!"

The constable raised his hand in the orthodox official manner, which is intended to soothe.

"Now, then! now, then!" He addressed me. "Is what these persons say true—have you been hoaxing them?"

"Most distinctly not; as, if you will be so good as to rid my house of their presence, I shall have much pleasure in promptly proving to you."

The sergeant—he was a sergeant—made short work of the clearance, even managing, by dint of an assurance that he would listen to all she had to say afterwards, to dislodge "Sarah Eliza Warren." Then he turned to me.

"Now, perhaps, you will tell me what this means. If you're the householder, as you say, you yourself ought to turn anyone out of your own house you want to turn out, as a policeman has no right to come into a private house unless an actual charge is to be preferred. I don't know what you've been doing, but you seem to be responsible for something very like a riot."

I felt that it was hard, after what I had undergone, to be addressed in such a strain by a man in his position.

"When you have heard the explanation which I am about to give you, you will yourself perceive how far you are justified in adopting towards me such a tone." I paused. I seated myself—the support of a chair having become an absolute necessity. "The day before yesterday, as I was turning from Knightsbridge into Sloane Street, I saw a purse lying on the pavement. I picked it up. I inquired of several people standing about, or who were passing by, if they had dropped it. No one had. I brought it home, and yesterday I sent an advertisement to the papers. Here it is, in one of them."

I pointed it out to him in a newspaper of the day.

"FOUND, A PURSE.—Owner may have it by giving description and paying the cost of this advertisement.—Apply to 25, Bangley Gardens, S.W."

"It's too vague," objected the constable.

"I purposely made it as vague as I could, thinking that if I left all the details to be filled in I should render it certain that it could only be claimed by the actual owner, and, to make sure it should be claimed by him, I had it inserted in all the morning papers."

The constable smiled the smile of superiority.

"If you had let me know what you had done I 'd have sent my men down in time to protect you. A vague advertisement like that appearing in all the papers is bound to attract the attention of half the riffraff of London, who are always ready for a little game of trying it on, not to speak of the hundreds, perhaps thousands, who are losing their purses every day."

"I have discovered that fact—a day after the affair."

"You ought to have taken it at once to a police-station. Everyone ought to take the things they find. It would save them a lot of bother."

"That, also, I perceive too late. I was under a different impression at first. I know better now. Perhaps you will allow me to repair my error and confide it to your keeping at this, the eleventh hour. Then I shall have pleasure in referring all further applicants to you."

As he placed the purse in the inside pocket of his tunic the sergeant grinned.

"Don't think you 'll get rid of them by giving it to me now, because you won't. Look at the street. There 's a pretty sight for you."

It was a pretty sight—of a kind. The usually

deserted Bangley Gardens was filled with a clamorous crowd. It distinctly comprised all sorts and conditions of men—and women. Two or three policemen, standing at the foot of my steps, were doing their best to keep the people back. It seemed incredible that all this bother could be about a purse. If ever I found another I would know the reason why.

"I shall have to leave some of my men to keep the people circulating, and to save you from annoyance. I shouldn't be surprised if you have them worrying you for several days to come. If you take my advice you'll put an advertisement in to-morrow's papers, to say that you have handed the purse to us."

I did put an advertisement in the next day's papers, though it was not couched in the terms which he suggested. For the joke was that scarcely had the sergeant turned his back when I took up, half absent-mindedly, a telegram from the heap which was constantly arriving, and found it contained this message—a tolerably voluminous one:

"To 25, Bangley Gardens.

"Referring to advertisement of purse found in to-day's *Times*, Lady Hester Hammersmith, of Hammersmith House, Grosvenor Square, on Thursday

afternoon, between three and four, dropped, probably outside Cane and Wilson's, green silk network purse, secured by two gold rings—emerald in one, sapphire in the other. At one end of the purse were four ten and one five-pound notes; at the other, about nine pounds in gold and silver. As Lady Hester Hammersmith values the purse apart from its intrinsic value, and is greatly troubled at its loss, if this is the purse found, please wire at once. Reply paid."

I rushed to the door.

"Saunders, where is the boy who brought this message? Run after that sergeant of police and bring him back again—this is the purse I found."

It was. And so it came about that the second advertisement which I inserted was not worded as the sergeant had suggested, but was to the effect that no further applications need be made to anyone, because the purse which was found had been restored to its rightful owner.

For One Night Only

"ONCE I were a waiter. Never again. It was like this here—

"At that time I was fresh from the country—ah! I was fresh—and I was in a situation along with old Bob Perkins, what kep' a green-grocer's shop in the 'Ampstead Road. One day Mr. Perkins says to me:

"'Brocklebank,' he says, 'would you like to do a little job of waiting?' I knew as he went out acting as waiter at private parties and such like, so I says:

"'I don't mind,' I says; 'not that I knows anything about it, if that don't make no odds.

"'Lor', no! that don't make no odds,' he says. 'It's only the cloak-room you'll have to look after, and you'll get 'alf-a-crown and your grub for doin' it.'

"'Cloak-room?' I says. 'What's that?' 'Why,' he says, 'where the gents puts their

'ats and coats and umbrellas.' 'I 'm on,' I says. 'I shouldn't be surprised if I was able to keep a heye upon a humbrella; I should think that was about my style.' But I were wrong, as I 'm a-goin' to tell yer.

"In the evening I went up with Mr. Perkins to a house in the Camden Road. I had on a old dress suit of Perkins's, which wasn't no sort of fit, seeing as how he was fifty-two in the waist and I was twenty-five. Mrs. Perkins, she 'd what she called 'caught the trousers up' in the back, and she said as no one would see me it would be all right, which I hoped it would be. It didn't feel all right, I tell you that.

"When me and Mr. Perkins got up to the house they put me straight away into a little band-box of a cupboard sort of place, where there was some shelves and some 'ooks and some pieces of paper, with numbers on—the same number on two pieces of paper—and a box of pins. The servant girl as shows me in says—a saucy piece of goods she was!—'There you are! and I hope you 're more 'andy than you looks, because if you mixes of the things there 'll be excitement.' Mr. Perkins, he 'd told me what I 'd have to do as we was coming

along, so I wipes my 'ot 'and upon his breeches, and I 'opes for the best.

"Presently the people begins a-coming to the party. A young gent, he comes up to me, and he 'ands me his overcoat, and a billycock 'at, and a silk scarf, and a umbrella, and a pair of india-rubber shoes, and I was floored at once; because Mr. Perkins had told me that I was to pin one number to whatever a gent gave me, and I was to give him the same number, so that he might know it by that number when he came again. So when this young gent gave me all that lot of articles I began pinning one number to his 'at—it was a 'ard 'at and not easy to drive a pin in—and another to his overcoat, and another to his umbrella, and another to his shoes, and another to his scarf—as I'd understood Mr. Perkins to tell me. But this here young gent, he wouldn't have it. He wanted me to pin one number to the lot of them; and as I was a-arguing with him, and tryin' to understand how he made out as I could do that, seeing as how the pins was little ones, and the numbers not large ones neither, a lot of other gents came up, and this here young gent he got quite red in the face, and he snatched a number out of my hand and he walked off, and he left me staring.

"Well I got on pretty well, considerin', so long as the people didn't come too fast. But I tell you, if you 're not used to pins, they 're more difficult to manage than you might think. You never know where you 're driving of them. I know that, what with the 'eat and the 'aste, some being all of a flurry, I drove more of them into my 'ands than I quite liked. And I soon saw that that there box of pins wouldn't never last me long, seein' as how I bent three out of every two, so as I couldn't use 'em—not to speak of others I dropped and couldn't stop to find.

"But, as I was a-sayin', I got on somehow, and I daresay I should have got on, somehow, to the end, if it hadn't been that I was fresh from the country. Of course, I didn't know what gentlefolk wear, and one 'at was like another 'at to me—and that was where I was deceived. One gent fair took me aback. He came in with a 'igh top-'at on his 'ead, and when he took it off he put one end against his chest and he gave it a sort of a shove, and he squashed it as flat as my 'and. I tell you, I stared. I thought he'd been having a drop to drink, and had busted his brand new 'at for a sort of a joke. But he seemed

to be sober enough, so far as I could see, and he didn't seem to mind what he'd done to his 'at, not a little bit. Presently another gent came alone, and he done the same to his top-'at. Then another, and another — in fact, a whole crowd of them. And there was me, a-perspiring like one o'clock, with Perkins's breeches a-coming undone where his old woman had caught 'em up at the back, a-standing in the middle of a lot of squashed 'igh 'ats, what was lying all over the place. So I began to see that there was more in the nature of a 'igh 'at than I'd supposed.

"Bless you! there wasn't nearly room for all the things that these gents kept a-handing me, and unless I took to standin' on 'em, I didn't see what I was to do. So when there came a sort of a lull like I looks round to see how I could make a bit of room. 'Alf them gents hadn't squashed in their 'igh 'ats, like the other gents 'ad done, and I sees at once as how they were takin' up more than their fair share of space. So I makes up my mind to squash 'em for 'em, and I sets about a-doin' it. I takes up a 'igh 'at what a old gent had just a-give me — a beautiful shiny one it was—and I sets it against my stomach

and I starts a-'eavin'. I 'd no idea it 'd be so 'ard. Them other gents had seemed to squash theirs easy, but this 'ere one took some shovin'. And, when it did go, it went all lop-sided like. I had to sit on it before it 'd lie down flat.

"I had my 'and full, I tell you, squashin' all them 'igh 'ats. There was forty of 'em, if there was one. Fair 'ard work I found it. I supposed there was some knack about the thing as I 'adn't yet caught. And when I 'd finished the lot I took a squint at 'em. If you 'll believe me, a shiver went up and down my back. Somehow I didn't like the way as they was lookin'. There was a crumpled sort of look about 'em which didn't seem like as it ought to be. I was a-perspirin' all over. Perkins's breeches had come undone behind, and was 'anging about me anyhow; my collar had come unpinned at the back of my shirt; the bow that Mrs. Perkins had give me for a necktie had worked loose in front. A lot of them articles hadn't got no numbers on, and most of them as had I felt certain as I 'd given to the wrong parties; and, altogether, I began to wish as how I hadn't come.

"Presently the old gent as had given me the 'igh 'at as I had started squashin' came up to

the door. He was a tall old gent, very fierce-lookin', with a long white moustache—a regular toff. As he'd been the last to come, and it seemed as how he was goin' to be the first to go, it looked as if he had soon had enough of the party. 'Give me my 'at,' he says.

"I knew which was his 'at, though it 'adn't got no number. I had good reason to. So I routed it out from under a 'eap of others. He looks at it, and then he looks at me.

"'That's not my 'at,' he says.

"'Excuse me, sir,' I says, 'it is your 'at—leastways, it's the one as you gave to me.'

"He looks at the 'at again, and then again he looks at me, and all of a sudden he went quite red in the face.

"'Mine was a new 'at!'

"'Yes, sir,' I says; 'so I thought, sir, when you gave it me. It didn't look as though it 'adn't never been worn. If you try this 'at on, sir, you will find, sir, as it's yours.'

"Then he takes the 'at out of my 'and, lookin' at me once more, searchin' like, and he turns it round and round, and he squints inside of it.

"'As I'm alive,' he says, 'I do believe it's mine!'

"I says, 'I'm sure, sir, as how it is. I noticed it most particular.'

"'But, good 'evins!' he says, 'whatever 'ave you been a-doing to it?'

"'I've only been a-squashin' of it, sir,' I says.

"'Only been a-squashin' of it!' he says, and he gives a kind of gasp. 'Are you drunk, man?'

"'No, sir,' I says, 'and that I'm not. I haven't had so much as 'alf a pint since I've been inside this 'ouse!' Which I 'adn't, and my throat was gettin' regular parched.

"He did flare out!

"'Then if you're not drunk, man,' he says, 'what the devil do you mean by tellin' me that you've only been a-squashin' of a brand new 'at?' He gives another squint inside of it. ''Ang me if it doesn't look as if he'd been a-sitting down upon the thing!'

"'I had to,' I says, 'to make it stay down flat.'

"I thought he would have had a fit.

"'My God!' he says, 'what sort of a place is it that I've got into?' Then he uses language what I'd always been taught was most unbecomin' to anyone what called 'imself a gentleman. 'You damned scoundrel, you!'

he says. 'If you was my servant I'd have you sent to gaol for this! I might have expected that something would come of ever entering such a dog-'ole of a 'ouse! Take the 'at, you 'ound, and be damned to you!'

"And if he didn't throw his own 'at into my face with such violence as not only to break the skin right off my nose, where it 'appened to 'it me, but as to make me feel for the moment as if I had gone silly. When I come to myself, as it were, if he hadn't gone right into the street, for all I knew, and left his 'at behind him. As I was thinkin' what I ought to do—for I ain't accustomed to havin' 'igh 'ats chucked in my face as if they were brickbats, not even at a party—three other gents came 'astening up—young ones, they was.

"''Ats, waiter!' they says. 'We're in a 'urry'—which I could see they was.

"'What is your numbers, gentlemen?' I says.

"'You never give us none,' says they.

"'In that case, gentlemen,' I says, 'I shall have to ask you for to be so good as to choose your own 'ats.'

"So I takes up in both my 'ands a 'eap of squashed 'igh 'ats and I 'olds 'em out to 'em.

You should have seen their faces! First they looks at me, and then they looks at each other. Then one of them gives a sort of grin.

"'Ain't you made some sort of mistake?' he says.

"'As 'ow?' I says.

"'Ours was 'igh 'ats,' he says.

"'Well, and ain't these 'igh 'ats?' I says.

"Then again they looks at me, and again they looks at each other; and another one, he speaks—a short, puffy young fellow he was, with curly 'air.

"'They looks to me as if they was low 'ats,' he says; 'uncommon low—I never saw none look lower.'

"All three laughs. What at was more than I could say. I didn't know what to make of 'em. There was they a-starin' at me, and there was I a-starin' at them, with both my arms 'eaped up with them there 'ats. Then the third one, he has a go—a stylish-lookin' chap. He was very 'an'some, like you sees in the barbers' shops.

"'Waiter,' he says, 'are you a-'avin' a game with us?'

"'A game, sir?' I says. 'Beggin' your pardon, sir, I'm not 'avin' no game with no one. Do I look as if I was?'

"Which I didn't feel it, I can tell you that.

"'Well,' he says, 'I asks you for my 'at, and you offers me my choice of them leavings from a rag-and-bone shop; so, if you ain't a-'avin' a game with me, I don't know what you are a-'avin'.'

"'Come, waiter!' says the one as had spoken first; 'didn't we tell you as 'ow we was in a 'urry? Let us 'ave our 'ats. Don't keep on playing the fool with us!'

"'You must excuse me, gentlemen,' I says, speaking a trifle warmish—because, as you'll understand, I was beginning to feel a little badgered like; 'if anyone's a-playin' the fool it seems to me—asking of your leave—as it's you as is playin' the fool with me!'

"'Us as is playin' the fool with you?' they says, all together, as it might be.

"'Eggsactly,' I says. 'That is what I says,' I says, 'and that is what I means,' I says. 'First, you asks me for to give you your 'ats; and then, when I offers you some 'ats for you to take what is your own, you starts a-larfin'. If, as you says, you're in a 'urry, perhaps you'll step inside and cast your eyes around, and point out which is your 'ats. You can

take which ones you please for all I care; I 'm sure you 're very welcome.'

"With that they stepped in. When they was in, and I was in, there wasn't much room left for anything but breathin', and 'ardly room enough for that.

"'Where is the 'igh 'ats?' says the stylish-lookin' feller.

"'Where is your eyes?' I says. 'Ain't they all over the place? Why, you 're a-steppin' on one now!'

"You should have seen the 'op he gave!

"'These 'ats,' he says, 'from what I can see of 'em—which isn't much—looks to me as if they had all been squashed.'

"'Of course they has!' I says. ''Ow do you suppose I was a-goin' to find room for them if they wasn't? This ain't the Halbit 'All, and yet it ain't the Crystal Pallis!'

"Then they looks at each other again; and, from the way in which they done it, I felt as 'ow there was something which wasn't altogether what it ought to be. So I goes on—

"'If them 'ats hasn't been squashed eggsactly as they ought to have been squashed, that ain't my fault,' I says. 'You ought to have squashed them for yourselves, as the other gents done.

I don't know nothing about the squashin' of 'igh 'ats, and I never laid myself out as knowin' nothing. I just put them against my chest and I gives 'em a shove, and then I sits on 'em to make 'em lay down flat. That's all I done!'

"While I was speakin' I could see them there young gents' mouths was gettin' wider and wider open, and when I stopped they burst out larfin' fit to split. What there was to larf at was more than I could see. All I knew was, that I wished I 'adn't never come. They staggered out into the 'all, and the curly-'eaded one, he cries out:

"'Oh, Sheepshanks, do come 'ere!' Then a cove comes up, as I found out afterwards was the bloke as was a-givin' the party. 'Oh, Sheepshanks!' says this young feller; 'if he ain't squashed them just eggsactly as they ought to have been squashed, don't you blame him. He never laid himself out as knowin' nothing about the squashin' of 'igh 'ats, but he's done his best—he's sat down upon them to make them lie down flat! Oh, Lord! Someone put a piece of ice down my back, afore I die!'

"This 'ere curly-'eaded young feller kep' on

larfin' so I thought he would have bust. Mr. Sheepshanks, he comes up to me, lookin' a bit pinky. 'What's the matter? What's the meanin' of this?' he says.

"'Oh!' says the curly-'eaded young feller, still a-bustin' of 'isself a-larfin'; 'nothing! That waiter of yours has only been a-squashin' the 'igh 'ats—every man-jack of 'em. For goodness sake ask him about them—don't ask me! My gracious! why don't someone bring that piece of ice?'

"Mr. Sheepshanks, he came into the little band-box of a room, looking pinkier and pinkier. He looks at some 'ats which I was a-'oldin' in my 'ands.

"'What have you been a-doin' to those 'ats?' he says.

"'I've only been a-squashin' 'em,' I says; 'that's all!'

"'You've only been a-squashin' 'em?' he says—and he gives a kind of gasp, like as if he was taken short of breath upon a sudden. And he looks about the room.

"'What 'ats are these?' he says.

"'They is the 'ats,' I says, 'what was given to me by the gents as is at the party.'

"He gives another sort of gasp, and there

came something into his face what I didn't altogether like the look of.

"'Who's been a-destroyin' of 'em?' he says.

"'No one ain't been a-destroyin' of 'em,' I says. 'I've only been a-sittin' on 'em to make 'em lie down flat.'

"'Oh!' he says, short and sharp like. 'Is that all you have been a-doin'? And what sort of a drunken idiot may you be, pray?'

"'I'm not drunk,' I says, 'seein' as 'ow I haven't even seen the sight of liquor since I've been inside this blessed 'ouse. And, as for idiot, I ain't so much of a idiot, perhaps, as you are'; for I didn't care who he was, nor yet what he was. I'd had about enough of being bully-ragged.

"'May I venture to ask who brought you here?' he says.

"'No one brought me 'ere,' I says, 'seein' as 'ow I came along of Mr. Perkins, to oblige him; and now I wish I hadn't, and so I tell you straight.'

"'I also,' he says, 'am inclined to wish you hadn't.'

"Very hard and stern he was. I didn't like the look of him, nor yet the sound of him.

'Send Perkins to me,' he says. Presently Mr. Perkins, he comes 'urryin' up.

"'Perkins,' says Mr. Sheepshanks, 'what scoundrel is this you have brought into my 'ouse?'

"'It's only a young man from the country, sir,' says Perkins, 'as I brought with me to 'elp in the cloak-room. I do 'ope he has been doin' of nothing wrong?'

"And he gives me a glare out of his eye, like as if I had been doin' anything to him.

"'I don't know if you're a-thinkin',' says this 'ere Mr. Sheepshanks, a-puffin' and a-pantin', as it seemed to me, with rage, 'that I asked my friends to my 'ouse to have their 'ats destroyed; because your young man, as you says is from the country—and I 'opes to goodness as 'ow he'll soon go back to it!—has done for every one of 'em.'

"'I denies it!' I says. 'I tells you again, as I tells you afore, that I've only been a-squashin' of 'em and a-sittin' on 'em to make 'em lie down flat!'

"When I says that, the way Mr. Perkins goes on at me was what I never had expected. He abused me scandalous. He took me by the neck, and he 'ustled me into the 'all. And

there was all the people what was at the party a-crowdin' on the stairs. If you'll believe me, before I 'ardly knew what 'ad 'appened, I found myself a-standin' . . .!'

"Yes, that were the first time ever I acted as a waiter—likewise, it was the very last.

"When I goes round to put the 'orse ready for market, his missus, she meets me at the door. She gives me the money that was due to me, and she says as 'ow she didn't think as 'ow I had better stay for to have a talk with Perkins, because as 'ow he might be violent. So I didn't. And I've never set eyes on him from that day to this.

"It was some time before I quite understood what it was had made the gents what was at that there party so excited. One day, comin' along a street near the Strand, I sees in a shop window a 'igh 'at what was a-shuttin' of itself up and a-openin' of itself out without, so far as I could see, no one a-doin' nothing to it. Some sort of machinery, I expect as 'ow it was. So I stops and I takes a look at it There was a boy a-lookin' at it too. So I says to him—

"'What kind of a 'at do you call that?' I says.

"'It's a hopera 'at, ain't it?' he says. 'Who do you think as you're a-gettin' at?'

"I wasn't a-gettin' at no one, and it was like that there boy's impudence to suppose as 'ow I was.

"'Oh! a hopera 'at, is it?' I says. 'You don't 'appen to know if that's the same as a 'igh 'at, do you?'

"'A 'igh 'at!' he says. 'Go on! Ax your grandmother! P'r'aps your mother 'ardly knows you're out! Go and prig the parish pump and pop it with a peeler!'

"And that there boy, he 'ooks it. And it was well for him he did. If I had a-got my 'ands on him he'd have known it. But, from the way in which that 'at was a-goin' on in that there window, and from what that there boy says, I took it that there was two kinds of 'igh 'ats—the hopera kind and the other kind. And, in supposin' that the other kind could be squashed in, like the hopera kind, was just where I had made my error."

Returning a Verdict

IT was in the country, at the last Quarter Sessions, a case of theft. James Bailey, in the employ of Samuel Nichols, a fishmonger, was charged with stealing certain trusses of hay and bushels of corn. The jury had retired to consider their verdict.

"Of course," observed the foreman, who had seated himself at the head of the table, "we've only come out here as a matter of form. There's no doubt that the young scamp did it."

William Baker, leaning towards him, shading his hand with his mouth, whispered, with the evident intention of addressing him in strictest confidence, "I say guilty!"

Some of the jurymen were standing about the room talking to one another audibly on subjects which had not the slightest connection with the case they were supposed to be considering.

"What I want," said Slater, the butcher of Offley, to old George Parkes of Wormald's Farm, "is a calf—a nice one—just about prime."

With his heavy hand old Parkes nursed his stubbly chin.

"Ah!" he reflected. "I haven't got nothing, not just now, I haven't. Might have in about a month."

Slater shook his head. "Must have it Friday."

"Ah!" Mr. Parkes paused. "I haven't got nothing." Paused again. "I might have, though."

A. B. Timmins, secretary of the local branch of the Primrose League, was calling across the room to Mr. Hisgard, a well-known amateur vocalist, with a view of retaining his services for an approaching "smoker." The foreman looked about him. He raised his voice, rapped on the table.

"Gentlemen, please—business!" Somebody laughed, as if the foreman had been guilty of a joke—so he improved on it. "Business first, pleasure afterwards." The laugher held his peace—the joke fell flat. The jury seated themselves—not with any air of over-anxious

haste. The foreman continued—he was one of the most flourishing auctioneers in that division of the county—and now spoke with that half persuasive, half authoritative manner with which many of them were familiar in the rostrum. "We must remember, gentlemen, that the court is waiting. So, with your permission, we will come to the point at once. Those who are of opinion that the prisoner is guilty will please hold up their hands." Seven hands went up. "Those who are of the contrary opinion." One hand was raised—Jacob Longsett's. Mr. Grice, the foreman, eyed the three gentlemen who had made no sign on either occasion. He addressed himself to one of them, "Well, Mr. Tyler, which is it to be?"

"The fact is, Mr. Grice," said Mr. Tyler, "that I've had a bad earache—it was the draught which must have given it me. I think I didn't quite catch all that was being said now and again; but I'm willing to say what the other gentlemen do!"

"You mean that you'll vote with the majority?"

"That's just what I do mean, Mr. Grice."

"I ain't going to say nothing," declared George Parkes, who had also refrained from expressing an opinion. "I don't know no good

about young Bailey, nor yet about Sam Nichols neither. Sam Nichols, he's owed me nigh on four pound these three years and more."

"I don't think," observed the foreman, "that we ought to allow personal considerations to enter into the case. It's our duty to speak to the evidence, and to that only."

"I don't care nothing about no evidence. The one's as big a thief as t'other."

Old George clenched his toothless jaws and blinked.

"What'll he get if we bring him in guilty?" asked Mr. Plummer, the third abstainer.

The foreman shook his head. "That oughtn't to influence our decision."

Mr. Plummer differed, and said so.

"It'll influence mine. James Bailey is not yet eighteen. To send him to prison will do him more harm than good. If his case is to come under the First Offenders Act, we shall know where we are."

"We might make a recommendation to that effect," suggested Captain Rudd.

"Excuse me," interposed Mr. Moss, "but I doubt if I could agree to our doing that. I'm afraid that Master Bailey deserves some punishment. This is not the first time he has done

this sort of thing. He was dismissed from his last two places for dishonesty."

Again the foreman shook his head.

"That didn't come out in the evidence. You know, gentlemen, what we have to do is to dismiss from our minds any knowledge of the parties which we may have outside the case, and confine our attention to the sworn testimony."

Mr. Moss smiled, declining to be pooh-poohed.

"That's all very well in theory, Mr. Grice, but in practice it won't do. Nichols, with his fish-cart, has done a daily round in this country of some twenty miles or so for the last twelve or fourteen years. I doubt if there is a person in this room who has not some knowledge of him. As for Bailey, his mother lives within a hundred yards of my house; I have known him ever since he was born. I am acquainted, too, with his last two employers, and with the circumstances under which he left them."

"I know nothing of either of the parties," said Captain Rudd.

"You are a new-comer. I doubt, as I say, if any other person present can say the same."

If any other person could, he didn't. There was a pause—broken by the foreman.

"Let us understand our position. Eight of us say guilty—Mr. Tyler goes with the majority; two of us have not yet made up our minds; and Mr. Longsett is the only one who says not guilty. May I inquire, Mr. Longsett, on what grounds you favour an acquittal?"

"You've no right to ask me anything of the kind. This is not the first jury I've served on. Although you're foreman, you're only like the rest of us. What you've got to do is to ask me if I say guilty or not guilty. I say not guilty.

"I believe, Mr. Longsett," insinuated Mr. Moss, "that Bailey is a relation of yours?"

"That's no business of yours."

"Then are we to understand, Mr. Longsett"—the foreman spoke with almost ominous suavity—"that you have arrived at a point at which you are impervious to argument?"

"I say not guilty."

"Even though it may be demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt that the prisoner is guilty?"

"It's no good talking to me, Mr. Grice. I say not guilty."

The foreman, stretching out his hands in front of him, looked round the table with an

air which was eloquent with deprecation. Old Parkes banged his fist upon the board.

"And I say guilty, and I hope they'll give him seven years—the thieving varmint!"

"Arrived at a state of sudden conviction—eh, George?"

This was Mr. Timmins, who was middle-aged and jaunty.

"Some people are easily convinced," growled Mr. Longsett.

"You're not one of that sort, are you, Jacob?"

This again was Mr. Timmins.

"You won't convince me."

Nor, judging from the expression of Jacob's visage, did there seem to be much probability of their being able to do anything of the kind. There was another interval of silence—broken this time by Captain Rudd.

"Then because this gentleman chooses to differ from us, without condescending to give us his reason for so doing, are we to stultify ourselves, and is justice to be baulked? Is that the situation, Mr. Foreman?"

"Excuse me, Captain Rudd, but Mr. Longsett is not alone. I also say not guilty. The observation of Mr. Parkes, expressing a hope that the prisoner will get seven years, shows to me

that a spirit of malignancy is in the air, and to that spirit I am unable to subscribe."

The speaker was Mr. Plummer. The others looked at him. The foreman spoke.

"Pardon me, Mr. Plummer, but why do you say not guilty?"

"Because I decline to be a participator in the condemnation of this mere youth to a ruthless term of penal servitude."

"But, my dear sir, he won't get penal servitude—Mr. Parkes was only joking. He'll get, at the outside, three months."

"That would be too much. It would be sufficient punishment for one of his years—my views on the subject of juvenile delinquency I have never disguised—that he should be requested to come up for judgment when called upon."

"But, my dear sir, if the magistrates leave us a free hand to do our duty, why can't we leave them a free hand to do theirs? The issue we have to decide upon is a very simple one; the responsibility of acting on that decision will be theirs."

Mr. Plummer settled his spectacles on his nose and was silent. Captain Rudd addressed him.

"I suppose you will not deny, sir, that all the evidence goes to prove the prisoner's guilt?"

"There are degrees in guilt."

"Possibly—but you admit that there is guilt, even though it may only be in the positive degree?"

Again Mr. Plummer was still. Mr. Slater called to Mr. Longsett across the table:

"You're a sportsman, Jacob, and I'm a sportsman. I tell you what I'll do. I'll toss you, guilty or not guilty. I can't stop messing about here all day—I've got my beasts to dress."

Mr. Longsett was obviously tempted; the offer appealed to the most susceptible part of him. Still, he shook his head.

"No," he grunted, as if the necessity of announcing such a refusal pained him. "I shan't."

Mr. Plummer was scandalised.

"Such a proposal is disgraceful—it ought not to be allowed to be made. Making of justice a mockery!"

Mr. Slater declined to be snubbed—at least by Mr. Plummer.

"Seems to me as if you don't quite know where you are. First you want to preach to

the magistrates, then you want to preach to the jury; perhaps you think you're at the corner of High Street?"

There were those who smiled. The reference was to Mr. Plummer's fondness for open-air expositions of "the Word." Mr. Grice drummed with his fingers on the table.

"Come, gentlemen, come! we're wasting time. As business men we ought to know its value. Now, Mr. Longsett, I've too much faith in your integrity not to know that you're open to conviction. Tell us, where do you think the evidence for the prosecution is not sufficiently strong?" Mr. Longsett did not justify the foreman's faith by answering. "Be frank, on what point are you not satisfied?"

After more than momentary hesitation Mr. Longsett replied, without, however, raising his eyes.

"It's no use talking to me, Mr. Grice, so that's all about it. I say not guilty!"

Mr. Moss explained.

"The plain fact is, Mr. Foreman, Mr. Longsett is a relation of the prisoner; he ought not to have been on this jury at all."

This time Mr. Longsett did raise his eyes —and his voice too.

"I've as much right to be on the jury as you have—perhaps more. Who do you think you are? I pay my way—and I pay my servants too! They don't have to county-court me before they can get their wages. Only the other day I was on a jury when they were county-courting you. So it isn't the first jury I've been on, you see."

Mr. Moss did not seem pleased. The allusion was to a difference which that gentleman had had with one of his servants, and which had been settled in the county court. Again the foreman drummed upon the board.

"Order, gentlemen, order!"

Mr. Timmins turned to Mr. Hisgard. He winked.

"Have a game at crib, Bob? I knew Jacob would be here, so I came provided!"

He produced a cribbage-board. Once more the foreman interposed.

"Keep to the business we have in hand, please, gentlemen."

"Oh, they can have their game, I don't mind. Perhaps I came as well provided as anyone else."

As he replied Jacob took from his pocket a brown paper parcel of considerable dimensions. Tom Elliott, who was sitting by him,

instantly snatching it, passed it on to Mr. Hisgard.

"Have a sandwich, Mr. Hisgard?"

"No, thank you. But perhaps Mr. Timmins will?"

He passed the packet to Mr. Timmins. That gentleman made a feint of opening it. Mr. Longsett, rising from his chair, reached for his property across the table.

"None of that; give it back to me." Mr. Timmins tossed the packet to the other end of the table.

"Now, Timmins, what do you mean by that? Do you want me to wipe you across the head?"

Mr. Timmins addressed Mr. Grice. "Now, Mr. Foreman, won't you offer the jury a sandwich each? It is about our dinner-time."

Mr. Grice eyed the packet in front of him as if he were more than half disposed to act on the suggestion.

"I really don't think, Mr. Longsett, that you ought to eat sandwiches out of a pure spirit of contradiction."

"Never mind what you think; you give me back my property, or I'll give the whole lot of you in custody." The parcel was restored to him. He brandished it aloft. "There you

are, you see, a lot of grown men go and steal another man's property, and you treat it as a joke. A mere lad goes and looks at a truss of mouldy hay, and you want to ruin him for life. And you call that justice! You ain't going to get me to take a hand in no such justice, so I tell you straight!"

"It went a little farther than 'looks,' didn't it, Mr. Longsett? 'Looks' won't carry even mouldy hay three miles across country."

"And 'looks' won't carry my property from where I'm sitting down to where you are! If Jim Bailey's a thief, so's Tom Elliott—there's no getting over that. Why ain't we sitting on him instead of on that there young 'un?"

"See here, Jacob." Mr. Timmins stretched out towards him his open palm. "Here's a sporting offer for you: if you'll bring Jim Bailey in guilty, I'll bring in Tom Elliott!"

"I won't bring in neither; the one's no more a thief than the other."

"Nice for you, Tom, eh?"

"Oh, I don't mind. I know Jacob. It's not the first time a member of your family's been in trouble, is it, Jacob?"

"By ——! if you say that again I'll knock the life right out of you!"

The foreman rapped upon the table.

"Order, gentlemen, order! Keep to the business in hand, if you please."

Mr. Longsett confronted him, towering over Elliott, with clenched fists and flashing eyes.

"Keep him in order then—don't keep on at me! You make him keep a civil tongue in his head, or I will." He glared round the board. "I don't care for the whole damned lot of you. I'm as good as any one of you—perhaps better! I'm here to do my duty according to my conscience and conviction, and I'm going to do it, and I say not guilty, and if we stop here till Christmas you won't make me say no different!"

This announcement was followed by an interval of silence; then Captain Rudd attempted to voice the sense of the meeting.

