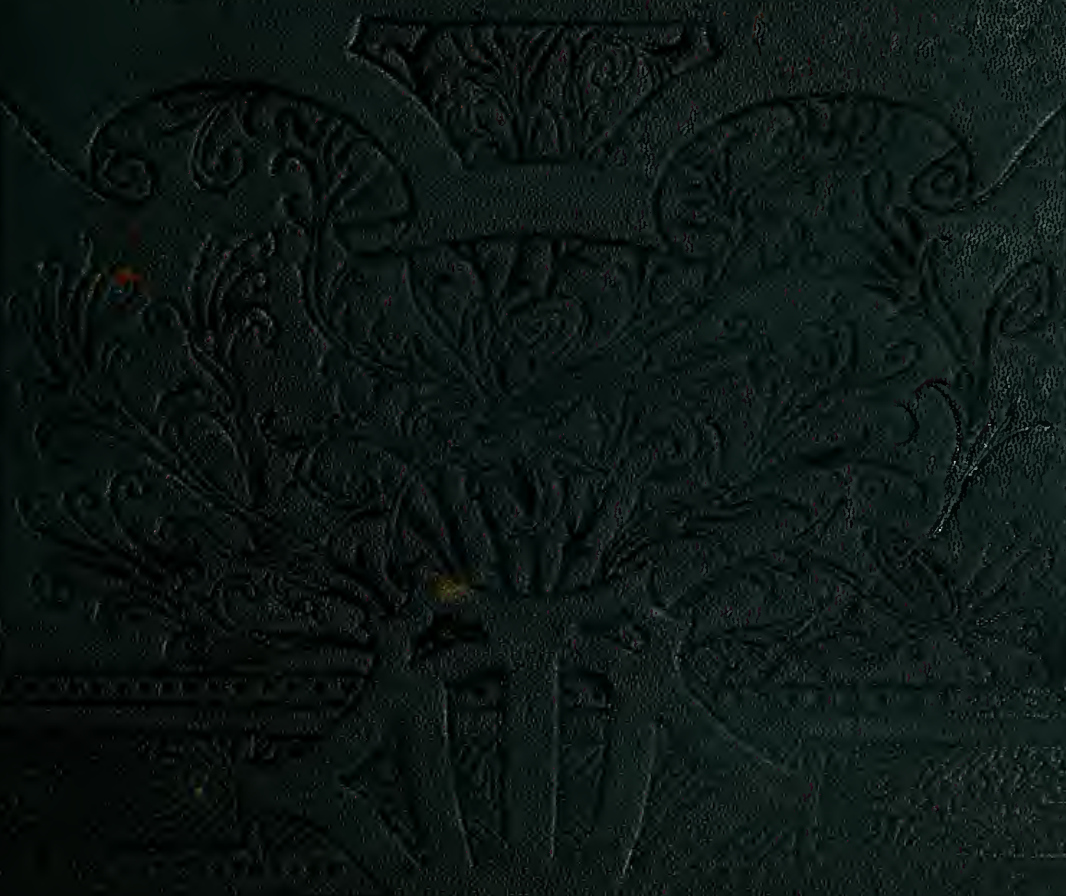


LEVER'S  
WORKS

















On the Brink.

[LUTTRELL OF ARAN.—FRONTISPIECE.]



THE WORKS  
OF  
CHARLES LEVER.

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*VOL. V.*

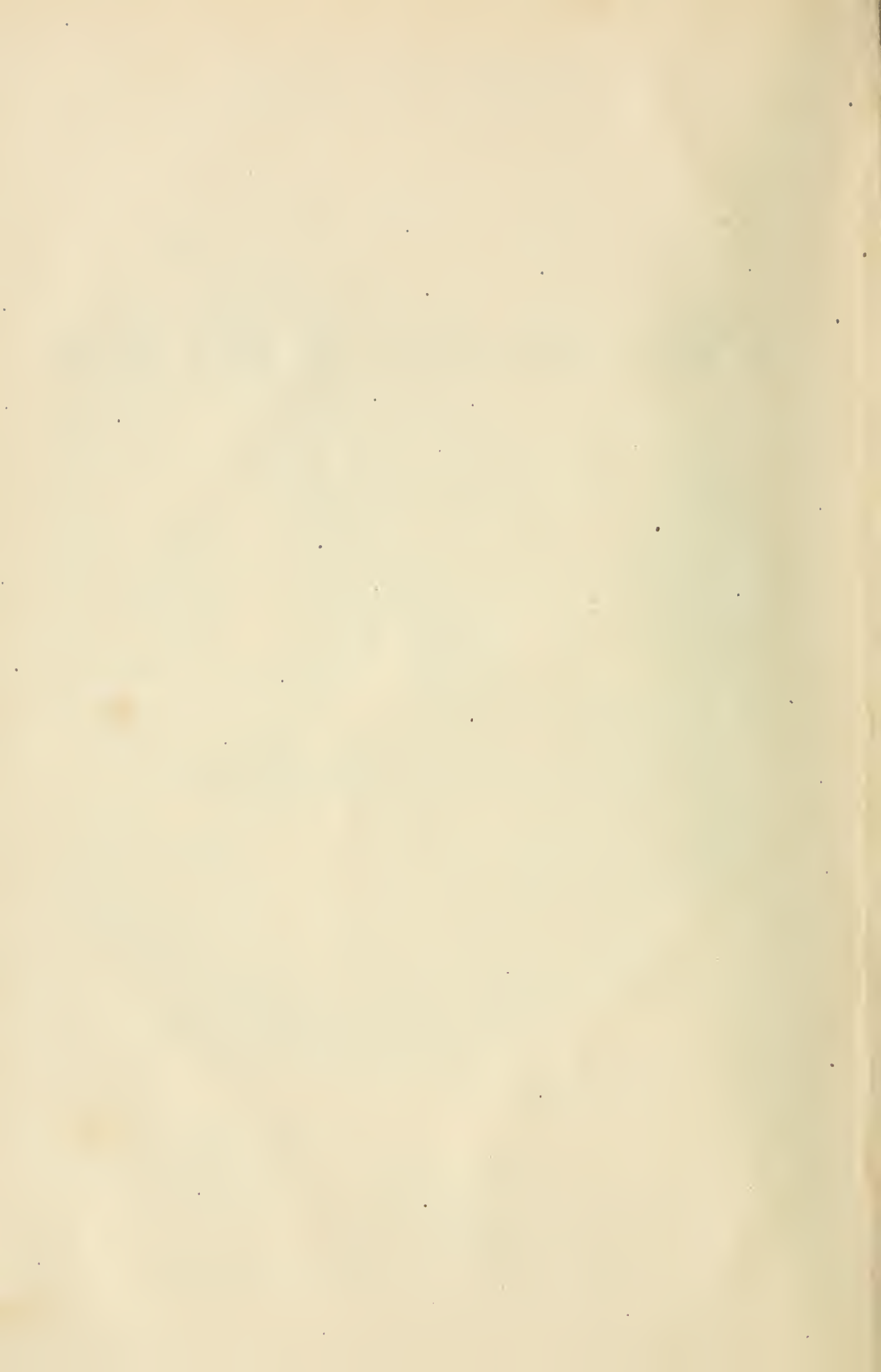
LUTTRELL OF ARRAN.  
BRAMLEIGHS OF BISHOP'S FOLLY.

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*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.*

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# LUTTRELL OF ARRAN.

## CHAPTER I.

### A WILD LANDSCAPE.

“ONE half the world knows not how the other half lives,” says the adage ; and there is a peculiar force in the maxim when applied to certain remote and little-visited districts in these islands, where the people are about as unknown to us as though they inhabited some lonely rock in the South Pacific.

While the great world, not very far off, busies itself with all the appliances of state and science, amusing its leisure by problems which, once on a time, would have been reserved for the studies of philosophers and sages, these poor creatures drag on an existence rather beneath than above the habits of savage life. Their dwellings, their food, their clothes, such as generations of their fathers possessed ; and neither in their culture, their aspirations, nor their ways, advanced beyond what centuries back had seen them.

Of that group of islands off the north-west coast of Ireland called the Arraas, Inishmore is a striking instance of this neglect and desolation. Probably within the wide sweep of the British islands there could not be found a spot more irretrievably given up to poverty and barbarism. Some circular mud hovels, shaped like beehives, and with a central aperture for the escape of the smoke, are the dwellings of an almost naked, famine-stricken people, whose looks, language, and gestures mark them out for foreigners if they chance to come over to the mainland. Deriving their scanty subsistence almost entirely from fishing and kelp-burning, they depend for life upon the chances of the seasons, in a spot where storms are all but perpetual, and where a day of comparative calm is a rare event.

Curious enough it is to mark that in this wild ungenial spot civilization had once set

foot, and some Christian pilgrims found a resting-place. There is no certain record of whence or how they first came, but the Abbey of St. Finbar dates from an early century, and the strong walls yet attest the size and proportions of the ancient monastery. Something like forty years ago the islanders learned that the owner of the island, of whose existence they then heard for the first time, proposed to come over and live there, and soon afterwards a few workmen arrived, and, in some weeks, converted the old crypt of the Abbey into something habitable, adding two small chambers to it, and building a chimney—a work of art—which, whether meant for defence or some religious object, was, during its construction, a much-debated question by the people. The intention to resume a sovereignty which had lain so long in abeyance would have been a bold measure in such a spot if it had not been preceded by the assurance that the chief meant to disturb nothing, dispute nothing of vested interests. They were told that he who was coming was a man weary of the world and its ways, who desired simply a spot of earth where he might live in peace, and where, dying, he might leave his bones with the Luttrells, whose graves for generations back thronged the narrow aisle of the church. These facts, and that he had a sickly wife and one child, a boy of a few years old, were all that they knew of him. If the bare idea of a superior was distasteful in a community where common misery had taught brotherhood, the notion was dispelled at sight of the sad sorrow-stricken man who landed on an evening of September, and walked from the boat through the surf beside his wife, as two sailors carried her to shore. He held his little boy's hand, refusing the many offers that were made to carry him, though the foaming water surged at times above the little fellow's waist, and made him plunge with childish glee and laughter ; that infant

courage and light-heartedness going farther into the hearts of the wild people than if the father had come to greet them with costly presents!

John Luttrell was not above six-and-thirty, but he looked fifty; his hair was perfectly white, his blue eyes dimmed and circled with dark wrinkles, his shoulders stooped, and his look downcast. Of his wife it could be seen that she had once been handsome, but her wasted figure and incessant cough showed she was in the last stage of consumption. The child was a picture of infantile beauty, and that daring boldness which sits so gracefully on childhood. If he was dressed in the very cheapest and least costly fashion, to the islanders he seemed attired in very splendor, and his jacket of dark crimson cloth and a little feather that he wore in his cap sufficed to win for him the name of the Prince, which he never lost afterward.

It could not be supposed that such an event would not create a great stir and commotion in the little colony; the ways, the looks, the demeanor, and the requirements of the new comers, furnishing for weeks, and even months, topics for conversation; but gradually this wore itself out. Molly Ryan, the one sole domestic servant who accompanied the Luttrells, being of an uncommunicative temper, contributed no anecdotic details of in-door life to stimulate interest and keep curiosity alive. All that they knew of Luttrell was to meet him in his walks, and receive the short, not over-courteous nod with which he acknowledged their salutations. Of his wife, they only saw the wasted form that half lay, half sat at a window; so that all their thoughts were centred in the child—the Prince—who came familiarly amongst them, uncared for and unheeded by his own, and free to pass his days with the other children as they heaped wood upon the kelp fires, or helped the fishermen to dry their nets upon the shore. In the innocence of their primitive life this familiarity did not trench upon the respect they felt they owed him. They did not regard his presence as anything like condescension, they could not think of it as derogation, but they felt throughout that he was not one of them, and his golden hair and his tiny hands and feet were as unmistakable marks of station as though he wore a coronet or carried a sceptre.

The unbroken melancholy that seemed to mark Luttrell's life, his uncommunicativeness, his want of interest or sympathy in all that went on around him, would have inspired, by themselves, a sense of fear amongst the people; but to these traits were

added others that seemed to augment this terror. His days were passed in search of relics and antiquarian objects, of which the Abbey possessed a rich store, and to their simple intelligence these things smacked of magic. To hear the clink of his spade within the walls of the old church by day, and to see the lone light in his chamber, where it was rumored he sat sleepless throughout the night, were always enough to exact a paternoster and a benediction from the peasant, whose whole religious training began and ended with these offices.

Nor was the child destined to escape the influence of this popular impression. He was rarely at home, and, when there, scarcely noticed or spoken to. His poor sick mother would draw him to her heart, and as she pressed his golden locks close to her, her tears would fall fast upon them, but dreading lest her sorrow should throw a shade over his sunny happiness, she would try to engage him in some out-of-door pursuit again—send him off to ask if the fishermen had taken a full haul, or when some one's new boat would be ready for launching.

Of the room in which the recluse sat, and wherein he alone ever entered, a chance peep through the ivy-covered casement offered nothing very reassuring. It was a narrow, lofty chamber, with a groined roof and a flagged floor, formed of ancient gravestones, the sculptured sides downwards. Two large stuffed seals sat guardwise on either side of the fireplace, over which, on a bracket, was an enormous human skull, an inscription being attached to it, with the reasons for believing its size to be gigantic rather than the consequences of diseased growth. Strange-shaped bones, and arrow-heads, and stone spears and javelins decorated the walls, with amber ornaments and clasps of metal. A massive font served as a washstand, and a broken stone cross formed a coat-rack. In one corner, enclosed by two planks, stood an humble bed, and opposite the fire was the only chair in the chamber—a rude contrivance, fashioned from a root of bog-oak, black with centuries of interment.

It was late at night that Luttrell sat here, reading an old volume, whose parchment cover was stained and discolored by time. The window was open, and offered a wide view over the sea, on which a faint moonlight shone out at times, and whose dull surging plash broke with a uniform measure on the shore beneath.

Twice had he laid down his book, and, opening the door, stood to listen for a moment, and then resumed his reading; but it was easy to see that the pages did not



engage his attention, nor was he able, as he sought, to find occupation in their contents.

At last there came a gentle tap to the door; he arose and opened it. It was the woman-servant who formed his household, who stood tearful and trembling before him.

"Well?" said he, in some emotion.

"Father Lowrie is come," said she, timidly.

He only nodded, as though to say, "Go on."

"And he'll give her the rights," continued she; "but he says he hopes that you'll come over to Belmullet on Sunday, and declare at the altar how it was."

"Declare what?" cried he; and his voice rose to a key of passionate eagerness that was almost a shriek. "Declare what?"

"He means, that you'll tell the people —"

"Send him here to me," broke in Luttrell, angrily. "I'm not going to discuss this with you."

"Sure isn't he giving her the blessed Sacrament!" said she, indignantly.

"Leave me, then—leave me in peace," said he, as he turned away and leaned his head on the chimney-piece; and then, without raising it, added, "and tell the priest to come to me before he goes away."

The woman had not gone many minutes, when a heavy step approached the door, and a strong knock was heard. "Come in!" cried Luttrell, and there entered a short, slightly-made man, middle-aged and active-looking, with bright black eyes, and a tall, straight forehead, to whom Luttrell motioned the only chair as he came forward.

"It's all over, sir. She's in glory!" said he, reverently.

"Without pain?" asked Luttrell.

"A parting pang—no more. She was calm to the last. Indeed, her last words were to repeat what she had pressed so often upon me."

"I know—I know!" broke in Luttrell, impatiently. "I never denied it."

"True, sir; but you never acknowledged it," said the priest, hardily. "When you had the courage to make a peasant girl your wife, you ought to have had the courage to declare it also."

"To have taken her to the court, I hope—to have presented her to royalty—to have paraded my shame and my folly before the world whose best kindness was that it forgot me! Look here, sir; my wife was brought up a Catholic; I never interfered with her convictions. If I never spoke to her on the subject of her faith, it was no small concession from a man who felt on

the matter as I did. I sent for you to administer to her the rights of her Church, but not to lecture me on my duties or my obligations. What I ought to do, and when, I have not to learn from a Roman Catholic priest."

"And yet, sir, it is a Catholic priest will force you to do it. There was no stain on your wife's fame; and there shall be none upon her memory."

"What is the amount of my debt to you, Father Lowrie?" asked Luttrell, calmly and even courteously.

"Nothing, sir; not a farthing. Her father was a good friend to me and mine before ruin overtook him. It wasn't for money I came here to night."

"Then you leave me your debtor, sir, and against my will."

"But you needn't be, Mr. Luttrell," said the priest with eagerness. "She that has just gone, begged and prayed me with her last breath to look after her little boy, and to see and watch that he was not brought up in darkness."

"I understand you. You were to bring him into your own fold. If you hope for success for such a scheme, take a likelier moment, father; this is not your time. Leave me now, I pray you. I have much to attend to."

"May I hope to have an early opportunity to see and talk with you, Mr. Luttrell?"

"You shall hear from me, sir, on the matter and early," said Luttrell. "Your own good feeling will show this is not the moment to press me."

Abashed by the manner in which these last words were spoken, the father bowed low and withdrew.

"Well?" cried the servant-woman, as he passed out, "will he do it, your reverence?"

"Not to-day, anyhow, Molly," said he, with a sigh.

How Luttrell sorrowed for the loss of his wife was not known. It was believed that he never passed the threshold of the door where she lay—never went to take one farewell look of her. He sat moodily in his room, going out at times to give certain orders about the funeral, which was to take place on the third day. A messenger had been despatched to his wife's relatives, who lived about seventy miles off, down the coast of Mayo, and to invite them to attend. Of her immediate family none remained. Her father was in banishment, the commutation of a sentence of death. Of her two brothers, one had died on the scaffold, and another had escaped to America, whither her three sisters had followed him; so that except her uncle, Peter Hogan, and his fam-

ily, and a half-brother of her mother's a certain Joe Rafter, who kept a shop at Lahinch, there were few to follow her to the grave as mourners.

Peter had four sons and several daughters, three of them married. They were of the class of small farmers, very little above the condition of the cottier; but they were, as a family a determined, resolute, hard-headed race, not a little dreaded in the neighborhood where they lived, and well known to be knit together by ties that made an injury to any one of them a feud that the whole family would avenge.

For years and years Lattrell had not seen or even heard of them. He had a vague recollection of having seen Peter Hegan at his marriage, and once or twice afterwards, but preserved no recollection of him. Nothing short of an absolute necessity—for as such he felt it—would have induced him to send for them now; but he knew well how rigid were popular prejudices, and how impossible it would have been for him to live amongst a people whose most cherished feelings he would have outraged, had he omitted the accustomed honors to the dead.

He told his servant Molly, to do all that was needful on the occasion—to provide for those melancholy festivities which the lower Irish adhere to with a devotion that at once blends their religious ardor with their intensely strong imaginative power.

"There is but one thing I will not bear," said he. "They must not come in upon me. I will see them when they come, and take leave of them when they go; but they are not to expect me to take any part in their proceedings. Into this room I will suffer none to enter."

"And Master Harry," said the woman, wiping her eyes with her apron—"what's to be done with him? 'Tis two days that he's there, and he won't leave the corpse."

"It's a child's sorrow, and will soon wear itself out."

"Ay, but it's killing him!" said she, tenderly—"it's killing him in the meanwhile."

"He belongs to a tough race," said he with a bitter smile, "that neither sorrow nor shame ever killed. Leave the boy alone, and he'll come to himself the sooner."

The peasant woman felt almost sick in her horror at such a sentiment, and she moved towards the door to pass out.

"Have you thought of everything, Molly?" asked he, more mildly.

"I think so, sir. There's to be twenty-eight at the wake—twenty-nine, if Mr. Rafter comes; but we don't expect him—

and Father Lowrie would make thirty; but we've plenty for them all."

"And when will this—this feasting—take place?"

"The night before the funeral, by coorse," said the woman.

"And they will all leave this the next morning, Molly?"

"Indeed I suppose they will, sir," said she, no less offended at the doubt than at the inhospitable meanness of the question.

"So be it, then!" said he, with a sigh. "I have nothing more to say."

"You know, sir," said she, with a great effort at courage, "that they'll expect your Honor will go in for a minute or two—to drink their healths, and say a few words to them?"

He shook his head in dissent, but said nothing.

"The Hogans is as proud a stock as any in Mayo, sir," said she, eagerly, "and if they thought it was any disrespect to her that was gone—"

"Hold your tongue, woman," cried he, impatiently. "She was my wife, and I know better what becomes her memory than these ignorant peasants. Let there be no more of this;" and he closed the door after her as she went out, and turned the key in it, in token that he would not brook more disturbance.

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## CHAPTER II.

### A YACHTING PARTY.

In a beautiful little bay on the north-east of Innishmore, land-locked on all sides but the entrance, a handsome schooner yacht dropped her anchor just as the sun was setting. Amidst the desolate grandeur of those wild cliffs, against which the sea surged and plashed till the very rocks were smooth worn, that graceful little craft, with her tall and taper spars, and all her trim adjuncts, seemed a strange vision. It was the contrast of civilization with barbarism; they were the two poles of what are most separated in life—wealth and poverty.

The owner was a baronet, a certain Sir Gervais Vyner—one of those spoiled children of Fortune which England alone rears: for while in other lands high birth and large fortune confer their distinctive advantages, they do not tend, as they do with us, to great social eminence, and even political influence. Vyner had got almost every prize in this world's lottery; all, indeed, but one; his only child was a daugh-



ter, and this was the drop that sufficed to turn to bitterness much of that cupful of enjoyment Fate had offered to his lips. He had seen a good deal of life—done a little of everything—on the turf—in the hunting-field—on the floor of the House he had what was called “held his own.” He was, in fact, one of those accomplished, well-mannered, well-looking people, who, so long as not pushed by any inordinate ambition into a position of undue importance, invariably get full credit for all the abilities they possess, and, what is better still, attract no ill-will for the possessing them. As well as having done everything, he had been everywhere: up the Mediterranean, up the Baltic, into the Black Sea, up the St. Lawrence—everywhere but to Ireland—and now, in a dull autumn, when too late for a distant tour, he had induced his friend Grenfell to accompany him in a short cruise, with a distinct pledge that they were not to visit Dublin, or any other of those cognate cities of which Irishmen were vain, but which to Mr. George Grenfell represented all that was an outrage on good taste, and an insult to civilization. Mr. Grenfell, in one word, entertained for Ireland and the Irish sentiments that wouldn't have been thought very complimentary if applied to Feejee islanders, with certain hopeless forbodings as to the future that even Feejee itself might have resented as unfair.

Nobody knew why these two men were friends, but they were so. They seemed utterly unsuited in every way. Vyner loved travel, incident, adventure, strange lands, and strange people; he liked the very emergencies, the roughings of the road. Grenfell was a Londoner, who only tolerated, and not very patiently, whatever was beyond an easy drive of Hyde Park Corner. Vyner was a man of good birth, and had high connections on every side—advantages of which he no more dreamed of being vain, than of the air he breathed. Mr. Grenfell was a nobody, with the additional disparagement of being a nobody that every one knew. Grenfell's Italian warehouse, Grenfell's potted meats, his pickled salmon, his caviare, his shrimps, his olives, and his patent macaroni, being European in celebrity, and, though the means by which his father made an enormous fortune, were miseries which poisoned life, rising spectre-like before him on every dinner-table and staring at him in great capitals in every supplement of the *Times*. He would have changed his name, but he knew well that it would have availed him nothing. The disguise would only have invited discovery,

and the very mention of him exacted the explanation, “No more a Seymour nor a Villiers than you are; the fellow is old Grenfell's son; ‘Grenfell's Game Sauce,’ and the rest of it.” A chance resemblance to a fashionable Earl suggested another expedient, and Mr. George Grenfell got it about—how, it is not easy to say—that the noble Lord had greatly admired his mother, and paid her marked attention at Scarborough. Whatever pleasure Mr. George Grenfell felt in this theory is not easy to explain; nor have we to explain what we simply narrate as a fact, without the slightest pretension to account for.

Such were the two men who travelled together, and the yacht also contained Vyner's daughter, Ada, a little girl of eight, and her governess, Mademoiselle Heinzelman, a Hanoverian lady, who claimed a descent from the Hohenzollerns, and had pride enough for a Hapsburg. If Vyner and Grenfell were not very much alike in tastes, temperament, and condition, Grenfell and the German governess were positively antipathies; nor was their war a secret or a smouldering fire, but a blaze, to which each brought fuel every day, aiding the combustion by every appliance of skill and ingenuity.

Vyner loved his daughter passionately—not even the disappointment that she had not been a boy threw any cloud over his affection—and he took her with him when and wherever he could; and, indeed, the pleasure of having her for a companion now made this little home tour one of the most charming of all his excursions, and in her childish delight at new scenes and new people he renewed all his own memories of early travel.

“Here you are, sir,” said Mr. Crab, late a sailing-master in the Royal Navy, but now in command of *The Meteor*—“here you are;” and he pointed with his finger to a little bay on the outspread chart that covered the cabin table. “This is about it! It may be either of these two; each of them looks north—north by east—and each has this large mountain to the south'ard and west'ard.”

“‘The north islands of Arran,’ read out Vyner, slowly, from a little MS. note-book. ‘Innishmore, the largest of them, has several good anchorages, especially on the eastern side, few inhabitants, and all miserably poor. There is the ruin of an Abbey, and a holy well of great reputed antiquity, and a strange relie of ancient superstition called the Judgment-stone, on which he who lays his hand while denouncing a wrong done him by another, brings down divine vengeance

on either his enemy or himself, according as his allegation is just or unjust. There is something similar to be found in the Brehon laws——”

“For mercy’s sake don’t give us more of that tiresome little book, which, from the day we sailed, has never contributed one single hint as to where we could find anything to eat, or even water fit to drink,” said Grenfell. “Do you mean to go on shore in this barbarous place?”

“Of course I do. Crab intends us to pass two days here; we have sprung our foretopmast, and must look to it.”

“Blessed invention a yacht! As a means of locomotion, there’s not a cripple but could beat it; and as a place to live in, to eat, sleep, wash, and exercise, there’s not a cell in Brixton is not a palace in comparison.”

“Mademoiselle wish to say good-night, Sare Vyner,” said the governess, a tall, fair-haired lady, with very light eyes, thick lips, and an immense lower jaw, a type, but not a flattering type, of German physiognomy.

“Let her come by all means;” and in an instant the door burst open, with the spring of a young fawn the little girl was fast locked in her father’s arms.”

“Oh, is it not very soon to go to bed, papa dearest?” cried she; “and it would be so nice to wait a little and see the moon shining on these big rocks here.”

“What does Mademoiselle Heinzleman say?” asked Vyner, smiling at the eager face of the child.

The lady appealed to made no other reply than by the production of a great silver watch with an enormous dial.

“That is a real curiosity,” said Grenfell. “Is it permissible to ask a nearer view of that remarkable clock, Miss Heinzleman?”

“Freilich!” said she, not suspecting the slightest trace of raillery in the request. “It was made at Wurtzburg, by Jacob Schmelling, year time 1736.”

“And intended probably, for the Town-hall?”

“No, Saar,” replied she, detecting the covert sneer; “intended for him whose arms it bear, Gottfried von Heinzleman, Burgomeister of Wurtzburg, a German noble, who neither made sausages nor sold Swiss cheeses.”

“Good-night! good-night! my own darling!” said Vyner, kissing his child affectionately. “You shall have a late evening to-morrow, and a walk in the moonlight, too;” and after a hearty embrace from the little girl, and a respectful curtsy from the governess, returned with a not less respect-

ful deference on his own part, Vyner closed the door after them, and resumed his seat.

“What cursed tempers those Germans have,” said Grenfell, trying to seem careless and easy; “even that good-natured joke about her watch she must take amiss.”

“Don’t forget, George,” said Vyner, good humoredly, “that in any little passage of arms between you, you have the strong position, and hers is the weak one.”

“I wish *she* would have the kindness to remember that fact, but she is an aggressive old damsel, and never looks so satisfied as when she imagines she has said an impertinence.”

“She is an excellent governess, and Ada is very fond of her.”

“So much the worse for Ada.”

“What do you mean by that?” cried Vyner, with an energy that surprised the other.

“Simply this; that by a man who professes to believe that objects of beauty are almost as essential to be presented to the eyes of childhood as maxims of morality, such a choice in a companion for his daughter is inexplicable. The woman is ugly, her voice discordant and jarring, her carriage and bearing atrocious—and will you tell me that all these will fail to make their impression when associated with every tone and every incident of childhood?”

“You are not in your happiest mood to-night, George. Was the claret bad?”

“I drank none of it. I took some of that Moselle cup, and it was tolerably good. By the way, when and how are we to get some ice? Carter says we have very little left.”

“Perhaps there may be glaciers in the wild region beside us. Ireland and Iceland have only a consonant between them. What if we go ashore and have a look at the place?”

A careless shrug of assent was the answer, and soon afterwards the trim yawl, manned by four stout fellows, skimmed across the smooth bay, and landed Vyner and his friend on a little rocky promontory that formed a natural pier.

It was complete desolation on every side of them: the mountain which rose from the sea was brown and blue with moss and heather, but not a human habitation, not an animal marked its side; a few sea-birds skimmed fearlessly across the water, or stood perched on peaks of rock close to the travellers, and a large seal heavily plunged into the depth as they landed; save these, not a sign of anything living could be seen.

“There is something very depressing in this solitude,” said Grenfell; “I detest



these places where a man is thrown back upon himself."

"Do you know, then, that at this very moment I was speculating on buying a patch of land here to build a cottage; a cabin of three or four rooms, where one might house himself if ever he came this way."

"But why should he come this way? What on earth should turn any man's steps twice in this direction?"

"Come, come, George! You'll not deny that all this is very fine: that great mountain rising abruptly from the sea, with narrow belt of yellow beach below it; those wild fantastic rocks, with their drooping seaweed; those solemn caves, wherein the rumbling sea rushes to issue forth again in some distant cleft, are all objects of grandeur and beauty, and, for myself, I feel as if I could linger for days amongst them unwearied."

"What was that?" cried Grenfell, as they now gained a crest of the ridge, and could see a wild irregular valley that lay beneath, the shades of evening deepening into very blackness the lower portions of the landscape. "Was that thunder or the roar of the sea? There it is again!"

They listened for a few moments, and again there came, borne on the faint land-breeze, a sound that swelled from a feeble wail to a wild sustained cry, rising and falling till it died away just as it had begun. It was indescribably touching, and conveyed a sense of deep sorrow, almost of despair. It might have been the last cry of a sinking crew as the waves closed above them; and so indeed did it seem to Vyner as he said—

"If there had been a storm at sea, I'd have sworn that sound came from a shipwreck."

"I suppose it is only some other pleasant adjunct of the charming spot you would select for a villa," said Grenfell; "perhaps the seals or the grampuses are musical."

"Listen to that!" cried Vyner, laying a hand on his arm; "and see! yonder—far away to the left—there is a light!"

"Well, if there be inhabitants here, I'm not astonished that they cry over it."

"Let us find out what it can mean, George."

"Have you any arms about you? I have left my revolver behind, and have nothing but this sword-cane."

"I have not as much, and feel pretty sure we shall not need it. Every traveller in Ireland, even in the remotest tracts, bears witness to the kindness which is extended to the stranger."

"They who come back from the Rocky Mountains are invariably in love with the

Sioux Indians. The testimony that one wants is from the fellows who have been scalped."

"What an intense prejudice you have against all that is Irish!"

"Say, if you like, that I have a prejudice against all mock cordiality, mock frankness, mock hospitality, and mock intrepidity."

"Stay, George! you can't impugn their courage."

"I don't want to impugn anything beyond the inordinate pretensions to be something better, braver, more amiable, and more gifted than all the rest of the world. I say, Vyner, I have had quite enough of this sort of walking; my feet are cut to pieces with these sharp stones, and every second step is into a puddle. Do you mean to go on?"

"Certainly; I am determined to see what that light means."

"Then I turn back. I'll send the boat in again, and tell them to hoist a lantern, which, if the natives have not done for you in the meanwhile, you'll see on the beach."

"Come along; don't be lazy."

"It's not laziness. I could walk a Parisian Boulevard for these three hours; what I object to is, the certainty of a cold, and the casualty of a sprained ankle. A pleasant journey to you;" and as he spoke, he turned abruptly round, and began to retrace his steps.

Vyner looked after him; he called after him too, for a moment, but, as the other never heeded, he lighted a fresh cigar and continued his way.

The light, which seemed to tremble and flicker at first, shone steadily and brightly as he drew nearer, and at length he hit upon a sort of pathway which greatly assisted his advance. The way, too, led gradually downwards, showing that the glen or valley was far deeper than he at first supposed it. As he went on, the moon, a faint crescent, came out, and showed him the gable of an old ruin rising above some stunted trees, through whose foliage, at times, he fancied he saw the glitter of a light. These lay in a little cleft that opened to the sea, and on the shore, drawn up, were two boats, on whose sides the cold moonlight shone clearly.

"So, there are people who live here!" thought he; "perhaps Grenfell was right. It might have been as well to have come armed!" He hesitated to go on. Stories of wreckers, tales of wild and lawless men in remote untravelled lands, rose to his mind, and he half doubted if it were prudent to proceed farther. Half ashamed of his fears, half dreading the bantering he was



sure to meet from Grenfell, he went forward. The path led to a small river where stepping-stones were placed, and crossing this, the foot track became broader, and evidently had been more travelled. The night was now perfectly still and calm, the moonlight touched the mountain towards its peak, but all beneath was in sombre blackness, more especially near the old church, whose ruined gable his eyes, as they grew familiarized with the darkness, could clearly distinguish. Not a sound of that strange unearthly dirge that he first heard was audible; all was silent; so silent, indeed, that he was startled by the sharp crackling of the tall reeds which grew close to the path, and which he occasionally broke as he pressed forward. The path stopped abruptly at a stone stile, over which he clambered, and found himself in a little enclosure planted with potatoes, beyond which was a dense copse of thorns and hazel, so tangled that the path became very tortuous and winding. On issuing from this, he found himself in front of a strong glare of light, which issued from a circular window of the gable several feet above his head, at the same time that he heard a sort of low monotonous moaning sound, broken at intervals by a swell of chorus, which he at length detected was the response of people engaged in prayer. Creeping stealthily around through dock-weeds and nettles, he at last found a narrow loop-holed window to which his hands could just reach, and to which, after a brief effort, he succeeded in lifting himself. The scene on which he now looked never faded from his memory. In the long narrow aisle of the old Abbey a company of men and women sat two deep around the walls, the space in the centre being occupied by a coffin placed on trestles; rude torches of bog-pine stuck in the walls threw a red and lurid glare over the faces, and lit up their expressions with a vivid distinctness. At the head of the coffin sat an old grey-headed man of stern and formidable look, and an air of savage determination, which even grief had not softened; and close beside him on a low stool, sat a child, who, overcome by sleep as it seemed, had laid his head on the old man's knee, and slept profoundly. From this old man proceeded the low muttering words which the others answered by a sort of chant, the only interruption to which was when any one of the surrounders would rise from his place to deposit some small piece of money on a plate which stood on the coffin, and was meant to contain the offerings for the priest. If the language they spoke in was strange and unintelligible to Vyner's ears, it did not the less convey, as the sound

of Irish unfailingly does to all unaccustomed ears, a something terribly energetic and passionate—every accent was striking, and every tone full of power—but far more still was he struck by the faces on every side. He had but seen the Irish of St. Giles's; the physiognomy he alone knew was that blended one of sycophancy and dissipation that a degraded and demoralized class wear. He had never before seen that fierce vigor and concentrated earnestness which mark the native face. Still less had he any idea what its expression could become when heightened by religious fervor. There were fine features, noble foreheads wide and spacious, calm brows, and deeply-set eyes, in many around, but in all were the lower jaw and mouth coarse and depraved-looking. There was no lack of power, it is true, but it was a power that could easily adapt itself to violence and cruelty, and when they spoke, so overmastering seemed this impulse of their nature, that the eyes lost the gentleness they had worn, and flashed with an angry and vindictive brilliancy.

Drink was served round at intervals, and freely partaken of, and from the gestures and vehemence of the old man, Vyner conjectured that something like toasts were responded to. At moments, too, the prayers for the dead would seem to be forgotten, and brief snatches of conversation would occur, and even joke and laughter were heard; when suddenly, as though to recall them to the solemn rites of the hour, a voice, always a woman's, would burst in with a cry, at first faint, but gradually rising till it became a wild yell, at one particular cadence of which—just as one has seen a spaniel howl at a certain note—the rest would seem unable to control themselves, and break in with a rush of sound that made the old walls ring again. Dreadful as it had seemed before, it was far more fearful now, as he stood close by, and could mark, besides, the highly-wrought expressions of the terribly passionate faces around.

So fascinated was he by the scene—so completely had its terrible reality impressed him—that Vyner could not leave the spot, and he gazed till he knew, and for many a long year after could remember, every face that was there. More than once was he disposed to venture in amongst them, and ask, as a stranger, the privilege of joining the solemnity, but fear withheld him; and as the first pinkish streak of dawn appeared, he crept cautiously down and alighted on the grass.

By the grey half-light he could now see objects around him, and perceive that the Abbey was a small structure with little

architectural pretensions, though, from the character of the masonry of very great age. At one end, where a square tower of evidently later date stood, something like an attempt at a dwelling-house existed—at least, two windows of unequal size appeared, and a low doorway, the timbers of which had once formed part of a ship. Passing round the angle of this humble home, he saw a faint streak of light issue from an open casement, over which a wild honeysuckle had grown, attaching itself to the iron bars that guarded the window, and almost succeeded in shutting out the day. Curious for a glance within this strange dwelling-place, Vyner stole near and peeped in. A tiny oil-lamp on a table was the only light, but it threw its glare on the face of a man asleep in a deep arm-chair—a pale, careworn, melancholy face it was, with a mass of white hair unkempt hanging partly across it. Vyner passed his hands across his eyes as though to satisfy himself that he was awake. He looked again; he even parted the twigs of the honeysuckle to give him more space, and as he gazed, the sleeper turned slightly, so that the full features came to view.

“Good God! it is Luttrell!” muttered Vyner, as he quietly stole away and set out for the beach.

Anxious at his long absence, two of his crew had come in search of him, and in their company he returned to the shore and went on board.

### CHAPTER III.

#### AN OLD STORY.

IT was late in the day when Vyner awoke and got up. Late as it was, he found Grenfell at breakfast. Seated under an awning on the deck, before a table spread with every luxury, that much-to-be-pitied individual was, if not watering his bread with tears, sipping his chocolate with chagrin. “He had no newspaper!”—no broad sheet of gossip, with debates, divorces, bankruptcies, and defalcations—no moral lessons administered to foreign kings and kaisers, to show them how the press of England had its eye on them, and would not fail to expose their short-comings to that great nation, which in the succeeding leader was the text for a grand pæan over increased revenue and augmented exports.

Grenfell had a very natural taste for this sort of reading. It supplied to him, as to many others, a sort of patent patriotism, which, like his father’s potted meats, could

be carried to any climate, and be always fresh.

“Is not this a glorious day, George?” said Vyner, as he came on deck. “There is something positively exhilarating in the fresh and heath-scented air of that great mountain.”

“I’d rather follow a watering-cart down Piccadilly, if I was on the look-out for a sensation. How long are we to be moored in this dreary spot?”

“Not very long. Don’t be impatient, and listen while I recount to you my adventure of last night.”

“Let me fill my pipe, then. Carter, fetch me my meerschaum. Now for it,” said he, as he disposed his legs on an additional chair. “I only hope the story has no beautiful traits of Irish peasant life, for I own to no very generous dispositions with regard to these interesting people, when I see the place they live in.”

Not in the slightest degree moved by the other’s irritability, Vyner began a narrative of his ramble, with all the power that a recent impression could impart of the scene of the wake, and pictured graphically enough the passion-wrought faces and wild looks of the mourners.

“I was coming away at last,” said he, “when, on turning an angle of the old church, I found myself directly in front of a little window, from which a light issued. I crept close and peeped in, and there, asleep in a large arm-chair, was a man I once knew well—as well, or even better than I know you—a man I had chummed with at Christ Church, and lived for years with on terms of close affection. If it were not that his features were such as never can be forgotten, I might surely have failed to recognize him, for though my own contemporary, he looked fully fifty.”

“Who was he?” abruptly broke in Grenfell.

“You shall hear. Luttrell!”

“Luttrell! Luttrell! You don’t mean the fellow who was to have married your sister-in-law?”

“The same: the first man of his day at Christ Church, the great prizeman and medallist, ‘the double first,’ and what many thought more of, the best looking fellow in Oxford.”

“I forget the story. He wanted to marry some one, and she wouldn’t have him. What was it?”

“He wanted to marry my wife,” said Vyner, rather nettled at the cool carelessness of the other. “She was, however, engaged to me, and she said, ‘I have a sister so very like me, that we are constantly taken for



each other; come here next week, and you'll meet her.' They met, liked each other, and were contracted to be married. I want to be very brief, so I shall skip over all but the principal points."

"Do so," said the other, dryly.

"Everything went well for a time. All inquiries as to his fortune, position, connections, and so forth, were found satisfactory by the Courtenays, when some busybody whispered to Georgina that there was an ugly story about him in Ireland, and suggested that she should ask under what circumstances he had quitted the Irish University and come over to take his degree at Oxford. Luttrell was considerably agitated when the question was put to him, though they were alone at the time; and, after a brief pause with himself, he said, 'I'd rather you had not asked me about this, but I meant to have told you of it myself, one day. The thing is very simple, and not very serious. The only thing, however, I exact is, that the confession is to and for yourself alone. You have a right to know the fact; I have a right, that it be kept a secret.'

"She gave the pledge he required, and he went on to say that there existed in Ireland a secret society known by the name of the United Irishmen whose designs were, time and place suiting, to throw off their allegiance to England, and declare for Irish independence. This association was so far formidable, that it embraced men of all classes and conditions, and men of all religious professions, the majority being Presbyterians. He was one of these, and a very foremost one; drawn into the league, in reality, rather by the warm enthusiasm of a generous nature than by any mature consideration of the object or its consequences. In some contest for a prize at College, a gold medal in science, I believe—Luttrell's closest competitor was the son of the Provost of the University; but, after a three days' conflict, Luttrell presented himself at the Hall to receive his laurels, but what was his astonishment to hear, as he entered, that he would be first required to subscribe a declaration that he was not a member of any secret or treasonable society.

"'If you mean,' cried he, to the Proctor, who recited the terms of the declaration—'if you mean me to say that I am not a United Irishman, I will not do so. Give your gold medal to that gentleman yonder,' added he, pointing to the son of the Provost; 'his father's loyalty deserves every testimony you can confer on it.' He left the Hall, took his name off the books, and quitted Ireland the next day. It was gravely debated whether an expulsion should not

be passed upon him; but, in consideration of his great collegiate distinction and his youth, the extreme rigor was spared him, and he was suffered to leave uncensured.

"Either the confession was not what she had expected, or that she fancied it might cover something far more serious beneath it, but Georgina was not satisfied with the story. She again and again reverted to it. Not a day that they walked out alone that she would not turn the conversation on this theme, which, by frequent discussion, Luttrell came at length to talk of, without any of the reserve he at first maintained. Indeed, some of this was, in a measure, forced upon him, for she questioned him closely as to the details of the association, how far it involved him, and to what extent he was yet bound by its obligations.

"It was in a sort of defence of himself, one day, that he so far forgot prudence as to declare that the society numbered amongst its members many men not only high in station, but actually regarded as strong adherents of the English party. He told how this, that, and the other, who were seen at every levee of the Castle, and not unfrequently quoted as guests of the Viceroy's table, were brothers of this league; and he indeed mentioned names of distinction and eminence.

"In her eagerness to confute all her father's opinions on this matter—for she had told him the whole story from the first—Georgina hastened off to enumerate the great men who were engaged in this treason. Two were in Parliament, one was a Law Adviser of the Crown, another was a Commissioner of Customs, and generally regarded as an active partisan of the Government. I remember these, but there were many others of equal note. Mr. Courtenay, who besides being a ministerial supporter, had once been private secretary to Lord Castlereagh, divulged the whole to the Home Secretary. Investigations were instituted, and, although United Irishism had lost its sting after Emmett's failure, all who had once belonged to it were marked men, and black-listed in consequence.

"I have been told that the consternation which the disclosure created in Ireland was terrific. Men resigned their commissions of the peace, pretended ill-health, went abroad; lawyers and physicians of eminence were ashamed to show their faces; and a well-known editor of a violently 'English' newspaper disposed of his journal and went to America. 'Who is the traitor?' was now the universal demand; and, indeed, in the patriotic papers the question stood forth every morning in great capitals.

“‘Who was the traitor?’ none could positively assert; but the controversy was carried on without any squeamish delicacy, and if the papers did not fix on the man, they very freely discussed the probability or improbability of this or that one.

“‘Why not Luttrell?’ said one writer in a famous print. ‘His father betrayed us before.’ This was an allusion to his having voted for the Union. ‘Why not Luttrell?’ They entered thereupon into some curious family details, to show how these Luttrells had never been ‘true blue’ to any cause. That, with good abilities and fair prospects, they were not successful men, just because they couldn’t be honest to their party, or even to themselves. They were always half way between two opinions, ‘and,’ as the writer said, ‘far more eager to have two roads open to them, than to travel either of them.’ Whether excited by a theme which had engrossed much of public attention, or incited by some personal animosity, this editor devoted a portion of each day’s paper to Luttrell. The result was a hostile message. They met and exchanged shots, when the newspaper writer at once declared, ‘If Mr. Luttrell will now disown any connection with this act of betrayal, I am ready to beg his pardon for all that I have said of him.’ Luttrell for a moment made no reply, and then said, ‘Take your pistol, sir; I have no explanations to make you.’ At the next fire, Luttrell fell wounded. He was upwards of two months laid in his bed. I saw him frequently during that time; and though we talked every day of the Courtenays, I had not the courage to tell him that they were determined the match should be broken off; Georgina herself—how, I cannot well say, nor ever clearly understood—being brought to believe that Luttrell had done what would forever exclude him from the society of his equals. I cannot dwell on a period so full of miserable recollections. I never passed so many hours of torture as when sitting by that poor fellow’s bedside. I listened to all his bright projects for a future which in my heart I knew was closed to him for ever. As his convalescence advanced, my task grew more difficult. He used to ask every day when he would be permitted to write to her; he wondered, too, why she had not sent him a few lines, or some token—as a book, or a flower. He questioned and cross-questioned me about her daily life; how she felt his misfortune; had she received a correct account of the incident of the duel; what her family thought and said; and, last of all, why Mr. Courtenay himself had

only called once or twice, and never asked to come up and see him.

“My own marriage was to take place early in May. It was now April; and at one time there had been some talk of the two sisters being married on the same day. It was late in the month; I am not clear about the date, but I remember it was on a Sunday morning. I was sitting with him, and he lay propped up on the sofa, to enable him to take his breakfast with me. ‘I was thinking all last night, Vyner,’ said he—‘and nothing but a sick man’s selfishness could have prevented my thinking it long ago—how you must hate me.’

“‘Hate you, and why?’

“‘Because but for me and my misfortune you’d have been married by the sixth or seventh, and now, who knows how long you must wait?’

“I saw at once that the double marriage was running in his mind, and though my own was fixed for the following Thursday or Friday, I had not nerve to say so; nor was my embarrassment the less that Mr. Courtenay had charged me with the task of telling Luttrell that all should be considered as at an end, and every day used to question me if I had yet done so.

“‘Now or never,’ thought I, as Luttrell said this; but when I turned and saw his wasted cheek, still pink with hectic, and his glassy, feverish eye, I shrunk again from the attempt.

“‘Why did you look at me so pitifully, Vyner?’ said he, eagerly: ‘has the doctor told you that I shall not rub through!’

“‘Nothing of the kind, man; he says he’ll have you down at Hastings before a fortnight is over.’

“‘What was it, then? Do I look very fearfully?’

“‘Not even that. You are pulled down, of course. No man looks the better for eight or ten weeks on a sick-bed.’

“‘Then it is something else,’ said he, thoughtfully; and I made no answer.

“‘Well,’ said he, with a deep sigh, ‘I have had my forebodings of—I don’t know what—but of something that was over me all this time back; and when I lay awake at night, wondering in what shape this disaster would come, I have ever consoled myself by saying ‘Well, Vyner certainly does not know it; Vyner has no suspicion of it. If now, however, I were to be wrong in this; if, in reality, Vyner *did* know that a calamity impended me; and if’—here he fixed his bright staring eyes with their wide pupils full upon me—‘if Vyner knew something, and only forbore to break it to me because he saw me a poor sickly wasted



creature, whose courage he doubted, all I can say is, he does not know the stuff the Luttrells are made of."

"I tried to answer this, but all I could do was to take his hand and press it between my own. 'Out with it, like a good fellow,' cried he, with an effort to seem gay—'out with it, and you'll see whether I am too vain of my pluck!'"

"I turned partly away—at least so far that I could not see his face nor he mine—and I told him everything. I cannot remember how I began or ended. I cannot tell what miserable attempts I made to excuse or to palliate, nor what poor ingenuity I practised to make him believe that all was for the best. I only know that I would have given worlds that he should have interrupted me or questioned me; but he never spoke a word, and when I had concluded he sat there still in silence.

"'You are a man of honor, Vyner,' said he, in a low but unshaken voice that thrilled through my heart. 'Tell me one thing. On your word as a gentleman, has—has—she——' I saw that he was going to say the name, but stopped himself. 'Has she been coerced in this affair?'"

"'I believe not. I sincerely believe not. In discussing the matter before her, she has gradually come to see, or at least to suppose——'"

"'There, there, that will do!' cried he aloud, and with a full tone that resembled his voice in health. 'Let us talk of it no more. I take it you'll go abroad after your wedding?'"

"I muttered out some stupid commonplace, I talked away at random for some minutes, and at last I said good-bye. When I came back the next morning he was gone. He had been carried on board of a steam-vessel for some port in the south of Ireland, and left not a line nor a message behind him. From that hour until last night I never set eyes on him."

"You have heard of him, I suppose?" asked Grenfell.

"Vaguely and at long intervals. He would seem to have mixed himself up with the lowest political party in Ireland—men who represent, in a certain shape, the revolutionary section in France—and though the very haughtiest aristocrat I think I ever knew, and at one time the most fastidious 'fine gentleman,' there were stories of his having uttered the most violent denunciations of rank, and inveighed in all the set terms of the old French Convention against the distinctions of class. Last of all, I heard that he had married a peasant girl, the daughter of one

of his cottier tenants, and that, lost to all sense of his former condition, had become a confirmed drunkard."

"The moral of all which is, that your accomplished sister-in-law had a most fortunate escape."

"I'm not so sure of that. I think Luttrell was a man to have made a great figure in the world. He swept college of its prizes, he could do anything he tried, and, unlike many other clever men, he had great powers of application. He had, too, high ability as a public speaker, and in an age like ours, where oratory does so much, he might have had a most brilliant career in Parliament."

"There is nothing more delusive than arguing from a fellow's school or collegiate successes to his triumphs in after life. The first are purely intellectual struggles; but the real battle of life is fought out by tact, and temper, and courage, and readiness, and fifty other things, that have no distinct bearing on mind. Your man there would have failed just as egregiously amongst gentlemen as he has done amongst the 'canaille' that he descended to. He had failure written on his passport when he started in life."

"I don't believe it; I can't believe it."

"Your sister-in-law, I think, never married."

"No. She has refused some excellent offers, and has declared she never will marry."

"How like a woman all that? She first mars a man's fortune, and, by way of reparation, she destroys her own. That is such feminine logic!"

"Is that a dog they have got in the bow of the launch, yonder?" said Vyner, directing the captain's attention to one of the boats of the yacht that was now pulling briskly out from the land.

"Well, sir, as well as I can make out, it's a child," said he, as he drew the telescope from the slings and began to adjust it.

"Yes, sir, it's a native they have caught, and a wild-looking specimen too;" and he handed the glass to Vyner.

"Poor little fellow! He seems dressed in rabbit-skins. Where is Ada? She must see him."

## CHAPTER IV.

### ON BOARD.

"It was not an easy matter to get him to come, sir," said the sailor in a whisper



to Vyner, as he assisted the boy to get on the deck.

"Where did you find him?"

"Sitting all alone on that rocky point yonder, sir; he seemed to have been eying, and we suspect he has run away from home."

Vyner now turned to look at the child, who all this while stood calm and composed, amazed, it is true, by all he saw around him, yet never suffering his curiosity to surprise him into a word of astonishment. In age from ten to twelve, he was slightly though strongly built, and carried himself erect as a soldier. The dress which Vyner at first thought was entirely made of skins was only in reality trimmed with these, being an attempt to make the clothes he had long worn sufficiently large for him. His cap alone was of true island make, and was a conical contrivance of undressed seal-skin, which really had as savage a look as need be.

"Do you live on this island, my little fellow?" asked Vyner, with a kindly accent.

"Yes," said he, calmly, as he looked up full into his face.

"And have you always lived here?"

"So long as I remember."

"Where do you live?"

"On the other side of the mountain—at St. Finbar's Abbey."

"May I ask your name?"

"My name," said the boy, proudly, "is Harry Grenville Luttrell."

"Are you a Luttrell?" cried Vyner, as he laid his hand affectionately on the boy's shoulder; but the little fellow seemed not to like the familiarity, and stepped back to escape it.

"Are you the son of John Hamilton Luttrell?"

"Yes. What is your name?"

"Mine," said the other, repressing a smile—"mine is Gervais Vyner."

"And do you own this ship?"

"Yes."

"And why have you come here?"

"Partly by chance—partly through curiosity."

"And when will you go away?"

"Something will depend on the weather—something on whether we like the place and find it agreeable to us; but why do you ask? Do you wish we should go away?"

"The people do! I do not care!"

It is not easy to give an idea of the haughty dignity with which he spoke the last words. They were like the declaration of one who felt himself so secure in station, that he could treat the accidents of the day as mere trifles.

"But why should the people wish it?"

We are not very likely to molest or injure them."

"That much you may leave to themselves," said the boy, insolently. "They'll not let you do it."

"You seem very proud of your island, my little man. Have you any brothers or sisters?"

"No—none."

"None belonging to you but father and mother?"

"I have no mother now," said he, with an effort to utter the words unmoved; but the struggle was too much, and he had to turn away his head as he tried to suppress the sobbing that overcame him.

"I am very, very sorry to have pained you, my boy," said Vyner, with kindness. "Come down with me here, and see a little daughter of mine, who is nearly your own age."

"I don't want to see her. I want to go ashore."

"So you shall, my boy; but you will eat something with us first, and see the strange place we live in. Come along;" and he took his hand to lead him forward.

"I could swim to the land if I liked," said the boy, as he gazed down at the blue water.

"But you'll not have to swim, Harry."

"Why do you call me Harry? I never knew you."

"I have a better claim than you suspect. At least, I used to call your father John long ago."

"Don't do it any more then," said he, defiantly.

"And why?"

"He wouldn't bear it—that is the why! Stand clear, there!" cried he to one of the sailors on the gangway. "I'm off!" and he prepared himself for a run ere he jumped overboard; but just at this moment Ada tripped up the cabin ladder and stood before him. The long yellow ringlets fell on her shoulders and her neck, and her lustrous blue eyes were wide in astonishment at the figure in front of her. As for the boy, he gazed at her as at something of unearthly beauty. It was to his eyes that Queen of the Fairies who might have soared on a light cloud or tripped daintily on the crest of the wide sea waves.

"Here is a playfellow for you, Ada," said her father, as he led her towards him.

"It is Robinson Crusoe, papa," said she, in a whisper.

The boy's quick ear had, however, caught the words, and he said quickly, "I wish I was Robinson!" the speech seemed to strike some chord in the little girl's heart,

for she went freely towards him at once, and said, "Oh, wasn't it nice to live in that pretty island, and have everything one's own?"

"This island here is mine!" said the boy, proudly.

"Yes, Ada," said Vyner, "what he says is quite correct; his father owns the whole of these islands. But come along into the cabin, Harry; I want you to see our home, though it is a very narrow one."

With the gravity of a North American Indian, and with a self-possession that never broke down under every trial to which curiosity exposed it, the boy looked at all around him. If Aladdin himself was not more wonder-struck at the splendors of the cave, he never for a moment betrayed his amazement. He ate and drank, too, with the same air of composure, and bore himself throughout with a quiet dignity that was remarkable. Ada displayed before him her prettiest toys, her games, and her picture-books, and was half piqued at the little evidences of astonishment they created. No suspicion crossed her mind how the color that came and went and came again, how the hurried breathing, how the clammy fingers that trembled as they touched an object, were signs of emotion far deeper and more intense than all that a cry of wonderment could evidence.

"I suppose," said she at last, when impatience mastered her, "you have got such masses of these yourself, that you don't care for them?"

"I—I have nothing—nothing but a crossbow to shoot the sea-gulls, and a hatchet, and the hatchet is too heavy for me."

"But what can you do with a hatchet?" asked she, smiling.

"Split logs, and cut a way through the thicket, like fellows on an uninhabited island; or sometimes I think I'm fighting a bear. I'd like to fight a young bear!—wouldn't you?"

"I suspect not. Girls do not fight bears."

"Ah, I forgot!" said he, blushing deeply; and, ashamed of his blunder, he beat his head over a picture.

Meanwhile, Vyner and Grenfell were walking the deck and conversing in a low tone.

"It would be a mistake, Vyner, a great mistake, take my word for it," said the other. "To the man who assumes the incognito, all attempt at recognition is offensive. Besides, what is it to lead to? You can't imagine he'll want to talk over the past, and for such a man there is no speculation in the future."

"But the idea of being on the very island with him, knowing that he was within a mile of me, and that I never went to see him! It sounds very heartless, and I feel it would be so."

"I have nothing to say when you put the question on the ground of a sentiment. I can only discuss it as a matter of expediency, or the reverse. You don't charge a man with the opinions you find in an anonymous book; because, even supposing they are his, he has not thought proper to avow them. Well, you owe exactly the same deference to him who lives under an incognito, or retires to some secluded, unfrequented spot. His object is to escape notice; under what plea do you drag him forth into the broad noonday?"

"I am certain my wife wouldn't forgive me if I left without even an effort to see him."

"As to that I can say nothing. I never was married, and I do not pretend to know what are the 'cases of conscience' discussed connubially."

"You see, Grenfell," said the other, confidentially, "we all feel, as we have a right to feel, that we have done this man a great wrong. There has not been one single calamity of his life, from the day we broke with him, that is not traceable to us. His unfortunate line in politics, his low, political associates, the depraved life some assert that he lives, and, worse than all, his wretched marriage with a poor uneducated peasant girl."

"And do you fancy that a morning call from you is the reparation for all this?"

"Come, come, that is not the fair way to put it. Luttrell and I were once great friends. I was, I well know, very much his inferior in knowledge and power, but in worldliness and tact I was more than his match, and he gave way to me on every question of this sort. It may be—I'd like to think it might prove the case—that this old sentiment has not died out of his heart, that, as he used to say long ago, and people laughed when he said it, 'Let us hear what Vyner says.' Now, if this were so, I might even yet do something, if not for him, for that fine boy there."

"Leave that fine boy alone, Vyner, that's my advice to you. I never saw a fellow of his years with such an overweening self-confidence. There is, I don't deny it, a certain 'gentleman' element in him, but it is dashed with something which I neither understand, nor could venture to say what it may lead to; but I repeat, leave him alone."

Vyner shook his head dissentingly, but did not speak.



"Besides, let us be practical. What could you do for him? You'd not adopt him, I take it?" Vyner was silent, and he continued: "Well, then, you'd cut off the one tie he has in life, and not substitute another. Besides, don't you remember what old Scott said at the Huxleigh steeple-chase: 'I never back the half bred 'uns, no matter how well they look in training.'"

"What a stickler for blood you have become," said Vyner, laughing; and it was only as he saw the crimson flush in the other's cheek that he bethought him how the remark might have offended.

"Take your own line then," said Grenfell, angrily; "it doesn't signify to me personally a brass farthing! Our dinner company with old Crab and the German Frau can scarcely but be improved, even though it be by the admixture of a little rebellion through it."

"For all that, you'd like Luttrell immensely if you met him."

"I like none but men of the world—men who know the people, the places and the things one is daily connected with—who can take up the game of society where it left off last night, and have not to read themselves up in daily life the way fellows read their history out of the *Annual Register*."

"Well, I'll write him a note," said Vyner, following out his own thoughts; "I'll tell him, in a few words, how I chanced to come here, and I'll ask if he will receive me, or, better still, if he'll come and dine with us to-morrow."

"I know the answer you'll get as well as if I had written it."

"Well, what will it be?"

"See you hanged first!"

"What is all this going on below? Are you quarrelling, children?" cried Vyner, as a great uproar burst forth from the cabin.

"Oh, no, papa; but Robinson is so droll; he put baby-doll into a boat and had her shipwrecked, and saved by the little negro; and now they are going to be married. Just come and see it all."

"Tell me, Harry," said Vyner, "what would papa say if I were to write him a note and say that I have detained you here to dinner, and wouldn't let you go?"

"He'd say I could have jumped overboard," said the boy reddening at what he thought was an imputation on his personal prowess.

"I don't exactly mean by force, my dear boy; I intended to say, by persuasion."

Either the view now submitted to him was not very clear, or that it was combined with other elements, but he made no reply.

"I will put it in this wise: I'll say I have made Harry's acquaintance this morning by a lucky accident, and I hope you will not be displeased if he should stay and dine with us. I have a little girl of his own age who is delighted to have his company, and I feel certain you will not deprive her of so agreeable a playfellow."

"Papa will not know," said the boy, moodily.

"Not know what, my little man?"

"Papa will not care," said he; and a slight tremor shook his voice.

"Not care for what?"

"I mean," said he, resolutely, "that I often go away at daybreak and never come back till late at night, and papa does not mind it—he never asks for me."

As he spoke, Ada drew nigh her father, and clasped his hand in her own, while her tearful eyes turned alternately from her father to the child, the sense of her own happy lot, loved and cherished as she was, blending with a deep pity for one so desolate and friendless.

"That's the way boys are made independent and bold-hearted," said Vyner, hastily. "Men like their sons to be trained up in the free habits they enjoyed themselves. So, then, my note is not necessary—you can remain without it?"