"In that case, Mr. Foreman, we may as well intimate to the court that we are unable to agree."

"What'll be the consequence of that?"

"The prisoner'll have to stand another trial, when, should none of his relations happen to be upon the jury, there will be no hesitation about bringing in a verdict of guilty—in which case the young scamp will get his deserts."

Stretching his body across the table, Jacob shook his clenched fist in the speaker's face.

"Look here, Captain Rudd, you may be a captain, but you 're no blooming gentleman, or you wouldn't talk like that. Captain or no captain, the next time you say anything about Jim Bailey being a relation of mine I 'll crack you in the mouth!" Straightening himself, Jacob shook his fist at the eleven. "And I say the same to every one of you. It's no affair of yours what Jim Bailey is to me—so just you mind it."

The captain curled, at the same time, his lip and his moustache, his bearing conveying the scorn which he doubtless felt.

"If you suppose, sir, that I shall allow you to play the common bully with impunity, you are mistaken. You forget yourself, my man!"

"Oh, no! I don't forget myself—it 's you who forgot yourself. And as for playing the common bully, it 's you began it. You 're trying to bully me when you taunt me with Jim Bailey being my relation; you think if you keep it on long enough you 'll frighten me into acting against my sense of duty."

The foreman intervened sharply: "Order! Mr. Longsett, your language is improper and irregular; if you are not careful I shall have to report it to the court."

"It's no more improper and irregular than theirs is. We're here to say guilty or not guilty, not to pry into each other's private affairs. If they don't make no personal remarks, I shan't."

"Listen to reason, Mr. Longsett. Do I understand, Mr. Plummer, that you will acquiesce in a verdict of guilty if we prefer a recommendation to the court that the case shall be treated under the First Offenders Act?"

"You are at liberty to so understand, Mr. Grice."

"And you, Mr. Longsett? If we are unable to agree the prisoner will have to go back to prison, and, on his again standing his trial, I have no hesitation in saying that he will be found guilty, when he will be likely to receive much less lenient treatment than now, when we are ready and willing to recommend him to mercy."

"We're going to agree."

"That's good hearing. You agree to a verdict of guilty, coupled with a recommendation to mercy?"

"I don't do nothing of the kind."

"Then what do you agree to?"

"I agree to a verdict of not guilty—that's what I agree to."

"Then, in that case, we're likely to disagree. You can hardly expect eleven men to go against the weight of evidence for the sake of agreeing with you."

"There's no hurry that I knows on. We'll wait a bit. I have heard of juries being locked up for eight-and-forty hours. I daresay before that time some of you'll have changed your minds. Seems to me that there's three or four already that can change their minds as easy as winking." He began, with a certain amount of ostentation, to untie the string which bound his brown paper parcel. "I'm getting peckish. If you don't mind, Mr. Foreman, we'll talk things over while I'm eating."

The unfolding of the paper revealed the fact that it contained a comfortable number of succulent-looking sandwiches. The eleven eyed them—and their owner—sourly. Carefully taking the top one of the heap between his finger and his thumb Mr. Longsett took a bite at it. Seldom has the process of attacking a sandwich had a more attentive audience.

"I say, Jacob," observed Mr. Timmins, "aren't you going to give me one?"

"What, give you the food from between my own lips! Not if I know it. We may be here till this time to-morrow. I've got to think of myself, Mr. Timmins."

"I'm not going to stop here till this time to-morrow, Jacob Longsett!"

As he spoke old Parkes banged his fist upon the table.

"All right, George Parkes, nobody asked you to, so far as I know. Seems to me you're uncommon keen to send the lad to gaol."

"I don't wish the lad no harm."

"Seems to me as how you do."

"I say I don't!"

Mr. Parkes punctuated each of his remarks with a bang upon the board.

"Then why don't you do what you've sworn to do, and bring him in not guilty along of me?"

"I don't care what I brings him in. It don't make no odds to me. It ain't none of my affair. I've got my own business to 'tend to, and when a man's got to my years he don't care to meddle in no one else's. I'm willing to bring him in not guilty along of you, Jacob Longsett."

"That's more like it. If there was more

like you and me, George Parkes, we'd soon be outside of this."

Captain Rudd, who had listened to this short dialogue without evincing any signs of approbation, once more endeavoured to urge the foreman to action.

"Don't you think, Mr. Foreman, that the time has arrived for you to communicate the fact of our disagreement to the court?"

Mr. Longsett made haste to differ.

"Excuse me, Mr. Foreman, but, if Captain Rudd will allow me, I don't think it has. We haven't been here hardly any time. There's no hurry, so long as we're doing our duty. I daresay we'll all agree yet before we've finished. All we want is a little patience."

"And something to eat," said Mr. Timmins.

"Then do you mean to say," exclaimed Mr. Longsett, as he commenced upon another sandwich, "that you'd send a young lad to gaol, and blast his good name for ever, just because you're hungry?"

"May I be permitted to make a remark?" The inquiry came from Mr. Tyler. He was holding his handkerchief to his ear; his general expression was one of suffering. "Considering how little of the evidence I really heard I

don't wish it to be supposed that I have any objection to a verdict of not guilty. And I may add that not only is my earache driving me nearly mad, but my health, as a whole, as some of you know, is bad, and I am easily exhausted. Had I supposed that any of this sort of thing would have taken place I should have procured a medical certificate excusing me. I appeal to gentlemen to arrive as rapidly as possible at a decision, which will enable me to obtain measures of relief."

"Hear, hear!" Mr. Longsett rapped with his knuckles on the table.

"I 'd never have come," declared old Parkes, "if I 'd a known I was going to be kep' all day without my dinner. When a man gets to my years he wants his victuals regular. I didn't have hardly no breakfast, and I ain't had nothing since."

"I tell you what it is," cried Slater; "I want my dinner, and I 've got my business to attend to—this is the busiest day of the week for me. So far as I can see it doesn't make much difference how we bring it in. You say that if you bring him in guilty you 're going to get him off: then why shouldn't you bring him in not guilty right away? If you bring him in

guilty I can't help thinking that he ought to be punished—he won't care nothing for your bringing him in guilty if he isn't; while, if you bring him in not guilty, he'll thank his stars for the narrow squeak he'll think he's had, and it'll be a lesson to him as long as he lives."

"There is," allowed Mr. Plummer, "a good deal in what Mr. Slater says."

"There is one thing against it," murmured Mr. Moss. His voice was rather squeaky, and, as if conscious of the fact, he generally produced it as softly as he could.

"What's that?"

"The evidence. We are supposed to be influenced by the evidence, and by that only."

"It struck me that the evidence was all one-sided."

"Precisely—on the side of the prosecution. Since the case was practically undefended the presumption is that the prisoner had no defence to offer."

"But, as practical men," persisted Mr. Plummer, "does it not occur to you that there is a good deal in what Mr. Slater says? If we find the lad not guilty we shall teach him a lesson, and, at the same time, not be placing on his character an ineffaceable slur. We might, for

instance, state in open court, through the mouth of our worthy foreman, that we are willing to give the prisoner the benefit of the doubt."

"But there is no doubt. Let us do justice though the heavens fall. Have you yourself any doubt that James Bailey stole Samuel Nichols's corn and hay?"

"Ah, dear sir, there is only One who can say. He has no doubt. We are not omniscient."

"That sort of talk may be all very well in a pulpit, Mr. Plummer. It is out of place in a court of law when we are dealing with ascertained facts."

Mr. Plummer raised his hands and shook his head, as if he was sorry for Mr. Moss.

"Let us show mercy, that we may be shown it," he all but whispered.

"In other words," struck in Captain Rudd, "we are to do evil in order that good may come—even to the extent of prostituting truth."

"I am afraid, in our present situation, these things are not arguable. Some of us, thank Heaven, see things through eyes of our own."

"Precisely, and it is because they don't appear to be arguable that I once more suggest to the foreman that the court be informed that we are unable to agree."

"And I again take leave to differ. Why now, there's"—Mr. Longsett pointed with his finger —"one—two—three—four—five of us as says not guilty. We're agreeing more and more every minute. I dare bet any money we'll all be like one family before we get outside this room. If the foreman ain't got no particular objection I'll have a moistener. I never could eat dry." Taking a black bottle out of an inner pocket in his overcoat he applied it to his lips. Such of the eleven as were not keenly observant ostentatiously turned their eyes another way. He took a long and hearty pull, then he smacked his lips. "Good stuff that; I always like a drop when I've been eating—helps digestion."

"This is more than human nature can stand," groaned Mr. Timmins. "Mr. Foreman, I move that the magistrates be informed that we are unable to agree, and I request that you put that motion without further delay."

"I second that motion," said Captain Rudd.

"And I say no!"

Jacob flourished his bottle. Mr. Timmins's visage, as he confronted Mr. Longsett, became slightly inflamed.

"We don't care what you say. Do you think

we 're going to sit here, watching you guzzling, as long as ever you please? If you want to give a proper verdict you give one which is according to the evidence—we 're not going to let you play the fool with us, Jacob, my boy."

Extending the open palm of his left hand, Mr. Longsett marked time on it with the bottle which he was holding in his right.

"Excuse me, Mr. Foreman, but perhaps I know a bit of law as well as the rest of you, and I say that the law is this, that before a jury can tell the court anything it 's got to agree upon what it 's going to tell. And what I mean by that is this, that before any one of us—I don't care if it 's the foreman, or who it is!—can tell the court that we disagree we 've got to agree to disagree—and I don't agree!"

Mr. Moss put a question to the foreman.

"Is that really the case?"

The foreman smiled a wintry smile—and temporised.

"I shouldn't positively like to say."

"But I do say positively. You can ask the magistrates, if you like, and see if I 'm not right. Why, if you go into court now and say that we disagree I shall say we don't! I shall say that if we only have a little more

time we shall agree yet; all we want's a chance of talking it over."

The foreman, pressing his fingers together, addressed Mr. Longsett with an air that was acid.

"Then, according to you, if one member of a jury chooses to make himself objectionable his colleagues are at his mercy?"

Jacob rose from his seat in such a flame of passion that it almost seemed he was going to hurl his bottle at the foreman's head.

"Don't you call me objectionable, Mr. Grice! I won't have it! I'm no more objectionable than you are! I've got as much right to an opinion as you, and because my opinion don't happen to be the same as yours you've no right to call me names. If we all start calling each other names a nice state of things that'll be. A pretty notion of a foreman's duties you seem to have!"

Mr. Grice, who was not pugilistic, turned a trifle pale; he did not seem happy. Captain Rudd, tilting his chair backwards, and thrusting his hands into his trouser pockets, looked up at the ceiling.

"This is the sort of thing which brings the jury system into contempt."

"What's that, Captain Rudd?" Mr. Longsett, who was still upon his feet, chose his words with much deliberation, emphasising them with shakings of his fist. "You mean you're the sort, I suppose? You're quite right, you are. You've been in the army, you see, and you think we're soldiers, to come to heel whenever you tell us, and that's where you're mistaken, Captain Rudd. We're free Englishmen, and we don't choose to have you come the officer over us—and that's how you make the thing contemptible by trying."

There was silence. His colleagues seemed to be arriving at the conclusion that Jacob was a difficult man to differ with.

"It strikes me," said Mr. Timmins, when the silence was becoming painful, "that if the law is really such that we've got to stop here till our good Jacob takes it into his generous head to let us go, you and I, Mr. Hisgard, might have that little game of crib I was speaking of; it may help us forget where we are, and that we're not going to have any dinner till it's past supper time."

"Just you wait a minute. Perhaps," replied Mr. Hisgard, "I may be allowed to say a word." No one appeared to have any objection.

"What I wish to remark is this. With all deference, I think Mr. Slater spoke as a practical man. I don't see that there's much difference between saying guilty and at the same time asking the magistrate to award no punishment, and, as Mr. Slater puts it, bringing it in not guilty right away."

Mr. Timmins, who had been shuffling a pack of cards, replaced them on the table.

"All right. Let's have it that way and make an end of it. Suppose we all say not guilty and caution him not to do it again—what's the odds?"

"So far as I'm concerned," observed Tom Elliott, "I'm willing to bring him in not guilty. It's my belief he's been led into it all along, and I know perhaps as much about it as any-one. There's a good deal about the affair what's been kept quiet by both sides. Perhaps I might have said a word for one."

Mr. Moss interrogated the foreman with up-lifted eyebrows.

"Do you think it does make any difference?"

The foreman shrugged his shoulders. He was still. Captain Rudd spoke for him.

"It makes the difference between right and wrong—that's all."

Mr. Plummer leaned his elbows on the table; his spectacled countenance wore its most benevolent smile.

"Hearken to me, dear sir. We are all Christian men——"

"Not necessarily at this moment; at this moment we are jurymen—only jurymen."

Mr. Plummer sighed, as if in sorrow. He turned to the others, as if desiring their forgiveness for the captain.

"This gentleman—I trust he will pardon me for saying so—puts a curb upon his natural generosity. His is what we may, perhaps, term the military mind—precise, and, if we may say so, just a little—the merest atom—hard. For my part I think, Mr. Foreman, we might, as Christian men, conscientiously return a negative finding, intimating at the same time that, owing to the prisoner's tender years, we are not unwilling to give him the benefit of the doubt."

The captain dissented.

"What sort of mind do you call yours, sir? Were we to return such a verdict, we should make of ourselves the laughing-stock of England."

The foreman shook his head.

"I hardly think England will interest itself in our proceedings to that extent. Similar verdicts in similar cases are, I imagine, more common than you may suppose. I am not advocating such a course, but I believe it would be logically possible for us to inform the magistrates that, while some of us entertain strong opinions on the subject of the prisoner's guilt, being desirous to arrive at a state of agreement, and also bearing in mind the youth of the accused, we are willing to acquiesce in a verdict of acquittal."

"I agree to that," cried Mr. Longsett. "That's fair enough. Now, is it all settled?"

"I'm not."

The speaker was the captain. All eyes were turned on him.

The foreman spoke.

"Don't you think, captain, you — might swallow a gnat?"

"I don't wish to set myself up as a superior person, but, under the circumstances, I'm afraid I can't."

"Quite so. Now we know where we are." Mr. Longsett composed himself in his chair; planting his hands against his sides he stuck out his elbows; he screwed up his mouth. "It

just shows you how one man can play skittles with eleven others."

The captain was silently contemptuous.

"I really doubt if it matters." It was Mr. Moss who said it; he whispered an addition into the captain's ear: "If the young scamp isn't hung to-day he'll be hung to-morrow."

The captain ignored the whisper; his reply was uttered with sufficient clearness.

"Perhaps, sir, your sense of duty is not a high one."

The eleven eyed each other, and the table, and vacancy; a spirit of depression seemed to be settling down upon them all. Old Parkes, with elongated visage, addressed a melancholy inquiry to no one in particular. "What's us sitting here for?"

Jacob responded—"That's what I should like to know, George. Perhaps it's because a gentleman's made up his mind to ruin a poor young lad for life."

The captain took up the gauntlet.

"I presume it is useless for me to point out to you that your statement is as incorrect as it is unjustified. I have heard a good deal about the absurdities of the jury system. I may tell you, sir, that you have presented me with an object-

lesson which will last me the rest of my life. It occurs to me as just possible that the sooner the system is reformed the better."

"Ah! I daresay it would. Then gentlemen like you would be able to grind poor lads under your feet whenever it suited you. Oh, dear, no! You think yourself somebody, don't you, captain?"

Captain Rudd looked as if he would if he could; in his eyes there gleamed something very like a foreshadowing of assault and battery. The foreman made a little movement with his hands, which, possibly, was intended to be a counsel of peace. Anyhow, the captain allowed the last word to be Jacob's. Mr. Tyler, his handkerchief still pressed to his ear, appealed to the captain in a tone of voice which was almost tearful.

"As man to man, sir, let me beseech you to take pity on the dreadful situation we are in."

"To what situation do you allude, sir?"

"I am alluding, sir, to the dreadful pain which I am enduring in my left ear; you can have no conception of its severity. Besides which I have a sadly weakly constitution generally—as is well known to more than one gentleman who is now present. I have suffered for the last

twenty years from chronic lumbago, together with a functional derangement of the liver, which, directly any irregularity occurs in my hours or habits, invariably reduces me to a state of collapse. I assure you that if this enforced confinement and prolonged abstention from my natural food endures much longer, in my present state of health the consequences may be highly serious."

"I don't follow your reasoning, sir. Because you are physically unfitted to serve upon a jury, and culpably omitted to inform the court of the fact, you wish me not to do my duty, you having already failed to do yours?"

"I wish you," sighed Mr. Tyler, "to be humane."

"This is the first jury ever I was on," groaned Mr. Parkes, shaking his ancient head as if it had been hung on wires, "and I'll take care that it's the last. Such things didn't ought to be—not when a man's got to my years, they didn't. Who's young Jim Bailey, I'd like to know, that we should go losing our dinners àcause of him? Hit him over the head and ha' done with it—that's what I say."

"You must excuse me, Captain Rudd," said Mr. Timmins, "but why can't you strain a point

as well as the rest of us? Why shouldn't we, as a body of practical men, take a merciful view of the position and give the boy another chance? He is only a boy after all."

"We are not automata though we are jurymen, and surely we may, without shame, allow ourselves to be actuated by the dictates of our common humanity."

Thus Mr. Plummer. Mr. Slater agreed with him in a fashion of his own.

"Let the boy go and have done with it—I daresay we can trust Jacob to give him a good sound towelling."

"He's had that already."

There was a grimness in Mr. Longsett's tone which caused more than one of his hearers to smile.

"I'll be bound his mother's crying her eyes out for him at home."

This was Tom Elliott. Mr. Plummer joined his hands as if in supplication.

"Poor woman!" he murmured.

"It comes hard upon the mothers," said Mr. Hisgard.

"And Jim Bailey's mother is as honest and hard-working a woman as ever lived—that I know as a fact. And she's seen a lot of trouble!"

As he made this announcement Mr. Timmins shuffled his pack of cards, as if the action relieved his mind. For some moments everyone was still. Suddenly Mr. Tyler, who had been looking a picture of misery, broke into audible lamentations.

"Oh dear! oh dear! I'm very ill! Won't anyone take pity on a man in agony?"

So intense was his sympathy with his own affairs that the tears trickled down his cheeks. Mr. Timmins endeavoured to encourage him.

"Come, Mr. Tyler, come! Bear up! It'll soon be over now!"

"If anything serious comes of the cruel suffering which is being inflicted on me I shall look to you gentlemen for compensation. I'm a poor man; it's always a hard struggle, with my poor health, to make two ends meet. I can't afford to pay doctors' bills which have been incurred by the actions of others!"

"That's pleasant hearing — what do you think, Mr. Hisgard? — if we've got to contribute to this gentleman's doctors' bills! Come, Mr. Tyler, don't talk like that, or soon we shall all of us be ill. I know I shall!"

There was a further pause. Then Mr. Moss delivered himself.

"I 'm bound to admit that what Mr. Timmins has said of the prisoner's mother I know to be correct of my own knowledge. Mrs. Bailey has been a widow for many years; she has brought up a large family with the labour of her own hands; she has had many difficulties to contend with, and is deserving of considerable sympathy. There is that to be said. Come, Captain Rudd, for once in a way let us be illogical. If you will agree to a verdict of not guilty I will."

Captain Rudd, his head thrown back, continued for some moments to silently regard the ceiling. The others watched him, exhibiting, in various degrees, unmistakable anxiety. Finally, with his eyes still turned ceilingwards, he capitulated.

"All right. Let it be as you say. Rather than the gentleman in front of me should perish on his chair, and other gentlemen should suffer any longer from the absence of their "natural food," I am willing to be joined with the rest, and, with you, to place myself under the dominion of Mr. Jacob Longsett's thumb."

"Hear, hear! Bravo!" There were observations expressive of satisfaction from different

quarters; but Mr. Longsett, in particular, was enthusiastic in his approbation.

"Your words does you honour, captain!"

"You think so?—I 'm sorry we differ."

The foreman rapped upon the table.

"Order, gentlemen, please. Then may I take it that, at present, we are finally agreed upon a verdict of not guilty?"

"Coupled," corrected Mr. Moss, "with an intimation to the effect that, considering the prisoner's age, we have been willing to give him the benefit of the doubt."

"Precisely. Does any other gentleman wish to make an observation? Apparently not. Then may I also take it that we are ready to return into court?"

Acclamations in the affirmative rose from all sides. The foreman rang the hand-bell which was in front of him. The usher appeared.

* * * * *

So the prisoner was acquitted, no one in the court having the faintest notion why.

The Chancellor's Ward

I.

ONE really ought to write, She married him, not He married her.

"The simple question is, my dear Tommy, are you going to take me or leave me?"

This was in Hyde Park. They were seated on one of those seats which are in front of the police-station. Neither of them ought to have been there, which, of course, was one of the reasons why they were. Mr. Stanham turned his eye-glass full upon Miss Cullen. Perhaps he thought that that was sufficient answer. Anyhow, she went on:

"In other words, are you going to marry me, or are you not?"

"I am; gad, I should rather hope so. I say, don't be too hard upon a fellow, Frank."

"Call me Fanny, don't call me Frank! Don't

you know that my name is Frances, sir, which has absolutely no connection with Frank?"

"That's all right, old man."

That is what Mr. Stanham murmured. Extraordinary how some men do talk to women nowadays, even to the women whom they love!

"Then, if you do intend to marry me, Mr. Thomas Stanham, you'll be so good as to do so on Thursday morning next, before noon."

Mr. Stanham began to scratch the gravel with his stick.

"And get seven years' penal."

"Stuff! They don't give you penal servitude for marrying wards in Chancery. It's contempt of court."

"Yes, I know. Have to wash out your cell at Holloway, and stand at 'attention,' with your hat off, while the governor cuts you dead."

"Then perhaps you will be so good as to tell me what it is that you do propose to do. Do you imagine that you are the sort of person the Court of Chancery will ever allow to marry me?"

"Haven't so much imagination, my dear Frank."

"Call me Fanny, not Frank! You are not to call me Frank. Then do you suppose that

I 'm the sort of girl who 's willing to wait, and not to marry her sweetheart, until she 's twenty-five? because if you suppose anything of that kind we must be perfect strangers."

"It 's very good of you, I 'm sure."

"Oh, I daresay. You don't love me that much." Miss Cullen flicked her parasol. "Because a horrid old uncle chooses to say that I 'm to be a ward of the court until I 'm five-and-twenty am I to be a spinster all my life? If you love me the least little bit you 'd invite the Lord Chancellor to come and see you marry me in the middle of Hyde Park, even if, directly the deed was done, he had your head cut off on Tower Hill."

"Thanks, dear boy."

Of course he married her. On the morning of the specified Thursday she went out for a stroll, and he went out for a stroll, and they met at the registrar's, and, as she put it. the deed was done.

And, when the deed was done, she went home to lunch, and he went, not home to lunch, but to a private place, where he could swear. Now here they were, both of them, at Tuttenham. They encountered each other on the doorstep. She said, "How do you do, Mr.

Stanham?" And he said, "How do you do, Miss Cullen?"

"Nice way in which to have to greet your own wife," he told himself, having reached the comparatively safe solitude of his own apartment.

Then the Duke got him into his own particular smoking-room. The Duke was in an arm-chair. Mr. Stanham stood before the fireplace with his hands in his pockets. The talk wandered from Dan to Beersheba. Then, a good deal *à propos des bottes*, the Duke dropped what he evidently intended to be taken as a hint.

"If you take my advice, young man, you'll keep clear of Frances Cullen. She's here."

Mr. Stanham winced.

"Is she? Yes, I know. I met her on the steps."

"Did you!"

The Duke eyed him. He, not improbably, had observed the wince.

"Warnings are issued all along that coast. Steer clear."

"What do you think they'd do to a man if he were to marry her?"

"Do to him! Tommy! I hope you're not meditating such a crime. She's not an ordinary

ward of the court, any more than she's an ordinary millionaire."

"So I suppose."

"You had a little run with her in town. Everybody had their eyes on you, as you're aware. And when the Duchess told me she was coming I'd half a mind to write and put you off—fact! This is not a house in which even tacit encouragement can be offered to a dalliance with crime. Not"—the Duke puffed at his pipe—"not that she's half a bad sort of girl. She's clever. Very pretty. And she's got a way about her which plays havoc with a man."

"Much obliged to you, I'm sure."

"What do you mean?"

"For saying a good word for my wife."

"Your wife?"

"Mrs. Thomas Stanham—*née* Cullen."

"Tommy! You don't mean it!"

"You can bet your pile I do, and then safely go one better. I've got a copy of the marriage certificate in my pocket, and I rather fancy that she's got the original document in hers."

"You—young blackguard!"

"Sort of cousin of yours, ain't I, Datchet?

It's all in the family, you know, blackguard and all."

"How did you do it?—And when?—And who knows?"

"Only you and me, and the lady. That's what's weighing on my mind. What's the good of having a wife if she ain't your wife—or, at any rate, if you daren't say that she's your wife, for the life of you?"

The Duke suddenly rose from his seat. He seemed to be in a state of actual agitation.

"Tommy, do you know that the Chancellor is coming here?"

"Who?"

"The Lord Chancellor. The carriage went to meet him an hour ago. I expect him every moment."

Mr. Stanham looked a trifle blank.

"I didn't know the ministry was formed."

"It's formed, but it's not announced; Triggs is to be the Chancellor."

"And what sort of gentleman may Triggs be when he's at home?"

"Sir Tristram? Well!" The Duke was walking up and down the room. He appeared to be reflecting. "He's rather a queer card, Triggs is. He's been a bit of a wildish

character in his time—and they do say that his time 's not long gone. He has a temper of his own—a nasty one." Pausing, the Duke fixedly regarded Mr. Stanham. "I should say that when Triggs learns what you have done he will clap you into gaol, and keep you there, at any rate until Miss Cullen ceases to be a ward of the court."

Mr. Stanham's countenance wore a look of dire consternation.

"No! She 's to be a ward until she 's twenty-five, and she 's not yet twenty-two."

"Then, in that case, I should say that, at the very least, you are in for three good years of prison. My advice to you is——"

The Duke's advice remained unuttered. Just at that moment the door was opened. A servant ushered in a new-comer.

"Sir Tristram Triggs."

The Duke, striding forward, held out both his hands. "Sir Tristram! And how long is it to be Sir Tristram?"

The other shrugged his shoulders.

"For a few hours, more or less, I suppose. I don't know much about this kind of thing. I daresay I shall know more about it when I 've done."

"When you've done? May that not be for many and many a year! Allow me to introduce to you a friend of mine—Mr. Thomas Stanham."

Sir Tristram turned. For the first time he appeared to notice Mr. Stanham.

Physically the new great man was short, and inclined to ponderosity. The entire absence of hair upon his face served to accentuate its peculiar characteristics. It was a square face—and, in particular, the jaw was square. His big eyes looked from under a penthouse formed by his overhanging brows. As one looked at him one instinctively felt that this was a man whom it would be safer to have as a friend than an enemy. As he turned a faint smile seemed to be struggling into existence about the corners of his great mouth. But directly his glance alighted upon Mr. Stanham that smile vanished into the *ewigkeit*. He looked at him very much as a bull-terrier might look at a rat. And he said, in a tone of voice which seemed fraught with curious significance—

"I have had the pleasure of meeting this gentleman before."

On his part Mr. Stanham regarded Sir

Tristram with a supercilious air which, perhaps unconsciously to himself, was only too frequently seen upon his face—as if Sir Tristram were an inferior thing.

"I 'd no idea that your name was Triggs."

The Duke, standing behind Sir Tristram, clenched his fists, and glared at Mr. Stanham as if he would like to have knocked him down.

It happened, shortly afterwards, that Miss Cullen left her bedroom to come downstairs. As she went along the corridor she met a gentleman who was being conducted by a servant, probably to his own apartment. The gentleman was Sir Tristram Triggs. When Sir Tristram saw Miss Cullen, and Miss Cullen saw Sir Tristram, they both of them stopped short. The great man's complexion was, normally, of a ruddy hue. At sight of the lady he turned the colour of a beetroot, boiled. She drew herself up to the full capacity of her inches. And she uttered a single monosyllable.

"You!"

That was all she said—then went sweeping on.

"That horrid man!—He here!—To think of it!—If I 'd only known that he was coming I do believe, in spite of Tommy, that I 'd have stayed away."

At the foot of the stairs Miss Cullen encountered Mr. Stanham. That gentleman had, as he was wont to have, his hands in his pockets. Also, as he was not wont to have, he had a face as long as his arm.

"I say, Frank, old man, isn't there somewhere where I can have a word or two with you on the strict Q.T.?"

"Certainly—the library. There's never a soul in there."

One would not like to libel Tuttenham so far as to say, with Miss Cullen, that the only tenants the library ever had were the books. But, on that occasion, it did chance that the pair had the whole place to themselves. Mr. Stanham perched himself on a corner of the table, still with his hands in his pockets.

"There's going to be a pretty kettle of fish, dear boy."

That was what the gentleman observed.

"My dear child, what do you mean? What is the matter?"

"The Lord Chancellor's here."

"No!—How do you know?"

"Datchet just introduced me to him."

"Oh, Tommy, I say, what fun!"

With a little laugh the lady clapped her

hands. She appeared to be gifted with a keener eye for comedy than Mr. Stanham.

"I don't know what you call fun. It happens that the new Lord Chancellor is a man who, I have good reason to believe, would give a tidy trifle for a chance of getting his knife into me."

"Whatever for?"

"I'll tell you the story. Last year, when I was at Canterstone for the shooting, I was placed next to a man whom I had never seen in my life, and whom I never wanted to see in my life again. What Charlie asked him for beats me. I believe, if he knew one end of a gun from the other, it was as much as he did know. I doubt if there ever was his ditto as a shot. I wiped his eye over and over again. I kept on doing it. I couldn't help it—I had to. He never hit a bird. But he didn't like it any the more for that. We had something like a row before the day was over. I fancy that I said something about a barber's clerk. Anyhow, I know I walked off there and then."

"You nice, agreeable child! It's my opinion that all you men are the same when you are shooting—missing links. And, pray, what has this pleasant little sidelight on the sweetness of

your disposition got to do with the new Lord Chancellor?"

"Only this—the new Lord Chancellor's the man I called a barber's clerk."

"Tommy! How horrible!"

"It does seem pretty lively. You should have seen how he looked at me when Datchet just now introduced us. Unless I am mistaken in the gentleman, when this little affair of ours leaks out, and I'm brought up in front of him and he sees who I am, he'll straightway consign me to the deepest dungeon, and keep me there, at any rate as long as he's Lord Chancellor. It's only a cheerful little prophecy of mine. But you mark my words, and see."

"My poor dear boy! Whatever shall we do?"

"There's one thing I should like to do, and chance it; I should like to kick Sir Tristram Triggs!"

"Kick who? Sir Tristram Triggs! Tommy! Why would you like to kick Sir Tristram Triggs?"

"That's the beggar's name."

"The beggar's name? Can it be that Sir Tristram Triggs is the new Lord Chancellor?" She threw out her arms with a gesture of

burlesque melodrama. "Tommy! Kiss me! Quick. Before I faint!"

"I never saw a chap like you for kissing."

"That's a pretty thing to say! Although we may be married, sir, we have not yet been upon our honeymoon."

"I'll kiss you, if you like."

"Thank you kindly, gentle sir!" She favoured him with a sweeping curtsey. "Tommy, even you have no idea of the ramifications and complications of our peculiar situation." Mr. Stanham had removed his hands from his pockets. They occupied a more agreeable position round the lady's waist. "See if I don't snatch you from the lion's jaws."

"Does that mean that you will help me to escape from Holloway?"

"It means that you will never get as far as Holloway!"

"Am I to die upon the road then?"

"Don't talk like that, don't! You don't know what a wife you've got! You don't know how she loves you, worthless creature that you are! Tommy, do say that you love me, just a little bit! There, you needn't squeeze me quite so tight. I can't explain to you all about it. I will some day! There's

going to be a duel, perhaps to the death! between the Lord Chancellor and yours to command; and if that august personage, in the figure anyhow, of Sir Tristram Triggs, is not worsted and overthrown, I will give you leave, sir, to say that you do not admire my taste in dress. Tommy, don't."

II.

After dinner Miss Cullen, strolling about the great glasshouse, all alone, came upon Sir Tristram, also all alone. Although not, probably, more than half an inch taller than the gentleman, she looked,—yes, down at him, as if, comparatively, he were but an insect at her feet.

"Well, Sir Tristram, what amends do you propose to make to me?"

"Miss Cullen?"

"Sir?"

She gazed at him; and this famous lawyer, who had been more than a match for the *olla podrida* of the law courts, and the champions of the political ring, quailed before a young girl's eyes.

"I fear, Miss Cullen, that I fail to apprehend your meaning."

"Is it possible that you are an habitual desecrater of that law which you have sworn to uphold, and that, therefore, the details of your crimes are apt to escape your memory? More than three months have elapsed since you committed your crime. So far as I know you have not sought as yet to take advantage of any occasion to offer me atonement."

Sir Tristram faced round to her with something of the bulldog look which had come upon his face when he had found himself in front of Mr. Stanham.

"May I inquire, Miss Cullen, why you go out of your way to use language of such extravagant exaggeration? It would be gross absurdity, amounting almost to prostitution of language, to call the offence of which I was guilty, if it was an offence, a crime."

"Perhaps it is because you are a lawyer that you are unaware that not so very long ago a man was sentenced to six months' imprisonment for exactly the same thing."

Sir Tristram fidgeted. He seemed not to have complete control over his tongue.

"Miss Cullen, I trust that I may never be found lacking in respect to a lady. If I have been so unfortunate as to have offended you

I proffer you my most sincere apologies, and I humbly entreat for your forgiveness."

Miss Cullen remained, obviously, wholly unmoved.

"When a criminal expresses his contrition, is he held, by so doing, to have sufficiently purged himself of his offence?"

"What is it that you require of me?"

"I am told that you are to be the new Lord Chancellor. I am a ward in chancery."

"I learn the fact with the greatest pleasure."

"Do you? Then your pleasure bears a strong resemblance to my pain. I am to remain a ward till I am twenty-five."

"Indeed?"

Sir Tristram began to rub his hands.

"Yes, indeed! I had an objectionable uncle who was so foolish as to suppose that I could not be a better judge of my own life's happiness than—a number of elderly gentlemen."

"Hem!" Sir Tristram coughed.