"Would you like it?" said he, turning to Ada.

"Oh, how much!" cried she, eagerly.

"Then I'll stay!" As he spoke, he leant back in his chair, and, who knows with what thoughts, sighed faintly, while two heavy tears rolled slowly down his cheeks. Vyner saw it, but turned away and went on deck.

"I can gather from what that boy has just said," said he to Grenfell, "that his father is almost indifferent about him; he never knows of his coming or going, nor ever looks for him at meal-times."

"I should be surprised if it were otherwise," said Grenfell. "Demoralization never works by halves. When a man begins to go down hill, he never takes any other road. What could remain of your great scholar and double-first man after years of association with brutal companionship and a peasant for a wife! How could it be possible for him to retain any one of the habits of his own class amidst the daily frictions of that vulgar existence!"

"I begin to fear as much myself," said Vyner, sorrowfully. As he spoke, he felt Ada's hand in his own; she drew him to one side, and whispered, "Harry is crying, papa. He says he must go home, but he won't tell me why."

"Perhaps I can guess, darling. Let me speak with him alone." Vyner went down into the cabin by himself, but whatever passed between him and the boy, the result, so far as persuading him to stay, was not successful, and young Luttrell came on deck along with him.

"Man a boat, there," said Vyner, "and take this young gentleman ashore. I will write one line to your father, Harry."

The two children stood hand in hand while Vyner wrote. They wore each of them a look of sorrow at parting; but the boy's face had a flush of shame as well as sorrow. They never uttered a word, however.

Vyner's note was in these words :

"MY DEAR LUTTRELL,—Will you allow an old friend to see you, when he calls himself,

"Affectionately yours,  
"GERVAIS VYNER?"

He did not show this note to Grenfell, but handed it to the boy at once.

"He won't take the books, papa," whispered Ada, "nor anything else I offered him."

"He'll know us all better later on, dearest. Do not embarrass him now by attention; he is ashamed to refuse, and does not care to accept. If papa will let you come out to breakfast with us to-morrow, Harry, we shall be glad to see you; and remember. I look to you to show me where we are to catch the lobsters."

"I'll tell you that now," said the boy. "You see that great rock yonder. Well, a little more inland, where the water is about four fathoms, and perfectly clear, that's the spot."

When the boat was announced as ready, the boy took his leave of each in turn, shaking hands with Vyner, and Ada, and the governess; and then, advancing towards Grenfell, he stopped, and simply said good-bye.

"Good day, sir," said Grenfell stiffly, for he was one of those men whose egotism even a child could wound. "Is that boy like his father?" asked he, as Harry passed over the side.

"Wonderfully like, since his face took that expression of seriousness."

"Then it is not a good face."

"Not a good face?"

"Mind, I didn't say not a handsome face, for it is strikingly regular and well proportioned, but the expression is furtive and secret."

"Nothing of the kind. Luttrell was as

frank a fellow as ever breathed. I think, after what I told you, you can see that it was trustfulness proved his ruin."

"Isn't he what your countrymen would call a 'Wunderkind,' Mademoiselle?" asked Grenfell of the governess.

"No, Saar, he is a much-to-be-pitied, and not the less-for-that-very dignified youth."

"How Homeric it makes language to think in German. There he is, Ada, waving a rag of some sort, in farewell to you."

Ada kissed her hand several times to him, and then hastened below into the cabin.

"I have asked Luttrell's leave to call on him," said Vyner.

"I thought you would," was the dry reply.

"I only wrote one line, and made my request in the name of our old friendship."

"Well, of course, you are the best judge of your own duties; only, for my own part. I beg, if I ever should turn hermit, that you'll not think yourself bound to have me shaved and trimmed for the honor of dining some one day at your table."

"Upon my word, I think it would be a pity to take you out of your cave, or whatever you call it," said the governess, with a spiteful laugh.

"There, don't fight any more till tea-time," said Vyner, laughingly. "Who'll come on shore with me? I'm for a ramble over that purple mountain yonder."

"I have the music-lesson."

"And I have the remainder of that article in the *Quarterly*," said Grenfell, "which proves incontestably the utter hopelessness of Ireland. The writer knows the people well, and describes their faults of character perfectly."

A low, faint sob caught Vyner's ear, and, on hurrying below, he found Ada seated at the table, with her head leaning on her arms.

"What's the matter, Ada darling?" asked he, gently.

"Oh, papa, it was for his mother he was crying; for though she seldom spoke to him or noticed him, he used to see her at the window, and now he'll never see her more."

"We must try and comfort him, Ada; the poor boy has a very dreary lot in life."

"He says he is happy, papa! and that he only hopes he'll never have to leave this lonely island all his life."

"Did he speak of his father at all?"

"No, papa; only to say that he'd never remember whether he was at home or abroad, and that it was so pleasant not to have any one who cared what became of one."



“And you—did you agree with him?”

“Oh, no, no!” cried she, as her eyes swam in tears. “I could have told him how much better it was to be loved.”

Vyner turned away to hide his own emotion, and then, with an affected carelessness, said, “Get over this music-lesson now, and whenever you are free, tell Mr. Crab to hoist a bit of white bunting to the peak, and I’ll come back to fetch you for a walk with me.”

“Is Mr. Grenfell going, papa?”

“No, darling; but why do you ask?”

“Because—because—I’d rather go with you alone. It is always so much nicer and happier.”

“How is it that Grenfell, with all his smartness, can never hit it off with any one, young or old, rich or poor?” thought Vyner, as he walked the deck, deep in thought. “He reads everything, has a smattering of all subjects, with a good memory and a glib tongue, and yet I believe I am the only man about town who could tolerate him.” If this were a reflection that had more than once occurred to his mind, it usually ended by impressing the conviction that he, Vyner, must have rare qualities of head and heart, not merely to endure, but actually to almost like, a companionship for which none other would have had taste or temper but himself. Now, however—not easy is it to say why—a doubt flashed across him that his doubting, distrustful, scoffing nature might prove in the end an evil, just as a certain malaria, not strong enough to give fever, will ultimately impregnate the blood and undermine the constitution.

“I don’t think he has done me any mischief as yet,” said he to himself, with a smile; “but shall I always be able to say as much?”

“You must read this paper—positively you must,” cried Grenfell from the sofa, where he lay under a luxurious awning. “This fellow writes well; he shows that the Irish never had any civilization, nor, except where it crept in through English influence, has there ever been a vestige of such in the island.”

“I don’t see I shall be anything the better for believing him!”

“It may save you from that blessed purchase of an Irish property that brought you down to all this savagery. It may rescue you from the regret of having a gentleman shot because he was intrepid enough to collect your rents. That surely is something.”

“But I have determined on the purchase of Derryvaragh,” said Vyner, “if it only be what descriptions make it.”

“To live here, I hope—to turn Carib—

cross yourself when you meet a priest, and wear a landlord’s scalp at your waist-belt.”

“Nay, nay! I hope for better things, and that the English influences you spoke of so feelingly will not entirely desert me in my banishment.”

“Don’t imagine that any one will come over here to see you, Vyner, if you mean that.”

“Not even the trusty Grenfell?” said he, with a half-smile.

“Not if you were to give me the fee-simple of the barbarous tract you covet.”

“I’ll not believe it, George. I’ll back your friendship against all the bogs that ever engulfed an oak forest. But what is that yonder? Is it a boat? It seems only a few feet long.”

“It is one of those naval constructions of your charming islanders; and coming this way, too.”

“The fellow has got a letter, sir; he has stuck it in his hatband, said Mr. Crab.

“An answer from Luttrell,” muttered Vyner. “I wonder will he receive me?”

## CHAPTER V.

### HOW THE SPOIL WAS DIVIDED.

THE letter, which was handed on board by a very wild-looking native, was written on coarse paper, and sealed with the commonest wax. It was brief, and ran thus:—

“DEAR SIR,—I cannot imagine that such a meeting as you propose would be agreeable to either of us; certainly the impression my memory retains of you, forbids me to believe that you would like to see me as I am, and where I am. If your desire be, however, prompted by any kind thought of serving me, let me frankly tell you, that I am as much beyond the reach of such kindness as any man can be who lives and breathes in this weary world. Leave me, therefore, to myself, and forget me.

“I am grateful for your attentions to my boy, but you will understand why I cannot permit him to revisit you. I am, faithfully yours,

“JOHN H. LUTTRELL.”

“Well, did I guess aright?” cried Grenfell, as Vyner stood reading the letter over for the third time; “is his answer what I predicted?”

“Very nearly so,” said the other, as he handed him the letter to read.



"It is even stronger than I looked for ; and he begins ' Dear Sir. '

"Yes, and I addressed him ' My dear Luttrell ! '

"Well ; all the good sense of the correspondence is on his side ; he sees naturally enough the worse than uselessness of a meeting. How could it be other than painful ? "

"Still I am very sorry that he should refuse me."

"Of course you are ; it is just the way a fellow in all the vigor of health walks down the ward of an hospital, and, as he glances at the hollow cheeks and sunken eyes on either side, fancies how philanthropic and good he is to come there and look at them. You wanted to go and stare at this poor devil out of that sentimental egotism. I'm certain you never suspected it, but there is the secret of your motive, stripped of its fine illusions."

"How ill you think of every one, and with what pleasure you think it ? "

"Not a bit. I never suffer myself to be cheated ; but it does not amuse me in the least to unmask the knavery."

"Now, having read me so truthfully, will you interpret Luttrell a little ? "

"His note does not want a comment. The man has no wish to have his poverty and degraded condition spied out. He feels something too low for friendship, and too high for pity ; and he shrinks, and very naturally shrinks, from a scene in which every look he gave, every word he uttered, every sigh that he could but half smother, would be recalled to amuse your wife, and your sister-in-law, when you reached home again."

"He never imputed anything of the kind to me," said Vyner, angrily.

"And why not ? Are we in our gossiping moments intent upon anything but being agreeable, not very mindful of private confidences or indiscreet avowals ? We are only bent upon being good recounters, sensation novelists, always flattering ourselves the while as to the purity of our motives and the generosity of our judgments, when we throw into the narrative such words as the ' poor fellow, ' the ' dear creature. ' We forget the while that the description of the prisoner never affects the body of the indictment."

"I declare you are downright intolerable, Grenfell, and if the world were only half as bad as you'd make it, I'd say Luttrell was the wisest fellow going to have taken his leave of it."

"I'd rather sit the comedy out than go home and fret over it's vapidity."

"Well, Mr. Crab," said Vyner, turning suddenly to where his captain was waiting to speak with him, "what news of our spar ? "

"Nothing very good, sir. There's not a bit of timber on the island would serve our purpose."

"I suppose we must shift as well as we can till we make the mainland ! "

"This fellow here in the boat, sir," said a sailor, touching his cap as he came aft, "says that his master has three or four larch-trees about the length we want."

"No, no, Crab," whispered Vyner ; "I don't think we can do anything in that quarter."

"Would he sell us one of them, my man ? " cried Crab, to the peasant.

"He'd give it to you," said the man, half doggedly.

"Yes, but we'd rather make a deal for it. Look here, my good fellow ; do you go back and fetch us the longest and stoutest of those poles, and here's a guinea for your own trouble. Do you understand me ? "

The man eyed the coin curiously, but made no motion to touch it. It was a metal he had never seen before, nor had he the faintest clue to its value.

"Would you rather have these, then ? " said Crab, taking a handful of silver from his pocket and offering it to him.

The man drew the back of his hand across his eyes, as if the sight had dazzled him, and muttered something in Irish.

"Come, say you'll do it," said Crab, encouragingly.

"Is there any answer for my master, to his letter, I mean ? " said the man, looking at Vyner.

"No, I think not ; wait a moment. No, none," said Vyner, after a moment of struggle ; and the words were not well uttered, when the fellow pushed off his boat, and struck out with all his vigor for the shore.

"What a suspicious creature your savage is ; that man evidently believed you meant to bribe him to some deep treachery against his master," said Grenfell.

"Do let the poor peasant escape," cried Vyner, laughingly, while he hastened below to avoid any further display of the other's malevolence, calling out to Mr. Crab to follow him. "Let us get under weigh with the land breeze this evening," said he.

"There's a strong current sets in here, sir. I'd as soon have daylight for it, if it's the same to you."

"Be it so. To-morrow morning, then, Crab ;" and so saying, he took up a book, and tried to interest himself with it.

The peasant meanwhile gained the land, and made the best of his way homeward.

"Tell the master there's no answer, Molly," said he, as she stood wiping the perspiration from her face with her apron at the door of a long low-roofed building, into which all the assembled guests were congregated.

"Indeed, and I won't, Tim Hennesy," said she, tartly. "'Tis enough is on my bones to-day, not to be thinking of letters and writings. Go in and help Dan Neven with that long trunk there, and then bring a hatchet and a hammer."

The man obeyed without a word; and, having assisted to deposit a heavy deal box like a sea-chest in the place assigned it, perceived that several others of various sizes and shapes lay around; all of which formed objects of intense curiosity to the visitors, if one were to judge from the close scrutiny they underwent, as well as the frequent tapping by knuckles and sticks, to assist the explorer to a guess at what was contained within.

A word or two will explain the scene. When Molly Ryan came to inform her master that the relatives of his late wife intended to sail by the evening's tide, and wished to pay their respects to him personally, before departure, he excused himself on some pretext of illness; but to cover his want of courtesy, he directed her to tell them that they were free to take, each of them, some memorial of her that was gone, and ordered Molly to have all the boxes that contained her effects, conveyed into the long storehouse.

"Let them take what they like, Molly," said he, abruptly, as though not wishing to discuss the matter at more length.

"And as much as they like?" asked she.

"Yes, as much as they like," said he, motioning that he would be left in peace and undisturbed.

Loud and full were the utterances of praise that this munificence evoked. "Wasn't he the real gentleman?" "Wasn't it the heart's blood of a good stock?" "Wasn't it like one of the 'ould race,' that could think of an act at once so graceful and liberal?" "After all, it wasn't proud he was. It was just a way he had; and 'poor Shusy, that was gone,' was the lucky woman to have been his wife." "To be sure, it was a solitary kind of life she led, and without friends or companions; but she had the best of everything." Such were the first commentaries. Later on, gratitude cooled down to a quiet rationalism, and they agreed that he was only giving away what was of no use to him. "He'll surely

not marry again, and what could he do with cloaks, and shawls, and gowns, that would only be moth-eaten if he kept them."

"These two here is linen," said Molly with an air of decision, "and I suppose you don't want to see them."

A murmur of disapproval ran through the meeting. They wanted to see everything. His Honor's munificence was not limited. It included all that was once hers; and a very animated discussion ensued as to what constituted personal properties.

"Maybe you'd like the crockery too," said Molly, indignantly, for she began to feel ashamed of the covetousness.

"We'll see everything," said old Peter Hogan, "and we'll begin with this." So saying, he inserted a chisel beneath one of the pine planks, and soon displayed to the company a large chest full of house linen. The articles were neither costly or remarkable, but they seemed both to the beholders; and sheets, and napkins, and pillow-cases, and table-cloths were all scrutinized closely, and unanimously declared to be perfection.

The crockery and glass were next examined, and even more enthusiastically approved of. Some curious china and some specimens of old Venetian glass, family relics, that even connoisseurship might have valued, really amazed them, and many an epithet in Irish went round as a cup or a goblet was passed from hand to hand to be admired.

The clothes were the last to be examined, and with all their heightened expectations the reality surpassed what they looked for. Hats, and shawls, and silk gowns, scarfs, and bonnets, and ribbons, soon covered every box and bench around, and covetous eyes sparkled as each longed for some special prize in this vast lottery. "I remember the day she wore that brown silk at chapel," said one, "That's the blue tabinet she had on at the christening." "There's the elegant shawl she had on at the fair at Ennis." "But look at this—isn't this a real beauty," cried one, who drew forth a bright dress of yellow satin, which seemed never to have been worn.

"Don't you think you could pick and choose something to please ye, now?" said Molly, who was in reality not a little frightened by all this enthusiasm.

"It is true for you, Molly Ryan," said Peter. "There's something for everybody, and since the company trusts it to me to make the division, this is what I do. The crockery and glass for Mr. Rafter, the linen for myself, and the clothes to be divided among the women when we get home."



"So that you'll take everything," cried Molly.

"With the blessin' of Providence, 'tis what I mean," said he; and a full chorus of approving voices closed the speech.

"The master said you were to choose what plazed you —"

"And it's what we're doing. We are plazed with everything, and why wouldn't we? Wasn't she that's gone our own blood, and didn't she own them? The pillow she lay on and the cup she dhruuk out of is more to us than their weight in goold."

Another and fuller murmur approved these sentiments.

"And who is to have this?" cried one of the women, as she drew forth from a small pasteboard box an amber necklace and cross, the one solitary trinket that belonged to her that was gone. If not in itself an object of much value, it was priceless to the eyes that now gazed on it, and each would gladly have relinquished her share to possess it.

"Maybe you'd have the dacency to leave that for his Honor," said Molly, reprovingly.

Less, perhaps, in accordance with the sentiment than in jealous dread lest another should obtain it, each seemed to concur with this recommendation.

"There's something in what Molly says," said old Peter, with the air of a judge delivering a charge. "If his Honor houlds to a thing of the kind, it would be hard to refuse to him; but if he doesn't, or if it would only be more grief to be reminding him of what's gone—Let me finish what I have to say, Molly," added he, with some irritation, as a sneering laugh from her interrupted his speech.

"There's an old pair of shoes of hers in the room within. I'll go for them, and then you'll have everything," said she; and she darted an angry glance around and left the spot.

"I'll wear this—this is for me!" cried a little girl, taking the amber necklace from the case and putting it on. And a buzz of astonishment at the audacity ran around. She was about eleven years of age, but her dark blue eyes and long lashes made her seem older. It was one of those beautiful faces which appear to suggest that with years the delicate loveliness must be lost, so perfect the accordance between the expression and the feature. She had a mass of golden-brown hair, which fell in long curls over a neck of perfect whiteness; but even these traits were less striking than the air of gracefulness that really implied a condition far above that of her rank in life; and,

as she stood in the midst to be admired, there was a haughty consciousness of her claim for admiration that was as triumphant in that assembly as ever was the proud assertion of beauty in a court.

"It becomes you well, Kitty O'Hara, and you shall have it, too," cried old Hogan, who was her grandfather, and whose pride in her took the shape of the boldest aspirations for her future. "Ain't I right?" cried he, appealing to those around him. "Look at her, and say if she isn't a picture!"

With a full burst of assent all broke in at this appeal, and still she stood there unabashed, almost unmoved, indeed, by the admiring looks and enthusiastic words around her.

"Isn't that the making of a lady, ay, and as elegant a lady as ever stepped?" cried the old man, as his eyes ran over with proud emotion. "And as sure as my name is Peter Hogan, it's diamonds will be round the same neck yet! Yes, my darling, yer ould grandfather won't be to the fore to see it, but there's some here that will. Mark the words I'm saying now; lay them up in your hearts, and see if I'm not telling the truth. There she stands before you that'll raise her family, and make a name for them far and wide."

While he delivered this boastful speech, the girl turned her eyes from him, a slight flush deepened the color of her cheek, and a scarcely perceptible eagerness showed itself on the parted lips, but her attitude was unchanged, and a slight nod of the head, in token of assent, was the only notice she took of his words.

"Yes, come in, my dear," cried Hogan at this moment—"come in, Master Harry; there's none here but your own kith and kin, and here's a nice little wife, or a sweetheart, for you." As he said this, he drew from the doorway, where he lingered, the boy, who now came forward with a shamefaced and reluctant look. "There they stand," said the old man, as he placed them side by side, "and I defy the world to show me a purtier couple."

The boy turned a long and steady look at the girl—something for the beauty, and something, too, doubtless, there was for the ornaments that heightened it—and she bore the scrutiny without a shadow of constraint; but there was even more, for, as he continued to stare at her, she smiled superciliously, and said at last, with a faint smile, "I hope I'm not so ugly that I frighten you!"

There was just that pertness in the speech that stood for wit with the company.

and they laughed loud and heartily at what they fancied to be a repartee.

"Did ye ever see a purtier—did ye ever see as purty?" cried old Hogan.

"Yes I did, this very evening, on board of that schooner there. There's one ten times as handsome, and she is a lady, too."

Insolent as were the words, the look and manner with which he gave them were far more so. It was like the speech of a proud noble to his vassals, who actually derived a sense of pleasure in the measure of outrage he could dare to mete out to them. The boy turned his haughty stare around at each in turn, as though to say, "Who is there to gainsay me?" and then left the place.

"Isn't that a worthy twig of the ould tree?" cried old Hogan, passionately. "The world hasn't done with the Luttrells yet! But I know well who puts these thoughts in the child's head. It's Molly Ryan, and no other. Taching him, as she calls it, to remember he's a gentleman."

The company endorsed all the indignation of the speaker, but, soon recalled to more practical thoughts, proceeded to nail down the trunks and boxes, and prepared to carry them down to the seaboard.

## CHAPTER VI.

### ON THE SEA-SHORE AT NIGHT.

TOWARDS the evening of the same day a light breeze from the westward sprang up, and Mr. Crab argued that there was little use in waiting any longer to refit, and proposed to sail with the tide. By keeping along close to shore he learned that the ebb would take him well out to sea before midnight. Vynner, therefore gave orders that the yacht should lie-to after she rounded the extreme promontory of the island, and send in a boat there to take him off, thus giving him one last ramble over a spot it was scarcely possible he would ever revisit.

He landed early in the evening, and amused himself strolling at will along the desolate shore. There were objects enough on every hand to excite interest, whether the visitor had been man of science or man of taste. Strange sea-plants and shells abounded; lichens of colors the most novel and varied; rocks, whose layers defied all theories of stratification, and were convoluted and enclosed one within another inextricably. Caves, whose stalactites glittered with the gorgeous tints of Bohemian glass.

The very cries of the sea-fowl had a wild unearthly shriek in them that seemed to suit the solitude, and their fearlessness showed how little they knew of molestation.

"How peaceful at first, how dreary at last, must be life in such a spot!" thought Vynner; who, like all men, would pronounce upon the problem as it addressed itself to *him*. He could understand the repose of coming suddenly there out of the din and turmoil of the world, and he could picture to his mind how the soft teaching of that first sentiment would darken into the impenetrable blackness of unbroken gloom. As he thus mused, he was sorry that he had written that note to Luttrell. He had no right to obtrude himself upon one, who, in withdrawing from the world, declared that he desired to be unknown. He was half angry with himself for a step which now appeared so unjustifiable. "After all," thought he, "the man who makes this his home should not fear to have his door forced; he ought to be able to sleep with his latch ajar, and never dread an intruder." Again and again he wished that he had gone his way without even letting Luttrell know that he had been his neighbor.

As he mused he rambled onward, now, from some rocky point obtaining a view of the jagged coast line, broken into innumerable bays, some small enough to be mere fissures, now turning his glance inward, where a succession of valleys, brown and purple in the evening light, darkened and deepened beneath him. He could, besides, in the far distance, make out the copse of trees that sheltered the abbey, and at last detect the twinkle of a light through the foliage, and then turning seaward, he could descry the light and airy spars of his little vessel as she slowly crept along, a light from a stern window showing where he, too, for the nonce, owned a home, on the blue waters of the Atlantic. What a difference between these two homes! what blissful thoughts, and budding hopes, and present enjoyments in the one, what unbroken gloom in the other! "I was wrong to have written, but I wish he had not repulsed me," said he, and still there lingered in his heart a half hope, that, if he were to present himself boldly before Luttrell, he would not reject him. The dread of Grenfell was too great to make him risk defeat; that scoffing, sneering spirit, who on the mere fact of thinking ill of every one, took credit for detecting all individual short-comings, would be so unforgiving if he had to come and own that he had been twice repulsed!

"No," thought he, "I'll accept my de-



feat as it is, and try to think no more of it;" and then he endeavored to think of the scene and the objects around him. From the spur of the mountain, a long, low, shingly promontory stretched into the sea, at the extremity of which were some rocks, forming an arm of a large bay that swept boldly inwards, and this was the spot which on the map he had pointed out as a suitable place for the yacht to lie-to, and wait for him. He now saw, however, that in following out the spit of land, he had diverged largely from the way, and must retrace his steps for above a mile ere he could reach the strand, and at the same time, in the half fading twilight, he could make out the schooner, under easy sail, heading still farther to the southward.

Crab had evidently mistaken the headland, and was making for one still more distant. What was to be done? In coming down to the coast line he had subjected himself to following out all the jagged and irregular course of the shore, and yet to venture inland without a guide would have been the extreme of rashness. There was nothing for it but to make a signal, if perchance it could be seen; the *Meteor* was not more than a mile off, and the project seemed not hopeless. He tied his handkerchief to his cane, and hastened on towards one of the rocks before him; as he drew nigher, he saw something which at last he made out to be the figure of a man, seated with his head supported between his hands, and gazing steadfastly seaward. Vynner mounted the rock and waved his signal several times, but in vain; the dark background of the mountain probably obscured the flag, and prevented its being observed.

"I want to signal the schooner yonder, my good man," cried he to a poor looking creature who sat crouched down close to the water's edge, "could you get me some dry leaves or chips together to make a fire?" The other looked up with a startled air, for he had thought himself alone, and then rising to his feet, they stood face to face. "My dear old friend!" cried Vynner, "have we met at last? How glad I am to see you again."

"Not this way, surely not this way," muttered Luttrell, in a faint and broken voice.

"To be sure I am, Luttrell. I'll call the chance that led me here one of the happiest of my life, if it brings you back to any of your old feeling for me."

"You got my note?" asked the other in a hoarse voice.

"Yes; and it was no part of my intention

to molest you, Luttrell. This meeting is, I assure you, the merest accident."

"Let me go, then, Vynner; the shame is killing me; I wouldn't that you had seen me thus—in these rags, in all this misery. These are not the memories I wanted you to carry away with you, but what would you have? I came here to live like the others."

"My dear old friend, I wanted to talk of long ago with you; it is not to reproach you I've come. Take my word for it, I feel too acutely all the wrong you have suffered from mine. I know too well at whose door your heaviest injuries lie."

"If I had attempted to be more or better than my neighbors, I couldn't have lived here," cried he, eagerly reverting to his self-defence.

"But why live here, Luttrell? It is not at your age, or with your abilities, a man retires from the game of life."

"I have played all my cards, Gervais," said he, with a wild laugh, "and never scored a point with them."

"How many a fellow has had a long run of ill-luck, to be repaid by as great a share of fortune after."

"Ay, but I'll not try it! I don't ask, I don't wish it. If I were to win now, I have nothing to do with my winnings."

"Think of your boy—your fine boy, Luttrell!"

"Ah, Robinson!" cried he, laughing; and Vynner blushed deeply as he fancied how the child had repeated the nick-name. "There is only one way he could want such assistance, and if he but live here, he'll never need it."

"Live here! But you cannot mean that he should?"

"Why not? What need is there that he should know of all those fine prizes that his father strove for and never won, any more than of fine food, or fine clothes, or fine equipages?"

Vynner shook his head in dissent, and the other went on with increased energy.

"My own mistake was, to have borne the thing so long; I might have come here before my health was broken, my hand unsteady, my foot weak, and my nerves shattered. I'd have gone out to see you, Vynner," said he, suddenly; "but Harry told me you were not alone; you had a friend. Who is he?"

"Grenfell; you remember a Grenfell at Christ Church?"

"Only Cox and Grenfell's son, the potted-shrimp man; of course it's not he?"

"Yes it is, and a very clever fellow too."

"There's what I couldn't do, Vynner;

there you beat me," cried he, aloud; "with the peasant, with the mountaineer, with the fisherman, yes, I can live in daily, hourly companionship. I can eat as coarse food, wear as coarse clothes, lie down on as mean a bed, talk as penuriously, and think as humbly, but I couldn't endure the continual refinement of your fellow of new-made wealth, nor the pretensions of one who feels that by money he is to be any one's equal."

"How your old pride of family stirs you still, Luttrell."

"Not so; it is not for myself I am pleading. I am not come of a stock so distinguished that I can arrogate to myself the defence of my order. The first of my name who came over here was a Dutch pedlar; some generations of thrift and industry made us gentlemen. For time does for family what it does for wine, and just merely by age your poor light Medoc mellow into very drinkable claret. But how have you made me rattle on in my old guise! See, they are signalling to you, yonder; that lantern at the peak has been run up now."

"I must manage to let them know I'm here; how to make a fire is the question."

"There's abundance of broken wood along here. The fishermen's boats fare ill along this coast; we'll soon gather enough for your purpose."

As they strayed about collecting the fragments of broken timber, Vyner pondered over the absence of all move on Luttrell's part to invite him to his home. Indeed, in his alacrity to make the signal, he only showed his eagerness to aid his departure. He wondered, too, how much external change, and how little real alteration, had taken place in Luttrell. His old conversational turn was there, though he seemed half ashamed when he found he had fallen into it.

"I told you we should not be long making a respectable pile," said Luttrell. "The wreck furnishing the bonfire is the law of nature. If my eyes do not deceive me, they have lowered a boat:" as he spoke, he knelt down to kindle the wood, by using his hat to fan the flame, which, after smouldering for a moment, sprang up into a clear tongue of fire. "There, Vyner, they see it; they have thrice lowered the light from the peak."

"The boat can come in here safely?"

"There's water for a large ship in this bay. Great facilities exist in these Islands of Arran, and if trade were ever to turn its steps hither, I'd direct my attention to wrecking to-morrow. The man who has so successfully achieved his own ruin, ought to be able to assist others."

A shout from the beach was now replied to by Vyner, and the stout rowers pulled in vigorously to the shore.

"I have not shocked you, Vyner," said Luttrell, "by asking you to see what would have shocked you—the place I live in. If you were one of those men to whom mere curiosity affords some pleasure, I'd have shelved my pride, or my shame, or whatever be the name of it, and said, 'Come and look at my den; see to what poor conclusions a life of blunders leads;' but you are made of other stuff, and would find no happiness in my humiliation."

"Will you not come on board with me, Luttrell, and let us have one long summer's night gossip together?"

"I'd scarce refuse if you had been alone; I can't face your distinguished friend."

"You are unjust, quite unjust to him; besides, knowing our old ties, he'll leave us to ourselves, and we shall have our talk unmolested. Is there not in the past something to build on for the future—Well, for Harry?"

"I think not. It is not necessary to plot out the life of one bred and trained as he is. Let the world treat him as it may, he'll scarcely meet any hardships he has not had a foretaste of."

"But what do you intend by him?"

"If he likes idleness, the elegant leisure of my own life, for instance," said he, with a mocking laugh, "he'll have about the amount of fortune such a mode of living requires. If he be ambitious, or prefer a course of activity, he can go on board some of these American traders, or sail with a fishing lugger. Frankly, Vyner, it's a matter I have not given much thought to. There is but one part of it, indeed, on which I can declare I have made up my mind. He is to have no protectors, no patrons. We are a hard race to deal with, and we often seem ungrateful when we are merely self-willed."

"How I wish you'd let me talk all these things over with you," said Vyner, in a friendly tone, "Not to say that I want your advice on my own account."

"Advice, and from me!"

"Even so, Luttrell. I have a project about purchasing some property on the coast here. Not a very profitable investment, perhaps, but certainly cheap, and at some long future to become possibly remunerative."

"Derryvaragh, I suppose?"

"Yes, that's the name."

"The most picturesque spot in the island; finer than the boasted Killarney itself, and far and away beyond Windermere and the



Scotch Lakes. I know it well. I have walked the mountains grouse-shooting, and fished every mile of the river; but what would you do with it when you called it yours? You dare not assert one single right of property; the people who live there, and whose fathers have lived there for centuries, have never acknowledged lord or master. You'll stock it with sheep, and send an agent. They'll eat your mutton, and shoot your agent. You'll appeal to the law, and you might as well threaten a New Zealander with a bill in Chancery. Leave such speculations alone; there are no fortunes to be made here, not even fame for having reformed us. All the privilege your purchase will confer, will be to feed us in times of famine, and be shot at when prices rise and the nights grow longer."

"Why, you are more discouraging than Grenfell?"

"I don't know about Grenfell, but I know that Ireland is not to be bettered by men like you. It is out of our own rough energies must come the cure for our own coarse maladies. Go back and build model cottages in Norfolk, give prizes to your oldest farm laborer, or the mother of the largest family. Here's your yawl; good-bye."

"Do step in and come on board with me, Luttrell, if only for an hour or two."

"No, I cannot. I'd not stand your friend's impertinences about Ireland, besides, and I'd be led into rudeness, which I'd not forgive myself. Lady Vyner is not with you?"

"No, she's in Wales, at Llantlannoch, where I wish you'd let me tell her you were coming to see her."

"Who knows!"

"My dear Luttrell, is this a promise?"

"No, not exactly."

"Will you write to me?"

"I think not."

"May I write to you?"

"I'd rather you would not. You cannot suspect, Vyner, how painful even these few minutes we have passed together will render the life I go back to; do not add to that bitterness by what would become a ceaseless sorrow."

"But Harry. Let Harry come to us; there is an excellent school at Wrexham."

"There's a school on that promontory yonder, where the master, besides reading and writing, instructs in net-mending, sail making, caulking, and fish salting. Your Wrexham fellow couldn't compete with that. Good-bye."

With a hurried shake of the hand, and as though nervously irritable at being stared

at by the sailors, Luttrell moved away, and Vyner gazed after him for a moment, and stepped into the boat.

"Mr. Crab says, sir, that the weather looks dirty outside," said the coxswain; but Vyner did not heed the remark, and sat deeply buried in his own thoughts.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A COTTAGE IN WALES.

IF we wanted a contrast to the wild desolation of Arran, it would be in the lovely valley of North Wales, where Vyner's cottage stood. It was a purchase he had made purely from its picturesque beauty; a spot chanced upon in a summer's ramble, and bought at once with that zest which leads a rich man to secure the gem that has captivated his fancy. It stood on a little rocky platform that projected from a mountain, and looked downwards and upwards, through one of those charming valleys which now widen into luxuriance, and now contract again till they resume the features of a deep ravine. A river of some size feamed and tumbled over a rocky bed beneath, and occasionally deepened into some waveless pool, over which the red-berrid ash-trees drooped gracefully, and the dark copper beeches threw their bronzed shadows. Deep woods clothed the mountain in front, and over them all rose the rugged summit of Cader Idris, with its amphitheatre of rock half lost in the clouds.

If as regards loveliness of position, tranquillity, and beauty in all its details, the cottage of Dinasllyn could scarcely be surpassed, there was one detracting element which certainly impaired its charm, the "Quid amarum," amid all its excellence. It was a show place. It had been the scene of some romantic attachment, some half-remembered Abelard and Heloise, whose pictures yet survived, and of whom there were traditions of rustic benches where they used to sit; of trees whereon their initials were carved; of cedars that they had planted. Vyner and his wife did not at first know, nor estimate, to what a heritage they had succeeded, nor in the least suspect what an affliction mere purposeless curiosity, united to plenty of leisure, may become.

The old gardener whom they had taken on with the cottage was not at all disposed to surrender that perquisite of black mail he had for years long levied from visitors, nor perhaps did he fancy to abdicate those functions of "Cicerone" which elevated



him in the eyes of his fellows. If his love-story was not as affecting as Paul and Virginia, it had its realisms that compensated for some pathos. He could show the dairy where Chloe made the butter, and the kitchen garden where Daphnis hoed his cabbages. There were the steps cut in the solid rock that led down to her bath in the river; "here the bower she loved so well; here the tree she planted."

To be obliged to devote a day of every week, or even certain hours of a day, to the invasion of a set of strangers, induced by *ennui*, by curiosity, or, as it may be, by mere imitation, to wander about your house and stroll through your garden, free to lounge in your easy-chair, or dispose themselves on your sofas, criticizing your pictures, your prints, your books, and your music, hazarding speculations as to your tastes and dispositions from the titles of the volumes on your table, and the names of your newspapers—to feel that, as the clock strikes a certain hour on a certain morning, all the cherished privacy which constitutes what we call home is fled, and that your hall is a public street, and your drawing-room a piazza, so that you are driven to hide yourself in your own house, at the peril of being classified among the curiosities, and perhaps sent off to press with the other details, satisfactory or the reverse, of the visitor's experience. These are no slight evils. They are a heavy tax on all the benefits of possession, and we have our doubts if even Naboth's vineyard would be enviable, if linked with the condition of showing the grounds and displaying the grapes to vulgar visitors.

When the Vyners purchased the cottage they had been told of the custom, just as you are told of a certain pathway across the lawn, which was a mere usurpation, a thing "without a shadow of legality," that you have only to close to-morrow, but of whose actual torments when you do come to suppress, no one has ever given the measure. They heard that the former owner usually set an hour or two apart on a Wednesday or a Thursday to gratify tourist curiosity; in fact, the celebrity of the spot had been ingeniously introduced as an element of value—just as the shade of Pope might be catalogued amongst the merits of Twickenham, and the memory of Rousseau figure in the inventory of a certain cottage near Geneva!

Vyner was himself one of those easy, happy natures, which submit without sacrifice to what affords pleasure to others. His wife saw no hardship in yielding to a moderate amount of this infliction; the more, since they only came to the cottage for about six

or eight weeks of every year. It was Georgina Courtenay who resisted the custom as a most "unwarrantable intrusion, a practical impertinence," as she called it, which "reduced a family either to the condition of the cracked china on the mantle-piece, or the fussy house-keeper who exhibited it." Georgina was not a very tolerant nature; with what she disagreed, she made no compromise, and, like most such people, she found that life gave her sufficient occasion for conflict.

Vyner's absence from home presented an admirable opportunity "to suppress this nuisance," as she phrased it, and she accordingly had a notice appended to the gate—a copy of which was also duly forwarded to the village inn—stating that, during the sojourn of the family at Dinaslyn, the cottage and grounds were not open for the inspection of strangers. The morning of the famous ordinance was not more anxious to the household of Charles the Tenth, than was that of the edict to the family at the cottage. What was to follow that great *coup d'état* was the question. Would each of the vested interests—gardener, gate-keeper, house-keeper, and butler—submit to see their long-established perquisites suddenly effaced and extinguished? Would the village folk be content to lose the profits of strangers, who each year flocked down in increasing hordes? Would the tourists themselves, who had carried their romantic sympathies hundreds of miles by land or sea, agree to put up with a glance at the cottage chimneys by telescope, or a peep through the iron gate at the trim avenue, whose abrupt turning shut out all further inspection? If no splashed and booted aides-de-camp rode in to tell with trembling accents that popular sentiment had taken the menacing form of a silent and brooding anger, at least there were voices to declare that at "The Goat" the visitors were highly indignant, and that one of the strangers at the "Watkin's Arms" had dispatched a copy of the manifesto, with a commentary, to the *Times*. Indeed, it was in the public room of this latter establishment that public indignation found its chief exponent. Visitors from far-off lands, a traveler from Ireland, a gentleman from the United States, a German naturalist, with a green tin box and a pair of brown spectacles, were loud in declaring their sentiments, which amounted to this: that the possessors of any spot remarkable for its historic associations, of a much-prized marble or world-famed picture, were mere trustees for the public, who had an unimpachable right to see, gaze on, and

admire to their heart's content : these being privileges which in no wise detracted from the positive value of the object so worshipped, since there is no record of any garden whose perfume could be exhausted by smelling, nor any picture whose beauties mere sight could have absorbed. These observations, we are careful to record, were embodied in a very formal-looking document, signed by about twenty names, and only awaited the selection of a suitable envoy to be transmitted to the cottage.

It is but a fair tribute to American courage to own that, where so many held back, reluctant and timid, the Yankee declared his readiness to go forward. He protested that he would rather like it. "It was just his grit," and that he was "main tired of sittin' there like a wounded skunk, with his head out of a hole." Whether from some lurking jealousy of the stranger, or some ungenerous disbelief in his address, the company did not accept his offer, or at least show such eagerness in the acceptance as they might, but broke up into twos and threes, discussing the event. While these deliberations went forward, a one-horse chaise drew up to the door, and a writing-desk and a small carpet-bag were deposited within it by the landlord, who, by a significant look towards his other guests, seemed to say, "Here's your opportunity ! This is your man !"

"Who is he ? Where is he going ?" asked one, calling him aside.

"He's Mr. M'Kinlay, from London, the family law-agent, going over to the cottage."

He had but finished this speech, when a middle-aged man, with a high complexion, and short gray hair, without whiskers, appeared, conning over his bill as he came forward.

"You can scarce call it supper, Mr. Pugh," said he in an accent unmistakably Scotch—"the bit of fish, and the leg of a cold turkey—except that it was eaten at eleven at night. It was just a snack."

"It's only two-and-six, sir," said the other, humbly.

"Only ! I'd like to know what you'd make it, man. That's the price of a right good meal up in town, and not served on a coarse table cloth, nor over a sanded floor ; and what's this 1s. 10d. ? What's that ?"

"Ale, sir. Your servant drank it very freely."

"If it only disagreed with him as it did with me, I'll make no objection to his excess. Are these gentlemen waiting to speak to me, for I don't think I have the honor

"Yes, sir," said a short, apoplectic-looking man, with a bald head. "We are strangers—strangers casually thrown into acquaintance at this hotel. We have come here from motives of pleasure, or health, or indolence—one common object having its attraction for us all—the far famed cottage of Dinaslyn. We have learned, however, to our infinite di-appointment, that by a whim, a mere caprice—for it is impossible it could be more—of the persons who are the present occupants, the travelers, the tourists I will call them, are to be excluded in future, and all access refused to a spot which has its claims on the sympathies not alone of the Englishman, for I see at my side a learned professor from Jona, and a distinguished citizen of New York—"

"Kansas, stranger, Little Rock," said the Yankee, interrupting, and then advancing to the front. "Here's how it is, sir. Your friends up yonder ain't content to have God's gifts all their own, but they won't even let a man look at them. That ain't nature, and it ain't sense. We have drawn up our notions in a brief message. Are you a'mindin' of me, stranger ?"

This question was not completely un-called for, since for some few seconds Mr. M'Kinlay had turned to the landlord, and was occupied in the payment of his bill.

"Seventeen shillings and fourpence, leaving eightpence for Thomas, Mr. Pugh ; and remember that your driver is now fully paid, unless I should stay to dinner."

"Are you a'mindin' of me, sir ?" said the Yankee with an energy that actually made the other start, and sent a deeper crimson to his cheeks.

"I must say, sir—I will say, that having no acquaintance with you, having never seen you till now—"

"All your loss, stranger, that's a fact ! You're not the first man that regretted he did not know the length of my boot before he put his foot on my corns. You'll have to take them papers—do you mind ?—you'll have to take them papers, and give them to your friends up yonder !"

"I'm neither a postman nor your messenger, sir," said M'Kinlay, getting into the chaise.

"You'll have to take them papers," and he laid them on the seat of the carriage as he spoke, "that's how it is ! and as sure as my name is Dodge !—Herodotus Manning Dodge !—you'd better give an account of 'em when you drive out of that gate up there, for I'll wait for you, if it was till next fall !"

"That's mighty plain talking, anyhow," broke in a voice, with a very distinctive ac-



cent, "and a man needn't be much of a gentleman to understand it."

"Even a brief visit," cried out the first speaker.

"Just to see the cedars, or Clorinda's grotto," lisped out a female voice.

But Mr. M'Kinlay did not wait for more, but by an admonitory poke of his umbrella set his driver off at full speed, and was soon well out of both eye and earshot.

To say that Mr. M'Kinlay drove away in a towering passion—that he was excessively angry and indignant, would be the truth, but still not the whole truth, for he was also terribly frightened. There was in the tall Yankee's look, language, and gesture, a something that smacked of the bush, and the hickory-tree—a vague foreshadowing of Lynch law, or no law—that overpowered him. Such a man, within a reasonable distance of Scotland Yard, for instance, might not have proved so terrible; but here he was in the heart of the Welsh mountains, in the very spot of all others where there was every facility for a deed of violence. "He might throw me over that cliff, or pitch me into that quarry hole," muttered he, and the landscape at the moment offered both the illustrations to aid his fancy.

It was, then, in a tremor of mingled anger and terror that he drove up to the gate, and in no patient mood was it that he sat outside the padlocked portal till a messenger went up to the house with his card to obtain leave for his admission. The order was speedily given, and he passed in.

The brief interval of traversing the space between the gate-lodge and the cottage was passed by Mr. M'Kinlay in arranging his cravat, brushing the dust from his coat, and so far as might be, smoothing down any asperities that should have betrayed themselves in his features; for, though neither a young man nor a man of the world of fashion, he had his pretensions, the most cherished one of all which was a design upon the hand of Miss Georgina Courtenay. Had Miss Courtenay been in the full blaze of her beauty, as she was some eight or nine years before, Mr. M'Kinlay would never have dared to lift his eyes to her; had she even continued to live in town and mingle in that society where she had always lived and moved, he would not have dreamed of such a presumption. But Mr. M'Kinlay knew the world. He had seen an exiled Grand-Duke in a hansom cab, and had actually met a deposed Prince on a Margate steamer. In the changeful fortunes of life, the "price current" was the only test of anything. Railroads, and mines, and telegraphic companies rose and fell with the

fluctuations of the market, and marriageable ladies might come one day to figure in the share list! Miss Georgina, however ungalant the confession, represented a security at a discount. She had gone down year by year, and at last ceased to be quoted. And yet "it was a very good thing." She had, none knew it better—very few so well—she had eighteen thousand pounds, besides expectations, the latter very reasonable, and promising in their way. Her connections were admirable—high enough to give him a very considerable lift socially, and yet not so elevated as to make his rise that of a mere "parvenu." Professionally, the advantage would be great, and lead to much parliamentary business, the carrying of local bills, and a deal of very profitable employment. He flattered himself that in most other respects, there was much the world would deem suitable. He was twelve—well, if you like, fourteen years her senior, but then neither was very young, and when a woman had reached we shall not say what of the thirties, her marrying was not subjected to the criticisms applied to the blushing bride of eighteen or twenty. Lastly, he was well off, had a capital business, a good house in a good street, was "well placed" among men of his class, and altogether favorably regarded by his betters. "She might do worse," muttered he, at the end of his rumination, as he descended from the chaise, with an amount of activity in his movements that showed he had detected the flounce of a muslin dress at the drawing-room window.

"All well, I hope, Rickards?" said he to the stout butler, who bowed his welcome in most gracious guise.

"Quite well, Mr. M'Kinlay—and, indeed, you look the same, sir."

"Nothing the matter with me, Rickards, that a little rest won't remedy. Over-work, over-work is my malady!"

Mr. Rickards sighed responsively; he had heard men speak of the affection, and the symptoms they mentioned were quite appalling. "Her ladyship's not down yet, but Miss Georgina is in the drawing-room," added he, with great significance of manner. "Step this way, sir."

Miss Courtenay was busily engaged searching for a letter in her writing-desk, when the butler announced in his most emphatic manner, Mr. M'Kinlay; but she only turned her head round, and, with a weak smile, said, "Oh, Mr. M'Kinlay! I trust they did not keep you waiting on the road. You know we have been obliged to have the gate locked."

"I heard so. Indeed, I have heard of



little else since my arrival, Miss Courtenay," said he, not altogether mastering the anger he felt at his cool reception. "I hope Lady Vyner is well."

"Yes, as well as she ever is. What a provoking thing it is to mislay a letter; but I suppose it is an oversight you have never committed. You have everything in order, docketed, pigeon-holed, and what not."

"Pardon me, I am the most careless of men. All about me is a chaos of confusion."

"Indeed!" said she, with a faint, very faint show of interest, as though quite unexpectedly aware of some favorable trait in his character. "Who would have thought it! It is a letter from my niece's governess I have lost, and with it all clue to her address."

"I can, perhaps, supply that," said Mr. M'Kinlay: "at least, if it be the town she stopped at while the yacht is being repaired."

"Exactly so. What's the name of it?"

"Here it is," said he, producing a small clasped note-book from which, after a brief search, he read, "Mademoiselle Heinzleman's address will meanwhile be, 'Carrick's Royal Hotel, Westport, Ireland.'"

"What a blessing is red tapery after all!" said she, in a sort of soliloquy. "If there were not these routine people, what would become of us?"

"I am charmed that even my blemishes should have rendered you a service," said he, with a tingling cheek.

"I don't think my sister knows you are here," said she, ignoring all his remarks.

"I suspect Rickards must have told her," said he, half-stiffly.

"Just as likely not; he is getting so stupid—so old."

This was a very cruel speech to be so emphasized, for Rickards was only one year Mr. M'Kinlay's senior.

"He looks active, alert, and I'd not guess him above forty-six, or seven."

"I don't care for the number of his years, but he is old enough to be fussy and officious, and he has that atrocious activity which displays itself with certain middle-aged people by a quick short step, abrupt speech, and a grin when they don't hear you. Oh, don't you hate that deaf-man's smile?"

Mr. M'Kinlay would fain have smiled too, but he feared the category it would sentence him to.

"I'm afraid you expected to find my brother here, but he's away; he is cruising somewhere along the coast of Ireland."

"I was aware of that. Indeed, I am on

my way to join him, and only diverged at Crewe to come over here, that I might bring him the latest advices from home."

"And are you going yachting?" said she, with a sort of surprise that sent the blood to M'Kinlay's face and even his forehead.

"No, Miss Courtenay, I trust not, for I detest the sea; but Sir Gervais wants my advice about this Irish estate he is so full of."

"Oh! don't let him buy anything in Ireland, I entreat of you. Mr. M'Kinlay, not to sanction this. None of us would ever go there, not even to look at it."

"I imagine the mischief is done."

"What do you mean by being done?"

"That the purchase is already made, the agreement ratified, and everything completed but the actual payment."

"Well, then, don't pay; compromise, contest, make difficulties. You legal people needn't be told how to raise obstacles. At all events, do anything rather than have an Irish property."

"I wish I had one."

"Well, I wish you had—that is if you are so bent upon it. But I must go and tell my sister this distressing news. I don't know how she'll bear it! By the way," added she, as she reached the door, "I shall find you here when I come back—you are not going away?"

"Certainly not without seeing Lady Vyner, if she will accord me that honor," said he, stiffly.

"Of course she'll see you," cried she, and left the room.

Left alone with his reflections, Mr. M'Kinlay had not the pleasantest company. Had he mistaken all the relations between Miss Courtenay and himself, or was she changed to him—totally changed? Was it thus that they met at last? He knew that she always had a certain flippant manner, and that she was eminently what the French call *inconséquent*; but she was more, far more, now. The allusion to Rickard's age was a direct impertinence, and the question as to his yachting taste was a palpable sneer at the habits of his daily life.

"The case does not look well—certainly not well," murmured he, as he walked the room with his hands behind his back. "Many would throw up the brief, and say, 'Take a nonsuit.' Yes, most men would; but I'll do nothing rashly!" and with this wise resolve he took up a book, and began to read; but still the hours rolled on, and no one came. By the clock over the mantel-piece it was now four. Could it possibly

be that it was two hours and a half since—since she had left him ?

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AN OLD BACHELOR'S HOUSE.

It is quite true Georgina forgot all about Mr. McKinlay. The gardener had met her on her way, and presented her with a bouquet of Japanese roses—the real purple roses it was supposed never could be reared out of a Tycoon's garden ; and so she hastened up to her sister's room, as totally oblivious of the man of law as though he had been hundreds of miles away. They talked pleasantly of flowers—flowers for the china vase, and flowers for the hair—they laughed at the incongruous blunders of the people who wore “ wrong colors,” and that “ drab bonnet ” they had seen last Sunday in church. They next discussed dress, and the impossibility of wearing anything “ decent ” on the dusty roads ; and, lastly they ordered the ponies and the phaeton and drove out.

How charmingly pleasant are these lives of little cares and of little duties ; where conscience has no burden that would be too weighty for the strength of childhood—where no torturing anxieties invade, no tormenting ambitions pursue—where the morning's stroll through the garden is the very type of existence, a ramble amidst fragrance, and fruit, and flowers, with no other call upon exertion than to enjoy ! And what a teachable faculty is that same one of enjoyment. How it develops itself under good training and favorable opportunities.

These sisters had a very pleasant life, and they knew it ; that is, they no more over-looked the stones in their path than their neighbors ; but they thoroughly understood that Fate had accorded them a very smooth road, and one right easy to travel. They chatted gaily as they drove along the side of a brightly eddying river, through a glen of some miles in extent. The day was one of those mellow ones of August, tempered with a slight breeze, that gently moved the cloud-shadows on the mountains, adding at each change some new effect of light and color. “ Let us go and call on Sir Within,” said Lady Vyner ; “ it would be a glorious day to see the old castle, and the mountain behind it.” Her sister agreed at once ; for though the drive was full eight miles, the road was beautiful all the way, and at its end was a grand old keep, Dalradern Castle,

with a charming old bachelor for its owner, than whom none better understood how to do the honors of his house.

While the sisters push their smart ponies to a brisk trot, we shall take the opportunity to say a word of Sir Within Wardle. He was the last of a great Welsh family of large fortune and ancient name, but who had lived all his life away from England. He had been in diplomacy since his boyhood ; he had joined an embassy in the Low Countries at the age of sixteen ; and lived long enough to see the whole map of Europe new colored.

It had been the dream of his existence to “ come home ”—to return to the temperate climate and genial air of England—to get back where the trees were really trees, and where grass was veritably green, and where people told the truth, and tradesmen were honest. Well, he did get back, but it was not to find everything as he had pictured it. The temperate climate rained a good deal. The genial air had a marked tendency to give bronchitis. The grass was unquestionably green, but so were they who walked in it, for wet feet were invariable. As to truthfulness in his own class, he had nothing to complain of ; but he thought servants were pretty much as elsewhere, and as to his tradespeople, there was little to choose between Fleet Street and the “ Graben,” and Piccadilly was not a whit above the Rue de la Paix !

In fact, there were many things as he had hoped, and not a few that disappointed him. People, generally, were what he deemed more narrow-minded ; they sat more in judgment over their neighbors than he liked ; they were more inquisitive and less charitable. In his world, where he had passed fifty odd years, the charming people were admitted to be charming, though certain delinquences chargeable to them, might have disparaged their claims to character. It was not held to the disadvantage of Beauty that discretion should not have united itself to loveliness, and Wit was just as highly appreciated as though its possessor had not been more than lucky with the dice-box. Sir Within, be it remarked, wanted none of these immunities on his own behalf. He had never been what is called a man of gallantry, never gambled. His great passion was a splendid house, and grand receptions. He liked great people, crowned heads, and after them coroneted ones. He revered grand-dukes and serene-highnesses ; and it was not by any means improbable that in his homage to the great lay the secret of that tolerance, on the score of morals, that marked him ; for, be it said



with respect, kings and kaisers have a habit of showing the world that they soar in a sphere above common proprieties, and can afford to do in ethics what they can do with the Bourse—go in for a rise or fall, as the whim seizes them.

To "come back" with tastes like these was a mistake, but to attempt to justify them was infinitely worse. Sir Within began to lecture his country neighbors on their hard-heartedness and ungenerosity. He enumerated scores of people who had taken little scampers into vice, and come back to live more gorgeously on virtue. What anecdotes he had of ministers who had cheated at cards! Great men, excellent men in all other respects, unimpeachable in all their public acts, and pillars of the State they pertained to. He told of a society whose very laxity saved all friction, and which went on smoothly—for it always went downward. The consequence may be anticipated. His neighbors—at least their wives—voted him an old monster of vice, corrupted by half a century of foreign iniquities. They refused his invitations, and neglected his advances. His presents of fruit—such fruit too!—were declined, and his society strictly avoided.

The Vyners, who only came to the neighborhood for a few weeks in the year, scarcely knew anything of local feelings, and only heard that he never went out, and saw little company at home—facts which, when they came to be acquainted with him, struck them as strange, for he was eminently one made for society, and seemed to feel the raciest enjoyment in it. He had all that peculiar go and eagerness in him which pertains to men who talk well, and feel that they have this power.

Perhaps my reader may have met such a character—not that they exist as a class—but if he has done so, he will acknowledge that it is a very charming form of selfishness, and gifted with marvellous powers of pleasing. At all events, Lady Vyner and her sister delighted in him—most ungrateful had they been if they had not—for never was courtesy more polished, never homage more devoted or more respectful. Royalty could not have been received by him with a greater deference, and now as they drove up to the massive entrance of the castle, and the sharp clatter of the ponies' feet awoke the echoes of the solemn courtyard, Sir Within was promptly at his post to help them to descend; and as the wind blew his long white hair backwards, he stooped to kiss their hands with all the reverence of a courtier.

"Do you know, dear ladies," said he,

"that I had a vision of this visit? It was revealed to me—I cannot say how—that you would come over here to-day, and I told Bernais to prepare the orangery; for," said I, "Bernais, I will offer *ces dames* no luncheon, but will insist on their taking an early dinner."

"What a tempting proposal!" said Lady Vyner, looking at Georgina, whose fiat was always needed to every project.

"I vote for being tempted!" said Georgina, gaily; "but what do I see there—something new?"

"No, something old, but restored. Don't you remember the last day you were here saying that the silence of this old court wanted the pleasant splash of a fountain? and so I got these disabled nymphs and hamadryads remounted, and set them to blow their conchs and spout the cataracts as of yore."

"How beautiful it all is!"

"Curious enough, the figures are really good. Some worthy ancestor of mine had purchased this group at Urbino from some ruined Italian mansion; and, as a work of art, it is almost equal to a Luca della Robbia. The mistake is the era. It is not suited to this old dungeon. Here we are in the tenth century, and this group is cinque cento. Let me send it to the cottage. It would be perfect in your garden."

"Not for worlds. I couldn't think of it!"

"Don't think of it, but say 'Yes.' Remember, that in a villa ornamentation nothing comes amiss; there are no incongruities."

"It is impossible, Sir Within—quite impossible."

"Don't imagine we have come here as brigands," said Miss Courtenay, smiling.

"When you carry away my heart, what matters what is left me!" said he, sighing.

Miss Courtenay looked down—it was a bashful look, but not a displeased one—and, somehow, more conscious than the compliment of so old a gentleman might seem to warrant.

"And so Sir Gervais likes Ireland?" said he, as he introduced them into the drawing-rooms.

"So much so, that I fear he has made a purchase of some property there."

"That is only a mistake when one feels that he must live on the spot he owns. Some witty Frenchman says: 'I used to fancy that I owned my furniture, but I found that it owned me, I was the bondsman of an old arm-chair, and the actual slave of a chest of drawers?' You laugh, ladies, but



just see whether this old house or I be the master here."

"Well, it's not a very severe bondage after all," said Georgina, smiling.

"How pleasantly one discusses another's captivity! By the way, when are you all to come and pay me this long promised visit? Remember the longer you defer payment, the larger grows the debt; your week is now a month."

"When Sir Gervais comes home, we shall be delighted."

"Why not be here when he arrives? How much pleasanter he'd find the house where your presence had imparted that charm that comes of female influence. You cannot guess how this old room, that I thought so dreary a while ago, looks positively beautiful now. Yes, Bernais, bring it in." This was said to the servant, who, after appearing at the door, made a hasty retreat. "It is the *menu* of our dinner, ladies, and my cook, M. Piquard, wishes to acquit himself with distinction. See, here is a query. 'Is the pheasant to be "aux huitres," or aux pointes d'asperges?' Decide."

"I should say with the asparagus," said Miss Courtenay.

"And your judgment is correct; the other is a mere compromise to a supposed English taste. A summer day's dinner is to the full banquet of mid-winter what a light 'aquarelle' is to an oil picture. You want grace, delicacy; you require elegance, transparency, softness; not depth, nor force, nor strong effect."

"What Sybarites you must deem us!" said Lady Vyner, laughing.

"I am repeating for you to-day a little dinner I once gave the Duchesse de Sagance. She was much admired at the time by the Archduke Charles of Austria; but forgive me if I am talking of forbidden themes."

"Oh, go on, Sir Within! We must implicitly bow to your discretion."

"Ah, if you do that, I'm ruined. You silence me at once!"

"You surely wouldn't have us say, 'Be indiscreet?'"

"No, but I'd have you say, 'Talk to us as if we were all at Vienna, at Milan, or at Naples.'"

"Neither my sister nor myself 'pose' for prudery, Sir Within, but the world says that you are—what shall I call it?—too—too—do help me to the word."

"How can I, when it is to my own blame? Who ever called on a prisoner to fill up his own indictment?"

"What the world means is, perhaps," broke in Georgina, "that Sir Within oc-

asionally forgets his geography, and fancied at the foot of Snowdon that he is close to Vesuvius."

"I apprehend you," said he, smiling; "but confess, that dress is not more a question of climate than conversation; both one and the other are lighter in the south of Europe, and what is of more moment, with perfect safety, too; mark that, Mesdames, with perfect safety."

"It may be all very well for you, who are acclimatized, to say so," said Lady Vyner, "but bear in mind that we only passed one winter at Rome."

"And did you not like it? What a furious cataract of all manner of sensations is a first winter at Rome! Grandeur and littleness, sublimity and absurdity—the splendid St. Peter's and the slipshod priesthood—and, more ridiculous than all, our cockney population wandering over the Coliseum and Quirinal, not fully certain that they are getting the real article for their money, or whether Nero and Tiberius are not dear at the price paid for them. I often wish it were right for an ex-Envoy to give his note-book, or some extracts from it, to the world. Impressions of the B. S.—the British Subject, I mean—by a late Foreign Minister."

"Very amusing, doubtless; but very spiteful," said Miss Courtenay.

"Here comes Bernais to announce dinner, and rescue you from my tartness;" and, giving an arm to each of the ladies, he led them forward.

Valued reader, is it amongst the number of your experiences to have "assisted" at a dinner—usually a Russian one—where, without having found anything pre-eminently good to eat, you are given to understand they all cost fabulous sums—that the fricassee you scarcely tasted was brought from the frontier of China, and the fish, that seemed flavorless, came by estafette from the Caspian? Such, in a certain way, was Sir Within's conversation; it sparkled with great people—kings glittered, and queens bespangled it; it was evidently a dear article to have acquired, but, beyond that, it possessed little value. Yet, "for all that and all that," his guests liked it. To be sure, it was admirably aided; his "little dinner," as he modestly styled it, was a banquet, not in ponderous detail, or duration, but in the perfect selection and the exquisite delicacy of all that composed it.

And did he not relish the success he achieved—the double success of his cook and of himself! If there be a time when egotism is less odious than at others, it is when a host expatiates on the pains he has

taken to feed you. The little selfish vain-gloriousness of the moment is so readily pardoned, while the truffle is on your fork, or the ruby claret half way to your lip.

It was towards the close of the dinner that Sir Within, adroitly turning the topic from the meats to the guests, was discussing, with some knowledge of the subject, the people who made the pleasantest dinner company, and showing how an accomplished host makes the light talkers do duty at the first course, using them as mere skirmishers, who are to fall back and be ignored as the great engagement comes on. "I flatter myself," said he, "that I can manage most classes of men, though I own there is one that totally defies me—that is to say, he is so obstinately self-willed, and so professionally trained to persistence, that he deems it a triumph. I mean your lawyer!"

"Oh, Laura! what have I done!" exclaimed Georgina, laying her hand on her sister's arm, and staring half wildly at her.

"What is it? What is the matter?"

"Was there ever such a blunder—how shall we get over it?"

"What is it then? tell it?" cried Lady Vyner, eagerly.

"I forgot all about him—utterly—completely forgot!"

"About whom?"

"Mr. M'Kinlay, the lawyer. He arrived this morning, came to the cottage very early, saying he was on his way to Ireland to meet Gervais, and only ran over from Crewe to see us; I left him to tell you that he was there. I had it in my head when I quitted the room, but what drove it out again, or what occurred to make me forget it, I cannot now imagine."

In spite of all the annoyance of the incident, Lady Vyner laughed immoderately, and so did Sir Within, and so, at last, did Miss Courtenay, and the mirth was kept up by all sorts of fanciful conceits as to what the lawyer must have thought, said, or done.

"He has driven away in a towering passion; he's hot-tempered at times, I know," said Lady Vyner.

"No, no! you'll find him very comfortably installed when you get back," said Sir Within. "He'll be vexed, he'll be angry, doubtless; but as a minister plenipotentiary vents his ill-temper in a dispatch; your man of law consigns all his indignation, more practically, to his bill of costs. What an avalanche of six-and-eightpences will fall on your forgetfulness."

"We must hasten to repair the disaster. Sir Within, would you oblige me by ordering our ponies. I know you'll forgive our abrupt leave-taking."

"I shall never forgive the cause of it. Why not let me send a messenger over to ask him, saying I had insisted on detaining you?"

"Oh, on no account! Besides, he's a touchy person, and my husband is most tenacious regarding him. I must hasten back and make my explanations in person."

"I don't know how I am to face him at all!" cried Georgina.

"I'd certainly not try," said Sir Within.

Vague as the mere words were, they were uttered with a significance that plainly said, "You might stay where you are;" and Miss Courtenay evidently so read them, for her cheek reddened as she turned away.

Lady Vyner, however, went on: "I don't think we shall have any difficulty about it—at least, I hope not—though what I'm to say, and how to say it, I cannot imagine."

"Throw me into the breach," said Sir Within; "say that, hearing of his arrival, I begged a visit from you—that I wanted some legal advice—I required a draft of—what shall I say?—I can scarcely be going to be married. Let it be a will, then."

"Oh, no, not a will, Sir Within!" said Georgina, with a very soft smile.

"It shall be whatever you decide for it," said he, assisting her with her shawl as he spoke.

"Do you ever mean to come over to breakfast with us?" asked Lady Vyner. "The promise has been made and renewed, I think, a dozen times."

"May I say next Sunday, then?"

"And you'll promise to come to church with us afterwards?" cried Lady Vyner.

He muttered something with a smile to Miss Courtenay, and she turned away abruptly, but ere she drew down her veil her face betokened the reverse of displeasure.

Though as they drove homeward, the unpleasant explanation that lay before them engaged much of their thoughts, taxing all their address how to encounter its difficulty, yet, from time to time, Georgina would return to talk of the house they had just quitted, and the host.

"It is easy enough to see why our straightlaced neighbors do not take to him," said she; "he is too much a man of the world—too tolerant and forgiving for their notions."

"A little too lax, also, for the proprieties of English life," added Lady Vyner.

"For its hypocrisies, if you like, Laura. I'm certain, people are pretty much the same everywhere, though the way they talk about themselves may be very different."

"I suspect he has made a conquest,



Georgy," said her sister, laughing; "or rather, that his magnificent old castle, and his Vandykes, and his pineries, and his conservatory have——"

"No! that I protest against. His 'accessories,' as the French would call them, are undeniable. It is a house absolutely princely in all its details; but I think he himself is the gem of the collection. He is courteous and so pleasant, so anecdotic, and full of all manner of *à propos*, and then so utterly unlike every one else that one knows."

"I suppose there lies his chief attraction. We have to measure him with people all whose thoughts and ideas are so essentially homely, and who must of necessity be eternally talking of themselves—that is, of their own turnpike, their own turnips, and their own cock pheasants."

"Is it not strange that he never married?" said Georgina, after a silence.

"I don't think so. He's not a man that would be likely to marry, and very far from being one that a woman would like to take as a husband."

"Do you think so—do you really think so?"

"I'm certain of it. All those charming little schemes for our entertainment that captivated us a while ago, show a degree of care and attention bestowed on little things which would make life a perfect servitude. Cannot you imagine him spending his mornings giving audience to his cook, and listening to the report of his gardener? I fancy I see him in the midst of a levee of domestics, gravely listening to the narrative of the last twenty-four hours of his household."

"So far from that," said Georgina, warmly, "he told me Bernais did everything—engaged and discharged servants, changed furniture, re-arranged rooms, and, in fact, managed little daily 'surprises' for him, that, he said, compensated for much of the solitude in which he lived."

"But why does he live in solitude? Why not go back to the life and the places that habit has endeared to him?"

"He told me to-day that he intended to do so; and that he is only waiting for the visit of a certain relative, Mr. Ladarelle, after which he means to set out for Italy."

"Ladarelle is the great banker, and, if I mistake not, his heir."

"Yes. Sir Within says that they scarcely know each other, and have all that dislike and distrust that usually separate the man in possession and the man in expectancy."

"One can fancy how distasteful his heir

must be to a man like Sir Within Wardle," said Lady Vyner.

"To any man, sister," broke in Georgina—"to any man who only knows the person as the inheritor of his fortune. I declare I think Sir Within spoke of the Ladarelles with much forbearance, aware, as he is, that they are coming down here to see in what state of repair the castle is, and whether the oaks are being thinned more actively than a mere regard for their welfare would exact."

"Did Sir Within say that?" asked Lady Vyner, with a laugh.

"No; but I guessed it!"

"Well, he supplied the text for your theory?"

"In a measure, perhaps. It was when you went with Groves to look at the large cactus he told me this, and mentioned that, by a singular provision, though the estate is strictly entailed, he could charge the property to any amount with jointure if he married; and perhaps, said he, my worthy relatives were anxious to satisfy themselves that this event has not, nor is very likely to occur."

"Not now, certainly?" said Lady Vyner, with a saucy laugh.

"I don't know. There are many women well to do, and well off, would marry him."

"That is to say, there are a considerable number of women who would sacrifice much for money."

Miss Courtenay was silent; when she next spoke, it was about the evening—the air was growing fresh, and the twilight deepening. "I wonder in what mood we are to find Mr. M'Kinlay—if we are to find him at all."

"I own it would be very awkward; but I am such a coward about meeting him, that I half wish he had gone away, and that we were left to make our lame excuses in a letter."

"I have to confess that the matter sits very lightly on *my* conscience," said Georgina, "though I am the real delinquent. I don't like him, and I shall not be very unhappy if he knows it."

"Possibly enough, but such a breach of all politeness——"

"My dear Laura, he has met this incident, or something very like it, a hundred times. Earls and viscounts have made appointments with him and forgotten him; he has been left standing on that terrace or pacing moodily up that street, for hours long, and as Sir Within said very smartly, consoled by the item that would record it in the bill of costs."

"Yes, I remember the remark: it struck



me as the only bit of vulgarity about him."

"Vulgarity! Sir WithinWardle vulgar!"

"Well, I have no other word for it, Georgy. It was the observation that might readily have come from any ordinary and common-place person, and sounded unsuitably from the lips of a very polished gentleman."

"Poor Sir Within! if in a gloomy moment you may be wondering to yourself what harsh or envious things your wealth, your splendor, and your taste may have provoked from us, I am certain that you never imagined that the imputation of being vulgar was one of them!"

Fortunately there was no time to continue a theme so threatening to be unpleasant, for already they were at the gate lodge, and a loud summons with the bell had announced their arrival.

## CHAPTER IX.

### MR. M'KINLAY'S TRIALS.

MR. M'KINLAY was awakened from a pleasant nap over the "Man of Feeling," which he had persuaded himself he was reading with all the enjoyment it had once afforded him, by the French clock over the mantle-piece performing a lively waltz, and then striking five!

He started, rubbed his eyes, and looked about him, not very certain for some minutes where he was. The hum of the bees, the oppressive perfume of the sweet-brier and the jessamine, and the gentle drip-drip of a little trickling rivulet over some rockwork, seemed still to steep his senses in a pleasant dreamy languor, and a sort of terror seized him that the ladies might possibly have come in, and found him there asleep. He rang the bell and summoned Rickards at once.

"Where are the ladies?" asked he, eagerly.

"Not come back yet, sir. It's very seldom they stay out so long. I can make nothing of it."

"You told her ladyship I was here, didn't you?"

"I told Miss Georgina, sir, and of course she told my lady."

"What's your dinner-hour?"

"Always early, sir, when Sir Gervais is from home. My lady likes four, or half-past."

"And it's five now!"

"Yes, sir; a quarter-past five. It's the strangest thing I ever knew," said he,

going to the window, which commanded a view of the road at several of its windings through the valley. "We have an excellent lake trout for dinner; but by good luck it's to be grilled, not boiled, or it would be ruined utterly."

"Capital things, those red trout," said M'Kinlay, to whom, like most of his craft, and way of life, the pleasures of the table offered great temptations. "Is your cook a good one, Rickards?"

"Only a woman, sir; but by no means bad. Sir Gervais always takes M. Honoré with him on board the yacht; but you'll see, sir, that she knows how to roast, and we have a sweet saddle of Welsh mutton today, if it's not over-done."

"That's what I'm afraid of, Rickards," said the lawyer; and if a sigh ever denoted sorrow, his did as he spoke. "Is the mutton small?"

"Very small, sir. Mountain mutton."

"And of course it will be done to rags! She serves it with currant jelly, I suppose?"

"No, sir, with Guava. Sir Gervais prefers it."

"And what else was there on your bill of fare for to-day?"

"A very simple dinner, sir. Partridges on toast, a salad of white truffles, and a roast hare."

"Quite enough, quite enough. Do you bring your wine down with you?"

"Only the Madeira, sir. Sir Gervais gets some claret over from an Irish house called Sneyd's, which he calls very drinkable."

"So do I, too: very drinkable, indeed; and your Madeira, you say, you bring with you. I say, Rickards, I think a glass of it and a biscuit wouldn't be amiss, if I'm to wait much longer."

"I was just thinking the same, sir; and if you'll step into the dining-room, and take a morsel of game pie, I'll fetch the Madeira out of the sun. It's fine and mellow by this time."

"Is this your woman cook's performance?" said Mr. M'Kinlay, as he helped himself for the second time to the pie."

"Yes, sir; and she'd do better, too, if it wasn't that the ladies don't like so much jelly. Here's a fine old truffle, sir!"

"She's a valuable woman—a very valuable woman. Tell her, Rickards, that I drank her health in a bumper. Yes, up to the brim with it. She shall have all the honors."

"Something sweet, sir? A little cherry tart?"

"Well, a little cherry tart I'll not object to. No, no, Rickards, don't open champagne for me."

"It's in the ice, sir, and quite ready."

"Let it stay there. I'm very simple about both eating and drinking. I'd not have made a bad hermit, if I hadn't been a lawyer."

"No, indeed, sir! I never saw a gentleman so easily pleased. You're not like Mr. Grenfell, sir, that has the bill of fare brought up every morning to his dressing-room; ay, and M. Honoré himself, too, summoned; just as if it was before a magistrate, to explain what's the meaning of this, and why he doesn't do the other."

"Your master permits this?"

"He likes it, sir; he laughs heartily at it."

"And the ladies, do they like it?"

"Oh, Mr. Grenfell only comes over to Beau Park when the ladies is away, sir, up in town or at the sea-side."

"He's no favorite of theirs, then?"

"I don't believe they ever saw him, sir. At all events, he was never down with us when we were all at home."

"I suspect I know why," said M'Kinlay, knowingly.

"Yes, sir," replied Rickards, as knowingly, while he took up a jar of pickled onions from the sideboard, and held it ostentatiously forward.

"You're right, Rickards, you've hit it correctly. One glass more of that admirable wine. What's that great ringing at the gate? Is that your mistress?"

"No, sir. The lodge people have orders never to keep her waiting; they always have a look-out when she's coming. There it is again. If you'll excuse me a moment, sir, I'd better step out and see what it means!"

The permission was graciously accorded, and Mr. M'Kinlay emptied the last of the Madeira into his glass, discussing with himself whether the world had anything really more enjoyable to offer than a simple cottage life, with a good cook, and a capital cellar! Little heed did he give to the absence of Rickards, nor was he in the least aware that the bland butler had been above a quarter of an hour away, when he entered flushed and excited.

"It's the same as a burglary, sir; there's no difference; and it's by good luck you are here to declare the law of it!"

"What is the matter—what has happened, Rickards?"

"They're in the drawing-room, sir; they walked in by the open windows; there was no keeping them out."

"Who are in the drawing-room?"

"The tourists, sir," exclaimed Rickards. "The tourists! The people that would

force their way into Windsor Castle and go through it, if the King was at his dinner there!"

Strong in a high purpose, and bold with the stout courage of that glorious Madeira, Mr. M'Kinlay arose. "This is an unparalleled outrage," cried he; "follow me, Rickards;" and he took his way to the drawing-room. Though the noise and tumult bespoke the presence of several people, there were not above half a dozen in the room. One, however, a pale, sickly-looking young man, with long hair which required everlasting tossing of his head to keep it out of his eyes, sat at the piano, playing the most vigorous chords, while over his shoulder leaned a blue-eyed, fair, ringletted lady, whose years—past the forties—rather damaged the evident determination she evinced to be youthful and volatile.

"Do, Marmy, do dearest, there's a love," said she, with the faintest imaginable lisp, "do compothe something. A Fanthasia, on visiting Dinasslyn. A dhream —"

"Pray be quiet, Celestina!" said he, with a wave of his hand. "You derange me!"

"Have they got a 'catalog' of the gim-cracks?" exclaimed a nasal voice that there was no mistaking. "I ain't posted in brass idols and boxwood saints, but I'd like to have 'em booked and ticketed."

"Are you, aware, gentlemen and ladies," said Mr. M'Kinlay, with a voice meant to awaken the very dullest sense of decorum—"are you aware that you are in the house of a private gentleman, without any permission or sanction on his part?"

"Oh, don't, don't disturb him, sir," broke in the ringletted lady. "You'll never forgive yourself if you spoil it;" and she pointed to the artist, who had now let all his hair fall forward, after the fashion of a Skye terrier, and sat with his head drooped over the piano, and his hands suspended above the keys.

"Say what for the whole bilen," cried the Yankee. "It ain't much of a show; but I'll take it over to New York, and charge only twenty-five cents for the reserved seats!"

"I repeat, sir," exclaimed M'Kinlay, "your presence here, and that of all your companions, is a most unreasonable intrusion—a breach of all propriety—one of those violations of decency, which, however practised, popular, and approved of in a certain country, neither distinguished for the civilization of its inhabitants, nor for their sense of refinement——"



"Is it Ireland you mane, sir—is it Ireland?" said a short, carbuncled-nosed little man, with a pair of fiery red eyes. "Say the word if it is."

"It is not Ireland, sir. I respect the Irish. I esteem them."

"Could you get them to be quiet, Celestina?" said the artist, faintly; "could you persuade the creatures to be still?"

"Hush, hush!" said she, motioning with both her hands.

A tremendous crash now resounded through the room. It was Mr. Herodotus M. Dodge, who, in experimenting with his umbrella on a Sèvres jar, to detect if it were cracked, had smashed it to atoms, covering the whole floor with the fragments.

"Send for the police! Tell the porter to lock the gate and fetch the police!" shouted M'Kinlay. "I trust to show you, sir, that you're not in Fifteenth-street, or Forty-sixth Avenue. I hope to prove to you that you're in a land of law and order."

Overcome by his rage, he followed Rickards out of the room, declaring that he'd make all England ring with the narrative of this outrage.

The legal mind, overbalanced for an instant, suddenly recovered its equanimity, and he began to reflect how far he was justified in a forcible detention. Would "a claim lie" for false imprisonment? Were he to detain them, too, what should be his charge? Was it a trespass? Had they been warned off? "Wait a moment, Rickards," said he; "I must think a minute or two. There's a difficulty here. Where a person, passing in the street, smashes accidentally—it must be accidentally—a pane of plate-glass, of the value of, let us say, five-and-twenty or thirty guineas, the law only holds him responsible for the damage of an ordinary window-pane; so that here it will be quite open to the defence to show that this man imagined he was breaking a common jug, a mere earthenware pipkin. It is, then, to the trespass we must look. Call the lodge-keeper; say I wish to have a word with him."

While Rickards hastened on his errand, Mr. M'Kinlay sat down to ponder carefully over the case. Your men conversant with great causes in equity and weighty trials at bar, are nervously fearful of meddling with the small cases which come before petty tribunals. They really know little about them, and are almost certain to fail in them; and they feel—very naturally—ashamed at the sorry figure they must exhibit in such failures.

"They are all gone, sir—they've made a regular retreat of it—not one left."

"Who—who are gone?"

"Them tourists, sir. They overtook me as I went down the avenue, and made George open the gate; and away they are, the whole of 'em."

"I'm not sorry for it, Rickards. I declare I'm not sorry. It would cost more time and more trouble to follow them up than they're worth; and I am certain, besides, Sir Gervais wouldn't have the affair in the newspapers for ten times the amount of the damage they have done him. What's the noise without—who's coming now?"

"My Lady!" exclaimed Rickards, and hastened out to receive her.

Mr. M'Kinlay could notice that a short dialogue took place between the ladies and the butler before they entered the door, and that they both laughed at something he was telling them. Was the story that amused them of him, or of the invasion? He had not time to consider when they entered.

"How d'ye do, Mr. M'Kinlay?" said Lady Vyner, quietly. "We've kept you very long waiting, I fear. You may serve dinner at once, Rickards. Mr. M'Kinlay will excuse our dining in morning dress, Georgina."

"I should hope so," said her sister, with a very saucy toss of the head.

"Your Ladyship will excuse my not remaining to dinner," said he, with a marked coldness. "I only wanted to see you, and ask if you had any commissions for Sir Gervais."

"No, there's nothing, I fancy. I wrote yesterday—I think it was yesterday."

"Tell him not to meddle with Irish property, and come away from that country as soon as he can," said Georgina.

"Say the garden is looking beautiful since the rain," said Lady Vyner, rising. "Good-bye, and a pleasant journey!"

"Good-bye!" said Georgina, giving him the tips of her fingers.

And Mr. M'Kinlay bowed and took his leave, carrying away, as he went, very different thoughts of cottage life and its enjoyments from those he might have felt had he gone when he had finished the last glass of Madeira.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE SHEEBEN.

JUST as we see on the confines of some vast savage territory one solitary settlement that seems to say, "Here civilization ends, beyond this the tracts of cultivated men are unknown," so there stood on the borders of



a solitary lake in Donegal—Lough Anare—a small thatched house, over whose door an inscription announced “Entertainment for Man and Beast,” the more pretentious letters of the latter seeming to indicate that the accommodation for Beast was far more likely to prove a success than that intended for humanity.

What imaginable spirit of enterprise could have induced Mr. O’Rorke to have established an inn in such a region is not easy to guess. To the north of Lough Anare lay a vast untraveled, almost roadless, district. Great mountains and deep valleys, wild plains of heather, enclosing lakes, with islands, sometimes mere rocks, sometimes covered with an oak scrub—last remnants of primeval forests—succeeded each other apparently without end. A miserable shealing, usually padlocked on the outside, was all that betokened habitation, and a living being was very rarely met with. It is true there was scenery which for grandeur and beauty might have vied with the most vaunted spots on the island. Mountain gorges far finer than Dunluce, lakes more varied in shape, and with margins bolder in outline and richer in color than Killarney, and coast-line with which the boasted Glengarriff could not for a moment compete, all destined to remain as unknown as if they lay thousands of miles away in some Indian sea.

A great proportion of this territory was the property of the University of Dublin—endowment made in the time of Queen Elizabeth, when probably all lands without the pale had about the same value; some of it pertained to a wealthy English noble, who, until the accident of a governmental survey, had never so much as cared to ascertain its limits, and who made the first use of his knowledge by announcing for sale the lands of Mac-na-Morroch, Knochlifty, Kilmacooran, and Derryvaragh; in all, nigh fifty thousand acres of mountain, bog, callow, and lake, whose great capabilities, whether for sheep-farming, fishing, for the quarries of marble, or the immense mineral resources, were vouched for by a roll of scientific names, whose very titular letters enforced conviction. If the pen of an imaginative writer might have been employed in depicting the stores of wealth and fortune that lay here entombed, no fancy could have exaggerated the natural loveliness of the landscape. All that was wild and grotesque in outline, with all that was most glowing in color, were there; and when on the nameless lakes the setting sun added his glory to the golden purple of their reflecting light, the scene became one of such

gorgeous splendor as Art would not have dared to imitate.

The little inn we have just mentioned stood on a rocky eminence which projected from the mountain-side, and could be seen for miles off, more conspicuous, besides, by a large, green flag, with a harp in the centre, which by the patriotism of Mr. O’Rorke flaunted its folds to the wild mountain breezes, as though enjoying in the solitude an immunity which the Saxon might have resented elsewhere. Tim O’Rorke was indeed one who had “suffered for Ireland.” Four several times had he figured in Crown Prosecutions, and both fine and imprisonment had been his portion. On the last occasion, however, either that national enthusiasm was cooling down, or that suspicions of Tim’s honesty were getting abroad, the subscription for his defence was almost a failure. No imposing names headed the list, and the sums inscribed were mean and contemptible. Unable to fee the great bar, to retain which, perhaps, formed the grandest triumph of his life, O’Rorke decided to defend himself, and in the course of his defence launched forth into a severe and insulting castigation of his party, who, after using up his youth and manhood in their cause, left him, when old and broken and dispirited, to the merciless cruelty of his enemies. He read aloud in open court the names of the powerful and wealthy men who at first stood by him, and then, with a shameless insolence, contrasted them with the ignoble friends who remained to him. He recited the proud sums once contributed, and, amidst the laughter of the court, ridiculed the beggarly half-crowns that now represented Irish patriotism. The verdict was against him, and once more he was sent back to Kilmainham, to serve out a two years’ sentence, this time unalleviated by the sympathy of any friends, or the kind wishes of any partisans. His sentence completed, he made two or three efforts to reinstate himself in public esteem; he established an eating-house called “The Rebel’s Home,” he instituted an evening paper entitled the *Pike*, he invented a coat-button marked ’98, but somehow friends and enemies had become wearied of him. It was seen that he was one of those who neither have the power of good nor evil, that he could be of no use to his own, no injury to others, and the world dropped him—dropped him as it does its poor and disreputable relatives, taking no heed of his gaunt looks nor his tattered raiment, and by this tacit indifference showed that the mass of mankind can behave on certain occasions pretty much

as would an individual man. Tim threatened, stormed, and reviled; he vowed vengeance and menaced disclosures; he swore that his revelations would impeach some of the highest in the land, and he intimated that up to a certain day he was yet appeasable. Threats, however, were not more successful than entreaties, and Tim, gathering together a few pounds, under the plea of departure for Australia, quitted the scene he had so long troubled, and was heard of no more.

For years he had continued to exist in some fashion or other—poaching the chief source—in the wild spot we have just described; and it was on the rock in front of his door, with a short pipe in his mouth, that he now lay stretched, on a fine autumn morning, lazily gazing down the valley, where at a great distance off he could detect a small speck upon the road, intimating that rarest of all events, the approach of a jaunting car. He threw his glance upwards to see that his flag disported its folds to the air, and to the sign over his door—"The Vinegar Hill, by T. O'Rorke, Entertainment for Man or Beast"—to be sure that all was in order, and he then smoked quietly on and watched the road.

By a landslip which had occurred several years before, and whose effects had never been remedied, the road was blocked up about a mile from the little inn, and travelers, desirous of its accommodation, were obliged to continue their journey on foot. Whether from the apathy of hope deferred, or calculating on the delay that must thus intervene, Mr. O'Rorke saw two persons descend from the car, and, each taking his carpet-bag, set out to walk, without the slightest movement on his part to provide for their reception; and this, though he was himself cook, waiter, and housemaid—all that the inn possessed of master or attendant.

Mr. O'Rorke's experience of travelers included but two categories, each of them rare enough in their visitations. They either came to shoot grouse or convert the natives. All who were not sportsmen were missionaries. A certain amount of peril attended both pursuits. The people were a wild semi-civilized set, who saw with jealousy a stranger amongst them, and certain hints palpable enough not to be mistaken intimated to the lovers of sport, as well as the distributors of tracts, that their pursuits were dangerous ones; and thus, in time, the numbers decreased year by year, till at last the advent of a traveler was a rare event.

The two who now ascended the rocky path had neither guns nor fishing-tackle—as little had they of missionaries in their as-

pect—and he watched them with a lazy curiosity as they approached.

"Are you Mr. O'Rorke?" cried the first who came forward, who was our acquaintance Sir Gervais Vyner.

"Yes, my name is O'Rorke."

"And the owner of this inn, I take it?" asked Grenfell, somewhat haughtily.

"The same."

"Is this your usual way of receiving strangers, my friend, or is your present manner an especial politeness to ourselves?"

"Can you let us have a dinner, and make up a couple of rooms?" broke in Vyner hastily. "We should like to stop here a few days."

"You can see the rooms, whether they'll do for you or not; such as they are, you can have them, but I can't make them better."

"And for eating what can you give us?"

"Mutton always—fish and game when there's the season for them—and poteen to wash them down."

"That is the illicit spirit, isn't it?" asked Grenfell.

"Just as illicit as anything else a man makes of his own produce for his own use; just as illicit as the bread that is made of his own corn."

"You're a politician, I see," said Grenfell, with a sneering laugh. "I half suspected it when I saw your green flag there."

"If I hadn't been one, and an honest one too, I'd not be here to-day," said he, with an energy greater than he had shown before. "Have you anything to say against that flag?"

"Of course he has not. Neither he nor I ever saw it before," said Vyner.

"Maybe you'll be more familiar with it yet; maybe the time isn't far off when you'll see it waving over the towers of Dublin Castle!"

"I am not aware that there are any towers for it to wave over," said Grenfell, mockingly.

"I'll tell you what there are! There are hills and mountains that our fathers had as their own; there are plains and valleys, that supported a race braver and better than the crafty Saxons that overcame them; there are holy churches, where your faith was taught before we ever heard of Harry the eighth and his ten wives!"

"You are giving him more than the Church did," said Grenfell.

"I don't care whether they were ten or ten thousand. He is your St. Peter, and you can't deny him!"

"I wish I could deny that I don't like



this conversation," said Vyner. "My friend and I never came here to discuss questions of politics or polemics. And now about dinner. Could you let us have it at three o'clock; it is just eleven now?"

"Yes, it will be ready by three," said O'Rorke, gravely.

"The place is clean enough inside," whispered Grenfell, as he came from within, "but miserably poor. The fellow seems to have expended all his spare cash in rebellious pictures and disloyal engravings."

"He is an insupportable bore," muttered Vyner; "but let us avoid discussion with him, and keep him at a distance."

"I like his rabid Irishism, I own," said Grenfell, "and I intend to post myself up, as the Yankees say, in rebellious matters before we leave this."

"Is that Lough Anare, that sheet of water I see yonder?"

"Yes," said O'Rorke.

"There's a ruined tower and the remains of seven churches, I think, on an island there?"

"You'd like to draw it, perhaps?" asked O'Rorke, with a cunning curiosity in his eye.

"For the present, I'd rather have a bathe, if I could find a suitable spot."

"Keep round to the westward there. It is all rock along that side, and deep water close to the edge. You'll find the water cold, if you mind that."

"I like it all the better. Of course, George, you'll not come? You'll lie down on the sward here and doze or dream till I come back."

"Too happy, if I can make sleep do duty for books or newspapers," yawned out Grenfell.

"Do you want a book?" asked O'Rorke.

"Yes, of all things. What can you give me?"

He returned to the house and brought out about a dozen books. There were odd volumes of the press, O'Callaghan's "Celts and Saxons," and the Milesian Magazine, profusely illustrated with wood-cuts of English cruelty in every imaginable shape that human ingenuity could impart to torture.

"That will show you how we were civilized, and why it takes so long to do it," said O'Rorke, pointing to an infamous print, where a celebrated drummer named Hemenstall, a man of gigantic stature, was represented in the act of hanging another over his shoulder, the artist having given to the suffering wretch an expression of such agony as no mere words would convey.

"This fellow is intolerable," muttered Vyner, as he turned away, and descended the rocky path. Grenfell, too, appeared to have had enough of his patriotic host, for he stretched himself out on the green sward, drawing his hat over his eyes, and giving it to be seen that he would not be disturbed.

O'Rorke now retreated to the kitchen to prepare for his guests' entertainment, but he started with astonishment as he entered. "What, Kitty, is this you?" cried he; "when did you come?"

The question was addressed to a little girl of some ten or eleven years old, who, with her long golden hair loose on her shoulders, and her cheeks flushed with exercise, looked even handsomer than when first we saw her in the ruined Abbey at Arran, for it was the same child who had stood forward to claim the amber necklace as her right.

"My grandfather sent me home," said she, calmly, as she threw the long locks back from her forehead, "for he had to stay a day at Murramore, and if he's not here to-morrow morning, I'm to go on by myself."

"And was that all you got by your grand relation, Kitty?" said he, pointing to the necklace that she still wore.

"And isn't it enough?" answered she, proudly; "they said at the funeral that it was worth a king's ransom."

"Then they told you a lie, child, that's all; it wouldn't bring forty shillings—if it would thirty—to-morrow."

"I don't believe you, Tim O'Rorke," said she, boldly; "but it's just like you to make little of what's another's."

"You have the family tongue if you haven't their fortune," said he, with a laugh. "Are you tired, coming so far?"

"Not a bit; I took the short cut by Lisnacare, and came down where the waterfall comes in winter, and it saved more than four miles of the road."

"Ay, but you might have broken your neck."

"My neck was safe enough," said she, saucily.

"Perhaps you could trust your feet if you couldn't your head," said he, mockingly.

"I could trust them both, Tim O'Rorke; and maybe they'd both bring me farther and higher than yours ever did you."

"There it is again; it runs in your blood; and there never was one of your name that hadn't a saucy answer."

"Then don't provoke what you don't like," said she, with a quivering lip, for though quick at reply she was not the less sensitive to rebuke.



"Take a knife and scrape those carrots, and when you've done, wash those radishes well."

The girl obeyed without a word, seeming well pleased to be employed.

"Did she leave any money behind her?" asked he, after a pause.

"No, none."

"And how did he treat you?—was he civil to you all?"

"We never saw him."

"Not see him! how was that? Sure he went to the wake?"

"He did not. He sent us 'lashins' of everything. There was pork and potatoes, and roast hens and ducks, and eggs and tea, and sugar and whisky, and cakes of every kind."

"But why didn't he come in amongst you to say that you were welcome, to wish you a good health, and the time of the year?"

"I don't know."

"And your grandfather bore that?"

She made no answer, but her face became crimson.

"I suppose it was all right; he wanted to show you that it was all over between him and you, and that when she was gone you didn't belong to him any more."

Two heavy tears rolled along the hot and burning cheeks of the child, but she never spoke.

"Your old grandfather's well changed, Kitty, from what I knew him once, or he wouldn't have borne it so quietly. And what did you get for your journey?"

"We got all her clothes—elegant fine clothes—and linen—two big boxes full, and knives and forks, and spoons and plates, that would fill two dressers as big as that. And this," and she lifted the amber beads as she spoke, with a flashing eye—"and this besides."

"He knew you well; he treated you just the way they treat the wild Indians in the Rocky Mountains, where they buy all that they have in the world for an old brass button or a few spangles. In his eyes you were all poor savages, and no more."

"I wish I never set foot in your house, Tim O'Rorke," said she, throwing down the knife, and stamping her bare foot with anger. "'Tis never a good word for man or woman comes out of your mouth, and if it wasn't so far to go I'd set off now."

"You're the making of a nice one," said he, with a sneering laugh.

"I'm the making of what will be far above you one day," said she, and her large blue eyes dilated, and her nostrils expanded with passion.

"Go down to the well and fill that pitcher," said he, calmly. And she took the vessel, and tripped as lightly on the errand as though she had not come seventeen long miles that same morning.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE LEGEND OF LUTTRELL AND THE ———.

DOUBTLESS the fresh free mountain air had its influence, and something, too, lay in the surprise at the goodness of the fare, but Vyner and Grenfell sat at the open door after their dinner in the pleasant frame of mind of those who have dined to their satisfaction, and like to reflect on it.

"I can almost look with complacency on your idea of an Irish property, Vyner, when I think of that mutton," said Grenfell, as he lazily puffed his cigar, while he lay full stretched on the grass. "With what consummate tact, too, the fellow avoided all attempts at fine cookery, and sent us up those trouts plainly fried."

"This is the only thing I cannot relish—this vile, semi-sweet and smoky compound. It is detestable!" And he held the whisky to his nose, and laid it down again. Are we sure that he cannot command something better?"

"Here goes to see," said Grenfell, starting up. "What a crowning pleasure would a glass of sherry—that Amontillado of yours—be in such a spot."

"Fetch me out that map you'll find on my table," said Vyner, as the other moved away, and he lay half dreamily gazing out at the long valley with its mountain barrier in the distance. It was the thought of space, of a splendid territory princely in extent, that captivated his mind with regard to this purchase. All told him that such acquisitions are seldom profitable, and very often perilous; that whatever changes are to be wrought must be carried out with patience and infinite caution, and that the people—the wild natives, who consider the soil as more than half their own—must be conciliated. But was there ever a man—at least an imaginative impulsive man—who did not fancy he was the person to deal with such difficulties? That by his tact and skill, and delicate treatment, the obstacles which had closed the way for others would be removed; that with an instinctive appreciation of the people, of their moods of thought, their passions, and their prejudices, *he* would discover the road to their hearts, and teach them to trust and confide in him?

It was in a sort of fool's paradise of this kind that Vyner lay. He was a prince in his own wild mountain territory, his sway undisputed, his rule absolute. He had spread benefits innumerable around him, and the recipients were happy, and, what is more, were grateful. Some terrible crime—agrarian outrage, as newspaper literature has it—had come before the House, and led to a discussion on the question of Irish landlordism, and he imagined himself rising in his place to declare his own experiences—"very different, indeed, from those of the Right Honorable Gentleman who had just sat down." What a glowing picture of a country he drew; what happiness, what peace, what prosperity. It was Arcadia, with a little more rain and a police force. There was no disturbance, no scarcity, very little sickness, religious differences were unknown, a universal brotherhood bound man to man, and imparted to the success of each all the sentiment of a general triumph. "And where, sir, will you say, is this happy region—in what favored country blessed by nature is this Elysium? and my reply is, in the wild and almost trackless mountains of Donegal, amidst scenery whose desolate grandeur almost appals the beholder; where but a few years back the traveler dared not penetrate above a mile or two from the coast, and where in comparison the bush in Newfoundland or the thicket in New Zealand had been safe. It is my proud privilege to declare, sir, and this I do, not alone before this House, but in face of the country—"

"That you never saw a prettier face than that," said Grenfell, leading forward the little girl by the hand, and placing her before him.

"She is pretty; she is downright beautiful," said Vyner, warmly. "Where did you find this queen of the fairies?"

"At the well yonder, trying to place on her head a pitcher not much smaller than herself. She tells me she is a stranger here, only waiting for her grandfather to come and fetch her away."

"And where to?" asked Vyner.

"To Glenvallah." And she pointed in the direction of the mountains.

"And where have you come from now?"

"From Arran—from the island."

"What took you to the island, child?"

"I was at my aunt's wake. It was there I got this." And she lifted one of the beads of her necklace with a conscious pride.

"Amber and gold; they become you admirably."

The child seemed to feel the praise in her inmost heart. It was an eulogy that took in what she prized most, and she shook back the luxuriant masses of her hair, the better to display the ornaments she wore.

"And it was your aunt left this to you?" asked Grenfell.

"No; but we had everything amongst us. Grandfather took this, and Tom Noonan took that, and Mark Tracey got the other, and this—this was mine."

"Were you sorry for your aunt?" asked Vyner.

"No; I didn't care."

"Not care for your father's or your mother's sister?"

"She was my mother's sister, but we never saw her. She couldn't come to us, and he wouldn't let us come to her."

"He, I suppose, means her husband?"

The child nodded assent.

"And what was the reason of this; was there a family quarrel?"

"No. It was because he was a gentleman."

"Indeed!" broke in Grenfell. "How did you know that?"

"Because he never worked, nor did anything for his living. He could stay all day out on the sea-shore gathering shells, and go home when he pleased to his meals or his bed."

"And that is being a gentleman?"

"I think it is; and I wish I was a lady."

"What was this gentleman's name?"

"John Hamilton Luttrell—Luttrell of Arran we called him."

"John Luttrell! And was your aunt his wife, child?" asked Vyner, eagerly. "And are you the cousin of Harry Luttrell?"

"Yes; but he would not let me say so; he is as proud as his father."

"He need not be ashamed of such a cousin, I think," said Vyner, as he surveyed her; and the child again raised her fingers to her necklace, as though it was there that lay all her claim to admiration.

"Keep her in talk, George, while I make a sketch of her; she is the very brightest thing I ever saw in nature."

"Tell me the names of all these mountains," said Grenfell; "but first of all, your own."

"My name is Kitty; but I like them to call me Katherine—as the priest does."

"It is statelier to be Katherine," said Grenfell, gravely.

And she gave a nod of haughty acknowledgment that almost provoked a smile from him.

"That mountain is Caub na D'haoul,



the Devil's Nightcap; whenever he takes it off, there's a storm at sea; and there's Kilmacreenon, where the Bradleys was killed; and that's Strathmore, where the gold mines is."

"And are there really gold mines there?"

"Ay, if one had leave from the devil to work them; but it was only old Luttrell ever got that, and he paid for it."

"Tell me the story, child; I never heard it."

The girl here seated herself on a knoll directly in front of them, and, with a demure air, and some of that assumed importance she had possibly seen adopted by story-tellers, she began, in a tone and with a fluency that showed she was repeating an oft-told tale:

"There was one of the Luttrells once that was very rich, and a great man every way, but he spent all his money trying to be greater than the King, for whatever the King did, Luttrell would do twice as grand, and for one great feast the King would give, Luttrell would give two, and he came at last to be ruined entirely; and of all his fine houses and lands, nothing was left to him but a little cabin on Strathmore, where his herd used to live. And there he went and lived as poor as a laborin' man; indeed, except that he'd maybe catch a few fish or shoot something, he had nothing but potatoes all the year round. Well, one day, as he was wanderin' about very low and sorrowful, he came to a great cave on the hill-side, with a little well of clear water inside it, and he sat down for the sake of the shelter, and began to think over old times, when he had houses, and horses, and fine clothes and jewels. 'Who'd ever have thought,' says he, 'that it would come to this with me; that I'd be sittin' upon a rock, with nothing to drink but water?' And he took some up in the hollow of his hand and tasted it; but when he finished, he saw there was some fine little grains, like dust, in his hand, and they were bright yellow besides, because they were gold.

"If I had plenty of you, I'd be happy yet," says he, looking at the grains.

"And what's easier in life, Mr. Luttrell?" says a voice; and he starts and turns round, and there, in a cleft of the rock, was sittin' a little dark man, with the brightest eyes that ever was seen, smoking a pipe. 'What's easier in life,' says he, 'Mr. Luttrell?'

"How do you know my name?" says he.

"Why wouldn't I?" says the other. 'Sure is isn't because one is a little down in the world that he wouldn't have the right to his own name? I have had some trou-

bles myself,' says he, 'but I don't forget my name for all that.'

"And what may it be, if it's pleasin' to you?" says Luttrell.

"Maybe I'll tell it to you," says he, 'when we're better acquainted.'

"Maybe I could guess it now," says Luttrell.

"Come over and whisper it, then," says he, 'and I'll tell you if you're right.' And Luttrell did, and the other called out, 'You guessed well; that's just it!'

"Well," says Luttrell, 'there's many a change come over me, but the strangest of all is to think that here I am, sittin' up and talking to the —'. The other held up his hand to warn him not to say it, and went on: 'And I'm no more afeard of him than if he was an old friend.'

"And why would you, Mr. Luttrell?—and why wouldn't you think him an old friend? Can you remember one pleasant day in all your life that I wasn't with you some part of it?"

"Give up that drawing, Vyner, and listen to this," said Grenfell. "I'll make her begin it again for you."

"I am listening. I've heard every word of it," said Vyner. "Go on, dear."

"I know what you mean well enough," said Luttrell. 'I know the sort of bargain you make, but what would be the good of all my riches to me when I'd lose my soule?'

"Isn't it much trouble you take about your soule, Mr. Luttrell?" says he. 'Doesn't it keep you awake at night, thinking how you're to save it? Ain't you always correctin' and chastisin' yourself for the good of your soule, not lettin' yourself drink this or eat that, and warnin' you, besides, about many a thing I won't speak of, eh? Tell me that.'

"There's something in what you say, no doubt of it," says Luttrell; 'but, after all,' says he with a wink, 'I'm not going to give it up as a bad job, for all that.'

"And who asks you?" says the other. 'Do you think that a soule more or less signifies to me? It don't: I've lashins and lavins of them.'

"Maybe you have," said Luttrell.

"Have you any doubt of it, Mr. Luttrell?" says he. 'Will you just mention the name of any one of your friends or family that I can't give you some particulars of?'

"I'd rather you'd not talk that way," says Luttrell; 'it makes me feel unpleasant.'

"I'm sure," says the other, 'nobody ever said I wasn't polite, or that I ever talked of what was not pleasing to the company.'



“ ‘Well,’ says Luttrell, ‘supposin’ that I wanted to be rich, and supposin’ that I wouldn’t agree to anything that would insure my soule, and supposin’ that there was, maybe, something that you’d like me to do, and that wouldn’t hurt me for doin’ it; what would that be?’

“ ‘If you always was as cute about a bargain, Mr. Luttrell,’ says the other, ‘you’d not be the poor man you are to-day.’

“ ‘That’s true, perhaps,’ says he; ‘but you see, the fellows I made them with wasn’t as cute as the —.’

“ ‘Don’t,’ says the other, holding up his hand to stop him; ‘it’s never polite. I told you I didn’t want your soul, for I’m never impatient about anything; all I want is to give you a good lesson—something that your family will be long the better of—and you want it much, for you have, all of you, one great sin.’

“ ‘We’re fond of drink?’ says Luttrell.

“ ‘No,’ says he; ‘I don’t mean that.’

“ ‘It’s the gamblin’?’

“ ‘Nor that.’

“ ‘It’s a liking for the ladies?’ says Luttrell, slyly.

“ ‘I’ve nothing to say against that, for they’re always well disposed to me,’ says he.

“ ‘If it’s eatin’, or spendin’ money, or goin’ in debt, or cursin’, or swearin’, or being fond of fightin’—’

“ ‘It is not,’ says he; ‘them is all natural. It’s your pride,’ says he—‘your upsettin’ family pride, that won’t let you do this, or say that. There’s what’s destroyin’ you.’

“ ‘It’s pretty well out of me now,’ says Luttrell, with a sigh.

“ ‘It is not,’ says the other. ‘If you had a good dinner of beef, and a tumbler of strong punch in you, you’d be as impudent this minute as ever you were.’

“ ‘Maybe you’re right,’ says Luttrell.

“ ‘I know I am, Mr. Luttrell. You’re not the first of your family I was intimate with. You’re an ould stock, and I know ye well.’

“ ‘And how are we to be cured?’ says Luttrell.

“ ‘Easy enough,’ says he. ‘When three generations of ye marry peasants, it will take the pride out of your bones, and you’ll behave like other people.’

“ ‘We couldn’t do it,’ says Luttrell.

“ ‘Try,’ says the other.

“ ‘Impossible.’

“ ‘So you’d say about livin’ on potatoes, and drinkin’ well-water.’

“ ‘That’s true,’ says Luttrell.

“ ‘So you’d say about ragged clothes and no shoes to your feet.’

“ Luttrell nodded.

“ ‘So you’d say about setting in a cave and talking over family matters to—to a stranger,’ says he, with a laugh.

“ ‘I believe there’s something in it,’ said Luttrell; ‘but sure some of us might like to turn bachelors.’

“ ‘Let them, and welcome,’ says he. ‘I don’t want them to do it one after the other. I’m in no hurry. Take a hundred years—take two, if you like, for it.’

“ ‘Done,’ says Luttrell. ‘When a man shows a fair spirit, I’ll always meet him in the same. Give me your hand; it’s a bargain.’

“ ‘I hurt my thumb,’ says he, ‘but take my tail, ’twill do all the same.’ And though Mr. Luttrell didn’t like it, he shook it stoutly, and only let it go when it began to burn his fingers. And from that day he was rich, even till he died; but after his death nobody ever knew where to find the gold, nor ever will, till the devil tells them.”

“ ‘And did his family keep the bargain; did they marry the peasants?’ asked Grenfell.

“ ‘Two of them. One before John Luttrell of Arran; and another must do it, and soon too, for they say the two hundred years is near out now.’

“ ‘And is it said that the remedy succeeded?’ asked Vyner; ‘are the Luttrells cured of their family pride?’

“ ‘They can’t be till the third marriage takes place; indeed, my grandfather says they’ll be worse than ever just before they’re cured! ‘for,’ says he, ‘every one that makes a bargain with the devil thinks he has the best of it.’

“ ‘And that, I suspect, is a mistake, Katherine,’ said Vyner.

She threw down her eyes, and seemed lost in thought, making no reply whatever to his remark.

“ ‘I’d have had no dealings with him at all,’ said Vyner.

“ ‘You are rich, and you don’t need him,’ said she, almost fiercely, as though his words had conveyed a sneer.

“ ‘That’s just it, Kitty,’ said Grenfell; ‘or if he did want him it would be for something different from money.’

She gave a saucy toss of her head, as though to show she agreed with him, and turned to the table where Vyner was at work with his chinks.

“ ‘That’s me,’ said she, gravely.

“ ‘I like your own face better,’ said Vyner.

“ ‘So would the little fellow with the pipe that you were telling us of,’ said Grenfell.

“ ‘Let him say so,’ said she, with a ring-

ing laugh; and she bounded from the spot, and skipping from crag to crag flew down the rock, and hurried down the little path at speed.

"There's a man coming up the road; don't you see him waving his hat?"

"It's an old man," said Vyner, as he looked through his telescope. "I suppose her grandfather."

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE WALK IN THE MOUNTAINS.

WHEN Vyner went to sleep that night, it was to dream of all that the last few days had presented before him. The wild and rocky Arran, with its ruined Abbey and its lonely occupant; the bright-eyed but over thoughtful looking boy, with all the freshness of childhood and all the contemplative temperament of a man; then the iron-bound shore and the semi-savage natives; and last of all the mountain region where he then was, with that fairy figure more deeply impressed than he had drawn her, and whom he now fancied to be tripping lightly before him up the rocky sides of Strathmore.

As he opened his eyes, the view that met them startled him. It was one of those vast stretches of landscape which painters cannot convey. They are too wide, too boundless for picture. The plain which lay outstretched before him, rising and falling like a vast prairie, was unmarked by habitation—not a hovel, not a hut to be seen. Vast groups of rocks stood out here and there abruptly, grotesque and strange in outline, as though giants had been petrified in the act of some great conflict, the stunted trees that crowned the summits serving as feathers on the helmets. A great amphitheatre of mountain girded the plain, save at one spot, the Gap of Glenvallah, through which, as his map told him, his road on that morning lay.

His object was to see with his own eye the so much vaunted scenery of this region, to visit the lonely spot, and talk himself with its wild natives; he doubted, indeed, if both the solemnity and the savagery had not been exaggerated. To acquire the property was, after all, only one of those caprices which rich men can afford themselves. They can buy some rare and costly relic—some curious manuscript, some singular specimen of a contested species, a shell, a stone, a fragment of sculptured marble—to show which once or twice to some critical eye is all its value; why not then possess in

nature what, had it been reduced to art and signed Poussin or Salvator, would have been priceless? It was thus he reasoned: "If this place be but what they have described it, I shall own a landscape that all the galleries of Europe cannot rival. A landscape, too, whose varying effects of sun and shadow, of daybreak and twilight, shall be endless. The greatest of all painters, the sun, shall throw over the scene his own lights, and the storm shall wash the canvas and bring out afresh all the most lovely tints of color."

Grenfell had promised him overnight to be up and stirring by an early hour, but when called he refused to rise; he had his lazy fit on him, he said; he might have called it rather a malady than a paroxysm, for it was chronic. He declared that the view from the rock before the door fully satisfied him; he was no glutton about scenery, a little did for him, and here was a feast. "Besides," said he, "I have been reading those atrocious magazines all night, and I mean to devote my day to some rebel colloquies with my host."

Perhaps after all, Vyner was scarcely sorry to set out alone; Grenfell's companionship was of so essentially worldly a character, his qualities were best exercised when they discussed the men, the things, and the topics of his day: such a man saw in the wild sublimity of a mountain scene little else than its desolation, and Vyner bethought him how often this town-bred gentleman had jarred upon him in moments of peaceful reverie and errant fancy.

O'Rorke served his breakfast in silence; either he was not in communicative mood, or he mistrusted his guest. He answered with brevity the few questions about the road, only adding "that it was a pity the gentleman had not mentioned before where he was going, for there was an old man and his grand-daughter had just set out on that very road."

"The child I saw here yesterday?"

"The same."

"Have they been long gone? Could I overtake them, think you?"

"Easy enough; they've taken some bread and a bottle of milk for their breakfast, and you'll come up with them, if you walk briskly, before they reach the Gap."

He lost no further time, but strapping on a light knapsack, and armed with a stout stick, set out at once.

"If it's a gauger you are, you'd wish yourself back in the place you came from before night," said O'Rorke, as he looked after him. Vyner was a good walker, and trained to the mountains, so that his eye



quickly detected any available short cut, and enabled him at a glance to choose his path. If there was not actual peril in his position—thus alone and companionless in a wild region, where any suspicion may attach to the stranger—there was that amount of adventure that summons a man's courage to its post, and tells him that he must look to his own safety; and who that has felt this sensation, this proud sense of self-dependence, does not know its ecstasy! Who has not tasted the small heroism of being alone on the mountain, on the wild heath at midnight, on the rolling sea with a gathering storm in the distance, and who, having felt, has not gloried in it?

But to the man who leaves behind a home of every comfort, where all that can adorn and embellish existence are to be found, the contrast of present privation with past indulgence has something wonderfully exciting. He pictures the present drawing-room with its cheerful fire, and the happy faces around the hearth; he fancies he hears the merry laugh, the melodious chords of the piano, the swell of some sweet voice, and then he bends his ear to the rugged plash of the breaking sea, or the whistling wind as it sweeps through some Alpine "crevasse." If no sense of such dangers arose to Vyners' mind, yet there was enough to make him feel how different was his present position from anything that his daily life exacted. The chances that we voluntarily confront have a wondrous fascination.

From his map he learned that the estate which he wished to purchase began at the Gap of Inchegora, a solemn gorge visible for many a mile off! It was indeed a grand portal that same Gap, not fully fifty feet in width, and more than nine hundred in height—a mere fissure, in fact, as complete as though made by the stroke of a giant's scimitar. With his eyes directed constantly to this spot, he went onward, and came at length to a little stream, at the margin of which, and under the shelter of a solitary ash, sat the old peasant and his granddaughter at their breakfast.

"I have walked hard to come up with you," said Vyners. "I wanted to have your company to the Gap." The old man touched his hat in acknowledgment of this speech, and then bent down his head, while the child spoke to him in Irish.

"'Tis deaf my grandfather is, sir, and he didn't hear you," said the girl.

"Tell him I would be glad if he'd be my guide as far as Mort-na—"

She laughed merrily at his poor attempt at the name, and said, with a racy intonation,—

"Mortnagheela. 'Tis there we live ourselves."

The old peasant munched his bread and lifted the bottle twice to his lips before he answered the girl's question, and then said,

"Ask him is he a gauger."

"No," said Vyners, laughing; "I have not come here to molest anyone. I want nothing more than to look at your big mountains and grand old cliffs."

"You're a surveyor," said the old man, whose hearing seemed to have not lost one word Vyners uttered.

"Not even that, my good friend—a mere idler, no more."

The peasant said something in Irish to the child, and she laughed heartily at it, looking up the while in Vyners' face, as though it made the jest more poignant.

"Well, will you let me bear you company, Katherine?" asked he.

As the girl repeated the question, the old fellow gave a half-impatient shrug of the shoulders, and uttered a few sentences in Irish with a voluble energy that savored of passion.

"'Tis what he says, sir," said the child; "that he was in trouble oncé before, and found it hard enough to get out of it, and if misfortune was to come to you, that he'd be blamed for it."

"So, then, he'd rather have nothing to do with me," said Vyners, smiling. "What does he mean by trouble?"

The old man looked up in his face, and his eyes took an almost defiant expression as he said,—

"Isn't the assizes trouble?—isn't it trouble to be four months in gaol waiting for them?—isn't it trouble to stand up in the dock, with two sons of your own, and be tried for your life?"

"Yes, that indeed may be called trouble," said Vyners, compassionately, as he sat down on the bank and took out a cigar. "Do you smoke? Will you have one of these?"

The old man looked at the cigar and shook his head; either he did not value, or did not understand it.

"That's the reason I come up here," resumed the peasant. "I'm a Mayo man, and so is all belongin' to me, but after that"—he laid an emphasis on the last word—"the landlord, ould Tom Luttrell, wouldn't renew my lease, and so I come up to this wild place, where, praise be to the Virgin, there's no leases nor landlords either."

"How does that happen? The land surely has an owner?"

"If it has, I never saw him, nor *you* neither. And whoever he is, he knows



better than to come here and ax for his rents." The bitter laugh with which the old fellow finished his speech was scarcely short of an insult—indeed Vyner half winced as he felt that it might have been meant as a menace to himself. "No," continued he, as though following out the flow of his own thoughts; "there's the Gap of Incheogora before us, and through that Gap tithe-proctor, agent, or bailiff never passed, and if they did, they'd never pass back again!"

"And who is supposed to own these lands?" asked Vyner, mildly.

"The College of Dublin has some of them; Lord Landsborough has more; John Luttrell of Arran says that there's part of them his; and, for the matter of that, I might say that the mountain there was mine—and who's to contradict me?—or what better an I after saying it?"

Pouring out a cupful of brandy from his flask, Vyner offered it to him, and this he took with gratitude, his eyes devouring with admiration the little silver goblet that held it.

"Drink Mr. Luttrell's health," said Vyner, pouring out the last of the liquor into the cup; "he was an old friend of mine long ago."

"Here's health to him, and long life too, if it was any use to him," said the man, doggedly.

"There is truth in what you mean; a life such as he leads now can be of little pleasure, or profit either."

"And who brought him to it?" burst in the old man, fiercely, for the spirit had mounted to his brain, maddening and exciting him. "What was it but the old Luttrell pride that ruined every one of them, and will ruin them yet? He married a decent girl, well brought up, and good-looking; she wasn't a lady, but not a lady in the land had a better heart or a finer temper, but he wouldn't own her for all that. No, not a bit of it; there she lived, now with one brother, now with another, nobody darin' to call her Mrs. Luttrell, nor even as much as hint she was married. How we stood it—we never were very patient—I don't know, but we did, and more ill-luck to us for doing so!" There was a long pause before he continued: "At last there came that trouble I was telling you of. When Mr. Crowe was shot, and I was tuk with my two sons, as innocent every one of us as that little girl there, but what did that signify?—the Attorney-General said, 'It's eight-and-twenty years I'm coming this circuit, and I never knew a capital felony to be tried without a Malone

in it! I wonder,' says he, 'will the time ever come when this will cease?' There was eight of us then banished, some in Botany Bay, and some in America, and, by coorse, it was hard for us to make up money for the 'defence'—the more because we spent so much already on lawyers. Howsomever, we did do it. We got a pound here, and ten shillings there, and at last gathered twenty-two fourteen-six. I'll never forget it, twenty-two fourteen-six—in fact, I used to go on saying it over to myself, as I sat in my cell, just as if saying it would make it grow. The attorney, Mr. Roach, who was a good friend of ours, towld me in secret that there was two or three ugly things in the case, and that short of ould Mr. Clancy, the King's Counsel, there warn't a man could get us off; 'and less than thirty guineas,' says he, 'won't bring him down.' All this time none of us would ask Sally Luttrell for a farthin'. We all knew she had nothing of her own, and we wouldn't be beholdin' to Mr. Luttrell. At last, my youngest daughter couldn't bear it any longer; she sets off for the house where Sally was stoppin', and what she said, or how she did it, we never knew, but the next morning there came to Mr. Roach's office a note with the money. It was an order on French's Bank, signed with a letter L. When the trial was come on—it was the third day—the Crown lawyers were pushing hard to make out a charge of conspiracy, and show that half the country was in it, and at last declared that they were ready to prove that an immense sum of money lay in the Bank just to defend all the people that ever broke the law, or did anything wrong, and that in this case they would produce a list of subscribers, each of them down for some trifle, every one of whom had been once at least in that dock with an indictment against him. Sure enough, however he come by it, he had the list. And such a set of witnesses as he brought up never was seen afore. 'Gentlemen of the jury, I only ask you to look at them,' says he; 'just look at them, and you'll know what sort of a tie binds these people to the prisoners in the dock.' Clancy said nothing till it was all over—he wouldn't cross-question one—but he holds a bit of paper in his hand, and says, 'My Lord,' says he, 'it appears to me that to be poor and wear ragged clothes in this country is to be outlawed, and that any man whose condition is not as comfortable as my learned friend's must be declared a rebel to his King and a liar to his Maker. It's very hard,' says he, 'but as it comes from so high an authority as the Attorney-General,

it must be good law, and I'll not dispute it. Fortunately, however, for my unhappy client, his character has not only made friends for him amongst good men and kind men—it is only by his equals in life that his honest nature is known—poor laborers, humble peasants testify by their hard-earned pittance, freely given, to their love for an old neighbor and friend. But what good is it? They are poor, and must be perjured; they are half-famished, and of course they are infamous. But here, my Lord, is a witness well enough to do to be respected; he eats, drinks, and dresses in the way the law requires; he has an estate, and of course a conscience; he keeps an agent, and therefore he has a soul to be saved; his sympathies are written down here at the cost of eleven pounds eight shillings, and—though his modesty is satisfied with a mere letter L—his name is John Hamilton Luttrell.”

As if the strain on his memory to recall the precise words employed, and to bring back the whole scene, had been too much for him, or as though the emotions of the past had surged back to overwhelm him, the old peasant held his hand over his eyes, and sat several minutes without speaking.

“Did Luttrell come on the table, then?” asked Vyner.

“No, sir; he was seen in court a short time before, but when he was called he couldn't be found; nor from that day out was he ever seen in the streets of Castlebar. It was that sent him away to the island. His pride and his shame together.”

“You are less than just to my old friend,” said Vyner, warmly. “To know what he felt, to understand all the difficulties that he saw before him, you should be in *his* place as he was.”

“That's as much as to say that I ought to be a gentleman before I condemned him,” said the old fellow, with a look of intense craftiness. “But the lawyer that defended *me* didn't want to be a laborin' man to explain what *I* felt, or what was passin' in my heart. No, sir, there's things in the world that are just the same to the rich man as to the poor one, just as sickness and sorrow is. Get up, Kitty, we're stayin' too long here; it will be black night before we get home.”

“How many miles do you count it?”

“Twenty-one—long miles, too—the last four of them over shingle, and steep besides.”

“Shall I find an inn—well, shall I find shelter for the night?” said he, correcting himself.

“Shelter I could give you myself, but I'd

rather you'd look for it anywhere else. I told you already why.”

“Well, I'm not afraid of your company, and, if you don't dislike mine, we'll travel together.”

The little girl said something with eagerness in Irish, and then turning to Vyner she took his hand, and said, “Yes, come with us.” And they set out.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE PROJECT.

It was on the evening of the second day after Vyner's departure, that Grenfell, never much given to anxieties about others, felt a certain uneasiness, and sauntered down the glen, wondering what might have detained him. He had not gone fully a mile, when he saw in the grey twilight a man approaching; he hailed, and was answered in his friend's voice, “All right; it is I.”

“I was going to start the hue and cry, or whatever may represent that institution here, after you, Vyner. Where have you been all this time?”

“As to the where, my friend, it would require a very different tongue from yours or mine to say; Russian and Polish names are nothing in comparison. As to the how I have been, is easier to answer—never better; though, with all due gratitude be it said, I have passed my time in rather questionable company.”

“At least they recognized the rights of hospitality?”

“Arabs themselves were never more punctilious. My host was the grandfather of our little friend the fairy queen, a man of nigh eighty, who had been tried on two capital charges, and ought, I suspect, to have been convicted on both. His friends, to the number of twenty odd, were all Whiteboys, Ribbonmen, or whatever other name includes law-breakers of the first magnitude; and one, as handsome and frank-featured a young fellow as ever you saw, who accompanied me to the lake side this evening, had made his escape from Castlebar gaol when under sentence of death, and actually went back to the town to witness the execution of his cousins on the following Saturday, it being, as he said, the only mark of affection he was able to show them.”