"If I was willing to overlook your offence"—Sir Tristram smiled—"I should require a *quid pro quo.*"

"And what, my dear Miss Cullen, would be the nature of the *quid pro quo?*"

"I should want you to consent to my marrying."

"To consent to your marrying?—Ah!—I see! —If the matter is laid before me in due and proper form—it is possible that you have a certain individual in your mind's eye whom you are willing to make the happiest of men —and I was satisfied that he was a fit and a proper, person, and every care was taken to safeguard your interests — then, my dear Miss Cullen, nothing would give me greater pleasure than to give my consent to your being happily launched on what, I fear, is too often the troubled sea of marriage."

"That's not the sort of thing I want at all."

"No? Then what is the sort of thing you want, may I inquire?"

The young lady tapped her foot against the floor. For the first time she seemed to be not entirely at her ease.

"The fact is, I'm married already."

"Married — already? With the consent of the court?"

"Bother the court!"

"Young lady! Are you aware who it is to whom you are speaking?"

"I am perfectly aware. I am speaking to the person who kissed me against my will."

"Miss Cullen! I'm the Chancellor!"

"That for the Chancellor!"

She actually snapped her fingers in his face. He seemed to be speechless; though, perhaps, he only seemed so. When he did speak it was as if he were suffering positive pain.

"I find myself unable to believe that you are capable of realising the position in which I stand, the position in which you stand too. Personal misusage I might endure. But, in this matter, I am impersonal. Take care! I represent in my poor person the majesty of English law."

He turned as if to go. If he supposed that he had crushed her he was very much mistaken.

"Is that your last word, Sir Tristram?"

"Miss Cullen, it is my last."

"Then, now, be so good as to listen to my last word. The Duke of Datchet is a magistrate. I will go straight to him and demand from him a warrant for your arrest."

"A warrant for my arrest? Girl!"

"I presume that it is because I am a girl that you are enough of a man first to assault and then to bully me."

Taking out his handkerchief Sir Tristram applied it to his brow.

"Am I mad, or you? Are you utterly impervious to any sort of reason?"

"Not more than you are. I have yet to learn that, because you are Lord Chancellor, you cannot be made to answer for your crimes, exactly like any other criminal. Forgive my husband, forgive me, whose only crime has been that we love each other, and who have not offended in the sight either of heaven or of earth, and I will forgive you, who have offended in the sight of both. Decline to do so, and, unless there is one law for the great and another for the small, in which case the world shall hear of it, I promise that you shall learn, from personal experience, what it means to go to gaol."

Sir Tristram looked about him as if he wondered why the earth did not open to swallow her. He seemed to gasp for breath.

"Miss Cullen, I beg that you will not suppose that under any possible circumstances I could listen, even for a single instant, to what, to me, are your hideous insinuations. But one possible solution I do see to the painful situation in which you stand. If the person whom you have illicitly and improperly married——"

"Not improperly married,—how dare you!"

"In the eyes of the court, Miss Cullen, certainly, in the eyes of the court. Hear me out. If this person should prove to be a fit and a proper person, of good character, of due position, and so forth, then, taking all the circumstances into consideration, I might be moved to leniency. What is the person's name?"

"He is of the highest lineage."

"So far, so good."

"He is a gentleman of the noblest character."

"Still better."

"He would be showing honour to any lady in the land if he made her his wife."

"Hem! Precisely! I asked you for his name."

"Thomas Stanham."

"Thomas Stanham!" Sir Tristram's countenance went as black as a thundercloud. "Thomas Stanham!" He turned to her with a look of fury on his face, which took even Miss Cullen by surprise. "That vagabond!"

"How dare you speak so of my husband, sir?"

"Your husband? Girl, you are a fool. You, the owner of prospective millions, have thrown them, even before they are in your actual possession, into the lap of that pitiful adventurer. You ask me to show him leniency? I will be

lenient to you at least. I will protect you from him in spite of yourself."

He spoke with a degree of dramatic intensity which threw a lurid light upon the cause of his success in life. Miss Cullen was silenced after all. She stood and watched him as he strode away, with a degree of dignity in his bearing which seemed to have suddenly made him taller.

"Tommy must have wiped his eye!"

That was what she said to herself when she was alone.

"Well, old man, have you had it out with Triggs?"

Turning, Miss Cullen found that Mr. Stanham had approached from behind. He stood in the doorway—as usual, with his hands in his pockets.

"Yes, young man, I've had it out with Triggs."

Miss Cullen had a little flush on her cheeks and an added light in her eyes, which superfluities, it might be said, unjustifiably heightened her attractions.

"Softened his adamantine breast?"

"Well, hardly. Not what you might call quite. In fact, I should say that, if he remains

in his present frame of mind, he will send you, for a certainty, to something much worse than penal servitude for life."

"Is that so? Very kind of you, I'm sure. I knew you'd make a mess of it, my love."

"Wait till the play is over. There's always a muddle in the middle. The third act has not begun."

III.

"Triggs, this is the deuce of a nice state of things!"

The latest ornament of the woolsack was seated in the privacy of his own apartment prior to retiring to rest. But the cares of his position had followed him there. He was working his way through a mass of papers when his host appeared at the door.

"To what state of things does your Grace refer?"

The Duke looked round as if to make sure that they had the room to themselves. He seemed to be in a state of considerable agitation; indeed, the abruptness of his entry had in itself suggested agitation.

"Of—of course you know that I—I'm a magistrate."

"Certainly I know it."

Something in the other's tone seemed to have a soothing influence upon the Duke, possibly because it roused the spirit of mischief that was in him. He sat in an arm-chair. Crossing his arms upon his chest, stretching out his long legs in front of him, he regarded the toes of his evening shoes.

"Triggs, I have had an application made to me for a warrant for your arrest."

The Chancellor went a peony hue, as we have seen him do before.

"Your Grace is joking."

"I wish I were. I found it anything but a joke, and I am afraid that you are not likely to find it one either."

Sir Tristram removed his glasses. He held them in his hand. His face became hard and stern.

"May I ask your Grace to be more explicit?"

The Duke turned. Placing one elbow upon the arm of his chair, he looked at Sir Tristram as he leaned his chin upon his hand.

"Triggs, Miss Cullen has applied to me to issue a warrant against you for assault."

"Surely such an application was irregular?"

"I am not so sure of that—I am not so sure.

Anyhow, I told her that it was. The only result of which, so far as I can judge, will be that she will make the application, in more regular form, either to me or to someone else to-morrow. But that is not the point. Triggs, did you do it?"

"Is it necessary that your Grace should ask me?"

"You didn't kiss her?"

Sir Tristram took out his handkerchief. He actually gasped for breath. It is to be feared that at that moment the representative of English law almost told a lie. However, it was only almost; not quite. He merely temporised.

"The whole affair is a pure absurdity."

"How do you mean? Is the charge unfounded?"

Sir Tristram drew his handkerchief across his brow.

"Supposing I did kiss her?"

"Supposing! Triggs? Good heavens! I remember your leading for a woman who brought exactly such a charge against a man. I remember how clearly you pointed out how, under certain circumstances, such an action might be, and was, an offence against good

morals. Didn't Pickum give the man six months?"

The lawyer's resemblance to a bulldog became more and more pronounced. He all but showed his teeth. "I don't know, Duke, if you are enjoying a little amusement at my expense."

The Duke sprang to his feet. His bearing evinced an accession of dignity which, in its melodramatic suddenness, almost approached to farce.

"It is not my habit, Sir Tristram, to regard my magisterial duties as offering much scope for amusement. Situated as I am—as you are—as we all are—our party!—in the eyes of the nation, it seems to me that this matter may easily become one of paramount importance. Of such importance that I have come to you as a friend to-night to ask you, if there is a chance of Miss Cullen's charge becoming so much as whispered abroad, to seriously consider if it would not be advisable for you to place your resignation in the hands of the Prime Minister before your appointment to the Chancellorship is publicly announced."

Sir Tristram's jaw dropped open. His resemblance to a bulldog perceptibly decreased.

"Duke!"

"I am not certain, in coming to-night, that I have not allowed my friendship for you to carry me too far. Still, I have come."

"Your Grace is more than sufficiently severe. If you will allow me to exactly explain my position in this matter I shall have no difficulty in making that evident. I fear that Miss Cullen is a dangerous young woman."

The Duke shrugged his shoulders.

"You, of all men, ought to know that, under certain circumstances, women are dangerous—and even girls."

"Precisely. That is so. But I think that after I have made my explanation you will allow that Miss Cullen is an even unusually dangerous example of a dangerous sex." He paused—perhaps for reflection. When he continued it was with a hang-dog air. "Some short time since I did myself the honour of asking Miss Cullen to become my wife. I fear that—eh—circumstances induced me to take her answer too much for granted. So much so, indeed, that—eh—while I was waiting for her answer I—eh—I—eh—kissed her. I do not wish to lay stress upon the accident that the kiss was but the merest shadow of a kiss. But such, in fact, it was."

"In plain language, Triggs, you kissed her against her will."

"I had no idea that it was against her will, or I should certainly not have done it. Her behaviour after—eh—my action filled me with the most profound amazement. She jumped up. She addressed me in language which I can only describe as more pointed than elegant. And—eh—she walked away, leaving me, I do assure your Grace, dumbfounded."

"Well?"

The Duke's back was turned to Sir Tristram, possibly because there was something on his Grace's face which bore an amazing resemblance to a smile.

"Well, I heard nothing more of the matter. Indeed, I have heard and seen nothing of the lady till I met her here to-day. This evening she has alluded to the matter in a manner and in terms which filled me with even more profound amazement than her behaviour on the—eh—original occasion."

"But, man, didn't you apologise?"

"I apologised in terms of almost abject humility. But that did not content her. I will be frank with your Grace. She made me a proposition which——"

The Duke waved his hands. He cut Sir Tristram short.

"I have heard too much already. Triggs, I have allowed my friendship for you to play havoc with my discretion; let me hear no more. My advice to you is compromise, compromise, at almost any cost. You don't want to have your career ruined by a girl, and for the mere shadow of a kiss. To consider nothing else, think of the laughter there would be. As you say, the young woman can be dangerous, and, if nothing happens to change her purpose, you may take my word for it that she means to be."

Before Sir Tristram could reply the Duke was gone. The newly-appointed representative of the majesty of English law was left alone with his papers and his reflections. These latter did not seem to be pleasant ones. Words escaped his lips which we should not care to print—we fear they referred to that undutiful ward of his lordship's court. Inwardly, and, for the matter of that, outwardly, he cursed her with bell, book, and candle; certainly never was heard a more terrible curse. And so thoroughly did he enter into the spirit of the thing that he was still engaged in curs-

ing her when the door opened, and in front of him was Miss Cullen with the handle in her hand.

She looked charming, and by that we mean even more charming than usual. She had changed her dress for a *peignoir*, or a dressing-gown, or something of the kind. Beyond question Sir Tristram had no notion what the thing was called. It suited her to perfection —few men had a better eye for that sort of thing in a woman than he had. There is no fathoming feminine duplicity, but no one ever *looked* more surprised than did that young woman then. She had thrown the door wide open and rushed into the room, and half closed it again behind her before she appeared to recognise in whose presence and where she really was.

"I—I thought—isn't this Mary Waller's room? Oh—h!"

As struck with panic she turned as if to flee. But Sir Tristram, who was gifted, before all else, with presence of mind, interposed. He rose from his chair.

"Miss Cullen, may I beg you for one moment?"

"Sir! Sir Tristram Triggs!" Miss Cullen's

air of dignity was perfect, and so bewitching. "I had something which I wished to say to Lady Mary Waller. There has been some misunderstanding as to which was her room. I must ask you to accept an apology."

"Unlike you, Miss Cullen, I always accept an apology."

"Indeed! Then my experience in that respect has, I presume, been the exception which proves the rule."

"May I ask when you apologised to me—and for what?"

"This evening,"—the lady looked down; her voice dropped; thrusting the toe of her little shoe from under the hem of her skirt, she tapped it against the floor—"for becoming a wife."

The grim man behind the table regarded her intently. Although he knew that the minx was worsting him with his own weapons, she appealed to, at any rate, one side of him so strongly that he was unable to prevent the corners of his mouth from wrinkling themselves into a smile.

"May I ask, Mrs. Stanham——"

"Sir Tristram!" She threw out her arms towards him with a pretty little gesture. "You

have set my heart all beating! You have brought the tears right to my eyes! You are the first person who has called me by my married name."

He moved his hand with a little air of deprecation—as if the thing were nothing.

"May I ask, Mrs. Stanham, if Mr. Thomas Stanham is related to the Duke of Datchet?"

"Related?—Of course he is!—He's his favourite cousin."

"His *favourite* cousin?" We doubt if she was justified in her use of the adjective, but the simple truth is, she *was* a dangerous young woman. "I see. The plot unfolds. May I ask, further, if this little comedy was rehearsed in advance?"

"And in my turn may I ask, Sir Tristram, what it is you mean?"

They looked at each other, eye to eye. They understood each other pretty well by the time Sir Tristram's glance dropped down again to the papers on his table. His tone became, as it were, judicial.

"Well, Mrs. Stanham, I have been considering the matter of which you spoke to me this evening, and, having regard to the whole bearing of the case, to the social position of

Mr. Thomas Stanham, and so forth, speaking, of course, *ex parte* and without prejudice, I may say that, as at present advised, if proper settlements are made, the marriage might be one which would not meet with the active disapprobation of the court."

Sir Tristram raised his eyes. The lady shook her head—very decidedly.

"That won't do."

"Won't do? What do you mean?"

"What I say. I'm not going to have Tommy bothered about settlements. I'm settlement enough for Tommy. What you have to do is to sit down and to simply write this: 'My dear Mrs. Stanham,—Speaking as Lord Chancellor, it gives me much pleasure in assuring you, as a ward of the court, that your marriage with Mr. Thomas Stanham meets with my entire and unreserved approval.—Yours faithfully, Tristram Triggs!'" Sir Tristram glowered—he might! But she was undismayed. "You will have to do it, sooner or later—you're a very clever man, and you know you will!—so why not do it at once?"

He did it at once. Actually! Possibly because the whole affair appealed keenly to his sense of humour—one never knows! She

read the paper, folded it, and then she said—with such a pout! and with such malice in her eyes!—

"Now you may kiss me again, if you like."

"I am obliged to you, but the costs in the suit have already been too heavy."

"Then I'll kiss you!"

And she did—with some want of precision, just over the right eye. Then she fled to the door. When she was half-way through it she turned, and waved towards him the hand which held the paper.

"You are my guardian, you know."

A Honeymoon Trip

MRS. GODWIN WRITES TO HER MOTHER

"YOU know, dear mamma, I was against a compartment being reserved. One might as well advertise the fact that one is starting on one's honeymoon. But I was not prepared to find the train so full as it was. Our carriage was crowded, and not with nice people. They played cards the whole way down, and, when one is just beginning one's married life, it was not agreeable to have to listen to some of the language which was used. Conrad was quite fidgety. You know he is most particular. But it was no use speaking. One of the men asked him if he would take a hand. When he observed that he objected to cards being played in a railway carriage, the person replied that he looked as though he did. And then the others smiled. This quite upset him. And, as we were nearing Harwich, he began to feel in his

pockets in a way which, I must say, was annoying. I had refrained from speaking to him as much as possible, being unwilling to let the others have a chance of guessing at the situation we were in; but when he stood up and began to turn his pockets inside out, and altogether to upset the other passengers, I did ask him what it was that he was looking for.

"'I can't find the tickets.'

"You know how easily he becomes embarrassed, and how the blood flies to his head. You remember that Geraldine said she thought he must be apoplectic.

"'You put them in your pocket-book.'

"'But that is gone too.'

"'You will find it when you get on board.'

"All the people were staring at him, he was making such a fuss.

"'I should like to find it before I get on board.'

"'Perhaps,' suggested an old gentleman, who was sitting in the opposite corner, 'it's in your overcoat.' Conrad took his coat from the rack and looked to see. It was not there. 'Feel in your pockets again,' suggested the old gentleman.

"Conrad felt. He did not find the pocket-book, but he found something else instead. He produced it with an exclamation. It was the first time I ever heard him swear.

"'Good heavens! It's the key of the safe!'

"His manner was so ludicrous, everybody laughed.

"'My dear Conrad, do sit down!'

"He sat down and stared at me like a man in a dream.

"'But you don't understand. It's the key of the safe. I forgot that I was going to be married, and I brought it away.'

"I do not think that I was ever so much annoyed in my life. After all the pains I had taken to conceal the fact that we were honey-mooning, and then for him to blurt it out like that! The other passengers simply roared.

"'This is a nice way of beginning one's honey-moon. I shall have to return to town at once.'

"Of course they laughed again. I was really too annoyed to speak. I sat and tried to look as though I liked it. When he had finished laughing the man who sat next to him stooped and picked up something from the floor of the carriage.

"'Anybody lost a pocket-book?' he asked.

" Of course it was Conrad's.

"'I—I expect I dropped it,' he explained. Then he turned to me. 'I am afraid we shall have to return to town at once.'

"'Don't be silly. We shall do nothing of the kind. I suppose there is a telegraph office at Harwich.'

"Before he had time to answer the train began to slow. I took the management of affairs into my own hands.

"'If you will go and send your telegram I will go on board. But pray don't be long.'

"But he was long. It appears, from what I have since learnt, that the London train was behind its time, and it was a question of missing the tide in the Scheldt. Anyhow, there was a great deal of hurry and scurry, and, as I was wondering what had become of Conrad, some-one shouted, 'All on board!' In my agitation I lost my presence of mind. And at that moment I saw Conrad running along the quay in the direction of the boat for Rotterdam. I suppose that, owing to his shortsightedness, and his haste, and the darkness, he mistook one boat for the other. I was tongue-tied in my bewilderment. Before I recovered myself we were moving down the river, and the quay was

out of sight. You may imagine my sensations, without tickets, almost without money, a bride without a bridegroom! I asked for the captain. I was told that he was navigating the ship, but I could see him later on. I saw him later on. He came when we had reached the open sea. As he advanced I thought I knew his figure. I felt as though my legs were giving way beneath me—it was Mr. Pearson! The recognition was mutual.

"'Jennie!' he cried. 'Miss Nash!' He looked as though he were dumbfounded. 'This is an unexpected pleasure!'

"'I—I wish to see the captain.'

"'I am the captain. You wish to see me? Come this way!'

"He led the way into his cabin. I followed, speechless. Events were crowding on me, for which I was wholly unprepared.

"'Mrs. Nash is with you?'

"'No, not—my mother. I—I am with my husband.'

"'Your husband!' He gave a start of surprise. 'Oh, indeed, your husband.'

"You know what a big man he is, and his huge beard? I declare that, as he stood and glared at me, I felt positively frightened.

"'That is to say, he was with me, but he has been left behind.'

"'Left behind? Might I ask you to explain?'

"'He went to send a telegram and he mistook the boat, and I'm afraid he's gone to Rotterdam.'

"'To Rotterdam? And you are bound for Antwerp? Ha, ha, ha!'

"He actually laughed, which was a brutal thing to do.

"'And the worst of it is that he has my ticket.'

"'That would be the worst part of it—to you.'

"I knew very well what he meant, though I took care not to let him suspect that I knew it. I did not know what else to do, so I took out my handkerchief and began to cry.

"'Madame la Baronne will excuse me, but I have still some little matters to which I must attend. Doubtless Madame la Baronne will have ceased to weep by the time that I return.'

"He left the cabin. I distinctly heard him bolt the door on the other side. My first impulse was to fasten it upon my side too. But I refrained. He had entirely upset me—what little there was of me left to upset—by addressing me

as Madame la Baronne! He evidently took it for granted that I had married the Belgian. I do not suppose that Geraldine will pay the slightest heed to anything I say, but I would earnestly advise her to be exceedingly careful in avoiding complications with men. I know that, as I sat there waiting for Mr. Pearson's return, I wished with all my heart that I had never met any man until I met Conrad—some of them never will understand.

"When he came back I had calmed myself to the best of my ability. There was a tolerable glass in the cabin. I took advantage of it to put myself a little to rights. He entered while I was engaged in doing so. He came in so quietly that the first intimation I had of his presence was seeing his face beside mine in the glass. It gave me quite a shock.

"'Mr. Pearson!'

"I turned. He bowed.

"'Always the same!' he said.

"'I was just looking to see if there was any of me left.'

"'Let me beg of you to take a seat.'

"I sat down. He went to a desk which was at one side of the cabin and sat down too, his back to me. His manners did not strike me as

particularly polite. Unlocking the desk, he took something out of it. I tried to make a little conversation.

"'I had no idea, Mr. Pearson, that you had become a captain.'

"He bowed, but said nothing. I tried again:

"'If it is not giving you too much trouble, Mr. Pearson—I am tired, you know—might I ask you to show me to a berth?"

"This time he condescended to face me.

"'Our encounter is of so unexpected a nature that I am sure you will excuse me if for a few minutes I detain you. I can scarcely hope to have so excellent an opportunity again.'

"'I can only say that I am tired.'

"'There are a few matters here in which you cannot fail to take an interest.'

"He turned to the things which he had placed upon his desk.

"'Here is a revolver.'

"He took one in his hand and held it out to me. You know, dear mamma, I am not nervous as a rule, but when he did that a creepy, crawly feeling went all over me.

"'I purchased it to shoot the Baron. It is perhaps as well that he is left behind. I might have used it yet.'

"There was something in his eyes I did not like. In an ordinary case I should have said his language was absurd. But my position was peculiar.

"'You are under a misapprehension, Mr. Pearson. The Baron d'Ardigny is not my husband.'

"'Not your husband!'

"He sprang up with a shout. The revolver clattered to the floor. If it was loaded it was a miracle that it did not go off. 'Not D'Ardigny! Is it possible that you duped him too?'

"'I am at your mercy, Mr. Pearson, and you are, of course, free to use towards me any language which, as a gentleman, may be consistent with your code of honour.'

"'My code of honour! Such words from you! You ruined me—is that not so? You tempted me to desert my ship. When I did so all that you had to say was that the whole affair had been a little joke of yours. They court-martialled me. I was broken. Surely you cannot expect my honour to be more than yours?'

"You know, dear mamma, when I had that scrape with Charlie Pearson I never meant any harm—you know I never did. When he was

goose enough to suppose I was in earnest, and actually left his ship to come to me, you remember how annoyed I was? But really, when, on board his own boat, he talked to me in that style I was without a word.

"'May I—it seems absurd when I remember that I used, with your consent, to hold you to my bosom and press your lips to mine!—but may I ask your name?'

"'I am Mrs. Godwin.'

"'So, since the Baron's little affair and mine there has been another. What a quantity of bad language I have wasted on D'Ardigny! Do you know, Mrs. Godwin, when I look at you and think of all that is past, I wonder how I could ever have been such a fool?'

"I tried to smile.

"'You must own that you were a little foolish.'

"'Oh, I was! Undoubtedly I was! Ever to have believed in you!'

"'May I ask if you intend to continue to insult me till we get to Antwerp?'

"'I scarcely know what I intend as yet. I belong to the prehistoric race of man. When I see a woman who deserves to be drowned, I want to drown her.'

"'Holding the position which you do on

board, to drown me would be the easiest thing in the world.'

"He merely shrugged his shoulders — and laughed.

"'Do you know what this is?' He took up a piece of paper from his desk. 'This is a lock of your hair. Has Godwin, I wonder, got a lock as well? Possibly, like the pieces of the true cross, it is to be found all over the world. This is a flower which you wore in your bosom at the Yacht Club ball. Before you gave it me you kissed it, so I kissed it too—ah, many a time! You have no conception of what a prize I thought it was. Now I am quite aware that there was not a man in the room who might not have had a similar one for the asking. Do you see this? This was once your shoe. You would scarcely believe that I bribed your maid to give it to me. I flattered myself that on our wedding night I would surprise you with a request to put it on the foot I loved. I suppose I may not presume to put it on to-night?'

"'I imagine, Mr. Pearson, that you are forgetting that I am married.'

"'That doesn't make any difference, does it? I should not have thought it would—to you.'

"You know, dear mamma, that I have the sweetest temper in the world. I never felt inclined to box anybody's ears before, except Geraldine's, and she is sometimes too provoking! but I did feel inclined to box his then. However, I told myself that if he forgot he was a gentleman I would not forget I was a lady.

"'Possibly, Mr. Pearson, it will cause you to keep your remarks somewhat within bounds when I tell you that this is my wedding night.'

"'Your—wedding night!'

"'Yes, my wedding night. I was married to-day.'

"As I thought of it, and of how different was the reality to the anticipation, the tears gushed to my eyes. Some men would have been touched by such a spectacle, but he was not. He began to pace about the cabin, running his fingers through his beard. All at once he began to laugh so violently that I thought he would never stop.

"'This is the best joke I ever heard,' he gasped in the middle of his mirth. 'Do you mean to say that you are starting on your honeymoon?'

"'Yes, I do.'

"'Poor devil of a Godwin! Then there is

every prospect of your spending it with me. Never in my wildest dreams did I look forward to such happiness as this. Is there nothing I can offer you in the shape of consolation?'

"'The only consolation you can offer me is to show me to my berth. I am miserable; you know I am! I should have thought that no man, to whatever depths he may have sunk, would have taken advantage of a woman in my situation.'

"By this time my tears were flowing quite profusely. But they made no impression upon him. He recommenced pacing round and round the cabin. He was large, and it was small. His tramp, tramp, tramping, and the general callousness of his demeanour, agitated me to such an extent that I almost feared that I should become hysterical. Just as I began to think that I could not hold out any longer he went to the door and shouted 'Spooner!'

"I supposed he was shouting for the steward. I congratulated myself that after all he had been touched, and that I was to be shown to a berth at last. I was beginning to dry my tears when a hairy object appeared in the doorway. He was so broad in proportion to his height that I at first thought he was deformed.

"'Come in, Spooner.' The man came in. A more unlikely-looking Spooner I never saw. Really, he reminded me of nothing so much as Quasimodo. His face was all covered with hair; even his great hands were hairy. He had a pair of big black eyes, which, added to his other attractions, made him look the perfect picture of ferocity. 'This is my first officer.' Even in my grief I smiled. What could be expected of a crew which had such officers? 'You recollect, Spooner, my telling you about that old sweetheart of mine who broke me?'

"'I do.'

"You know how basses seem to produce their voices from their boots. Mr. Spooner's voice seemed to come from much lower than his boots.

"'You remember my telling you what a jade she was?'

"'I do.'

"'Well, here she is.'

"Mr. Spooner stared at me, as well he might do. For my part I was dumb. Charlie Pearson always had a graceful way of introducing a lady.

"'You remember my telling you about that Baron she jilted me for?'

"'I do.'

"'And how I used to carry a revolver about with me in my breeches pocket so that it might be handy to get a shot at him?' Mr. Spooner nodded his head. 'I used to say that if she married I'd make her a widow within a week. Well, she is married. But it's not to the Baron. It seems that she sent him to the deuce after me. She's married a man named Godwin. I suppose she thinks she can use her husbands like her sweethearts, so she has given him the slip and left him ashore. Think she's got tired of him, eh? Well, she must be pretty smart at tiring—she only married him to-day. She's starting on her honeymoon. This is her wedding night, and she's left the man ashore.'

"Mr. Spooner listened to this without even so much as blinking an eye. He stood staring at me like a great stolid bear.

"'Spooner, I've laid awake of nights wondering when she and I would meet again. I've gone half mad racking my brains, thinking what vengeance I would take. I've asked myself over and over again what I'd do to her if ever I got her in my power. Now I've got her. And I ask you what you would do if you were I?'

"'I'd forgive her.'

"'Forgive her!'

"Mr. Pearson drew a long breath. He looked at Mr. Spooner and then he looked at me.

"'That's a wrinkle. Hang me, I will forgive her! I'll treat her with contempt and let her go. What shall I do with these gimcracks? I've kept them as though they were the richest treasures from Ali Baba's cave. Here's a lock of her hair, here's a rose from her bosom, here's a shoe from her foot, here's a bundle of her letters. You know what's in them, because I've read them to you many a time.'

"These were pleasant things for me to hear.

"'Spooner, what shall I do with these?'

"'Burn 'em.'

"'So I will. Here's the lot. Give 'em to the cook, and tell him to use them in the morning to light his galley fire.'

"He thrust the various articles into Mr. Spooner's hands. You may imagine my sensations.

"Then he turned to me.

"'Now, madam, if you wish it, I will show you to your cabin.'

"I was quite unable to speak. I had never supposed it was possible that I could have been

so cowed by two mere men. The truth is, that I was in such a passion that I really was beside myself. I would have given anything to have been a man to have been able to knock him down. He showed me to the cabin, and without a word he left me at the door. When I was inside I clenched my fists and stamped my foot and screamed.

"'My dear child, aren't you well?'

"I looked up. There was an old woman, sitting up in her berth, and looking at me through her spectacles.

"'Stewardess,' she cried. Then to me, "I wish you'd go and find my husband. My name is Maunders-Griffin. Oh, I am so ill! And tell him that those anti-sea-sick lozenges have not had the least effect. I've eaten them all, and I want some more. Oh!'

"The reaction was so sudden, so extreme, that I was seized with a fit of laughter. It was impossible for me to control myself. I daresay the old woman thought that I was mad. It so exhausted me that I had to drop into a chair to save myself from falling.

"The stewardess advanced.

"'Would madam like a berth?'

"'A berth! No. I—I will go on deck.'

"The atmosphere of the cabin was unbearable; you know what a cabin is at night when it is full of women who are ill. I felt that if I stayed there long I should be ill myself. Besides, under the best conditions, I felt that in the excited state of my brain it would be impossible for me to sleep, so I went on deck.

"It was a glorious night. There was a full moon and cloudless sky. But a stiff breeze was blowing, and one soon became conscious that it bore with it a strong solution of salt spray.

"I paced up and down, trying to calm myself sufficiently to enable me to realise my situation. I suppose that never was a woman more unfortunate. What a wedding night!—that night which is supposed to be the most sacred of a woman's life. To whom was I to turn for advice, with such a captain and such a chief officer? Dear mamma, I am not ashamed to confess that I cried, really and truly cried. I sat down by the side of the ship and quite gave in.

"While I was still crying someone came behind and touched me on the shoulder.

"'If you are not well, don't you think you had better go downstairs?'

"I looked round. An old gentleman was standing behind me. He actually thought that I was sick. I was indignant.

"'Thank you. I am quite well.'

"'I—I beg your pardon. I—I thought you were affected by the motion of the sea.'

"'I am obliged to you. I am never ill on board ship. Never.'

"I think my manner rather startled him. He took off his hat and moved away. You know how I object to people who think they have a right to interfere because they happen to be old —and, generally, silly. It is such stuff. The consciousness that I had crushed him made me feel distinctly better. I sat up and looked at the sea. But as I watched the gleaming waters the old thoughts came back, and, before I knew it, again my eyes filled with tears. It was foolish, but I could not help it. I do not often cry, but I did cry then.

"I daresay I had been making rather a goose of myself—I had been crying a good long time, when again someone touched me on the shoulder. It was once more that absurd old man.

"'If you will take my advice, my dear, you will go downstairs. I am an old man, and take the liberty of addressing you.'

"Fancy calling me 'my dear,' as though I were a child! I stood up and faced him.

"'My good sir, *will* you leave me alone?'

"He looked at me as though he were trying to find an excuse to begin a conversation. I daresay he would have liked me to make a confidant of him.

"'I am afraid you are in trouble. I don't like to see a young lady crying alone on deck all night, especially such a young lady as you.'

"I looked at him—you know how I can look if I like—and I walked away. I walked up and down the deck, and each time I passed him I looked him full in the face—such a look! He crossed to the other side. The scent of battle was in my nostrils. I crossed too. Then he went downstairs instead of me.

"Dear mamma, I stayed on deck all night. I saw the night gradually brighten. I saw the sun rise. I saw the birth of day. And, dear mamma, you have no idea how cold it was. You remember how cold it was when we saw the sun rise on the Righi? I declare I felt it quite as cold that morning on the boat. It was bitter. I was chilled to the bone. I went downstairs and routed out the steward, and made him get me a cup of coffee. I never

enjoyed anything so much. And the state I was in when I looked at the glass! I went to the ladies' cabin and put myself to rights. And there I stayed. It was not nice. But I felt that it would be still less nice to have to return to the deck and meet a crowd of men and encounter Mr. Pearson. I had quite made up my mind what I would do. I resolved that when I reached Antwerp I would first of all wire to you, then go straight to Brussels, and return by the shorter route to England. I would do it if I only had enough money to take me the whole of the way third class. If Conrad wanted me he would find me where he found me first of all—at home. *My* home, not his.

"I was aware, from the motion of the ship, that we had entered the Scheldt. For some time we proceeded up the river. Then, all at once, we stopped. I supposed the stoppage to be for the purpose of taking up a pilot. After a delay the boat went on again. I was thinking about all sorts of things, and was telling myself that, perhaps, after all, I had not been so good a girl as I might have been, and that sometimes I had been to blame in those little flirtations which had chequered my

career—and I wonder who would not have been sentimental in such a plight as mine—when someone came to the cabin door and said:

"'Is there anyone here of the name of Godwin?'

"I sprang up, my heart in my mouth.

"'I am Mrs. Godwin!'

"'Would you mind coming up on deck?'

"Without a moment's hesitation I followed the man upstairs. I imagined that, in some mysterious way, a message had reached me from Conrad, or that perhaps he had come himself—though, unless he possessed the seven-leagued boots, how he was to spring from the Rotterdam boat to the Scheldt I never paused to reflect.

"I was in quite a tremor when I got on deck. I noticed that all the passengers were gathered together in a crowd, and that in their midst were three or four foreigners in some kind of uniform.

"One, in particular, was resplendent. On him my eyes fell. And as they did so—dear mamma, I did not disgrace you by positively fainting, but a cold chill went down my back and penetrated to the marrow of my bones. It was the Baron! Hector d'Ardigny! At his side stood Mr. Pearson. Even at that

trying moment I was struck by the ludicrous contrast the one presented to the other—the Baron four feet six, Mr. Pearson six feet four. Geraldine will remember how it used to tickle me in days gone by. It tickled me then.

"As I was becoming conscious that I was the centre of attraction Mr. Pearson motioned towards me with his hand.

"'This is Mrs. Godwin.'