“I make you my compliment, as the French say, on your company. And the women, what were they like?”

“I saw but two, an old hag that was



brought down special to give an opinion upon me from external traits, and pronounce whether I had the color of hair or eyes that indicated a tendency to bear witness against my neighbor; the other was a sickly creature, bedridden though in the prime of life, mother of little Katherine."

"But explain how you could have prolonged your stay amongst such people. What were you doing? what were you saying?"

"Doing? The whole day we walked the mountains. They led me by paths known only to themselves, over an immense mountain district, showing me all that was noteworthy, and pointing out effects of scenery and picturesque spots with a feeling and taste that amazed me. They used no cant of art, none of that tricky phraseology, it is true, which we accept as the vernacular of all landscape description; but in their wild imagery and reckless imagination they gave names to the places which showed now deeply objects of terror or beauty had appealed to them. Then at nightfall we gathered close to the turf fire and the potato 'kish,' a wide, open basket, which served as strainer and dish together. There we supped, talked politics, religion, law and a little literature—at least so far as the *Life of Freeny* and the story of *Moll Flanders* enter into biographical letters."

"How I should like to have drawn a cordon of policemen round the party and netted the whole."

"You might liked to have planned the campaign, but I'll be sworn if you had been favored with a look at the company you'd never have led the expedition."

"What a traveller's knack it is to exaggerate the war-paint of one's Indian friends," said Grenfell, superciliously. "But here we are with our supper waiting for us, and even Mr. O'Rorke's noble feast will contrast favorably with your host's."

The meal ended, they seated themselves on the door-sill, looking out into the still and starry night, and resumed the theme they were discussing.

"I take it that you said you were a mere tourist rambling for pleasure?" asked Grenfell.

"No, I told them I had come down to see the country with some intentions to make a purchase. It was not so easy to explain that I was more eager to acquire a very beautiful and picturesque tract than a remunerative one, but they believed me at last—that is, they gave credit to my sincerity at the cost of my shrewdness." Grenfell nodded, as though he agreed with them, and Vyner went on: "We were a full house

when I made my declaration—there were, I should say, six or seven-and-twenty present—and they concurred in applauding the frankness with which I spoke to them. A very old man, a venerable figure, whose high forehead and white beard would have impressed me, perhaps, more reverentially if I had not been told that he had been flogged by John Beresford, in the year '98, for some cruel outrage he had committed—this apart—he, however, complimented me highly on my straightforwardness, and said that if others would do like me there would be fewer disturbances about land; and the illustration he used was this: "If you go into a fair to buy a horse, and you see a splendid animal, strong-boned, well-ribbed, and powerful, with every promise of speed and strength; you are as well satisfied with his price as with his perfections, but do your inquiries stop there?—not a bit of it. You know well that he may be a capital hunter and a noble roadster, but you want to learn what his temper is. All his fine qualities depend upon this, for if he be unruly and unmanageable, to what purpose is his power or his activity? It is precisely the same with a property; you may have wood and water, arable land and lay, mines and meadows, and, with all these there may be a "temper" that renders them worthless. Landlords won't believe this; buyers won't listen to it. They say, "Make out my title clear and clean, and leave me to deal with it." Men with money in the bank, and who, because they can live anywhere, are chained to nowhere, cannot understand the love of a poor laboring man to some mud-hovel or some shealing, to a brook where he has paddled in boyhood, to the mountain that he has seen from his earliest infancy. They do not, cannot, perceive why poverty should sharpen any susceptibilities—poverty, that can blunt so many—and they say "Turn him out. I'll find a place for him elsewhere." But that's a mistake; you might as well say you'd replace the child he has followed to the churchyard. The man, in the very proportion of his destitution, has bound up his heart with some half-dozen little objects that have, from time and long usage, grown to be part of him. The monotony that wearies the rich man is the luxury of the poor. To live where their fathers lived, to see an unchanged world around them, to have few contrasts of the present with the past is their paradise —"

"Where did you get all this?" broke in Grenfell. "From your friend of the cat-o'-nine-tails?"

"Exactly. The words of wisdom were



all his own, and, unlike the fate of most wisdom, it was listened to. He showed me, in fact, that though the Law might give possession, it would not ensure me one of the rights of property; I might own but not enjoy; I might have and hold, but neither sow nor reap; I might walk over, and shoot over, but with no privilege to keep any other from doing the same, and that before I thought of preserving the game, I should take some measures about preserving myself. The man who enunciated these principles—for they were principles—declared them calmly and dispassionately, not as sentiments that conveyed anger or passion; far from it—he felt all the dignity of a sage instructing ignorance. He was a great Saquem, delivering the laws of his tribe, and showing what had been their guides and directors for centuries. I did, indeed, once, only once, venture upon a mild remonstrance, that there were some things which a landlord possessed for the betterment of those under him; that he might assist them in many ways, and be the means of their advancement and prosperity; but he demurred to this, and so did his followers. Their experience, they said, did not confirm this; as a class they had found landlords narrow-minded and selfish, very ignorant of the people, and very indifferent to them. They opined that, as an institution, landlordism had not succeeded, and half hinted that it was a Saxon innovation that was brought over in days of violence and oppression, and did not suit the conditions of the country at present."

"And you listened to these rascals coolly propounding such doctrines?"

"Yes; and so would you have done too, had you have been in my place, my dear George! A minority is never very truculent when the majority could pitch it over a cliff without the slightest risk of being called to account for it."

"It would have pushed my patience hard, though."

"It would have been your prudence, and not your patience, that you'd have consulted."

"Well, I'll not quarrel with the rogues if they have disabused you as to the pleasures of Irish proprietorship; they've done you a good service, but I must say, I think their case a more hopeless one, now that I see lawlessness is a system."

"I don't think you would if you talked with them! They were too argumentative not to be open to conviction; too logical, with all their prejudices, not to be approachable by their reason. I was, all the time we were talking, so impressed with this, that I could

not help imagining what a race so quick-sighted and intelligent might become when educated and instructed. Take my word for it, George, Hodge will have no chance against Paddy if he ever get book-learning."

A mocking laugh was Grenfell's answer.

"So satisfied am I of the truth of what I say, that I'm going to give a proof of it."

"What, going to set up a school in the wilds of Donegal!"

"No. I'm going to carry away that pretty child, and educate her with Ada."

"You'll not do anything so foolish, I trust!"

"It is all settled, the conditions arranged, the terms agreed to. I have given her grandfather ten pounds for her outfit, some few things she needed, and as much more to pay their journey over to Wales, for the old fellow, with a caution that was creditable, wished to see the ladies to whom his child was to be confided, and confer a little with them besides."

"All your scheme for the property was absolute wisdom compared with this!"

"How so?"

"Where everything is so absurd one cannot decide what to ridicule. Suppose you succeed—and it is what I by no means grant—what will you do with her? You'll give her the tastes, the accomplishments, and the habits of a lady—to marry her to your gamekeeper or your gardener. You'll turn her brain with ten years of luxury—to make the whole of her after life a dreary servitude. You'll excite ambition, whose very least evil will be bitter disappointment; and for what? To gratify a caprice, to paint the moral of a vapid theory about Irish intelligence. No, no, Vyner, don't make such a blunder as this, and a serious blunder, too; for, amongst other pleasant contingencies, Paddy MacHackaway is sure to call you to account some fine day; why you dared to do this, or omitted to do that; and with all your respect for his reasoning qualities, he sometimes expresses his sentiments with a bludgeon."

"The thing is done, George, if you were to rail at it for a week. It is done, and cannot be undone, even if I wished it."

"But why not? What is easier than to send for this old rascal who has so overblarneyed you, and compromise the matter? A couple more of those crisp ten-pounders that I must say you displayed before these creatures with an unpardonable rashness—"

"Be it so," broke in Vyner. "But let me tell you that they saw my pocket-book full of them; they saw on the window-seat,

where by chance I had left it, a purse heavy with gold, and yet these poor fellows were proof against the temptations ; and it was the gaol-breaker himself who carried my knapsack on my way back, which contained, as he knew, both purse and pocket-book ; so that against their honesty I'll not listen to a word."

"Let them have all the virtues under the sun if you will ; call them all Arcadians. All I ask is that we should have no dealings with them. Send off O'Rorke ; let him bring this old fellow before me, and I'll answer for it that I settle the question at once."

"No, no ; my word is pledged, and I'll not break it."

"I don't ask you to break it. What I propose is, that you should be released from a very ill-judged contract, certain to turn out ill to all it includes. Let me at least try if what I suggest is not practicable."

"If the negotiation were to be carried on with men of your own rank and condition, Grenfell, there is not any one to whom I would with more confidence confide it ; but forgive me if I say that you're not the man to deal with these people."

"Why not ?"

"For a number of reasons. First of all, you are strongly prejudiced against them ; you are disposed to regard them as something little better than savages——"

"Pardon me, there you are wrong—as not one whit better."

"That's enough, then ; you shall be no envoy to them from me."

"Well, I'll knock under ; I'll agree to your high estimate of them, intellectually and morally, only with that detractive element of poverty which makes even clever men submissive, and occasionally squeezes conscience into a compromise. You tell me they are very amenable to reason ; let me see if I agree with you. You assure me that with all their seeming impulsiveness and headlong rashness they are eminently calculating and forecasting. I want to see this. Beshink you what a grand witness I shall be to the truth of your theory when I am converted. Come, consent to send for seeing him, so that I may have a quarter of an hour's talk with him."

"To what end ? You could scarcely address to him the arguments you have just used to me——"

"Leave that to my discretion. I suspect, Vyner—mind, it is mere suspicion—but I suspect that your Celtic friend will be far more practical and business-like in his dealings with me than with you, that his

shrewdness will show him that I am a common-place man of the world, not caring, nor indeed believing, in any great regeneration for Ireland, and that all our intercourse must take the shape of a bargain."

"I consent," said Vyner ; "but, I own, less from choice than necessity, for time presses, and I find by a note I have just received that M'Kinlay, my man of business, has arrived at Westport, and whatever we decide on must be done at once."

"If I'm not very much mistaken, Vyner, my negotiation will not take ten minutes, and perhaps as many pounds, so that you may order whatever it be that is to carry us hence, and I'll guarantee to be ready."

While Vyner hastened to give the necessary orders, Grenfell opened his writing-desk, from which he took some bank-notes and gold, and thrust them together in his pocket.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### A DISCUSSION.

"WHEN that old man comes," said Grenfell—"Malone, I think is the name—let him come in here. I want to speak to him."

"He's outside now, before the door," said O'Rorke, whose prying looks showed how eager he felt to know what might be the subject of their conversation.

"Does he hold any land in this neighbourhood ?"

"He's like the rest," replied the other, half sullenly ; "he lives where he can, and how he can."

"What you would call a squatter ?" said the Englishman, who smiled at his own sharpness in employing the word.

"What I wouldn't call any such thing," replied O'Rorke, firmly ; "no more than I'd say it was squatting to sit down on my own hearthstone."

"Which, perhaps, wouldn't be your own, my good friend, if you were merely a tenant, and not a solvent one."

"You may talk that way up in Leinster, or some of the counties that border on Leinster ; but I tell you that you know mighty little of Ireland if you think that what your newspapers call the 'GREAT name of ENGLAND' terrifies any one down here. Just try it. It's about fifty miles from this to the Land's End, and I'll give you all that distance to find ten, no, but five men, that you'll frighten by the threat of British law or British vengeance—which is about the same thing."



"I'm sorry to hear it; that is to say, I should be sorry it was true."

"Well, if you mean to deny, why don't you prove it? What's easier than to tell the carman we're not going to Westport, we're going up through Donegal to count the people that's in love with the British rule in Ireland! You shake your head. I don't wonder, indeed; no shame to you, that you wouldn't like the journey. But I'll tell you what you can do instead of it," said he, with a firm and steady voice.

"What's that?"

"Leave sixpence here, in my hands, and it will treat every well-wisher of England from this to the Giant's Causeway. Isn't that a fine investment for you?"

Grenfell's face flushed, his brow darkened, and he turned to hurl a stern reproof to this insolence; but he saw in the elated look of the other all the delight of one who was gradually drawing an adversary into the lists, and to a combat in which practice had given him a certain dexterity.

Determined, at all events, to foil this design, the Englishman affected indifference, looked at his watch, turned over some papers that lay on the table, and then carelessly said, "Send in Malone here."

With the dogged air of one disappointed and baffled in his designs, O'Rorke left the room, and soon after the old man entered, stroking down his white hair as he came forward, and making his reverences with a strange mixture of servility and defiance.

"Your name is Malone?" said Grenfell.

"Peter Malone, sir."

"Come nearer, Malone. I have heard a good deal about you from my friend, whom you treated so hospitably up in the mountains, and he has also spoken to me of a sort of plan—I won't call it a very wise one—that he struck out the other night, and which, it appears, you agreed to, about your granddaughter." He paused, hoping that the peasant would speak, but the old man simply bent his two dark and piercing eyes on him and nodded. Grenfell went on: "I have pointed out to him some, though very far from all, of the inconveniences of the scheme, and I have asked his leave to point them out to you, and from what he has told me of your good sense and clear-headedness, I suspect I shall not have undertaken my task in vain."

"Does he mean that he wants to go back of it?" asked Malone, with a calm and resolute look.

"Listen to me patiently, and you shall hear all." It is not necessary I should weary my reader with a sermon where the text conveys so much. The chief burden

of Grenfell's argument was what he had addressed to Vyner; and upon this he expanded freely, laying much stress on the misfortune that must accrue to any young girl raised to a temporary elevation, from which she must come down to meet a life of perhaps privation and hardship. He pictured an existence of luxury on the one hand, and of poverty on the other, and asked what right had any one to expose another to such extremes—what preparation could ease and indulgence be to a life of toil and suffering? "How were the acquirements of the one to be made applicable to the other?—how," he asked, "is the young lady—for she will have become a young lady—to change at once to the condition of the ill-fed, ill-dressed, hard-worked country girl?"

Had the orator only glanced as he spoke at the features of the listener, he would have seen what a lamentable blunder his rhetoric had made. At the mention of the words "young lady," the whole expression of the old man's face altered; his half-sullen obduracy, his rugged sternness disappeared, his eyes lighted up, his lips parted, his nostrils dilated, and his whole face beamed with joy that was positively triumphant. "Go on, sir!—go on!" he cried, as though he yearned for a perfect picture of what imagination had but sketched an outline.

"You cannot mean, my good man," said Grenfell, hastily, "that you would think it any benefit to be placed where you couldn't remain?—to stand at a height where you couldn't balance yourself? It is not enough that people can dress well, and talk well, and look well; they must have, besides, the means to do all these, day after day, without an effort, without as much as a care or a thought about them. Do you understand me?"

"Sure, people wasn't born ladies and gentlemen from the beginnin' of the world?"

"No; great families took their rise in great actions. Some by courage, some by cleverness, some by skill, and some by great industry."

"Just so!" broke in the old man. "There was always some one to begin it, and likely enough too in a mighty small way. Dare I ax your honor a question?"

"Ask freely, my good fellow."

"Though I suppose your honor will have to go back very far, can you tell me what was the first of your own great family?"

From the purpose-like energy of the old peasant's manner, and the steady and penetrating look of his bright eyes, Grenfell felt certain that the man had been prompted to



put this insult upon him, and in a voice broken by passion, he said,—

“You'll gain very little by insolence, old man! With my family you have nothing to do; they were in no wise connected with yours.”

“Be gorra! I knew it,” cried the peasant, slapping his thigh with his hand. “I'd have taken my oath of it. I was as sure of it as I was of my skin that you were not a born gentleman. You may be as rich as you please, and have houses, and lands, and cows, and horses, but there's not a drop of the real blood in your body! I said it the first minute I looked at you, and I say it again.”

Pale and quivering with anger, Grenfell could not utter a word. The savage violence of the peasant came on him so much by surprise that he was actually overwhelmed by it; and though he darted on the old fellow a look of fury, he turned away without speaking, and entered the house.

Vyner had just received tidings that Mr. M'Kinlay had arrived at Westport to await his instructions, and he was writing a hurried line to despatch by the messenger to say that he would return there on the morrow, when Grenfell entered, and threw himself into a chair.

“I have met with ruffianism in most shapes, Vyner,” cried he, “but so insolent a scoundrel as that yonder never came across me before.”

“Insolent! Is it possible? What pretext could he have for insolence?”

“I know well, with your infatuation for these people, what a hopeless task it would be to persuade you that they were not miracles of good manners, as well of loyalty and good conduct. I am quite prepared to hear that I mistook, or misunderstood—that, in short, what I fancied was insult was Irish *naïveté*.”

“But tell me what passed between you: what he said?”

“I will not.”

“Will you not let me judge of what you accuse him?”

“I will not; nay, more, I make it a charge upon you, as you desire our friendship to continue, that not only you never interrogate me on this matter, but that you neither question nor permit that man to be questioned upon it. Such a fellow should have as small a place in one's memory as in one's esteem, and I'd rather forget him.”

“Tell me, at least, what have you done in the negotiation?”

“Nothing. He opines that you have given him a pledge, to which as a gentle-

man you are bound, and as he sees neither peril nor inconvenience to result from converting a peasant child into a mock young lady, I suppose you have no choice, but must carry out your fine project with all the success it deserves.”

“I wish you would let me know what passed between you. If there was any intentional offence I'd certainly not overlook it.”

“I'll tell you nothing.”

“Shall he ask your pardon?”

“He may; but he shall never have it.”

“You are provoking, George, I must say. You are not just to either of us; for certainly if I were convinced that you were aggrieved to the extent you suppose——”

“I tell you once again, and for the last time, I will not discuss it; and as you have promised me not to open the matter with this fellow, it may be forgotten at once.”

“You really wish it?”

“I insist upon it.”

“That is sufficient. Vyner took out his pocket-book, and walked to the door. “Malone,” cried he; and the old man came forward bareheaded and respectful, without a shade of passion on his face. “Malone, I am not so fully assured as I felt last night when I first proposed it, that my plan for your grandchild would be a wise one; at least, reflection has shown me some difficulties about it——”

“Just tell me, sir, do you want to draw back?” said the old man, resolutely, but respectfully.

“It would be better that you heard me out,” said Vyner, severely. “I am willing to do all that I offered——”

“That will do, sir. I never doubted the word of a real gentleman.”

“I was going to say that if, instead of taking your child from you, you preferred that I should settle a certain sum of money on her, to be her marriage portion——”

“No, sir; no, sir. What you offered or nothing. Make her a lady, as you said you would, or leave her where she is.”

“I think, my good man, you suffer your hot blood to get the better of your judgment occasionally, and it would be as well if you would give yourself some more time for reflection.”

“My blood is just as God gave it to me, neither hotter nor colder; and what I say now, I'd say to-morrow. Keep your word, or break it, whichever you please!”

“I can very well understand how my friend——” Vyner stopped himself in time, and, after a second's pause, proceeded: “You hold me, then, to my bargain?”

"How can I hould you? You may hould yourself, but *I* can't hould you!"

Vyner's cheek flushed, partly with anger, partly with shame, and he said: "With this you will buy what clothes your grand-child will require at present. Do not spend more of it than you like, for these things shall be looked to by others; and this will pay the cost of your journey. I have written down the way you are to go, and also the name and place of my house. My present intention is to be at home within a fortnight; but if you arrive before that, you will be equally welcome."

"Very well, sir," said the old man, as he deposited the bank-notes in a leather purse. "I may go now."

"Yes, you may go. Remember, however, Maloué, that if between this and next Thursday week, you are inclined to think that my last offer is a better one——"

"No fear of that, your honor!" broke in the old man with a laugh. "I'm a poor man and an ignorant man, but I know what's best for the stock I came from. It isn't money we want. It's the place where we can make money, and more than money;" and with a jerk of his frieze coat over his shoulder, the old fellow strode away down the valley.

## CHAPTER XV.

### MR. M'KINLAY'S MISSION.

WHEN Mr. M'Kinlay set out from the cottage in Wales, it was in no especial good humor towards Miss Courtenay. She had what is vulgarly called "snubbed him," and this is a process uncommonly painful to a well-to-do middle-aged gentleman, accustomed to a great deal of daily respect, and not a little looked up to in his peculiar sphere.

All night long, as he travelled, he pondered over these things, his irritation growing ever deeper. He recalled every word she had said, and in his anger even imitated to himself the careless impertinence of her tone as she said, "And are *you* going yachting?" just as if such a thought was too absurd to be entertained. "And why not, I'd like to know? Is there anything in my status or position that would make a pleasure excursion ridiculous in a man like me? I could afford it. I hope she doesn't imply I'm too old for it. Age is an ugly subject; she'd better not cross-examine her witnesses there. And my red tapery! What a blessing it was there were creatures to docket, and tie up, and register, and

save superior souls the trouble of remembering anything! And then her last impertinence, when, after a sneer at Irish property, she said she wished I had one! I'm much mistaken, madam," cried he, half aloud, "if a little of that same secluded savagery that Ireland affords wouldn't do you a world of good—if a couple of years of country life, with a bog landscape and a rainy sky, wouldn't prove an admirable alternative to you! No fine acquaintances, none of those pleasant idlers, who like to run down for a week to the country, and bring all the gossip of town along with them, will follow you to Ireland. No fealty, no affection will cross the Channel, and traverse that dreary waste of morass, dotted with mud-hovels, they call in irony the Green Isle. If anything could bring you to your senses, madam, it would be a residence here."

Such were Mr. M'Kinlay's thoughts as the mail lumbered heavily along through the deeply-rutted roads, and the rain swooped down in torrents. "I should like to see her yonder," muttered he, as they passed a dreary two-storied house that stood alone on the bleak moor they call the Curragh. "That's the reformatory I should like to try you with!"

With such benevolent intentions as these did he arrive at Carrick's Royal Hotel, in Westport, just as Vyner and Grenfell had reached the same spot.

"You've had an uncomfortable journey of it, I fear, Mr. M'Kinlay," said Vyner, as he shook him cordially by the hand. "Nothing but wind and rain for the last three days. Come into my room here, I want to speak to you before you meet any one. I don't think you know Grenfell," said he, when they were alone, "and I should like to prepare you a little for a man who, with unquestionable abilities, has a number of oddities about him, and has a most intense pleasure in contradiction. This has been especially called out by a project of mine, which, perhaps, you will not fully approve, but, at all events, will accept as a pardonable caprice."

With this prelude he related his plan about the little girl whom he destined to make a companion for Ada. He told how he had been struck by her wonderful beauty, but far more by the signs of remarkable intelligence she displayed, and the traits of decision and firmness so rare in a creature of her age. He urged the advantage it would be to Ada, whose fault was an excess of timidity to see one her own age so bold and fearless. "That intrepid spirit, trained to independence, will certainly impart



some of its nature to my timid and gentle girl." said he, "and the companionship will as certainly dispel the tendency to depression which is the besetting sin of my dear child."

"Do you mean to adopt her?" asked the lawyer.

"No, not adopt her. I mean to educate her, and bring her up with Ada, portion her when she is married, or make some provision for her if she lives single."

"That is to say, you want some eight or ten years of her life, and are not overburdened with anxiety as to what becomes of her after."

"Grenfell himself couldn't have judged me more unfairly, M'Kinlay. I want to deal honourably and liberally by her, and I want you to counsel me how to do so."

"Make a settlement on her, fix upon a sum, appoint trustees, and arrange that on her coming to a certain age she shall be declared in the enjoyment of it."

"I am quite willing; nay, more, I'll leave the entire matter in your hands. You shall decide on the amount—yes, I insist upon it—and shall make all the other arrangements. I don't think there will be much more to detain us here, for I am not so eager about this property as I was some weeks ago."

"Have you been over it?"

"Yes, and am delighted with its picturesque beauty. It is infinitely finer than I expected, and if I believed they'd let me live there for a few weeks every year, I would even build a house, and furnish it."

"And who doubts it?"

"I do; and so would you, M'Kinlay, if you talked the matter over, as I did, with a committee of the whole House. We discussed the thing very coolly and impartially; we entered upon the question of landlordism in all its bearings, what it contained of good, and where it degenerated into evil; and although they failed to convince me that capital, skill, and intelligence, backed by an honest desire to do good, were only unwarrantable interferences with people who wanted none of them, they assuredly made me believe that the pleasure of possession would be dear at the price of being shot at, and that the great probability of being thrown over a precipice rather detracted from one's enjoyment of wild scenery."

"The fellows who talk like this are not the stuff murderers are made of, Sir Gervais. They like to frighten away purchasers, just as people get up ghost stories to deter persons from taking a house. If you like the property——"

"I repeat I am charmed with it."

"In that case, don't lose it. Ireland cannot remain for ever out of the law. One day or other she must come into civilization, and these acres, that are bought for less money than so much land in South Africa or New Zealand, will be as profitable as an estate in the West Riding."

Vyner smiled and shook his head. "Have you not been hearing this story for more than a century back?"

"Let us hear it for a century still, and the investment will pay cent. per cent. But come, I will tell you of a plan to test this problem fairly. Make the estate the fortune you intend for this young girl, with a power of redemption on your part by payment of a certain sum—let us say half as much more as you are now to pay for it. By the time that she will have grown up to womanhood you will have had the opportunity of deciding whether you desire to become an Irish proprietor or not. At all events, she will have either a good round sum in hand, or an estate which certainly will be no perilous heritage to her, though it might be a dangerous possession to you. This, I think, meets every difficulty."

"Grenfell would tell us that instead of overcoming one obstacle it raises two," said Vyner, laughing.

"But why consult him on the matter?"

"Because I shall want him. I should like to make him a trustee; he's a hard-headed man of the world, and well adapted for the office."

"And whom will you name for the other? Has the girl any relative or connection of a class sufficiently elevated for the duty?"

"I suspect not; they are all peasants, and of the very poorest kind. I doubt greatly if there be one amongst the number who could read and write. Stay!" cried he, suddenly. "An idea just occurs to me, and if the notion be at all practicable, it solves every difficulty at once. The child's aunt, a peasant like the others, was married to a gentleman, an old friend and college companion of my own. Unfortunate in many ways, and, of course, lost to the world of society by this unequal match, he retired to a lonely island on the coast, where he has lived for some years in a condition and with habits scarcely above the half-savage creatures about him. He was and is still a man of considerable ability, although soured and disgusted with a world wherein he met nothing but failure. I met him last week by mere accident, having landed on the lonely rock he inhabits. I will not say he was at all pleased with the recognition, but, in short, we renewed acquaintance, and parted a little more like



friends than we met. If he could be induced to accept this trust, it would accomplish all that I wish."

"Has his wife any influence over him?"

"She is dead. She died a few days since."

"Does he care for and interest himself about those who belong to her?"

"I have no means of knowing; but I suspect not."

"Then probably it would be better that you made this proposition to him without any intimation that you knew of the relationship between him and this girl; asking him to assist you in carrying out a whim—a mere caprice?"

"I have been thinking over that. I believe you are right. He might not feel indisposed to serve these people, though he might shrink from declaring them his near connections. At the same time, I feel he may refuse us on other grounds. He rejects whatever in the remotest way would lead him back into the world he has quitted. His is a passive sort of misanthropy,—I believe, the least curable kind."

"It would be a pity not to secure him; he is the very man, with his local knowledge and thorough acquaintance with the people, to give your experiment the fairest chance of success."

"Well, here goes for the attempt. Let us first have our dinner, M'Kinlay, and then I'll write your credentials. You shall go over to Arran, and use your best powers of persuasion. I'll tell you by-and-by all that you ought to know beforehand of your adversary, for adversary you'll find him, whatever subject you broach; but I shall call it a great victory if you succeed."

"Where is Arran?" asked the lawyer, in some trepidation, for he only half liked his mission.

"Here it is," said Vyner, spreading a map over the table, and pointing to some three or four insignificant dots off the coast of Donegal. "It is the most northern of these—that one."

"And how is it to be come at?"

"We must learn all that from the people at the inn here. A fishing lugger I take it—"

"I declare, frankly, I have no fancy for the expedition; nor is there, indeed, any reason for it. A letter will be amply sufficient to explain your object."

"Yes, but not to urge and persuade him—not to meet the doubts and the difficulties he will suggest—not to re-assure him about this, and convince him about that. He's a clever fellow, M'Kinlay, and one who will require to examine every phase of a subject before he'll accept it."

"Good heavens! what a place to go to," cried the other, as his eyes were still intently bent upon the little spot on the map.

"The place is most interesting; some remarkable scenery and a very curious ruin of an ancient abbey."

"Not in my way—not at all in my way, Sir Gervais. I'd rather see a snug chop-house than the purest specimen of pointed Gothic."

"Well, it will be an event in your life at any rate—an incident to recall hereafter; and more than all it will be a service to myself personally, which I shall not easily forget."

"If you make a point of it, I'll certainly go. I have told you that the adventurous spirit is not my strongest characteristic. Out-of-the-way places or buildings, or out-of-the-way people, have no interest for me. They are like a language I don't know; they may be eloquent and charming to others, to me they make no appeal; but I'll go, as you wish it, and I'll do my best."

"And you'll succeed, too, I know it. Luttrell and you will understand each other at once. He'll be pleased with your purpose-like, straightforward manner, while he'd reject flatly any attempt to influence or cajole him. He'll possibly oppose his habitual indolence and his life of isolation to all plans for exertion or activity, but you'll satisfy him that we have no intention to burden him unnecessarily, and that, in all likelihood, he'll not be called upon for more than a single act of an executive nature."

"What are these luggers like? Are they considered safe?"

"The best sea-boats in the world."

"And the sailors?"

"None better in the kingdom. In fact on a coast like this—" He stopped suddenly, just remembering in time, that by any picturesque description of an iron-bound shore or an Atlantic swell, he might effectually deter M'Kinlay from all thought of the expedition. "Say nothing of what we have been talking over, at dinner," said he; "and I rejoice to say, here comes the waiter to announce it."

M'Kinlay sighed; he could have eaten with a capital appetite half an hour ago. It was all gone now. He'd have liked a stiff glass of brandy and seltzer-water, nothing more.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE OLD LEAVEN.

THE little intercourse which Luttrell maintained with the world was with his

agent, a gentleman who had long acted in that capacity for his family when such an office was profitable, and when portentous tin boxes on office shelves, with the name of Hamilton Luttrell on them, told of title-deeds and estates.

To this gentleman Luttrell had applied to assist him to sell a quantity of antiquarian objects, the collecting of which had been the pursuit of many a solitary day, and in cataloguing which he had passed many a long night. At first, this taste had been adopted as a pastime—a something to impart an interest to a dreary and purposeless life; but when three deficient harvests had so far lessened his income that he was driven to obtain a small loan to live, he resolved to sell his collection, and applied to his agent to aid him, making one only condition—that the bargain should not be effected in Ireland, where his name was still well known, but with some English dealer, who might never have heard of the Luttrells.

Though the carefully drawn catalogue which Luttrell forwarded comprised a variety of rare and curious objects all bearing upon and illustrating ancient history, they were, with a very few exceptions, of little intrinsic value. There were weapons of stone, spear-heads and javelin points, massive clubs embossed with sharpened pebbles, bronze ornaments and clasps, strangely-shapen casques and shields, and swords of forms that bespoke an antiquity long antecedent to the Roman wars, with amulets of amber and silver. Some rings and a sword-hilt alone were gold; this latter carved with marvellous beauty of design and great artistic excellence.

At last, after many months of utter silence on the matter, he received the following letter:—

“Kildare Street, Dublin.

“DEAR MR. LUTTRELL, — I am very sorry at the failure of all my attempts to dispose of your collection. Vangheest, however, in sending me back, as you wished, the catalogue yesterday, spoke of an American gentleman who appeared disposed to treat with you. As he is a perfect stranger to both of us, and the native of a distant country, I saw no reason for refusing him the permission he asked, to view the collection, and, if allowed, confer with you personally.

“I have accordingly given him a few lines of introduction, and he will present himself to you as Mr. or Captain Herodotus M. Dodge, U. S. I do not opine you will find him the possessor of much antiquarian lore; but he is an outspoken, stright-

forward man, with whom a business matter can be readily transacted.

“I know how reluctant you are to be intruded upon, but I am aware—better, perhaps, than yourself—that you want money at this moment, and I trust you will pardon me for having transgressed your orders respecting visitors, and made this case an exception to your rule. If, however, you persist in your determination not to receive a stranger, a line addressed to Mr. D., at Carrick’s Hotel, will be in time, any day till the tenth, to prevent this visit.

“Should you deal with Mr. D., you need not give yourself any trouble about the details of the payment, as his reference to bankers and others here have perfectly satisfied me as to his respectability.

“Believe me, dear Mr. Luttrell,

“Faithfully yours,

“GEORGE CANE,

“for Cane and Carter.”

Luttrell was very angry at this letter. It was an insufferable liberty that Cane had taken. Cane should have written—should have asked his pleasure—should have inquired whether even the certainty of selling the collection was not overpaid for at the price of this unseemly intrusion. “There is no inn on the island. This man must be my guest, and with the variable weather here, who can tell for how long? He may feel, or affect to feel, interest about the place and its people, and prolong his stay for days!”

There was, however, one passage in the letter which pained him to the quick; it was very brief, but, to him, very significant. It ran thus: “But I am aware—better, perhaps, than you are—that you are in want of money.”

Now, Messrs. Cane and Carter had been for some time making advances—small it is true—to Luttrell, and as well to intimate to him that he had overdrawn with them, as to imply that they did not desire a continuance of the practice, his correspondent threw in that parenthesis—so full of meaning as it was.

There was a time, as late as his own father’s day, when Messrs. Cane and Company would not have written such a letter. Not a few of the broad acres of the Luttrells had passed into their hands since that, however. They had not their country-houses and conservatories in those days; nor their sons in the “Guards;” nor a daughter married to a viscount.

How is it that men will often grow more bitter over their fallen fortunes, when they contrast them with the prosperity of others



who have never injured them. Cane had actually befriended Luttrell in many ways ; in keeping the agency of the small remnant of property that belonged to him, he was really performing a kind office ; but Luttrell could not, for all this, forgive him for being prosperous.

He sat down to write two notes, one to Mr. Cane, a very sharp reproof for a liberty which he ought never to have presumed upon, and which nothing in their respective conditions could warrant or excuse. "While," added he, "I am no less surprised at your remark, that you are even more than myself aware of my need of money. The observation either implies a sensitive sympathy for which I was not prepared, or a covert impertinence which I hesitate to accept as credible."

"I will not receive your friend Mr. Dodge, nor shall I again trouble you with the private and personal interests of

"Your faithful servant,

"JOHN HAMILTON LUTTRELL."

The second note was even briefer. "Mr. Luttrell begs to inform Mr. H. M. Dodge that he cannot receive his visit at Arran, nor can he at present decide to dispose of his collection."

"How is the wind, Hennesy ?" asked he of his boatman.

"Strong from the east, sir, and comin' on harder."

"Could you beat up to Westport, think you ? I have two letters of importance to send."

"We might, sir," said the man, doubtfully, "but it's more likely we'd be blown out to sea."

"How long is this gale likely to last ?"

"It's the season of these winds, your honor, and we'll have, maybe, three weeks or a month of them, now."

"In that case, you must try it. Take three men with you, and the large yawl ; put some provisions and water on board ; perhaps a little ballast, too."

"That we will, sir. She'll take a ton more, at least, to carry sail in this weather."

"Are you afraid to go ?" asked Luttrell, and his voice was harsh, and his manner stern.

"Afraid ! devil a bit afraid !" said the man, boldly, and as though the imputation had made him forget his natural respect.

"I'd not ask you to do what I'd not venture on myself."

"We all know that well, sir," said the boatman, recovering his former manner. "'Tis only that, maybe, we'll be more time about it than your honor thinks. We'll

have to make a long stretch out beyond Spanish Bay, perhaps, near 'the Cobbles.'"

"I don't care how you do it, but mind that these two letters reach Westport by Monday night, or Tuesday morning at farthest. This is for the post, this for the person whose name is on it, and who will be at Carrick's Hotel. Give it if you can into his own hands, and say that there is no answer required."

"You bade me remind you, sir, that the next time the boat went over to Westport, that I was to take Master Harry, and get him measured for some clothes ; but of course you'd not like to send him in this weather."

"I think not ; I think there can be no doubt of that," cried Luttrell, half angrily. "It's not when the strong easterly gales have set in, and a heavy sea is coming up from the south'ard, that I'd tell you to take a boy——" He stopped suddenly, and turning fiercely on the sailor, said, "You think I have courage enough to send you and a boat's crew out, and not to send my son. Speak out, and say it. Isn't that what you mean ?"

"It is not, sir. If you towld me to take the child, I wouldn't do it."

"You wouldn't do it ?" cried Luttrell, passionately.

"I would not, sir, if you never gav' me another day's pay."

"Leave the room—leave the house, and prepare to give up your holding. I'll want that cabin of yours this day month. Do you hear me ?"

"I do, sir," said the man, with a lip pale and quivering.

"Send Sam Joyce here."

"He's only up out of the fever since Monday, sir."

"Tell Maher I want him, then ; and mind me, sir," added he, as the man was leaving the room, "no story-telling, no conspiring, for if Tom Maher refuses to obey my orders, whatever they are, he'll follow you, and so shall every man of you, if I leave the island without a family except my own."

"Don't send your child out, anyways," said the man.

"Leave the room, sir," said Luttrell imperiously ; and the man, cowed and crest-fallen, closed the door and withdrew.

As though to carry corroboration to the sailor's warning, a fierce blast struck the window at the moment, making the old woodwork rattle, and threatening to smash it in, while the dark sky grew darker and seemed to blend with the leaden-colored sea.



"I want you to go over to Westport, Maher," said Luttrell to a hard-featured, weather-beaten man of about fifty, who now stood wet and dripping at the door.

"Very well, sir," was the answer.

"Take the big yawl, and any crew you please. Whenever all is ready, come up here for your orders."

"Very well, sir," said the man, and retired.

"Where's Master Harry, Molly?" cried Luttrell, advancing into the passage that led towards the kitchen.

"He's out on the rocks, watching the sea."

"Call him in here. I want to speak to him. What are you doing here, sir? I told you to leave this." This stern speech was addressed to Hennesy, who, with evident signs of sorrow on his face, stood half hid beside the door.

"I was hopin' your honor wouldn't turn me out after nine years' sarvice, when I never did or said one word to displaze you."

"Away with you—be off—I have no time to parley with fellows like you. Come in here, Harry," and he laid his hand on the boy's shoulder, and led him into his room. "I'm sending a boat over to Westport; would you like to go in her?"

"Wouldn't I?" said the boy, as his eyes flashed wildly.

"You are in want of clothes, and you could go to Sweeney's and get measured for a suit."

"I do not care for the clothes; but I'd like the sail. Isn't Tim Hennesy to go?"

"Hennesy is not to go. Maher is to command the boat."

"I'd rather have Tim; but I don't care."

"Be ready, then, in half an hour."

"I'm ready now."

"I mean, get another coat, something warmer, for you'll be out one night at least; and put your woollen wrapper round your throat. Molly will give it to you."

"There's thunder!" cried the boy; "I hope it won't lull the wind. It's blowing fiercely now."

"You're a good swimmer, ain't you?"

"I can beat every one but Tim."

"And what would you do if you were upset?"

"Hold on by the boat, or a spar."

"Till you were picked up? But if none came to pick you up?"

"Hold on still, till I was near enough to swim."

"And if you didn't get near enough?"

"Go down, I suppose," said the boy, with a laugh. "One can always do that!"

Luttrell nodded, and after a moment said, "Get ready now, for here's Maher coming for orders."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE NOR'-WESTER.

THE day—a dark and stormy one—was drawing to a close as the yawl got under weigh. She was manned by a stout crew of five hardy islanders; for although Maher had selected but three to accompany him, Tim Hennesy volunteered, and, indeed, jumped on board, as the boat sheered off, without leave asked or given. Luttrell had parted with his boy in his habitual impassive way—reminded him that he was under Tom Maher's orders, equally on shore as on board—that he trusted to hear a good account of him on his return, and then said a cold "good-bye," and turned away.

When Harry, who rarely had so long an interview with his father, left the room, he felt a sort of relief to think it was over; he had been neither punished nor scolded, even the warning that was given was very slight, and uttered in no unkindness.

"Give me a kiss, Molly, and throw an old shoe after me for luck!" cried he, gaily, as he reached the door. "We've got the big yawl, and though Tom has put two reefs in the mainsail, won't I make him shake them out when we're well out to sea."

"I'll just go and tell the master this minit, then," said she, eagerly, "and you'll see what he'll say to you."

"Will you be quiet?" said he, catching hold of her apron to detain her; "wasn't I only joking? I'm to be under Tom's orders, and of course I'll obey him."

There was a waggish drollery in the way he said this that by no means reassured her, but taking his hand, she walked down to the beach beside him, telling him to be careful of himself, and do nothing rash, and to mind what Tom Maher said, and, above all, to remember he was the last of the family, and if anything was to happen to him there was an end of the name for ever.

"And don't you think, Molly, that the world would continue to go round, even if it lost us, great as we are?"

"Ah, ye're a young imp! that's what ye are," said she, wiping a tear from her eye as she spoke. "'Tis wishin' them well I am, the same clothes. I'd rather see you in a suit of sealskin than sent out on such

a day as this, just to be measured by a tailor."

"You'd dress me worse than Brian O'Lynn, Molly," said the boy, with a merry laugh. "Did you ever hear what he did for a watch?"

"Arrah! what do I care what he did."

"Here it is, and very ingenious, too," said he:

"Bryan O'Lynn had no watch to put on, So he scooped out a turnip to make him a one. He then put a cricket clean under the skin, 'They'll think it is ticking,' says Bryan O'Lynn."

"May I never!" began she, trying to reprove his levity; but as he stepped into the boat at the same instant, her grief overcame all else, and she burst into tears. She threw her apron over her face to hide her emotion; but she suddenly drew it down as a wild cry, half yell, half cheer, broke from the fishermen on the shore; a squall had struck the boat just as she got under weigh, and though she lay over, reeling under the shock, she righted nobly again, and stood out boldly to sea.

"There's not a finer craft in the King's navy," said a very old man who had once been a pilot. "I'd not be afeerd to go to 'Quaybeck' in her."

"Come up and taste a dhrop of sperits this wet day," whispered Molly in his ear, for his words were a balm to her aching heart.

At first from the window of his lonely room, and then, when the boat had rounded the point of land, and could be no more seen, from a little loopholed slit in the tower above him, Luttrell watched her course. Even with his naked eye he could mark the sheets of spray as they broke over the bow and flew across her, and see how the strong mast bent like a whip, although she was reduced to her very shortest sail, and was standing under a double-reefed mainsail, and a small storm-jib. Not another boat, not another sail of any kind was to be seen; and there seemed something heroically daring in that little barque, that one dark speck, as it rose and plunged, seen and lost alternately in the rolling sea.

It was only when he tried to look through the telescope, and found that his hand shook so much that he could not fix the object, that he himself knew how agitated he was. He drew his hand across his brow and found it clammy, with a profuse and cold perspiration. By this time it was so dark that he had to grope his way down the narrow stairs to his room below. He called for Molly. "Who was

that you were talking to? I heard a strange voice without there."

"Old Moriarty, the pilot, your honor; I brought him in out of the wet to dry himself."

"Send him in here to me," said Luttrell, who, throwing a root of oak on the fire, sat down with his back to the door, and where no light should fall upon his face.

"It's blowing fresh, Moriarty," said he, with an affected ease of manner, as the old man entered and stood nigh to the door.

"More than fresh, your honor. It's blowin' hard."

"You say that, because you haven't been at sea these five-and-twenty years; but it's not blowing as it blew the night I came up from Clew, no, nor the day that we rounded Tory Island."

"Maybe not; but it's not at its worst yet," said the old fellow, who was ill-pleased at the sneer at his seamanship.

"I don't know what the fellows here think of such weather, but a crew of Norway fishermen—ay, or a set of Deal boatmen—would laugh at it."

"Listen to that now, then," said the other, "and it's no laughing matter;" and as he spoke a fierce gust of wind tore past, carrying the spray in great sheets, and striking against the walls and windows with a clap like thunder. "That was a squall to try any boat!"

"Not a boat like the large yawl!"

"If it didn't throw two tons of water aboard of her, my name isn't Moriarty."

"Master Harry is enjoying it, I'm certain," said Luttrell, trying to seem at ease.

"Well! It's too much for a child," said the old man, sorrowfully.

"What do you mean by a child? He's no child, he's a well-grown boy, and if he's ever to have a man's heart in him, ought to begin to feel it now."

"It was no night to send him out, anyhow; and I say it, though it was your honor did it!"

"Because you're an old fool, and you think you can presume upon your white head and your tottering limbs. Look here; answer me this—"

A fearful thunder roll, followed by a rattling crash like small-arms, drowned his words. "It is a severe night," said he, "and if she wasn't a fine sea-boat, with a good crew on board her, I'd not feel so easy!"

"Good as she is, it will thry her."

"What a faint-hearted old dog you are, and you were a pilot once."



"I was, sir. I took George Bowyer up the Chesapeake, and Commodore Warren could tell you whether I know the Baltic Sea."

"And you are frightened by a night like this!"

"I'm not frightened, sir; but I'd not send a child out in it, just for——" He stopped and tried to fall back behind the door.

"Just for what?" said Luttrell, with a calm and even gentle voice—"just for what?"

"How do I know, your honor? I was saying more than I could tell."

"Yes, but let me hear it. What was the reason that you supposed—why do you think I did it?"

Deceived and even lured on to frankness by the insinuating softness of his manner, the old man answered, "Well, it was just your honor's pride, the old Luttrell pride, that said, 'We'll never send a man where we won't go ourselves,' and it was out of that you'd risk your child's life!"

"I accused you of being half a coward a minute ago," said Luttrell, in a low, deep voice, that vibrated with intense passion, "but I'll tell you you're a brave man—a very brave man—to dare to speak such words as these to me! Away with you; be off; and never cross this threshold again." He banged the door loudly after the old man, and walked up and down the narrow room with impatient steps. Hour after hour he strode up and down with the restless activity of a wild animal in a cage, and as though by mere motion he could counteract the fever that was consuming him. He went to the outer door, but he did not dare to open it, such was the force of the storm; but he listened to the wild sounds of the hurricane—the thundering roar of the sea, as it mingled with the hissing crash, as the waves were broken on the rocks. Some old tree that had resisted many a gale, seemed at last to have yielded, for the rustling clash of broken timber could be heard, and the rattling of the smaller branches as they were carried along by the swooping wind. "What a night! what a terrible night!" he muttered to himself. There was a faint light seen through the chinks of the kitchen door; he drew nigh and peeped in. It was poor Molly on her knees, before a little earthenware image of the Virgin, to whom she was offering a candle, while she poured out her heart in prayer. He looked at her, as, with hands firmly clasped before her, she rocked to and fro in the agony of her affliction, and noiselessly he stole away and entered his room.

He opened a map upon the table, and tried to trace out the course the boat might have taken. There were three distant headlands to clear before she could reach the open sea. One of these, the Turk's Head, was a noted spot for disasters, and dreaded by fishermen even in moderately fresh weather. He could not take his eyes from the spot; that little speck so full of fate to him. To have effaced it from the earth's surface at that moment, he would have given all that remained to him in the world! "Oh what a destiny!" he cried in his bitterness, "and what a race! Every misfortune, every curse that has fallen upon us, of our own making! Nothing worse, nothing so bad have we ever met in life as our own stubborn pride, our own vindictive natures." It required some actual emergency, some one deeply momentous crisis, to bring this proud and stubborn spirit down to self-accusation; but when the moment *did* come, when the dam *was* opened, the stream rushed forth like the long pent-up waters of a cataract.

All that he had ever done in life, all the fierce provocations he had given, all the insults he had uttered, his short-comings, too, his reluctance to make amends when in the wrong, passed spectre-like before him, and in the misery of his deep humiliation he felt how all his struggle in life had been with himself.

That long night—and how long it was!—was spent thus. Every wild gust that shook the window-frames, every thunder-clap that seemed to make the old ruin rock, recalling him to thoughts of the wild sea on which this poor child was tossing. "Have they got well out to sea by this time, or are they beating between the Basket Rocks and the Turk's Head?" would he ask himself over and over. "Can they and will they put back if they see the storm too much for them?" He tried to remember his parting words. Had he taunted them with reluctance to venture out? Had he reflected on their courage? He could not now recall his words, but he hoped and he prayed he had not.

The leaden grey of morning began to break at last, and the wind seemed somewhat to abate, although the sea still rolled in such enormous waves, and the spray rose over the rocks and fell in showers over the shingle before the windows. Luttrell strained his eyes through the half-murky light, but could descry nothing like a sail seaward. He mounted the stairs of the tower, and stationing himself at the loop-holed window, gazed long and earnestly at the sea. Noting but waves—a wild, dis-



ordered stretch of rolling water—whose rocking motion almost at last made his head reel.

The old pilot, with his hat tied firmly on, was standing below, and, careless of the beating rain, was looking out to sea.

“The gale is lessening, Moriarty,” cried out Luttrell; “it has blown itself out.”

It was evident the old man had not caught the words aright, for all he said was, “She’s a fine sea-boat if she did, sir,” and moved away.

“He thinks it doubtful—he does not believe they have weathered the storm,” said Luttrell; and he sat down with his head between his hands, stunned and almost senseless.

There is no such terrible conflict as that of a proud spirit with misfortune. He who sees nothing in his calamities but his own hard fate has the dreariest and least hopeful of all battles before him. Now, though Luttrell was ready to utter his self-accusings aloud, and charge himself audibly with the faults that had wrecked his life, yet, strange as it may seem, the spirit of true humility had never entered his heart, far less any firm resolve to repent.

With all the terrible consequences that his unbridled temper could evoke before him, he still could not but regard himself as more persecuted than erring. “I did not make myself,” cried he, impiously. “I no more implanted the passions that sway than the limbs that move me! Other men—is not the world full of them?—have been as haughty, as unyielding, and domineering as myself, and yet have had no such disasters heaped upon them—far from it. Out of their very faults has sprung their fortune. In their pride they have but asserted that superiority that they knew they possessed.”

While he reasoned thus, his heart, truer to nature than his brain, trembled at every freshening of the storm, and sickened as the dark squalls shot across the sea.

Nor was his agony less that he had to control it, and not let those about him see what he suffered. He sat down to his breakfast at the accustomed hour, and affected to eat as usual. Indeed, he rebuked Molly for some passing carelessness, and sent her away almost choked with tears, “as if,” as she sobbed to herself—“as if she was a dog. To know whether the milk ‘took the fire’ or not! Musha! any man but himself wouldn’t know whether it was milk or salt water was afore him.”

It was his habit to pass the morning in reading. He would not appear to deviate from his custom, but sat down to his books

as usual. No sooner, however, was all still and quiet around him than he stole up to the tower, and stationed himself at the narrow window that looked over the sea.

The wind had greatly abated, and the sea also gone down, but there was still the heavy roll and the deafening crash upon the shore, that follow a storm. “The hurricane is passing westward,” muttered Luttrell; “it has done its work here!” And a bitter scorn curled his lips as he spoke. He was calling upon his pride to sustain him. It was a hollow ally in his time of trouble; for as he gazed and gazed, his eyes *would* grow dim with tears, and his heavy heart would sigh, as though to bursting.

As the day wore on, and the hour came when he was habitually about, he strolled down to the beach, pretending to pick up shells, or gather sea anemones, as he was wont. The fishermen saluted him respectfully as he passed, and his heart throbbed painfully as he saw, or fancied he saw, a something of compassionate meaning in their faces. “Do they believe, can they think that it is all over, and that I am childless?” thought he. “Do they know that I am desolate?” A pang shot through him at this, that made him grasp his heart with his hand to suppress the agony.

He rallied after a minute or so, and walked on. He had just reached the summit of the little bay, when a sort of cheer or cry from those behind, startled him. He turned and saw that the fishermen were gathered in a group upon one of the rocks, all looking and pointing seaward; with seeming indolence of gait, while his anxiety was almost suffocating him, he lounged lazily towards them.

“What are the fellows looking at?” said he to the old pilot, who, with some difficulty, had just scrambled down from the rock.

“A large lugger, your honour, coming up broad.”

“And is a fishing boat so strange a thing in these waters?”

“She’s out of the fishing grounds altogether, your honour; for she’s one of the Westport boats. I know her by the dip of her bowsprit.”

“And if she is, what does it signify to us?” asked Luttrell, sternly.

“Only that she’s bearin’ up for the island, your honour, and it’s not often one of them comes here.”

“The seldomer the better,” said Luttrell, gloomily. “When the fellows find there are no grog-shops here, they turn to mischief, break down our fences, lop our trees,

and make free with our potatoes. I'll have to do one of these days what I have so often threatened—warn all these fellows off, and suffer none to land here."

Perhaps the old pilot thought that other and very different feelings might at that moment have had the sway over him, for he looked away, and shook his head mournfully.

"She has a flag at the peak," cried one of the men from the rock.

"She has what?" asked Luttrell, impatiently.

"She has the half-black, half-white ensign, your honour."

"Your own flag at the peak," said the pilot.

"More of their insolence, I suppose," said Luttrell; "because they have a hamper or a parcel on board for me, perhaps."

"I don't think it's that, sir," said the other, moodily.

"What is it then?" cried he, harshly.

"'Tis, maybe, your honour, that they have some news of ——" he was going to say "Master Harry," but the ghastly paleness of Luttrell's face appalled and stopped him.

"News of what did you say?"

"Of the big yawl, sir; they maybe, saw her at sea."

"And if they had, would that give them a right to hoist the Luttrell flag? We are low enough in the world, Heaven knows!" he cried; "but we are not come to that pass yet, when every grocer of Westport can carry our crest or our colours." This burst of mock anger was but to cover a rush of real terror; for he was trembling from head to foot, his sight was dimmed, and his brain turning. He felt the coward, too, in his heart, and did not dare to face the old man again. So, turning abruptly away, he went back to the house.

"My fate will soon be decided now," said he, as he tottered into his room, and sat down, burying his face in his hands.

The group of fishermen on the rock grew larger and larger, till at last above thirty were clustered on the point, all eagerly watching, and as earnestly discussing every motion of the lugger. It was soon clear that her course was guided by some one who knew the navigation well, for instead of holding on straight for the bay, where she was to cast anchor, she headed to a point far above it, thus showing that her steersman was aware of the strong shore current that had force enough to sweep her considerably out of her course. Meanwhile they had ample time to discuss her tonnage, her build, her qualities for freight and

speed, and her goodness as a sea-boat. "I wonder did she see the yawl?" said one at length, for, with a strange and scarcely accountable terror, none would approach the theme that was uppermost in every heart. The word once uttered all burst in at once, "'Tis with news of her she's come! she saw her 'put in' to Belmullet, or to Westport, or she saw her sheltering, perhaps, under the high cliffs of the coast, 'lying to,' till the gale lightened." None would say more than this.

"Hurrah!" cried one at last, with a joyful cheer that made every heart bound, "I see Master Harry; he's steerin'!"

"So he is," shouted another; "he's settin' up on the weather gunwale, and his head bare too. I see his hair flyin' wild about him."

"Go up and tell the master."

"Faix I'm afeerd; I never spoke to him in my life."

"Will you, Owen Riley?"

"Sorra step I'll go; he turned me out of the place for saying that the cobbler wanted a coat of pitch, and she sank under me after. Let old Moriarty go."

"So I will. 'Tis good news I'll have to bring him, and that never hurt the messenger." And so saying, the old pilot hastened, as fast as his strength would permit, to the house.

The door was open, and he passed in. He sought for Molly in the kitchen, but poor Molly was away on the beach, following the course the lugger seemed to take, and hoping to be up at the point she might select to anchor at. The old man drew cautiously nigh Luttrell's door, and tapped at it respectfully.

"Who's there? Come in; come in at once," cried Luttrell, in a harsh voice. "What have you to say? Say it out."

"'Tis to tell your honour that Master Harry——"

"What of him? What of him?" screamed Luttrell; and he seized the old man by the shoulders, and shook him violently.

"He's steerin' the lugger, your honour, and all safe."

A cry and a wild burst of laughter broke from the overburdened heart, and Luttrell threw himself across the table and sobbed aloud.

Overcome by terror at such a show of feeling in one he had deemed dead to every emotion, the old man tried to move away unseen: but just as he had closed the door behind him, Luttrell screamed out, "Come back. You saw him—you saw him yourself?"

"No, sir; but better eyes than mine did,



and they could see that he had no cap on his head."

"And they were sure it was he?"

"There's no mistakin' him among a thousand!"

"If they deceived me—if this was false——" he stopped and wiped the cold sweat from his forehead. "There, I see her now. She's rounding to—she's going to anchor. I have been poorly of late, Moriarty," said he, in a low subdued tone; "things fret and worry me that I'd not let annoy me if I were stronger. Men of *your* stamp fancy there can never be much amiss with men of *mine*, because we have enough to eat and drink. What's that noise without? Who is talking there?"

The door opened suddenly, and Harry, with flushed face and wildly disordered hair, and with clothes all wet and dripping, stood before his father. He made no motion to embrace, or even approach him, but stood within the door respectful, but not abashed, and as if waiting for leave to advance farther.

Luttrell's cheek trembled, and changed color twice, but, subduing his emotion with a great effort, he said in a tone of affected indifference, "You had rough weather—did you make Westport?"

"No, sir; we lost the boat."

"Lost the boat: how was that?"

"She filled; at least, she took so much water that she would not answer her helm, and then she heeled over and went down."

"Down all at once."

"Yes; I had barely time to cut away our ensign from the peak. I thought I'd save the Luttrell colors, and so I did."

"Were you far from land at the time?"

"About fifteen miles; as good as fifty, for the wind was strong off shore, and such a sea!"

"And what did you do?"

"We had plenty of spars. There were oars, and stretchers, and four large planks of the flooring all floating about, and each of us laid hold of something."

"By my sowle you're a brave boy!" cried the old pilot, who could restrain himself no longer.

Luttrell turned a fierce look on the old man, and pointed to the door, and the poor fisherman slunk away overwhelmed with shame.

"So we've lost our best boat, and all her tackle," said Luttrell, moodily; "a heavy loss."

"It is!" said the boy, gravely; "but the fellows that picked us up say that they don't know how we held on so long with

an undecked boat. They were watching us for an hour before we went over."

"Who were they?"

"Westport men; they were taking that man over here you gave us the letter for—a Yankee fellow."

"What do you mean by a Yankee, sir?"

"Tom Crab called him so to me; that's all I know; but he's a good fellow, and gave me some brandy when he pulled me on board; and I hear he rubbed me till I got quite warm."

"Where is he now?"

"He's helping them to carry that sick man up here, and I don't think he's so sick as they say. I'm sure it's just fright, and no more; for every time the boat went about in stays, he'd raise his head and give a groan."

"Of whom are you talking?"

"I don't know his name, sir; but they tell me he wants to see you very much. There he goes; they have got him in that blanket and are bringing him here."

"Where will I put the sick gentleman, sir?" said Molly, coming in; "may I make a bed in the store-room?"

"Do so," said Luttrell, briefly; "and for the other give him the room that was your mistress's; and do you, Harry, go out and be civil and attentive to these people. I will see them myself later on. They must put up with rough fare, but they came self-invited."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### A SKIPPER.

LUTTRELL had just made up his mind that he would inform the American visitor he would receive him, when Harry entered, leading the stranger by the hand. "That's papa," said the boy, and retired.

"I hope I see you in very good health, sir," said Mr. Dodge, advancing boldly, and shaking Luttrell's hand in a hearty, vigorous manner. "You live in a pretty lonesome spot here, and, as the man said to the whip-snake in the spout, 'you ain't easy to get at.'"

"Perhaps that was one of the reasons that led me to choose it, sir," said Luttrell, stiffly, "and had you got my note, you'd have seen that I never intended you should incur the inconvenience of coming to it."

"Well, sir, it warn't pleasant; I'll tell no lie, it warn't pleasant! I'm a seafarin' man, sir, and I've been one all my life; but such a harbor to get out of, and such



a port to get into, and such a craft to do it in, I never seed in all my born days."

"You compel me to repeat my regrets, sir. I am, indeed, sincerely sorry for your fruitless journey."

"Well, it warn't all time lost—we picked up that crew, and that lad of yours. He's a fine 'buoy,' sir; I know 'buoys' well, and I say it again, he'll be a smart man."

Luttrell bowed a cold and haughty acknowledgment.

"He ain't a bit like you, not a bit; there's no pride, no stand-off about *him*; he's a raal frank, straight-ahead one. I seed it before he was well aboard. It was all I could do to keep him from swimming after his cap—a darned old sealskin thing it was—but he said it was his best one, and he'd not get another in a hurry."

"His frankness deserved all your praise, sir; it went to the extent of exposing his father's poverty."

"And if it did—what o' that? You ain't ashamed of it, are you? Look at me, sir; I have a matter of seventy thousand dollars in the Tennessee Bank, and a trifle more in Ohio scrip, and I own every timber in the barque *Prettyman Quincey Squash*, four hundred and odd tons, a clipper to sail, and a whale for freight, and I ain't proud nor no ways blown up to burstin' for that!"

"I am delighted to know of your prosperity, sir, for your sake," said Luttrell, coldly.

"Mind," said the other, who accepted the words in their most flattering sense, "I didn't say it was all got with my hands in my 'pants'-pockets. I had a darn'd deal of smart work for it. I was up among the Injians for four years; I was over the Rocky Mountains trappin'; I was a cook aboard a south sea whaler, and"—here he winked one eye, and gave Luttrell a good-humoured poke with his fingers—"and I did a little in *Ebony* off the Samsoo River, you understand; unwholesome work it was, with the baracoons always flooded, and the alligators flopping through the mud, and stirring up foul air and fever. Ugh!" he cried, with a wry face, "you'd see an ugly sort of a blotch on your cheek at night, and before the same hour next evening the ground sharks would be a fitin' over you. You haven't got anything to drink, have you?"

"I can, unfortunately, offer you nothing but our mountain whisky; it is home-made, however, and not bad."

While Luttrell took a bottle and some glasses from a small cupboard in the wall, Mr. Dodge employed himself in a leisurely

examination of the chamber and its furniture. "May I never!" exclaimed he, "if it ain't a droll sort of crib. Why, stranger, I'd not live here three months without making something better to sit on, and handier to eat off, than these. Just you give me a hatchet, and a hammer, and a handful of nails, to-morrow morning early, and see if I won't."

"I am afraid my furniture deserves all the ill you can say of it," said Luttrell, with a faint smile.

"That ain't a chair—it's not like a chair."

"I will not defend it, certainly."

"And yet it shows why you Britishers never can, by any possibility, be a great people—no, sir, never."

"I am really curious to hear that explanation."

"Well, sir," said he, tossing off a fresh tumbler of undiluted whisky, "you're a goin' to hear it—but 'don't be impatient,' as the bush squirrel said to the young mouse, 'I've got your mother in my mouth, but I'll eat you presently.' Here's how it is. When you was makin' that chair, you had in your mind some old-fashioned, ramshackle, nine-cornered machine you had seen of your father's, or your grandfather's, and nothin' would persuade you but to imitate that. It was wisdom of your ancestors—but we never had no ancestors. We didn't begin the world with fifty cranks in our head about how some helpless old critter ten centuries back would ha' tried to do this, or to mend that. There's the difference between us, sir; and mind my words, when we've got a ten-inch gun that'll send a shot from Long Island to the Battery Point, you Britishers will be a going back to bows and arrows, and a paintin' your bodies blue, like your ancestors."

"The picture is not flattering," said Luttrell, gravely. "And now, sir, let us talk of something more nearly interesting to us. I am informed by my correspondent that you have seen the catalogue of my small collection, and desire to examine the objects themselves."

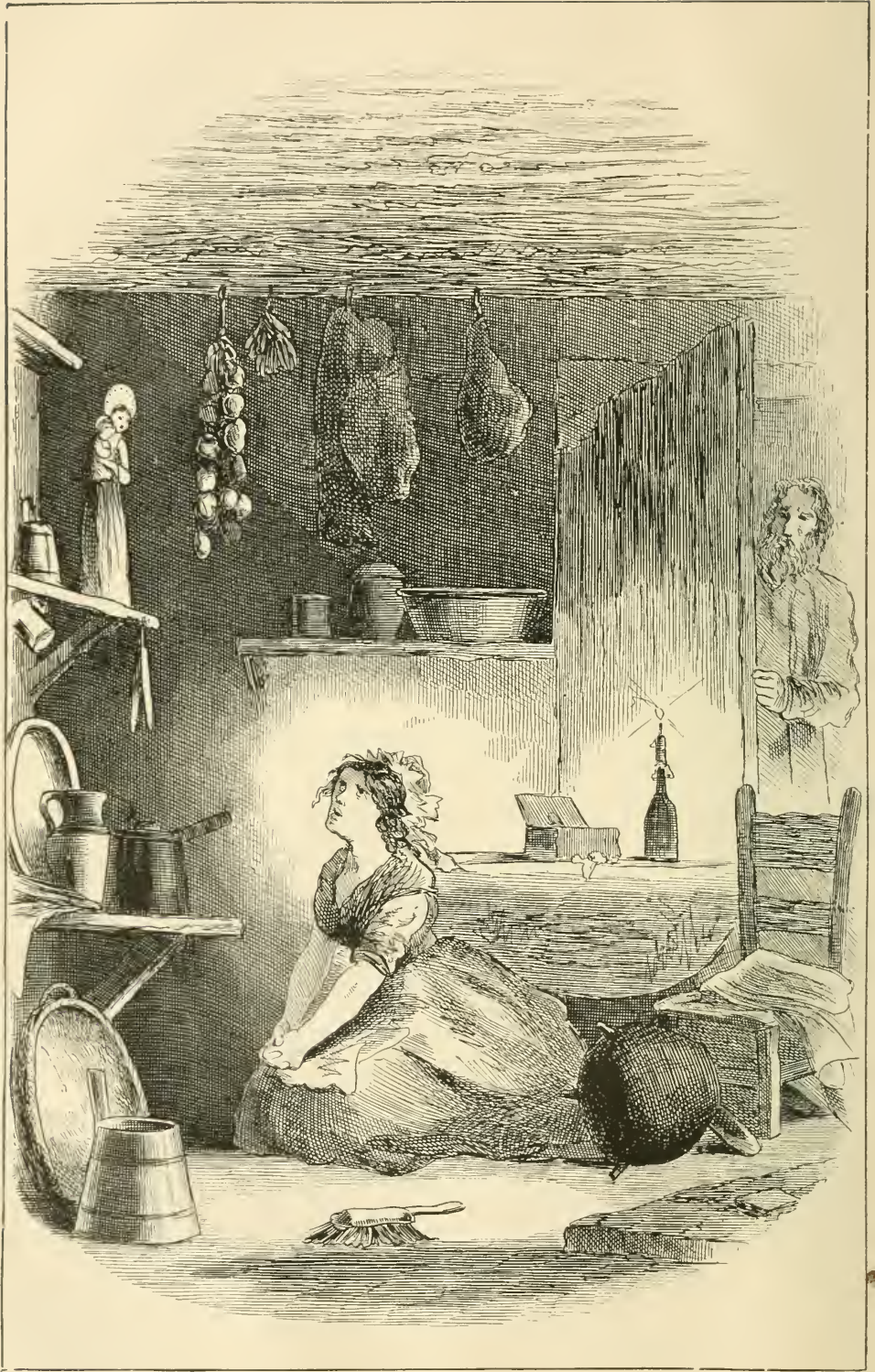
"If that's a home brew, stranger, it does you more credit than the chair," said Mr. Dodge, smacking his lips after the third tumbler of whisky.

"I am proud to have anything worth offering you, sir."

"If you've a barrel or two of that spirit to dispose of, we'll deal, sir, that's a fact;" and Mr. Dodge emptied the bottle into his glass.

"I'm not certain whether my resources extend so far, but if they do, the whisky





Molly praying for young Harry's safety.



is much at your service, and I will feel honoured if you accept it."

"Now for the gimeracks—let's see 'em," said Mr. Dodge, as though eager to show how promptly he could respond to a graceful or generous action.

"Some of the gimeracks are here before you," said Luttrell, making a rather awkward attempt to smile, as he repeated the word. "This curiously misshapen attempt at a figure is, I have every reason to believe an image of the idol 'Crom,' the object of worship to the Irish in the days of Paganism. You see he holds in his hand a sort of weapon like a fork."

"It ain't a brand, and it ain't a fork! The Choctaws have idols that beat that critter hollow, and they stick eyes in them of a red stone that sparkles when there's light on it. What's this?"

"An ancient Irish spear, or javelin."

"It's a whale harpoon, and a rare bad one to boot: the spike ain't well fastened, and no lead on the butt-end. Here's a bowie-knife, ain't it?"

"It's the sword of an Irish chieftain, and was found in the tomb of Thady O'Shaughlen, Prince of the Keil, and the lands of Maroon; the inscription that you see here—"

"I see nothing but scratches, made believe with an old nail or a dinner-fork—they ain't letters."

"This inscription signifies 'I am.'"

"Well, I'm blessed if I believe them's old—they're rubbish, stranger, jist rubbish—and as for the big dish—"

"It is a shield—a more perfect specimen is not extant. It was the battle-shield of Brian Ogh-na-Tiernach; he was killed in the great battle of Gongal-a-Murrah, which some historians have confounded with the battle of Claddahmore."

Perfectly insensible to the sneers, or the not less offensive ridicule expressed by the American, Luttrell went on displaying object after object with all the zeal of one who gloried in his pursuit, and delighted in his success as an antiquarian. He drew forth rare scraps of manuscript, some worn and tattered fragments discolored by age, and to all seeming undecipherable; he read out names of kings and saints, valiant chieftains, and holy martyrs, whom he mentioned with a voice tremulous with veneration; and he showed signet-rings and amulets they had worn, as a priest might have displayed the most sacred relics.

"Look here, stranger," said the Yankee, as he threw himself into the old chair, and stretched out his legs to the fullest extent, "there's a museum in my native town of

Halkanpolis, and I want to make 'em a present; it's to be somethin' nobody ever seed the like of afore, nor ever will again. I du think this gatherin' here is pretty nigh that ticket! And now, I say, what will you take for the whole bilin' as it stands?"

"You have not seen one-tenth of the collection as yet!" cried Luttrell, whose zeal as an antiquarian was far greater than his eagerness as a vendor. "There's the great book of the Three Curses."

"We can do the swearin' and cursin' pretty well without a book where I come from," said the Yankee, with a grin.

"Diarmid's Token, as it is called. This curious gem, with its setting of pure gold, was formerly believed to be a protection against witchcraft."

"In my country, Britisher, it's the witches would want the amulet! We're a pretty hard set down there, and can take care of ourselves without any help from charms. Come now—let's deal; what's the whole figure in one word?"

"You are unjust to both of us," said Luttrell. "You neither know what I want to sell, or yourself to buy. Let me go on and show you some curious relics of a later period; they may have more interest for you, perhaps."

"Not a hickory shaving's difference, whether you showed me a trowel that helped to build Babel, or a snuff-box of Queen Bess. If you want to please me, talk of dollars, stranger, hard dollars."

"Luttrell's face flushed with a passing anger; this reducing him to the position of a tradesman, first displaying and then pricing his wares, sorely tried a temper that was never proof against much pressure. The purpose-like cold face of the American, however, showed him that the man meant no covert impertinence by his demand: but simply desirous of finishing a bargain as speedily as might be.

"I am sorry, sir," said he, at length, "that you will not let me lay before you even the few objects that I prize the most; however, as you give me no choice in the matter, and as circumstances render me anxious to part with my collection, I obey you. I estimated the whole at three hundred pounds. My agent informed me that, in London, two hundred pounds was deemed the value, and I never got a higher offer than a hundred and fifty, which I refused, but which I will now take, if offered me."

The American took a very scrubby notebook from his pocket, and made a short calculation with a pencil.

"Well!" said he, in a drawling, dreary sort of way, "it ain't much. I suppose you was years over it?"

"Yes," said Luttrell, taken suddenly off his guard, "they occupied me many very sad days and nights. They were labors that lightened sorrow, and took me away from cares that were eating into my heart."

"Ah! and how much better you'd have been, stranger, if you'd ha' been doin' something genuine useful, something to make yourself and others more comfortable, and not a grubbin' after old shoe-buckles and saint' shinbones. Well, you don't think so! No matter; that's our way o' looking at it. Now to business. There's just one thing in these diggings that has tuk my fancy. It's the only thing here that I'd give a red cent for, on my own account; but I do like it wonderful. I don't suppose you'll let me have it to buy, but if you'll jist give a loan of it, we'll say for a year or two—two years—I'll close the deal, and give you your first price, fifteen hundred dollars."

"Luttrell's dark face lighted up at the prospect of relief from much embarrassment, and his eyes ranged over the room to see what it possibly could be that had captivated his strange visitor's fancy. A few gaffs, a single-barrel gun, and some fishing-tackle, were in one corner, and a pair of high sealskin boots in another, and a rough wolf-like "lurcher" lay under the table—could it be any of these? It was scarcely credible, and yet the American had seen none other—he had walked straight from the landing-place to the Abbey. "What signifies what it is?" said Luttrell to himself. "It is the caprice of an unlettered fellow, who would, perhaps, care more for a tobacco-pouch than for my 'Book of the Four Gospels.'"

"I have no doubt that I shall accept your offer, and gladly accept it," said Luttrell; "but it would gratify me if you were to say what it is that you desire to possess."

"It's then just as likely you'd refuse me."

"And I mistake you much if, in such a case, you'd hold me to my bargain!"

For the first time the American's features brightened; the dull leaden cheek colored, and the firm-set thin lip curved into a pleasant smile as he said, "You're right there, Britisher—you're right there. I'd not ha' clinched the nail, if I saw it was going to fester you! Here's how it is, then," and he drew a long breath to give him courage—"here's how it is—I want your 'buoy.'"

"My what?"

"Your buoy; your son!"

"You want my son," said Luttrell, drawing himself up, and looking with an air of haughty insolence. "Have you forgotten, sir, which side of the Atlantic you are standing on, and that you are no longer in a land where men deal in their fellow-men? Or is it that, presuming on what poverty you have seen here, you dare to insult me with a proposal your own mean whites would have resented with a bowie-knife?"

"You ha' been a rare chap on a stump, Britisher, that's a fact?" said the Yankee, coolly. "Your words come rushin' out like water out of a pump; but they don't squash me, for all that. Hairy Dodge—Dan Webster always called me Hairy, the short for Herodotus—Hairy Dodge is a hard grit, and it's not every millstone can grind him."

"Will you do me the favor, sir, to accept the very humble hospitality I can offer," said Luttrell, proudly, "and let there be no no more question of any business between us? I think I heard mention of a sick friend who accompanied you."

"He ain't a friend of mine. It was a critter I met at the inn, and who wanted to come over here to see you, and so we agreed we'd take the lugger between us."

"He is ill, I am told."

"Jist fright—nothing but fright! The first sea that took the boat on the quarter, he cried out, 'Lord a mercy on us!' 'Oh, are ye there?' says I; 'are ye prayin' for that sort o' thing?' and, surely, he did go at it, till he grew too sick for anything but groans. There was no use reasonin' with him, for all he said was, 'Put me ashore where you like, and I'll give you five hundred pounds. He got up to a thousand; and once, when the peak hal-yards gave way, and the sail came clattering down, he raised the bid to half his whole fortune."

"So that there is no actual malady in the case?"

"Nothin' o' the kind. It's jist fright—mere fright! How you're ever to get him off this to the mainland again is clean beyond me. He'll not go, that's certain, if he can help it."

"I must look to him, and see that, so far as our very poor accommodation serves, he wants nothing. You'll excuse me, I trust, sir."

Luttrell spoke in a cold and formal tone, hoping that his visitor, seeing no prospect of any transaction between them, would now take his leave. Mr. Dodge,



however, either did not deem the battle lost, or he saw no reason to retire from the field, for he disposed himself once more in the old chair, and taking out a cigar about as long as a modern parasol, prepared to smoke.

"You haven't any objection to this sort o' thing?" he asked coolly, as he lit it.

"None whatever. I'd say, make yourself at home, sir, if it were not that this humble house of mine is so little like a home."

"It will look jollier in the evening, when there's a good fire on the hearth, and a strong brew o' that pleasant spirit smokin' afore us;" and Mr. Dodge vouchsafed a strange sort of grin, which was the nearest approach he could make to a laugh, and Luttrell, stung by the notion that another was assuming to do the honors of *his* house, and to himself, too, retired hastily without speaking.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE LAWYER ABROAD.

To reach the "store-room" where Mr. M'Kinlay lay—for of course it is needless to inform our readers he was the much terrified voyager alluded to—Luttrell was obliged to pass through the kitchen, and in so doing beheld a scene which had never before presented itself to his eyes in that spot. Molly Ryan, feeling all the importance of the occasion, and well knowing that her master would never remember to give her any orders on the subject, had issued a general requisition for supplies all over the island, which was so quickly and well responded to, that the place looked less like a room in a dwelling-house than a great mart for all sorts of provisions.

Great baskets of fish stood on every side—fish of the strangest and most uncouth forms many of them, and with names as uncouth. There were varieties of ugliness among them to gratify the most exacting naturalist, flat-headed, many-toothed monsters, with bony projections all over them, and dorsal fins like hand-saws. Even the cognate creatures wore an especial wildness in that wild spot, and lobsters looked fiercer, and crabs more crabbed, while oysters, least aggressive of all floating things, had a ragged and rocky exterior that seemed to defy all attempt at penetration. Besides, there were hampers of eggs, and "creels" of potatoes, and such other garden produce as the simple cultivation per-

mitted. While, meekly in one corner, and awaiting his fate with that air of conscious martyrdom which distinguishes the race, stood a very lean sheep, fastened by a hay-rope to the leg of a dresser.

But the object which more than others attracted Luttrell's attention was a pale, sallow-faced man, who sat next the fire on a low seat, all propped up by pillows, and his legs enveloped in a blanket; his wan and singular appearance being considerably heightened by the feathers of a goose having lighted on him, giving him half the look of some enormous fowl in the act of being plucked. This addition to his picturesqueness was contributed by Harry, who, engaged in plucking a goose at the opposite side of the fire, sent all the down and feathers in that direction. Harry himself, without shoes or stockings, indeed with nothing on but a flannel shirt and trousers, was entertaining the stranger, and giving him, so far as he could, an insight into the life and habits of the islanders.

It is perhaps fortunate for me that it is not part of my task to record the contributions to history which Harry Luttrell afforded the stranger; they were not, possibly, divested of a little aid from that fancy which narrators are sometimes led to indulge in, and certainly Mr. M'Kinlay felt on hearing them, that terrible as were the perils of the voyage, the danger that beset his place of refuge seemed infinitely more terrible. A few traditionary maxims were all that they knew of Law, of religion they knew still less; in a word, the stranger learned that he was in the midst of a people who cared no more for British rule than they did for the sway of the Grand Llama; and in a place where, if it were very difficult to live, few things were so easy as to get rid of life.

So intensely interested was M'Kinlay in the boy's narrative, that he never noticed Luttrell, who entered the kitchen, and made his way towards him. Luttrell himself was so preoccupied with one thought, that he hardly acknowledged the salutations of the people who made way for him to pass. The thought that engaged him was this: that the man before him was the bearer of a writ against him. That the law, which in his fastness he had so long defied or evaded, had at last tracked him home, and though he knew that, were this to be the case, nothing could be easier for him than to conceal himself in the island—there were spots there, where, had it been safe to have followed, no search could have discovered him—yet, in the passionate



boldness which prompted him always, to meet the coming peril half way, he now sought out this man, whatever might be his mission, to confront him.

Who can tell, besides, what an insolent pride he felt in being able to say to the emissary of the law, "Go back to those who sent you, and tell them that you saw and spoke to Luttrell of Arran, but that you did not dare to lay a hand upon him, nor utter the stupid formula of your craft, because one single word from him would have settled your doom for ever; that he did not avoid nor evade you; that he received you courteously, and so far as he could, hospitably; but with the proud consciousness that *he* was more the master of *your* fate than were you of *his*, and that the wisest thing you could do was to forget the errand you came upon, and go back as you came." With some such thoughts as these Luttrell now came forward and stood before the stranger, and for some seconds each looked in silence at the other.

"Are you Mr. Luttrell of Arran?" asked M'Kinlay, in a low, feeble tone.

"I am accustomed to believe, sir, that a stranger usually announces his own name and quality first, when presenting himself in the house of another," said Luttrell, slowly and gravely.

"I ask pardon; my name is Robert M'Kinlay, sir, of Furnival's Inn, and 28 Regent's Terrace, London, conveyancer."

"And I am John Hamilton Luttrell of Arran. Now that we know each other, are there any matters we can treat of, or is this meeting to have merely the character of a pleasant *rencontre*?"

"It was business brought me here, Mr. Luttrell!" said M'Kinlay, with a groan of such intense sincerity that Luttrell almost smiled at it.

"Whenever you feel equal to treat of it, you'll find me at your service," said Luttrell.

"Could it be now, Mr. Luttrell—could it be now?" cried M'Kinlay, with eagerness.

"It shall be this minute, if you desire it."

Unwrapping the blanket from around him, and disposing it not very gracefully, perhaps, over his shoulders, Mr. M'Kinlay scrambled rather than walked after Luttrell to his room.

"Ah, sir!" cried he, as he entered, "if I had but the shadow of a suspicion of what the expedition was before me, I'd have refused flatly; ay, sir, if I had to throw up the agency for it the day after."

"I am truly sorry, sir, your impressions of this place should be so unfavorable."

Mr. M'Kinlay was too full of his disas-

trous experiences to listen to excuses, and he went on. "People cross the Atlantic every week and don't suffer one-half what I did since I left Westport. I vow I think they might round the Cape with less actual danger; and when we tacked about and ran down to take up the creatures that were upset, one of our sailors—no, indeed, but two of them—declared that it was at the imminent risk of our own lives we were doing it; that if something held on, or didn't hold on, I forget which, and that if we were to get entangled in the wreck—but I can't describe it, only I remember that the American—the greatest savage I ever met in my life—took a pistol out of his pocket, and swore he'd shoot the man at the helm if he didn't bear up for the wreck. He swore—I'll never forget his awful oaths, doubly terrible at such a moment—that he saw a boy, or as he called it, 'a buoy,' on a spar waving his cap to us, and he said, 'I'll go down to him if we upset beside him.' Yes, sir, it sounds incredible that a man so dead to any sentiment of humanity could exist, and who could declare that he'd imperil five lives, and his own, too, just out of—what shall I call it?—a whim, a caprice, a fancy, and for what?—for some fishermen, some starving creatures whose miserable lives ought to make death a release, and a boy that possibly, until your kind cook gave him leave to sit at the kitchen fire, had no home to go to to dry himself."

Luttrell's face grew almost purple, and then, of a sudden, ashy pale. To suppress the passionate impulse that worked within him made him feel sick almost to fainting, but he did suppress it, and with an immense effort of self-control said, "And the American, you say, was resolved that he'd save the boy."

"Ah! at any cost! indeed, he had the cruelty to say to myself, 'If the boat goes over, mind that you keep up' to windward or to leeward, or somewhere, I don't know where, for I was well aware that it was down I should go. 'You can swim,' said he, 'I suppose?' 'Not a stroke,' said I. 'It don't matter,' said he, 'you can grip on all the same.' Yes, sir, that was his unfeeling remark: 'You can grip on all the same.'"

"But he declared that the boy he *would* save!" cried Luttrell with a scornful toss of his head at the other's prolixity.

"That he did; I am willing to make oath of it, let the consequences be what they may to him."

"He never told *me* of that," said Luttrell, thoughtfully.

"I should think not, sir; it's not very likely that a man will parade his own inhumanity, and declare how he risked five valuable lives to save a few savage creatures, who might as well be drowned at sea as die of starvation on shore."

"You are severe, sir. You judge us somewhat hardly. With all our barbarism, we have our uses, and, more too, we have ties and affections pretty much like our betters." Though there was far more sadness than sarcasm in the way Luttrell said these words, Mr. M'Kinlay winced under the reproof they conveyed, and hastily blurted out his excuses.

"You cannot suppose I could have meant to include you, sir. You couldn't imagine that in speaking of these poor ignorant creatures, I had the slightest intention——"

"I never suspect an insult where it is possible to believe such was not intended, sir," said Luttrell, haughtily. "But I don't think that we are here now to discuss the fishermen of Arran, or their claim to be deemed civilized."

"You are right—you are quite right, Mr. Luttrell. I ask pardon for all this digression, the more since it was entirely personal; but a man's first shipwreck takes a wonderful hold on his imagination;" and the lawyer laughed one of those practised laughs which, by setting others off, frequently cut short an unpleasant discussion. Luttrell was, however, impassive in his gravity; if anything, he looked more stern than before. "I have come here," resumed M'Kinlay, "at the request of my friend and client, Sir Gervais Vyner. This letter is my introduction to you."

Luttrell took it, read the address, turned it round, and looked at the seal, and then laid it down upon the table. He heaved a long sigh, too, but it was a sigh of relief, for he had had sore misgivings as to M'Kinlay's visit, and visions of law and its dire consequences in various ways had been flitting before his eyes.

"I opine that the letter will explain the object of my coming here more briefly than I could."

"Do me the favor to tell it in words, sir," said Luttrell, coldly; and the other bowed and began.

Our reader may not be as patient a listener as was Luttrell, nor indeed, need he hear Mr. M'Kinlay's account of a mission with which he is already familiar; enough, then, if we say that he was listened to for above an hour in perfect silence, not one word of remark, not a question, not even a gesture, interrupted the flow of the narra-

tive, and although at some moments the lawyer grew pathetic over peasant hardships and privations, and at others was jocose over their drolleries, Luttrell neither vouchsafed any show of sentiment or of mirth, but heard him throughout, as might the Chancellor have heard a pleading in Equity. Vyner had cautioned M'Kinlay not to divulge the name of the girl in whose behalf Luttrell was entreated to act, until he had given some pledge of his willingness to accept the trust. He knew well the proud susceptibility of the man, and how instantaneously he would reject what savored of an advantage to those connected with him, not to speak of the additional pain he would feel in knowing that these peasants had been paraded as his near relatives, and so Vyner had said, "Keep the name of the girl in the background, and even when asked for it, do not appear aware of her being his connection. Leave it entirely to him to avow it or not, as he pleases. Remember," said he, as he parted with him, "you will have to treat with not only a very acute, ready-witted man, but one of the most sensitive and easily irritated temperaments in the universe."

In fact, so profuse had Vyner been of his directions, his counsels and his warnings, that he frightened M'Kinlay considerably, impressing him with a very wholesome fear of the man he was to deal with. "I'll let him pick out the facts from the brief itself," thought he as he handed the letter. "I'll not open the case by a speech." This clever tactic was, however, routed at once by Luttrell, as he said, "Let me hear the statement from yourself, sir. I will give it all my attention."

Thus called upon, he spoke, and, apart from those little digressory excursions into the pathetic and the humorous, he spoke well. He owned, that though Vyner's desire to be an Irish proprietor met a certain encouragement from himself, that he looked with little favor on the other project, and less even of hope.

Indeed, of this plan, not being a father himself, he spoke less confidently. "But, after all," said he, smiling, "they are one and the other but a rich man's fancy. He can afford an unprofitable investment, and a somewhat costly experiment."

In all he said, Mr. M'Kinlay took pains to show that Sir Gervais was acting under his own judgment; that he, M'Kinlay, was a cool, calm, long-headed man of the world, and only looked on these matters as a case he "was to carry," not criticize; a question he was to consign to parchment, and not ratify by an opinion.



Perhaps he was a little prolix in his excuses and exculpation, dwelling somewhat needlessly on the guarded prudence he had himself maintained throughout the affair, for Luttrell at last said, and rather abruptly, "Come to *me* now, sir. Let me hear what part is assigned to me in these matters, for assuredly I cannot guess it."

"My friend and client wishes you to be a trustee in this case; that you will act for the young girl on whom he purposes to make the settlement, and, in fact, consent to a sort of guardianship with respect to her."

Luttrell gave a smile, it was a smile of much meaning, and full of inexpressible sadness. "What a strange choice to have made," said he, mournfully. "When a captain loses a frigate, the Admiralty are usually slow to give him another; at all events, they don't pass over scores of able and fortunate officers to fix upon this one unlucky fellow, to entrust him with a new ship. Now this is precisely what your friend would do. With a large and wide acquaintance, surrounded with friends, as few men are, esteemed and loved by many, he goes out of his way to seek for one whose very name carries disaster with it. If, instead of conferring a benefit upon this poor child, he owed her a deep grudge, then, and then only, I could understand his choice of me! Do you know, sir," and here his voice became loud and full and ringing—"do you know, sir, it would be difficult to find a man who has accumulated more failures on his head than he who now stands before you, and these not from what we usually call fate, or bad luck, or misfortune, but simply and purely from an intractable temper, a nature that refused to be taught by its own hard experiences, and a certain stubborn spirit, that ever took more pleasure in breasting the flood than others took in swimming with the full tide of fortune. It takes very little knowledge of life to teach a man one lesson—which is, to avoid such men as me! They whose qualities ensure failure are truly unlucky! Tell Sir Gervais Vyner that it is not out of apathy or indolence that I refuse him, it is simply because when he makes *me* the partner of his enterprise, it insures disaster for it."

Mr. M'Kinlay replied to this passionate outburst as lamely as men usually do to such like appeals; that is, he strung platitudes and common-places together, which, happily for him, the other never deigned to pay the slightest attention to.

One only observation did reach Luttrell's ears. It was a remark to which the speaker

imparted little force; for when he made it, he had come to the end of his persuasive resources, and was in the position of those gunners who, when their ammunition is expended, charge the piece with the nearest rubbish they can lay hands upon. The remark was to this purpose: that, simple as the act seems, the choice of a trustee is one of the most puzzling things in the world, and nothing is often more embarrassing than being refused by one upon whom, without ever directly asking, we have confidently counted for that office.

Luttrell started; he suddenly bethought him of Harry. What would be more forlorn or friendless in the world than that poor boy's lot, if he were left fatherless? Except Vyner, was there one he could ask to befriend him? Indeed, whenever the contingency crossed his mind, and the thought of death presented itself full before him, he at once reverted to the hope that Vyner would not refuse this his last request. If, however, by declining what was now asked of him any coldness or estrangement ensued, he could not, of course, make this demand. "I shall have forfeited all my claim upon him," said he to himself, "if I deny him this small service, and perhaps he will not understand, and, at all events, not give any weight to the scruples I have detailed. He may say these are but the gloomy fancies of a solitary, cheerless life.—Yes," said he, on the closing a discussion with himself, and now speaking the result aloud—"Yes. It shall be a bargain between us. Let Vyner be the guardian of my boy, and I will accept this charge; and, to show what confidence I place in his generosity, I shall accede at once; and when you get back to England, you will tell him the compact I have made with him."

"I do not feel myself in a position, Mr. Luttrell, to make a formal pledge on the part of Sir Gervais Vyner," began M'Kinlay—

"I shall not ask you, sir," broke in Luttrell, proudly; "we have been friends some five-and-twenty years, without any assistance from lawyers, and it is possible we may continue the attachment without their aid. Tell me now of this trust, for I am ashamed to say how little attention I have given the subject hitherto."

It was a pleasure to Mr. M'Kinlay to leave diplomacy, and get back again into those pleasant pasturages where duties are "recited," and obligations laid down, with all the rules of action stated, and with the rigid cautions impressed, due stress being stamped at every step on separate responsi-



bility, and reiterated warning given, how "each acted for himself, and not one for the other," till Luttrell's less practised brain actually whirled with the repetitions and reiterations; nor was he more comforted by learning that on certain difficulties not at all improbable, arising, he would have to recur to the law courts for guidance—a gloomy prospect which all Mr. M'Kinlay's fluent readiness could not dispel, as he said, "A mere matter of form, I assure you, and only requiring a short bill in Equity, and a hearing before the Master."

"There, there, that will do," cried he, at last; "don't terrify me any more. A surgeon never made his operation less painful by describing every step of it beforehand to the patient; but, sir, I accede; and now forgive me if I leave you for one moment; I have a word to say to your fellow-traveller, whom I see out yonder."

The American was seated on a rock, smoking, and Harry beside him, when Luttrell drew nigh.

"Come here, Harry," cried he to the boy; "I want to speak to you."

"Oh, papa," said the boy, as he came up, "if you only heard all the pleasant stories he has! There's nowhere he hasn't been. In countries where the trees are covered with fruit, and monkeys and peacocks all over them; in lands where there are mines of gold, and silver, and diamonds, all for the taking; in seas, too, where you look down and see great reefs that look like rocks, but are really precious stones. And now he was telling me of a beautiful island, far, far away, so rich in flowers and spices, that you can know for more than a hundred miles off when you are coming to it."

"Has he asked you to go away with him, Harry?"

"No, papa."

"But you would like to do so? Speak out, boy; tell me frankly. Do you wish it?"

"Would he take me, papa?" asked he, timidly.

"Yes."

"And would you let me?" and he spoke with even a fainter voice, and greater anxiety in his look.

"First answer me my question, Harry. Do you wish to go?"

"Yes, papa, greatly."

Luttrell turned away his head and drew his hand across his eyes, and for several minutes did not look round again. When he did, it was to see the boy standing calm, firm, and erect before him. Not a trace of emotion on his features, as his eyes confronted his own.

"I suppose you are right," said Luttrell, half speaking to himself. "I suppose you are right. It is very dreary here!"

"And there are no wild beasts to hunt, nor red men to fight, nor beautiful birds to catch, papa; nor any gold——"

"No, boy! There is not any gold assuredly. But remember, Harry, how many there are here who never saw gold, never heard of it; brave fellows, too, who are not afraid to scale the straightest cliff, nor venture out on the stormiest sea."

"And for what, papa? For a curlew's nest, or a hamper of fish; and he, yonder, tells me, that one good voyage of his barque would buy out all the islands here for ever."

"So, then, you have eaten of the apple already," cried he, with a bitter laugh. "Well, as he has tempted, he may take you. Send him to me."

The boy almost flew in his speed back, and gulping out a word or two, pointed to his father.

"Are you of the same mind, now, that you were an hour or two back? Do you wish to have that boy of mine on board your ship?" asked Luttrell.

"I'll give you a thousand dollars for him down, sir, and you shall keep the gim-cracks."

"You may take him. There must be no money-dealings between us now, sir—I will sell you nothing. Come into the house with me; a very few minutes will be sufficient."

As they walked side by side towards the house, the American, with a quaint brevity, told all that Luttrell could have desired to know of him. He and his craft, the *Quincey Squash*, were well known at Liverpool and London; he was sole owner, and traded in everything, from "lumber" to Leghorn bonnets; he went everywhere, and ventured in everything; in fact, he liked an "assorted cargo of notions" better than a single freight. "I won't say he'll come back a rich man to you, sir, in five years, but you may call me a Creole if he don't know a bit of life. Just look here," said he, as he opened a pocket-map and spread it over the table, "there's ten years of my life marked out on that chart; these lines—some of 'em pretty long ones—is my voyages." Captain—for we must now give him his accustomed title—Captain Dodge spoke fluently, and vain-gloriously, too, of all he had travelled, and all he had seen; of how he had traded for ivory on the Gold Coast, and for furs up at Hudson's Bay; how he had panted in the tropics, and shivered at Behring's Straits. If a little proud of his successes against Malays and

Moors, it was not quite certain that he "had not done" a little mild buccaneering occasionally, when "freights were low and trade was heavy." Not that Luttrell gathered much of what he narrated, for a strange confusion was in his brain, and as he gazed at the chart and tried to follow the lines, a dimness obscured his sight, and he had to turn away and wipe his eyes.

"Wud your honor like the dinner now?" whispered Molly Ryan from the door; "the strange gentleman that was sick is dyin' of hunger."

"Yes, we're quite ready," said Luttrell; and taking a key from a nail, he betook himself to a little closet which formed his cellar. A few bottles of port, and two or three of Burgundy—remnants of a stock which once had been famous—were all that survived, but he took them forth, saying, "I am unlikely to play the host again, let us make festival for the last time."

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE SUPPER AT ARRAN.

WITH all the ardor of an Irish menial to do honor to her master's hospitality, Molly Ryan had taken the unwonted step of laying out the dinner in the "sacristy" of the Abbey, which Luttrell had once on a time intended to have converted into a grand gallery for all his rare and curious objects, and from which he soon desisted, deterred by the cost.

It was a long, narrow, vaulted chamber, with four pointed windows in one wall, and blank niches to correspond to them in the other. If in the cold, unflattering light of day it would have presented an air of cheerless gloom and destitution, not so did it look now, as a great fire of turf blazed and glowed on the ample hearth, and the light of four huge pine-torches flared red from the niches, and threw a warm and mellow glare over everything; while the board was spread with an abundance which would have been utterly wasteful, if some five-and-twenty sailors and fishermen without were not to revel at second-hand, and feed on what fell from the master's table.

Luttrell had heard nothing—knew nothing of this arrangement, and when he was told in a whisper that the dinner was ready in the sacristy, his brow darkened, and his cheek flushed with anger. "We need not have starved them with cold as well as hunger," muttered he, sternly, to the woman; but she knew better than to

await his reproaches, and hastened away to the kitchen.

"To you, who have seen where I live, gentlemen," said he to his guests, "it will be unnecessary to apologize for how I live; I can but say how much I regret it for *your* sakes; custom has made it easy to myself." With this he led the way along a little narrow passage, and then crossing a court-yard, entered the sacristy. If M'Kinlay and the Yankee stared with amazement at the ample preparations to regale them, and the fine old hall—for such it looked—in which they were displayed, Luttrell could scarcely master his astonishment at what he saw, and nothing short of that "dignity which doth hedge" a host as well as "a king," could have prevented him from openly expressing his surprise. Molly whispered a word in his ear, to which as hastily he said, "Certainly, of course," and just as the guests took their seats, Harry, dressed in what remained to him of his best, came forward, and stood near the table. "Sit opposite to me, Harry; the foot of the table is the fitting place for the heir of the house, is it not, Mr. M'Kinlay?"

"And is this your son, sir? is this young gentleman the—the—"

"The boy you picked up at sea," resumed Luttrell, courteously, "and who will be proud to renew his acquaintance with you more pleasantly than it opened."

"Well, young 'un, you've got a jollier color on your cheeks now than when we saw you bobbing behind that bit of broken jibboom! You was blue, that's a fact; but I'm a raw Eastern if you was bluer than the lawyer!"

Poor Mr. M'Kinlay! scarcely had one shame overcome him when came the terror of another; for now, for the first time, did he recognize in the Yankee the terrible tourist of the Welsh mountains. A vague something would cross him as he lay in the lugger, sea-sick and miserable, that the horrid voice, and the horrid look, and the horrid gesture of his fellow-traveller, were not encountered for the first time; but he was too full of his own sorrows to waste a thought on such speculations, and it was only now, as they sat at the same board, eating of the same dish, and hob-nobbing together, that the measure of his conviction became full. "He doesn't know—he cannot know me!" muttered he, "and I have only one blunder to atone for; but who could have thought it was his son!" He turned to engage Harry in conversation, to inquire into his habits, his tastes, and his amusements, but the boy, fascinated by the Yankee's discourse, could not bear to lose



a word of it. Dodge—"Gen'ral" he called himself, as he spoke of those days—Gen'ral Dodge had served in many of the wars of the South American Republic; he had been with Bolivar and against him; he had made and lost his fortune three successive times, had taken part in a buccaneer expedition to Mexico, was imprisoned and condemned to death, and saved by an earthquake that left the jail and one quarter of Santa Fe in ruins. As to his shipwrecks and adventures with pirates, his hunting exploits, his raids either with Indians or against them, they were legion; and certainly to these narratives he imparted a "gusto" and an expression which gave them a marvellous power, occasionally corroborated as they were by material evidence, as when he showed where he had lost the thumb and two fingers of his left hand, the terrible cicatrix in the back of his head from an Indian's attempt to scalp him, and the mark of a bullet which had traversed his body from the neck to the opposite collar-bone. There was no disbelieving a man whose every joint and limb could come into court as his witnesses, not to say that he was one of those men whom few love to contradict. If he were, at some times, rather boastful on the score of his courage and daring, he was, at others, equally frank as to his short-comings in honesty, and he told with an astonishing frankness of some acts which, had they not been committed in unsettled and semi-civilized lands, would worthily have been requited by the galleys.

"Well, old Ramskin!" said he, addressing M'Kinlay—for while he talked he drank freely, and was already in his third bottle of Burgundy, warmed up with occasional "flashes" of brandy—"Well, old Ramskin, I'd guess you'd rather be perched on a tall stool in your counting-house than up on a rock, watching for an Indian scout party; but mark me, it's all prejudice, and for my part I'd rather put a ball in a red-skin than I'd torture a white man with law and parchments." He here diversified his personal recollections by some anecdotes of lawyers, and of the esteem in which their fellow-citizens hold them "Far-West," the whole winding up with a declaration that such creatures "warn't in natur," and only grew out of a rank, rotten, and stagnant condition of society, which, when only stirred by any healthy breeze of public opinion, either "left 'em or lynched 'em." He turned round for the approval of his host to this sentiment, and now saw, for the first time, that he had quitted the table.

"If you had not been so energetic in your censures of my profession, sir,"

said M'Kinlay, "you might have heard Mr. Luttrell asking us to excuse his absence for a few minutes while he spoke to his son."

Perhaps the American felt this rebuke as a sharp one, for he sat in silence for some minutes, when he said, "Am I to have the pleasure of your company to-night when I weigh anchor?"

"Yes; I intend to leave when you do."

"Your business is done then?"

"It is."

"And mine, too," said the American; and each looked at the other, to see who first would divulge his secret.

"I have made arrangements for the guardianship of his son, whom, by the way, I never suspected to be the boy we picked up at sea," said M'Kinlay, thus endeavoring by a half confidence, to obtain the whole of the American's.

"He'll not want such guardianship, I promise you, when he lives a few years with me."

"With you! What do you mean?"

"Just what I say, stranger; that he's coming aboard the *Squash*, bound now for the Isthmus; and, I repeat it, five years with Hairy Dodge will turn him out a long sight cuter than if he passed his 'prenticeship even with yourself."

"It is a strange notion of Mr. Luttrell's—a very strange notion."

The American raised himself up in his seat, and looked as if he were about to resent the speech, but he repressed the temptation, and merely said, "We're going to have lighter weather than we came over in, and a fine bright night besides."

"I hope so, with all my heart," said the other; and now each sat and sipped his wine in silence.

Leaving them thus, let us turn one moment to Luttrell, as he stood at the window of his room, with his boy beside him. There was neither lamp nor candle, but a strong moonlight streamed into the chamber, and their shadows were distinctly marked upon the floor.

"Why is Molly crying so bitterly, papa? Sure I'm not going away for ever!" said Harry.

"I hope not—I think not; but when people part some are always faint-hearted about the chances of meeting again."

"But you are not, papa?"

Luttrell did not answer for a few seconds. "Are you quite sure, Harry, that this life is what you like? I mean," said he, correcting himself quickly—"I mean, would you not rather live here till you were a



man, and make Arran your home, as it is mine now?"

"No, papa. I'd like to see the countries that the Captain told of, and see some of the things he did, and then come back very rich, and build a fine castle here, and a great pier out in the sea, and have the finest cutter that ever sailed."

"But, before all this can come to pass, bethink you what a hard life is before you—what days of storm and nights of weariness. You may be hardly used, and have none to pity you—be ill, and not have one to speak kindly to you. Are you ready for all this, Harry?"

"I suppose I must bear it if I want to be a man;" and he drew himself up proudly as he spoke.

"You'll have to remember, too, sir, that you are a gentleman," said Luttrell, almost sternly; "that there are scores of mean and shabby things the fellows around may do, a Luttrell must not stoop to. Keep your word when you once pledge it; insult no man willingly; fight him who insults you; and never, if it be your fortune to command others, never say 'Go,' in a moment of danger, but 'Come.'"

"I'll not forget that," said the boy, seriously.

"Keep this purse, Harry. It was one your mother knitted, many years ago. The few guineas that are in it spend when and how you like; only remember that when gone they cannot easily be replaced by me. And now give me a kiss, for they must see us part easily."

The boy sprang into his arms, and held him fast in his embrace, while he kissed him over and over; and Luttrell parted the hair upon his forehead, kissing him tenderly there, as he muttered a few words beneath his breath.

"There, go back to them Harry, and tell them I will join them presently."

As Harry left the room, Luttrell lighted his lamp, and sat down at his table to write. It was to Vyner he addressed himself, and intended to be as brief as might be—very little, indeed, more than the intimation that he had accepted the trust proposed to him, and begged in turn Vyner would do as much by him, and consent to be the guardian of his boy, should he be left fatherless.

"I ask this with all the more confidence," wrote he, "that your kind interest in poor Harry is so fresh in my mind, and all your generous offers to befriend him are the only cheering thoughts that occur to me in this, one of the gloomiest moments of my life.

"An American trading captain, led hither by an accident, has captivated the boy's imagination by stories of travel and adventure, and I have consented to let Harry go with him. To remain here and live as I have done was open to him; he could have succeeded me in this wild spot without the bitterness of feeling the fall that led to it; but, in the restless spirit of our race, he might some day or other have emerged, and I dreaded to imagine what a semi-savage Luttrell would be; strong of limb, vigorous, daring, and ignorant, with pride of blood and poverty to stimulate him. What is there he might not have done in a fancied retribution against a world that had crushed his race and ruined his family—for such were the lessons he has been learning from his cradle, the only teachings he has ever had!

"The hardships of life at sea will be better training than these. The boy is very like me. I would sorrow over it, Vyner, if I did not count on that resemblance for your love to him. In one respect, however, we are not like. Harry *can* forgive an injury. Who knows, however, what he might become were he to grow up in daily contact with me? for I dreaded to mark how each year seemed to develop the Luttrell more and more in his nature. Now pride of birth with prosperity may lead to intolerance and oppression, but leash it with poverty and it will conduce to violence, perhaps to crime.

"Before the mast he will see things differently. Night-watches and hard junk are stern teachers. To rescue him from my influence, to save him from me, I send him away, and leave myself childless. I can scarcely expect that you will be able to follow me in these reasonings. How could you, happy as you are in every accident of your life, blessed in everything that gives value to existence? I feel I shall never see him again; but I feel, too, just as confidently, that at some day or other—distant it may be—you and he will meet and talk of me, speaking in love and affection, forgiving much, pitying all.

"Say nothing of this guardianship to your wife, lest it should lead her to speak of me; or, at all events, wait till I am gone. Talk of me then they may, for there is no voice so eloquent to defend as the wind that sighs through the long grass over our graves!

"I have made a will, not very formally, perhaps, but there is none likely to contest it. What a grand immunity there is in beggary! and Cane and Co. will, I apprehend, if called upon, vouch for me in

that character. There are several lawsuits which have dragged on their slow course for two generations of us. I believe I myself continued the contests rather as obligations of honor than aught else. Harry was not trained with such principles, however, and I shall leave to your discretion whether our claims be abandoned or maintained.

"Last, but far from least of all, the family to which Harry's mother belonged contains many very bold, restless, and I might say dangerous, men. One of the reasons of my retirement to this lonely spot was the security I possessed in the midst of my own wild islanders against demands not always urged with moderation. They are not likely to forget the near relationship to my boy, if they can make it a source of profit; or, failing that, to convert it to a matter of menace. On every account, therefore, I entreat that he may not come back here, or, if so, but passingly.

"I hope he will never sell these islands; they would be a sorry commodity in the market, and they are the oldest possessions of our name in this kingdom. When Henry the Second sent John de Luttrell as Envoy to Rome—but where am I straying to? The shouts that ring without tell me that all is ready for their departure, and in a few moments more I shall be alone in the world. Think of me sometimes, dear friend, even if the thought come in your happy hours to dash its joys with sadness; but do not speak of—last of all, do not write to—

"Yours, while he lives,

"JOHN HAMILTON LUTTRELL.

"I am half ashamed to add one other request; but if my cheeks grow red as I write, my heart will be the calmer when it is written. Be a friend to my boy in all ways that your kindness, your sympathy, your counsel can dictate. Guide, direct, encourage, or, if need be, reprove him; but never, whatever you do, aid him with your purse. It is on this condition alone I commit him to you. Remember!"

"They are growing impatient, papa," said the boy, entering the room half timidly. "It is nigh flood, and we shall want all the ebb to take us round the Caskets."

"And are *you* so impatient to be off, Harry?" said he in a low soft voice; "do you wish to leave me, Harry?"

"Not if you would have me stay, papa; but I thought, I used to think at least—that—"

"That we made but little companionship together, you would say," said Luttrell, mildly; "that we lived too much apart. Well, it is true," said he, with a deep sigh, "quite true." He paused for a moment, and then, with a sort of effort, and in a changed voice, continued, "If I should be no more here when you come back, Harry, do not let this old place fall to ruin. It has sheltered me during many a year of sorrow, and sorrow has a very attaching quality!"

"Papa, I will not go. I will not leave you!" said the boy, falling on his neck, and kissing him over and over.

"You must be manly, sir," said Luttrell, rising and disengaging himself from the boy's embrace. "When men promise, they are bound to keep their word."

The tone, the look, the gesture, full as much as the stern words themselves, recalled Harry to himself, and he drew his hand roughly across his eyes, and stepping back, stationed himself, as he was wont, to hear his father's commands.

"I have written to Sir Gervais Vyner the letter you see here, asking him to be your guardian in case I should die before your return. I have reason to hope he will not refuse me. If he accept, you will obey him in all things. You would obey me, at all events. Whenever you return to England, seek him out, and learn to know him as the last friend I had left me."

"I will, sir."

The calm and resolute tone of the boy seemed for an instant almost to overcome the father, who stood and stared steadfastly at him.

"I have told Sir Gervais," he continued, that he will find you honorable, truthful, and brave; see that my words be borne out. And I have besought him to give you all that his friendship can bestow; but on no account—mind this, boy—on no account assist you with money. You hear me, Harry?"

"I do, sir. I will not forget your words."

"If you should have any immediate call for money, I have told your captain I will repay him for what he will advance you; be thrifty, for I have but little to live on, as you will discover one of these days when it is all your own."

"My dear sir," broke in Mr. McKinlay, as he bustled into the room, all coated and muffled for the journey. "Will you pardon me if I say we shall lose the tide if we delay? This young gentleman's luggage is all on board, and if there be no very urgent reason for deferring our departure, I should take it as a favor to say good-bye."

"There is nothing unreasonable in your



haste, sir," said Luttrell with a faint smile. "This is a place where few would care to dally. I have been saying a few words to my son, before he leaves me. This is the cause of your delay."

"My dear sir, I offer a thousand apologies, and beg to retire at once."

"They are all said, sir. Harry and I have nothing more of any consequence to talk over. If Sir Gervais had not been here himself, Mr. M'Kinlay, I'd have asked you to paint us somewhat less savage than we are. Oh, here comes the captain."

"I say, youngster," cried Dodge, entering, "if you ain't bent on kissin' the ugliest population I ever saw since I left the Feejees, just step out by the back of the house, and make the best of your way down to the shore. Good day, sir. You shall have news of us. Let me see; it will be a matter of six months or so. But I'll have a sharp look out after the 'buoy,' and he'll do well, you'll see. Don't you be surprised if you see him a comin' in some fine morning with a green monkey or a furred baboon. Cheer up, sir! Don't let the buoy see you down-hearted," whispered he. "Come along, Harry! Be lively, my lad; out of that window, and let me find you aboard when I get down."

"Be kind to him!" muttered Luttrell, as he drew his hand hastily across his eyes.

"Lord love ye! I'm the kindest critter that ever breathed. The whole time I was with the Choctaws I never scalped an enemy. I couldn't bear it; and whenever I cut a fellow's head off, I turned him right round, so that I shouldn't see his face. Soft-hearted, warn't it? But that's my natur'. There, I hear them heaving short; so good-bye, for the last time."

"Harry, Harry—one word——"

"He's gone, poor fellow; don't break down his courage. Good-bye. Don't call him back."

"Be it so," said Luttrell, as he sunk down into his chair, and covered his face with his hands. For awhile all was still; then suddenly a wild cheer, a cry, in which the wail of sorrow was blended with the swell of the deep voices crying out; and Luttrell arose, and flung open his window. The lugger was under weigh. The shadow of her full canvas moved slowly along, growing fainter and fainter, at least to eyes that were now dimmed with tears; and when he turned away to wipe them, she was gone.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### A WELCOME HOME.

To welcome Sir Gervais Vyner home, the ladies had invited Sir Within Wardle to dinner—one of those privileged little family meetings, to be of which one must be an honored guest—and so, indeed, did the old baronet with his fine tact understand it; for he was very skillful in comprehending all those situations which make the so-to-say diplomacy of daily life.

He knew that he was admitted to that very pleasant brevet rank, the friend of the family, before whom everything can be said and talked over; and he showed by innumerable little traits how he valued his promotion, and, with a subtlety all his own, talked of himself and his own affairs with an easy confidence that seemed to say, "Here we are, all in secret committee; we may speak as freely as we like."

The dinner was a very pleasant one. Vyner gave an amusing account of his Irish experiences, spoke of everything and every one but Luttrell, for his was a name that was never mentioned amongst them. Indeed, in the wrong that the Courtenays had done him was the seal that closed their lips; for while we can talk, and talk fluently of those who have injured us, of such as we have ourselves injured, we are dumb.

Sir Within saw, with the old craft of his trade, that there was a reserve; he smelt it like a secret treaty, but it did not touch him, and he was indifferent about it. He joined with the ladies warmly in their depreciation of Ireland as a residence, and laughingly concurred in their insistence that they were never to be asked to go there.

As to the project of adopting the little peasant girl, they made it the subject of much pleasant banter; for, of course, Vyner was totally unable to reply to one-tenth of the questions which the matter suggested.

"We will suppose she is very pretty, and, what is still harder to believe, we will suppose that she'll grow up prettier, what is to come of it? what do you intend her to be?" said Georgina.

"Yes," said Sir Within, "let us look a little to what Italians call *e poi!*"

"When well brought up, and well educated, she might surely be a governess," said Lady Vyner, coming to her husband's rescue.

"And was it worth while to withdraw her from the drudgery she knew, to enter upon a slavery that she never heard of?" asked Georgina.



"To tell truth," said Vyner, "I must confess I was thinking more of the benefit to Ada, the advantage she would have in a joyous, high-spirited creature of her own age, that might make her hours of lessons more full of emulation, and her play hours pleasanter."

Sir Within bowed a courteous assent to a speech principally addressed to himself.

"And," continued Sir Gervais, bolder for this encouragement, "and as to forecasting what is to happen to any of us, even if we be alive, some ten or twelve years hence, I really own I don't think it is called for."

"I am not sure of that," said Sir Within. "I have made up my mind to live about five-and-thirty years more, and even speculated on how I am to live it."

"Do let us hear your plan," said Georgina, with a slight flush of eagerness in her face.

"I have two," said he; "and as there is not a little to be said for each, I hesitate between them."

"We cannot pretend to be of any use in counselling you, unfortunately," said Lady Vyner; "but if there be anything which what you slightly call 'woman's wit' can add to your own reasonings, we offer it freely."

"I am deeply, infinitely gratified; your kindness is most acceptable. My first plan is one with whose details I am but too conversant. It is to live an old bachelor."

The ladies looked at each other, and then looked down. They did not very well see what was to be said, and they said nothing, though, by his silence, he seemed to expect a remark.

"Well," said Vyner, trying to break the awkward pause, "you at least know its resources, and what such a mode of life can offer."

"A good deal," resumed Sir Within. "A well cultivated selfishness has very great resources, if one has only sufficient means to indulge them. You can, what is called, live well, consult the climate that suits you, frequent the society that you like, know the people that you care to know, buy the picture, the horse, the statue that takes your fancy. You can do anything and be anything but one."

"And what is that?"

"Be happy—that is denied you! I am not, of course, speculating on any supreme bliss. I leave all these divine notions to novelists and play-writers; but I speak of that moderate share of daily contentment which we in our mundane humility call happiness; this you cannot have."

"But, if I mistake not, you have given all the ingredients of it in your late description," said Georgina.

"And the Chinese cook got all the ingredients to make a plum-pudding, but he forgot to tie the bag that held them; so is it the old bachelor's life has no completeness; it wants what the French call *l'ensemble*."

"Then why not tie the bag, Sir Within?" asked Lady Vyner, laughing.

The old diplomatist's eyes sparkled with a wicked drollery, and his mouth curved into a half-malicious smile, when Sir Gervais quietly said,—

"She means, why not marry?"

"Ah, marry!" exclaimed he, throwing up his eyebrows with an air that said, "here is a totally new field before us!" and then, as quickly recovering, he said, "Yes, certainly. There is marriage! But, somehow, I always think on this subject of a remark Charles de Rochefoucauld once made me. He said he was laid up once with an attack of gout in a château near Naney, without a single friend or acquaintance, and, to beguile the weary hours, he used to play chess with himself, so that at last he fancied that he was very fond of the game. When he came up to Paris afterwards, he engaged a person to come every day and play with him; but to his horror he discovered that he could no longer win when he pleased, and he gave up the pursuit and never resumed it. This is, perhaps, one of the discoveries men like myself make when they marry."

"Not if they marry wisely, Sir Within," said Lady Vyner.

"I declare," broke in Georgina, hastily, "I think Sir Within is right. Telling a person to marry wisely is saying, 'Go and win that thirty thousand pounds in the lottery.'"

"At all events," said Vyner, "you'll never do it if you don't take a ticket."

"But to do that," said Lady Vyner, laughingly, "one ought to dream of a lucky number, or consult a sorceress at least."

"Ah! if you would but be the sorceress, Lady Vyner," exclaimed he, with a mingled seriousness and drollery.

"And tell you, I suppose, when you ought to venture?"

"Just so."

"Am I so certain that you would respect my divination? A prophet can't afford to be slighted."

"I promise," said he; and rising from his seat, he extended his right hand in imitation of a famous incident of the period, and exclaimed, "Je jure!"

"It is then agreed," said she, quietly, but with a slight show of humor. "If it should ever be revealed to me—intimated to my inner consciousness is the phrase, I believe—that a particular person was Heaven-sent for your especial happiness, I'll immediately go and tell you."

"And I'll marry her."

"Her consent is, of course, not in question whatever," said Georgina: "but I think so gallant a person as Sir Within might have mentioned it."

"So I should, if Lady Vyner hadn't said she was Heaven-sent. When the whole thing became destiny, it was only obedience was called for."

"You're a lucky fellow," cried Vyner, "if you're not married off before Easter. There's nothing so dangerous as giving a commission of this kind to a woman."

"Sir Within knows he can trust me; he knows that I feel all the responsibility of my charge. It is very possible that I may be too exacting—too difficult——"

"I pray you do so," cried he, with much eagerness.

"Do you see how he wants to get off?" said Vyner; "like certain capricious ladies, he'd like to see all the wares in the shop, and buy nothing."

"I fancy it's pretty much what he has done already," said Georgina, in a half-whisper; but the butler put an end to the discussion by announcing that Mr. M'Kinlay had just arrived.

"Shall we go into the drawing-room?" said Georgina to her sister.

"If you like; but he'll certainly come in to tea," was the answer.

"Well, it is at least a reprove," said she, with a dreary sigh; and they retired.

As they left by one door, Mr. M'Kinlay entered the room by the other. After a cordial greeting, Sir Gervais presented him to Sir Within, and began to question him about his journey.

"Well, Sir Gervais," said he, after a long-drawn breath, "it is no exaggeration if I say, that I have not another client in the world for whom I would undergo the same fatigues, not to say dangers."

"My friend, Mr. M'Kinlay, has been on an excursion of some peril and much hardship," said Sir Vyner to Sir Within.

"Ah? In Canada, I presume."

"No, sir," resumed M'Kinlay, "far worse—ininitely worse than Canada."

"You speak of Newfoundland, perhaps."

"Excuse me, sir, I mean Ireland, and not merely Ireland itself—though I believe a glutton in barbarism might satiate himself there—but worse again, sir—I have

been over to visit some islands, wretched rocks without vegetation—well would it be could I say without inhabitants—off the west coast, and in, actually in the wild Atlantic Ocean!"

"The Arran Islands," interposed Vyner, who saw that Sir Within was doubtful of the geography.

"Yes, sir; had they called them the Barren Islands there would have been some fitness in the designation." Mr. M'Kinlay appeared the better for his very small drollery, and drank off a bumper of claret, which also seemed to do him good.

"And was the estate you wished to purchase in these wild regions?" asked Sir Within.

"No; my friend's mission to Arran was only remotely connected with the purchase. In fact, he went in search of an old friend of mine, whose assistance I needed, and whose caprice it was to retire to that desolate spot, and leave a world in which he might have been a very conspicuous figure. I am not at liberty to tell his name, though, perhaps, you might never have heard it before. M'Kinlay will, however, give us an account of his reception, and all that he saw there."

"My troubles began," said Mr. M'Kinlay, "almost immediately after we parted. You remember that on our last evening, at Westport it was, that the waiter informed me a gentleman then in the house had engaged a lugger to take him over to Innismore, the very island I wanted to reach. I commissioned the man to arrange if he could with the gentleman to accept me as a fellow-traveller. It was settled, accordingly, that we were to sail with the ebb tide at eight o'clock the next morning. My first shock, on reaching the pier, was to see what they called the lugger. She was a half-decked tub! I say tub, for her whole length was certainly not double her breadth. She was tarred all over, her sails were patched, her ropes knotted, and for ballast she had some blocks of granite in a bed of shingle, which shifted even as she lay surging in the harbor. They—the sailors, I mean—answered my questions so rudely, and with so much ferocity of look and demeanor, that I was actually afraid to refuse going on board, lest they should take it as an offence, though I would willingly have given five guineas to be excused the expedition, and wait for a more responsible-looking craft. My fellow-traveller, too, a very rough-looking, and evidently sea-faring man, settled the point, as, seeing my hesitation, he said, 'Well, sir, ain't the boat good enough for you? Why don't you



step aboard?' The faces of the bystanders quickly decided me, and I went down the plank praying for my safety, and cursing the day I ever saw Ireland."

Our reader would probably not thank us to follow Mr. M'Kinlay in his narrative, which, indeed, only contained sorrows common to many besides himself—the terrors of being shipwrecked added to the miseries of sea-sickness. He told how, through all his agonies, he overheard the discussions that overwhelmed him with terror, whether they could "carry" this, or "take in" that; if such a thing would "hold," or such another "give way;" and lastly, whether it were better to bear away for Cork or Bantry, or stand out to open sea, and—Heaven knows where! "Terrors that will keep me," cried he, "in nightmares for the rest of my life!"

"At last—it was all that was wanting to fill the measure of my fears—I heard a sailor say, 'There! she's over at last!' 'Who's over?' cried I.

"'The fishing boat that was down to leeward, sir,' answered he. 'They're all lost.'

"'Lucky for them,' said I to myself, 'if it's over so soon. This prolonged agony is a thousand deaths.' 'They're on the spars; I see them!' cried my fellow-traveller; 'slack off.' I forget what he said, but it was to slack off something, and run down for them. This atrocious proposal rallied me back to strength again, and I opposed it with an energy, indeed with a virulence, that actually astonished myself. I asked by what right he took the command of the lugger, and why he presumed to imperil my life—valuable to a number of people—for God knows what or whom. I vowed the most terrific consequences when we got on shore again, and declared I would have him indicted for a constructive manslaughter, if not worse. I grew bolder as I saw the sailors, fully alive to our danger, were disposed to take part with me against him, when the fellow, one of the greatest desperadoes I ever met, and, as I afterwards found out, a Yankee pirate and slaver—drew a pistol from his breast, and presented it at the helmsman, saying, 'Down your helm or I'll shoot you!' and as the man obeyed, he turned to me and said, 'If I hear another word out of your mouth, I'll put an ounce ball in you, as sure as my name is'—I think he said 'Hairy.' I believe I fainted; at least, I only was aware of what was going on around me as I saw them dragging on board a half-drowned boy, with a flag in his hand, who turned out to be the son of Mr. Lut—"

"'There, there, M'Kinlay,'" burst in Vyner, all this agitates you far too much—don't go on, I'll not permit you. To-morrow, after a good sleep, and a hearty breakfast, I'll make you finish your story; but positively I'll not listen to another word now." The hastily thrown glance of displeasure showed the lawyer that this was a command, and he hung his head, and muttered out an awkward concurrence.