"I do not think that the Baron had hitherto noticed me. He noticed me then! It strikes me that up to that moment he had been engaged in glancing at Mr. Pearson. To say that at sight of me the colour of his countenance was that of a boiled beetroot is to use a trite and coarse comparison. But I do not know to what else I could compare it, unless it be to a lobster newly boiled.

"'Jennie!' he gasped. 'Miss Nash!'

"'This,' repeated Mr. Pearson, 'is Mrs. Godwin.'

"The Baron glared at Mr. Pearson. Then he glared at me. Then he *sprang* at Mr. Pearson.

"'Villain!' he cried. 'This is a trick you play on me!'

"Before the eyes of all the passengers he slapped the captain's face. Of course, it would

have been quite easy for Mr. Pearson to have picked him up and dropped him into the water. I fancy public expectation took it for granted that the Baron would be summarily disposed of in some such fashion. If so, public expectation was wrong. Mr. Pearson did nothing of the kind. He stood quite still. He looked at the Baron. He took out his handkerchief and wiped his cheek. Then he looked at his handkerchief. Then he turned to me.

"'Be so good as to come this way.'

"Docile as a child I went that way. Mr. Pearson came after me, leading, unless I am mistaken, the Baron by his epaulette. We all three entered the captain's cabin—that apartment in which I had already spent such an agreeable twenty minutes. Mr. Pearson addressed the Baron in language which was eminently adapted to tickle the ears of a lady.

"'I 've half a mind, you little brute, to choke the life right out of you. But I 'll give you another chance for your skin. The fun 's too good to lose. You said you wanted someone of the name of Godwin, and here is someone.'

"The Baron took off his *képi*. He wiped his brow. The dear little man was damp with perspiration.

"'It is someone of the name of Conrad Godwin that I want.'

"'I am Mrs. Conrad Godwin,' I observed.

"I supposed that, in some mysterious way, he had become possessed of a message either for Conrad or for me. I was not prepared for his behaviour. He dropped into a seat with an exclamation which sounded very like an execration.

"'You see, my dear Baron,' said Mr. Pearson, 'our dear Jennie has married—and she hasn't married you. She hasn't showed herself possessed of many virtues, but she has had sense enough for that. I took it for granted that you were something in the hairdressing line, from the moment I first set eyes on you.'

"The Baron paid no attention to Mr. Pearson—it was as well he didn't.

"He sat, huddled up on a chair, looking at me with gaping eyes.

"'But it is impossible that you are Mrs. Conrad Godwin!'

"'I fail to see the impossibility, for, in fact, I am. If you have a message for me, may I ask you to deliver it?'

"'Message! I have no message! I have instructions to arrest you.'

"I was startled then.

"'To arrest me!'

"'A telegram has come to detain anyone arriving by this boat of the name of Conrad Godwin. I am the chief of the police'—the Baron d'Ardigny, with his large property in the Ardennes, had sunk to a policeman—'and I am afraid that, with your husband, Mr. Conrad Godwin, you must be my prisoner.'

"'My husband, as I cannot help suspecting that you are possibly aware, does not happen to be on board.'

"'Your husband is not on board? You are travelling alone?'

"'Owing'—dear mamma, I did almost break down then,—'owing to an unfortunate accident, my husband lost the boat. But, Baron, you must be under some delusion. Surely you are not having a jest at my expense?'

"'It is no jest! It is the truth! I am an officer.' He slapped his chest: you know the way he had when he said anything particularly absurd. 'My duty is my duty! Before that all other things must fade. If, as you say, you are Mrs. Conrad Godwin; if your husband is on board, or no matter where he is, I must proceed to your arrest.'

"'Mr. Pearson, you will not suffer this?'

"'Mrs. Godwin, I am helpless. We are in Belgium, and in Belgium we must do as the Belgians do.'

"'But the thing is monstrous! You will surely insist on this person's exhibiting the authority on which he pretends to act?'

"Mr. Pearson shrugged his shoulders. He turned to the Baron with a smile—and once he said he loved me! Man's falseness is incredible.

"'Baron, have you got the warrant in your pocket?'

"'No warrant is required. I will show madame my instructions when we reach the *bureau*. We are in Belgium, not in England. I would advise madame, as a friend, not to give me any trouble.'

"He arrested me! Yes, dear mamma, I spent my wedding night crying, alone, on the deck of a steamer, and at the break of day I was taken into custody. Arrested by one old lover in the presence of another. It was in this way I commenced my married life.

"I sat in the cabin on one chair, and the Baron sat on another chair in front of me, on guard! I will do him the justice to allow

that he seemed quite as much at a loss as I was.

"When we reached the quay I got into an open fly; the Baron sat on the seat beside me, two policemen sat on the seat in front of me, and two more policemen kept the driver in countenance upon the box. In this way we drove through the streets of Antwerp. We arrived at the *bureau*. I was shown into what seemed to be a kind of office; the Baron followed me, closed the door behind him; we were alone. Directly we were alone he threw his *képi* on the floor. I thought the man was mad.

"'Jennie!' he cried. 'Mees Nash! What is the meaning of all this? Unfold this mystery.'

"'It is you who must do that. It is I who require an explanation from you.'

"'You have not married Monsieur Pearson?'

"'Baron d'Ardigny!'

"'How came you then to be with him on his ship?'

"'You might as well ask how I came to be the passenger of a train of which a man named Brown was guard.'

"'Oh, if you only knew what I have suffered. Your image is where it always was.' He

slapped his hand against his right side, where, probably, he supposed his heart to be. 'You have treated me—ah, how you have treated me! But no matter. The past is past. It is for the future that we live. Tell me, what is it you have done?"

"'It occurs to me that I have done one thing, lost my senses.'

"'I am your friend; do not be afraid. No matter for the past. I say it is for the future that we live. Is it murder?'

"'Murder!'

"'We will say then it is not murder. Thank goodness, it is not that! But there are other things besides. Is it forgery?'

"'Forgery!'

"'Is it something you have stolen? Perhaps a little money, or some jewellery, or something of value from your friends.'

"'Baron d'Ardigny, during your acquaintance with me did I strike you as being of the material of which thieves are made?'

"'Ah, who shall say! No man can tell! There was one woman I loved before I was in love with you. She did not use me so bad as you; she was an angel! She was what you call shoplifter. One day I went to see her;

she was not there. I did not see her for a long time. I thought that she was dead. One day I was in a prison; she was among the prisoners. When she saw me she laughed; she put out her tongue and winked her eye. The anguish is still here.'

"'Putting aside the question of what I have done, or left undone, perhaps you will tell me of what it is I am accused?'

"'How should I know?'

"'If you don't know, I don't know who should.'

"'It is they who are coming who shall know.'

"'And pray who is coming?' A thought occurred to me. 'Is it Conrad?'

"'Conrad! Who is Conrad? Ah! I forgot there was a Conrad.' His manner changed. Crossing his arms upon his chest he glared at me, as the bad characters sometimes glare at the Adelphi. 'Miserable! You wish to play again with me the fool!'

"Dear mamma, if you *can* imagine the Baron d'Ardigny as being madder than he used to be—do!

"'Baron d'Ardigny, there are one or two questions which I should like you to answer.

First of all, am I to regard myself as a prisoner?'

"'Did you not use to tell me that you would be for ever mine?'

"'Never, Baron, never!—You have not favoured me with an answer to my question.'

"'Was there not a moment when I was your star of love?'

"'Not a moment, Baron.—You have not answered me. Am I, or am I not, to regard myself as a prisoner?'

"'You are a prisoner! It is as a prisoner you are here! It is as a prisoner you must treat me!'

"'I should be delighted to treat you as a prisoner. Unfortunately it appears that it is as a prisoner you are treating me.'

"'Your crimes, I do not doubt, they are as black as ink! A woman who can be as false as you—to such a woman nothing is impossible.'

"'Baron d'Ardigny, I do not know how this sort of thing is done in Belgium, but in England when they lock a person up they tell him what they lock him up for. With you, has a policeman the power of taking a person to the station-house for the sole purpose and pleasure of calling them names?'

"'Mees Nash——'

"'I have already informed you that I am Mrs. Godwin.'

"'So you are Mrs. Godwin! You insist! Well! At last we have arrived! Meez-sers Godwin, I tell you this. Mark carefully; I meet your husband once—for a moment. A second time—for ever—upon the field of honour.'

"I do not know if abroad policemen always speak to their prisoners as the Baron spoke to me. The inhabitants of those countries must enjoy themselves if they do. For my part, although my situation was sufficiently critical, it was all I could do to refrain from laughter. If you could only have seen how funny he looked! I do not know if he mistook my silence for admiration, but on a sudden his madness assumed a dreadful phase. He threw himself into an attitude—ask Geraldine if she has forgotten his attitudes—and apostrophised me thus: 'When I look upon that lovely face, upon those eyes of perfect blue, upon that hair of gold, upon that figure exquisite, I say to myself, "Hector, Hector d'Ardigny! you who has not been without his fortunate experience, is it possible that you cannot win the love of a creature so divine?" I answer to myself, "It is impossible."'

"I hesitated for a moment what, under the circumstances, I had better do. I saw plainly that it was no use to talk to the man. I arrived at a sudden resolution. I decided that I would try—as they say in the cookery-books—another way. As he stood with his eyes and hands raised towards the ceiling I went and I took him by the thing inside the collar of his coat—stock, I think they call it—and I shook him. I do not think he ever had a better shaking in his life. I kept at it till the thing inside the collar of his coat came loose in my hand. Then —you know he is *such* a little man—I lifted him off his feet and seated him on the edge of the table. The rest was silence. He looked at me, and I, for my part, looked at him.

"'Now,' I said, when I began to feel a little cooler, 'perhaps you will tell me what I am here for?'

"'Apparently,' he gasped—the little man was breathless—'to murder me.'

"'My good man, you shouldn't provoke me.'

"In a sort of unconscious soliloquy I heard him murmur:

"'*Mon Dieu! Ces Anglaises!*' Then with a visible shudder, '*Si elle etait ma femme!*'

"'Baron d'Ardigny, if you do not wish me to

shake you again you will tell me what I am here for.'

"'Inquire of Philippe.'

"'I will not inquire of Philippe—whoever Philippe may happen to be. I inquire of you. And I intend you to answer my inquiry. I suppose that I am here for something.'

"'For a great deal, it seems.' His hand stole towards his neck. '*Bonne chance! Elle a cassé mon col.*'

"'Answer me.'

"Dear mamma, I shook him up a little.

"'I will answer you! *Par exemple! Quel hercule!*'

"'Then do so.'

"'If you will permit me to stand upon my feet I will answer you at once.'

"'Answer me where you are.'

"But, mademoiselle, I am an officer. It is impossible that an officer can sit upon a table.'

"'Answer—me—at—once!' Dear mamma, I shook him again.

"'*Ah, sacré nom! C'est embêtant!* Will you destroy my clothing? Look into that drawer.'

"I pulled out the drawer. The first thing I saw was a telegram. I took it up.

"'Is this it?'

"'That is it! You have said! Now, perhaps, you will permit me to descend.'

"'I think, Baron, that you had better stay for a moment where you are.'

"I opened the telegram.

"'Detain Conrad Godwin coming by boat from Harwich.'

"'I fancy, M. le Baron, someone has been hoaxing you.'

"'Hoaxing me! What you mean?'

"'It strikes me that if I make public the usage to which you have subjected me, you are a ruined man.'

"'*Une jolie femme! Elle marche!* And if I make public the treatment which you have accorded to the chief of the police, how is that for you—eh?'

"'Very good. We will leave it so. I will communicate with our ambassador, our ambassador will communicate with your Government, your Government will communicate with you.'

"'Mees Nash, I do not understand.'

"'Baron d'Ardigny, if you call me "Mees Nash" again I shall box your ears. I was married yesterday, and, as I have already told you, I am Mrs. Conrad Godwin.'

"Dear mamma, I think I *should* have boxed

them. He was *so* provoking. But while we were staring at one another—the little man looked thunderstruck!—the door of the room opened and—Conrad entered.

"'Jennie!' he cried.

"I had intended, when we did meet again, to assume towards him a dignified deportment, and to treat him with the just resentment which his conduct merited. But before I knew it I found that I was in his arms.

"I believe he kissed me—before the Baron. And I am afraid that we both of us behaved in rather a foolish way. Which is the more strange because, you know, dear mamma, I am a stickler for decorum.

"'Conrad, I thought that you had left your wife for ever?'

"'Jennie, I reached Rotterdam at 9.0 and I left by the train at 9.15, *viâ* Zevenbergen, for Antwerp. When I reached Antwerp they told me you were arrested.'

"'I have been arrested. This is the chief of police, who arrested me. Baron d'Ardigny, this is my husband, Mr. Conrad Godwin.'

"I suspect that the Baron, from his perch upon the table, had been edified by our proceedings.

"When I said this he sprang to the ground.

"'So!—this is Conrad Godwin! Sir, I will pull your nose.'

"Conrad was puzzled.

"'I beg your pardon?'

"'Sir, I tell you are *canaille*, *cochon*—pig! You understand?'

"Conrad turned to me.

"'Is he mad?'

"'Mad!' The Baron went mad at the bare suggestion. 'Mr. Conrad Godwin, I treat you as a gentleman. As a gentleman I tell you I will cut your throat.'

"I think he would have 'gone' for Conrad. But just then the door opened again, and a strange gentleman came in.

"'Godwin!' he cried.

"'Haynes!'

"'You have the key of the safe.'

"'I know it. I wired you that I had.'

"'Wired me! When?'

"'I wired you last night from Harwich.'

"'The deuce you have! And I have been chasing you through Ostend and Brussels! A nice muddle you have made of it. All the locksmiths and burglars in London have been retained to effect an entrance to the safe. I

thought I would be even with you, so I sent them a wire to detain you.'

"'They have not detained me, but they have my wife. They have arrested her.'

"'Mrs. Godwin!—I beg ten thousand pardons!'

"He was most apologetic — really nice, mamma!" . . .

"P.S.—Dear mamma, the Baron lunched with us at the Hotel St. Antoine. There were four of us. I did not ask Mr. Pearson. I thought that perhaps he would not come. *The Baron was charming!*"

The Burglar's Blunder

"THAT'S done the trick! Now for the swag!"

As Mr. Bennett made this observation to himself he slipped the window up and stepped into the room. He stood for a moment listening. Within, all was still; without, not a sound disturbed the silence of the night.

"I think it's all serene."

It is probable that Mr. Bennett smiled. He was engaged in the exercise of his profession, and it consoled him to perceive that, on this occasion, the stars seemed to be fighting on his side. He drew down the window softly and replaced the blind. It was a principle of his never to leave anything which might give a hint to the outside public of what was going on within. The room, with the blind down, was intensely dark. He put his hand into his pocket and drew out a little shaded lantern.

Cautiously removing the shutter about half an inch a pencil of light gleamed across the room. He was apparently content with this illumination. By its aid he carefully examined floor, walls, and ceiling.

"Early English. I thought so."

This remark referred to the upholstering of the room, which was in the Early English style. Stooping down he drew a pair of list slippers over his indiarubber shoes. With swift, cat-like steps he strode across the floor and left the room. He was evidently familiar with his ground. The burglar's profession, to be profitably practised, entails nó inconsiderable labour. It is quite an error to suppose that the burglar has only to stroll along the street and break into the first house which catches his eye. Not at all. Such a course is altogether unprofessional. Persons who do that kind of thing get what they deserve—"stir," and plenty of it. A really professional man, an artist—such, for example, as Mr. Bennett—works on entirely different lines. He had had this little job in his mind's eye for the last three months. Acacia Villa presented an almost ideal illustration of *the* promising crib to crack. Did he rush at it on that account? Quite the other way. He

prepared his ground. He discovered, what all the world—in that neighbourhood—knew already, that it was occupied by a single lady and a solitary maid. That fact alone would have induced some men to make a dash at it before unscrupulous competitors had had an opportunity to take the bread out of their mouths. But Mr. Bennett was made of other stuff.

It was situated in a lonely suburb, and in a lonely portion of the lonely suburb. It stood in its own grounds. There was not a dog about the place. There was not a shutter to a window. There was no basement to the house—you had only to step from the ground to the window-sill, and from the window-sill into the house. These facts would have been so many extra inducements to the average burglar to "put up" the place at once.

But Mr. Bennett looked at the matter from a different standpoint. He did not ask if he could crack the crib—he had never yet encountered one which had mastered him—but whether the crib was really worth the cracking. The very defencelessness of the place was against it—in his eyes, at any rate—at first. People who have anything very well worth stealing do not, as a rule, leave it at the mercy

of the first individual who passes by—though there are exceptions to the rule. Mr. Bennett discovered that there was one, and the discovery revealed the *artist* in the man.

The occupant of Acacia Villa was a Miss Cecilia Jones. Mr. Bennett had never seen Miss Cecilia Jones. Nobody—or hardly anybody—ever had. There appeared to be a mystery about Miss Cecilia Jones. But Mr. Bennett had seen the maid, and not only seen her, but promised to marry her as well. This was a promise which he never made to any woman unless actually compelled: the present had been a case of actual compulsion.

The maid's name was Hannah—Miss Hannah Welsh. She was not young, and she was not good-looking. Mr. Bennett was partial to both youth and beauty. It went against the grain to court Miss Welsh. But he found that courtship was an absolutely indispensable preliminary. After he had encircled her waist a few times with his arm, and tasted the nectar of her lips—also a few times—Miss Welsh began gradually to unbend. But the process was very gradual. She was the most reticent of maids. He had not only to present her with several presents—the proceeds of the exercise of his

profession—he had not only to promise to marry her, he had not only to name the day, but he had even to buy—or steal: the words were synonymous with him—the wedding-ring, before all the tale was told. When he had actually tried the ring on Miss Welsh's finger—to see if it would fit—then, and only then, he heard all there was to hear.

Miss Jones was queer—not mad exactly, but peculiar. She had quarrelled with all her relatives. She was rich. She was full of crotchets. She distrusted all the world, particularly bankers. To such a length had she carried her want of confidence that she had realised all her fortune, turned it into specie, and kept it in the house. It was at this point that Miss Welsh's conversation became interesting to Mr. Bennett.

"Keeps it in the house, does she? In notes, I suppose?"

"Then you suppose wrong. She won't have nothing to do with notes—trust her. It's all in gold and diamonds."

"Diamonds! How do you know they're diamonds?"

Miss Welsh glanced at him out of the corner of her eyes. The conversation was carried on

in the back garden at Acacia Villa, which was extensive and secluded. The time was evening, that season which is popularly supposed to be conducive to sentimental intercourse.

"Perhaps I know as much about diamonds as here and there a few."

Her tone was peculiar, almost suggestive. For an instant Mr. Bennett meditated making a clean breast of it, and asking Miss Welsh to come in on sharing terms. But he had an incurable objection to collaboration. Besides, in this case sharing terms would probably mean that he would have to go through the form, at any rate, of making her his wife.

"Where does she keep them? In a safe, I hope."

He did not hope so, though he said he did. At the very best, a safe, to a professional man, means the wasting of valuable time.

"She keeps them in her bedroom, in the chest of drawers, in a red leather box, in the little top drawer on the left-hand side."

Mr. Bennett felt a glow steal all over him. He began to conceive quite a respect for Miss Cecilia Jones.

"And the gold—where does she keep that?"

"In tin boxes. There are ten of them. There

are a thousand sovereigns in each. There are five boxes on each side of the chest of drawers." Mr. Bennett possessed considerable presence of mind, but he almost lost it then. Ten thousand pounds in sovereigns! He would never regret the affection he had lavished on Miss Welsh—never, to his dying day. *Would* it be a bad speculation to marry her? But no; the thought was rash. He would reward her, but in quite a different way. He made a rapid calculation. Ten thousand sovereigns would weigh, roughly, about 130 pounds avoirdupois. He might turn them into a sack—fancy, a sackful of money! But 130 pounds was no light weight to carry far. He must have a vehicle at hand. What a convenience a "pal" would be! But he had worked single-handed so far, and he would work single-handed to the end.

When he had ascertained his facts he acted on them at once, thus revealing the artist again. Spare no pains in making sure that the crib is worth the cracking, *then* crack it at once. On the night following this conversation the crib was cracked: he had arranged for the marriage to take place on the next day but one—or Miss Welsh thought he had—so that if he wished to avoid a scandal he really had no time to lose.

We have seen him enter the house. Now we understand how it was he knew his ground.

He paused for an instant outside the drawing-room door: it was through the drawing-room window he had effected an entrance. All was still. He moved up the staircase two steps at a time. There was not a stair that creaked. At the top he paused again. From information received, to adopt a phrase popular in an antagonistic profession, he was aware that Miss Jones slept in the front bedroom.

"There's three bedrooms on the first floor. When you gets to the top of the stairs you turns to the left, and if you goes straight on you walks right into Miss Jones's room."

Mr. Bennett turned to the left. He went straight on. Outside Miss Jones's door he paused again. The critical moment had arrived. He felt that all his properties were in order—a bottle and a sponge in his right-hand pocket, a revolver in his left, a stout canvas bag fastened round his body beneath his coat. The lantern was shut. He opened it sufficiently to enable him to see what sort of handle there was on the door. Having satisfied himself on that point he closed it again.

Then he proceeded to effect an entrance into Miss Jones's bedroom.

He took the handle firmly in his hand. It turned without the slightest sound. The door yielded at once.

"Not locked," said Mr. Bennett beneath his breath. "What a stroke of luck!"

Noiselessly the door moved on its hinges. He opened it just wide enough to enable him to slip inside. When he was in he released the handle. Instantly the door moved back and closed itself without a sound.

"Got a spring upon the door," Mr. Bennett told himself—always beneath his breath. "Uncommonly well oiled they must keep it too."

The room was pitchy dark. He listened acutely. All was still as the grave. He strained his ears to catch Miss Jones's breathing.

"A light sleeper!"

A very light sleeper. Strain his ears as he might he could not catch the slightest sound. Mr. Bennett hesitated. As an artist he was averse to violence. In cases of necessity he was quite equal to the occasion, but in cases where it was not necessary he preferred the gentler way. And where a woman was in question, under hardly any provocation would

he wish to cut her throat. He had chloroform in his pocket. If Miss Jones was disagreeable he could make his peace with that. But if she left him unmolested should he stupefy her still? He decided that while she continued to sleep she should be allowed to sleep, only it would be well for her not to wake up too soon.

He moved across the room. Instinctively, even in the thick darkness, he knew the position of the chest of drawers. He reached it. He quickly discovered the little top drawer on the left-hand side.

In a remarkably short space of time he had it open. Then he began to search for the red leather box. He gleamed the lantern into the drawer so that its light might assist his search.

While he was still engaged in the work of discovery, suddenly the room was all ablaze with light.

"Thank you. I thought it was you."

A voice, quite a musical voice, spoke these words behind his back. Mr. Bennett was, not unnaturally, amazed. The sudden blaze of light dazzled his eyes. He turned to see who the speaker was.

"Don't move, or I fire. You will find I am a first-rate shot."

He stared. Indeed, he had cause to stare. A young lady—a distinctly pretty young lady—was sitting up in bed holding a revolver in her hand, which she was pointing straight at him.

"This room is lighted by electricity. I have only to press a button, it all goes out." And, in fact, it all went out; again the room was dark as pitch. "Another, it is alight again." As it was—and that with the rapidity of a flash of lightning.

Mr. Bennett stood motionless. For the first time in his professional career he was at a loss, not only as to what he ought to say, but as to what he ought to do. The young lady was so pretty. She had long, fair hair, which ranged loose upon her shoulders; a pair of great big eyes, which had a very curious effect on Mr. Bennett as they looked at him; a sweet mouth; through her rosy lips gleamed little pearl-like teeth; and a very pretty—and equally determined—nose and chin. She had on the orthodox nightdress, which, in her case, was a gorgeous piece of feminine millinery, laced all down the front with the daintiest pink bows. Mr. Bennett had never seen such a picture in his life.

"I am Miss Cecilia Jones. You are Mr. Bennett, I presume — George Bennett — 'My George,' as Hannah says. Hannah is a hypnotic subject. When I am experimenting on her the poor dear creature tells me everything, you know. I wonder if I could hypnotise you."

Mr. Bennett did not know what she meant. He was only conscious of the most singular sensation he had ever experienced. To assist his understanding, possibly, Miss Jones gave a practical demonstration of her meaning. With her disengaged hand she made some slight movements in the air, keeping her eyes fixed on Mr. Bennett all the while. Mr. Bennett in vain struggled to escape her gaze. Suddenly he was conscious that, as it were, something had gone from him—his resolution—his freedom of will—he knew not what.

Miss Jones put down her hand.

"I think that you will do. How do you feel?"

"Very queer."

Mr. Bennett's utterance was peculiar. He spoke as a man might speak who is under the influence of a drug, or as one who dreams—unconsciously, without intention, as it were.

"Oh, they always do feel like that at first. Are you considered a good burglar as a rule?"

"As a rule."

Mr. Bennett hesitatingly put up his hand and drew it across his brow. It was the hand which held the lantern. When the lantern touched his skin he found that it was hot. He let it fall from his hand with a clatter to the floor. Miss Jones eyed him keenly all the time.

"I see you are not quite subjective yet, but I think that you will do. And of course I can always complete the influence if I will. It only illustrates what I have continually said—that it is not necessarily the lowest mental organisations that traffic in crime. I should say that yours was above rather than below the average. Have you yourself any ideas upon that point?"

As he answered Mr. Bennett faintly sighed.

"None!"

Miss Jones smiled, and as she smiled he smiled too, though there was this feature about Mr. Bennett's smile—there was not in it any sense of mirth. Miss Jones seemed to notice this, for she smiled still more. Immediately Mr. Bennett's smile expanded into a hideous grin. Then she burst into laughter. Mr. Bennett laughed out too.

"After all, you are more subjective than

I thought you were. I don't think I ever had a subject laugh quite so sympathetically before."

As Miss Jones said this—which she did when she had done laughing—she turned and adjusted the pillows so as to form a support to her back. Against this she reclined at ease. She placed the revolver on the bolster at her side. From a receptacle in the nature of a tidy, which was fastened to the wall above her head, she drew a small leather case. From this she took a cigarette and a match. With the most charming air imaginable she proceeded to light the cigarette and smoke.

Mr. Bennett watched all her movements, feeling that he must be playing a part in a dream. It was a perceptible relief when she removed her eyes from his face, though they were such pretty eyes. Yet, although she was not looking at him, he felt that she saw him all the time—he had a hideous impression that she even saw what was passing in his mind.

"I wouldn't think about my revolver. You won't be able to fire it, you know."

He had been thinking about his revolver: a faint notion had been growing up in his mind that he would like to have just one shot at her. Miss Jones made this remark in the most

tranquil tone of voice, as she was engaged in extinguishing the match with which she had lighted her cigarette.

"And I wouldn't worry about that chloroform—it is chloroform, isn't it?—in the right-hand pocket of your coat."

As she said this Miss Jones threw the extinguished match from her on to the bedroom floor. A great cloud of horror was settling down on Mr. Bennett's brain. Was this fair creature a thing of earth at all? Was she a witch or a fairy queen? Mr. Bennett was a tolerably well-educated man, and he had read of fairy queens. He gave a sudden start. Miss Jones had lighted the cigarette to her satisfaction, and had fixed her eyes upon his face again.

"I suppose you were hardly prepared for this sort of thing?"

"Hardly."

The word came from Mr. Bennett's stammering lips.

"When you heard about the defencelessness of Acacia Villa, and about Miss Jones—who was peculiar—and that sort of thing, you doubtless took it for granted that it was to be all plain sailing?"

"Something of the kind."

Not the least odd part of the affair was that Mr. Bennett found himself answering Miss Jones without the least intention of doing anything of the sort.

"Those diamonds you were looking for are at the bottom of the drawer—at the back. Just get them out and bring them here. In a red leather case—you know."

Mechanically Mr. Bennett did as he was told. When his back was turned to the lady, and he ceased to be compelled to meet her eyes, quite a spasm of relief went over him. A faint desire was again born within his breast to assert his manhood. The lady's quiet voice immediately interposed.

"I wouldn't worry myself with such thoughts if I were you. You are quite subjective."

He was subjective, though still Mr. Bennett had not the faintest notion what she meant. He found the red leather box. He brought it to her on the bed. He came so close to her that she puffed the smoke between her rosy lips up into his face.

"It is not locked. It opens with a spring, like this."

She stretched out her hand. As she did so

she grazed slightly one of his. He trembled at her touch. She pressed some hidden spring in the box and the lid flew open. It was full of diamonds, which gleamed and sparkled like liquid light.

"Not bad stones, are they? There's a hundred thousand pounds' worth at the least. There are the tin boxes, you see. Five on either side the chest of drawers." Mr. Bennett followed the direction of Miss Jones's hand—he saw them plainly enough. "A hundred thousand pounds' worth of diamonds in your hand, ten thousand pounds in front of you—not bad plunder for a single night's work. And only a young woman to reckon with—it is not twelve months since I turned twenty-one. Yet I don't think you will get much out of this little job—do you?"

The tears actually stood in Mr. Bennett's eyes.

"I don't think I shall," he moaned.

"And yet there is no magic about it—not the least. It is simply an illustration of the latest phase in scientific development." Miss Jones leaned back against the pillows, enjoying her cigarette with the etherealised satisfaction of the true lover of the weed. With her left hand—what a little white and dainty hand it was!—

she toyed with her long, fair hair. "At an extremely early age I discovered that I could exercise at will remarkable powers over my fellow-creatures. I lost no opportunity to develop those powers. At twenty-one I became my own mistress. I realised my fortune—as Hannah told you—and retired to Acacia Villa. You understand I had ideas of my own. I was peculiar, if you choose to have it so. I continued to develop my powers. I experimented upon Hannah. Now I am experimenting upon you. I am enjoying this experiment very much indeed. I hope you are enjoying it a quarter as much as I am—are you?" Some slightly inarticulate remark dropped from Mr. Bennett, which was apparently to the effect that he was not.

"I am sorry to hear that. Perhaps you will enjoy it more a little later on. Now, what shall I do with you? I know."

Miss Jones pressed a little ivory button, which was one of a row set in a frame of wood against the wall.

"That rings an electric bell in Hannah's room. I often ring her down in the middle of the night to be experimented on. She comes directly. Here she is, you see."

There was a slight tapping against the bedroom door.

"Come in!" exclaimed Miss Jones.

The door opened and Miss Welsh came in. She was not exactly in full dress. Mr. Bennett, who through it all was conscious in a horrid, nightmare sort of way, thought that he had never seen anyone look so extremely unprepossessing as Miss Welsh looked in disarray. The instant she was inside the room Miss Jones raised her hand. Miss Welsh stood still. Miss Jones turned to Mr. Bennett.

"I have her entirely under control. Some of the results I have obtained with her are really quite remarkable. But you shall see for yourself and judge." The young lady addressed Miss Welsh.

"Well, Hannah, here is Mr. Bennett, you see."

It was evident that Miss Welsh did see. She seemed struggling to give expression to her feelings in speech. Miss Jones went calmly on—

"He is here on business—he is committing burglary, in fact. You were right in supposing that was his profession. The mistake you made was in imagining that he would have shared the spoil with you. I think, Mr. Bennett, I am

right in saying that you would not have given Hannah much?"

"Not a sou."

"Probably you did not even intend to marry her?"

"I would have seen her hung first."

Mr. Bennett made this plain statement with quite curious ferocity. Miss Welsh rubbed her eyes with the sleeve of what we will suppose, for courtesy's sake, was her nightdress.

"That makes nine of 'em," she said.

"That makes nine of them, as Hannah says. Hannah, Mr. Bennett, is a woman of experience. She has had nine promises of marriage, but not one of them came off. But I don't think, Hannah, that you ever had a promise from a burglar before?"

"Never before."

"Then, at least, that is a new experience, and a new experience is so precious. Is there any remark you would like to make, Hannah, appropriate to the occasion?"

For a moment it did not appear as though there were. Then it seemed that there at least was one.

"I should like to scratch his eyes out," observed the damsel—ætat forty-five or so.

Miss Cecilia smiled. Mr. Bennett immediately smiled too. But there was this difference—that while the lady's smile was a thing of beauty, the gentleman's was a peculiar ghastly grin.

Miss Jones remarked Mr. Bennett's facial contortions with an appearance of considerable interest.

" I never had them smile *quite* so sympathetically before. In that respect, Mr. Bennett, you are unique. Charmed to have met you, I am sure." The young lady knocked the ash off her cigarette with her dainty finger and turned her attention to Miss Welsh. "I don't think, Hannah, that we will have any scratching out of eyes."

When she had thus delivered herself Miss Jones reclined in silence for some moments on her pillows, discharging the smoke of her cigarette through her delicate pink nostrils. When she spoke again it was to the gentleman she addressed herself.

" Mr. Bennett, would you mind closing that box of diamonds and replacing them in the drawer ? "

Mr. Bennett shut the box with a little snap and carried it across the room. There was

something odd about his demeanour as he did this—an appearance as though he were not engaged in the sort of labour which physics pain. Miss Welsh, standing as though rooted to the ground, followed him with her eyes. The expression of her countenance was one of undisguised amazement. Her face was eloquent with a yearning to relieve herself with words. When Mr. Bennett put the box back where he had found it and shut the drawer she gave a kind of gasp. From Mr. Bennett there came a distinctly audible groan. "Turn round, Mr. Bennett, and look at me." Mr. Bennett did as he was bidden. He was not altogether a bad-looking young man—his chief fault, from the physiognomist's point of view, lay in the steely tint of his clear blue eyes. Miss Jones's great big orbs seemed to rest upon him with a certain degree of pleasure. "I need scarcely point out to you that the burglary is a failure. The principal cause of failure is that you are too subjective. You have quite one of the most subjective organisations I have yet encountered. The ideal criminal must keep himself abreast with the advance of science. In failing to do so, Mr. Bennett, you have been guilty of a blunder which, in your case, is certainly worse

than crime. You are a dreadful example of the burglar's blunder. I might label you, preserve you in your hypnotic state, and use you as an illustration of a lecture I am now preparing. But I have other views, and it is not impossible I may encounter you again. Go to my writing-table. You will find a sheet of foolscap paper. Write what I dictate."

Mr. Bennett went to the writing-table. He found the sheet of foolscap paper. "Write, in good, bold characters :—

"*I am George Bennett,*
The Burglar.
For further particulars apply at Acacia Villa."