"Won't you take more wine, Sir Within?"

"No more, thank you. Your capital Bordeaux has made me already exceed my usual quantity."

"Let us ask the ladies, then, for a cup of tea," said Vyner, as he opened the door; and, as M'Kinlay passed out, he whispered, "I just caught you in time!"

The ladies received Mr. M'Kinlay with that sort of cool politeness which is cruel enough when extended to the person one sees every day, but has a touch of sarcasm in it when accorded to him who has just come off a long journey.

Now, in the larger gatherings of the world, social preferences are scarcely felt, but they can be very painful things in the small, close circle of a family party.

"You have been to Ireland, Mr. M'Kinlay—I hope you were pleased with your tour? Won't you have some tea?" said Lady Vyner, with the same amount of interest in each question.

"Mr. M'Kinlay must have proved a most amusing guest," said Georgina, in a low voice to Sir Within, "or we should have seen you in the drawing-room somewhat earlier."

"I felt it an age," said he, with a little bow and a smile, intended to be of intense captivation.

"But still you remained," said she, with a sort of pique.

"*Ma foi!* What was to be done? The excellent man got into a story of his adventures, a narrative of a shipwreck which had not—as I was cruel enough to regret—befallen him, and which, I verily believe, might have lasted all night, if by some lucky chance he had not approached so near a topic of some delicacy, or reserve, that your brother-in-law closed 'the séance,' and stopped him; and to this accident I owe my freedom."

"I wonder what it could have been!"

"I cannot give you the faintest clue to it. Indeed I can't fashion to my imagination what are called family secrets—very possibly because I never had a family."

Though Georgina maintained the conversation for some time longer, keeping up that little game of meaningless remark and

reply which suffices for tea-table talk, her whole mind was bent upon what could possibly be the mystery he alluded to. Taking the opportunity of a moment when Sir Within was addressing a remark to Lady Vyner, she moved half carelessly away towards the fire-place, where Mr. M'Kinlay sipped his tea in solitude, Sir Gervais being deep in the columns of an evening paper.

"I suppose you are very tired, Mr. M'Kinlay?" said she; and simple as were the words, they were uttered with one of those charming smiles, that sweet captivation of look and intonation, which are the spells by which fine ladies work their miracles on lesser mortals; and, as she spoke, she seated herself on a sofa, gracefully drawing aside the folds of her ample dress, to convey the intimation that there was still place for another.

While Mr. M'Kinlay looked rather longingly at the vacant place, wondering whether he might dare to take it, a second gesture, making the seat beside her still more conspicuous, encouraged him, and he sat down, pretty much with the mixed elation and astonishment he might have felt had the Lord Chancellor invited him to a place beside him on the wool-sack.

"I am so sorry not to have heard your account—the most interesting account, my brother tells me—of your late journey," began she; "and really, though the recital must bring back very acute pain, I am self-ish enough to ask you to brave it."

"I am more than repaid for all, Miss Courtenay, in the kind interest you vouch-safe to bestow on me."

After which she smiled graciously, and seemed a little—a very little—flurried, as though the speech savored of gallantry, and then, with a regained serenity, she went on, "you narrowly escaped shipwreck, I think?"

"So narrowly, that I believe every varying emotion that can herald in the sad catastrophe passed through me, and I felt every pang, except the last of all."

"How dreadful! Where did it happen?"

"Off the west coast of Ireland, Miss Courtenay. Off what mariners declare to be the most perilous lee-shore in Europe, if not in the world; and in an open boat too, at least but half decked, and on a day of such storm that, except ourselves and the unlucky yawl that was lost, not another sail was to be seen."

"And were the crew lost?"

"No; it was in saving them, as they clung to the floating spars, that we were so near perishing ourselves."

"But you *did* save them?"

"Every one. It was a daring act; so daring that, landsman as I was, I deemed it almost foolhardy. Indeed, our crew at first resisted, and wouldn't do it."

"It was nobly done, be assured, Mr. M'Kinlay; these are occasions well bought at all their cost of danger. Not only is a man higher for them in his own esteem, but that to all who know him, who respect, who——" She hesitated, and in a flurried sort of way, suddenly said, "And where did you land them?"

"We landed them on the island," said he, with an almost triumphant air—"we brought them back to their own homes—dreary enough in all conscience; but they never knew better."

"How is the place called?"

"Innishmore, the most northern of the Arran Islands," said he in a whisper, and looking uneasily over at Sir Gervais, to see that he was not overheard.

"Is the place interesting, or picturesque, or are there any objects of interest?" said she, carelessly, and to let him recover his former composure.

"None whatever," continued he, in the same cautious voice; "mere barbarism, and such poverty as I never witnessed before. In the house where we were received—the only thing worthy the name of a house in the place—the few articles of furniture were made of the remnants thrown on shore from shipwrecks; and we had on the dinner-table earthenware pipkins, tin cups, glasses, and wooden measures indiscriminately. While as if to heighten the incongruity, a flagon of silver, which had once been gilt too, figured in the midst, and displayed a very strange crest—a heart rent in two, with the motto *La Lutte rielle*, a heraldic version of the name."

"Luttrell!" whispered she, still lower. "What is his Christian name?"

"John Hamilton. But, my dear Miss Courtenay, where have you been leading me all this time? These are all secrets; at least Sir Gervais enjoined me especially not to speak of where I had been, nor with whom. I am aware it was out of respect for the feelings of this unfortunate man, who, however little trace there remained of it, has once been a gentleman and a man of some fortune."

"If you never tell my brother that you have revealed this to me, I promise you I'll not speak of it," said she; and with all her effort to appear calm, her agitation nearly overcome her.

"You may depend upon me, Miss Courtenay."







McKinlay repairing damages after the storm.



"Nor to my sister," murmured she, still dwelling on her own thoughts.

"Certainly not. It was a great indiscretion—that is, it would have been a great indiscretion to have mentioned this to any one less—less——"

While he was searching his brain for an epithet, she arose and walked to a window, and Mr. M'Kinlay, rather shocked at his own impetuous frankness, sat thinking over all that he had said.

"Come, Sir Within," cried Vyner, "here's my friend M'Kinlay, a capital whist player. What say you to a rubber? and Georgina, will you join us?"

"Not to-night, Gervais. Laura will take my place."

Lady Vyner acceded good naturedly, with many excuses for all her ignorance of the game, and while Sir Within and Vyner held a little amicable contest for her as a partner, Georgina drew again nigh to where M'Kinlay was standing.

"Did he look very old and broken?" asked she, in a low but shaken voice.

"Terribly broken."

"What age would you guess him to be?"

"Fifty-four, or five; perhaps older."

"Absurd!" cried she, peevishly; "he's not forty."

"I spoke of what he seemed to be; his hair is perfectly white, he stoops considerably, and looks, in fact, the remains of a shattered, broken man, who never at any time was a strong one."

An insolent curl moved her mouth, but she bit her lips, and with an effort said, "Did you see his wife?"

"He is a widower; except the little boy that we rescued from the wreck, he has none belonging to him."

"Come along, M'Kinlay, we are waiting for you," cried Sir Gervais; and the lawyer moved away, while Georgina, with a motion of her finger to her lips, to enjoin secrecy, turned and left the room.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### SOME WORDS AT PARTING.

It was as the Vyners sat at breakfast the following morning that the servant announced the arrival of an old countryman and a little girl, who had just come by the stage.

"Oh! may I go, papa—may I go and see her?" cried Ada, eagerly; but Sir Gervais had stooped across to whisper something to his wife, and the governess, deeming the

moment favorable to exert her authority, moved away at once with her charge.

"The peasant child that we told you of, Sir Within," said Lady Vyner, "has arrived, and it is a rare piece of fortune you are here, for we shall steal a travelling opinion out of you."

"In what way may I hope to be of use?"

"In telling us what you think of her. I mean, of her temper, character, disposition; in short, how you, with that great tact you possess in reading people, interpret her."

"You flatter me much, Lady Vyner; but any skill I may possess in these respects is rather applicable to people in our own rank of life, where conventionalities have a great share, now in hiding, now in disclosing traits of character. As to the simple child of nature, I suspect I shall find myself all at fault."

"But you are a phrenologist, too?" said Sir Gervais.

"A believer, certainly, but no accomplished professor of the science."

"I declare it is very nervous work to be in company with a magician, who reads one like an open volume," said Georgina. "What do you say, Mr. M'Kinlay, if we take a walk in the garden, while these learned chemists perform their analyses?"

Mr. M'Kinlay's eyes sparkled with delight, though he had to stammer out his excuses: He was going to start off for town; he must meet the "up mail" somewhere, and his conveyance was already waiting at the gate.

"Then I'll stroll down the avenue with you," said she, rising. "I'll go for my bonnet."

"Let me have the draft as early as you can, M'Kinlay, whispered Sir Gervais, as he drew the lawyer into a window-recess. "I don't think Luttrell will like acting with Grenfell, and I would ask my friend, Sir Within here, to be the other trustee."

"No; he certainly did not seem to like Grenfell, though he owned he did not know him."

"Then as to his own boy, I'll write to him myself; it will be more friendly. Of course, all these matters are between ourselves."

"Of course."

"I mean strictly so; because Lady Vyner's family and the Luttrells have had some differences, years and years ago. Too long a story to tell you now, and scarcely worth telling at any time; however, it was one of those unfinished games—you understand—where each party accuses the other

of unfair play, and there are no quarrels less repairable. I say this much simply to show you the need of all your caution, and how the name 'Luttrell' must never escape you."

Mr. M'Kinlay would like to have declared at once that the imprudence had been committed, and that the warning had come too late; but it required more time than he then had at his disposal to show by what a mere slip it had occurred, and at the same time how innocently the tidings had fallen. Lastly, there was his pride as a business man in the way—the same sort of infallibility which makes popes and bank cashiers a little less and more than all humanity—so he simply bowed and smiled, and muttered a something that implied a perfect acquiescence. And now he took his leave, Lady Vyner graciously hoping soon to see him again; and Sir Within, with a courtesy that had often delighted arch-duchesses, declaring the infinite pleasure it would afford him to see him at Dalradern, with which successes triumphant, he shook Vyner's hand, and hastened out to meet Miss Courtenay.

It is a very strange thing to mark how certain men, trained and inured to emergencies of no mean order—the lawyer and the doctor, for instance—who can await with unshaken courage the moment in which duty will summon them to efforts on whose issue another's life is hanging—I say, it is a strange thing to mark how such men are unnerved and flurried by that small by-play of society which fine ladies go through without a sensation or an emotion. The little common-place attentions, the weak flatteries, the small coquetries that are the every-day incidents of such a sphere, strike them as all full of a direct application, a peculiar significance, when addressed to themselves; and thus was it Mr. M'Kinlay issued forth, imbued with a strong conviction that he had just taken leave of a charming family, endowed with many graceful gifts, amongst which conspicuously shone the discernment they showed in understanding himself.

"I see it," muttered he, below his breath—"I see it before me. There will come a day when I shall cross this threshold on still safer ground. When Sir Gervais will be Vyner, and even—"

"I trust I have not kept you waiting?" said the very sweetest of voices, as Miss Courtenay, drawing her shawl around her, came forward. "I sincerely hope I have not perilled your journey; but I went to fetch you a rose. Here it is. Is it not pretty? They are the true Japanese roses, but they have no odor."

Mr. M'Kinlay was in ecstasy; he declared that the flower was perfection; there never was such grace of outline, such delicacy of coloring, such elegance of form; and he protested that there was a faint, a very faint, but delicious perfume also.

Georgina laughed, one of those sweet-ringing little laughs beauties practice—just as great pianists do those seemingly haphazard chords they throw off, as in careless mood they find themselves before a piano—and they now walked along, side by side towards the gate.

"You don't know in what a position of difficulty my indiscretion of yesterday evening has placed me, Miss Courtenay," said he. "Here has been Sir Gervais enjoining me to the strictest secrecy."

"You may trust me to the fullest extent; and tell me, what was your business with Luttrell?"

"You shall know all. Indeed, I have no desire to keep secrets from you." It was somewhat of a hazardous speech, particularly in the way it was uttered; but she received it with a very sweet smile, and he went on, "My journey had for its object to see this Mr. Luttrell, and induce him to accept a trusteeship to a deed."

"For this child?"

"Yes; the same."

"But she is his daughter, is she not?"

"No; he had but one child, the boy I spoke of."

"Who told you so? Luttrell himself, perhaps, or some of his people. At all events, do you believe it?"

He was a good deal startled by the sharp, quick, peremptory tone she now spoke in, so like her wonted manner, but so widely unlike her late mood of captivating softness, and for a second or two he did not answer.

"Tell me frankly, do you believe it?" cried she.

"I see no reason to disbelieve it," was his reply.

"Is the boy older than this girl?" asked she, quickly.

"I should say so. Yes, certainly. I think so, at least."

"And I am almost as certain he is not," said she, in the same determined tone. "Now for another point. My brother Vyner is about to make a settlement on this girl, is it not so?"

"Yes; I have instructions to prepare a deed."

"And do you believe—is it a thing that your experience warrants you to believe—that he contemplates this for the child of Heaven knows whom, found Heaven knows where? Tell me that!"



"It is strange, no doubt, and it surprised me greatly, and at first I couldn't credit it."

"Nor you don't now! No, no, Mr. M'Kinlay, don't be a churl of your confidence. This girl is a Luttrell; confess it?"

"On my honor, I believe she is not."

"Then I take it they are cleverer folk than I thought them, for they seem to have deceived you."

"We shall not do it, sir, in the time," cried the postilion from his saddle, "unless we start at once."

"Yes, yes, I am coming. If you would write to me, Miss Courtenay, any of your doubts—if you would allow me to write to you."

"What for, sir? I have no doubts. I don't certainly see how all this came about; nor—not having Mr. Grenfell's acquaintance, who was with my brother—am I likely to find out; but I know quite as much as I care to know."

"You suspect—I see what you suspect," said Mr. M'Kinlay, hoping by one clever dash to achieve the full measure of her confidence.

"What is it I suspect?" asked she, with an air of innocent curiosity.

"You suspect," said he, slowly, while he looked intently into her eyes at the time, "you suspect that Sir Gervais means by adopting this child to make some sort of reparation to Luttrell."

"A what, sir?" said she, opening her eyes to almost twice the usual size, while her nostrils dilated with passion. "What did you dare to mean by that word?"

"My dear Miss Courtenay, I am miserable, the most wretched of men, if I have offended you."

"There's eleven now striking, sir, and we may as well send the horses back," cried the postilion, sulkily.

"There, sir, you hear what he says; pray don't be late on my account. Good-bye. I hope you'll have no more disasters. Good-bye."

For a moment he thought to hasten after her, and try to make his peace; but great interests called him back to town, and, besides, he might in his confusion only make bad worse. It was a matter of much thought, and so, with a deep sigh, he stepped into the chaise and drove away, with a far heavier heart than he had carried from the porch of the cottage.

"I must have called a wrong witness," muttered he, "there's no doubt of it; *she* belonged to 'the other side.'"

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## MALONE IN GOOD COMPANY.

WHEN Georgina returned to the drawing-room, she found her sister seated on a sofa, with Sir Within beside her, and in front of them stood a girl, whose appearance certainly answered ill to the high-flown descriptions Sir Gervais had given them of her beauty.

With the evident intention of making a favorable first impression, her grandfather had dressed her up in some faded relics of Mrs. Luttrell's wardrobe; a blue silk dress, flounced and trimmed, reaching to her feet, while a bonnet of some extinct shape shadowed her face and concealed her hair, and a pair of satin boots, so large that they curved up, Turkish fashion, towards the toes, gave her the look rather of some wandering circus performer, than of a peasant child.

"*Je la trouve affreusement laide!*" said Lady Vyner, as her sister came forward and examined her with a quiet and steady stare through her eyeglass.

"She is certainly nothing like the sketch he made, and still less like the description he gave of her," said Georgina, in French. "What do you say, Sir Within?"

"There is something—not exactly beauty—about her," said he, in the same language, "but something that, cultivated and developed, might possibly be attractive. Her eyes have a strange color in them; they are gray, but they are of that gray that gets a tinge of amethyst when excited."

While they thus spoke, the girl had turned from one to the other, listening attentively, and as eagerly watching the expressions of the listeners' faces, to gather what she might of their meaning.

"Your name is Kitty—Kitty O'Hara, I think?" said Lady Vyner. "A very good name, too, is O'Hara!"

"Yes, my lady. There is an O'Hara lives at Craig-na-Manna, in his own castle."

"Are you related to him?" asked Georgina, gravely.

"No, my lady."

"Distantly, perhaps, you might be?"

"Perhaps we might; at all events, he never said so!"

"And you think, probably, it was more for him to own the relationship than for you to claim it?"

The girl was silent, and looked thoughtful; and Lady Vyner said, "I don't think she understood you, Georgina?"

"Yes I did, my lady; but I didn't know what to say?"

"At all events," said Georgina, "you don't call each other cousins."

The child nodded.

"And yet, Kitty, if I don't mistake greatly, you'd like well enough to have some grand relations—fine, rich people, living in their own great castle?"

"Yes, I'd like that!" said the girl. And her cheeks glowed, while her eyes deepened into the color the old baronet described.

"And if we were to be to you as these same cousins, Kitty," said Lady Vyner, good-naturedly, do you think you could love us, and be happy with us?"

The girl turned her head and surveyed the room with a quiet, leisurely look, and, though it was full of objects new and strange, she did not let her gaze dwell too long on any one in particular; and in a quiet steady tone, said, "I'd like to live here!"

"Yes; but you have only answered half of her ladyship's question," said Sir Within. "She asked, could you love her?"

The girl turned her eyes full on Georgina, and, after a steady stare, she looked in Lady Vyner's face, and said, "I could love *you!*" The emphasis plainly indicating what she meant.

"I think there can be very little mistake there," said Georgina, in French. "I at least have not captivated her at first sight."

"Ma foi, she is more savage than I thought her," said Sir Within in the same language.

"No," said she, quickly catching at the sound of the word, "I am not a savage!" And there was a fierce energy in the way she spoke actually startling.

"My dear child," said he, gently, "I did not call you so."

"And if he had," interposed Miss Courtenay, "gentlemen are not accustomed to be rebuked by such as you!"

The girl's face grew scarlet; she clenched her hands together, and the joints cracked as the fingers strained and twisted in her grasp.

"You have much to learn, Kitty," said Lady Vyner; "but if you are a good child, gentle and obedient, we will try and teach you."

The child curtsied her thanks.

"Take off that odious bonnet, Georgy, and let us see her better."

The girl stared with amazement at hearing her head-dress so criticised, and followed it with her eyes wistfully.

"Yes; she is much better now."

"What splendid hair!" said Sir William, in French.

"You have got pretty hair, he says," said Georgina.

"This is prettier," said the child, as she lifted the amber beads of her necklace and displayed them proudly.

"They are very pretty too, and real amber."

"Amber and gold," said the girl, proudly.

"Now she looks like the picture of her," said Lady Vyner, in French; "she positively is pretty. The horrid dress disfigured her altogether."

Sir Gervais entered the room hastily at this moment, and whispered a few words in his wife's ear, concluding aloud: "Let her go to Ada; she is in the garden. You can go this way Kitty," said he, opening one of the French windows; "cross over the grass to that little wooden gate yonder, and the path will bring you to the garden. You'll find a young lady there who would like to know you."

"May I have my bonnet?" asked she, wistfully.

"No; go without it. You'll be freer!"

"I must ask you to let me show you this old man. He has submitted me to a cross-examination so sharp and searching for the last half-hour, that I really want a little rest."

Whatever absurdity the pretension of dress had thrown around the girl, nothing of the same kind was observable in the appearance of the old man, who, in his long coat of bluish grey frieze, and with his snow-white hair falling on his shoulders stood before them. His air, too, was thoroughly respectful; but neither abashed by the presence in which he found himself, nor, stranger still for an Irish peasant, at all excited to any show of curiosity by the rich objects about.

"Well, Malone," said Vyner, with the frank familiar tone that so well became him, "I believe we have now gone over everything that we have to say to each other, and, at all events, as you will stop here to-day—"

"No, your honor; with your honor's leave, I'll go off now. It's best for the child, and, indeed for myself!" And a heavy sigh followed the last word.

"You are afraid, then, she will fret after you," said Georgina, fixing a full and steady gaze on the old man's face.

"She might, my lady," said he, calmly.

"Nothing more natural; who would blame her?" broke in Lady Vyner. "But might it not be as well for you to wait and see how she likes her new life here?"

"She is sure to like it, my lady."

"I suspect she is!" said Georgina, quickly. And the old man turned and looked at her with a keen, sharp glance;



it almost seemed to ask, "How do you know this!"

Vyner broke the somewhat awkward pause that ensued by saying, "As I shall be your landlord, Malone, in a few days, you will have many opportunities of communicating with me, and I am sure, until your granddaughter can write with her own hand, either of these ladies will be kind enough to send you news of her."

The old man made a gesture of gratitude, and stood still without speaking. At length he sighed deeply, and seemed engaged in some process of recollection, for he counted over to himself something, marking each event on his fingers.

"I do think, Malone," said Vyner, with much kindness of voice and manner, "it would be well to remain here to-day at least. You yourself will go back more satisfied as you see in what sort of place and with what people you have left your child."

"No, thank your honor; I'll go this morning. It is best. There's only one thing more I have to say, but to be sure it's the great one of all."

"Then it is a matter of money," said Georgina, in a low tone; but low as it was the old fellow, who often affected deafness, caught it at once, and with a look of great resentment fixed his eyes on her.

"I half suspect," said Vyner, "we have not forgotten anything. I have told you how she will be treated and looked on, how educated and cared for."

"And how dressed," added Lady Vyner.

"I have, so far as I know, too, provided for the contingency of her wishing to return home again, or for such a wish on the part of her friends; and I have satisfied you that her opinions in matters of religion shall be respected, and that she shall have, whenever it is possible, the advantage of conferring with a priest of her own Church. Now, do you remember anything else we ought to take into account?"

"Yes, your honor," said the old man, resolutely. "I want to know, if it was to happen, from any rayson, that your honor or the ladies wished to send her back again, after she was, maybe, two years or three years here, when she was accustomed to be treated like a lady, and felt like one—I want to know where she's to go, or who to?"

"There is much good sense in that question," said Sir Within, in French; and he now arose to look closer at the old countryman.

"I think, Malone, we have already provided for that."

"No, your honor. You said how it

would be if Kitty wanted to go back herself, or if I sent for her; and how, too, it would be if, when she was grown up and fit to be married, that she ought to have consent from your honor, or the guardians that your honor wud give her in charge to. But now I want to know how it would be if, after the child was used to fine ways of livin', she was to be sent away—without any fault of hers, maybe, but just because—no matter for what rayson"—here his eyes glanced rapidly at Georgina—"I'd like to ax, what's to become of her then?"

"I scarcely think we can go so far as to provide for every casualty in life; but it will perhaps satisfy you to know that she'll have two guardians to watch over her interests. One of them is this gentleman here."

"And who's the other?" asked Malone, curiously.

"The other? The other is not yet formally declared, but you will be fully satisfied with him, that much I guarantee."

Malone did not give much attention to this speech, his whole interest seeming now to concentrate in the person of him who was to be the girl's guardian.

"Is your honor married?" asked he at length of Sir Within.

"I have not the happiness," said the old diplomatist, with a grace of manner that he might have displayed to a sovereign.

"There it is again," sighed Malone; "she'll have nowhere to go to if she's turned out. Has his honor a house near this?"

"Yes. I shall be happy to show it to you," said Sir Within, politely.

"I declare, Malone, if I'm ever in want of a guardian I'll look you up. I never heard of your equal in foresight," said Georgina, laughing.

"Wouldn't I need to be, my lady? Who has the child to look to barrin' myself? And maybe, then she wouldn't have even me. I am seventy-eight last April; and his honor there isn't very young either."

"Trop vrai, ma foi," said Sir Within, trying to laugh gaily, but reddening to his forehead as he turned away.

"You must have more patience than I, Gervais, to prolong this discussion," said Georgina, angrily. "I vow I'd anticipate the old man's objection, and pack them off both together this very morning."

Every syllable of this was overheard by Malone, though he affected not to hear it, and stood a perfect picture of immobility.

Sir Gervais, who up to this was rather amused by the casuistical turn of the peasant's mind, now seemed rather to lose temper, and said, "Such an arrangement as we

contemplated, Malone, requires a little exercise of good faith on both sides: if you believe that you cannot extend that trust in us so far as we expect from you. I really think the best and easiest way would be to do as this young lady says—end our contract at once.”

Not in the least startled by the peremptory tone which Vyner had now for the first time used towards him, the old man folded his hands with an air of resignation, and stood without uttering a word.

“Did you hear what Sir Gervais said to you?” asked Georgina, after a pause of some seconds.

“Yes, my lady.”

“And what answer have you to make?” asked she again, more imperatively.

“’Tis your ladyship is right,” began Malone, in a voice greatly subdued, and with almost a slight whining intonation through it; “’tis your ladyship is right. His honor is too good and too patient with me. But what am I but a poor ignorant laborin’ man, that never had any edication nor larnin’ at all? And if I be thinking of more than I ought, it’s because I know no better.”

“Well, what will you do?” said Vyner, hastily, for there was a servility in the man’s manner that revolted him, and he was impatient to conclude.

“I’ll tell you what I’ll do, if your honor lets me,” said Malone, resolutely. “I’ll go and speak to Kitty. She’s cute enough, young as she is, and whatever she says I’ll abide by.”

“Do so; take your own way altogether, my good man; and be assured that whichever decision you come to will not in any degree affect our future dealings together.”

“That is, your honor won’t turn me out of my houldin’?”

“Nothing of the kind.”

“He never suspected you would,” said Georgina, but in a very cautious whisper, which this time escaped Malone.

“I’ll not be ten minutes, your honor,” said he, as he moved towards the door.

“Take as much time as you please.”

“He’ll not part with her, I see that,” said Lady Vyner, as the man withdrew.

Georgina gave a saucy laugh, and said, “He never so much as dreamed of taking her away; his whole mind was bent upon a hard bargain; and now that he has got the best terms he could, he’ll close the contract.”

“You don’t believe too implicitly in humanity,” said Sir Within, smiling.

“I believe in men only when they are gentlemen,” said she; and there was a

very gracious glance as she spoke, which totally effaced all unpleasant memory of the past.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### A QUIET TALK IN A GARDEN.

MUCH as the magnificence and comfort indoors had astonished Malone, he was far more captivated by the beauty of the garden. Here was a vast variety of objects which he could thoroughly appreciate. The luxuriant vegetation, the fruit-trees bending under their fruit, the profusion of rare and rich flowers, the trim order of the whole, that neatness which the inexperienced eye has seldom beheld, nor can, even when seeing, credit, struck him at every step; and then there were plants utterly new and strange to him—pines and pomegranates, and enormous gourds, streaked and variegated in gorgeous colors, and over and through all a certain pervading odor that distilled a sense of drowsy enjoyment very captivating. Never, perhaps, in his whole life, had he so fully brought home to him the glorious prerogative of wealth, that marvellous power that culls from life, one by one, every attribute that is pleasure-giving, and surrounds daily existence with whatever can charm or beguile.

When he heard from the gardener that Sir Gervais seldom or never came there, he almost started, and some vague and shadowy doubt shot across his mind that rich men might not be so triumphantly blessed as he had just believed them.

“Sure,” he muttered, “if he doesn’t see this he can’t enjoy it, and if he sees it so often that he doesn’t mind, it’s the same thing. I wondher, now, would that be possible, and would there ever come a time to myself when I wouldn’t think this was Paradise.”

He was musing in this wise, when a merry burst of childish laughter startled him, and at the same instant a little girl bounded over a melon-frame and ran towards him. He drew aside, and took off his hat with respectful deference, when suddenly the child stopped, and bust into a ringing laugh, as she said:

“Why, grandfather, don’t you know me?”

Nor even then did he know her, such a marvellous change had been wrought in her by one of Ada’s dresses, and a blue ribbon that fastened her hair behind, and



fell floating down her back with the rich golden tresses.

"Sure it isn't Kitty?" cried he, shading his eyes with his hand.

"And why wouldn't it be Kitty?" replied she tartly, and piqued that her own attractions were not above all adventitious aid. "Is it a white frock makes me so grand that ye wouldn't know me again?"

"May I never," cried he, "but I thought you was a young lady."

"Well, and what's the differ, I wonder? If I look like one, couldn't I be one?"

"Ay, and do it well, too!" said he, while his eyes glistened with a look of triumph. "Come here, Kitty darlin," said he, taking her hand and leading her along at his side, "I want to spake a word to you. Now, Kitty, though you're only a child, as one may say, you've more wit in your head nor many a grown woman, and if you hadn't, it's the heavy heart I'd have this day leavin' you among strangers."

"Don't fret about that, grandfather; it's an elegant fine place to be in. Wait till I show you the dairy; that's grander inside than ever I seen a house in Ireland; and if you saw the cow-house; the beasts has straps with buckles round their necks, and boards under their feet, just like Christians, only betther."

"A long sight betther nor Christians!" muttered he, half savagely. Then recovering, he went on: "You see, here's how it is. 'Twas out of a 'conceit'—a sort of fancy—they took you, and out of the same, my honey, they may leave you some fine mornin' when you have got ways that would be hard to give up, and used to twenty things you couldn't do without; and I was tellin' them that, and askin' how it would be if that day was to come."

"Ah," cried she, with an impatient toss of the head, "I wish you hadn't put such thoughts into their heads at all. Sure, ain't I here now? Haven't they tuk me away from my home, and where would I go if they turned me out? You want to make it asy for them, grandfather, isn't that it?"

"Faix, I believe you're right, Kitty."

"Sure, I know I am. And why would they send me away if I didn't displease them, and you'll see that I'll not do that."

"Are you sure and certain of that?"

"As sure as I'm here. Don't fret about it, grandfather."

"Ay, but darlin', what will plase one wouldn't, may be, be plasin' to another; there's the mistress and her sister—and they're not a bit like each other—and there's the master and that ould man with

the goold chain round his neck—he's your guardian."

"Oh, is he?" cried she. "See what he gave me—he took it off his watch-chain. He said, 'There's a little sweetheart for you.'" And she drew from her bosom her handkerchief, in which she had carefully rolled up a small figure of a man in armor, of fine gold and delicate workmanship. "And the little girl here—Ada, they call her—tells me that he is far richer than her papa, and has a house ten times grander."

"That's lucky, anyhow," said the old man, musing. "Well, honey, when I found that I couldn't do any better, I said I'd go and talk to yourself, and see whether you were set upon stayin' with all your heart, or if you'd like to go back again."

"Is it back to Derryvaragh?"

"Yes; where else?"

"Catch me at it, Peter Malone, that's all! Catch me goin' to eat potatoes and lie on straw, work in the fields and go bare-foot, when I can be a lady, and have every-thing I can think of."

"I wonder will ye ever larn it?"

"Learn what?"

"To be a lady—I mean a raal lady—that nobody, no matter how cute they were, could find you out."

"Give me two years, Peter Malone, just two years, maybe not so much, but I'd like to be sure—and if I don't, I'll promise you to go back to Derryvaragh, and never lave it again."

"Faix, I think you'd win!"

"Sure, I know it."

And there was a fierce energy in her look that said far more than her words.

"Oh, Kitty, darlin', I wondher will I live to see it?"

Apparently, this consummation was not that which held chief over her mind, for she was now busy making a wreath of flowers for her head.

"Won't the gardener be angry, darlin', at your pluckin' the roses and the big pinks?"

"Let him, if he dare. Miss Ada told him awhile ago that I was to go every-where, and take anything just like herself; and I can eat the fruit, the apples, and the pears, and the grapes that you see there, but I wouldn't because Ada didn't," said she, gravely.

"You'll do, Kitty—you'll do," said the old man; and his eyes swam with tears of affection and joy.

"You begin to think so now, grandfather," said she, archly.

"And so I may go in now and tell them that you'll stay."

"You may go in, Peter Malone, and tell them that I won't go, and that's better."

The old man stepped back, and turning her round full in front of him, stood in wondering admiration of her for some seconds.

"Well?" said she, pertly, as if interrogating his opinion of her—"well?"

But his emotion was too strong for words, and the heavy tears coursed after each other down his wrinkled cheeks.

"It's harder for me to leave you, Kitty darlin', than I thought it would be, and I know, too, I'll feel it worse when I go back."

"No you won't, grandfather," said she, caressingly. "You'll be thinking of me and the fine life I'm leading here, and the fine times that's before me."

"Do you think so, honey?" asked he, in a half-sobbing tone—"do you think so?"

"I know it, grandfather—I know it, so don't cry any more; and, whenever your heart is low, just think of what's coming. That's what I do. I always begin to think of what's coming!"

"And when time comes, Kitty, 'Alannah,' will you ever remimber yer ould grandfather, who won't be to 'the fore' to see it?"

"And why won't he be?"

"Because, darlin', I'm nigh eighty years of age, and I can't expect to see above a year or two, at farthest. Come here and give me a kiss, ma Cushleen! and cut off a bit of your hair for me to have as a keepsake, and put next my heart in my coffin."

"No, grandfather; take this, it will do as well"—and she handed him the little golden trinket—"for I can't cut my hair after hearin' the gentleman sayin' how beautiful it is!"

The old man, however, motioned away the gift with one hand, while he drew the other across his eyes.

"Is there anything you think of now, Kitty?" said he, with an effort to appear calm, "for I must be goin'."

"Give my love to them all beyant," said she, gravely, "and say if there's a thing I could do for them, I'll do it, but don't let them be comin' after me?"

A sickly paleness spread over the old man's face, and his lips trembled as he muttered, "No fear of that! They'll not trouble you! Good-bye!" And he stooped and kissed her.

When he had walked a few paces away, he turned, and, with his hands fervently clasped above his head, uttered a blessing in Irish.

"God speed you, grandfather, and send you safe home!" cried she, and, skipping over a flower-bed, was lost to his view, though he could hear her happy voice as she went away singing.

"The devil a doubt of it," muttered the old man, "them's the ones that bate the world; and if she doesn't come in first in the race, by my soule it isn't the weight of her heart will keep her back!"

"Well, Malone!" cried Sir Gervais, as they met at the garden-gate, "have you been able to make up your mind?"

"Yes, your honor; Kitty says she'll stay."

Sir Gervais paused for a moment, then said,—

"Because we have been talking the matter over amongst ourselves, Malone, and we have thought that, as possibly your expectations might be greater than were likely to be realized, our best way might be to make you some compensation for the trouble we have given you, and part the same good friends that we met. I, therefore, came to say, that if you like your present holding, that little farm—"

"No, your honor, no," broke he in, eagerly; "her heart's in the place now, and it would be as much as her life is worth to tear her away from it."

"If that be so, there's no more to be said; but remember that we gave you a choice and you took it."

"What does he mean to do?" asked Georgina, as she now came up the path.

"To leave her here," answered Vyner.

"Of course. I never had a doubt of it. My good man, I'm much mistaken if your granddaughter and I will not understand each other very quickly. What do you think?"

"It is little trouble it will give your ladyship to know all that's inside a poor ignorant little child like that!" said he, with an intense servility of manner. "But her heart is true and her conscience clean, and I'm lavin' you as good a child as ever broke bread this day!"

"So that if the tree doesn't bear the fruit it ought, the blame will lie with the gardener; isn't that what you mean?" asked she, keenly.

"God help me! I'm only a poor man, and your ladyship is too hard on me," said he, uncovering his snow-white head, and bowing deeply and humbly.

"After all," whispered she, in Vyner's ear, "there has really been nothing determined about the matter in dispute. None of us know what is to be done, if the contingency he spoke of should arise."



They walked away arm in arm, in close conference together, but when they returned, after a half-hour or so, to the place, Malone was gone. The porter said he had come to the lodge for his bundle, wished him a good-bye, and departed.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE TWO PUPILS.

DAYS went over, and the time arrived for the Vyners to leave their Welsh cottage and take up their abode for the winter in their more commodious old family house, when a letter came from Rome stating that Lady Vyner's mother, Mrs. Courtenay, was very ill there, and begging to see her daughters as soon as might be.

After considerable debate, it was resolved that the children should be left behind with the governess, Sir Within pledging himself to watch over them most attentively, and send constant reports of Ada to her family. Mademoiselle Heinzelman had already spoken very favorably of Kitty, or Kate, as she was henceforth to be called; not only of her disposition and temper, but of her capacity and her intense desire to learn, and the Vyners now deemed her presence a most fortunate event. Nor were they so far wrong. Ada was in every quality of gentleness and obedience all that the most anxious love could ask; she had the traits—very distinctive traits are they, too—of those who have been from earliest infancy only conversant with one school of manners, and that the best. All the examples she had seen were such as teach habits of deference, the wish to oblige, the readiness to postpone self-interest, and a general disposition to please without obtrusiveness—ways which spread a very enjoyable atmosphere over daily life, and gild the current of existence to those with whom the stream runs smoothly.

She was a very pretty child, too. She had eyes of deep blue, which seemed deeper for their long black lashes; her hair was of that rich auburn which sets off a fair skin to greatest advantage; her profile was almost faultless in regularity, and so would have been her full face if an over-shortness of the upper lip had not marred the effect by giving a habit of slightly separating the lips when silent, and thus imparting a look of weakness to her features which the well-formed brow and forehead contradicted.

She was clever, but more timid than

clever, and with such a distrust of her ability as to make her abashed at the slightest demand upon it. This timidity had been deepened by solitude—she being an only child—into something like melancholy, and her temperament when Kate O'Hara first came was certainly sad-colored.

It was like the working of a charm, the change which now came over her whole nature. Not merely that emulation had taken the place of indolence, and zeal usurped the post of apathy, but she became active, lively, and energetic. The occupations which had used to weary became interesting, and instead of the lassitude that had weighed her down she seemed to feel a zest and enjoyment in the mere fact of existence. And it is probably the very nearest approach to happiness of which our life here below is capable, when the sunshine of the outer world is felt within our own hearts, and we are glad with the gladness of all around us.

Mademoiselle Heinzelman's great test of all goodness was assiduity. In her appreciation all the cardinal virtues resolved themselves into industry, and she was inclined to believe that Heaven itself might be achieved by early rising and hard work. If she was greatly gratified, then, at the change produced in her pupil, she was proportionately grateful to the cause of it. But Kate had other qualities which soon attracted the governess and drew her towards her. She possessed that intense thirst for knowledge, so marked a trait in the Irish peasant-nature. She had that sense of power so associated with acquirement as the strongest feature in her character, and in this way she had not—at least she seemed not to have—a predilection for this study or for that; all was new, fascinating, and engaging.

It was as with Aladdin in the mine, all were gems, and she gathered without thinking of their value; so did she pursue with the same eagerness whatever was to be learned. What will not industry, with even moderate capacity, achieve? But hers were faculties of a high order; she had a rapid perception, considerable reasoning power, and a good memory; but above all was the ability she possessed of concentrating her whole thoughts upon the matter before her.

She delighted, too, in praise; not the common eulogy that she had learned this or that well, but such praise as pointed to some future eminence as the price of all this labor; and when her governess told her of a time when she would be so glad to possess this acquirement, or to have mastered that difficulty, she would draw herself up, and

with head erect and flashing eye, look a perfect picture of gratified pride.

It would have been difficult for a teacher not to feel pride in such a pupil. It was such a reflected triumph to see how rapidly she could master every task, how easily she met every difficulty; and so it was that the governess, in her report, though laying all due stress on Ada's charming traits of disposition and temper, speaking actually with affection of her guileless, gentle nature, grew almost rapturous when she spoke of Kate's capacity and progress. She went into the theme with ardor, and was carried away by it much more than she knew or imagined. It was a sort of defence of herself she was making, all unconsciously—a defence of her system, which, as applied to Ada, had not been always a success. This correspondence was invariably carried on with Miss Courtenay, who, for some time contented herself with merely dwelling on what related to her niece, and only passingly, if at all, spoke of Kate.

At last, pushed, as it were, by Mademoiselle Heinzeleman's insistence, and vexed at a pertinacity which no silence could repress, she wrote a letter, so full of reprimand that the governess was actually overwhelmed as she read it.

"I have your four last letters before me," wrote she, "and it would be difficult for a stranger on reading them to declare which of the two pupils under your care was your especial charge, and which a merely adventitious element. Not so if the question were to be, Which of the two engrossed all your interest and engaged all your sympathy? We read, it is true, of dear Ada's temper, her kindness, her generosity, and her gentleness—traits which we all recognize, and many of which, we surmise, must have been sorely tried, but of which you can speak with a most fitting and scholastic moderation. Far otherwise, however, does your pen run on when Kate O'Hara is the theme. You are not, perhaps, aware that you are actually eloquent on this subject. You never weary of telling us of her marvellous progress; how she already begins to speak French; how she imitates those mysterious pothooks your countrymen persist in using as writing; how she plays her scales, and what a talent she has for drawing. Do not forget the while that these are very secondary matters of interest to us all here. Do you forget that in her companionship with my niece our whole object was the spring which might be derived from her healthy peasant-nature and light-heartedness. To convert this child into a miracle of accomplishment could serve no purpose

of ours, and assuredly would conduce to no advantage of her own. On this latter point you have only to ask yourself, What will become of all these attainments when she goes back—as she will go back—to her life of poverty and privation? Will her piano make her better company for the pig? Will her French reconcile her to the miseries of a mud cabin?

"She is the child of a poor cottier, a creature so humble that even here in this benighted state we have nothing his equal in indigence; and she will one day or other have to go back to the condition that my brother, with I fear a very mistaken kindness, took her from. You will see, therefore, how misjudging is the interest you are now bestowing. It is, however, the injustice to my niece which more nearly concerns me; and with this object I inform you that if I am not satisfied as to the total change in your system, I shall certainly be prepared to recommend to my brother one of two courses: a change in Ada's governess, or the dismissal of Ada's companion. It is but fair to you to say I prefer the latter.

"Remember, my dear Mademoiselle Heinzeleman, this is a purely confidential communication. I have not confided to my sister either my fears or my hopes. The experiment was one I did not augur well from. It has turned out even worse than I expected. Indeed, if Ada was not the very best and sweetest of natures, she could not but resent the unfair preference shown to one so inferior to her in all but those traits which win favor from a schoolmistress. My mother's health precludes all hope of our soon returning to England; indeed, we have even thought of sending for Ada to come here, and it is the dread of this climate, so pernicious to young people, offers the chief obstacle to the plan. Meanwhile, I feel forced to write what I have done, and to lay before you in all sincerity my complaint and its remedy.

"Evening.

"I have re-read your letter, and it seems to me that you might very judiciously remark yourself to Sir Gervais on the inexpediency of any continuance of Kate O'Hara's presence. Her genius, soaring as it does above poor Ada's, makes all emulation impossible. The pilot balloon, that is so soon out of sight, can offer no guidance—don't forget that! Suppose you said to my brother that there was no longer any necessity to continue the stimulus of emulation—that it might become a rivalry—perhaps worse. Say something—anything



of this kind—only send her home again, not forgetting the while that you can do now without injury what, later on, will cost a cruelty.

“I can feel for the pain a teacher may experience in parting with a prize pupil, whose proficiency might one day become a triumph; but remember, my dear mademoiselle, that poor, dear, simple Ada, to whom genius is denied, is, or ought to be, your first care here, and that the gifted peasant-girl might turn out to have other qualities of a firework besides the brilliancy.

“I will, so far as in me lies, relieve you from some of the embarrassments that the course I advise might provoke. I will request my brother to desire Mr. M’Kinlay to run down and pay you a few hours’ visit, and you can easily explain the situation to him, and suggest what I here point out as the remedy.

“Of course, it is needless to repeat this letter is strictly and essentially confidential, and not to be imparted to any one.

“I might have counselled you to have taken the advice of Sir Within Wardle, of whose kindness and attention we are most sensible, if you had not told me of the extraordinary ‘influence’—it is your own word, mademoiselle, or I should not even have ventured to use it in such connection—the ‘influence’ this young girl exercises over Sir Within. As the observation so completely passes my power of comprehension, for I really—and I hope without needless stupidity—cannot understand how a girl of her class, bringing up, and age—age, above all—could exert what you designate as ‘influence’—I must beg you will be more explicit in your next.

“You are perfectly right in refusing all presents for either of the girls, and I should have thought Sir Within had more tact than to proffer them. I am also very much against you going to Dalradern Castle for Christmas, though Sir Gervais, up to this, does not agree with me. If this girl should not be sent away before the new year, I think you might advantageously remark to my brother that the visit would be a great interruption to all study, and a serious breach of that home discipline it has been your object to impose. And now, my dear mademoiselle, accept all I have here said not only in your confidence, but in your friendship, and even where I appear to you nervously alive to small perils, give me credit for having thought and reflected much over them before I inflicted on you this long letter.

“Discourage your prodigy, check her

influence, and believe me, very sincerely your friend,

“GEORGINA COURTENAY.

“P.S.—What can Sir W. mean by passing his winter in the Welsh mountains, after giving orders to have his villa near Genoa prepared for his reception? Find out this, particularly if there be a secret in it.”

Mademoiselle Heinzelman received this letter as she was taking her half-hour’s walk in the garden after breakfast—one of the very few recreations she indulged in—while her pupils prepared their books and papers for the day.

Anything like remonstrance was so totally new to her that she read the letter with a mingled amazement and anger, and, though she read and re-read, in the hope of finding her first impression was an exaggerated one, the truth was that each perusal only deepened the impression, and made the pain more intense.

It was not that her German pride only was wounded, but her dignity as a teacher—just as natural an instinct as the pride of birth—and she muttered very mysterious gutturals to herself, as she went, about resigning her trust and retiring. This was, perhaps, too rash a step; at least it required time to think of. Two hundred a year, and a position surrounded with many advantages! The other alternative was easier: to send away Kate. A pity, perhaps, but after all, as Miss Courtenay said, possibly a mercy. Who could tell? Mr. M’Kinlay might help her by his counsel. She liked him, and thought well of him. Kate, that was making such progress—that could already make out some of Schiller’s ballads! What a pity it was! And to think of her touch on the piano, so firm and yet so delicate! How tenderly she let the notes drop in one of those simple melodies from Spohr she was learning! Ach Gott! and what taste in drawing!

Again she opened the letter, and at the last page muttered to herself: “I don’t remember that I said ‘influence.’” I’m almost sure I said that she interested Sir Within. I know I meant to say that she pleased him; that he was delighted to hear her sing her little Lied, dance her Tarantella, or her wild Irish jig, or listen to some of those strange legends, which she tells with a blended seriousness and drollery that is quite captivating. At all events, if I said ‘influence,’ I can correct the word, and say that Sir Within comes over to see us two or three times a week,

and it is plain enough that it is little Kate's gaiety attracts him. What sorrow to the dear children if they are not to pass their Christmas at the Castle!"

A light, elastic step on the gravel startled her. It was Kate who was coming; not the Kate we once saw in the old ruins of St. Finbar, but a young lady, with an air calm and collected, with some conscious sense of power, her head high, her look assured, her step firm even in its lightness.

"Sir Within is in the drawing-room, mademoiselle," said she, with a slight enrtsey, as she stood before her. "He says that this is St. Guldul's day, and a holiday everywhere, and he hopes you will be kind enough to take us over to the Castle for dinner."

"Nein! No," said she, peremptorily. "Wir haben keine solche Heilige," I mean, said she, correcting the harsh speech, "These saints are not in our calendar. I will speak to him myself. You may stay in the garden for a quarter of an hour. I will send Ada to you."

While the young girl fell back, abashed at the refusal, and even more by the manner with which it was done, the governess smoothed her brow as well as she might to meet the distinguished visitor, but in so doing, as she drew her handkerchief from her pocket, she dropped the letter she had been reading on the walk.

"I wonder why she is so cross with me?" said Kate, as she looked after her; "if there's a secret in it, I must learn it."

While Kate O'Hara sauntered carelessly along her foot struck the letter, and it fell open. She stooped and picked it up, and was at once struck by the peculiar odor of jasmine on the paper, which was a favorite with Miss Courtenay. She turned to the address, "Mademoiselle de Heinzleman"—the "de," too, was a courtesy Miss Courtenay affected—and so Kate stood still contemplating the document, and weighing it in her hand, as she muttered, "It does really feel heavy enough to be mischievous." Her training had taught her to respect as inviolable the letter of another; she had over and over marked the deference paid to a seal, and seen even Ada's letters from her playfellows handed to her unbroken, and she knew that to transgress in such a matter ranked in morals with a falsehood. She had no thought, then, of any dereliction, when in placing the fallen pages together within the envelope, her eye caught the words, "Kitty O'Hara," and lower down, "child of a poor cottier." The temptation, stimulated by a passion full as strong as curiosity, mastered her, and carrying away the letter into a secluded alley,

she read it from end to end. There was much to gratify her vanity in it; there was the admission—and from no favoring witness either—that she had capacity of a high order, and a zeal to master whatever she desired to learn. But far above the pleasure these words afforded was the last paragraph, that which spoke of her "influence" over Sir Within Wardle. "Could this really be true? Had the little attentions he showed her a deeper significance? Did he really interest himself for her? Was it her lonely, friendless condition touched him? Was it that the same feeling, so harshly expressed by Miss Courtenay, the revulsion that yet awaited her, that moved *him*?" There was an ecstasy in the thought that filled her whole heart with joy. Sir Within was very rich—a great personage, too. The Vyners themselves spoke of him always with a certain deference. What a triumph if she had won him ever to befriend her!

These thoughts flew quickly through her mind, and as quickly she bethought her of the letter, and what was now to be done with it. She would have liked much to keep it, to have it by her to read and re-read, and study, and weigh. This was of course impossible. To take it to mademoiselle would be to incur the risk of her suspecting she had read it. In an instant she determined to lay it back again where she had found it, on the walk, and let chance determine what became of it. Her resolution was scarcely carried out, when she heard Mademoiselle Heinzleman's voice calling her.

"I have dropped a letter, Kate. I have mislaid it, or it has fallen out of my pocket. Come and help me to look for it," said she, in deep confusion.

"Is this it, mademoiselle?" cried Kitty, artlessly, as she picked it up from the gravel.

"How lucky—how very fortunate!" exclaimed she, eagerly, as she clutched it. "There, you may have your holiday to-day, Kate. Go and tell Ada I shall not ask her to learn these verses; or wait"—she suddenly remembered that Sir Within was still in the drawing-room—"wait here, and I'll tell her myself."

Kate bowed and smiled her thanks, and once again alone, sat down to ruminate on her fortune.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE DINNER IN THE SCHOOL-ROOM.

SIR WITHIN could not persuade mademoiselle to accept his invitation for herself



and her pupils to dinner, and was about to take his leave when Ada suddenly said, "Why not dine with us, Sir Within?"

"Ei! done, mademoiselle!" broke in the governess. "How could you think of such a thing? Sir Within Wardle sit down to a school-room dinner!"

"But why need it be a school-room dinner, Mademoiselle Heinzleman? Why not tell cook that we mean to have company to-day, and make Rickards wait on us, and tell George to wear his gloves, just as if papa were at home?"

"Oh!" broke in Sir Within, "I have seen quite enough—more than enough—of all that, dear Ada; but if I could be permitted to join your own little daily dinner of the school-room, as you call it, that would really be a treat to me."

"I invite you, then!" said Ada. "Mademoiselle owes me a favor for that wonderful German theme I wrote, and I take this as my reward. We dine at three, Sir Within, and I warn you, on mutton-broth and mutton something else; but Kate and I will make ourselves as fine as we may, and be as entertaining as possible."

While the two girls scampered off, laughing merrily at the discomfiture of the governess, that respectable lady remained to offer profuse apologies to Sir Within for the liberty, childish though it was, that had been taken with him, and to excuse herself for any imputation of participating in it.

She little knew, indeed, with what honest sincerity he had accepted the proposal. Of the great game of life, as played by fine people, he had seen it to satiety. He was thoroughly wearied of all the pleasures of the table, as he was of all the captivations which witty conversers and clever talkers can throw over society. Perhaps, from his personal experience, he knew how artificial such displays are—how studied the *à propos*, how carefully in ambush the impromptu—and that he longed for the hearty, healthful enjoyment of young, fresh, joyous natures, just as one might turn from the oppressive odors of a perfumer's shop to taste with ecstasy the fresh flowers of a garden. It was, therefore, as he expressed it to the governess, a perfect fête to him to assist at that little dinner, and he was deeply honored by the invitation.

Mademoiselle was charmed with the old baronet's politeness. It was ceremonious enough even for Germany, he smiled so blandly and bowed so reverently and often, it was like a memory of the Fatherland just to listen to him; and, indeed, it was reassuring to her to hear from him that he had once been a minister at the court of a Herzog,

and had acquired his *moden* in this true and legitimate fashion. And thus did they discuss for hours "aesthetic," and idealism, and sympathy, mysterious affinity, impulsive destiny, together with all the realisms which the Butter-brod life of Germany can bring together, so that when she arose to dress for dinner, she could not help muttering to herself, as she went, that he was "a deeply skilled in the human heart-and-far acquainted with the mind's operations—but not the less on that account a fresh-with-a-youthful sincerity-endowed man."

The dinner, though not served in the school-room, was just as simple as Ada promised, and she laughingly asked Sir Within if he preferred his beer frothed or still, such being the only choice of liquor afforded him.

"Mademoiselle is shocked at the way we treat you," said she, laughing, "but I have told her that your condescension would be ill repaid if we made any attempt to lessen its cost, and it must be a 'rice-pudding day' in your life."

And how charmingly they talked, these two girls! Ada doing the honors as a hostess, and Kate, as the favored friend, who aided her to entertain an honored guest. They told him, too, how the fresh bouquet that decked the table had been made by themselves to mark the sense they had of his presence, and that the coffee had been prepared by their own hands.

"Now, do say, Sir Within, that dining with Royal Highnesses and Supreme Somethings is but a second-rate pleasure compared to an Irish stew in a school-room, and a chat round a fire that has been lighted with Bonycastle's Algebra. Yes, mademoiselle," Kate said, "I had to make light of simple equations for once! I was thinking of that story of the merchant, who lighted his fire with the King's bond when his majesty deigned to dine with him. I puzzled my head to remember which of our books lay nearest our heart, and I hesitated long between Ollendorff and Bonycastle."

"And what decided you?" asked Sir Within.

"What so often decides a doubt—convenience. Bonycastle had the worst binding, and was easier to burn."

"If you so burn to study algebra, mademoiselle," said the governess, who had misunderstood the whole conversation, "you must first show yourself more *eifrig*—how you call zeal?—for your arithmetic."

"You shall have full liberty, when you pay me a visit, to burn all the volumes on such subjects you find," said Sir Within.

"Oh, I'd go through the whole library,"

cried Kate, eagerly, "if I could only find one such as Garret O'Moore did."

"I never heard of his fortune."

"Nor I. Do tell it, Kate."

"Mademoiselle has forbidden all my legends," said she, calmly.

"I'm sure," said Sir Within, "she will recall the injunction for this time."

"It is very short," said Kate; and then with infinite archness, turning to the governess, added, "and it has a moral."

The governess nodded a grave permission, and the other began:

"There was once on a time a great family in the west of Ireland called the O'Moores, who, by years of extravagance, spent everything they had in the world, leaving the last of the name, a young man, so utterly destitute, that he had scarcely food to eat, and not a servant to wait on him. He lived in a lonely old house, of which the furniture had been sold off, bit by bit, and nothing remained but a library of old books, which the neighbors did not care for."

"Algebras and Ollendorffs, I suppose," whispered Sir Within; and she smiled and went on:—

"In despair at not finding a purchaser, and pinched by the cold of the long winter's nights, he used to bring an armful of them every night into his room to make his fire. He had not, naturally, much taste for books or learning, but it grieved him sorely to do this; he felt it like a sort of sacrilege, but he felt the piercing cold more, and so he gave in. Well, one night, as he brought in his store, and was turning over the leaves—which he always did before setting fire to them—he came upon a little square volume, with the strangest letters ever he saw; they looked like letters upside down, and gone mad, and some of them were red, and some black, and some golden, and between every page of print there was a sheet of white paper without anything on it. O'Moore examined it well, and at last concluded it must have been some old monkish chronicle, and that the blank pages were left for commentaries on it. At all events, it could have no interest for him, as he couldn't read it, and so he put it down on the hearth till he wanted it to burn.

"It was close on midnight, and nothing but a few dying embers were on the hearth, and no other light in the dreary room, when he took up the old chronicle, and tearing it in two, threw one half on the fire. The moment he did so the flame sprang up bright as silver, lighting up the whole room, so that he could see even the old cobwebs on the ceiling, that had not

been seen for years and years, and at the same time a delicious music filled the air, and the sounds of children's voices singing beautifully; but, strangest of all, in the very middle of the bright fire that now filled the whole hearth, there sat a little man with a scarlet cloak on him, and a scarlet hat and a white feather in it, and he smiled very graciously at O'Moore, and beckoned him over to him, but O'Moore was so frightened and so overcome he couldn't stir. At last, as the flames got lower, the little man's gestures grew more energetic, and O'Moore crept down on his knees, and said,—

"Do you want anything with me, sir?"

"Yes, Garret," said the little old man, "I want to be your friend, and to save you from ruin like the rest of your family. You were wrong to burn that book."

"But I couldn't read it," said Garret; "what use was it to me?"

"It was your own life, Garret O'Moore," said the little man, "and take care that you keep the part you have there, and study it carefully. It would have been better for you if you had kept the whole of it."

"And with that the flame sprang brightly up for a second or two, and then went black out, so that O'Moore had to grope about to find tinder to strike a light. He lit the only bit of candle he had, and began to examine the part of the book that remained, and what did he find but on every blank page there was a line—sometimes two—written as if to explain the substance of the printed page, and all in such a way as to show it was somebody's life and adventures—as, for instance: 'Takes to the sea—goes to America—joins an expedition to the Far West—on the plantations—marries—wife dies—off to China—marries again.' I needn't go on: everything that was ever to happen to him was written there till he was forty-five years of age, the rest was burned; but it was all fortunate—all, to the very end. He grew to be very rich, and prospered in everything, for whenever he was faint-hearted or depressed, he always said, 'It wasn't by being low and weak of heart that I begun this career of good fortune, and I must be stout and of high courage if I mean to go on with it.' And he grew so rich that he bought back all the old acres of the O'Moores, and they have a hand rescuing a book from the flames on their arms till this day."

"And the moral?—where's the moral?" asked the governess.

"The moral, the moral!" said Kate, dubiously. "Well, I'm not exactly sure where it is, but I suppose it is this that



it's far better to go to sea as a sailor than to sit down and burn your father's library."

"I have a notion, my dear Kate, that you yourself would like well to have a peep into destiny—am I wrong?"

"I would, sir."

"And you, Ada?"

"Why should *she*?" broke in Kate, eagerly; and then, as though shocked at her impetuosity, she went on, in a lower voice, "Ada makes her voyage in a three-decker, I am only clinging to a plank."

"No, no, dearest," said Ada, tenderly; "don't say that."

"Mademoiselle is looking at her watch," said Sir Within, "and I must accept the signal." And though she protested, elaborately, too, that it was a mere habit with her, he arose to ring for his carriage. "I am not going without the sketch you promised me, Ada," said he—"the pencil sketch of the old fountain."

"Oh, Kate's is infinitely better. I am ashamed to see mine after it."

"Why not let me have both?"

"Yes," said the governess, "that will be best. I'll go and fetch them."

Ada stood for a moment irresolute, and then muttering, "Mine is really too bad," hastened out of the room after Mademoiselle Heinzleman.

"You are less merry than usual, Kate," said Sir Within, as he took her hand and looked at her with interest. "What is the reason?"

A faint, scarce perceptible motion of her brow was all she made in answer.

"Have you not been well?"

"Yes, sir. I am quite well."

"Have you had news that has distressed you?"

"Where from?" asked she, hurriedly.

"From your friends—from home."

"Don't you know, sir, that I have neither?"

"I meant, my dear child—I meant to say, that perhaps you had heard or learnt something that gave you pain."

"Yes, sir," broke she in, "that is it. Oh, if I could tell you——"

"Why not write it to me, dear child?"

"My writing is coarse and large, and I misspell words; and, besides, it is such a slow way to tell what one's heart is full of—and then I'd do it so badly," faltered she out with pain.

"Suppose, then, I were to settle some early day for you all to come over to Dalradern; you could surely find a moment to tell me then?"

"Yes, sir—yes," cried she; and, seizing

his hand, she kissed it passionately three or four times.

"Here they are," said Ada, merrily—"here they are! And if Kate's does ample justice to your beautiful fountain, mine has the merit of showing how ugly it might have been. Isn't this hideous?"

After a few little pleasant commonplaces, Sir Within turned to Mademoiselle Heinzleman, and said: "I have rather an interesting book at Dalradern; at least, it would certainly have its interest for you, mademoiselle. It is a copy of 'Clavigo' with Herder's marginal suggestions. Goethe had sent it to him for his opinion, and Herder returned it marked and annotated. You will do me an infinite favor to accept it."

"Ach Gott!" said the governess, perfectly overwhelmed with the thought of such a treasure.

"Well, then, if the weather be fine on Tuesday, mademoiselle, will you and my young friends here come over and dine with me? We shall say three o'clock for dinner, so that you need not be late on the road. My carriage will be here to fetch you at any hour you appoint."

A joyous burst of delight from Ada, and a glance of intense gratitude from Kate, accompanied the more formal acceptance of the governess; and if Sir Within had but heard one tithe of the flattering things that were said of him, as he drove away, even his heart, seared as it was, would have been touched.

Kate, indeed, said least; but when Ada, turning abruptly to her, asked, "Don't you love him?" a slight color tinged her cheek, as she said, "I think he's very kind, and very generous, and very——"

"Go on, dear—go on," cried Ada, throwing her arm around her—"finish; and very what?"

"I was going to say an impertinence," whispered she, "and I'll not."

"Nine o'clock, young ladies, and still in the drawing room!" exclaimed the governess in a tone of reproach. "These are habits of dissipation, indeed—come away. Ach Gott! der Clavigo!" muttered she, with clasped hands. And the girls were hardly able to restrain a burst of laughter at the fervor of her voice and manner.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

KITTY.

THE wished-for Tuesday came at last, and with a fortune not always so favoring,

brought with it a glorious morning, one of those bright, sharp, clear days, with a deep blue sky and frosty air, and with that sense of elasticity in the atmosphere which imparts itself to the spirits, and makes mere existence enjoyment. The girls were in ecstacy; they had set their hearts so much on this visit, that they would not let themselves trust to the signs of the weather on the night before, but were constantly running out to ask George, the gardener, if that circle round the moon meant anything?—why were the stars so blue?—and why did they twinkle so much?—and was it a sign of fine weather that the river should be heard so clearly? Rickards, too, was importuned to consult the barometer, and impart his experiences of what might be expected from its indications. The gardener augured favorably, was pronounced intelligent, and tipped by Ada in secret.

Rickards shook his head at the aspect of the mercury, and was called a "conceited old ass" for his pains. Not either of them treated with different measure than is meted by the public to those great organs of information which are supposed to be their guides, but are just as often their flatterers, for the little world of the family is marvelously like the great world of the nation.

"What a splendid day, Kate! How beautiful the waterfall will look, coming down in showers of diamonds, and how crisp and sharp the copper beech and the big ilex-trees over it! Oh, winter, if this be winter, is really the time for scenery! What makes you so grave, dear? I am wild with spirits to-day."

"And so should I if I were you."

"How can you say that?" said Ada, as she threw her arm around the other's waist. "How can you, Kate, when you know how much cleverer you are, and quicker at everything—how you leave me behind at all I have been working at for years!"

"And never to need that same cleverness is worth it all, I am told!"

"How so? I don't understand you."

"I mean, that you are better off—better dealt with by Fortune to be a born lady than I, if I had all the gifts and all the powers you would bestow upon me."

"This is one of your dark days, as you call them," said Ada, reproachfully; "and you mean to make it one of mine, too, and I was so happy."

"This, perhaps, is another of my gifts," said she, with a mocking laugh, "and yet I was brought here to make you merry and light-hearted! Yes, dear, I overheard Mr. Grenfell tell your papa that his plan was a mistake, and that all 'low-bred ones'—that

was the name he gave us—lost the little spirit they had when you fed them, and only grew lazy."

"Oh, Kate, for shame!"

"The shame is not mine; it was *he* said it."

"How sad you make me by saying these things."

"Well, but we must own, Ada, he was right! I was—no, I won't say happier, but fifty times as merry and light-hearted before I came here; and though gathering brush-wood isn't as picturesque as making a bouquet, I am almost sure I sang over the one, and only sighed over the other."

Ada turned away her head and wiped the tears from her cheeks.

"Isn't it a hopeful thing to try and make people happy?"

"But papa surely wished, and he believed that you would be happy," said Ada, with something almost reproachful in her manner.

"All because he hadn't read that little German fable of the Two Fairies—the one who always did something and failed, and the other who always promised and promised, watering the little plant of Hope, as he calls it, and making believe that the fruit would be, one day, so sweet and so luscious as no lips had ever tasted before. And it's strange, Ada," added she, in a graver tone—"it's strange, but when I was out upon the mountains watching the goats rambling all day alone in the deep heather, how I used to think and think! O dear, what wonderful things did I not think would one day come to pass—how rich I should be, how great, and best of all, how beautiful! How kings and great people would flatter me, and make me grand presents; and how haughty I should be to some, and how gracious to others—perhaps very humble people; and how I'd amaze every one with all I knew, and they'd say, 'Where did she learn this? How did she ever come to know that?'"

"And would that be happiness, Kate?"

"Would it not?"

"Then why not have the same dreams now?"

"Because I cannot—because they won't come—because life is too full—because, as we eat before we are hungry, and lie down before we're tired, one's thoughts never go high enough to soar above the pleasures that are around them. At least, I suppose that's the reason. But I don't care whether it is or not; there's the carriage—I hear it coming. And now for such a jolly day in that glorious old garden, with the fountains and the statues, and



'All the fine things in rock-work and crockery,  
That make of poor Nature a solemn old mockery.'

Do you know the rest?"

"No, I don't. I never heard it."

"It goes on, a something about

'Flowers the gardener ne'er had in his Eden,  
And dells so secluded they ne'er saw the sun,  
And sweet summer-houses so pleasant to read in,  
With bright little jets-d'eau of eau-de-Cologne.'

Isn't that a Snob's Paradise?—that's what it's called, Ada." And away she went, singing a "Tyrol, tra la, la lira!" with a voice that seemed to ring with joy.

Ada called to her to come back; but she never heeded, and fled down the garden and was soon lost to view. Meanwhile the carriage had reached the door, and as Ada rushed forward to greet it, she stepped back with dismay, for, instead of Sir Within's spruce britschka, it was an old post-chaise, from which descended the well wrapt-up figure of Mr. M'Kinlay.

"Delighted to see you, Miss Ada; how you've grown since I was here—quite a young woman, I declare!" The last words were in soliloquy, for Ada, not aware that he had seen her, had betaken herself to flight to acquaint mademoiselle of his arrival.

"Glad to see you again, sir, in these parts," said Rickards, as he caught up the smallest item of the luggage by way of assisting the traveller. "You had a pleasant journey, I hope, sir?"

"So-so, Rickards—only so-so. It's not the time of year one would choose to come down amongst the Welsh mountains; bitterly cold it was this morning early."

"We'll soon warm you, sir; come into the dining-room. You haven't had breakfast, I'm sure."

"Nothing—not as much as a cup of tea—since four o'clock yesterday."

"Dear me, sir, I don't know how you bear it. It's what I remarked to Sir Gervais. I said, 'There's Mr. M'Kinlay, sir,' said I, 'he goes through more than any young gentleman in the grouse season.'"

"Well, I'm not so very old, Rickards—ch?"

"Old! I should think not, sir—in the very prime of life; and I declare, of an evening, sir, with your white waistcoat on, I'd not guess you to be more than—let me see—"

"Never mind the figure. Ah, this is comfortable; capital old room, and a good old-fashioned fireplace."

While the lawyer held his half-frozen hands to the fire, Rickards drew a little

table close to the hearth, and, with the dexterity of his calling, arranged the breakfast-things. "A hot steak in one moment, sir, and a devilled kidney or two. Excuse me, sir, but I'd say a little mulled claret would be better than tea; mulled, sir, with just one tablespoonful of old brandy in it—Mr. Grenfell's receipt."

"No man should know better, Rickards."

"Ah, sir, always sharp—always ready you are, to be sure!" And Rickards had to wipe his eyes as he laughed at the repartee.

"And how do you get on here, Rickards?" said M'Kinlay, in a tone evidently meant to invite perfect confidence, and as evidently so interpreted; for, though the door was closed, Rickards went over and laid his hand on it, to assure himself of the fact, and then returned to the fireplace.

"Pretty well, sir, pretty well. The governess will be meddling—these sort of people can't keep from it—about the house expenses, and so on; but I don't stand it, nohow. I just say 'This is the way we always do, mam'sel. It's just thirty-eight years I'm with the master's father and himself. Isn't that a pictur' of a steak, Mr. M'Kinlay? Did you ever see sweeter fat than that, and the gravy in it, sir? Mrs. Byles knows *you*, sir, and does her best. You remember that game-pie, sir, the last time you was here?"

"I think I do, and you told her what I said of it; but I don't like what you say of the governess. She is meddling—interferes, eh?"

"Everywhere, sir, wherever she can. With George about the hot-house plants and the melon frames, with Mrs. Byles about the preserves, a thing my lady never so much as spoke of; and t'other day, sir, what d'ye think she does, but comes and says to me, 'Mr. Rickards, you have a cellar-book, haven't you?' 'Yes, ma'am,' says I; 'and if the young ladies wants it in the school-room to larn out of, I'll bring it in with pleasure.' Wasn't that pretty home, sir, eh?"

"And what did she say to that?"

"She whisked about this way"—here Mr. Rickards made a bold pirouette—"and said something in high Dutch that I feel sure wasn't a blessing."

"Tell me one thing, Rickards," said the lawyer, in a lower tone, and with the air of a complete confidante. "What's this little game she's playing about that Irish girl, writing to my lady that she's a genius, and she can do this, that, and t'other, and that you've only to show her a book, and she knows it from cover to cover?"

"And don't you see what it is, sir?" said Rickards, with one eye knowingly closed; don't you see it, sir?"

"No, Rickards, I do not."

"It's all the way that little serpent has of comin' round her. Of all the creatures ever I seen, I never knew her equal for cunning. It ain't any use knowing she's a fox—not a bit of it, sir—she'll get round you all the same. It's not an easy thing to get to the blind side of Mrs. Byles, I promise you. She's a very knowledgeable woman, lived eleven years under a man-cook at Lord Wandsford's and knows jellies, and made French dishes as well as Monsieur Honoré himself. Well, sir, that imp there winds her round her finger like a piece of packthread. She goes and says, 'Byles'—she doesn't as much as Mrs. Byles her, the way my lady would—but 'Byles'—says she, 'if ever I come to be a great lady and very rich, I'll have you to keep my house, and you shall have your own nice sittin'-room, and your own maid to wait on you, and a hundred a year settled on you for life.' I vow it's a fact, sir, wherever she heard of such a thing, but said 'settled on you for life!' and then, sir, she'll sit down and help her with the strawberry jam, or the brandy-peaches, or whatever it is, and Mrs. Byles says there wouldn't be her equal in all England, if she only took to be a still-room maid."

"And can she humbug Mr. Rickards? Tell me that," asked the lawyer, with the leer of an old cross-examiner.

"Well, I do think, sir, she can't do that. It's not every one as could."

"No, Rickards; you and I know how to sleep with one eye open. But what does she mean by all this cunning—what does she intend by it?"

"There's what I can't come at, nohow, sir; for, as I say, what's the good of plotting when you have everything at your hand? She hasn't no need for it, Mr. M'Kinlay. She has the same treatment here as Miss Ada herself—it was the master's orders."

"It puzzles me, Rickards; I own it puzzles me," said the lawyer, as, with his hands deep in his pockets, he took a turn or two in the room.

"They say, sir, it's the way of them Irish," said Rickards, with the air of a man enunciating a profound sentiment; but M'Kinlay either did not hear, or did not value the remark, for, after a pause, he said,—

"It's just possible, after all, Rickards, that it's only a way she has. Don't you think so?"

"I do not, sir," replied he, stontly. "If there wasn't more than that in it, she wouldn't go on as I have seen her do, when she thought she was all alone."

"How so? What do you mean?"

"Well, you see, sir, there's a laurel hedge in the garden, that goes along by the wall where the peach-trees are, and that's her favorite walk, and I've watched her when she was there by herself, and it was as good as any play to see her."

"In what respect?"

"She'd be making believe all sorts of things to herself—how that she was a fine lady showing the grounds to a party of visitors, telling them how she intended to build something here and throw down something there, what trees she'd plant in one place, and what an opening for a view she'd make in another. You'd not believe your ears if you heard how glibly she'd run on about plants and shrubs and flowers. And then suddenly she'd change, and pretend to call her maid, and tell her to fetch her another shawl or her gloves; or she'd say, 'Tell George I shall not ride to-day, perhaps I'll drive out in the evening.' And that's the way she'd go on till she heard the governess coming, and then, just as quick as lightning, you'd hear her in her own voice again, as artless as any young creature you ever listened to."

"I see—I see," said M'Kinlay, with a sententious air and look, as though he read the whole case, and saw her entire disposition revealed before him like a plan. "A shrewd minx in her own way, but a very small way it is. Now, Rickards, perhaps you'd tell Miss Heinzleman that I'm here—of course, not a word about what we've been talking over."

"You couldn't think it, sir."

"Not for a moment, Rickards. I could trust to your discretion like my own."

When Mr. M'Kinlay was left alone, he drew forth some letters from his pocket, and sought out one in a small envelope, the address of which was in lady's writing. It was a very brief note from Miss Courtenay to himself, expressing her wish that he could find it convenient to run down, if only for a day, to Wales, and counsel Mademoiselle Heinzleman on a point of some difficulty respecting one of her pupils. The letter was evidently written in terms to be shown to a third party, and implied a case in which the writer's interest was deep and strong, but wherein she implicitly trusted to the good judgment of her friend, Mr. M'Kinlay, for the result.

"You will hear," wrote she, "from Mademoiselle Heinzleman the scraples she



has communicated to myself, and learn from her that all the advantages derivable from my brother-in-law's project have been already realized, but that henceforth difficulties alone may be apprehended, so that your consideration will be drawn at once to the question whether this companionship is further necessary, or indeed advisable." She went on to state that if Sir Gervais had not told her Mr. M'Kinlay would be obliged to go down to the cottage for certain law papers he required, she would have scarcely ventured on imposing the present charge upon him, but that she felt assured, in the great regard he had always expressed for the family, of his ready forgiveness.

A small loose slip, marked "Strictly private and confidential," was enclosed within the note, the words of which ran thus: "You will see that you must imply to Mademoiselle H. that she has written to me in the terms and the spirit of *my* letter to *her*, and in this way pledge her to whatever course you mean to adopt. This will be easy, for she is a fool.

"I cannot believe that all the interest she assumes to take in K. is prompted by the girl's qualities, or her aptitude to learn, and I gravely suspect she has my brother-in-law's instructions on this head. This plot, for plot it is, I am determined to thwart, and at any cost. The girl must be got rid of, sent to a school, or if no better way offer, sent home again. See that you manage this in such a way as will not compromise yourself, nor endanger you in the esteem of

"G. C."

This last line he re-read before he enclosed the slip in his pocket-book, and muttered to himself the words, "endanger you in the esteem of Georgina Courtenay."

"I wonder what she means by all this?" muttered he, as he folded the loose slip and placed it within the recess of his pocket-book. "The whole scheme of educating this girl was never a very wise one, but it need not have called up such formidable animosity as this. Ah, mademoiselle, I am charmed to see you looking so well; this mountain air agrees with you," said he, as the governess entered. "I have come down to search for some documents Sir Gervais tells me I shall find in his desk here, and will ask you to let me be your guest for twenty-four hours."

Mademoiselle professed the pleasure his visit would confer, and in an interchange of compliments some time was passed; at

length, Mr. M'Kinlay, as if suddenly remembering himself, said, "By the way, here is a note I have just received from Miss Courtenay; I think you may as well read it yourself."

The lawyer watched her face keenly as she read over the letter, and saw clearly enough, in the puzzled expression of her features, that she was trying to recall what she could have written in her last letter to Rome.

"Sonderbar, es ist sonderbar: it is strange, very strange," muttered she, evidently lost in doubt, "for in my letter of this morning from Lady Vyner, she says that we shall probably soon be sent for to Italy, for that her mother has a great longing to see Ada; and yet there is no hint whatever about Kate."

"Does she mention that she expects Miss O'Hara to accompany you?" asked he.

"She does not say so; her words are, 'Do not feel startled if my next letter will call you to us, for her grandmother is most anxious to see Ada;' and then she goes on to say what different routes there are, and where Sir Gervais could meet us."

"I think I understand the reserve," said Mr. M'Kinlay, with an air of much wisdom; "her ladyship addresses herself to one question solely, and leaves all outside of it to be dealt with by others. It is for us—for you, mademoiselle, and I—to think of what is to be done with Miss O'Hara."

"What is there to be done but take her with us?—without, indeed, you were to send her home again," said she, with some agitation in her voice.

"That is the whole question, mademoiselle; we must think over it carefully, and, first of all, I must examine certain papers here, which will explain what are the legal claims of this young lady, and who are her guardians; for I remember, though Mr. Grenfell was to have acted, and, indeed, his name was written in pencil, Sir Gervais changed his mind, and thought of another trustee. For all these matters I shall want a little time, and perhaps it will not be asking too great a favor if I were to beg to let me have my whole day to myself in the library, and the churlish privilege of being alone."

The governess acceded politely to his proposal, not sorry, perhaps, to have a short interval to herself for consideration over the question before her, and still better pleased, too, that the girls were not destined to lose the long-wished-for delight of a day at Dalradern.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

SIR WITHIN "AT HOME."

IF the two young girls whose visit Sir Within Wardle was expecting had been princesses of a royal house, he could scarcely have made more preparations for their reception. Who knows if he did not, indeed, feign to himself that his castle was on that morning to be honored by the presence of those who move among lesser humanities as suns do among inferior orbs? It would have certainly been one of those illusions natural to such a man; he loved that great world, and he loved all that revived it in his memory; and so when he gave orders that all the state furniture of the castle should be uncovered, the handsomest rooms thrown open, and the servants in their dress liveries, the probability is, that the fête he was giving was an offering secretly dedicated to himself.

In the old court-yard, beautiful plants—magnolias, camellias, and rare geraniums—were arranged, regardless that the nipping cold of a sharp winter's day was to consign so many of them to an early death; and over the fountain and the statues around it, beautiful orchids were draped—delicate tendrils torn from the genial air of the conservatory, to waste a few hours of beauty ere they drooped forever.

Sir Within heard the remonstrances of his afflicted gardener with the bland dignity he would have listened to a diplomatic "reclamation;" and then instantly assured him that his representations should have due weight on the next similar occasion, but, for the present, his commands were absolute. The comments of a household disturbed on a pretext so humble may be easily imagined. The vested interests of major-domo, and butler, and housekeeper, are not institutions to be lightly dealt with, and many indeed were the unflattering commentaries bestowed on the intelligence and understanding of him who had turned the house out of the windows for a couple of "school-girls." But guesses that actually rose to the impertinence of impeachment of his sanity were uttered, when the old baronet came down stairs wearing his ribbon and his star.

And it was thus attired that he received them as they drove into the court, and alighted at the foot of the grand staircase.

"You see, young ladies," said he, with a courtly smile, "that I deem the honor of your visit no small distinction. That old river-god yonder and myself have put on our smartest coats; and it is only to be

hoped neither of us will be the worse for our 'Bath.'

Ada smiled graciously and bowed her thanks; but Kate, with a sparkle in her eye, muttered, in his hearing too, "How neatly said!" a little compliment that fluttered the old man, bringing back days when a happy *mot* was a success only second to a victory.

"As you have never been here before, you must allow me to be your 'Cicerone;' and I'll be a more merciful one than Mrs. Simcox, my housekeeper, who really would not spare you one of my ancestors since the Conquest. These grim people, then, at either side of us are Withins or Wardles; nine generations of excellent mortals are gazing on us; that dark one yonder, Sir Hugh, was standard-bearer to Henry the Second; and that fair-faced damsel yonder was maid of honor to Queen Elizabeth, and betrothed to her cousin, Sir Walter Raleigh, whom she threw off in a fit of jealousy; the massive ring that she wears on her finger is described in the chronicle, as an 'ancient seal of Sir Walter with his armes.'"

"So that," said Kate, "we may infer that at the time of the portrait she was yet betrothed."

Sir Within was pleased at a remark that seemed to show interest in his description; and henceforth, unconsciously indeed, directed most of his attention to her.

"We had not many warriors amongst us," continued he. "Most of my ancestors were statesmen or penmen. The thin, hard-visaged man yonder, however, was killed at Dettingen; that sweet-faced girl—she looks a mere girl—was his wife."

"His wife! I thought she was his daughter," said Ada, with some disappointment in her voice.

"Why not his wife?" interposed Kate; "he looks a very gallant gentleman."

Sir Within smiled, and turned on her a look of most meaning admiration.

"I perceive," said he, in a low tone, "that neither wrinkles nor a gray beard can hide chivalry from *your* eyes. He was, indeed, a gallant gentleman. Mademoiselle," said he, turning to the governess, "you will, I hope, pardon all this display of family pretension, the more, since it is the last of the race inflicts it."

A faint sigh—so faint, that if Kate, who uttered it, had not been beside him, he could not have heard it—fell on the old baronet's ear, and, in a flutter of strange emotion, he passed rapidly on, and gained the landing-place. From room to room they strolled leisurely on. Pictures, statues, antique cabinets, and rare china,



arresting attention at every moment. There were, indeed, objects to have attracted more critical observers; but in their eager delight at all they saw, their fresh enthusiasm, their frank outspoken enjoyment, Sir Within reaped a satisfaction far and away beyond all the most finished connoisseurship would have yielded him.

He showed them his armory—mailed suits of every time and country, from the rudely-shaped corslets of Northern Europe, to the chased and inlaid workmanship of Milan and Seville; and with these were weapons of Eastern fashion, a scimitar whose scabbard was of gold, and a helmet of solid silver amongst them; and, last of all, he introduced them into a small low-ceilinged chamber, with a massive door of iron concealed behind one of oak. This he called his “Gem-room;” and here were gathered together a variety of beautiful things, ranging from ancient coins and medals to the most costly ornaments in jewellery; jewelled watches, bon-bon boxes of the time of Louis XIV., enamelled miniatures in frames of brilliants, and decorations of various foreign orders, which, though not at liberty to wear, he treasured as relics of infinite worth. Kate hung over these like one entranced. The costly splendor seemed so completely to have captivated her, that she heard scarcely a word around her, and appeared like one fascinated by an object too engrossing to admit a thought, save of itself.

“Shall I own that I like those grand landscapes we saw in the second drawing-room better than all these gorgeous things?” said Ada. “That beautiful *Salvator Rosa*, with the warm sunset on the sea-shore, and the fishermen drying their nets—may I go back and look at it?”

“By all means,” said Sir Within. “Remember, that all here is at your disposal. I want first of all to show mademoiselle my library, and then, while I am giving some orders to my household, you shall be free of me—free to ramble about where you like. Will you come with us, Kate?” said he, as he prepared to leave the room.

“Not if I may remain here. I’d like to pass days in this little chamber.”

“Remain then, of course; and now, mademoiselle, if you will accompany me, I will show you my books.”

Scarcely had the door closed, and Kate found herself alone, than she opened one of the glass-cases in which some of the costliest trinkets lay. There was a splendid cameo brooch of *Madame de Valois*, with her crest in diamonds at top. This Kate gazed at long and thoughtfully, and at last

fastened on her breast, walking to the glass to see its effect. She half started as she looked; and, whether in astonishment at seeing herself the wearer of such magnificence, or that some other and far deeper sentiment worked within her, her eyes became intensely brilliant, and her cheek crimson. She hurried back, and drew forth a massive necklace of emeralds and brilliants. It was labelled “A present from the Emperor to Marie Antoinette on the birth of the Dauphin.” She clasped it round her throat, her fingers trembling with excitement, and her heart beating almost audibly. “Oh!” cried she, as she looked at herself again in the mirror; and how eloquent was the cry—the whole outburst of a nature carried away by intense delight and the sentiment of an all-engrossing self-admiration, for indeed she did look surpassingly lovely, the momentary excitement combining with the lustre of the jewels to light up her whole face into a radiant and splendid beauty.

She took out next a large fan actually weighted with precious stones, and opening this, she seated herself in front of the glass, to survey herself at her ease. Lying back languidly in the deep old chair, the hand which held the fan indolently drooped over the arm of the chair, while with the other she played with the massive drop of the emerald necklace, she looked exceedingly beautiful. Her own ecstacy had heightened her color and given a brilliant depth to the expression of her eyes, while a faint, scarcely detectable quiver in her lip showed how intense was her enjoyment of the moment. Even as she gazed, a gentle dreamy sentiment stole over her, visions, Heaven knows of what future triumphs, of days when others should offer their homage to that loveliness, when sculptors would mould and poets sing that beauty; for in its power upon herself she knew that it was Beauty, and so as she looked her eyelids drooped, her breathing grew longer and longer, her cheek, save in one pink cloud, became pale, and she fell off asleep. Once or twice her lips murmured a word or two, but too faintly to be caught. She smiled, too, that sweet smile of happy sleep, when softly creeping thoughts steal over the mind, as the light air of evening steals across a lake.

For nearly an hour did she lie thus, when Sir Within came in search of her. His habitual light step and cautious gait never disturbed her, and there he stood gazing on her, amazed, almost enraptured. “Where was there a Titian or a Raphael like that!” was his first thought; for, with the instinct of his life, it was to Art he at once

referred her. "Was there ever drawing or color could compare to it!" Through the stained glass window one ray of golden glory pierced and fell upon her hair and brow, and he remembered how he had seen the same "effect" in a "Memling," but still immeasurably inferior to this. What would he not have given that Danneker or Canova could have seen her thus and modelled her! Greek art itself had nothing finer in form, and as to her face, she was infinitely more beautiful than anything the antique presented. How was it that in all his hitherto admiration of her he had never before recognized such surpassing beauty? Was it that excitement disturbed the calm loveliness, and gave too much mobility to these traits? or was it that, in her versatile, capricious way, she had never given him time for admiration? As for the gems, he did not remark them for a long while, and when he did, it was to feel how much more *she* adorned *them* than they contributed to her loveliness.

"I must bring Ada here," muttered he to himself. "How she will be charmed with the picture!" He turned to steal away, and then, with the thoughtful instinct of his order, he moved noiselessly across the room, and turned the looking-glass to the wall. It was a small trait, but in it there spoke the old diplomatist. On gaining the drawing-room he heard that the governess and Ada had gone out to see the conservatory, so Sir Within hurried back to the Gem-room, not fully determined whether to awaken Kate or suffer her to sleep on. Remembering suddenly that if discovered all jewelled and bedecked the young girl would feel overcome with a sense of shame, he resolved not to disturb her. Still he wished to take a last look, and stole noiselessly back to the chamber.

Her position had changed since he left the room, the fan had fallen from her hand to the floor, and by a slight, very slight, motion of the eyelids he could mark that her sleep was no longer untroubled. "Poor girl," muttered he, "I must not leave her to dream of sorrow;" and laying his hand softly on the back of hers, he said, in a low whisper, "Kate, were you dreaming my child?"

She raised her eyelids slowly, lazily, and looked calmly at him without a word.

"What was your dream, Kate?" said he, gently, as he bent over her.

"Was it a dream?" murmured she softly. "I wish it had not been a dream."

"And what was it then?" said he, as taking a chair he sat down beside her—"tell me of it all."

"I thought a great queen, who had no child of her own, had adopted me, and said I should be her daughter, and in proof of it she took a beautiful collar from her throat and fastened it on mine."

"You see so much is true," said he pointing to the massive emerald drop that hung upon her neck.

Kate's cheek flushed a deep crimson as her eyes glanced rapidly over the room, and her mind seemed in an instant to recover itself. "I hope you are not angry with me," stammered she, in deep confusion. "I know I have been very foolish—will you forgive me?" As she came to the last words she dropped upon her knees, and, bending forward, hid her head between his hands.

"My sweet child, there is not anything to forgive. As to those trinkets, I never believed they were so handsome till I saw them on you."

"It was wrong—very wrong; but I was alone, and I thought no one would ever see me. If I were sure you had forgiven me——"

"Be sure, my dear child," said he, as he smoothed back her golden hair, caressing the beautiful head with his wasted fingers; "and now that I have assured you of this, tell me what it was you wished to speak of to me. You had a trouble, you said—what was it, Kate?"

"May I tell you of it?" asked she, lifting her eyes for the first time towards him, and gazing upwards through her tears.

"To be sure you may, child, and with the certainty that you speak to one who loves you."

"But I do not know how I can tell it—that is, how you are to believe what I shall tell you, when I am not able to say why and how I know the truth of what I shall say."

"More likely is it child, I shall not ask that question, but take your word for it all."

"Yes, that is true; it is what you would do. I ought to have seen that," muttered she, half aloud. "Are we certain to be alone here? Can I tell you now?"

"Certainly. They are off to see the gardens. None will interrupt us: say on."

"Mind," said she, eagerly, "you are not to ask me anything."

"I agree. Go on."

"At the same time, you shall be free to find out from others whether I have misled you or not."

"Go on, my dear child, and do not torment yourself with needless cares. I want



to hear what it is that grieves you, and if I can remove your sorrow."

"You can at least counsel me—guide me."

"It is my right and my duty to do so. I am one of your guardians, Kate," said he, encouragingly.

"Do you remember the morning I came from Ireland, the morning of my arrival at the Cottage?"

"Perfectly."

"Do you remember my grandfather hesitating whether he would let me stay, till some promise was given him that I should not be sent away out of a whim, or a fancy, or at least some pledge as to what should be done with me?"

"I remember it all."

"Well, he was right to have foreseen it. The time *has* come. Mind your promise—do not question me—but I know that they mean to send me—I cannot—I will not call it home," cried she, fiercely. "Home means shelter—friends—safety. Which of these does it offer *me*?"

"Be calm, my dear child; be calm and tell me all that you know. What reason have they for this change?"

"Ada is to go to Italy, to see her grandmother, who is ill. I am no longer wanted, and to be sent away."

"This is very unlike them. It is incredible."

"I knew you would say so," said she, with a heightened color, and a sparkling eye. "*They* of course could do no wrong, but perhaps I can convince you. You know Mr. M'Kinlay,—he is now at the Cottage,—he has come down about this. Oh!" burst she out with a wild cry, while the tears ran down her cheeks,—“oh, how bold my sorrow makes me, that I can speak this way to you. But save me! oh save me from this degradation! It is not the poverty of that life I dread, so much as the taunts upon me for my failure; the daily scoffs I shall have to meet from those who hoped to build their fortunes on my success. Tell me, then, where I may go to earn my daily bread, so it be not there. I could be a servant. I have seen girls as young as me at service. I could take care of little children, and could teach them, too. Will you help me? Will you help me?” cried she, sobbing, “and see if I will not deserve it?”

"Be comforted, my poor child. I have told you already you have a right to my assistance, and you shall have it."

She bent down and kissed his hand, and pressed her cheek upon it.

"Tell me, Kate, do you desire to go abroad with Ada?"

"Not now," said she, in a faint voice.

"I did, but I do so no longer."

"And on no account to return to Ireland."

"On none," said she, resolutely.

"Then I will think the matter over. I will send for Mr. M'Kinlay to-morrow, and doubtless he will make some communication to me."

"But do not forget, sir, that you must not betray *me*."

"I will take care of that, Kate; but come, my dear child, bathe these eyes of yours, and come into the air. They will wonder, besides, if they do not see you. Let us go and find them. Your heart may be at rest now. Is it not so?"

"I have your promise, sir?"

"You have, child."

"Oh! am I not happy again!" said she, throwing back her long hair upon her neck, and turning towards him her eyes beaming with gratitude, and bright with triumph. "I have spent two nights of misery, but they are well repaid by the joy I feel now."

"There. You look like yourself already," said he. "Come, and we'll search for them."

"What am I thinking of?" cried she, suddenly. "I was forgetting these;" and she unclasped the necklace, and took off the brooch, depositing them carefully in their places.

"You shall wear them again one of these days, Kate," said he, with a look of pensive meaning.

"They only serve me to build castles with," said she, gaily, "and the words you have spoken will help me to raise much finer ones. I am ready now, sir."

"Of all the days of your life," whispered Ada to Kate, as they drove home that evening, "was this the happiest?"

"It was," said the other, thoughtfully.

"And mine, too. I had not one dark thought till I saw evening coming on, and felt how soon it was to end. But I have such happy news for you, dear Kate, only I am not at liberty to tell it—something that is going to happen—somewhere we are about to go."

"Do not tell me more, or I shall become too curious to hear all."

"But you would be so glad, so overjoyed to hear it."

"One can always wait patiently for good tidings, the wise people say. Where did you get your violets in mid-winter?"

"Where *you* got your roses, Kate," said the other, laughing. "I never saw such pink cheeks as you had when you came into the garden."

"I had fallen asleep," said Kate, blushing slightly. "Whenever I am very, very happy, I grow sleepy."

## CHAPTER XXIX.

MR. M'KINLAY IS PUZZLED.

MR. M'KINLAY was at his breakfast the next day when he received the following letter from Sir Gervais Vyner :—

"Rome, Palazzo Altieri.

"MY DEAR MR. M'KINLAY—Lady Vyner's mother insists on seeing Ada out here, and will not listen to anything, either on the score of the season or the long journey. I cannot myself venture to be absent for more than a few days at a time ; and I must entreat of you to give mademoiselle and my daughter a safe convoy as far as Marseilles, where I shall meet you. I know well how very inconvenient it may prove to you, just as term is about to open, so pray make me deeply your debtor for the service *in all ways*. My sister-in-law informs me—but so vaguely that I cannot appreciate the reasons—that Mademoiselle H. does not advise Miss O'Hara should accompany them. It will be for you to learn the grounds of this counsel, and if you concur with them to make a suitable arrangement for that young lady's maintenance and education in England, unless, indeed, her friends require her to return home. To whatever you decide let money be no obstacle. There are good schools at Brighton, I believe. If her friends prefer a French education, Madame Gosselin's, Rue Neuve, St. Augustine, Paris, is well spoken of. See Sir Within Wardle on the subject, who, besides being her guardian, is well qualified to direct your steps.

"I cannot tell you how much I am provoked by what I must call this failure in a favorite project, nor is my annoyance the less that I am not permitted to know how, when, or why the failure has been occasioned. All that Miss Courtenay will tell me is, 'She must not come out to Italy,' and that I shall be the first to agree to the wisdom of this decision when I shall hear the reasons for it. Of course all this is between ourselves, and with Sir Within you will limit yourself to the fact that her education will be more carefully provided for by remaining north of the Alps—a truth he will, I am certain, recognize.

"Be sure, however, to get to the bottom of this—I may call it—mystery, for up to

this I have regarded Ada's progress in learning, and great improvement in spirits, as entirely owing to this very companionship.

"Drop me a line to say if you can start on Monday or Tuesday, and at the Pavilion Hotel you will either find me on your arrival or a note to say when to expect me. Tell Sir Within from me, that I will accept any trouble he shall take with Miss O'H. as a direct personal favor. I am not at all satisfied with the part we are taking towards this girl ; nor shall I be easy until I hear from you that all is arranged to her own liking, and the perfect satisfaction of her family. I think, indeed, you shall write to Mr. L., at Arron ; his concurrence ought to be secured, as a formality ; and he'll not refuse it, if not linked to something troublesome or inconvenient.

"I shall be curious to hear your personal report of Miss O'Hara, so take care to fit yourself for a very searching cross-examination from

"Yours faithfully,  
"GERVAIS VYNER.

"I hear that the people have just thrown down the walls of my new lodge in Derryvaragh, and vowed that they'll not permit any one to build there. Are they mad ? Can they not see that a proprietor, if he should come there, must be of use to them, and that all the benefit would be *theirs* ? Grenfell laughs at me, and says he predicted it all. Perhaps he did : at all events I shall not be deterred from going on, though neither of my Irish experiences have as yet redounded to my vain glory.

"I have not the shadow of a reason for suspecting it, still you would confer a favor on me if you could assure me, of your own knowledge, that nothing weightier than a caprice has induced mademoiselle to recommend that Miss O'H. should not come out here with my daughter.

"All of this letter is to be regarded private and confidential."

Scarcely had M'Kinlay finished the reading of this letter, than a servant presented him with a small note, sealed with a very large impress of the Wardle arms, and bearing a conspicuous "W. W." on the outer corner. Its contents ran thus :

"MY DEAR MR. M'KINLAY—Will you allow me to profit by the fortunate accident of your presence in these regions to bespeak the honor and pleasure of your company at a *lôte-à-lôte* dinner with me to-day ? My carriage will await your orders ; and if perfectly in accordance with your



convenience, I would beg that they may be to take you over here by an early hour—say four o'clock—as I am desirous of obtaining the benefit of your advice.

“I am very sincerely yours,  
“WITHIN WARDLE.”

“How provoking!” cried Mr. M’Kinlay; “and I meant to have caught the night-mail at Wrexham.”

Now Mr. M’Kinlay was not either provoked or disappointed. It had never been his intention to have left the cottage till the day after; and as to a dinner invitation to Dalradern, and with “the contingent remainder” of a consultation, it was in every respect the direct opposite of all that is provoking. Here he was alone. None heard him as he said these words. This hypocrisy was not addressed to any surroundings. It was the soliloquy of a man who liked self-flattery, and, strange as it may seem, there are scores of people who mix these sweet little draughts for themselves and toss them off in secrecy, like solitary drinkers, and then go out into the world refreshed and stimulated by their dram.

“I cannot take his agency, if that’s what he is at,” said Mr. M’Kinlay, as he stood with his back to the fire and fingered the seals of his watch; “I am overworked already—sorely overworked. Clients, now-a-days, I find, have got the habit of employing their lawyers in a variety of ways quite foreign to their callings.” This was a hit at Sir Jervais for his request to take Ada abroad. “A practice highly to be condemned, and, in fact, to be put down. It is not dignified; and I doubt if even it be profitable,”—his tone was now strong and severe. “A fine old place, Dalradern,” muttered he, as his eyes fell upon a little engraving of the castle at the top of the note—such vignettes were rarer at that day than at the present—“I think, really, I will give myself a bit of a holiday and dine with him. I thought him a bit of a fop—an old fop, too—when I met him here; but he may ‘cut up’ better under his own roof.”

“Rickards,” said he, as that bland personage entered to remove the breakfast-things, “I am not going to dine here today.”

“Lor, sir! You an’t a going so soon?”

“No. To-morrow, perhaps—indeed, I should say to-morrow certainly; but today I must dine at Dalradern.”

“Well, sir, you’ll tell me when you comes home if he’s better than Mrs. Byles for his side dishes; for I’ll never believe it, sir, till I have it from a knowledgeable gentleman like yourself. Not that I think, sir,

they will play off any of their new-fangled tricks on you—putting cheese into the soup, and powdered sugar over the peas.”

“I have seen both in Paris,” said M’Kinlay, gravely.

“And frogs too, sir, and snails; and Jacob, that was out in Italy with the saddle-horses, says he seen fifteen shillings given for a hedgehog, when lamb got too big.”

“Let Mademoiselle Heinzelman know that I should be glad to speak to her,” said the lawyer, who, feeling that he was going to dine out, could afford to be distant.

“Yes, sir, I’ll tell her;” and Rickards stirred the fire, and drew down a blind here, and drew up another there, and fidgeted about in that professionally desultory manner his order so well understand. When he got to the door, however, he stepped back, and in a low confidential whisper said, “It’s the ’ock, sir, the ’ock, at Dalradern, that beats us; eighty odd years in bottle, and worth three guineas a flask.” He sighed as he went out, for the confession cost him dear. It was like a government whip admitting that his party must be beaten on the next division!

Mr. M’Kinlay was deep in a second perusal of Sir Gervais Vyner’s letter when Mademoiselle Heinzelman entered. “I have a few lines from Sir Gervais here, mademoiselle,” said he, pompously, for the invitation to Dalradern was still fresh in his mind. “He wishes me, if it be at all possible, to accompany you and Miss Vyner as far as, let me see”—and he opened the letter—“as far as Marseilles. I own, with whatever pride I should accept the charge, however charmed I should naturally feel at the prospect of a journey in such company—”

“Es macht nichts. I mean, sare,” said she, impetuously, “with Franz, the courier, we can travel very well all alone.”

“If you will permit me, mademoiselle,” said he, haughtily, “to finish my phrase, you will find that, notwithstanding my many and pressing engagements, and the incessant demands which the opening of term makes upon my time, it is my intention not to refuse this—this, I shall call it favor—for it is favor—to my respected client. Can you be ready by Monday?”

“We are Wednesday now! Yes, but of Mademoiselle Kate, what of her? Does she come with us?”

“I opine not,” said he, gravely.

“And where she go to?” said she, with an eagerness which occasionally marred the accuracy of her expression.

“Sir Gervais has suggested that we may

take one of two courses, mademoiselle," said he, and probably something in the phrase reminded M'Kinlay of a well-known statesman, for he unconsciously extended an arm, and with the other lifted his coat-skirt behind him, "or, it is even possible, adopt a third."

"This means, she is not to come with us, sir."

Mr. M'Kinlay bowed his concurrence. "You see, Mademoiselle," said he, authoritatively, "it was a mistake from the beginning, and though I warned Sir Gervais that it must be a mistake, he would have his way; he thought she would be a means of creating emulation."

"So she has, sir."

"I mean, wholesome emulation; the generous rivalry—the—the—in fact, that she would excite Miss Vyner to a more vigorous prosecution of her studies, without that discouragement that follows a conscious—what shall I call it—not inferiority."

"Yes, inferiority."

"This, I am aware, mademoiselle, was your view; the letter I hold here from Miss Courtenay shows me the very painful impression your opinion has produced; nor am I astonished at the warmth—and there is warmth—with which she observes: 'Mademoiselle H. is under a delusion if she imagines that my brother-in-law was about to establish a nursery for prodigies. If the pigeon turns out to be an eagle, the sooner it is out of the dovecot the better.' Very neatly and very smartly put. 'If the pigeon—,'"

"Enough of the pigeon, sare. Where is she to go? who will take her in charge?"

"I have not fully decided on the point, mademoiselle, but by this evening I hope to have determined upon it; for the present I have only to apprise you that Miss O'Hara is not to go to Italy, and whatever arrangement should be necessary for her—either to remain in England, or to return to her family, will be made as promptly as possible."

"And who will take her in charge, sare?" said she, repeating the former question.

Mr. M'Kinlay laid his hand over the region of his heart, and bowed; but whether he meant that he himself would undertake the guardianship of the young lady, or that the matter was a secret enclosed in his own breast, is not at all easy to say.

"May I speak to her about this?"

"Not until I shall see you again; but you may take all such measures as may prepare her for her sudden departure."

Mr. M'Kinlay was, throughout the brief interview, more despotic than gallant. He was not quite satisfied that the mission was one in perfect accordance with his high professional dignity, and so to relieve himself from any self-reproach, he threw a dash of severity through his condescension.

"I suppose," said he, superbly—"I suppose she has clothes?"

Mademoiselle stared at this, but did not reply.

"I am somewhat unaccustomed, as you may perceive, mademoiselle, to these sort of affairs; I know nothing of young ladies' wardrobes. I simply asked, was she in a position to travel, if called on, at a brief notice?"

"My poor Kate! my poor Kate!" was all that the governess could utter.

"I must say, mademoiselle," said he, pompously, "that, looking to what she originally came from, and taking into account the care and cost bestowed upon her, I do not perceive this to be a case that calls for any deep commiseration."

"Poor child! poor child!" stammered she out; and, unable to control her emotion, she arose and left the room.

"Rickards was right; that artful minx had won them all over. It is high time to send her back to her own country, and, from the brief experience I have had of it, I'll venture to say all her captivations there will not make many victims. Three o'clock already," said he, with surprise, "and I had meant to be at Dalradern early." He rang and ordered the carriage. It had been at the door for above an hour. Strange how the morning should have slipped over; had it been real business, what a deal he could have transacted in the time; but these little "peddling negotiations," so he called them, ran away with a man's time before he was aware of it. As he passed through the hall, he saw through a partly opened door the two girls—they were seated at a table, with their heads bent over a map.

"Yes," said Ada, "this is the way papa mentions; here is Marseilles, and here, if the sea be rough, is the road we shall have to travel, all along the coast by Nice and Genoa. Oh, don't you wish it may be bad weather, Kate?"

M'Kinlay bent his head, but could not catch the words she spoke.

"And I used to fancy you would like it all more than ever I did myself," said Ada, in a tone of reproach.

"It is your lot to enjoy everything, and to have everything to enjoy," said Kate, "and mine is—no matter what it is—let us have a stroll in the garden."



M'Kinlay had just time to move on ere they arose, and, passing out, he got into the carriage and drove away.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### SCANDAL.

It was half-past four, as Mr. M'Kinlay drove into the court-yard at Dalradern. Sir Within's note had said four o'clock, an early dinner, and Sir Within himself could be seen, at an oriel window, watch in hand, as the carriage passed under the arched entrance. Now, though it was part of Mr. M'Kinlay's usual tactics never to "cheapen himself," he felt he might by possibility have erred on the opposite side on this occasion, and he prepared to make some excuses for his delay, the letters he had read, the replies he was forced to make, and such like.

The old baronet heard these apologies with a most polished urbanity; he bowed a continual acquiescence, and then ordered dinner.

"I had hoped for a little daylight, Mr. M'Kinlay," said he, "to have shown you some of my pictures, which are only worth seeing when they have got sun on them. Are you fond of the arts?"

"Passionately, Sir Within; devotedly, if a man so ignorant may dare to say so."

"Then, I must only hope for better fortune on another occasion, and that you will give me an entire morning, if you will not graciously make me a visit of some days."

"Oh, sir."

"I think," continued he—"I think I could requite you. My Van Eyks are accounted the best of any private collection; and one at least of my Albert Durers will bear comparison with any in the Munich Gallery."

M'Kinlay muttered something that sounded as if he were firmly persuaded of the fact.

"I know," added Sir Within, "that this sounds a little boastful; but when I shall have told you how I came by this picture—it is called the Queen's Martyrdom, and represents the Queen Beatrice of Bohemia on a balcony while her lover is going to the scaffold; the king, her husband, has ordered her to throw to him the garland or wreath, which was the privilege of nobles to wear in their last moments—and, I say, when I tell you the history of the picture, you will, perhaps, acquit me of vainglory; and also, when you see it, you will render

me a greater service by deciding whether the headsman has not been painted by Cranach. How I wish we had a little daylight, that I might show it to you!"

How grateful was M'Kinlay to the sun for his setting on that evening; never was darkness more welcome, even to him who prayed for night—or Bluecher; and, secretly vowing to himself that no casualty should ever catch him there before candlelight, he listened with a bland attention, and pledged his word to any amount of connoisseurs required of him. Still he hoped that this might not be "the case"—the especial case—on which Sir Within had summoned him to give counsel, for, besides being absurd, it would be worse—it would be unprofitable. It was a pleasant interruption to this "art conversation" when dinner was announced. Now did Mr. M'Kinlay find himself more at home when appealed to for his judgment on brown sherry, and the appropriate period at which "Amontillado" could be introduced; but he soon discovered he was in the presence of a master. Dinner-giving was the science of his craft, and Sir Within belonged to that especial school who have always maintained that Brillat Savarin is more to be relied upon than Grotius, and M. Ude a far abler ally than Puffendorf. It was the old envoy's pleasure on this occasion to put forth much of his strength; both the dinner and the wine were exquisite, and when the entertainment closed with some choice "Hermitage," which had been an imperial present, the lawyer declared that it was not a dinner to which he had been invited but a banquet.

"You must run down in your next vacation, my dear Mr. M'Kinlay, and give me a week. I don't know if you are a sportsman?"

"Not in the least, sir. I neither shoot, ride, nor fish."

"Nor do I, and yet I like a country life, as a sort of interlude in existence."

"With a house like this, Sir Within, what life can compare with it?"

"One can at least have tranquillity," sighed Sir Within, with an air that made it difficult to say whether he considered it a blessing or the reverse.

"There ought to be a good neighborhood, too, I should say. I passed some handsome places as I came along."

"Yes, there are people on every hand, excellent people, I have not a doubt; but they neither suit me, nor *I them*. Their ways are not mine, nor are their ideas, their instincts, nor their prejudices. The world, my dear Mr. M'Kinlay, is, unfortunately,

wider than a Welsh county, though they will not believe it here."

"You mean, then, Sir Within, that they are local, and narrow-minded in their notions?"

"I don't like to say that, any more than I like to hear myself called a libertine; but I suppose, after all, it is what we both come to." The air of self-accusation made the old envoy perfectly triumphant, and, as he passed his hand across his brow and smiled blandly, he seemed to be recalling to mind innumerable successes of the past. "To say truth, diplomacy is not the school for devots."

"I should think not, indeed, sir," said M'Kinlay.

"And that is what these worthy folk cannot or will not see. Wounds and scars are the necessary incidents of a soldier's life; but people will not admit that there are moral injuries which form the accidents of a minister's life, and to which he must expose himself as fearlessly as any soldier that ever marched to battle. What do these excellent creatures here—who have never experienced a more exciting scene than a cattle show, nor faced a more captivating incident than a bishop's visitation—know of the trials, the seductions—the irresistible seductions—of the great world? Ah, Mr. M'Kinlay, I could lay bare a very strange chapter of humanity, were I to tell even one-fourth of my own experiences."

"An instructive one too, I should say, sir."

"In one sense, yes; certainly instructive. You see, Mr. M'Kinlay, with respect to life it is thus: Men in your profession become conversant with all the material embarrassments and difficulties of families; they know of that crushing bond, or that ruinous mortgage, of the secret loan at fifty per cent., or the drain of hush money to stop a disclosure, just as the doctor knows of the threatened paralysis or the spreading aneurism; but we men of the world—men of the world *par excellence*—read humanity in its moral aspect; we study its conflicts, its trials, its weakness, and its fall—I say fall, because such is the one and inevitable end of every struggle."

"This is a sad view, a very sad view," said M'Kinlay, who, probably to fortify himself against the depression he felt, drank freely of strong Burgundy.

"Not so in one respect. It makes us more tolerant, more charitable. There is nothing ascetic in our judgment of people—we deplore but we forgive."

"Fine, sir, very fine—a noble sentiment!" said the lawyer, whose utterance was not

by any means so accurate as it had been an hour before.

"Of that relentless persecution of women, for instance, such as you practice it here in England, the great world knows positively nothing. In your blind vindictiveness you think of nothing but penalties, and you seem to walk over the battle-field of life with no other object or care than to search for the wounded and hold them up to shame and torture. Is it not so?"

"I am sure you are right. We are all *fal—fal—li—ble*, not a doubt of it," muttered M'Kinlay to himself.

"And remember," continued Sir Within, "it is precisely the higher organizations, the more finely-attuned temperaments that are most exposed, and which, from the very excellence of their nature, demand our deepest care and solicitude. With what pains, for instance, would you put together the smashed fragments of a bit of rare Sevres, concealing the junctures and hiding the flaws, while you would not waste a moment on a piece of vulgar crockery."

"Pitch it out o' window at once!" said M'Kinlay, with an almost savage energy.

"So it is. It is with this precious material, finely formed, beautiful in shape, and exquisite in color, the world has to deal; and how natural that it should treat it with every solicitude and every tenderness. But the analogy holds further. Every connoisseur will tell you that the cracked or fissured porcelain is scarcely diminished in value by its fracture; that when skilfully repaired it actually is almost, if not altogether, worth what it was before."

M'Kinlay nodded; he was not quite clear how the conversation had turned upon porcelain, but the wine was exquisite, and he was content.

"These opinions of mine meet little mercy down here, Mr. M'Kinlay; my neighbors call them Frenchified immoralities, and fifty other hard names; and as for myself, they do not scruple to aver that I am an old rake, come back to live on the recollection of his vices. I except, of course, our friends the Vyners—they judge, and they treat me differently; they are a charming family."

"Charming!" echoed the lawyer, and seeming by his action to drink their health to himself.

"You know the old line, 'He jests at wounds that never felt a scar!' and so have I ever found that it is only amongst those who have suffered one meets true sympathy. What is this curious story"—here he dropped into a low, confidential voice—"about Miss C.? It is a bygone now-a-



days; but how was it? She was to have married a man who had a wife living! or, she did marry him, and discovered it as they were leaving the church? I forget exactly how it went—I mean the story—for I know nothing as to the fact.”

M’Kinlay listened, and through the dull fog of his besotted faculties a faint flickering of light seemed struggling to pierce. The misanthrope at Arran—the once friend, now banished for ever—the name that never was to be uttered—the mystery to be kept from all—and then Georgina’s own sudden outburst of passion on the evening they parted, when he blundered out something about a reparation to Luttrell. All this, at first confusedly, but by degrees more clearly, passed in review before him, and he thought he had dropped upon a very black page of family history. Though the wine of which he had drunk freely had addled, it had not overcome him, and, with the old instincts of his calling, he remembered how all-important it is, when extracting evidence, to appear in full possession of all the facts.

“How, in the name of wonder, Sir Within,” said he, after a long pause—“how did it ever chance that this story reached you?”

“Mr. M’Kinlay, my profession, like your own, has its secret sources of information, and, like you, we hear a great deal, and we believe very little of it.”

“In the present case,” said M’Kinlay, growing clearer every minute, “I take it you believe nothing.”

“How old is Miss O’Hara?” asked Sir Within, quietly.

“Oh, Sir Within, you surely don’t mean to—”

“To what, Mr. M’Kinlay,—what is it that I cannot possibly intend?” said he, smiling.

“You would not imply that—that there was anything there?” said he, blundering into an ambiguity that might not commit him irretrievably.

“Haven’t I told you, my dear Mr. M’Kinlay,” said he, with an air of easy familiarity, “that if I am somewhat skeptical, I am very charitable? I can believe a great deal, but I can forgive everything.”

“And you really do believe this?” asked M’Kinlay.

“Something of it; about as much as Mr. M’Kinlay believes. Kate O’Hara is—let me see,” muttered he, half aloud; “I was at Stuttgart; it was the winter Prince Paul died; we had a court mourning, and there were no festivities. The Legations received a few intimates, and we

exchanged all the contents of our letters—that was sixteen or seventeen years ago; the young lady, I take it, is not far from fifteen.”

“Good heavens, Sir Within, you want to establish a distinct link between this story and the age of the young girl!”

“That is too legal a view, Mr. M’Kinlay; we diplomatists deal in another fashion—we speculate, we never specify. We always act as if everything were possible, and nothing certain; and in our very uncertainty lies our greatest security.”

“At all events, you don’t believe one word of this story?”

“When a gentleman so intimately connected with all the secret details of a family history as you are, instead of showing me where and how I am in error, limits himself to an appeal to my incredulity, my reply is, his case is a weak one. She is a most promising creature; she was here yesterday, and I declare I feel half ashamed of myself for thinking her more attractive than my dear old favorite, Ada. What are you going to do about her?”

The suddenness of this question startled M’Kinlay not much, if at all. “Did the old baronet know of the Vyner’s plans?—was he in reality more deeply in their confidence than himself?”—was the lawyer’s first thought. It was clear enough he knew something, whatever that something might mean. To fence with such a master of his weapon would be a lamentable blunder, and M’Kinlay determined on frankness.

“It is the very subject on which I want to consult you, Sir Within. The case is a nice one, and requires nice treatment. The Vyners have determined she is not to go out to Italy.”

“Do they give their reason?”

“No, not exactly a reason. They think—that is, Miss Courtenay thinks—all this is, of course, in strict confidence, Sir Within?”

The old minister bowed an acquiescence, with his hand on his heart.

“As I was observing, then,” resumed M’Kinlay, “Miss Courtenay thinks that the united education scheme has not been a success; that Miss O’Hara has contrived, somehow, to usurp more than her share; that from natural quickness, perhaps, in learning, a greater aptitude for acquirement, she has not merely outstripped but discouraged Miss Vyner—”

The incredulous surprise that sat on the old baronet’s face stopped M’Kinlay in his explanation, and he said: “You don’t appear to believe in this, Sir Within?”

“Don’t you think, sir,” said the old en-

voy, "that sitting here *tête-à-tête* as we do now, we could afford to be candid and frank with each other? Does it not strike you that you and I are very like men who could trust each other?"

There was a fine shade of flattery in the collocation that touched the lawyer. It was not every day that he saw himself "brigaded" in such company, and he reddened slightly as he accepted the compliment.

"Let us, then," resumed the old minister, "let us leave to one side all mention of these young ladies' peculiar talents and capacities; come to the practical fact that, for reasons into which we are not to inquire, they are to be separated. What do you mean to do by Miss O'Hara?"

Mr. M'Kinlay paused for a few seconds, and then, with the air of one who could not subdue himself to any caution, said: "Whatever you suggest, Sir Within—anything that you advise. You see, sir," said he, turning down the corner of Vyner's letter, and handing it to him to read, "this is what he says: 'Tell Sir Within from me, that I will accept any trouble he shall take with Miss O'H. as a direct personal favor.'"

Sir Within bowed. It was not the first time he had been shown a "strictly confidential dispatch" that meant nothing.

"I think—that is, I suspect—I apprehend the situation," said he. "The Vyners want to stand in the *statu quo ante*; they have made a mistake, and they see it. Now what does Mr. M'Kinlay suggest?"

"I'd send her back, Sir Within."

"Back! Where? To whom?"

"To her friends."

"To her friends! My dear M'Kinlay, I thought we had disposed of all that part of the case. Let us be frank—it *does* save so much time; for friends, read Mr. Luttrell. Now, what if he say, 'No; you have taken her away, and by your teaching and training unfitted her for such a life as she must lead here; I cannot receive her?'"

"I did not mean Mr. Luttrell; I really spoke of the girl's family—"

"You are a treasure of discretion, sir," said Sir Within; "but permit me to observe, that the excess of caution often delays a negotiation. *You* say that she cannot go to Italy, and *I* say she can as little return to Ireland—at least without Mr. Luttrell's acquiescence. Now for the third course?"

"This school Sir Gervais speaks of in Paris," said M'Kinlay, fumbling for the passage in the letter, for he was now so confused and puzzled that he was very far from

feeling calm. "Here is the address—Madame Gosselin, Rue Neuve St. Augustin, Paris. Sir Gervais thought that—with of course your approval—this would be the best course we could take. She would be well treated, well educated, cared for, and eventually qualified to be a governess—if she should not chance to marry."

"Yes, yes," said Sir Within, slowly, as he pondered over the other's words, "there is much in what you say, and the remarkable fact is, that *they do*, very often, make admirable wives."

Who were the "they" he referred to, as a category, M'Kinlay did not dare to inquire, but assented by a smile and a bow.

"Curious it is," said the old man, reflectively, "to mark how generations alternate, as if it were decreed that the world should not make any distinct progress, but oscillate between vice and virtue—virtue and vice. The respectable father and the scampish son being the counterpoise for the rakish mamma and the discreet daughter."

To what such a reflection could be thought to apply, Mr. M'Kinlay had not the vaguest conception; but it is only fair to add, that his faculties were never throughout the interview at their clearest.

"My chief difficulty is this, sir," said the lawyer, rising to an effort that might show he had an opinion and a will of his own; "Sir Gervais requests me to convey his daughter as far as Marseilles; he names an early day to meet us there, so that really there is very little time—I may say no time, if we must start by Monday next."

Sir Within made no reply, and the other went on:—

"Suppose I take this girl over to Paris with us, and the school should be full, and no vacancy to be had? Suppose they might object—I have heard of such things—to receive as a pupil one who had not made any preliminary inquiries?"

"Your position might become one of great embarrassment, Mr. M'Kinlay, and to relieve you so far as in me lies, I would propose that until you have taken the necessary steps to ensure Miss O'Hara's reception, she should remain under the charge of my housekeeper here, Mrs. Simcox. She is a most excellent person, and kindness itself. When you have satisfied yourself by seeing Madame Gosselin at Paris, as to all matters of detail, I shall very probably have had time to receive a reply to the letter I will write to my co-trustee, Mr. Luttrell, and everything can be thus arranged in all due form."

"I like all of your plans, sir but the



last step. I have confessed to you that Sir Gervais Vyncr had strictly enjoined me not to mention Mr. Luttrell's name."

"You also mentioned to me, if I mistake not, that the young girl's friends, whoever they might be supposed to be, were to be consulted as to any future arrangements regarding her. Now, do you seriously mean to tell me that you are going to address yourself to the old peasant, who assumed to be her grandfather, and who frankly owned he couldn't read?"

"I do think, Sir Within, that old Malone—that is the man's name—ought to be informed, and, indeed, consulted as to any step we take."

"A model of discreet reserve you certainly are," said Sir Within, smiling graciously. "You will write to him, therefore, and say that Miss Kate O'Hara is, for the time being, under the roof of one of her guardians, Sir Within Wardle, preparatory to her being sent to a school at Paris. You may, if you think it advisable, ask him for a formal acquiescence to our plan, and if he should desire it, add, he may come over here and see her. I suspect, Mr. M'Kinlay, we cannot possibly be called on to carry out the illusion of relationship beyond this."

"But he is her grandfather; I assure you he is."

"I believe whatever Mr. M'Kinlay asks me to believe. With the inner convictions which jar against my credulity, you shall have no cause of complaint, sir; they are, and they shall be, inoperative. To prove this, I will beg of you to enclose ten pounds on my part to this old peasant, in case he should like to come over here."

"I am sure Sir Gervais will be deeply obliged by all your kindness in this matter."

"It is my pleasure and my duty both."

"What a rare piece of fortune it was for her, that made you her guardian."

"Only one of them, remember, and that I am now acting, perforce, without my colleague. I own, Mr. M'Kinlay, I am red tapist enough not to like all this usurped authority, but you have tied me up to secrecy."

"Not I, Sir Within. It was Sir Gervais who insisted on this."

"I respect his wishes, for perhaps I appreciate their necessity. You see some sort of objection to my plan, Mr. M'Kinlay?" said the old diplomatist, with a cunning twinkle of the eye. "What is it?"

"None, sir, none whatever," said the lawyer, rapidly.

"Yes, yes, you do; be candid, my dear

Mr. M'Kinlay. What we say to each other here will never figure in a Blue-book."

"I did not see a positive objection, Sir Within; I only saw what might be an embarrassment."

"In what shape?"

"I am completely in your hands, Sir Within Wardle; but such is my confidence in you, I will not withhold anything. Here is the difficulty I speak of; Miss Courtenay, who never favored the project about this girl, likes it now less than ever, and I do not feel quite certain that she will be satisfied with any arrangement short of sending her back to the obscurity she came from."

"I can understand and appreciate that wish on her part, but then there is no need that I should suspect it, Mr. M'Kinlay. The habits of my profession have taught me to bear many things in mind without seeming to act upon the knowledge. Now, the shelter that I propose to afford this young lady need not excite any mistrust. You will tell Sir Gervais that the arrangement met with your approval. That it was, in your opinion, the best of the alternatives that offered, and that Sir Within Wardle has, on the present occasion, a double happiness afforded him—he obliges friends whom he values highly; and he consults his own personal gratification."

In the last few words the old envoy had resumed a tone familiar to him in the days when he dictated despatches to a secretary, and sent off formal documents to be read aloud to dignitaries great and potent as himself; and Mr. M'Kinlay was duly impressed thereat.