Mr. Bennett wrote as she dictated, displaying the above legend in a striking round hand right across the sheet of paper. Miss Jones addressed Miss Welsh :

"Hannah, in my workbasket you will find a needle and some good stout thread. Get it out." Miss Welsh got it out. "Mr. Bennett, take off that sack which you have wound round your body beneath your coat." Mr. Bennett took it off. "Button up your coat again." Mr. Bennett buttoned it up. "Hannah, take that sheet of foolscap paper, on which Mr. Bennett

has written at my dictation, and sew it firmly to the front of his buttoned-up coat."

Miss Welsh took the sheet of foolscap paper. She approached Mr. Bennett, holding it in her hand. Mr. Bennett's hands dropped to his sides. He regarded her with a look which was the reverse of amiable. She eyed him with what were doubtless intended to be soft, pleading glances. When she reached him she placed her hand timidly against his chest. Mr. Bennett looked particularly glum. She raised the other hand which held the sheet of foolscap paper and spread it out upon his breast. It was legible at quite a considerable distance:

"*I am George Bennett,*
The Burglar.
For further particulars apply at Acacia Villa."

It was hardly the sort of inscription a chivalrous spirit would wish to have displayed upon his breast by the object of his heart's desire, or even by the woman he had promised to marry in the course of the following morning. Miss Welsh, who seemed to feel the truth of this, looked at him with sad, beseeching eyes. But Mr. Bennett's glumness perceptibly increased. Then Miss Welsh proceeded to sew

the inscription on. It must be owned that it was a conscientious piece of sewing. She first tacked it round the edges, then she sewed it up and down and across, from corner to corner, with a hundred careful stitches, in such a way that he would have had to tear it to fragments, piecemeal, in order to get it off. It would have been quite impossible to unbutton his coat while he had that inscription on. The process seemed to make Miss Welsh extremely sad. It made Mr. Bennett sadder still. When she had finished her conscientious piece of work she crossed her hands meekly in front of her and looked up at him with a rapturous gaze. Mr. Bennett did not seem to feel rapturous at all.

"Now, Hannah, take the sack which Mr. Bennett wore beneath his coat and hold it open for him, and enable him to step inside."

The sack was lying on the floor. Miss Welsh, with a half-uttered sigh, picked it up, and held the mouth wide open. Mr. Bennett scowled first at the lady, then at the bag. He raised his left foot gingerly, and placed it in the opening. Miss Welsh assisted him in thrusting his leg well home. Then there was a pause.

"Perhaps, Mr. Bennett, you had better put you arms round Hannah's neck," observed Miss Jones.

She was engaged in lighting a second cigarette at the ashes of the first.

Mr. Bennett put his arms about Miss Welsh's neck and thrust his other leg into the sack.

"Draw it up about his waist," remarked Miss Jones. By now the second cigarette was well alight.

Miss Welsh drew it up about his waist. It was a good-sized sack, so that, although a man of at least the average height, being drawn up it reached his loins.

"Mr. Bennett, hold the sack in that position with both your hands." Mr. Bennett held the sack in that position with both his hands. "Hannah, in the bottom of the hanging cupboard you will find some cord. Get it out."

In a mechanically melancholy way Miss Welsh did as she was told. The cord, being produced, took the shape of a coil of rope, about the thickness of one's middle finger.

"Make two holes in the front of the sack and pass the cord through them." With the same sad air Miss Welsh acted on Miss Jones's fresh instructions. She made two holes in the

front of the sack and passed the two ends of the cord through them.

"Now pass the cord over his shoulders, make two holes in the back of the sack, pass the cord through them, then draw it tight."

Again Miss Welsh obeyed, dolefully, yet conscientiously withal. The result was that when the rope was tightened—and Miss Welsh, in the most conscientious manner, drew it as tight as she possibly could—Mr. Bennett's lower portions were imprisoned in the sack in a manner which was hardly dignified. He might have been about to engage in a sack-race, only he did not appear to be in a sack-racing frame of mind. Miss Welsh seemed to feel that she was hardly treating him in the way in which one would wish to treat one's best young man. It was evident that Mr. Bennett had not the slightest doubt but that he was being used very badly indeed.

"Take the bottle and sponge, which you will find in his right-hand pocket, and the revolver, which you will find in his left, and place them on the bed." Miss Welsh did as her mistress told her. "Now tie him up with the cord so as to render him incapable of moving a limb. There are thirty-two yards of it. With that

quantity, and the exercise of a little skill, you should be able to make him tolerably secure."

As Miss Jones said this it almost seemed that Miss Welsh started. Mr. Bennett certainly did. Miss Welsh looked at him with such piteous eyes; Mr. Bennett favoured her with an unmistakable scowl—a scowl, indeed, of singular malignity. Then she proceeded to tie him up. In doing so she showed considerable skill and conscientiousness to boot. She first passed the rope two or three times right round him, so as to pinion his arms to his sides. Then, putting her foot up against his side, so as to enable her to use it as a lever, she hauled the rope as tight as she could. She did not seem to enjoy the hauling part of it—nor did Mr. Bennett, for the matter of that. She was a woman of undeniable strength; it was a wonder that she did not cut in two the man she had promised to marry. When the rope was at its utmost tension she made a most dexterous knot. He would have been tolerably secure had she done no more. But she did a great deal more; in that conscientious way she had she ran the rope about his legs, hauling it fast with the same ingenuity of method—with such energy, in fact, that she

hauled him off his legs, and both he and she fell flat upon the floor.

"Pick yourself up, Hannah; and you had better continue to tie Mr. Bennett where he lies —you will find it more convenient, perhaps."

Miss Welsh acted on Miss Jones's hint. But, however it may have added to her convenience, so far as Mr. Bennett was concerned it made the matter worse. She performed her task in such a very conscientious way; she rolled him over and over, she knelt on him—to give her leverage in hauling she even stood on him—she stood him on his feet and on his head. It certainly was *not* a favourable example of the way in which a young woman should use her best young man.

"Now, Hannah, you can stand Mr. Bennett on his feet," remarked Miss Jones, when she saw that Miss Welsh had completed her task. "If Mr. Bennett is unable to stand you had better prop him up with his back against the wall."

Miss Welsh propped Mr. Bennett up with his back against the wall: he would have certainly been unable to stand alone. Miss Jones addressed herself to him:

"You see, Mr. Bennett, how entirely I have

Hannah under my control. She is beautifully subjective. As I pointed out to you before, I assure you I have obtained some really remarkable results with Hannah. I hope that you have enjoyed all that you have seen—have you?"

Mr. Bennett feebly shook his head. He did not seem to have sufficient energy left to enable him to say he hadn't. He was too much tied up. Miss Jones went on—

"Before we part—and we are about to part, for the present, at least—I should like to address to you a few appropriate remarks. Burglary, I need not point out to you, Mr. Bennett, is criminal, and not only criminal, but cowardly. You select, as a rule, the night. You choose, preferentially, a house in which the inhabitants are helpless. You steal upon them unawares, prepared, if necessary, to take their lives at the moment when they are least able to defend them. You yourself are a coward of the most despicable sort, or you would never have come, in the dead of the night, certainly to rob, and perhaps to kill, an unprotected woman. I cannot describe to you the satisfaction which I feel when I consider that this is a case of the biter bit. When I think how

conscious you yourself must be of how completely the tables have been turned, I assure you that I am ready to dance about the room with joy. I trust, Mr. Bennett, that you will perceive and allow that these few remarks point a moral and adorn a tale. What I am now about to do with you is this. You brought that chloroform to stupefy me. On the contrary, with it Hannah shall stupefy you. When you are stupefied she will open the window, she will drag you to it, and she will drop you out. There is only a drop of about twelve feet. There is a flower-bed beneath. I hope you will not fall hard. You will damage the flowers, I am afraid; but, under the circumstances, I will excuse you that. You will lie there through the night. In the morning I will take care that a policeman finds you there. He will see the inscription written by yourself, and sewn on your breast by Hannah. He will see that you are George Bennett, the burglar, and he will act on the hint contained in the last line —he will make further inquiries at Acacia Villa. I assure you I will answer them. I will prosecute you with the utmost rigour of the law. You have doubtless, in the course of your career, been guilty of multitudinous crimes.

I think I know a means of bringing every one of them home to you. You will be sentenced to a long term of penal servitude. For a considerable time to come I shall know where to find you should I desire to subject you to further experiment."

As Miss Jones made these observations, which she did in the sweetest and most musical of voices, she continued to enjoy her cigarette. A fairer picture of feminine indulgence in the nicotian weed, it is not improbable, was never seen. But neither Mr. Bennett nor Miss Welsh seemed to appreciate the opportunity they had of observing the fair picture under circumstances of such exceptional advantage—the gentleman even less than the lady. After a short pause the beautiful young smoker gave a few instructions to Miss Welsh:

"Hannah, take that bottle of chloroform and that sponge. Empty the contents of the bottle on to the sponge; then press the sponge against Mr. Bennett's mouth and nose, and hold it there."

As Miss Jones said this an expression of great agony struggled through the stupor which was the prevailing characteristic of Mr. Bennett's face. It seemed as though he struggled to

speak. But his tongue was mute. Miss Welsh, too, seemed unutterably sad. At the same time she did as her mistress bade. She drew the cork out of the bottle and emptied the contents on to the sponge. As she did so Mr. Bennett's eyes passed from Miss Welsh to Miss Jones, and from Miss Jones to Miss Welsh, with something of that look of dumb agony which it is so painful to see at times upon the face of a dog. Miss Welsh emptied the bottle to its latest drop. She advanced towards Mr. Bennett, labelled, tied, and propped up against the wall. He made a perceptible effort to give expression to his agony in speech. But Miss Welsh gave him no time. She clapped the sponge upon his mouth and nose, pressing his head with all her force against the wall. He shivered, gave a sort of sigh, and fell, lying where he had fallen. Under Miss Welsh's forcible manipulation the anæsthetic had quickly done its work.

"Open the window wide!" Miss Welsh opened the window wide. "Pick Mr. Bennett up!" Miss Welsh picked him up. "Carry him to the window!" She carried him to the window. It was a curious spectacle to see her bearing all that was near and dear to her to his ignominious doom. "Throw him out!" She

threw him out. There was a momentary silence. Then came the sound of a thud. Mr. Bennett had fallen on the flower-bed beneath. "Shut the window down!" Miss Welsh shut the window down. "Go to the door, turn round, and look at me!" Miss Welsh did as she was bidden. She shuddered when her eyes encountered her mistress's glorious orbs.

The young smoker, raising her exquisitely-shaped hand, made a slight movement with it in the air.

"Leave the room and go to bed!" she said. Miss Welsh left the room and disappeared.

When she was left alone Miss Cecilia Jones carefully extinguished her cigarette, putting the unconsumed fragment in a little ash-tray which was fastened to the wall above her head. She replaced the pillows in their former position; under one of them she placed her revolver, on it she placed her head. Touching one of the ivory buttons, which she could easily do from where she lay, instantly the room was dark. In the darkness, having made herself comfortable between the sheets, she set herself to woo sweet sleep.

Ninepence!

I HAD gone in to get a glass of ale—into the four-ale bar. The place was pretty full. Scarcely had I begun to absorb my liquid when a gentleman of the nondescript sort, having a remnant of a red handkerchief tied about his neck, favoured me with this inquiry:

"If a party what you knew nothink at all about, and never seed afore in all your dyes, was to ask you to lend 'im ninepence, would you lend it 'im?"

As I thought it possible that the party in question might be himself, I lost no time whatever in replying, "Certainly not."

He turned to a friend with sandy hair and a suit of clothes which, unless he had decreased to half his size since first he had them, must originally have been somebody else's.

"That is what I says. Isn't that what I says? I says I wouldn't. No more I wouldn't."

The friend tilted his cap over his eyes, and he dug the knuckles of his right hand into the back of his head. I have not the faintest notion why. And he held forth thus:

"It was like this here. I was in the bar, yer know, along with some other parties, yer know, as it might be me and you in 'ere, when 'e comes in."

"Who come in?"

"Why this 'ere bloke. He says to me, 'If this ain't a pretty start, what is?' I says, 'What's up now?' He says, 'Just cast your eyes round me.' And he lifts up the tails of 'is coat—'e 'ad a tail-coat on, leastways it 'ad been a tail-coat once—and 'e says, 'Them 's trousers.' I says, 'They don't look it.' 'E says, 'They don't. And that's 'ow I'll lose a fortune.' I says, ''Ow do you make that out?' 'E says, 'I'll tell yer, seeing as 'ow you're a friend.'"

"Was 'e a friend of yourn? I thought yer said yer'd never seed 'im afore?"

"More I 'adn't. 'E draws the back of 'is 'and acrost 'is mug, and 'e says, 'I suppose you couldn't spare a sup?' Well, I let 'im 'ave a drop, and 'e pretty nearly drained me. 'I'll tell you all about it,' 'e says. 'It's like this—like this 'ere. I'm a hartist, that's what I am

—a profeshunal—yes. And I 've got a hingagement to-night at one of the fust music-'alls in London – the very fust. I 'm going to do my hextra speshul turn. It 'll be worth to me every farden of 'arf-a-quid—yes. And now it 's orf.' I says, ''Ow do yer make that out?' 'E pulls up the tails of 'is coat, ''Cause of them. Speaking, as it might be, as one hartist to another hartist, as a hartist, 'ow would you like to go on to do a hextra speshul turn in one of the fust music-'alls in London in them for trousers? And, mind you, mine 's a drawin'-room entertainment, and no lies—that 's what mine is. Yes, straight.' 'Well,' I says, 'I shouldn't.' 'E says, 'Of course you wouldn't; you couldn't. Why, they 'd 'oot at yer. Yes. So I 've got to chuck it.' I says, 'That 's 'ard.' 'E says, 'It is 'ard; it 's bitter 'ard—cruel 'ard.' 'E leans agin the counter, and he takes 'old, casual like, of a pewter what belonged to a chap as was be'ind 'im, and 'e lifts it to 'is lips, as if 'e didn't know what 'e was a-doing of. But the chap as the pewter belonged to, 'e grabs 'old of it, and 'e says, 'Excuse me, who 's a-payin'?' And this bloke says, seemin' quite took aback-like, 'I beg your pardon, sir. It was a haccident.' And the chap, 'e says, 'We 'll call it a haccident,' and

he drains the pewter right off, so as to make sure. And this 'ere bloke what I 'm a-telling you of, he wipes his mouth agin, and he looks at me. But I wasn't a-taking any. So 'e says, 'And what makes it all the 'arder is what I 'm going to tell yer—you bein' a friend o' mine.'"

"I thought you says 'e wasn't a friend o' yourn."

"More 'e wasn't. 'Ow could he be? Don't I tell yer I never saw 'im afore?"

"Well, 'e 'ad got a nerve, 'e 'ad. Some of 'em does 'ave."

"It was only 'is kid, you know. 'E says, 'I 've got one of the finest pair of trousers there is in all England—straight, I have. 'Well,' I says, 'if I was you I 'd put 'em on.' 'E says, 'They 're spouted. I was just a-going to get 'em out when I come in 'ere.' 'Why don't you 'urry,' I says, 'and get 'em out?' 'I can't.' 'Why can't you?' 'Sold the ticket.' 'What for?' 'Tuppence.' 'Can't yer buy it agin?' ''Aven't got the tuppence.' 'I can't make you out,' I says. 'Fust yer say you 're going to get your trousers out o' pawn, then yer say you 've sold the ticket, then yer say you haven't got the tuppence to buy it back agin. Where do you think you 're going to get the tuppence

from?' 'E says, 'That's what I want to know. Where am I?' I says, ''Ow much is there on the trousers?' 'E says, 'Sevenpence.' 'What,' I says, 'sevenpence on the finest pair of trousers there is in all England! They must be odd 'uns.' 'I might 'ave 'ad an 'eap o' money,' 'e says, 'an 'eap, but I didn't want it. That's where it was.' 'Was you in funds when you pawned your trousers?' 'Of course I was.' I says, 'I don't see no of course about it.' 'E says, 'Where else was I to put 'em?'

"I says, 'Wasn't there your legs? Was yer legs in pawn?' 'E says, 'That's different. I wasn't speakin' about that.' I says, 'Well, then, I am.' 'E leans back agin the counter, and 'e looks up at the ceiling, and 'e says, 'Ninepence between me and fortune. Every farden of 'arf-a-quid. Perhaps several 'arf-a-quids. If any lady or gentleman'—'e spoke like a reading book—'was to advance me the loan of ninepence for to enable me to clothe my legs with a pair of trousers as was suited to one of the fust music-'alls in London, and as would do credit to any hartist on the boards, I shall not cease for to remember the haction while the breath remains within my body. That is hall I 'ave to say. I say no more.' But 'e'd said

enough. You should 'ave 'eard 'im—done yer good. Of course, that 'ushed the patter. No one wasn't going to say nothing after that. Not 'ardly. Presently one woman says, 'I 'll give a penny if anyone else will.' This 'ere bloke took off 'is 'at. 'Madam, I thank you; as a hartist I thank you.' Then a lady what was with this other lady says, 'Susan, if you 'll give a penny, I 'll give a penny too.' Then this 'ere bloke's 'at come off again. Then there was a whip round. But it hung fire a bit. Nobody didn't quite ketch on. So this 'ere other lady, she says, 'It seems 'ard that a man can't earn 'is daily bread 'cause he ain't got no trousers to earn it in, don't it, Susan?' And Susan says, 'It do seem hard.' And this 'ere bloke, 'e says, 'It's cruel 'ard.' Then one chap says, 'I 'll give a pennyworth.' And another chap give a pennyworth. And presently there was the ninepence."

"Did you give a pennyworth?"

"Not me."

"Why didn't yer?"

"'Cause I hadn't got it."

"Would yer if yer 'ad?"

"Not me."

"Why wouldn't yer?"

"'Cause 'e was only a kiddin'."

"'Ow d'ye know 'e was only a kiddin'?"

"Anyone could tell 'e was."

"Them other parties couldn't tell 'e was."

"That's their look out."

"'Ere's a bloke what's going to earn 'arf-a-quid——"

"'E warn't going to earn no 'arf-a-quid no more than you are."

"If I wanted yer to lend me ninepence, would yer lend it me?"

"No."

"Why wouldn't yer?"

"'Cause I 'aven't got it."

"You never don't seem to 'ave nothink."

"I 'ave as much as you, perhaps, once in a while."

"I've just stood yer 'arf a pint."

"And I've stood you 'arf a pint more than once, and more than twice."

"I don't say you 'aven't." The original speaker turned to me. "If a friend was to ask you to lend 'im ninepence, wouldn't you lend it 'im?"

"That would depend on whether I had it."

"You, being a gentleman, of course you would have it."

I had finished my ale. I sidled towards the door.

" I fear that does not necessarily follow."

The man advanced.

" Look 'ere, if I was to ask you to lend me ninepence——"

" Excuse me. I 'm afraid I must be off."

And I was off.

I have a moral conviction that if I had stayed much longer that man would have tried to wriggle ninepence out of me.

A Battlefield Up-to-Date

I SAID to Nowell at the time that I didn't altogether like the notion. He seemed astonished.

"I thought you stipulated for something both novel and surprising?"

"Yes," I admitted, "I did. But I do not want the roof blown off. I don't want either the novelty or the surprise to go so far as that. This is an evening party, Nowell. The persons present will be friends of mine."

Nowell was sarcastic — almost rude. He appeared to be of opinion that "A Battlefield Up-to-Date, with Realistic Illustrations and Experiments," was just the theme for a drawing-room lecture.

"Steingard," he observed, "is an enthusiast— a man in a million. Think of the kudos it will bring you to have the ideas of a man like that first given to the world upon your premises—

your party 'll be immortal. Steingard's theories will revolutionise the art of warfare—they 'll amaze you."

Steingard was the individual who was going to lecture. I never saw him before that fatal night—and I 've never seen him since. He had better let me catch him.

I did not mention to my wife what was to be the lecturer's theme until the actual morning of the appointed day—I had had my qualms all through. She at once remarked that the party would have to be postponed—or the lecture. She was not going to have cannons let off in her drawing-room—nor dynamite either. Was I insane? or was I merely a senseless idiot? Did I not know that the mere explosion of a pistol at the theatre brought her to the verge of hysterics? Did I or did anyone else suppose that machine-guns discharging two thousand shots a minute could be fired with impunity at her guests? Was that my notion of an evening party? If so, perhaps I had better let the people know before they came.

I assured her that there would not be any machine-guns nor dynamite—nor, indeed, anything of the kind. Nowell had given me his word of honour that there would be no ex-

plosives of any sort. What there would be I did not know, but I had obtained a distinct guarantee that there would be nothing to "go off." Still, I went to Nowell to tell him I thought that perhaps after all the lecture had better be put off. Only as he turned out to be out of town, and I didn't know Steingard's address, I felt that all I could do would be to hope for the best.

If I had had the faintest shadow of a notion of what that best would be!

As soon as the guests began to arrive I perceived that the little programme I had arranged to open the evening with was not altogether relished.

"Well, Mr. Parker," asked Mrs. Griffin, as I met her at the door, "what are you going to give us this time to amuse us till the dancing begins? Your ideas are always so original. Last year you gave us that beautiful little play."

"And this year I am going to give you something novel and surprising. The distinguished scientist, Steingard, will give you a vivid impressionistic picture of a battle up-to-date, as it will exist under conditions created by himself."

"Oh!" She looked a trifle blank. "And where is he going to give it us—in here?"

She glanced round the room, as if she felt that, for an exhibition of that particular kind, space was a little restricted. I admitted to myself that the apartment was getting filled. My wife's mother became quite excited directly she heard what was about to take place.

"My goodness gracious, Henry," she exclaimed, "whatever do you mean? You know I am so sensitive that I cannot bear the slightest allusion to war and bloodshed. I shall insist on remaining in Louisa's bedroom till all is over."

And she did insist—showing herself to be wiser than she supposed. As I gradually became conscious that others would have insisted had they not feared the appearance of rudeness, I felt that Nowell had been an ass in supposing that such a subject would fitly usher in a little dance, and that I had been another in not snubbing him upon the spot. So, as Steingard was behind his time, I decided that when he did come I would ask him to stop and join the party and have a bit of supper, and just casually as it were put off the lecture to some future occasion.

But I was not prepared for the kind of man Steingard proved himself to be.

Directly he arrived I ran out into the street

and found him getting out of a four-wheeled cab, the top of which was covered with large wooden cases.

"You are Mr. Steingard? Delighted to meet you. You are a little late; so, as we're just beginning dancing, I think we'll have the lecture some time next week. But of course you'll stop and join the—eh—festive throng?"

"Your name is Barker?"

I explained that my name was Parker. He spoke with a strong foreign accent, and in a tone of voice which I instinctively disliked. He was about six and a half feet high, and had a moustache which stood out three inches on either side of his face; not at all the sort of looking person with whom one would care to quarrel.

"I have not come to be made a fool of," he remarked. "I have come to give a lecture, and that lecture I will give!"

And he gave it. It is all very well to say that when I saw what sort of man he was I ought not to have let him into the house. But he was invited, and I have the instincts of a gentleman. So they hauled four great wooden cases up the stairs. It took six strong men to do it; they broke the banisters and knocked

pieces out of the wall as they went. When the cases were opened they proved to be full of bottles of all sorts, shapes, sizes, and colours.

"Reminds you of the old Polytechnic. Do you remember the Leyden jars they used to have?"

When George Foster said that in a sort of whisper I thought of Edison's ideas of the dreadful part which electricity might be made to play in modern warfare. I did not require any illustrations of electrocution in my house, so I asked the lecturer a question.

"I suppose it has nothing to do with electricity?"

"Electricity? It is not electricity which kills men like flies, do not believe it. It is what I have in here."

He waved his hand towards his bottles. His manner was not reassuring.

"And of course there's nothing explosive?"

"Explosive? What have I to do with explosives?—ask of yourself. It is not dynamite, it is not mélinite, it is not cordite which destroys millions. It is noding of the kind. The Great Death is in these bottles."

He said this in a way which made me quite uncomfortable — it was most unsuited to an

evening party. Every moment I liked the fellow less and less, towards his bottles I felt an absolute aversion. I own that my impulse would have been to have sneaked out into the street and strolled round the square till the lecture was finished. But as I occupied the position of host I was in duty bound to see it through. And I did. Shall I ever forget it? Anything more monstrous than Nowell's idea of what was a fitting prelude to a little party I never yet encountered.

The lecturer commenced. He was as grave as a judge. It gave you the creeps to hear him. There was nothing humorous about him; he was a dreadful man. His accent was peculiar.

"In modern warfare de battle is not to de soldier, it is to de ghemist. I will prove it to you very easily. I have here dree bottles. They are little bottles"—they were, quite small—"yet I have only to take de stoppers out and you will know it as certainly as if I had exploded dree dynamite bombs."

I am sure the people paled, it was enough to make them.

"De first bottle will make you cough, de second will affect your eyesight, and de dird

bottle will make you ill. I will soon show to you dat I am not lying. From de first bottle I will now take de stopper."

He did, before anyone could stop him; in fact, before I, for one, had any idea of what it was that he was driving at. Directly he did so the atmosphere of the room became impregnated with an acrid odour which had a most irritating effect on the tonsils of the throat. Whether the man was a maniac or not, to this hour I have not certainly decided; but there he stood, the stopper in his hand, the atmosphere growing worse and worse, my guests staring at him with scared faces, every second increasing their sense of discomfort. One person began to cough, then another, then another, until presently everyone was coughing as I doubt if they had ever coughed before. It was a horrid spectacle. As for me—my throat is uncomfortably sensitive—I expected every moment I should choke.

"Did I not say," observed the scoundrel Steingard, "dat de first bottle would make you cough? I will now replace de stopper."

He replaced it. By degrees that peculiar acrid quality in the air became less prominent. People began to recover—just in time. It is

my belief that if they had continued to cough much longer something serious would have happened. As it was several of them were too exhausted to be able to give expression to their feelings in audible speech.

" I will now remove de stopper from de second bottle."

Had I been able to do so I should have prevented him, even at the risk of a scene—I am sure I should, I don't care who denies it. But the truth is I was so shaken that it was all I could do to stand, and before I was sufficiently recovered to allow of my interference the miscreant had worked his wicked will. He had unstoppered bottle No. 2, and for the former acrid odour there was substituted a pungent something which affected one like an unusual kind of smelling-salts. One's eyes not only began to water, they continued to water. They watered more and more. The tears trickled down our noses. We had to use our pocket-handkerchiefs to mop them up with. The more we mopped the more they flowed. It was ludicrous. We were literally blinded by our tears. Nothing could have been more out of place in a jovial gathering. For my part my lachrymal ducts were acted on to

such an extraordinary extent that I could see nothing. I endured the acme of discomfort.

"Did I not say," remarked the experimental Steingard—he spoke as if he were uttering the merest commonplace!—"dat de second bottle would affect de eyesight? Did I choose, de mere continuation of de stopper out of de bottle in de end would make you blind. But for our purpose to-night it is not necessary to go so far as dat. We will now pass on to de dird bottle."

"Pardon me, sir—excuse me for one moment!" The interruption came from General Wheeler, and evinced considerable presence of mind. Steingard paused with his hand upon the stopper. The General went on. "Did I understand you to say that the effect of unstoppering that other bottle will be to make us ill?"

"Yes, my friend, dat is so. I am now about to show it to you."

"You needn't, it is unnecessary. I'm ill already. So ill, indeed, that I shall send for a physician the instant I reach home. And I'm going home at once. If this is a party it's the first I've ever been to, and I'll take my oath it shall be the last. Now, Mrs. Wheeler! Now, Augusta! Philippa! Mary!

Matilda! Lucy! you girls! George! Frederic! Ferdinand! you boys, put your things on and come away with me at once. We're not going to stop here to be slaughtered by way of illustrating a murderous lecture on warfare up-to-date."

And the General began to collect his numerous progeny with what was, undoubtedly, a considerable show of heat. That he should have been moved to such behaviour in my house was most distressing. My wife regards the Wheelers as being among the most distinguished of her acquaintance—though an uglier lot of girls I never saw. But the General was not the only person who felt himself outraged—I wish he had been.

"Oh!—oh!—oh! Take me out of this dreadful house before I faint!"

That's what my wife's aunt, Mrs. Merridew, said before the whole assemblage—and from that particular aunt my wife has always had the most sanguine expectations. Of course, when she went on like that, my wife began at me—there are occasions on which Louisa has no sense of propriety, nor of justice either.

"This is Mr. Parker's idea of a little surprise! You can always rely on Mr. Parker doing any-

thing to please his friends! When Mr. Parker's in sight you never need look far for a fool!"

That was the sort of remark she kept making —out loud; it was most annoying. I endeavoured to calm her, and the General, and Mrs. Merridew, and others—for I was pained to see that a general feeling of unrest was making itself unpleasantly obvious. While I was striving, as it were, to spread oil upon the troubled waters, the voice of the miscreant Steingard was heard to observe:

"I will now remove de stopper from de dird bottle. If de ladies and gentlemen will keep deir seats dey will be de better able to abbreciate de success of dis exberiment."

In a moment the room was filled with a perfume—I use the word advisedly!—of a kind which no pen could adequately describe. Never did I come across anything of the sort before—it was astounding. Most of the people had been standing up; there and then they most of them sat down again—they had to. I noticed the General drop back on to his chair with a kind of gasp. Folks looked at each other with startled faces; they looked at me; they looked at the lecturer—that bottle fiend; they looked about them dumbly, as if in search of something

—speech was impossible while that bottle remained unstoppered. Their countenances were transfigured—it is really no exaggeration to say that they turned most of the colours of the rainbow. Some crammed their handkerchiefs into their mouths; some pinched their nostrils between their fingers; some clapped their hands to the pits of their stomachs. Nothing they could do was the slightest protection against the mephitic vapours which issued from that unstoppered bottle. It was a moving spectacle to see those people all bent double—especially if you regarded it from the point of view of the host, and remembered that you had invited them to an evening party.

At last—it seemed a long at last to me, but I suppose, after all, it could only have been a second or two—at last those against the door began to shuffle through it—when they were once through they never stopped till they had rushed downstairs and were out into the street. Others followed, a tottering crew, so that by degrees the room was emptied, and finally—a happy finally!—my guests, my wife, and I stood, a shivering crowd, on the windblown pavement.

At this point the demon Steingard came

out on the landing and shouted to us, so that we heard him in the street.

"Did I not say de dird bottle would make you ill? Very well den — is it not true? Has it not routed you—like a flock of sheep? Just so would it rout an army. Not all de armies of all de nations would stand against dat bottle when it was unstobbered. Now, ladies and gentlemen, if you will return I will bass on to a fresh branch of my subject—or, rather, I will commence my subject brober, and I will show you dings combared to which that bottle is as noding—noding at all. You shall see if I am lying."

That frightful threat finished it; settled the affair out of hand; concluded it at once. Nothing thereafter could have persuaded my guests to stand upon the order of their going. They went at once—before the party had had a chance of starting. It was worse than a catastrophe—it was a cataclysm. I can only trust that such a disaster is unparalleled in the history of festive gatherings. I had not the heart to attempt to stay their going. I was too demoralised, both physically and mentally. The impression made upon me by that third bottle was an enduring one.

When I returned into the house the creature who was the cause of all the trouble was stlil standing on the landing. He appeared unconscious of the deeds which he had done.

"I am waiting. Do not de ladies and gentlemen return?"

"Mr. Steingard," I said, with as much firmness as at that moment I had it in my power to display, "come downstairs and bring your bottles with you."

He seemed at a loss to understand my meaning.

"My friend, what do you mean? My lecture is hardly begun—my lecture brober not at all."

"Begun!" I screamed. "Begun!—It's finished!—So's the party!"

He actually betrayed symptoms of irritation.

"Noding of de kind—what you know of it? I have still sixty-seven bottles with which I wish to try my little experiments."

That was enough for me. Still sixty-seven bottles! And, for all I knew, or for anything I could do to prevent him, he might unstopper them, not only one by one, but all together, and at any moment. Half a dozen policemen were outside—they had gathered together under the

apparent impression that in my establishment a riotous assemblage was taking place. I called three or four of them into the house. I pointed to Mr. Steingard on the landing.

"Put that man outside—with his bottles!"

A painful and, I may add, an expensive scene ensued. But at last there was an end of Steingard, and of the party.

The next day I called on Nowell. He had returned to town.

"Nowell," I asked, more in sorrow than in anger, "what induced you to suppose that 'A Battlefield Up-to-Date, with Realistic Illustrations and Experiments,' would be a suitable subject for an evening party?"

He put his feet on the table and his hands in his pockets, and he rattled his coppers—and he smiled.

"Well, you see, my dear Parker, I wasn't invited. I am aware that it was an oversight—the purest oversight. But, of course, if I had been invited I should not have recommended Steingard's lecture."

I was aware he had not been invited—perfectly aware. There had been no oversight about it. The man is not a member of our social circle. We had never meant to invite

him. But to think that merely on that account he should have played us such a trick!

It just shows what an amount of malevolence is hidden away in the depths of human nature.

At the present moment I am scarcely on speaking terms with a single one of my old friends. They all seem to think that I did it on purpose.

Mr. Harland's Pupils

I.

MR. HARLAND'S first pupil from America made his appearance at Mulberry House School under rather peculiar circumstances. Mr. Harland received one morning this tersely-worded note:—

"219, TWENTIETH STREET, NEW YORK.

"SIR,—I have the honour to inform you that I am shipping my son, John F. Ernest, to your academy. He will arrive per s.s. *Germanic.* I have decided to educate him in England. Please acknowledge enclosed bank draft, value two hundred and fifty dollars ($250), in payment of six months' fees. Any sum in excess, to the amount of one hundred dollars ($100), will be paid, on demand, by my agents, Messrs. Rödenheim, of London.

"Yours faithfully,

"J. BINDON.

"P.S.—John F. Ernest to stay the holidays."

Mr. Harland received this communication by the morning post, and on the afternoon of the same day there appeared at Mulberry House the John F. Ernest thus alluded to. He was a slender, fair-haired boy, about twelve or thirteen years of age. He was self-possessed enough for thirty. He had come quite alone, he explained to the schoolmaster and the schoolmaster's wife. Apparently he, a tender child just in his teens, thought no more of travelling from America to England than the lady thought of travelling from her own village to the next. It is generally understood that at least the elementary education to be obtained in the United States is not to be despised. When asked why his father had sent him to England to get what he would have got equally well at home:

"I rather guess," replied John F. Ernest, "that my pa, he was raised at Duddenham."

Mulberry House School was situated on the outskirts of the delightful village of Duddenham. Mr. and Mrs. Harland glanced at one another. It almost seemed that it was as they feared. A J. Bindon, otherwise "Jolly Jack," had been known at Duddenham, not wisely, nor in any way pleasantly, but far too well.

Although he had removed himself, for the good of Duddenham, some fourteen or fifteen years before, his memory—which had a strong savour—lingered still. However, Mr. and Mrs. Harland allowed no hint to escape them that that J. Bindon might be in any way connected with the father of John F. Ernest.

The term passed away. During the holidays the Harlands went to enjoy the ozone-laden breezes at Bielsham-by-the-Sea. While they were staying there Mr. Harland received a second letter from America, a communication which was, in some respects, a colourable imitation of the first.

"219, TWENTIETH STREET, NEW YORK.

"SIR,—I have the honour to inform you that I am shipping my son, John F. Stanley, to your academy. He will arrive per s.s. *Aurania*. I have decided to educate him in England. Please acknowledge enclosed bank draft for two hundred and fifty dollars ($250) in payment of six months' fees. Any sum in excess, to the amount of one hundred dollars ($100), will be paid, on demand, by my agents, Messrs. Rödenheim, of London.

"Yours faithfully,

"J. BINDON.

"P.S.—You will also receive, per same ship, my son, John R. Stephen. Enclosed find second draft ($250). For balance, apply Messrs. Rödenheim."

"Mr. Bindon," observed Mr. Harland when he had finished reading this epistle, "appears to be rather a curious man."

"What is the matter?" inquired his wife. "Is he going to withdraw that son of his?"

"Not exactly. He has 'shipped'—the word is his own—two more. The second, who is 'shipped' in a postscript, is, apparently, a sort of afterthought."

When the lady and gentleman returned to Mulberry House the new-comers had arrived. The three Masters Bindon were interviewed together. One thing about them was noticeable—that they were all about the same age.

"How old are you?" asked the lady, addressing one of the strangers.

"Twelve."

"And you?"

"I'm twelve."

"Then," said the lady, "I suppose you are twins."

They did not look as though they were twins. One was big, and black, and bony; the other was short, and fat, and red. Still, as they both were twelve, and they were brothers—

"Twins?" said the red-haired lad. "I'm no twin. He's not my brother." He turned upon

the two other Masters Bindon with scorn in his eyes. "They 're neither of them my brothers. I disown them."

"John R. Stephen," remarked John F. Ernest, slipping his hand into that of the black-haired Master Bindon, "is my brother. John F. Stanley has disowned us from the first."

"Yes," said Rufus, "and I 'll disown you to the last."

"You wait," observed the black-haired Master Bindon, whose claim to fraternity was thus denied, "till we get outside. I 'll rub you down with a rail."

"I hope," said Mrs. Harland, when the Masters Bindon had withdrawn, "I do hope, Andrew, that there is nothing wrong."

"Pooh!" replied her husband. But when he was alone he rubbed his chin and murmured *sotto voce*, "It strikes me that there 's not much difference between J. Bindon and 'Jolly Jack.'"

He thought that there might be even less than he had imagined when one day, before the term was half-way through, he received a cablegram from New York:

"Son coming *Batavia.* Forgot to write. Draw Rödenheim. BINDON."

The son came. He proved to be John G. William. He, too, had just turned twelve. He did not seem pleased to see his brothers. Nor, to tell the truth, did they appear overjoyed at sight of him. He was a lad with a round bullet-shaped head, and was extraordinarily broad across the shoulders. He had not been twenty-four hours in the house before he had fought and thrashed the three other Masters Bindon. It was not surprising, when it was seen how he had damaged them, that his relatives, knowing his tastes and his capacity, had not welcomed him with open arms.

At tea Mrs. Harland, who had observant eyes, noticed that John F. Ernest was minus one of his front teeth. She inquired how he had lost it.

"John G. William, ma'am, has knocked it out."

"John G. William! Do you mean your brother who arrived to-day?"

John F. Ernest explained that he did.

Mrs. Harland, looking down the table, observed another Master Bindon whose eye looked queer. "How, my boy, did you manage to get that black eye?"

"John G. William," replied the black-haired—and black-eyed—youth.

"John G. William!" The lady, still allowing her glances to wander, lighted on a third Master Bindon, whose face was so dreadfully disfigured that it really made recognition difficult. "Good gracious!" she exclaimed. "What has happened to the child?"

This Master Bindon was the red-haired youth. He looked at the lady as well as the damaged state of his "optics" would permit. He uttered the ubiquitous name, "John G. William." Then he added, "He 's been fighting us. And, d——n him! he always is."

John G. William volunteered a statement on his own account.

"I told father I should lick 'em. He said he shouldn't be surprised but what they wanted it, and so I might."

It seemed curious for a father to give his son permission to "lick" his brothers, whom he was travelling 4000 miles to meet. Such conduct on the part of a father was scarcely in accordance with the traditions of Mulberry House. But the behaviour of the Masters Bindon one towards the other, not only now and then but as an invariable rule, was in itself a curiosity.

"Those Bindons," Mr. Harland told himself, some short time after the arrival of the latest

comer, "are certainly the most remarkable boys I ever remember to have met, especially John G. William."

But Mr. Harland had not become acquainted with all the peculiarities of the Bindon family yet.

One morning, perhaps six weeks after the advent of John G. William, Mr. Harland, coming in to breakfast, noticed, seated at table with his pupils, a boy who was to him a stranger. On that occasion Mr. Harland happened to be a couple of minutes late. The meal had been begun before he entered the room. As he came in, seated at the other side of the table, facing him, placidly eating his bread and butter, was this boy. He was a very thin boy, with high projecting cheek-bones and light hair, cut very close. He wore a pair of spectacles, or rather, they would have been a pair if one of the glasses had not happened to be broken. Altogether there was something about him which suggested that he had quite recently been engaged in a discussion of an animated character.

"Hollo!" cried Mr. Harland. "Who are you?"

"I am John P. Arthur Bindon."

His accent was nasal, undoubtedly the product of the land of the stars and stripes.

"Who?" repeated Mr. Harland, seeming a little puzzled.

"John P. Arthur Bindon." The boy took off his spectacles. "John G. William 's broken one of my glasses. He 's been licking me."

Mr. Harland looked about him, plainly at a loss. Mr. Moore, the usher, took his glance as containing an inquiry.

"I found him with the rest of the pupils in the playground."

"Oh," repeated Mr. Harland, "you found him with the rest of the pupils in the playground."

"I rather reckoned to find the others here," drawled the short-sighted youth, as, very carefully, he replaced the broken spectacles upon his nose. "We didn't agree. I guess they 're on the road."

"Is this"—Mr. Harland addressed his question to one of the other Masters Bindon—"is this your brother?"

"I disown him," answered Rufus, on whom the principal's glance happened to fall. "I disown 'em all."

"He is my brother," struck in the shrill

piping treble of John F. Ernest, "though he is the meanest-minded boy that ever put on shoes."

"I am not ashamed to admit," remarked John P. Arthur, still adjusting his broken spectacles, "that I appreciate the value of money. I have walked from Liverpool to save the charges."

"You have walked from Liverpool?"

"I understand it is a distance in the neighbourhood of one hundred and fifty miles. I have worn out a pair of boots. Still, I reckon I have saved better than half a dollar, net."

Mr. Harland took John P. Arthur up into his study. There the young gentleman explained.

"There was another row, so father decided to ship off three more of us. I rather think he must have forgotten to write, owing to the pressure of his business."

"Does your father keep an orphanage?"

John P. Arthur stared. "I never heard of it."

"Did you say he had shipped off three more of you? May I ask, then, where are the other two?"

"I left them at Liverpool. We didn't agree. I should calculate they're gone upon the burst. We each had twenty-five dollars and our fares." John P. Arthur slapped the inner pocket of his

coat. "I've still got my twenty-five, besides half a dollar saved out of my fare."

"May I ask the names of your two missing brothers?"

"One is John A. Francis, and the other—I forget the other's name."

It was Mr. Harland's turn to stare.

"You forget your brother's name?"

"There are such a lot of them that one gets mixed."

"I quite concede that there do appear to be a lot of them, and that one may get mixed, but still—your brother's name! May I ask the ages of the young gentlemen whom you presume have gone upon the burst? About your own?"

"I should say John A. Francis is younger than me. I fought him three times as we were crossing. I licked each time. He must be younger."

"And the young gentleman whose name you don't happen to remember?"

"He's older. He bangs me easy. Just picks me up and knocks me down. I reckon John G. William will find him pretty tough."

While Mr. Harland had been talking to John P. Arthur he had been paying no attention to his letters. When he turned to them he found

that among them there were two which threw some light upon the proceedings of the missing Masters Bindon. Here is the first:

"THE BARRACKS, LIVERPOOL.

SIR,—At our Holiness Meeting on Tuesday—Alleluia!—there came in a new recruit. He gave his name as Thompson Symes, and said that he was seventeen. He now says that his name is John A. Francis Bindon, and that his age is twelve. He originally stated that he was a pickpocket, and had been nine times in jail. He now says that he has never been in jail, but that he has been sent by his father in America to be a pupil in your school. We shall be obliged if you will inform us if you know anything of a boy named John A. Francis Bindon. We fear that his present statement is as false as the others he has made. Alleluia!—G. SMITH, *Major.*"

Here is the second:

"OFFICE OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE
RECLAMATION OF JUVENILE BEGGARS,
"LIVERPOOL.

"SIR,—A boy who was charged this afternoon at the Liverpool Police Court with the offence of begging tells a somewhat remarkable story. He has been remanded to the workhouse for a week to enable us to inquire into the truth of what he says.

"He is four feet seven inches in height, dark hair, pale face, and he has a deep scar upon his left cheek. Speaks with a decided American accent.

"He states that his name is John B. David Bindon, that he left New York on board the steamship *Ocean Star*, in company with his two brothers. The names of these two brothers he declares that he forgets, alleging that he has so many brothers that he cannot remember all their names. He says that they were coming from New York to be pupils in your school. On board ship they disagreed, and at Liverpool they parted. He does not know what became of his two brothers. He says that he himself had twenty-five dollars in his pockets in American currency. Part of this he spent upon confectionery and sweets, until he made some acquaintances in the street, who took him to what appears to have been a disreputable house. There they robbed him, not only of his money, but also of his clothes. They kept him, so he states, locked up for three days, only releasing him on his promising to appeal for alms, and on his undertaking to bring back the proceeds of his appeal. No sooner, according to his statement, did he commence to beg than he was given into custody.

"If you know anything, whether for good or ill, of a boy named John B. David Bindon, I should be obliged by your communicating at once with me at these offices. I have had much experience in these cases, and I think myself that the boy's story, strange though it seems, contains at least some portion of truth. Awaiting your early favour,

"I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

"EDWARD EVEREST, *Secretary*."

When Mr. Harland showed these letters to his wife, and told her John P. Arthur's story, the lady was, not unnaturally, surprised.

"Andrew, I am sure there is something wrong about those Bindons! There will be a scandal if you don't take care! I never heard of such a thing! Don't tell me that any man can have seven sons, all of an age! It's incredible on the face of the thing!"

Mr. Harland communicated with Mr. Smith and Mr. Everest. The two missing Masters Bindon appeared at Duddenham. They were given into the charge of the guard at Liverpool; the schoolmaster himself met them at the village station.

"Them boys," observed the guard, as he handed over his charges to the principal of Mulberry House, "them boys is nice ones."

Ten minutes after their appearance in the playground John G. William was having it out with John B. David.

"Andrew," called Mrs. Harland from an upper room, "those Bindons are fighting again."

"I see they are."

As a matter of fact the uproar had attracted her husband to his study window.

"They are an interesting family."

He stood at the window for a second or two observing the fray.

"I fancy that in John B. David John G. William has met his match. It is perhaps as well that he should."

He was aware, from previous experience, that if he interfered in one of the family discussions it would only be renewed at the earliest opportunity. As he was wondering whether it would not be as well to let them fight it out and have done with it, at any rate for the time, a servant entered the room with a letter in her hand. The principal opened it. It was a cablegram:

"Forgot to advise last shipment. Three. Draw Rödenheim.—BINDON."

"What sort of a family can that be," inquired the schoolmaster of himself, "which is so large that the father overlooks such a trifling detail as the sending of three of his sons, all of tender years, unescorted, across the Atlantic Ocean? And when, a month after their departure, the incident does occur to his mind, he contents himself with sending nine words—and nine such words—in a telegram. I think I will go up in person to Messrs. Rödenheim, and make a few inquiries."

He made them, but he received little information in return. Messrs. Rödenheim received him with courtesy. They informed him that, up to a certain amount, they were instructed to honour his calls; that Mr. Bindon was a client of theirs, financially, of the highest standing. But as to his family affairs: they were simply bankers, and as such Mr. Harland could not suppose that they concerned themselves with the family affairs of their customers.

"One thing seems pretty clear," said Mr. Harland to his wife, when he returned to Mulberry House. "There appears, in the case of the prolific parent of the Bindons, to be plenty of money, and that is more than can be said in the case of the parents of all my boys. I don't see myself, Maria, why I should object to there being seven, or even seventy brothers in a family, especially if the father of the seventy is a good paymaster, and all the seventy come to me."

"Of course there's that to be said."

"There's very much that to be said. The terms in my prospectus are thirty guineas per annum for boys of twelve, a reduction to be made for brothers. I have to make a reduction sometimes when there are no brothers. In this

case there are actually *seven* brothers, and, instead of being called upon to make a reduction—some fathers would want you to take the seven as though they were four!—I receive one hundred pounds a year with each, besides extras."

Mr. Harland smiled as he thought of the sum which he had drawn that day from Messrs. Rödenheim.

"No doubt that's nice enough."

"I don't know if you're aware that I receive more from those seven Bindons than from all the rest of my pupils put together. Under those circumstances I don't see how it concerns me if their father has a peculiar habit of shipping his offspring as though they were barrels of pork, and then forgetting to 'advise' me, as he calls it, of his 'shipments'!"

"But will it last?"

"Will what last? The Bindons? Are you afraid that John G. William will knock the rest of the family all to pieces? I don't think there is much fear of that now that John B. David has appeared upon the scene. It strikes me from what I have heard and seen that he will perform upon John G. William. I noticed at tea that John G. William's countenance seemed to be a little the worse for wear."

"But suppose tales got about, and the parents of the other boys objected to the presence of the Bindons—they certainly are the most remarkable children, for brothers too, I ever saw —and the other boys were taken away, and then the Bindons went, the school would have lost its character."

Mr. Harland reflected for a moment.

"I think I'll take the risk, Maria. So far as I am myself concerned I only hope that Mr. Bindon may 'ship' another seven."

The wish was father to the thought. Mr. Bindon shipped them. Not a fortnight after that discussion Mr. Harland had this letter:

"219, TWENTIETH STREET, NEW YORK.

"SIR,—I am shipping, per s.s. *City of Thay*, an assorted lot of five sons. My final selection not being yet made I am unable to advise you as to their names. For fees please draw, on their arrival, on Messrs. Rödenheim.

"Yours faithfully,

"J. BINDON.

"P.S.—Probably the lot may consist of seven."

"Maria," said Mr. Harland, when he handed this epistle to his wife, "Mr. Bindon is a truly remarkable man."

The lady read the letter.

"Andrew, what does he mean? 'An assorted lot of five sons. Probably the lot may consist of seven.' I take my stand, Andrew, and I insist upon an explanation. I will not have this man shooting his children—or what he calls his children—into my house as though they were coals. Seven sons all of an age were hard to swallow, but at fourteen I draw the line."

"You 're not a philosopher, Maria. At the rate of a hundred pounds a head I shouldn't draw the line at forty."

"Andrew, don't talk to me like that. Who is this man? And what is the mystery connected with his children? Did I tell you that the other morning I asked John P. Arthur how many brothers he had, and he said that he didn't know, there were always such a lot of fresh ones turning up?"

Mr. Harland rubbed his chin.

"I don't know, Maria, what difference it makes to us whether the boys we receive as pupils are the sons of Brown or Jones. It is not as though we went in for anything special in the way of birth and family. It isn't even as though we confined ourselves to the sons of so-called gentlemen. Mine is a middle-class school. In these days of competition with the Board

Schools one cannot choose one's pupils. I always welcome the sons of tradesmen, and I am quite sure I shall be always glad to receive any number of pupils at a hundred pounds a head, no matter who they are."

Probably, on reflection, Mrs. Harland fell into her husband's views. At dinner the principal of Mulberry House School made an announcement which, while it was of an interesting, was, at the same time, of a curious kind. It was when the pudding had been served.

"Boys, you will be glad to hear that I expect to receive, either to-day or to-morrow, five new pupils, and probably seven, but of the seven I am not quite sure. This piece of news should be specially interesting to the Masters Bindon, since the new pupils are their brothers." The headmaster's words were received with silence —possibly the silence of surprise. "I don't think that there is any other school in Europe which can claim to have had under its roof, at one and the same time, twelve brothers, and perhaps fourteen."

Up spake Rufus—John F. Stanley:

"I disown 'em," he observed; "I disown 'em all."

Mr. Harland smiled.

"But it does not follow because you disown them—which I am sorry to hear, because perhaps one of these days they may turn the tables and disown you—that therefore they are not your brothers."

"But they 're not my brothers, not one of all the lot of them. I 'm the only son."

"Yes," said Mr. Harland with gentle sarcasm, as his eyes, wandering round the table, rested on the other six; "I should say you were the only son."

Two days passed. There were still no signs of the latest "shipment." On previous occasions the Masters Bindon had appeared at Mulberry House within a few hours of the receipt of the "advice."

"I hope," suggested the principal to his wife when, on the evening of the second day, there was still no news, "that this is not another case of 'going on the burst.'"

On the afternoon of the following day Mrs. Harland was working in her own apartment, when the servant came rushing in. There was in the maid's bearing a suggestion of suppressed excitement.

"If you please, ma'am, there are a lot of little girls downstairs."

"A lot of little girls! What do they want?"

"If you please, ma'am, I don't know. I think they're foreigners. They say they've come to school."

The servant giggled. Mrs. Harland rose.

"Come to school! There must be some mistake. Where are they?"

"They're in the hall. And if you please, ma'am, there are three flies full of luggage."

Mrs. Harland went downstairs. A crowd of small girls were grouped together in the hall, varying in ages perhaps from six to fourteen.

The lady addressed herself to the largest.

"What is it you want?"

"We've come to school."

Mrs. Harland smiled.

"But this is a school for young gentlemen. No doubt you are looking for Miss Simpson's, Burlington House Academy. The flyman ought to have known."

"He said Mulberry House. He wrote it down."

The young lady held a piece of paper. She handed it to Mrs. Harland. On it were some words, inscribed in a handwriting which was becoming almost too familiar. At sight of it the lady felt an inward qualm.

"What is your name?"

"Clara Mary Dixon."

Unconsciously the lady gave a sigh of relief. It was not the name which she had dreaded.

"I'm sure there's some mistake."

"There's no mistake." Suddenly the young lady put her handkerchief up to her eyes. Immediately all the other young ladies followed suit. "You're trying to play it off on us. He wrote it down himself, he did. We never thought he was going to ship us off to Europe just 'cause he'd married ma."

The young ladies' voices were raised in lamentation. The servants stood giggling by. The flymen grinned upon the doorstep. Mrs. Harland deemed it inadvisable to continue the interview in public.

"Come this way." She led the way into the drawing-room. The weeping maidens followed. "Pray don't cry. The mistake, however it may have arisen, will soon be cleared up. Now tell me, where do you come from?"

"New—York—City!"

Mrs. Harland, when she received that answer, was conscious of another inward qualm.

"Who sent you to England?"

"Mr.—Bindon."

The lady sat down on a chair. She stared in speechless silence at the new arrivals. Then, rising, she rang the bell. The servant appeared.

"Tell your master I wish to speak to him in the drawing-room."

Scarcely had the housemaid turned her back than there came a loud ringing at the front-door bell. Another servant entered—the cook—in her hand a cablegram. Mrs. Harland was conscious that the envelope was addressed to Mr. Harland. As a rule enclosures addressed to him she held inviolate, but on this occasion she broke the rule. She tore the envelope open with a hand which slightly trembled. With her eyes she devoured the words which were written on the sheet of paper it had contained:

"Girls shipped by mistake. Boys following.—BINDON."

Those were the words which had been flashed across the seas. She read them over and over again. It seemed as though she could not grasp their meaning. She still held the telegram extended in her hand when her husband entered the room. That gentleman paused upon the threshold. Retaining the handle of the door in his hand, he appeared to be

making an effort to comprehend the meaning of the scene within.

"What is it you want, Maria?"

"I—I want nothing." The lady put her hand to her brow with a gesture which was almost tragic. "This is Mr. Bindon's latest shipment."

She stretched out her hands towards the strangers in a manner which really was dramatic. The girls had dried their eyes to enable them, perhaps, to study Mr. Harland to better advantage. They stood in a row, the tallest at one end and the shortest at the other. The line of height descended in an agreeably graduated scale. Mr. Harland stared at the girls. Then he stared at his wife. "I don't understand," he said.

"Read that!"

The lady thrust the cablegram into his hand. He read it. He read it once, he read it twice, he read it even thrice. Then crumpling it up he thrust both hands into his trouser pockets and he whistled.

"This is a pleasant state of things," he said.

"Is that all you have to say?" inquired his wife.

"Well, my dear, I may have a little more to say if you will give me a little time to reflect

upon the situation. It is a situation which requires reflection." He stared at the row of girls in front of him. He reflected. "This is a truly pleasant state of things. Your father, young ladies——"

"He is not our father," interposed the tallest of the row, Clara Mary.

"Not your father? Mr. Bindon is not your father?" Mr. Harland referred to the crumpled cablegram. "I am afraid that again I do not understand."

"We're the Miss Dixons. Ma's a widow. Mr. Bindon shipped us off to Europe the very day he married her. We never knew that we were going till just before we started, and I don't believe Ma knew it either."

Again the handkerchiefs were raised in a simultaneous row to tearful eyes.

"J. Bindon," murmured Mr. Harland, "*must* be Jolly Jack. You will be pleased to learn, young ladies," he added in a louder key, "that you have been shipped to Europe by mistake. I don't at this moment understand altogether how the mistake arose. There are eight of you—I perceive that there are eight—and one would think that a mistake to that extent would be one which it would be rather difficult to make.

Still, you will be gratified to learn, it has been made. Mr. Bindon has telegraphed to tell me so. We expected a shipment to consist of an assorted lot of sons, possibly five — possibly seven. I am informed in the telegram that that shipment is following. But whether we are to return at once the shipment which consists of you, or whether, so to speak, we are to give it warehouse room, there are no instructions yet to hand."

The row of girls stared at Mr. Harland, dry-eyed and open-mouthed.

He spoke in a tongue which was strange to them.

"Andrew," cried his wife, "I am ashamed of you! How can you talk like that!"

Mr. Harland continued, almost as if he were speaking to himself. "It occurs to me that I have read somewhere, it was perhaps in some old book, that in American schools they run—I believe the term is a correct one—the boys and girls together. I hope Mr. Bindon is not under the impression that such a system obtains in Duddenham."

"Andrew, it is shocking! Upon my word, I feel inclined to cry."

"Do not cry, Maria; do not cry. Suppose,

instead of crying, you come with me to the study, and let me say a word to you alone."

"Andrew," cried the lady, as she closed the study door, "I really am ashamed of you. How can you say such things—a man in your position?"

"A man in my position, Maria, is justified in saying anything, even damn. It is because my tongue inclines to adjectives, strong and pithy adjectives, that I endeavour to let off the steam in another way."

"What are you going to do with those poor girls?"

"What are you going to do, Maria? *Girls* are more in your line than mine."

"I believe he's done it on purpose, that Bindon man. I don't believe it's possible to make such a mistake; shipping girls in mistake for boys, indeed!"

"Not in the case of an ordinary family, Maria. But it is not an ordinary family, Mr. Bindon's." There was a pause. The lady walked excitedly up and down the room. The gentleman sat back in an arm-chair, his hands in his trouser pockets, his legs stretched out in front of him. "You will have to provide them with bed and with board, Maria, till we have turned the

matter over in our minds, or till we have heard further from Mr. Bindon."

They had to.

They provided the young ladies with bed and board.

"As," remarked Mr. Harland, when the days went by, and there still came no further instructions from America, "these young ladies bid fair to remain with us an indefinite length of time, I think, in order to do something which will entitle me to the proper fees, I will lay on something in the shape of a daily governess. They shall receive their education in the parlour. If Mr. Bindon could only see his way to making a few more errors in the 'shipment' line I might, on my part, see my way to running a school for young ladies in connection with my establishment for boys."

The eight Misses Dixon arrived on a Tuesday. Nothing—that is, nothing unusual—happened during the whole of the ensuing week. But on the Wednesday week, eight days after their arrival, an incident, slightly out of the common way, did vary the monotony. A fly drove up to Mulberry House, and in it, on the back seat, sat a solitary boy. Mr. Harland happened to be leaving the house just as the fly drove up.

He eyed the boy, the boy eyed him. The flyman touched his hat.

"If you please, sir, seems as how this here boy's for you. Leastways, it says so on his ticket." Turning round on his box the driver addressed his fare. "This here's the schoolmaster, and this here's Mulberry House."

The boy opened his mouth. Sounds issued forth. But they were sounds without form, and void. He appeared, judging from the grimaces he was making, to be suffering from an attack of facial convulsion. The flyman descended from his box.

"Seems, sir, as how this here boy's got a stutter. It is a stutter too. I never see nothing like it. They've been and stuck a lot of tickets all over him, so that people might know where he was going to. He'd never have made them understand."

When the boy came out of the fly Mr. Harland perceived that what the coachman said was correct. A square, white card was sewed on his coat, another on his waistcoat, and a third in a most prominent situation on his breeches. The writing on this latter, by dint of constant friction, had become so worn as to be unintelligible. On the other two was

written, in a bold round hand, so that he that ran might read:

"Frank J. Samuel Bindon,
Mulberry House School, Duddenham, England.
Note.—This Boy Stutters."

"I suppose," said Mr. Harland, as he eyed the youth, "that you are one of the assorted lot."

The boy opened his mouth.

"B-b-b-b-b-b-b-b-b-b-b—"

"I wouldn't speak to him much if I was you, sir," said the flyman. "Every time he opens his mouth I expect to see him have a fit. I've seen some stutters, but I never see one which came within a hundred mile of his."

"I think," said Mr. Harland, when he introduced Frank J. Samuel Bindon to his wife, "that I begin to understand what Mr. Bindon meant when he wrote that he was shipping an assorted lot of sons. In his family he appears to have samples of every kind."

"Hollo!" cried John F. Ernest, as Frank J. Samuel put in an appearance in the playground, "here's Stammering Sam!"

"Maria," said Mr. Harland, about an hour later, to his wife, "Stammering Sam can fight. He has polished off John G. William. He is

taking on John B. David for a change. What an interesting famly those Bindons are."

On the Friday the fly which had conveyed Stammering Sam again drove up to the doors of Mulberry House. The same flyman was on the box.

"Sarah," he observed to the servant who opened the door, "I've been bringing you a queer lot of young gentlemen of late. Wednesday I brought you up one with a stutter, now I've brought you one what's only got one leg, and another what's only got one arm. You'll soon be able to keep a museum of living curiosities."

As he was speaking the flyman stood at the door of his fly, his back turned to his fares. Suddenly the servant gave an exclamation.

"Look out, Mr. Stubbs," she cried.

The flyman moved aside, just in time to avoid the full force of a blow, which although it missed his head, at which it was aimed, and only shaved his shoulder, made him roar with pain. A boy, one of the fares, was standing up in the fly, grasping, with both his hands, a curious weapon of offence—a wooden leg.

"You young murdering villain!" shouted the flyman, clapping his hand to his injured shoulder.

"I've half a mind to break every bone in your body."

"I would if I were you," retorted the lad "Try it on. You've been saucing me all the way. I may only have one leg, but yours wouldn't be the first head which I've splintered with a wooden one. Then *you'd* be a living curiosity, I guess."

This young gentleman entered Mulberry House hopping upon one leg. The wooden limb he carried in his hands. After him followed a second young gentleman, who, since one of his sleeves was pinned up to his coat, was apparently possessed of but a single arm.

"There's a armless young gentleman in the drawing-room," announced Sarah to her master, "and another what's got his leg tucked under his arm."

The announcement did not appear to take the principal of Mulberry House by surprise.

"Further samples of the assorted lot," he murmured.

He was right. The strangers were two more examples of the fecundity and the versatility of Mr. Bindon. The young gentleman with "his leg tucked under his arm" declared his name to

be Oscar J. Oswald Bindon. The young gentleman with only one arm under which a leg could possibly be "tucked" was another John T. Jasper Bindon.

"I understood from your father," said Mr. Harland, "that this lot would consist of five, or possibly seven. May I ask if there are any more of you to follow? This dropping in unexpectedly, by ones and twos, Mrs. Harland and I find a little inconvenient."

"There's two more coming. But we wouldn't have anything to do with them because they stutter."

This repudiation comes from Oscar J. Oswald. As he spoke he was fastening on his wooden leg.

Two or three hours afterwards the fly—the same fly—drove up again to Mulberry House. The same flyman was on the box.

"Sarah," he whispered from behind his hand, probably taught prudence by experience, "here's two more stutters."

II.

Mrs. Harland was superintending the putting out of the "clean things." It was Saturday. On Sundays, at Mulberry House, all the pupils "changed."

"If you please, ma'am, there's a person in the drawing-room who says she's Mrs. Bindon."

"Mrs. Bindon!" Mrs. Harland was lifting a pile of clean linen. It fell from her hands. Day-shirts and night-shirts were scattered on the floor. The lady eyed the maid standing in the doorway as though she were some creature of strange and fearful import. "Whom did she ask to see?"

"She asked to see the schoolmaster."

"The schoolmaster?"

Mrs. Harland pursed her lips.

"Yes, ma'am. She didn't mention any name. And master's out."

The lady, to the best of her ability, supplied her husband's place. She interviewed the visitor. As she laid her hand on the handle of the drawing-room door her attentive ear detected a curious sound within.

"I do believe the woman's crying."

She turned the handle. She entered the room. A woman was seated on the extreme edge of a chair. She was indulging in a series of audible sniffs. In the palm of her hand, compressed into a knot which had something of the consistency of a cricket ball, was her handkerchief. This she bobbed first at one eye, then

at the other. When Mrs. Harland appeared she rose to her feet. The lady stared at her as if she were a spectre.

"Jane Cooper!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, ma'am."

The woman dropped a curtsey.

"You brazen hussey! How dare you come into my house!"

"If you please, ma'am, I'm come after that boy of mine."

She was a nervous, shrinking, little woman. She had fair hair and a washed-out complexion. Her pale blue eyes were blurred with weeping. She looked as though she had been crying for years. She wore a black silk dress, which was of primitive make, and the seams of which were slightly rusty. Her hands, which were gloveless, were large and red. Her shapeless bonnet had strayed on to the side of her head. Altogether she looked draggled and woebegone.

"You've come after that boy of yours! What do you mean?"

"My Neddy, ma'am."

Mrs. Harland gave an indignant twitch to her skimpy skirts. She moved across the room in the direction of the bell. The woman, perceiving her intention, gave an appealing cry.

"Don't be hard upon me. I 've come all the way from America to see my Neddy, ma'am."

Mrs. Harland hesitated, her hand upon the bell-rope. This woman, when a child, had been her own pupil in the Sunday-school. Later she had been her servant. While in her service she had "gone wrong." The same day on which she had been turned adrift she had disappeared from Duddenham. Her former mistress had heard nothing of her from that hour unto the present one.

"Jane Cooper, my servant told me that you gave your name as Mrs. Bindon. Are you Mrs. Bindon? Is that true?"

"It 's gospel truth."

"Then"—Mrs. Harland released her hold of the bell-rope—"it *was* Jolly Jack."

"That it was."

Mrs. Harland moved a step nearer to the woman.

"Do you mean to tell me that all those boys are yours?"

"No, ma'am, only Neddy. His father had him called Edward J. Phillip, but he 's always been Neddy to me. The rest are Mr. Bindon's."

"The rest are Mr. Bindon's! Jane! what do you mean?"

There was a ring, a good loud ring, at the front door bell. The woman clasped her hands.

"There's the rest of them," she cried. "Oh, don't let them come in here."

"The rest of them?"

"The other Mrs. Bindons."

Mrs. Harland clutched at the back of a chair.

"The other Mrs. Bindons?"

"They're always going on at me, and making fun of me, and pinching me. Oh! don't let them come in here."

The little woman's distress appeared to be genuine. She wrung her hands. Her tears fell unheeded to the floor. Mrs. Harland gazed at her both open-mouthed and open-eyed. Before she had recovered her presence of mind sufficiently to enable her to understand the cause of her visitor's emotion the door opened, and there entered unannounced — a magnificent woman! She was very tall, and very stately, and very fat. She weighed seventeen stone if she weighed an ounce. Her costume was very different to that of the dowdy Jane. She was attired from head to foot in red. She had on a red stuff dress with a train. A scarlet mantle accentuated with its splendours the upper portion of her person. She wore a red hat, adorned

with a red feather. And her face—as far as hue was concerned, her face matched her attire. She surveyed Mrs. Harland through a pair of *pince-nez.* "Mrs. Harland! So it is! How delightful! I should have known you anywhere—you haven't altered hardly a bit."

The lady, her hand stretched out, advanced in the most condescending fashion. Mrs. Harland shrank away.

"Louisa Brown!" she cried.

"Louisa Brown—that was; Mrs. Bindon—that is! Let me give you my card. I had some printed just before I came away."

After some fumbling the lady produced from her pocket a gorgeous mother-of-pearl card-case. Out of it she took a piece of pasteboard, resplendent in all the colours of the rainbow, about four inches square. This she offered Mrs. Harland. That lady declined it with a gesture.

"Won't you have it? Well, I'll put it on the mantelpiece; it'll be just the same. Dear old-fashioned mantelpieces! We don't have them out our way—we're in advance, you know—but I remember them so well."

The lady suited the action to the word. She placed the piece of cardboard on the mantelpiece in the most conspicuous place, on top

of the clock. Apparently unconscious that in Mrs. Harland's demeanour there was anything peculiar, she carefully selected the largest arm-chair the room contained. In it she placed her ample person. As she arranged her skirts she remarked:

"I 've come all this way to see them boys of mine. The dear lads! How are they? I hope you haven't made them *too* English. A little English I don't mind, being English as it were myself; but too much English I can't abide."

"You—impudent—creature!"

The lady put up her *pince-nez.*

"My stars! Here 's goings on! May I ask if that remark was addressed to me?"

"I never heard of such impudence in my life."

"Nor me. But some people have manners of their own. Is that the way in which to treat a lady who comes to visit you—standing there and staring?"

"A lady!" Mrs. Harland gasped. "Do you think I don't remember you?"

Mrs. Harland's form absolutely swelled as she glared at the big woman seated in the easy-chair.

"You, Louisa Brown, whose name is to this

day a byword in the village, to dare to come into my drawing-room—and in those clothes!"

The big woman was not taken at all aback.

"What is the matter with my clothes?" she asked.

"You, whom your own father turned into the streets, to dare to place yourself upon an equality with me!"

The big woman turned with an affable smile to the little one, who stood trembling and sniffing in the centre of the room.

"Queer old-fashioned folk they are this side. Now, to my thinking, one lady oughtn't to remind another lady of things she wishes to be forgotten."

The little woman bobbed her knotted handkerchief into her eyes.

"Oh, Louisa, how can you now!"

Mrs. Harland raised her arm, semaphore fashion.

"Leave the room!" she said.

The big woman settled herself more comfortably in the easy-chair.

"Not me. Not unless I take my sons along with me. You have received their father's money, which is mine; if you receive my money you'll receive me too—we go together."

"*I* have received your money—yours! Who are you?"

"There's my card." The big woman waved her hand in the direction of the mantelshelf. "I've another in my pocket, and I've told you who I am besides; but, to oblige you, I don't mind telling you who I am again. I'm Mrs. Bindon."

Mrs. Harland turned upon the little woman. There was frenzy in her air.

"Then who are you?"

Said the little woman, between her sniffs:

"I am Mrs. Bindon too."

"You are Mrs. Bindon too! Is the man a bigamist?"

The big woman smiled.

"There is no bigamy in Utah."

"Utah!" Mrs. Harland staggered back. "Utah!" She looked wildly round the room. "Isn't Utah where the Mormons are?"

The big woman, taking out a large white handkerchief, proceeded, at one and the same time, to fan herself, and to diffuse a strong odour of patchouli.

"Utah is, upon earth, the abiding place of the saints," she said.

Mrs. Harland echoed her words.

" The abiding place of the saints."

A vehicle was approaching the house. It could be seen through the window.

" I think," observed the big woman, as she raised her *pince-nez*, " that here are some of the other Mrs. Bindons."

Rising from her seat she opened the drawing-room door.

" Come in, my dears," she said, addressing some person or persons without; " I am here, and Mrs. Jane."

As she held the door wide open a procession began to enter the room—a procession of women. They were of all styles and shapes and sizes. There were fat and there were thin. They were attired in all the colours of the rainbow. Mrs. Harland, who began to think that her senses must be leaving her, distinctly counted seven. The seven, with the two already arrived, made nine—nine Mrs. Bindons. How the seven had journeyed in a single fly is one of the mysteries which are not yet unfolded. The big woman acted as mistress of the ceremonies.

" Sit down, my dears, there are seats for you all. I am sure you will excuse a little crowding."

" Where 's the teacher ? " asked a short, thick-set woman, who had seated herself with her

legs apart, and her hands set squarely on her knees.

"That is more than I can tell you. But here 's his wife."

The big woman waved her handkerchief and an odour of patchouli towards Mrs. Harland.

"Oh, you 're the schoolmarm?" The thick-set woman eyed Mrs. Harland as though she were taking her mental measurement. "Where 's them boys of mine?"

"These," explained the big woman, in the condescending way which seemed to be a peculiarity of hers, "are some of the other Mrs. Bindons. I have not," she added, "been treated quite with the civility I should like, and have a right to expect, but on this side they 're so old-fashioned."

"None of your old fashions for me, and none of your new ones neither. Give me the ways I 'm used to. Where 's them boys of mine?"

The thick-set woman stared at Mrs. Harland in a manner which suggested combat. The lady pressed her hand to her side. She felt at a loss for breath. Mechanically she crossed the room and rang the bell. The servant appeared.

"Tell the Masters Bindon that they are wanted in the drawing-room."

The servant gazed in amazement at the assembled congregation. The order had to be repeated before her faculties returned.

"Is that the hired gal?" inquired the thick-set woman directly the housemaid's back was turned.

"Servant, they call them here," explained the big woman in her patronising way.

The thick-set woman snorted. She glared at the big woman as though she were not grateful for the explanation. Silence prevailed. The nine ladies stared at Mrs. Harland. They seemed to be mentally appraising her. She herself appeared to be stricken with a sort of mental paralysis, as though the invasion had stricken her dumb.

At last—it seemed a very long at last—the door reopened, and there appeared the red-haired Master Bindon—John F. Stanley. His appearance was followed by another interval of silence. The ladies stared at him. He stared at the ladies. No enthusiasm was shown on either side. The thick-set woman broke the silence.

"So it's you?"

"It's me." He edged away. "Don't you hit me!" he exclaimed.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"What for?"

"Here you are in England, and your mother's looking for you in Canada. I guess your father's got you mixed."

"I shouldn't wonder," struck in a thin, acidulated-looking woman, "if Mr. Bindon's took you for my George, and sent my George to Canada. I never knew such a head for children as that man has got. Is my George here?"

"No," said Rufus. He grinned.

"Then," exclaimed the acidulated-looking woman, "I'm clean done."

The nervous little woman came forward. She laid her hand on Rufus's arm. "My Neddy's here! I'm sure my Neddy's here!"

Although she said that she was sure, her tone was by no means one of certainty. Her voice trembled—the little woman trembled too.

"He's not," said Rufus. He grinned again.

"He's not!" The little woman started back. "Not here! Mr. Bindon told me himself that he'd sent my Neddy to school at the old place at Duddenham. He wouldn't let me come all this way for nothing. And I've spent all my money on my fare."

The rest of the Masters Bindon began to

enter the room. They came in a long unbroken line. The little woman looked, with eager eyes, for the face she sought. The line ceased. She turned to Mrs. Harland.

"That's not all?" she cried.

"I think it is," said Mrs. Harland, with a sort of gasp.

"Neddy! Neddy!"

Crying, the little woman sank on her knees upon the floor.

There was a goodly company of the Masters Bindon. There were some among them the sight of whom gladdened their mothers' hearts.

"So it *is* you?" observed the thick-set woman to John G. William. "You've not gone to Canada—no such luck! Where's your brother?" The wooden-legged hero, Oscar J. Oswald, stumped in sight. "When I get you home I'll give you a good sound hiding, the pair of you. Didn't I tell you to write to me each week? You haven't so much as sent me a line to say if you was living or dead. When I get you home I'll make you wish that you was dead."

The big woman—Louisa Brown, that was—had three young gentlemen standing in a line in front of her. They were the three "stutters."

"Now, boys, I hope you 've got cured of your stammerings. You can't kiss me, you 'll mess my things. Do you hear what I say? I do hope you 've got cured of your stammering."

"B-b-b-b-b-b-b-b-b-b-b-b—"

There arose a chaos of sounds. The three young gentlemen opened their mouths. Judging from their contortions they appeared to be suffering agonies.

"For goodness gracious stop that noise!" The fond mother clapped her hands to her ears. "I declare I feel inclined to knock your heads together. Why, your stammer 's worse than before. I must say"—she glanced towards Mrs. Harland—"I must say that you 've been shamefully neglected."

III.

As Mr. Harland returned along the lane which led towards home he saw, standing in the middle of the road in front of him, a couple of ladies, who, judging from their manœuvres, appeared to be spying out the land. As he came up one of them hailed him. A tall, angular lady, who wore spectacles and low shoes and skirts which did not reach to her ankles, and who spoke in a loud, shrill, rasping

voice, which might have been audible on the other side the meadow.

"Say, stranger, can you hitch us on to Mulberry House Academy, where they larns young byes?"

"I know Mulberry House School. I'm the headmaster, Mr. Harland."

The lady turned to her companion.

"Bashemath, I guess we're solid." She returned to the gentleman. "You're the man we're after; we're Mrs. Bindon."

"You—I presume you mean that you are Mrs. Bindon?"

"Me and her are Mrs. Bindon."

"I—I suppose there's some joke intended. Or, perhaps, this lady is your daughter?"

"Sakes alive! Between Bashemath and me there are not twelve months."

"No, Deborah," said the other lady, "nor yet eleven."

"And as for joking, stranger, I'd have you know that I'm no jokist. Bashemath and me have had to walk up from the depôt. The driver said his carriage wouldn't hold no more than seven. We didn't see the use of a carriage just for Bashemath and me, being both of a saving mind."

"You will be glad to hear," remarked Mr. Harland, as he led the way to Mulberry House, a lady on either side of him, "that your sons all enjoy good health."

"Lord save the man!" cried the lady with the glasses, "you don't suppose all them byes is mine. I 've one of 'em, and he 's enough—the limb! I 've seven daughters, but they 're Samuel Newton's, who is dead. The rest of them byes are Mr. Bindon's."

"Are there"—Mr. Harland slightly coughed—"are there several Mr. Bindons?"

The lady pulled up short. She turned and faced the gentleman.

"Stranger, are you just sarsing?"

"Madam! Only by inadvertence could a word escape my lips which would in any way cause annoyance to a lady."

When they reached Mulberry House a couple of flys were standing at the front door.

"I guess," observed the angular lady, "there 's more of them come up than seven."

As Mr. Harland and his companions ascended the steps two gentlemen came rushing down them. They were the drivers of the flys. Unless circumstances belied them they had been whiling away the interval of waiting by listening

at the drawing-room door. In the hall were the cook, housemaid, and the small girl who acted as general help. Their presence in that particular spot required explanation. Their countenances, when they perceived their master, showed that it did.

"What is the meaning of this?" inquired Mr. Harland. "Where's your mistress?"

"If you please, sir, she's in the drawing-room."

"Is she engaged?"

"There are——" The girl choked back a giggle. "There are some ladies with her."

"I guess," remarked the angular lady, "they're some of the other Mrs. Bindons."

Three distinct and undeniable titters came from the servants.

"Sarah," said Mr. Harland, sternly checking the disconcerted damsel as she was about to seek refuge with her colleagues in flight, "show these ladies into the drawing-room, and tell your mistress that I wish to speak to her in the study."

"What—what on earth, Maria, is the meaning of this?" demanded Mr. Harland, as his wife made her appearance in his sanctum.

The lady dropped into a chair.

"Thank goodness, Andrew, you have come home. I don't know what I should have done if I had been left alone with them much longer."

"Who are these women?"

"They're the Mrs. Bindons."

"The Mrs. Bindons! How many of them are there?"

"There were nine. The two you brought make eleven."

"Eleven! Eleven Mrs. Bindons! Maria!"

"Andrew!"

"Is—is the man a Mormon?"

"Yes, he—he's a Mormon."

"Maria! You don't mean that?"

"I do. You remember Jane Cooper?"

"The slut that you sent packing?"

"She's here. She's one of the Mrs. Bindons. And Louisa Brown, she's another."

"Not *the* Louisa Brown?"

"And there are two or three more whose faces I know quite well, but I can't think who they are."

Mr. Harland drew a long breath. He whistled.

"I knew J. Bindon *must* be Jolly Jack."

"But, Andrew, what can we do? There's all those boys in there, and some of them have

found their mothers and some of them haven't. And there's Jane Cooper come all this way to see her son, and it appears he's been sent by mistake to Canada. And there's Louisa Brown been knocking those three poor stammering creatures' heads together, and she says that you've been neglecting them shamefully because you haven't cured their stutter. And there's a woman been thrashing John G. William with her umbrella. And they're all going on at one another, and at their children, and at me. Oh, Andrew, they've made me feel quite ill. That Mr. Bindon must be an awful man!"

"He appears to be, in his way, a character. A character, so far as Duddenham is concerned, almost of an original kind."

"Oh, Andrew, don't talk like that—don't. Think of it. Eleven wives! And I don't know how many more there are at home. To hear those women speak you would think that there were hundreds, and not one of them seems in the least ashamed. There are some of them in Canada looking for their children—for all I know eleven more are coming here. Andrew!" The lady rose. She laid her hand, with a solemn gesture, upon her husband's arm.

"I will not have those women and their children in my house. I will not have a Bindon, now that I know all, under my roof, not for a hundred thousand pounds."

Mr. Harland rubbed his chin.

"I think that I had better go and see these ladies, Maria, or they may feel that they are being slighted."

"No half measures! You will turn them out of my house, the mothers and their children, stick and stone, never to return—or else I leave it."

"You 're quite right, Maria. I think, if I were you, I 'd go upstairs and wash my face and brush my hair. You seem to be excited."

"You 'd be excited if you 'd gone through what I have."

"Now," said Mr. Harland to himself when his wife had gone, "to interview that very compound noun—the wife of Mr. Bindon." He went out into the passage. "They appear to be employing the shining hour. Unless I am mistaken that is John G. William's howl, and *that* is John B. David's. The ladies are either thrashing the young gentlemen upon their own account, or else they are setting them on, in what is possibly Salt Lake City style, to thrash each other." Then arose a hubbub of women's

voices. "What a peaceful household Jolly Jack's must be." He stood and listened. The din grew greater. "They 're at it. Are they scratching each other's eyes out, or are they merely giving their lungs free play? Perhaps on the whole I had better go and see."

He had hardly taken two steps in the direction of the drawing-room when someone twitched his coat-sleeve from behind.

"Mr. 'arland! Mr. 'arland!"

There came the twitch at his sleeve again. Someone addressed him in a very muffled voice, which in force scarcely amounted to a whisper, from the rear. Mr. Harland wheeled round.

"Who 's that?" he cried.

"Ssh!" Close behind him, so close that Mr. Harland by his sudden movement almost knocked him down, stood a man. He had his finger pressed against his lips. "Ssh! I came round by the back; I knew that they was in the front."

He spoke in a low and tremulous whisper. Beads of perspiration stood on his face. Agitation was on every line. Mr. Harland stared at him, astonished. He had approached from behind so noiselessly that the schoolmaster had been taken unawares.

"May I ask, sir, who you are?"

"I 'll tell you in 'arf a minute. Just step this way."

The stranger, taking Mr. Harland by the arm, led him in the direction of the study which he had just now quitted. Mr. Harland allowed himself to be led. At the study door the stranger paused. He jerked his thumb in the direction of the drawing-room. His voice dropped to a whisper: "How many of 'em are there?"

"How many are there, sir, of what?"

Mr. Harland put the counter-question in his ordinary tones. This seemed to disconcert the stranger. "Never mind. Just step inside."

With a hurried movement he drew Mr. Harland within the study.

"You don't mind my just turning the key?"

"If you mean do I object to your locking the door, I do very strongly. What are you doing? What do you mean, sir, by your impertinence?"

The stranger had not only locked the door, he had withdrawn the key from the lock.

"Softly! softly! I don't mean no 'arm. I only want to be a little private. Don't you know me, Mr. 'arland?"

"Know you?" The schoolmaster looked the stranger up and down. He was a man of

medium height, of a fleshy habit. His face, which was fat and broad, and pasty hued, suggested a curious mixture of shrewdness and of folly. His eyes were small and bright. He wore carefully-trimmed mutton-chop whiskers, adjuncts which lent him an air of flashy imbecility. When he removed his glossy silk hat, which he did to enable him to mop his brow with his pink silk pocket-handkerchief, it was seen that he was almost bald, and that what little hair he had was straw-coloured, parted in the middle, and curled close to his head. He was dressed from head to foot in shiny black broadcloth. His hands were large and fat, and the fingers were loaded with rings. A thick gold chain passed from pocket to pocket of his waistcoat, and in his light-blue necktie was an enormous diamond pin.

"Know you?" repeated Mr. Harland, continuing his examination of the man. "I 've seen you somewhere before, and yet"—then came a sudden burst of recollection. "Why, you 're Jolly Jack!" The stranger simpered. He carefully wiped the lining of his hat.

"Ah, Mr. 'arland, I used to be. But that 's a many years ago. There 's not much jollity about me now. I 'm just J. Bindon."

'Oh, you 're just J. Bindon. The Mr. Bindon, I presume, with whose correspondence I 've been honoured ?"

"That 's the chap."

"And whose 'shipments' from time to time have come to hand ?"

"Ah, them shipments !"

"As you say, Mr. Bindon, 'Ah, them shipments.' I don't know if you are aware, Mr. Bindon, that your wife is in my drawing-room ?"

"Ssh !" Mr. Bindon put his finger to his lips. He approached Mr. Harland with a mysterious air, "Might I ask you not to speak so loud, Mr. 'arland, and not to pronounce my name. If you must call me something, I 'd sooner you was to call me Jack."

"Is your name, Mr. Bindon, not one of which you have reason to be proud ?"

"Don't you, Mr. 'arland, don't you now." He put a question from behind the cover of his hand. "How many of 'em are there ?"

"How many are there—of Mrs. Bindon ?"

The husband and the father sighed.

"If you like to put it that way."

"I understand that in my drawing-room at present there are eleven."

Mr. Bindon placed his silk hat on a chair.

He began again to mop his brow. "That's all, is it? Then there's some more of 'em about. I suppose you couldn't tell me which of 'em is there?"

"I'm afraid not. I have not myself been introduced to the whole of Mrs. Bindon—only to two of her. And in the case of that two I have not been honoured with a formal introduction. But if you like I will ring the bell, and the servant shall make inquiries."

"Not for worlds, Mr. 'arland, not for worlds! I wouldn't ave 'em know that I was 'ere not for a thousand dollars. Mr. 'arland, you look upon a man who's in a remarkable situation."

"I can easily believe, Mr. Bindon, that I look upon a man who, upon more than one occasion, has been in a remarkable situation."

"It's easy to laugh, Mr. 'arland, but circumstances is stronger than us. Do you remember when I left Duddenham?"

"For the benefit of your health, was it not?"

"Just—just so. For the benefit of my 'ealth. By the way, I suppose I ain't running no risk in coming back?"

"You should be a better judge than I."

"Some—someone had been knocking a gamekeeper on the 'ead, but I'll swear it wasn't me.

I was very much misjudged in them days, Mr. 'arland. 'Owsomever, I suppose all that is forgotten years ago, and when I left Duddenham, Mr. 'arland, I went to America, and then I found myself in the City of the Saints."

"The City of the Saints?"

"In Salt Lake City, Mr. 'arland. I got on in my modest way; I certainly got on. But I soon saw that there was one way of getting on which was better than any other."

"And that was?"

"Marrying. Not as you understand it over here, marrying one young woman and getting done with it; but marrying in the wholesale line. In them days no man came to much in Salt Lake City who 'adn't got at least a dozen wives. I always 'ad 'ad an eye for a female. I 'd got no objection to a dozen, nor yet a score. So I looked about to see 'ow I could get 'em."

Mr. Bindon coughed modestly behind his handkerchief. He took a chair. He continued to tell his tale with the aid of his fingers.

"First of all I looked at 'ome. There was Jane Cooper; I knew she was in a little trouble; I asked 'er to come. There was Louisa Brown; she was in a little trouble too, so I asked 'er. Then there was Susan Baxter over at Basing-

thorpe. I always 'ad been sweet on Susan; I asked 'er too. There was one or two other gals about the countryside for whom I'd 'ad a liking, so I asked 'em all."

"Do you mean to tell me, Mr. Bindon, that all these young women came to you, each knowing that the other one was coming?"

"Well—not exactly. They didn't know that they all was coming till they all was there."

"And then?"

"Well, there was little differences just at first. But they settled down; they settled down. They 'ad a way in Salt Lake City, in them days, of getting the women to settle down. Well, Mr. 'arland, I got on! I got on! I got wives and children, and then more wives and more children. Some of the wives was widdies, and they brought children of their own. So we grew and multiplied, and all went well—till persecution came."

"Persecution?"

"You know, Mr. 'arland, we always 'ad 'ad enemies—the Saints! They was against the Peculiar Institootion."

"Wholesale marrying?"

Mr. Bindon only sighed.

"By degrees things got warm for us, especially

for me. I was a prominent member of the Church, and they went for me special because they said I had so many wives."

"May I ask, Mr. Bindon, how many wives you had?"

"That's more than I can say, Mr. 'arland, more than I can say. It's a little complicated. There's some you're married to, and some you're sealed to, and some you're on the point of being sealed to, and there you are. When I first went out, marrying was the surest way of getting on. But, by degrees, marrying didn't pay. There was a talk of bigamy. There was threats of bringing me before the Gentile courts."

Mr. Bindon paused. He drew his silk handkerchief two or three times across his brow. Again he sighed.

"Ah, Mr. 'arland, there 'adn't never been in my 'ousehold that perfect peace there ought to have been. There was complications. It's a long story, and it's no use going into it now, but there they was. I kep' 'em under—with great care, I kep' 'em under until persecution came. Then keep 'em under I could not, try 'ow I might. There was, Mr. 'arland, I tell you plainly, there was ructions. I've been struck, Mr. 'arland, struck! by my own wives. They

knocked me down one day, some on 'em, and stamped on me. It ain't all beer and skittles, married life, especially when you don't know 'ow many wives you 'as, and most of 'em 'as tempers."

Again Mr. Bindon paused to wipe his brow. It needed it. As he continued to unfold his narrative he was in a constant state of perspiration.

"What with Gentile persecution, and what with family ructions, I got desprit. Them byes and gals was at the bottom of the shindies, so I made up my mind to ship 'em off, and I ships 'em."

"Without their mothers' knowledge?"

"There was bound to be little deceptions, Mr. 'arland, there was bound to be—or I couldn't 'ave lived. I daresay I should have managed" —Mr. Bindon sighed—"if it 'adn't been for another little marriage what I made."

"Another!"

"It was this way, Mr. 'arland. My partner, he died, J. B. G. Dixon. He left three wives. These 'ere three wives, they wanted to withdraw his capital. I couldn't stand that, anyhow. So I married 'em, just to give 'em satisfaction. Three more or less didn't seem to make no odds. So I took 'em for a little wedding trip. My managing clerk—'e was a regular villain—I knows it now, but I didn't then. 'E 'ad a eye

on Dixon's wives 'imself, 'e 'ad. So when I married 'em 'e thought 'e'd take it out of me. That very day I married 'em I was going to ship off an assorted lot of sons to your academy. That there villain of a clerk 'e pretended 'e'd misunderstood my instructions. 'E went and shipped off them eight gals of J. B. G. Dixon's, instead of my assorted lot of sons. My crikey! when them wives of Dixon's found it out, wasn't there a shindy! They made out it was a regular plot of mine to rob 'em of their gals. I couldn't stand it, I tell you straight. So I've come over 'ere to fetch 'em back again—nothing else would suit them women but that I should. If you'll 'and 'em over, Mr. 'arland, I'll pay you what is doo, and I'll take 'em away with me round by the back if you don't mind."

"About the ladies in the drawing-room, Mr. Bindon?"

"There's been a little family difference, Mr. 'arland. When they 'eard that I'd taken on with Dixon's wives they didn't seem to like it, some of 'em. They'd found out where their byes 'ad gone to, or they thought they 'ad, so they came over 'ere to look for 'em—mind you, without saying a word to their 'usband, which was me. They came by one steamer, I came

by another, and if they was to know that I was 'ere they 'd want to take my life, some of 'em—I give you my word they would."

"Give me the key of the door."

"Mr. 'arland."

"I wish to give instructions for the Misses Dixon to be sent to the study."

"That 's all? No games! It 's serious, you know."

"Don't be absurd, sir. Give me the key."

"Mr. 'arland!"

Mr. Bindon yielded the key. His demeanour betokened agitation. He stood trembling as Mr. Harland unlocked the door. When the schoolmaster threw it open he gave a positive start. Mr. Harland stepped into the passage.

"Sarah!" He called for the housemaid in a tone of voice which must have been audible at some considerable distance.

"Not so loud, Mr. 'arland! You don't know what ears them women 's got."

Mr. Harland rather raised his voice than otherwise. "Tell your mistress that Mr. Bindon's here. You understand—Mr. Bindon."

"Mr. 'arland!"

"And send the Misses Dixon into the study."

"You 've done it, Mr. 'arland!"

"Done what, sir?"

"They've 'eard you—I'll bet my boots they 'ave."

Mr. Harland turned again and shouted, "Tell your mistress at once that Mr. Bindon's here!"

"They're coming!"

"How dare you, sir, try to shut the door in my face!"

"They're coming, Mr. 'arland! They'll murder me! You've spilt the cart!"

Mr. Bindon's agitation was extreme. There was a rush of feet along the passage, a sound of many skirts. A whirlwind of excited women dashed through the study door.

"Where's Mr. Bindon?" cried Louisa Brown—that was.

"I see him! He's underneath the table!"

"Fetch him out!" exclaimed the thick-set woman. They fetched him.

IV.

The procession left Mulberry House in the following order: the first fly contained all that was left of Mr. Bindon. The seats were occupied by four ladies—excited ladies. Mr. Bindon—all, we repeat, that was left of him—stood up between the four. He had not much standing room.

Around the first fly circled a crowd of boys. The crowd consisted of twelve—twelve sons! They hurrahed and shouted, they jumped and ran. Their proceedings gave to the procession an air of triumph. Eight young ladies walked beside the fly, the driver of which had received instructions not to proceed above a walking pace. These young ladies wept.

The second fly contained seven ladies, five inside and two upon the box. The language of these ladies was both fluent and fervid. They beguiled the tedium of the way by making personal remarks which must have been distinctly audible to at least one person in the fly in front. This person was kept in a perpendicular position by the points of four umbrellas.

"I hope," observed Mrs. Harland, when the procession had started, "that they won't murder him."

"I don't think you need be afraid of that, my love. They will merely escort him back, in the bosom of his family, to the City of the Saints."

Mr. Harland examined a cheque, which was written in a trembling hand, and the ink on which was scarcely dry. And the procession passed from sight.

A Burglar Alarm

I MUST confess that the idea appealed to Leila more strongly than it did to me. I do not deny that it struck me as original. But it does not follow that because an idea is original it is of much practical value. Leila thought that it was just the thing which was wanted to calm her condition of nervous disquietude. So, of course, I said nothing.

At that time we were living at The Larches, and had only just discovered what a striking difference there is in a house, which is nine miles away from anywhere, in the summer and in the winter. In the summer the place was a perfect paradise. The house was embowered in trees. Within a stone's-throw was a little stream, which murmured as it meandered, singing, as it were, songs of Arcady. But as the nights grew longer, and the mornings further off, it was even painful to observe what a

different aspect The Larches began to wear. The winds howled through the leafless corpses of the trees like souls in agony. The stream rose till it flooded all the neighbourhood. During the long evenings the feeling of solitude was really most depressing. As Leila justly remarked, if anything happened in the dead of the night, and we were in need of assistance, where should we be? The nearest doctor was thirteen miles off. A policeman seven. The only servants we could induce to stay with us were an old woman, who was so old that she had to choose between us and the workhouse, and a young girl who had come to us out of the workhouse, and who was undoubtedly meditating returning whence she came. She said that it was livelier at the workhouse than at The Larches. Of that, personally, I have not the slightest doubt.

One day in November I was reading a paper. We did get a paper, now and then, though I trust that not many people have realised what it means to drive, in English November weather, in an open basket-carriage, perhaps eighteen miles to get one. In this paper a paragraph caught my eye, which was headed, "A Burglar Alarm." I read it. The idea of the thing was

this. You were to cover the hall, and the stairs, and the banisters, and any other place where anybody was likely to tread, with open newspapers. Then, if a burglar came into the house in the middle of the night, he would step on the newspapers, and you would hear them rustle, and would know that he was there. The idea rather struck me. I mentioned it to Leila. Indeed, I read the paragraph to her there and then. She was quite ecstatic.

"We'll try it to-night," she said.

I did not see the exact *sequitur*. Nor why we should lay traps for burglars because paragraphs appeared in papers. I told her so.

"If a burglar did break in, where should we be?" she asked.

That was her favourite form of inquiry. I really could not tell her, though I strongly suspected that I, for one, should be in bed. Nor did I see how, in that respect, the situation would be altered, although the house was covered with newspapers, both within and without.

"My dear Frederic, how dense you are! Don't you understand that we should at least know that the man was there, and that would be some relief at any rate."

I was not so sure of this myself, although I did not care to interrupt her flow of eloquence to tell her so.

"I 'll hunt up all the newspapers I can find, and, to-night, we 'll cover the stairs."

We did. Leila is of a sanguine temperament. When she has made up her mind on a subject I generally acquiesce. I acquiesced then.

Shortly before nine, which hour, as a rule, was our bedtime at The Larches, except on those occasions when we retired earlier, we commenced our operations.

We endeavoured to enlist the servants' sympathy and assistance; but Mrs. Perkins evidently regarded the whole affair as savouring of lunacy, and Eliza did nothing else but giggle. So Leila and I had, practically, to do it all. I think that we made a very fair job of it, on the whole. We laid between a dozen and twenty newspapers down in the hall. We covered the stairs.

By the way, it was only after we had covered the stairs that we discovered that it would be difficult, not to say impossible, for anyone to ascend them without disarranging all that we had done; so as we ourselves, and Mrs. Perkins and Eliza were all below, the stairs

had to be done over again. The servants went up first. We followed. And, as we followed, we covered the treads with the papers as we went. We even hung newspapers over the banisters, so that if a burglar, alarmed at the noise which he found he made by stepping on the stairs, caught hold of the banisters, he would not find that there was safety there.

I rather fancy that the preparations which we had made for an enemy who might or might not come acted on our own nervous systems.

Anyhow, hardly had we got into our bedroom and locked the door, than there came a noise as if all the newspapers we had just laid down were being stepped upon at once. And not only stepped but jumped on. Leila was immediately in an almost painful state of agitation. I, of course, was not so much affected. Still, I own that, even to me, the thing seemed curious.

"Did you lock the door?" she gasped.

"Certainly. Didn't you see me lock it?"

"Don't let him come in!"

"Don't let who come in, my dear?"

Leila did not say. She stood listening, trembling like a leaf. All was still.

"Frederic, who can it be?"

"I think, my dear, that perhaps I had better go and inquire."

Scarcely had I spoken than there came the noise again. This time it was louder than before, and more prolonged. Leila threw her arms about my neck. She was almost in hysterics.

"Frederic, it's a burglar!"

I did not see very well how it could be. If it was, then the fellow must have been secreted in the house. He must have watched us to our bedrooms, and then have instantaneously taken advantage of the fact of our backs being turned to indulge in acrobatic performances which were scarcely in accordance with received burglarious traditions.

"Nonsense, my dear, it is nothing of the kind."

As a matter of fact, it was not. It was the cat. Or rather, to be quite accurate, the kitten. Our cat, whose name, although the animal was of the feminine persuasion, was Simon, had recently had an addition to her family. In fact, five additions. Four of them, within a very short time of their birth, had passed from life—and into a pail of water. One of them remained alive. I really cannot say why. I

imagine that a white eye had something to do with the matter. The small creature was like a lump of soot, except about the region of one eye. There it was as white as the driven, or the undriven—I don't know which it is, but I know it is one or the other—snow. Leila had announced that the creature was to be named Macgregor. I can only repeat that, again, I cannot say why. Leila has a somewhat peculiar habit of naming, or, perhaps, it would be more correct to write, misnaming, the animals which come into her possession. She called the pony we had at The Larches the Duke of Liverpool. She said she did so because there was not a Duke of Liverpool. That seemed to me an insufficient reason why the title should have been conferred upon a spavined, ill-groomed little brute, with a nasty temper, and only three sound legs to move, or, as was more frequently the case, to stand upon.

It seems that Macgregor had mistaken us. He seems to have supposed that Leila and I had occupied the better part of an hour, and taken the stiffening out of our backs, in order to provide him with a novel form of amusement, by means of which he might while away, to his own satisfaction, the witching hours of

the stilly night. It appears, too, that Simon, his masculinely - named female parent, had shared in his delusion. At any rate, when Leila was beginning to think that all the burglars in England were dancing breakdowns on those newspapers, and I went out to see what really was the matter, with a revolver which was not loaded, and which never had been loaded, in one hand, and a hairbrush in the other, I found Macgregor dashing up and down the stairs in a perfect ecstasy of enjoyment, while his wretched parent, forgetting the respect which she owed to herself, and the example which she owed to him, was rushing and raging after him. I threw the revolver at Simon and the hairbrush at Macgregor.

Of course Macgregor had to be captured. Also Simon, his mother. It was absurd to suppose that we had covered the house from the top to the bottom with newspapers in order that these two animals might render life not worth the living. But Macgregor was not easy to catch. Leila and I had to hunt him single-handed; though, perhaps, double-handed would have been the better expression. We endeavoured to summon the servants to our assistance. But Mrs. Perkins, who was more than

a little deaf when wide awake, was stone deaf when fast asleep. We never entertained any hopes of being able to make her hear. Our idea was to rouse Eliza, then to induce Eliza to prod Mrs. Perkins with her elbow in the side, and so to establish a chain of communication.

However, directly we began to rap at the bedroom door, Eliza seemed to be developing strong symptoms of hysterics, apparently under the impression that we were burglars. So, since the girl was always more or less of an idiot, and we thought it would, perhaps, not be worth our while to send her into fits, we resolved, as has been said, to hunt Macgregor single-handed.

A kitten is a lively animal. One has an object-lesson on this interesting fact in natural history, when, with the aid of a single candle, two persons endeavour to catch a kitten in a large, rambling, old-fashioned house in the darkness of the night. We almost had Macgregor several times. Never quite. We followed him all over the house with untiring and, one might almost write, increasing zeal. Up the stairs and down the stairs. Then up again, then down again. I doubt if, in his short life, Macgregor had ever enjoyed himself so much before. For my part I vowed that never again

should a *lusus naturæ*, in the shape of a white eye, keep a kitten out of a pail.

Finally, in the back kitchen, while making a frenzied dash at him, I missed Macgregor, and knocked the candle over. In endeavouring to save it I cannoned into Leila. I had not previously been aware that she was in my near neighbourhood. With such force did I strike her that I sent her flying backwards, until, reaching the floor, she found a resting-place amidst the pots and the pans. She fell with such a clatter, and with such a din, that, in the darkness, my blood ran cold. And, having fallen, she began to scream in a manner which deprived me of the little self-possession I had left."

"Is that you, Leila?" I inquired.

I felt morally persuaded that it was. I did not see who else it could be. Still, I imagined that I might as well make sure. She did not tell me in so many words. But the voice which screamed was the voice of Leila.

"Are you hurt?" I asked.

Again she did not answer. She only screamed. I was in darkness. I had not saved the candle. I could not see her. I could not feel, because every time I moved I seemed to hit her with

another saucepan. I had no matches. I knew of none nearer than the bedroom. I had to leave Leila screaming there. I had to find my way out of that back kitchen, stumbling, as it seemed to me, over all the contents of an iron-monger's shop, and almost knocking out my brains against the partly-opened door. I had to grope my way along the newspaper-covered passages, across the newspaper-covered hall, up the newspaper-covered stairs. I had to hang on to the newspaper-covered banisters.

If ever there was a burglar alarm I sounded it. I heard Macgregor and Simon, his mother, indulging in their little playful pranks, above and below me, and everywhere at once. But the servants did not seem to hear anything. No, nothing. I had no means of knowing if Eliza had frightened herself into a fit, and if Mrs. Perkins was dead. As I entered the bed-room I swept a jug and basin off the wash-hand-stand. It sounded as if I had broken the contents of a china shop. But no one seemed to notice it—not even Simon and Macgregor. Such was my state of agitation, and such the confusion of my mind, that I floundered into the middle cupboard of the wardrobe, which, in some mysterious manner, must have opened

of its own accord. I had dragged all Leila's dresses off the hooks and half smothered myself beneath them before I discovered where I was. But I found the matches. Oh, yes, I found them after all.

I also found Leila. She was sitting up on the kitchen floor, in the midst of the pots and pans, in a frame of mind which, by me, was unexpected. She seemed to be under the impression that my conduct had been base, not to say heartless. She appeared to be under the, to me, extraordinary delusion that I had scrambled in the darkness up the newspaper-covered stairs, and fallen over everything which I could fall over, because I hated her. She wept. It was all I myself could do to refrain from tears.

However, we managed to secure Macgregor and his mother in the drawing-room, in which apartment we felt morally persuaded that they would break everything that was worth the breaking. Then Leila insisted upon me re-arranging the ingenious little trap which we had laid to catch a burglar.

"What," she remarked, as she wiped away a final tear, "was the use of doing a thing at all if we didn't do it properly?"

There was wisdom in her unanswerable inquiry, though I could not but feel thankful as I reflected that there were no more cats in the house who could mistake our intentions, and, under an entire misapprehension, turn them topsy-turvy once again.

Leila seemed to think that it was all owing to me that the newspapers had become disarranged. I do not know what could have put such an idea into her head. But it was obviously because she thought so that she insisted upon my doing all the work, while she stood three stairs above me and issued her instructions.

I am of a plethoric habit, and by the time I had done all the stooping which Leila thought was indispensable if the burglar alarm was to be all that a burglar alarm ought to be, I was, I am convinced, within a measurable distance of apoplexy. Indeed, I hinted to Leila that burglars might take up their permanent residence at The Larches before I should ever again be persuaded to make such arrangements for their reception. As for that paragraph in the paper, the stuff which some of the papers do contain is really monstrous. If I ever do encounter the editor of that particular journal in private life, I care not where nor when, I

shall have to be bound over by the magistrates in at least two sureties, I know I shall.

When Leila, on entering the bedroom, stepped on the handle of the broken jug and perceived the rest of the remains, and that there was about half an inch of water on the floor, I must say that I found her behaviour not a little trying. I had not informed her of the accident which, when I was searching for the matches, I had had, because, such was my state of agitation, it had slipped my mind — though, I know, she doubts it to this hour.

I was aware that she was bound to discover what had happened, therefore why should I have attempted to conceal it? Under the circumstances it is a mere absurdity to imagine that I could have proposed to myself to do anything of the kind; nor was it necessary for her to inform me, especially in the way in which she did inform me, that that toilet set had been one of her wedding presents. If a wedding present is to be regarded as a fetish in a family, and made a sort of little god of, then all I can say is that I wish she had had fewer wedding presents even than she did have.

I regret to have to write that Leila did not hesitate to suggest that I had broken that toilet

set on purpose. According to her it was all part of my heartlessness and the hatred which I bore her. That I had almost killed myself while hunting for the matches was nothing to her. Nor did she pause to consider how I could have done it on purpose, when, such was the Egyptian nature of the darkness, I did not even know that the toilet set was there. We mopped the water up with the towels. Then Leila knelt down and pieced the fragments of the toilet set together as best she could, and continued to address me as if I had been guilty, at the very least, of treason felony. When she discovered that during my unfortunate search for those mislaid and miserable matches I had also accidentally and quite unintentionally visited the wardrobe, I thought that she would have thrown something at me, even though she would have had to use as missiles pieces of the broken ware.

It appeared that in dragging Leila's dresses off the hooks I had had what one is bound to confess was the singular ill-fortune to tear holes in most, if not in all of them. Insignificant holes they were for the most part. Really hardly worth the mentioning, though you would not have thought they were hardly worth the mentioning if you had heard Leila. True, I

had made rather a lengthy incision in the back of her best silk, and ripped the waistband off her tailor-made; but the rest of the garments were scarcely, that is to say, from my point of view, not appreciably damaged. And when you consider that in my agitation I had struggled as for my life in that death-trap of a wardrobe, surely an allowance might have been made. Leila, however, made absolutely none.

That was not upon the whole a restful night. Neither Leila nor I wooed sweet sleep in that equable, at-peace-with-all-the-world frame of mind in which she should be wooed. It was some time before I ventured into bed at all. When at last I insinuated myself between the sheets Leila's observations followed me. Indeed, if I may be allowed to say so, they more than followed me. I had to coax her with all the power of coaxing that was in me before she could be induced to even think of slumber. Seating herself upon a chair, she announced her unalterable determination to spend the night there rather than consent to share her couch with the being who had torn her dresses. I perceived quite plainly that that burglar alarm was not going to prove an economical contrivance. The little mishaps which I had had

were likely to prove a more serious matter than any injury which mere burglars might have caused. But no matter. Leila protests that upon that fateful night I promised, as some slight solatium to her injured feelings, not to speak of her damaged vestments, to present her with six new dresses. This sounds to me almost incredible. I scarcely think that under any circumstances I can have gone so far as that. And when she adds, as she does add, that I gave her my solemn assurance that she should be allowed to select and to purchase at my expense any toilet set which she might see, and which might take her fancy when she next went up with me to town, I can only declare that if I did give such an undertaking it was only because I had firmly and finally resolved, in my own mind, that while such a prospect stared me in the face she never should go up with me to town again. But, as I have said already, no matter. I daresay that I did promise something. Now, I do not care what I promised. Whatever it was, the promise was extracted from me under pressure. I never meant to keep it. That I earnestly affirm.

When finally, having for all I know promised

to present her with the contents of half the shops in Regent Street and of all the shops in Piccadilly, I had succeeded in persuading her to come to bed, the excitement she had undergone told upon her slight and fragile frame, and ere long my Leila was asleep. I, too, slept at her side. Nor during the remaining silent watches of the night did aught disturb our rest.

We were roused by someone knocking at our bedroom door. I awoke with the immediate consciousness that we had overslept ourselves. As a matter of fact we had, by about two hours.

"Frederic!" exclaimed Leila, in that nervous way of hers which is apt to convey to those who do not know her the impression that the last trump has sounded. "There's someone at the door!"

"Who's there?" I asked.

The voice which answered was the voice of Eliza.

"If you please, sir, there's been robbers in the house!"

"Robbers! Don't talk such nonsense!"

"If you please, sir, it ain't nonsense. Mrs. Perkins says there have!"

And what Mrs. Perkins said was true. There

had been robbers in the house; or, at any rate, a robber; a midnight felon; a rifler of the homes of honest men. He had made his entry by way of the back kitchen window. He had had his supper in the front kitchen. A hearty meal it must have been. There were the remains of the feast still on the board. He seemed to have eaten all that there was worth eating. He had drunk all that there was worth drinking. He had certainly taken away with him on his departure all that there was worth taking. He had stripped the house of all its valuables. True, they were not many; but they were our all. And they were gone.

I imagine that few burglaries have been better carried through. He was a conscientious and observant workman of his kind. The ruthless villain! I hope one day to lay hands upon him somewhere. The county constabulary, I am certain, never will.

As for the burglar alarm—the burglar alarm was arranged in a neat heap in a corner of the hall. It had not fulfilled the purpose it had been intended to fulfil. Like Macgregor and Simon, his mother, the burglar had misunderstood the intentions which had actuated our bosoms, Leila's and mine, when we had placed

it there. He cannot have read the paragraph we had noticed in the paper.

I suspect that that burglar must have been, in his way—his own way—a humorist. He had seen those newspapers apparently; and, if you reflect, it was not strange: he had wondered what they meant by being there. Possibly he had supposed that they had been placed there to save the oilcloth and the carpets from being stepped upon. Anyhow, being certain that at any rate his boots were clean, and that he stepped lightly, he picked up the newspapers carefully one by one, folded them neatly into four, and placed them, as I have said, in a little heap in a corner of the hall.

A Lesson in Sculling

MISS WHITBY WRITES TO HER MOTHER

"MY DEAREST MAMMA,—I have had the most delightful time you can possibly think of. Everybody and everything has been so nice! And Jack has been teaching me sculling. And—oh, what do you think?—he drowned me! Yes—completely! Only, of course, it was all my fault. And he pulled me out of the water by the hair of my head—or something; I don't know what, or how. Wasn't it noble of him? I never enjoyed anything so much in all my life!

"But I will tell you all about it. I know you must feel anxious. Only don't think I'm dead, because I'm not. I haven't even caught a cold. All owing to Charlie. He says I wasn't in the water long enough; that's what *he* says. I assure you I was in the water quite long enough for me!

"You know, ever since we've been down here we've been on the river every day, Charlie and

I. His mother—Mrs. Mason, you know—doesn't care for the water; she says it's damp. But I think that's because she knows that two are company, and is tender-hearted—like you, my dearest Momkins! Besides, she likes fussing about and paying visits, and she is so good—I hope that I shall be as good as she is one of these fine days! But you can never tell!

"Of course it was very nice being pulled about. Only Charlie was so aggravating! He wouldn't do in the least bit what you told him. I would say to him before we started:

"'Charlie, do take me for a long row—now, promise me!' And he would say:

"'Certainly. Fourteen miles out and fifteen in."

"'Don't be silly! I wish you would—I do so like to be pulled.'

"He would be standing on the bank with his back to the water, and with me just in front of him. He would stretch out his arm.

"'Tip us your flipper!' He meant, 'Give me your hand.' When he chooses Charlie can be slangy. 'I'll pull you into the river.'

"It was not the slightest use my talking. I would sigh, and get into the boat and hope for the best. But I never got it. No!

"As soon as we had gone three or four

hundred yards Charlie would pull towards a little island, which is just beyond the bend in the river—I don't know who put it there; I know that I often wished that it was further—and row right round it into a sort of little creek which was on the other side, which was just large enough to hold the boat, and where no one could see us because of the trees. So far as privacy was concerned we might as well have been in the heart of a virgin forest. And there Charlie would stop, and do nothing else but talk; though I'm bound to confess that he chose interesting subjects of conversation as a rule, because generally, when he wasn't talking of himself, he was talking of me. And it is such a help to conversation when one is well acquainted with the topic under discussion. But he did so annoy me, because he would never do what I told him. I wanted him to row me to Oxford, or somewhere. But he said it was so hot—I didn't feel hot!—and Oxford was twenty miles away, and more. That was nonsense, because quite little electric launches go there and back in a day. At least, I am nearly sure they do.

"But what irritated me more than anything else was because he kept on asking me why, if

I was so fond of rowing, with the thermometer four hundred degrees above bursting point—I don't believe it was anything like so hot as that, but that is what he said—I didn't row myself. He knew I couldn't. But I made up my mind that I would learn, and, what is more, I would teach myself: I would show him what I could do.

"So one morning I got up, all alone, quite early, without breathing a single word to anyone. I don't know how early it was, but I know it was early, because, when I let myself through the dining-room window—French window—into the garden, there was not a creature in sight. The garden runs right down to the river. The boat is kept tied to the bank. I pulled it close and got into it—and directly I got into it it wobbled.

"Dearest mamma, even at that last moment—or at that first moment, whichever it was—I almost wished I hadn't come. Suppose I should upset! I do believe I should have gone straight back again to bed, only I couldn't. The boat had drifted to the end of the string and was ever so far from the land, and how to get it back again I didn't know. So I sat still, and scarcely dared to breathe. But it did seem so silly to sit still like that. If anybody saw me what should I say? I had a pair of nail-scissors in my pocket,

and with them I cut the string. They were a very small pair, and the string was thick and it was wet. It took me a long time to cut it. But I succeeded at last. I was adrift on the waters!

"Dearest mamma, have you ever felt what it is like to be adrift, all alone by yourself, in a dinghy?—you know what that is, I am sure. I think that is how it is spelt. I hope you never have, for your own sake. It is awful! I could have screamed, only I dared not, for fear of upsetting the boat. I had never thought of the oars until I was adrift. And when I did think of them my heart went into my mouth—between ourselves, I believe it was there already. They were generally taken out of the boat at night. But, fortunately, Charlie had been too lazy the evening before and had left them in. And there they were, staring me in the face. I took hold of one very gently, but directly I began to lift it the boat began again to wobble. I tried to think I didn't care. I clenched my teeth and I kept on lifting the oar, and at last I got it straight up in the air — like a scaffold-pole. I had had no idea it was so heavy. It was all I could do to hold it; in fact, I couldn't hold it. To my horror it slipped out of my grasp and fell into the stream with a splash. It drenched

me with water from head to foot. And there it was, floating about by itself, ever so far away.

"I quite abandoned hope. I gave myself up for lost. I tried to collect my presence of mind and to think of the Royal Humane Society's directions for drowning—which are printed on the board in Hyde Park, you know. Judged by the light of after events, losing that oar was the most fortunate thing which could have happened to me. If I had not lost it I should have drowned myself. My body might have been lying at the bottom of the river even now. But I did not know that at the time. And after I had abandoned hope it was all I could do to keep from crying.

"Suddenly someone called to me from the bank. It was Charlie. He was not very well dressed; he had his towel over his arm; he was going for his morning bathe. But I don't think I ever had loved him so much as when I heard his voice and saw him standing there—no, not even in that glad moment when first he told me that he loved me and asked me to be his wife.

"'Oh, Charlie!' I cried. 'I'm drowning!'

"'That's all right!' It sounded unfeeling, but I knew what he meant. 'I'll swim out to you.'

" He leaped head foremost into the river as if it had been nothing at all, and swam out to me as if he had been a dog. He swam first of all to the oar, and then he swam to the boat.

" 'Sit still!' he said.

" But it was not the slightest use my sitting still when he himself nearly pulled the boat right over. Almost before I knew it he was sitting on the seat in front of me, sopping wet and laughing.

" 'What's the meaning of this?' he asked.

" 'I'm learning to row.'

" 'You looked as if you were learning to row! Well, have you learnt?'

" 'Charlie, you're not to laugh at me! It isn't right. Some girls have people to teach them rowing—people who care for them, that is. But I haven't, so of course I have to teach myself. And I have to get up in the small hours of the morning to do it too.' I sighed—or I chose to let him think I did—'I might have been drowned.'

" 'That's true—you might.' He looked at me hard, and I believe there was a twinkle in his eyes. But as I looked right past him, far across the water, and he saw that I was serious, I think that it went no further. 'Look here, Miss Whitby——'

" 'You're not to call me Miss Whitby, Charlie!'

"'Very well, I won't. Look here, young person——'

"'And you're not to call me young person either. I'm not a young person.'

"'Then look here, old chap——'

"'Charlie Mason, if you call me old chap I'll get out of the boat this instant!'

"'That's right. Do.' He pretended to wait for me to get out. I was not so absurd. He went on: 'I don't know if you're aware that it's easier to learn rowing with one scull than with two?'

"'How was I to know that? No one ever told me. Nobody takes sufficient interest in me to tell me anything.'

"'If you had betrayed the slightest sign of desiring the information I would have taken sufficient interest in you to tell you that. I came out here to have a dip. I have had half of it. During the interval, before I have the other half, I shall have pleasure in imparting to you that instruction for which your soul professes to yearn.' I had said nothing about my soul, or about yearning either; I am not so profane. He pointed to the seat behind me. 'Get on to that seat and sit in the middle.'

"'You must take the boat to shore first. You know how strongly I object to changing places

while the boat is in the middle of the river; it does make it wobble so.'

"'Is the teacher to obey or to be obeyed? Execute my commands!'

"I 'executed his commands,' and the boat did not turn over. Charlie moved on to the seat which I had occupied. He showed me his back.

"'Do as I do.'

"I did as he did, or I tried to. He put one of the oars in its place in the water without the slightest difficulty. I did not find it by any means so easy.

"'May I ask, before we proceed any further, if it is your intention to knock me overboard?' He said that simply because I happened to hit him with my oar as I was lifting it. The thing would not go right. I daresay that I did knock him two or three times, but there was *really* no necessity why he should make a fuss, as he did do. 'Is your scull having a row with you, or are you having a row with it? What is the matter?'

"Thank you, nothing is the matter."

"I scorned to complain.

"'I'm glad to learn it; I hate to hear of people falling out. Now, are you all right?'

"'I am perfectly right.'

"He glanced round to inspect me.

"'Yes, you look perfectly right. You've got your scull the wrong way round.' I turned the thing. 'Now you've got it upside down.'

"'What do you mean? You don't mean to tell me that the other end ought to be in the water?'

"'No, I don't mean to tell you quite that, but I do mean to tell you that you ought to hold it so that the hollow part of the blade looks in front of you. It's an elementary fact, but it is a fact.' I turned the thing again. 'Suppose you put three or four feet more of it out of the boat. As you're holding it at present a good part of your scull seems to run to handle.' I pushed some more of the thing through the place they call the rowlock. 'I didn't tell you to put the whole of it out of the boat; it's just as well to keep something to catch hold of, if only for the look of the thing. If you observe, there's a strip of leather round the scull. That strip of leather marks the point where the scull is supposed to rest in the rowlock. That's better. Your hands are wrong; shift them. Hold your scull as I am holding mine.'

"It was all very well of him to talk like that, but it was most unfair, besides being ridiculous. His hands are, at least, twice as large as mine; he could get right hold of his oar, while I could

scarcely get hold of mine at all. But I declined to argue.

"'Now, when I say "pull," pull. And it's about time that somebody did begin to pull, or very shortly we shall be aground. Now, pull!'

"For some reason, I don't know what, the boat began to turn right round. Charlie immediately stopped rowing. I had never begun. Of course, at once Charlie tried to be funny.

"'I see the progress of this boat is going to be conducted on the tee-to-tum principle. May I ask why you didn't pull?'

"'Because I couldn't.'

"'Why couldn't you?'

"'Because I couldn't get my oar out of the water.'

"'So I should imagine. There appears to be six feet more of it in the water than there ought to be. This is not intended to be a lesson in punting. In punting one desires to feel the bed of the river; you and I do not want to get quite so deep.'

"'I wish you wouldn't laugh at me.'

"'My dear May, nothing can be further from my thoughts. How could I dare? Let us try again. Before making our second effort I should, perhaps, tell you that it is advisable to put your scull in just deep enough to cover

the blade, and then to pull it steadily out again. There's no hurry. Take your time; there's no fear of our going ashore just yet. At present we look more like crossing the river. Now, are you ready. When I say the word—pull!'

"Again the boat began to turn.

"'Charlie, I cannot get my oar out of the water. I'm not as strong as a horse.'

"He looked at me and laughed. I could have laughed, only I was afraid of crying; it was so vexing to feel one was so stupid.

"'When I was a small boy and I first started to row I couldn't get my oar out of the water, except when I didn't want to, and then it came out too easily. See, May, I'll keep the boat straight, and you have one or two shots at paddling.'

"I had what he called 'one or two shots at paddling,' that is, I just dipped my oar into the water and pulled. I began to feel that I was getting the hang of the thing—Charlie's own words. I saw that it was going to be much harder than I had ever imagined, but I did not mind that, because, as I say, I did feel that I was getting on.

"'Now,' said Charlie, 'I'll paddle.'

"Directly he began to paddle the boat began to turn.

"'What makes the boat go round?'

"'It's because you don't pull strong enough. If two persons don't pull equally—that is, together, and with equal strength—the boat is bound to turn.'

"When he said that I made up my mind that I would pull stronger; the boat should not go round. So I shut my eyes and clenched my teeth and I pulled with all my might, and before I knew what had happened, I was in the water!

"Charlie says that I caught a crab. He says, in my haste and my excitement—I didn't know I was excited, but I suppose I must have been —I did not put the oar into the water at all; I pulled with all my might at the vacant air. I know that I fell backwards off my seat, and that I made a wild grab at anything and everything, and that the boat went over.

"I never shall forget it. The water got into my ears and eyes and nose and mouth, and I thought that I never should stop going down. Then, all of a sudden, I found myself on the surface again, with the sky above me and Charlie's arm about my waist.

"Keep still," he said.

I did keep still; he says I did keep still. He says himself that I behaved like a regular trump.

I do declare to you, mamma, that I never felt the least bit uneasy directly I felt Charlie's arm round my waist. Wasn't it strange?

"'You won't let me drown, Charlie, will you?'

"That was all I said.

"'Not if I know it. It's all right, May; we're going shares in the other half of my dip, that's all. I'll take you ashore as easy as winking.'

"I don't know exactly what it was I said, but I believe that I said some absurd thing about that, if I was drowned, he would know that I loved him. But I do know that he kissed me, then and there, while he was holding me up for dear life, in the middle of the river.

"I never fainted till we got ashore, and then I only just dropped off. Charlie carried me right off to my bedroom, and there was a fine to-do. But I wasn't going to stop in bed—not I. I just changed my clothes and went straight downstairs to breakfast, and, after breakfast, I went for another row. And I went for another after lunch, and I got on first rate. Charlie declares that, with practice, I shall make as good an oarswoman as you would care to see; and, after we are married, he's going to teach me swimming—so he says.

"But we're not married yet."

Outside!

STACEY-LUMPTON wanted to go in a cab. I said that a 'bus was good enough for me. He looked me up and down as if I were some inferior kind of animal.

"I 'll pay for the cab."

That settled it. I told him that I could not think of allowing such a thing. He brushed a speck of dust off the silk facings of his frock-coat. Then, with his pocket-handkerchief, he brushed the top of one of the fingers of his lemon-coloured kid gloves — where it had touched his coat.

"But I 've never travelled in an omnibus."

"In that case it'll be a new sensation, and a new sensation 's everything! Read the daily paper—it 's the salt of life."

"But all sorts of extraordinary people travel in an omnibus!"

"I should rather think they do. Why, the

very last time I was on one the Archbishop of Canterbury sat on the seat in front of me, the Duke of Devonshire was on my right, a person high in favour at Marlborough House was just behind, while there was no one below the rank of a baronet in sight."

He looked at me, as he fumbled for his eye-glass, as if he thought I might be getting at him. Before he could make up his mind a "Walham Green" came lumbering towards us. Stopping it, I hustled Stacey-Lumpton into the road before he in the least understood what was happening.

"Now then, look alive! Here's the very 'bus we want! Jump up!"

I assisted him on to the step. He made as if to go inside. I twisted him towards the stairs. He remonstrated.

"My dear fellow, I really must beg of you to allow me to get inside this omnibus."

"Nonsense. You'll be crushed to death, besides being suffocated alive. There's plenty of room outside. Up you toddle."

I don't know about toddling, but urged, no doubt, to an appreciable degree by the pressure which I exercised from behind, he did begin to mount the stairs gingerly one by one. I followed

him. When he was near the top I sang out to the conductor.

"All right!" The conductor stamped his foot. The 'bus started. Then, to Stacey-Lumpton, "Hold tight!"

He held tight just in time. He seemed surprised. "Good gracious! I almost tumbled! The omnibus has started! Tell him to stop at once, I 'm falling!"

"Not you. The police won't allow them to stop more than a certain time. They 're bound to keep on moving. Shove along."

"This is most dangerous. I 'm not used to this kind of thing. And the roof seems full."

"There are two empty seats in front there, just behind the driver—move on."

He moved on after a fashion of his own. He seemed to find the task of preserving his equilibrium, and at the same time of steering his way between the two rows of occupied garden seats, a little difficult. He struck one man upon the head. He seized a lady by her bonnet. He all but thrust the point of his umbrella into another person's eye. He grabbed an old gentleman by the collar of his coat. This method of proceeding tended to make him popular.

"Driver!" exclaimed the old gentleman whom Stacey-Lumpton had grabbed, slightly mistaking the situation, "This person is drunk. He ought not to be allowed in such a condition on an omnibus."

Stacey-Lumpton was too confused to remonstrate. He went floundering on. Presently he kicked against a box which a gentleman of the coster class had placed beside himself on the roof. In trying to recover himself he brought his hand down pretty heavily on its owner's hat. Said owner lost no time in calling his attention to the thing which he had done.

"Where do you think you 're a-coming to? I shouldn't be surprised but what you thought this 'bus was made for you. You do that again and I 'll send you travelling, and don't you seem to forget it neither."

Stacey-Lumpton had reached a vacant seat at last. I sat beside him. Immediately behind us was the coster. He had taken off his hat and was lovingly examining it. It was an ancient billycock, which had been in somebody's family for several generations. A friend accompanied him.

"If I was you, Jimmy," observed his friend, "I should make that cove pay for your 'at."

"Make 'im pay for it? He ain't got no money. Do 'e look as though 'e 'ad?"

"Well, I should make 'im give yer 'is 'at for yourn. He's bashed your 'at in, ain't 'e?"

Jimmy acted on the hint. Leaning forward, he thrust his reminiscence of a head-covering under Stacey-Lumpton's nose.

"I say, I don't know if you know that you've bashed my 'at in, guv'nor?"

Stacey-Lumpton raised his fingers to his nostrils.

"Take it away, sir—horribly smelling thing."

"Wot are you calling a 'orribly smelling thing? Wot would you say if I was to bash your 'at in?"

"I should bash it in if I was you, Jimmy."

"So I will if 'e don't look out, and so I tell 'im."

The gentleman whose coat had been grabbed still seemed unappeased, and still seemed labouring under a misapprehension.

"Persons who are in an intoxicated condition ought not to be allowed on public conveyances." I turned to Stacey-Lumpton.

"I don't know if you are aware that you almost pulled that gentleman's coat off his back?"

The old gentleman's observations, although

addressed to no one in particular, had been audible to all. Twisting himself round in his seat, Stacey-Lumpton proceeded to explain.

"I hope, sir, I didn't hurt you."

The coster chose to take this remark as being addressed to him.

"But you 'urt my 'at! I give fourpence for that 'at not three months ago. 'Ow d'yer suppose I'm going to keep myself in 'ats?"

"If I have been so unfortunate as to damage your hat, sir, I shall be happy to present you with the sum of fourpence with which to provide yourself with another."

Jimmy's friend highly approved of this suggestion. He immediately proceeded to embellish it with an addition of his own.

"That's right. You give 'im fourpence and you give me fourpence. That's what I call be'aving like a gentleman."

Stacey-Lumpton failed quite to follow the line of reasoning.

"Why should I give you fourpence?"

"Why? Because I asks for it. I suppose you can 'ear me. You bashes in my friend's 'at, and I'm 'is friend, and we shares and shares alike. As you treats 'im you treats me. Ain't that right, Jimmy?" Jimmy said it was.

"Quite right, 'Enery—it's quite right. If the gentleman is a gentleman 'e 'll give us fourpence apiece—both the two of us. 'E looks a gentleman, don't 'e? 'Is 'at wasn't never bought for fourpence—no, nor for three fourpences neither."

A feminine voice was heard in the rear. It was the lady Stacey-Lumpton had seized by the bonnet; she seemed to have been nursing a grievance.

"And what about me? I suppose it doesn't matter anything at all about me. Oh dear no! I have had my bonnet tore almost off my head, and my hair too, but, of course, I am nobody. If a drunken wretch was to handle some wives some husbands would want to know the reason why. But if I was to be thrown right off the omnibust, and trampled under foot, my husband would sit still and never say a word—oh dear no!"

The husband in question appeared to be a stout individual who, seated by the lady's side, leaned his chin on the handle of an umbrella. He seemed to consider that the remark was, at least, partially addressed to him.

"It was only an accident, Eliza."

"Oh, of course, it was only an accident. Whenever anyone insults me it always is an accident. Some husbands wouldn't say it was

an accident, but I have to look after myself, I have." She immediately proceeded to do it. Raising her voice she addressed herself to Stacey-Lumpton. "Young man, I don't know if you happen to be aware that you 've scrunched my new bonnet out of shape, and drove a hair-pin through my head. Is that the way you always get on omnibuses?"

Stacey-Lumpton was all apologies.

"I beg ten thousand pardons, madam, but the fact is I am not accustomed to travelling on an omnibus, and I 'm afraid——"

"Fares, please." The conductor came along cutting the apologies short. "Your fare if you please, sir."

"What is the fare?"

"Arf a crown."

This was Jimmy's friend.

"Where are you going?"

This was the conductor. I explained.

"We want a pennyworth." I turned to Stacey-Lumpton. "I have no coppers. Have you got twopence?"

He produced a sovereign purse.

"Have you change for a sovereign?"

This to the conductor, and the conductor was contemptuous.

"Change for a sovereign! I haven't got change for no sovereign, unless you like to take it all in coppers."

"Take change for a sovereign in coppers? What do you suppose I should do with a sovereign's worth of coppers?"

"I don't know nothing at all about it. I 've got to do with 'em, haven't I? Twopence, please!"

Jimmy's friend interposed.

"You 'and me over the sovering. I 'll change it. I got sevenpence-'apenny,"

Jimmy chorussed.

"And I dessay I could make it up to a bob, and then we 'll take our two 'ats out of it, and then we 'll give yer wot 's left next time we sees yer—eh, 'Enery?"

The driver, turning his head, nodded to his colleague.

"That 's all right, Tom. You give the gentlemen their tickets. I 'll see you get your twopence. The gentlemen can owe it me." He gave his whip an artistic twirl. "I 've known myself what it 's like to have a sovereign and no change to be had—ah, and more than a sovereign, though you mightn't think it to see me here."

Not feeling inclined to be indebted to an omnibus driver for the loan of twopence, I

suddenly discovered that I had two coppers. The conductor retired. There was an interval of silence—spent, I imagine, by Stacey-Lumpton in endeavouring to smooth his ruffled plumage. Presently Jimmy's friend began again:

"I say, Jimmy, how about our fourpences?"

"That's what I say. Guv'nor, 'ow about our fourpences? I ain't seen no fourpence."

I tendered Stacey-Lumpton a word of advice.

"If you are wise you will give them nothing."

"I don't intend to."

"Oh, you don't, don't you? Well, that's 'andsome! Now, supposing I bash in your 'at?" All at once he made a fresh discovery. "If 'e ain't smashed the blooming box!" He picked up from beside him the box which Stacey-Lumpton had kicked against. "Smashed it right in—straight, 'e 'as! Well, there's a thing to do!" He thrust the box in question between Stacey-Lumpton and myself. "Look 'ere, there's bloaters in that box." We did not need his word to make us conscious of that fact. The perfume was enough. Stacey-Lumpton recognised that this was so with, on his face, an expression of speechless horror. "You've busted in the box and spiled the lot of 'em. Who's going to buy bruised bloaters, I'd like

to know? I don't mind my 'at so much, but when it comes to bloaters—they 're my *living*."

An interposition from the lady whose bonnet had been "scrunched."

"Parties like him think no more of taking the bread out of the mouths of the struggling poor than if they was insecks!"

Her husband seemed to think the remark slightly uncalled for.

"That 's you, Eliza, all over. You must put your spoke in everybody's wheel. You can't keep quiet, can you?"

"It 's as well some of us are like that. Some of us would keep quiet till we was dead. I 'm not that sort, I thank goodness."

A gentleman on the seat on the other side of the driver, leaning towards me, proffered a suggestion—his accent was distinctly nasal.

"If I vas your vriend I vould gif him a gopper or two to keep him quiet."

At last Stacey-Lumpton found his voice.

"Take that horrible thing away, man."

"'Orrible thing! Wot are you calling a 'orrible thing? Everythink 's a 'orrible thing accordink to you. Don't you come trying no toffs over me, my funny bloke, or you 'll soon know."

Thereupon something happened which I had not expected, and which, I am pretty sure, Jimmy had not expected either. Stacey-Lumpton took that box of bloaters in his kid-gloved hands, and in another moment it was lying in the road. He had thrown it overboard. What immediately ensued may be described as larks. I had not anticipated anything of that kind when I had suggested that we should ride outside. Jimmy "went for" Stacey-Lumpton with a full-mouthed imprecation.

"He's took my bloaters . . . his eyes!!!"

The driver pulled up. "Now then! now then! what's all this? Might I just inquire? Some of you'll get hurt, you know."

Stacey-Lumpton rose from his seat. He turned. He lifted Jimmy off his feet. Jimmy was one of those half-grown coster lads who in London may be regarded as common objects of the sea-shore. His opponent was twice his size and he was an athlete, although he was a "toff." Lowering Jimmy, in spite of his frantic struggles, over the side of the omnibus, he dropped him on to the street. 'Enery, who also evinced symptoms of violence, went by the same route after his friend. Stacey-Lumpton tossed a sovereign after them.

"Provide yourselves with another box of bloaters and a new hat out of that, my men."

But Jimmy was not to be appeased. His honour had been wounded in its most tender place. Tossing his injured billycock into the mud, he began to tear his coat off his back.

"Come down! Meet me like a man!"

The driver played the part of peacemaker.

"Don't be silly, my lad! The gentleman could swallow you! Pick up your sovereign. You'll never see as much money in your life again." He started his horses. "Good-bye, my little dears. If I was you I'd have a bloater each for tea."

When, having arrived at the end of his first 'bus drive, Stacey-Lumpton found himself on solid ground again, he delivered himself of a sententious observation:

"I fancy that some of the passengers on that omnibus were beneath the rank of a baronet."

I agreed with him. I thought it possible that they were.

Not that I think much of a baronet either.

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