"In all that relates to Mr. Luttrell I am to rely upon you, sir," said Sir Within, and Mr. M'Kinlay bowed his acquiescence. "I am certain that you smile at my excess of formality," continued the old minister. "These particularities are second nature to us;" and it was clear as he said "*us*," that he meant an order whose ways and habits it would be a heresy to dispute. "If you will not take more wine, let us go into the drawing-room. A drawing-room without ladies, Mr. M'Kinlay," said he with a sigh; "but, perhaps, one of these days—who knows?—we may be fortunate enough to receive you here more gracefully."

Mr. M'Kinlay, in any ordinary presence, would have responded by one of those little jocose pleasantries which are supposed to be fitting on such occasions; he had tact enough, however, to perceive that Sir Within would not have been the man for a familiarity of this sort, so he merely smiled.

and bowed a polite concurrence with the speech.

"It will be as well, perhaps, if I wrote a few lines to Mademoiselle Heinzeleman, and also to Miss O'Hara herself, and if you will excuse me for a few minutes, I will do so."

The old minister despatched his two notes very speedily, and, with profuse assurances of his "highest considerations," he took leave of the lawyer, and sat down to ruminare over their late conversation, and the step he had just taken.

Mr. M'Kinlay, too, meditated as he drove homewards, but not with all that clearness of intellect he could usually bestow upon a knotty point. Like most men in his predicament, to be puzzled was to be angered, and so did he inveigh to himself against "that crotchety old humbug, with his mare's nest of a secret marriage." Not but there was a "something somewhere," which he, M'Kinlay, would certainly investigate before he was many weeks older. "Miss Georgina's manner to me used to undergo very strange vacillations—very strange ones indeed. Yes, there was something 'in it'—surely something."

While Kate O'Hara was still sleeping the next morning, Ada hurried into her room, and threw her arms around her, scolding bitterly, as the hot tears ran down her cheeks. "Oh, Kate, my own dear, darling Kate, what is this dreadful thing I have just heard? Lisette has just told me that she is not to pack your clothes—that you are not coming with me abroad."

"Kate raised herself on one arm, and pushed back her hair from her brow, her large eyes wearing for an instant the meaningless looks of one suddenly awakened from sleep.

"Do you hear me—do you know what I am saying, dearest?" asked Ada, as she kissed her, and drew her towards her.

"Tell it me again," said she, in a low, distinct voice.

"Lisette says that mademoiselle has orders—from whom I cannot say—that you are to remain in England, to go to a school, or to live with a governess, or to return to Ireland, or something; but whatever it is that we are to be separated," and again her grief burst forth and choked her words.

"I knew this would come one day," said Kate, slowly, but without any touch of emotion. "It was a caprice that took me, and it is a caprice that deserts me."

"Oh, don't say that, Kate, of my own dear papa, who loves you almost as he loves me!"

"I can have nothing but words of

gratitude for him, Ada, and for your mother."

"You mean, then——"

"No matter what I mean, my sweet Ada. It may be, after all, a mercy. Who is to say whether after another year of this sort of life, its delicious happiness should have so grown into my nature that it would tear my very heart-strings to free myself from its coils? Even now there were days when I forgot I was a peasant girl, without home, or friends, or fortune."

"Oh, Kate, you will break my heart if you speak this way!"

"Well, then, to talk more cheerfully. Will not that pretty hat yonder, with the long blue feather, look wondrous picturesque, as I follow the goats up the steep sides of Inchegora? and will not that gauzy scarf be a rare muffle as I gather the seaweed below the cliffs of Bengore?"

"Kate, Kate!" sobbed Ada, "how cruel you are! You know, too, that dear papa does not mean this. It is not to hardship and privation he would send you."

"But there are reverses, Ada, a hundred times worse than any change of food or dress. There are changes of condition that seem to rend one's very identity. Here, I had respect, attention, deference, and now, I go, Heaven knows where, to render these tributes to Heaven knows whom. Tell me of yourself, my sweet Ada. It is a far brighter theme to dwell on."

"No, no; not if I must part with you," said she, sobbing; but you will write to me, my own darling Kate! We shall write to each other continually till we meet again?"

"If I may. If I be permitted," said Kate, gravely.

"What do you—what can you mean?" cried Ada, wildly. "You speak as though some secret enemy were at work to injure you here, where you have found none but friends who love you."

"Don't you know, my dear Ada, that love, like money, has a graduated coinage, and that what would be a trifle to the rich man, would make the wealth of a poor one? The love your friends bear me is meted out by station; mind, dearest, I am not complaining of this. Let us talk of Italy, rather; how happy you ought to be there!"

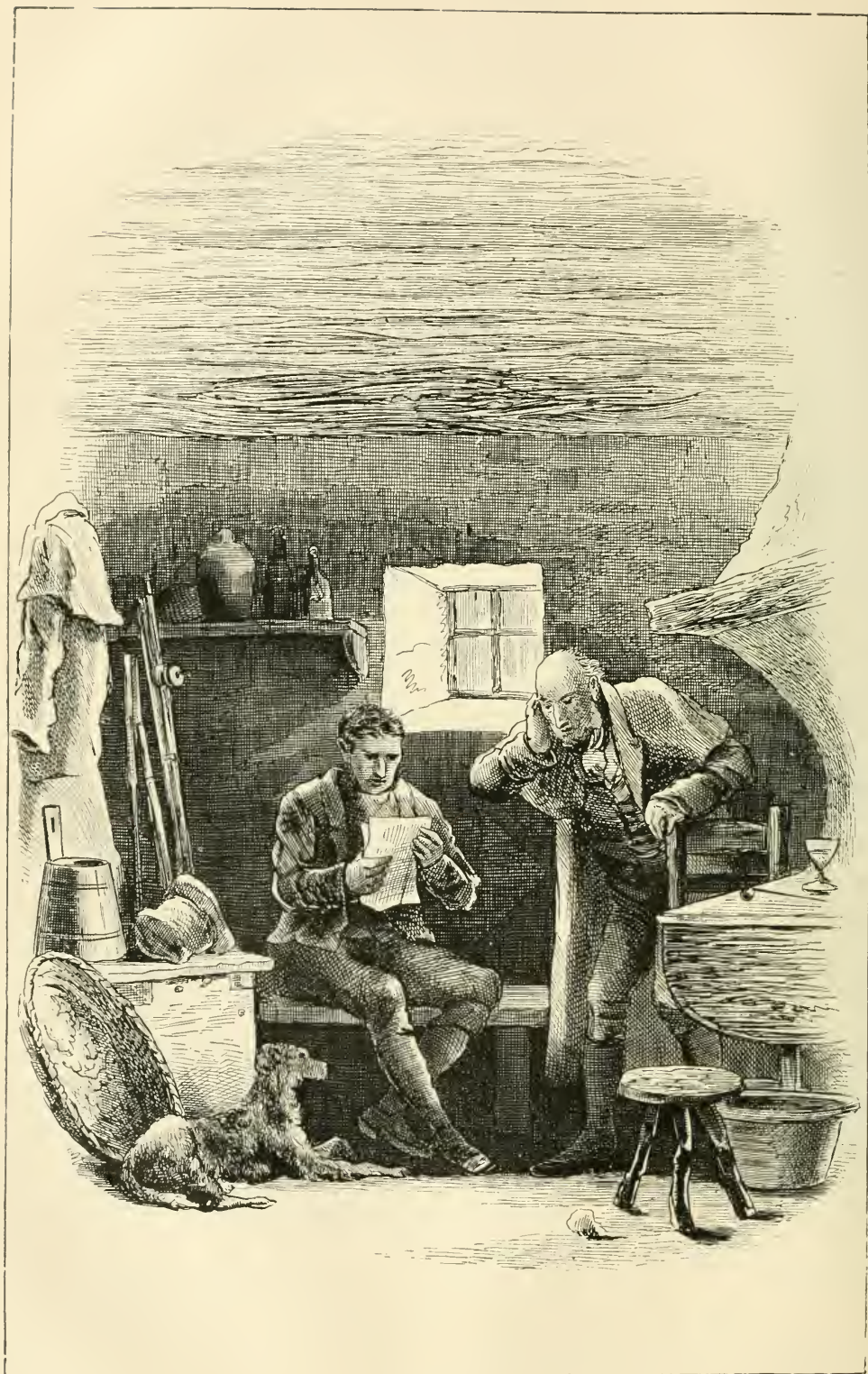
"If I but had you, my own dearest——"

"There, I hear mademoiselle coming. Bathe your eyes, dear Ada; or, better still, run away before she sees you."

Ada took this last counsel; but scarcely had she left by one door, than mademoiselle entered by another.







The Letter.



## CHAPTER XXXI.

## DERRYVARAGH.

A DREARY day of December it was, and the rain was pouring heavily, pitilessly down the dark gorge of Derryvaragh. The roar of mountain rivulets, swollen to torrents, filled the air, and the crashing sounds of falling timber blended with the noise of troubled waters. Beautiful as that landscape would be on a day of bright sunshine, it seemed now the dreariest scene the eye could rest on. The clouds lay low on the mountain sides, thickening the gloom that spread around, while yellow currents of water crossed and recrossed on every side, rending the earth, and laying bare the roots of tall trees.

From a window in O'Rorke's inn, O'Rorke himself and old Malone watched the devastation and ruin of the flood; for even there, in that wild region forgotten of men, there were little patches of cultivation—potato-gardens and small fields of oats or rye—but through which now the turbid water tore madly, not leaving a trace of vegetation as it went.

"And so you saw the last of it?" said O'Rorke, as he lit his pipe and sat down at the window.

"I did; there wasn't one stone on another as I came by. The walls were shaky enough before, and all the mortar washed out of them, so that when the stream came down in force, all fell down with a crash like thunder; and when I turned round there was nothing standing as high as your knee, and in five minutes even that was swept away, and now it's as bare as this floor."

"Now, mind my words, Peter Malone; as sure as you stand there, all the newspapers will be full of 'Another Outrage—More Irish Barbarism and Stupidity.' That will be the heading in big letters; and then underneath it will go on: 'The beautiful lodge that Sir Gervais Vyner had recently built in the Gap at Derryvaragh was last night razed to the ground by a party of people who seemed determined that Ireland should never rise out of the misery into which the ignorance of her natives have placed her.' That's what they'll say, and then the *Times* will take it up, and we'll have the old story about benefactor on one side, and brutality on the other; and how, for five hundred years and more, England was trying to civilize us, and that we're as great savages now—ay, or worse—than at first."

Malone clasped his worn hands together,

and muttered a deep curse in Irish below his breath.

"And all our own fault," continued O'Rorke, oratorically. "'Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow.' I said that on Essex Bridge to the Lord-Lieutenant himself; and look at me now—is it here, or is it this way, a patriot ought to be?"

"Isn't it the same with us all?" said Malone, sternly. "Didn't they take my grandchild away from me—the light of my eyes—and then desert her?"

"No such thing—she's better off than ever she was. She's living with a man that never was in Ireland, and mind what I say, Peter Malone, them's the only kind of English you ever get any good out of."

"What do you mane?"

"I mane that when one or two of us go over there, we're sure to be thought cute and intelligent; and the Saxon says, 'Isn't it a wonder what a clever people they are?' But if he comes here himself, and sees nothing but misery and starvation, he cries out, 'They're hopeless craytures—they live with the pig.'"

"And why wouldn't we if we had one?"

"Well, well, well," muttered the other, who never minded nor heeded the interruption, "maybe the time is coming, maybe the great day is near. Don't you know the song of the 'Shamroge in my Hat?'"

"I ne'er heard it."

"Tis little I care for Emancipation.

'Tis little I want such laws as that;

What I ask is, Ould Ireland to be a nation,

And myself with a shamroge in my hat."

"I wonder will the letter come to-day?" said the old man, with a weary sigh: "my heart is heavy waiting for it."

"If she sent you a ten-pound note, Peter Malone, whenever she wrote, there would be some sense and reason in your wishing for a letter; but, so well as I remember the one scrap of letter that she sent you, there was neither money nor money's worth in it."

"It was better than goold to my heart," said Malone, with a deep feeling in his voice and look.

"Well, there, it's coming now; there's Patsey holding up a letter in his hand. Do you see him at the ford, there?"

"I don't see him, my eyes are so weak; but are ye sure of it, Tim O'Rorke? Don't deceive me, for the love of the blessed Virgin."

"I'm not deceiving you; there is the boy coming along as fast as he can."

"Ay, but the letter?"

"He flourished it a minute ago, this way, for he saw me at the window."

"Open the window, and maybe he'd show it again," said the old man, trembling with eagerness.

"Faix! I'll not let the rain in. It's a nice day to have the windows open. You're eaten up with your selfishness, Peter Malone."

"Maybe I am, maybe I am," muttered the old peasant, as he sat down, and hid his face between his hands.

"And who knows where the letter will be from? Maybe it's Vynar is going to turn you out of your holding."

"So he may," sighed the other, meekly.

"Maybe it's the agents callin' on you to pay up for the time you were in it. Do you think that would be convenient, eh?"

"I don't care, if they did."

"I wouldn't wonder if it was trouble you were getting in about throwing down the walls of the Lodge. The police, they say, made a report about it."

"So they may; let them do their worst."

"Go round to the back. Do you think I'll open the front doore of a day like this?" screamed out O'Rorke to the messenger, who now stood without.

While he went to unbar the door, old Malone dropped on his knees, and with clasped hands and uplifted eyes muttered a few words of prayer; they were in Irish, but their intense passion and fervor were but increased by the strong-sounding syllables of that strange tongue.

"There it is—from herself," said O'Rorke, throwing down the letter on the table. "Her own handwriting; 'Mr. Peter Malone, to the care of Mr. O'Rorke, Vinegar Hill, Cush-ma-greena, Ireland.'"

"The heavens be your bed, for the good news, Tim O'Rorke! may the Virgin watch over you for the glad heart you've given me this day."

"Wait till we see the inside of it, first. Give it to me till I open it." But the old man could not part with it so easily, but held it pressed hard to his lips.

"Give it here," said the other, snatching it rudely; "maybe you'll not be so fond of it when you know the contents."

The old man rocked to and fro in his agitation as O'Rorke broke the seal; the very sound of the wax, as it smashed, seemed to send a pang through him, as he saw the rough unfeeling way the other handled that precious thing.

"It's long enough, anyhow, Peter—one, two, three pages," said he, turning them leisurely over. "Am I to read it all?"

"Every word of it, Tim O'Rorke."

"Here goes then:—

"March 27, 18—. Dalradern Castle, N. Wales

"MY DEAR OLD GRANDFATHER,—I sit down to write you a very long letter—"

"God bless her! God bless the darlin'!" said the old man, interrupting; "show me the words, Tim—show them to me."

"Indeed I will not do any such thing. It's just as much as I'll do is to read it out—a very long letter, and I hope and trust it will serve for a very long time, and save me, besides, from the annoyance of your friend and secretary, Mr. O'Rorke.' Listen to this, Peter Malone, 'from your secretary, Mr. O'Rorke, who, I suppose, having no treason to occupy him, is good enough to bestow his leisure upon me.' Did you ever hear more impudence than that in all your born days? Did you believe she'd be bowld enough to insult the man that condescended to serve her?"

"She's young, she's young, Tim. Would you have her as wise as you and me? The craytur."

"I'd have her with a civil tongue in her head. I'd have her respect and regard and reverence her superiors. And I'm one of them."

"Go on; read more," muttered the old man.

"It's not so easy, with a throat on fire, and a tongue swelled with passion. I tell you, Peter Malone, I know that girl well, and what's more, she never deceived me. It's like yesterday to me, the day she stood up here to my own face, and said, 'I wish I never set foot in your house, Tim O'Rorke.' Yes, there's the very words she used."

"Wasn't she a child, a poor little child?" said Malone, in a humble, almost supplicating voice.

"She was a child in years, but she had the daring of a woman, that no man would ever frighten."

"Read on, avie, read on, and God bless you," said the other, wiping away the big drops that stood on his brow.

O'Rorke read on: "'I know, grandfather, it is very natural you should like to hear of me—'"

A deep sigh and low muttered prayer broke here from the old man.

"—to hear of me; but when once assured that I was well and happy, I hoped and believed you would cease to make such inquiries as fill O'R.'s letters—"

"What does she mean?" broke in Malone.

"Listen, and maybe you'll hear;" and he read:—



“—For it cannot possibly be a matter of interest to you to hear that I read books you never saw, speak with people you never met, and talk of things, places, and persons that are all just as strange to you as if you were walking on a different earth from this.”

“Read that again.”

“I will not. ’Tis as much as I can to say it once. Listen:—

“You ask, Am I happy? and I answer, If I am not, is it in your power to make me so? You want to know, Do I like the life I lead? and I ask you, If it should be that I did not like it, do you think I’d like to go back to rags, misery, and starvation? Do you believe that I can forget the cold, cutting wind, and the rain, and the snow-drift of Strathmore, or that I don’t remember the long days I shivered on the cliffs of Kilmacreenon? They all come back to me, grandfather, in my dreams, and many a morning I awake, sobbing over miseries that, no matter what may be my fortune, have left a dark spot on my heart for life.”

“The darlin’ jewel! I hope not,” muttered Malone, as his lips trembled with emotion. “Read on, O’Rorke.”

“Take it for granted, that you need never fret about me.’ That’s true, anyhow, Peter; and she means it to say, ‘Don’t bother yourself about one that will never trouble her head about *you!*’”

“Go on with the readin’,” grumbled out Malone.

“Though I cannot answer one-fourth of your questions, I will tell you so much; I am better off here than at Sir G. V.’s. I am my own mistress; and, better still, the mistress of all here. Sir Within leaves everything at my orders. I drive out, and dress, and ride, and walk, just as I please. We see no company whatever, but there is so much to do, I am never lonely. I have masters if I wish for them—sometimes I do—and I learn many things, such as riding, driving, &c., which people never do well if they only have picked up by chance opportunity. You ask, What is to be the end of all this? or, as Mr. O’Rorke says, What will ye make of it? I reply, I don’t know, and I don’t much trouble my head about it; because I *do* know, Peter Malone, that if I am not interrupted and interfered with, all will go well with me, though certainly I can neither tell how, or where, or why. Another thing is equally clear: neither of us, dear grandfather, can be of much use to the other.”

“What’s that?” cried the old man; “read it again.”

“Neither of us can be of much use to the other.’ That’s plain talking, anyhow, Peter. She’s a young lady that makes herself understood, I must say that!”

“I never ‘dragged’ on her for a farthin’,” said Malone, with a mournful sigh.

“Lucky for you, Peter; lucky for you!”

“Nor I wouldn’t, if I was starvin’,” said he, with a fierce energy.

“Lucky for you, I say again!”

“You mane, that she wouldn’t help me, Tim O’Rorke. You mane, that she’d turn her back on her ould grandfather. That’s as it may be. God knows best what’s in people’s hearts. I can’t tell, nor you either; but this I can tell, and I can swear to it—that for all the good she could do me—ten, ay fifty times told—I’d not disgrace her, nor bring her to the shame of saying, ‘That ould man there in the ragged frieze coat and the patched shoes, that’s my mother’s father.’”

“If it’s to your humility you’re trusting, Peter, my man,” said the other, scoffingly, “you’ve made a great mistake in your granddaughter; but let us finish the reading. Where was it I left off? Yes, here, ‘Neither of us of much use to the other. You want to know what intercourse exists between the Vyners and myself—’ The Vyners! Ain’t we grand!” cried O’Rorke. “The Vyners! I wonder she don’t say, ‘between the Vyners and the O’Haras.’”

“Go on, will you?” said Malone, impatiently.

“—it is soon told—there is none; and what’s more, Sir Within no longer hears from or writes to them. Although, therefore, my own connection with this family has ceased, there is no reason why this should influence yours; and I would, above all things, avoid, if I were you, letting *my* fortunes interfere with *your* own. You can, and with truth, declare that you had nothing whatever to do with any step I have taken; that I went my own way, and never asked you for the road. My guardian, Sir Within, wrote, it is true, to Mr. Luttrell, of Arran, but received no answer. It will be my duty to write to him in a few days, and not improbably with the same result.

“You seem anxious to know if I have grown tall, and whether I am still like what I was as a child. I believe I may say, Yes, to both questions; but I shall send you, one of these days, a sketch from a picture of me, which the painter will this year exhibit at the Academy. It is called a great likeness. And last of all, you ask after my soul. I am sorry, dear grandfather, that I cannot be as certain of

giving you as precise intelligence on this point as I have done on some others. It may satisfy you, however, perhaps, if I say I have not become a Protestant——”

“God bless her for that !” said Malone, fervently.

“—although our excellent housekeeper here, Mrs. Sincox, assures me that such a change would be greatly to my advantage, in this world and in that to come ; but if her knowledge of the former is the measure of what she knows of the latter, I shall require other counsel before I read my recantation.”

“What does she mean by that ?” asked Malone.

“’Tis another way of saying, ‘I won’t play a card till I see the money down on the table.’”

“How can that be ? Which of us knows what’s going to happen here or in the next world ?”

“Maybe the Protestants does ! Perhaps that’s the reason they’re always so dark and downcast now.”

Malone shook his head in despair ; the problem was too much for him, and he said, “Read on.”

“That I am not without the consolations of the Church you will be glad to hear, as I tell you that a French priest, the Abbé Gérard, dines here every Sunday, and sings with me in the evening.”

“Sings with her. What makes them sing ?”

“Religion, of coorse,” said O’Rorke, with a grin of derision. “Listen to me, Peter Malone,” cried he, in a stern voice ; “when people is well off in the world, they no more think of going to heaven the way you and I do, than they’d think of travellin’ a journey on a low-backed car.”

“Go on with the reading,” muttered Malone.

“I have read enough of it, Peter Malone. You are cute enough to see by this time what a fine-hearted, generous, loving creature you have for a granddaughter. At all events, the dose you’ve taken now ought to be enough for a day. So put up the physic” —here he handed him the letter—“and whenever you feel in want of a little more, come back, and I’ll measure it out for you !”

“You’re a hard man, you’re a hard man, Mr. O’Rorke,” said the old fellow, as he kissed the letter twice fervently, and then placed it in his bosom.

“I’m a hard man because I read you out her own words, just as she wrote them.”

“You’re a hard man or you’d not want

to crush one as old and feeble as me.” And so saying he went his way.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### MR. M’KINLAY IN ITALY.

As there are periods in life, quiet and tranquil periods, in which the mind reverts to the past, and dwells on by-gones, so in story-telling there are little intervals in which a brief retrospect is pardonable, and it is to one of these I would now ask my reader’s attention.

There was not anything very eventful in Mr. M’Kinlay’s journey across Europe with Ada and her governess. They met with no other adventures than occur to all travellers by land or by water ; but on arriving at Marseilles, a letter from Lady Vyner apprised them that Sir Gervais was slightly indisposed, and requested Mr. M’Kinlay would complete his kindness by giving them his company and protection as far as Genoa, at a short distance from which city, and in one of those little sheltered nooks of the Riviera, they had now established themselves in a villa.

It is but truthful to own, that the lawyer did not comply with this request either willingly or gracefully. He never liked the Continent, he was an indifferent linguist, he detested the cookery, and fancied that the wines poisoned him. Mademoiselle Heinzleman, too, was fussy, meddling, and officious, presuming, at least he thought so, on being in an element more her own. And as for Ada, grief at separating from Kate had made her so indifferent and apathetic, that she neither enjoyed the journey or took any interest in the new scenes and objects around her. Mr. M’Kinlay, therefore, was in no mood to proceed farther ; he was tired of it all. But, besides this, he was not quite certain that he had done the right thing by placing Kate O’Hara at Dalradern ; or that in so doing he had carried out the very vague instructions of Miss Courtenay. Not that the lawyer saw his way at all in the whole affair. The absurd suspicion of the old envy about some secret contract, or marriage, or some mysterious bond, he could afford to deride ; but, unhappily, he could not as easily forget, and some doubts—very ungenerous and ungallant doubts they were—would cross his mind, that Miss Georgina Courtenay’s favor to himself, in some way or other, depended on the changeful fortunes of some other “issue,”



of which he knew nothing. "She means to accept me if she can get nothing better," was the phrase that he found on his lips when he awoke, and heard himself muttering as he dropped off asleep at night; and, after all, the consideration was not either reassuring or flattering. Middle-aged gentlemen, even with incipient baldness and indolent "proclivities," do not fancy being consigned to the category of last resorts. They fancy—heaven help them!—that they have their claims on regard, esteem, and something stronger too; and doubtless the delusion has its influence in fighting off, for a year or two, the inevitable admission that they have dropped out of the "van" into that veteran battalion which furnishes no more guards of honor at the Temple of Venus, nor even a sentinel at the gate. Very ungallant little sums in arithmetic, too, used he to work about Georgina's age; and it would seem strange to younger men the anxiety he felt to give her a year or two more than she had a right to. "I'm not sure she's not nearer thirty-five than thirty-two," muttered he, ill-naturedly, to himself. "Rickards said one night she was older than her sister, though the old rascal took care to come and tell me in the morning that it was a mistake." And then, by subtracting this thirty-five from another arbitrary sum, he obtained a result apparently satisfactory, being, as he termed it, the proper difference of age between man and wife. Why will not men in their zeal for truth, take "evidence for the defence" occasionally, and ask a woman's opinion on this subject?

They arrived at last at the Villa Balbi, a grand old palace on the sea-side, where ruin and splendor were blended up together, and statues, and fountains, and frescoes struggled for the mastery over a rank growth of vegetation, that seemed to threaten enclosing the whole place in a leafy embrace. Into the deep arches that supported the terrace, the blue Mediterranean flowed with that noiseless motion of this all but tideless sea. All was silent as they drove up to the gate, for they had not been expected before the morrow. Scarcely was the door opened than Ada sprang out and disappeared up the stairs, followed as well as she might by the governess. Mr. M'Kinlay was then left alone, or, at least, with no other companionship than some three or four servants, whose attempts at English were by no means successful.

"Ah, Miller, I'm glad to see *your* face at last," said the lawyer, as Sir Gervais's valet pushed his way through the crowd; "how are all here?"

"Sir Gervais has had a bad night, sir, and we were expecting the doctor every moment. Indeed, when I heard your carriage, I thought it was he had come."

"Not seriously ill, I hope?"

"Not that, perhaps, sir; but the doctor calls it a very slow fever, and requiring great care and perfect quiet. He is not to know when Miss Ada arrives."

"And the ladies, are they well?"

"My lady's greatly tired and fatigued, sir, of course; but Miss Courtenay is well. She was just giving directions about your room, sir. She said, 'If Mr. M'Kinlay should be afraid of this fever, you can take him down to the fattore's house, and make him up a room there.'"

"Is it a fever, then, Miller—a real fever?"

"They call it so, sir."

"This is all that's wanting," muttered M'Kinlay to himself. "I only need to catch some confounded disorder, now, to make this the most happy exploit of my whole life! Where is this house you speak of?"

"At the foot of the hill, sir, where you saw the clump of evergreen oaks."

"Why, it was a dirty-looking hovel, with Indian corn hung all over."

"Well, sir, it ain't very clean to look at, but it's not so bad inside, and you can be sure of a comfortable bed."

"I don't see why I am to stop at all. I have seen Miss Ada safe to her own door. I really cannot perceive that anything more is required of me," said he to himself, as he walked up and down the terrace.

"You'd like to eat something, perhaps, sir? Supper is ready whenever you wish it."

"Yes, I'll eat a morsel; I was very hungry half an hour ago, but all this tidings of illness and infection has driven away my appetite. A vast roomy old place this appears," said he, as he followed the servant across a hall spacious as a public square, into a salon large enough to be a church.

"We have five like this, sir; and on the other floor there is one still larger and loftier."

"How long are you here?" said the lawyer, abruptly, for he was not at all in love with the mansion.

"We shall be two months here on Tuesday, and her ladyship likes it so much, Sir Gervais means to buy it."

"Well, I hope I shall not be much more than two hours in it. Let me have something to eat, and order fresh horses at the post."

"You'll see my lady, I suppose, sir?"

"Of course, if she can receive me; but I will just send up a line on my card to say that my departure at once is imperatively necessary."

Few as the words were that were required to convey this message, Mr. M'Kinlay could scarcely write them in a legible way. He was nervously afraid of an illness; but the thought of a foreign malady—a fever of some outlandish type—was a terror as great as the attack of a savage animal, of whose instinct and ways he knew nothing. All the speculations which had filled his head as he came along the road were routed at once. Love-making and marriage were all very well, but they might be purchased too dearly. A dowry that was only to be won by facing a fever, was a sorry speculation. No! he would have none of such dangerous ambitions. He had gone through enough already—he had braved shipwreck—and if needs were that he must resign the agency, better that than resign life itself.

Not even the appetizing supper that was now spread before him could dispel these gloomy thoughts. He was half afraid to eat, and he could not be sure that wine was safe under the present circumstances.

"My lady hopes to see you in the morning, sir," said the valet. "She has just lain down, having been up last night with Sir Gervais."

"I am extremely sorry. I am greatly distressed! But it is impossible for me to defer my departure. I will explain it all by a letter. Just unstrap that writing-desk and I will write a few lines. You ordered the horses, I hope?"

"Yes, sir; they will be at the door by ten o'clock."

"Miss Courtenay knows I am here, I suppose?" said M'Kinlay, in a tone of well put-on indifference, as he opened his writing-desk and arranged his papers.

"I don't know, indeed, sir; but she has the governess in her room with her, and perhaps she has heard it from her."

Mr. M'Kinlay bit his lip with impatience; he was vexed, and he was angry. Nor altogether was it unreasonable; he had come a long journey, at considerable inconvenience, and at a time he could be ill spared from his clients; he had undergone fatigue and annoyance—the sort of annoyance which, to men who dislike the Continent, is not a trifling matter—and here he was now, about to set out again without so much as a word of thanks, not even a word of acknowledgment. What were they, or what was he, to justify such treatment? This was the somewhat irritating query to

which all his self-examination reverted. "Am I a lackey!" cried he, as he threw down his pen in a passionate outburst that completely overcame him. "I suppose they think I am a lackey!" and he pushed back from the table in disgust.

"Miss Courtenay, sir, would be pleased to see you in the drawing-room, sir, whenever it was convenient," said a thin-looking damsel of unmistakably English mould.

"I will wait upon her now," said Mr. M'Kinlay, with the severe accents of an injured and indignant man. In fact, he spoke like one whose coming might be supposed to evoke sentiments of trepidation, if not of awe; and yet, after he had uttered the words, he fussed and potted amongst his papers, arranging and settling, and undoing, in a way that to any shrewder observer than the Abigail, would have discovered a mind not by any means so bent upon peremptory action as he had assumed to bespeak.

"Will you show me the way?" said he, at last, as he locked up the writing-desk, and now followed her through room after room, till the girl stopped at a door and knocked gently. No answer was returned, and she repeated the summons, on which the maid opened the door, saying, "If you'll step inside, sir, I'll tell my mistress you are here; and Mr. M'Kinlay entered into what his first footstep informed him was a lady's boudoir. It was a small room, opening on a terrace by two windows, which were thrown wide, filling the chamber with the odor of orange-flowers to a degree positively oppressive. An alabaster lamp was the only light, and served merely to throw a sort of faint sunset-glow over the room, which seemed filled with cabinet pictures and statuettes, and had an easel in one corner with an unfinished sketch in oils upon it. The perfume of orange and magnolia was so overcoming that the lawyer moved out upon the terrace, which descended by a flight of marble steps into the sea. He sat down on these to inhale the fresh night air, for already his head was beginning to feel confused and addled by the strong odors.

He had not been many minutes there, when he heard the rustle of a lady's dress close to him, and before he could arise, Miss Courtenay moved forward and sat down beside him.

"How are you, Mr. M'Kinlay?" said she, giving him her hand, cordially. "I have come to thank you for all your care of Ada, and your kindness to us all."

These very simple words were delivered with a most winning grace of look and



manner. No wonder if he forgot all his irritation of a few moments before; no wonder if in the very unexpectedness of this pleasure, he felt somewhat confused; and it but needed that starlight hour, that perfumed air, that murmuring sea, and the light gauzy veil, which in Genoese mode Georgina wore in her hair, and which now floated carelessly half across his arm, to make Mr. M'Kinlay think this one of the happiest moments of his life.

After a few questions about the journey and its incidents, she went on to tell him of themselves, in that tone of easy confidence people use with their nearest friends. "It was a somewhat sad house," she said, "he had come to. Gervais"—she called him Gervais—"had caught one of those low fevers of the country, and her mother was still very poorly. Her sister, however, had benefitted by the climate, and this it was that decided them on remaining abroad. You knew, of course, that Gervais intends to buy this villa?"

"No; he had not heard of it."

"Nor that he had given up his seat in the House, and retired from public life?"

"Nor that either had he heard."

"Well, of course he means to tell you all now that he has got you out here. You will be such a comfort to him, Mr. M'Kinlay; he was longing to see an old friend again."

Mr. M'Kinlay's ears tingled with delight, and his heart throbbed high with hope, but he could only mutter out something that sounded like acknowledgment.

"He has so much to ask you about besides," she went on. "Mamma wants him to let his Wiltshire house for some years, and so retrace a little, for you know he has been rather extravagant lately."

"I have ventured on an occasional remonstrance myself, though not without feeling what a liberty I was taking."

"A liberty! Surely, my dear Mr. M'Kinlay, the kind solicitude of friendship is not a liberty. Then there have been some mines—lead or copper, I forget which, and I don't well remember whether in South Wales or Sardinia—but they have not turned out well."

"Very badly, indeed, Miss Courtenay; the shares are at thirty-two, and falling still."

"Yes; he will have to talk over all these things with you; but not for some days, of course, for he is very weak and low."

"You don't seem to know, then," said he, with a smile, "that I am going off to-night; my horses are ordered for ten o'clock."

"Impossible! Why, we have not seen

you yet; surely, Mr. M'Kinlay, you couldn't leave this without seeing Gervais and my sister?" There was a reproachful tenderness in her look, and mingled expression of wounded sensibility and shame at its being confessed, that gave some trouble to the lawyer's heart; for there rankled in that crafty old heart some memories of the conversation at Dalradern; and, in his distrustfulness, he would ask himself, "What does this mean?"

"Come, Mr. M'Kinlay, say this is only a threat; do confess it was only meant to terrify."

"Oh, Miss Georgina, you cannot attach such interest to my presence here, as to speak of my departure in terms like these!"

"I don't know how others think of these things," said she, with a sort of pouting air, "but, for my own part, I cling very closely to old friendships."

Had Mr. M'Kinlay been some twenty years younger, he would, doubtless, have seized on the moment to make a declaration. The conjecture promised well, and he would not have lost it; but Mr. M'Kinlay had arrived at the time of life in which men are more prone to speculate on the consequences of failure than on the results of success, and when they never address them to jump over the narrowest ditch without a thought of the terrible splashing they shall get if they fall in, and, worse even than the wetting, the unsympathizing comments of a malicious public.

"What is Mr. M'Kinlay pondering over so deeply?" said Georgina, as she turned her eyes full upon him; and very effective eyes they were at such a range.

"I can scarcely tell; that is, I don't well know how to tell," said he, trying to screw up his courage.

"Mr. M'Kinlay has a secret, I'm certain," said she, with a winning coquetry she was quite mistress of.

That look she gave—it was a long-dwelling look, as though she had half forgotten to take away her eyes, for ladies will sometimes fire after the enemy has struck—was too much for Mr. M'Kinlay; he forgot all his prudential reserves, and said—

"Has not every one his secret, Miss Courtenay?"

"I suppose so," said she, carelessly.

"Has not Miss Courtenay got one?" said he, leaning forward, and trying to catch her eyes; but she had dropped them too suddenly for him.

"Not that I'm aware of," said she; and if he had been gifted with a nice ear, he would have perceived that a slight vibration marked the words as they fell.

"By the way," said M'Kinlay—a most unlucky *à propos*—"have I your perfect approval in my arrangement for that young Irish lady—or girl—Miss O'Hara?"

Now the words "by the way," had so completely touched her to the quick, that for an instant her face became crimson.

"If you will first of all tell me what the arrangements are," said she, with a forced calm, "perhaps I may be able to say if I like them."

"Has the mademoiselle not told you anything?"

"Mademoiselle has told me, simply, that Mr. M'Kinlay assumed the whole responsibility of the case, and neither counselled with her nor divulged his intentions."

"Ah, that was not quite fair; I really must say that mademoiselle did not represent me as I think I merit. It was a sort of case perfectly new to me. It was not very easy to see one's way. I could not make out whether you would all be better pleased by some costly arrangement for the girl, or by having her sent straight back to where she came from. The mystery that hung over——" he paused and stammered; he had said what he had not intended, and he blundered in his attempt to recall it. "I mean," added he, "that mystery that the old diplomatist insists on connecting with her."

"As how?" said Georgina, in a low, soft voice, intensely insinuating in its cadence—"as how?"

"It's not very easy to say how, so much of what he said was vague, so much hypocritical; and, indeed, so much that seemed——" He stopped, confused, and puzzled how to go on.

"So that you had a long conversation together on this topic?"

"An entire evening. I dined with him alone, and we spoke of very little else as we sat over our wine."

"I wish you could remember what he said. Don't you think you could recall some at least of it?"

"I can't say that I could, and for this reason: that he kept always interpolating little traits of what he knew of life, and all his vast and varied experiences of human nature. These sort of men are rather given to this."

"Are they?" asked she; and it was not easy to say whether her accents implied a simple curiosity, or a dreamy indifference. Mr. M'Kinlay accepted them in the former sense, and with some pomposity continued:—

"Yes; I have frequently remarked this tone in them, as well as the tendency to

see twice as much in everything as it really contains."

"Indeed!" said she, and now her voice unmistakably indicated one who listened with eager attention to the words of wisdom. "Did he show this tendency on the occasion you speak of?"

"Markedly, most markedly. It is very strange that I cannot give you a more accurate account of our interview; but he addled my head about pictures and early art; and then, though always temperate, his wine was exquisite. In fact, I carried away a most confused impression of all that took place between us."

"You remember, however, the arrangements that were settled on. What were they?"

"The great point of all, the one you insisted on, I was, I may say, peremptory upon."

"Which was that?"

"That she could not come abroad; as I said to Sir Within: 'We must negotiate on this basis; here is Miss Courtenay's letter, these are her words;' and I showed him the turn-down—only the turn-down—of your note."

Had there been light enough to remark it, Mr. M'Kinlay would have seen that Miss Courtenay's face became deadly pale, and her lips trembled with repressed anger.

"Well, and then?" said she, with a faint voice.

"He cut the Gordian knot at once, my dear Miss Courtenay," continued he, in a sort of sprightly tone; "he said, 'There need be no difficulty in the matter. I can act here *ex-officio*;' he meant by that he was her guardian. 'I will write to her,' said he, 'and if she prefers to remain here——'"

"Remain where?" gasped she out, with a great effort to seem calm and composed.

"At Dalradern Castle, at his own house; 'if she likes this better than a Paris pension, or an Irish cabin, it is quite at her service.'"

"But, of course, you replied the thing was impossible; such an arrangement couldn't be. It would be indelicate, improper, indecent?"

"I didn't say all that; but I hinted that as Sir Within was a bachelor, there were difficulties——"

"Difficulties, sir! What do you mean by difficulties? Is it possible that one evening's companionship with a person hardened by a long life of 'libertinage' can have so warped your moral sense as to render you blind to so obvious a shame as this?"



“He said his housekeeper——”

“His housekeeper! Am I to believe, sir, that you listened to all this with the patience with which you repeat it now, and that no feeling of propriety roused you to an indignant rejection of such a scheme? Was his claret or his burgundy so insinuating as this?”

“When he said housekeeper——”

“Pray, sir, do not push my endurance beyond all limits. I have given a very wide margin for the influence of Sir Within’s machinations; but bear in mind that the magnetism of his wit and his wine has not extended to me.”

“If you want to imply, Miss Courtenay, that I was not in a condition to judge of——”

“Mr. M’Kinlay, I say nothing at any time by implication. People are prone to call me too outspoken. What I say and what I mean to say is this, that I cannot imagine a person of your intelligence calmly listening to and concurring in such a project.”

“I am free to own I disliked it, and I distrusted it; the few words that your brother’s butler, Rickards, said about this girl’s craft and subtlety, the artful way she got round people, the study she made of the tempers and tastes of those about her——”

“And with all this before you, with this knowledge fresh as it was in your mind, you quietly sit down to agree to a plan which opens to these very qualities a most dangerous field of exercise. What do you mean by it? What do you intend? I can’t suppose,” said she, with a sneer, “you contemplated her being Lady Wardle?”

“I certainly did not,” said he, with a sickly smile.

“Well, sir, you have placed yourself in a position for malevolent people to impute worse to you. Will you just tell me, who ever heard of such a thing? Is there any country, any society ever tolerated it? This girl is close on sixteen.”

“He asked particularly about her age,” said M’Kinlay, who was now so confused that he knew not well what he said.

And, simple as the words were, they seemed to pierce to her very heart, for she sprang to her feet, and in a voice trembling with passion, said,—

“I sincerely trust that you manage the material questions confided to you with more ability and tact than you do matters of social interest, and I can only say, sir, it is the last occasion of this kind on which you will be troubled with any commission from me.”

“I believed I was strictly carrying out

your intentions. You said she must not come abroad.”

“But I never said——” she stopped, and the crimson flush rose on her face and covered her whole forehead. “Now mind me, Mr. M’Kinlay, and remember, I do not intend that you should twice mistake my meaning; my wish was, and is, that this girl should go back to the place, the people, and the condition from which my brother, in a very ill-judging hour, took her. I believed, and I believe, that her presence in any, the most remote, connection with our family, is fraught with inconvenience, or worse—do you understand me so far?”

“I do,” said he, slowly.

“Well, with this strong conviction on my mind, I desire that she should be sent home again; and I tell Mr. M’Kinlay now, that any favor he cares for or values at my hands depends on the success with which he carries out this wish.”

“But how is this possible? What can I do?”

“That is for your consideration, sir; you entangled the skein, you must try if you cannot undo it. Lawyers, I have always heard, have resources at their command common mortals never have dreamed of. You may discover that Sir Within has no right to exercise this guardianship. You might find out,” she smiled dubiously as she uttered the words, “that the girl’s friends disapprove of this protection,—very humble people occasionally are right-minded on these points,—you might find—how can I tell what your ingenuity could not find—excellent reasons that she should go back to Ireland and to the obscurity she should never have quitted. I don’t doubt it may be hard to do this; but until I learn that it is impossible, I will never consent to withdraw from Mr. M’Kinlay that confidence with which his character and his abilities have ever inspired me.”

“If the desire to win your favor, Miss Courtenay——”

“No, no, Mr. M’Kinlay, that is not enough! We women are very practical, if we are not very logical; we ask for success from those who aspire to our good esteem.”

“To meet a difficulty, the first thing is to see where is the hitch!” said he, thoughtfully.

“I don’t believe that I apprehend you here. What is it that you mean?”

“I mean, Miss Courtenay, that it is only by learning very accurately what are the reasons for this girl’s removal—what urgent necessity, in fact, requires it—that I shall be likely to hit upon the means to effect it.”

"Suppose it to be a caprice—a mere caprice!"

"In that case I should be powerless."

"I don't mean an actual caprice," said she, hurriedly, for she saw her error; "but a sort of apprehension that this initial mistake of my brother's would lead to worse. Great unhappiness has been caused to families by these connections; the Irish are a very vindictive people, sir; if they thought, as they might think, some years hence, that we should have discovered our blunder before—In short, sir, I will not turn special pleader to show what I wish and I insist on."

"Do you think if I were to remain here to-morrow, Sir Gervais would be able to see me?"

"It is most improbable; I am certain the doctors would not consent to it."

"Nor even the next day, perhaps?"

"Just as unlikely; everything like business is strictly forbidden to him."

"Then I do not see why I should not start at once—now!"

"If I am to accept this as zeal to serve me," said she, in a very sweet accent, "I thank you sincerely."

"Ah, Miss Courtenay, could you only guess with what ardor I would apply myself to win your favor! If you had known how the very faintest promise of that favor——"

"Mr. M'Kinlay," said she, stopping him, and bestowing a very captivating smile on him, "Mr. M'Kinlay belongs to a profession that never stipulates for its reward!"

"Enough, my dear Miss Courtenay," said he, and in his enthusiasm, he actually sized her hand and kissed it.

"Good-bye," said she, with a sort of maidenly impatience; "let me hear from you soon."—And she left him.

That same night saw Mr. M'Kinlay wearily rumbling along the same way he had lately travelled, very tired and very road-sick; but still there burned in his heart a small flame of hope, a tiny light, indeed, not unlike one of the little lamps which from time to time he saw on the wayside, throwing their sickly glare over some humble shrine.

Ah, M'Kinlay! if you could but have seen the hurried impatience with which a cambric handkerchief was employed to efface, as it were, all trace of that rapturous embrace, it might have rescued you from some vain fancies, even though it made the road all the wearier and drearier.

A very few words more will complete our

account of a retrospect that has already grown longer than we wished. Mr. M'Kinlay's first care on reaching town was to address a very carefully-worded and respectful letter to Sir Within Wardle, stating that as the Vyner family had not fully approved of what he, M'K., had done with regard to the arrangements for Miss O'Hara, he hoped Sir Within would graciously name an early day to receive him, and explain what were the plans which they had fixed on for this young person, and by what means they proposed to relieve him from a charge which could not be other than embarrassing.

The following was the reply he received by return of post:—

"DEAR SIR,—Sir Within Wardle has handed me your note, and directed me to answer it. Perhaps this fact alone, and of itself, will be a sufficient reply. It will at least serve to show that, while I am honored by his entire confidence, I am not the cause of any such embarrassment as you feelingly deplore.

"Sir Within sees nothing in his present arrangements which call for the advice you are so kind as to offer, nor does he feel warranted in giving you the inconvenience of a journey, whose results would be unprofitable. Apart from this discussion, a visit from you would be always acceptable.

"Believe me, dear sir, with every sense of esteem and respect, yours,

"KATE O'HARA."

This short epistle, written in a bold but well-formed handwriting, and sealed with the initials of the writer, M'Kinlay forwarded by the night-mail to Miss Courtenay, and in due course received the following three lines:—

"DEAR SIR,—It will not be necessary in future to impose any further trouble on you in this matter. Sir Within Wardle, the young lady, and yourself, are all admirable representatives of the orders you severally pertain to.

"And I am, your faithful servant,

"GEORGINA COURTENAY."

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

SIR WITHIN AND HIS WARD.

How time has slipped over since we were last here, in the midst of the Welsh moun-



tains! It is more than a year, but still wonderfully little has gone on in that interval. The larch-trees at Dalradern have added some palms to their stature, but the venerable oaks and elms disdain to show by change the influence of so brief a period, and, in the same way, it is in Kate alone—that plant of rapid growth—that we have much alteration to mark.

What a change has been wrought in her! It is not merely that she has grown into a tall and graceful girl, but that one by one the little traits of her peasant origin have faded away, and she looks, and seems, and carries herself with all the air of a high-born beauty. In her lofty brow, her calm features, her manner, in which a quiet dignity blends with a girlish grace, and above all, in her voice, singularly sweet-toned as it was, might be read every sign of that station men distinctively call the “best.”

Masters and professors of every kind had surrounded her, but she had a sort of indolent activity in her disposition, which tended little to the work of learning, while her quickness enabled her to pick up smatterings of many things. But, as she said herself, Sir Within was her best teacher. The old minister’s tact, his social readiness, his instinctive seizure of the nice points of every situation,—these were the gifts that had a special attraction for her; and while she was envying him the charm of a manner that could captivate all, from the highest to the humblest, she had actually acquired the gift and made it her own.

To recognize in her the traits on which he most prided himself, to see in that lovely girl his pupil in the arts of society, to mark in her a copyist of himself in the little tricks of manner and effect, was the greatest of all flatteries; and he never wearied of watching her repeating himself before him in a form so captivating and so graceful.

Although he had lost—and it was a loss he deplored—the friendly intercourse of the Vyners, and although the neighborhood more strictly than ever quarantined him now, no representations nor remonstrances could prevail upon him to send Kate to a school, or to place her under other protection than his own. Innumerable were the governesses who had come down to take charge of her; none, however, remained long. Some alleged it was the solitude that oppressed them; others averred that their pupil would submit to no discipline but such as she liked, and that not alone the studies she would pursue, but even the hours she would devote to them, should be at her own choosing.

And one or two took higher ground, and declared that the establishment which contained an old bachelor and a very beautiful ward, was not in a position to confront the criticisms of the world.

To such as have not known, or met with the class Sir Within pertained to, it will perhaps seem incredible that the old rake actually felt flattered by this attack on his reputation. All that he had ever known of life was passed amongst people of admirable manners and very lax morals. They were the best bred, the best informed, the best dressed, and the pleasantest in the universe. Nowhere was life so easy and agreeable as in their company; everyone was kind, considerate, and obliging; not a hard word was ever dropped. Who could be uncharitable where all was tolerated? Who could be severe where everything was pardoned?

It was by a very easy induction that he was led to believe that a certain laxity on the score of morals was an essential element of good breeding, and that nothing was so low in tone as that “eternal scrutiny,” as he called it, into one’s neighbor’s habits, which would make of a gentleman very little other than a detective.

When he heard, therefore, that a certain Mademoiselle La Grange had taken her departure on these exceptional grounds, he actually chuckled with delighted vanity.

“So, *ma mie*”—this was his pet name for Kate—“they tell me that mademoiselle has gone off this morning,” said he, “no longer able to tolerate a house where there is no mistress.”

“The note she left behind her went fully into the matter,” said Kate. “It was not alone that you were unmarried, but that you were a very well-known monster of vice.”

“Vrai! vrai!” cried he, with ecstasy; “monstre épouvantable.”

“And, to confirm it, she added that no one came here; that the neighbors avoided the house, as the abode of a plague; and even sight-seers would not gratify the craving of their curiosity at the cost of their propriety.”

“Did she say all that?”

“Yes; she said it very neatly, too; as prettily and as tersely as such impertinence can be put in nice French.”

“And this is the ninth departure, is it not, *ma mie*, on these high grounds of morality?”

“No, sir, only the fifth. Two alleged loneliness, one accused the damp, and one protested against *my* temper!”

“What had you done, then?”

"Everything that was cross and ill-natured. It was the unlucky week that Cid Hamet staked himself."

"I remember; there were two days you would not come down to dinner on pretence of headache, and you told me afterwards it was all ill-humor."

"Because I always tell you everything," said she, with a smile so captivantly beautiful that it lit up her face as the sun lights up a landscape.

"I am sorry, too," said he, after a short silence, "that mademoiselle should have gone away at this moment, for I am expecting visitors."

"Visitors, sir?"

"Yes, child; two distant, very distant relatives of mine are coming to-day; less, indeed, to see me than the place I live in. They are my heirs, *ma mie*; and the world says, no sort of people are less palatable to the man in possession, and, I take it, the world is right in the matter. When one thinks how he dislikes the man who keeps the newspaper too long at the club, it may be imagined how he is hated who keeps another out of an estate; and the sense of being so hated engenders something that is not friendship!"

"I think I can understand that feeling!" said she, thoughtfully.

"Every one knows," continued he, "that when he is gone, the objects which he has loved and cherished—I mean the material objects, for I am talking as an old bachelor—will survive to give pleasure to others; but somehow he fancies—at least, I fancy—that the new incumbent will not know the full luxury of the shade under that sycamore where we sat yesterday to watch the fish in the pond; that he'll never appreciate that Claude as I do, when I let a fresh blaze of sunlight on the opposite wall, and see it in a soft reflected light; and as to the delight of riding through these old wooded alleys as I feel it, he'll not have *you* for a companion—eh, *ma belle et bonne?*"

She turned away her head. Was it shame, or sorrow, or both? Who knows? "What are your friends like?" asked she, suddenly.

"They are very like each other, and not like anything or any one else I ever met. They are, first of all, descendants of an old Huguenot family of excellent blood. Their ancestors settled here, and, like most others, they prospered. One became a peer, but died without an heir, and the title became extinct. The present head of the house is this person I expect here to-day, with his son. He is a banker, as his

son is. They are very rich, and very eager to be richer. Report says that they are not very generous or free-handed. My own experience can neither refute nor confirm the rumor. Their London house was very handsome when I saw it, and when I dined there everything bespoke the habits of wealth; but they had a sort of air of business in their reception, a look of doing something that was to redound to the bank, that I didn't like. The company, too, was of that mixed character that showed they were less familiars than clients."

"How intensely acute to detect all this at once!"

"I am nothing, *ma mie*, positively nothing, if I am not *fin*. It is the spirit of my old calling that survives in me. Nay, I even thought, in the distributions of the host's attentions to his friends, I could name the men who stood with a goodly balance to their account, and point out those who were being, what is called, accommodated."

"Oh, this is too much!" said she, laughing; but there was nothing in her tone or look that implied a shade of incredulity.

"Well, you are to see them both to-day; they will be here to dinner." He said this with a half-suppressed sigh, for the visit promised him very little that was agreeable.

He was essentially a man of conventionalities, and there were some difficulties in the present case that embarrassed him. First, he should be unable to have any dinner company to meet his visitors. He had long ceased to have intercourse with his country neighbors, and, of course, none would think of "calling" on his friends. This was provoking enough, but a greater trouble remained behind it. Kate's presence! How was he to account for that? Who was she? Why was she there? Who, and what, and where were her friends? Would not the Ladarelles at once connect the estrangement in which he lived from all society with the fact of this girl being beneath his roof? Would they not at once jump to the conclusion, It is this scandal has deterred all from visiting him? Now, it is just possible that something in this allegation against his morality might have tickled the morbid vanity of the old rake, who loved to think that youth and vice were convertible terms, and he even smirked as he imagined himself called on for his defence. Still, in his element of gentleman, there survived the shame of the part that would be assigned to Kate by such an imputation, and it is but justice to him to say that he felt this acutely. Had there been time for such an arrangement, he



would have procured a governess, and sent her away to some sea-side spot. As it was, he thought of taking the Vyners' cottage, and placing her there under the charge of Mrs. Simcox. This would have been easy, as the cottage had been advertised to let for some time back; but, as ill luck would have it, some one had just arrived there, whether as friend or tenant none knew.

It was true, he might keep her unseen for the few days the visit would last. The Castle was ample enough to secure a retreat which should be inviolable; but there were difficulties, too, about this, not easily to be met.

He could not implicitly rely on the discretion of servants, especially of servants who found themselves in the presence of the coming heir, of him who should be "king hereafter;" and again, he was not quite sure how she herself would meet a proposition that assigned her to so equivocal a position. She was very proud, and on one or two occasions he had seen her display a spirit that no old gentleman of his stamp would possibly expose himself to from a young girl, if he could help it. There was, then, nothing left but to present her as his ward, a word so wide in acceptance, that he trusted it might defy scrutiny, and with this resolve, though not without misgivings, he went about giving his orders, and directing the arrangements to receive his guests.

Even this office had its shade of sadness, pleasant as it is at ordinary times to prepare for those who come to enliven solitude or break a monotony, which even of itself savors of gloom; the task is not so agreeable if undertaken for those who come to inspect what will be their own hereafter; what, even as they survey, they seem half inclined to grasp; what, while they look at, they speculate on the changes they will effect in, thinking of that day when he, who now does the honors, shall have left the stage, and they themselves become the actors.

Kate, however, accompanied him everywhere, aiding by her counsels, and assisting by her suggestions, and serving in this way to dispel much of that depression which the task imposed. It was as they both were returning from one of the gardens, that a keeper came forward with a dead pheasant in his hand.

"A hen! Michael, a hen!" cried Sir Within, with displeasure.

"Yes, sir, and a very fine one. It was the gentleman who has just come to Dinaslyn shot her this morning. I met him coming up here to excuse himself to you, and say how sorry he was. He gave me this card and hoped you'd not be displeased at it."

"What's the name? I've not got my glass, Kate."

"Mr. George Grenfell, sir, Dover Street."

"Grenfell, Grenfell—never heard of any Grenfells, but Cox and Grenfell, the Piccadilly people, eh?"

Kate gave no answer, but still held the card, with her eyes fixed upon it.

"Sad thing to shoot a hen—very sad thing—and a remarkably fine bird; quite young, quite young," muttered Sir Within to himself. "Could hardly be the game sauce Grenfell, I think, eh, Kate? This apology smacks of the gentleman. What was he like, Michael?"

"A fine-looking man, sir, standing as tall as me; and about thirty-six or thirty-eight, perhaps. He had a nice spaniel with him, sir, one of the Woburn breed; I know 'em well."

"I'm sorry he shot that hen. Ain't you, Kate?"

But Kate was deep in thought, and did not hear him.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### SIR WITHIN'S GUESTS.

A SHORT, somewhat plump, dark-eyed young man, with a low but wide forehead, and a well-formed but rather thick-lipped mouth, lay in his dressing-gown on the sofa smoking, and at intervals conversing with a smart-looking valet. These were Mr. Adolphus Ladarelle, and his man Fisk. The time—a little past midnight; the place—a bedroom in Dalradern Castle.

"The governor gone to bed yet, Fisk?"

"No, sir; he's still talking with the old gent. They seemed to have had high words of it awhile ago, but they've got quiet again."

"The governor came down expressly for that! He likes a bit of a breeze, too, and I believe it does him good."

"Well, indeed, I think you're right, sir; I never seed him in such health as after that trial where Mr. Hythe, the cashier, was sentenced to fourteen years. It was just like putting so much to the master's own life."

Whether the prospect of such longevity was so agreeable to the young gentleman I cannot say, but he winced a little under the remark, and said, half moodily: "This old cove here ought to be thinking of that same journey. It's slow work waiting for the death of a man, after he passes seventy-four or five. The assurance offices know that much."

"It's to be all yours, Master Dolly, ain't it?" asked the man, in a coaxing sort of tone.

"Every stone of it, and every stick that the old boy doesn't manage to cut down in the meanwhile."

"You'll never live here, Master Dolly? You'd not stand this lonesome place a week!"

"I don't think I should, Tom. I might come down for the shooting, and bring some fellows with me, or I might run down for a few weeks 'on the sly.' By the way, have you found out who she is?"

"No, sir; they're as close as wax. Mrs. Simecox, I see, knows all about it, but she won't say a word beyond the 'young lady as is my master's ward.'"

"Is she French or English?"

"Can't say, sir; but I suspect she's French."

"Is she his daughter?"

"At times I do think she is; but she ain't like him, sir, not a bit!"

"But why can't you find out where she came from when she came here, who and what her friends, if she has any?"

"It's clear impossible, sir. They has all got orders to know nothing, and it's nothing they know."

"Did you try them with a 'tip,' Tom?"

"No use, sir. In a town house you can always do that, but these savages—they are just savages—in the country think they are bound to their masters, body and soul."

"What a mistake, Tom," said the other, with a twinkle of the eye.

"Well, sir, it's a mistake when a man does not love his master;" and Mr. Fisk turned away and drew his hand across his eyes.

The grin upon young Mr. Ladarelle's face was not a very flattering commentary on this show of feeling, but he did not speak for some minutes. At last he said, "He presented her to my governor as Mademoiselle O'Hara, saying, 'my ward;' and she received us as calmly as if she owned the place. That's what puzzles me, Tom—her cool self-possession."

"It ain't nat'ral, sir: it ain't, indeed!"

"It's the sort of manner a man's wife might have, and not even that if she were very young. It was as good as a play to see how she treated the governor, as if he had never been here before, and that everything was new to him!"

Mr. Fisk rubbed his hands and laughed heartily at this joke.

"And as for myself, she scarcely condescended to acknowledge me."

"Warn't that too impudent, sir?"

"It was not gracious, a. all events, but we'll know more of each 'other before the week is over. You'll see."

"That's pretty sartin, sir."

"Not but I'd rather you could have found out something like a clue to her first of all."

"Well, indeed, sir, there wasn't no way of doin' it. I even went down to the stable-yard and saw her own boxes. She has two as neat nags as ever you'd see in the Park, and I tried it on with her groom—Bill Richey they call him—and there was nothing to be done, sir. He had just one answer for everything; and when I said, 'Can she ride?' 'Ride! why wouldn't she?' 'Has she these two for her own use?' says I. 'Why wouldn't she?' says the fellow again. 'So I suppose,' says I, 'she's got lots of tin?' 'Why wouldn't she have lots of it?' said he, in the same voice. I don't know whether he was more rogue or fool, sir, but it was no good saying any more to him."

Young Ladarelle arose, and with his hands thrust low in his pockets, and his head slightly bent forward, walked the room in deep thought. "Cool as he is, he'd scarcely have presented her to the governor if there was a screw loose," muttered he; "he's too much a man of the world for that. And yet, what can it be?"

"There must be something in it, that's certain, sir; for none of the neighbors visit here, and Sir Within don't go out anywhere."

"How did you learn that?"

"From the gardener, sir. He was saying what a cruel shame it was to see the fruit rotting under the trees; and that last September he gave a basketful of pine-apples to the pigs, for that none of the people round would take presents when Sir Within sent them. 'That's all on account of her,' says I, with a wink, for I thought I had him landed. 'I don't well know,' says he, 'what it's on account of, but here's the master comin' up, and maybe he'll tell you!' And I had just time to cut away before he seen me."

"All that we know, then, is that there's a mystery in it. Well," muttered he, "I couldn't ask a prettier skein to unravel. She is very beautiful! Are they late or early here, Tom?" asked he, after a pause.

"They be just as they please, sir. The housekeeper told me there's breakfast from ten to one every morning, and dinner is served for six people every day, though only them two selves sits down to it; but the old gent says, *perhaps* some one might drop in. He says that every day of the



year, sir, but they never drop in. Maybe he knows why!"

"Call me at eleven or twelve—I don't care if it be one; for the day will be long enough here, after that."

"They tell me it's a very pretty place, sir, and plenty to see."

"I know every inch of it. I used to be here after my Rugby half, and I don't want to recall those days, I promise you."

"They've got some nice saddle-horses, too, sir."

"So they may; and they may ride them, too."

"And the lake is alive with carp, I hear."

"I'll not diminish their number; I'll promise them so much. I must stay here as long as the governor does, which fortunately for me, cannot be many days; but tobacco and patience will see me through it."

"I always said it, sir: 'When Master Dolly comes to his fortune, it's not an old jail he'll sit down to pass his life in!'"

"It's one of the finest and oldest places in the kingdom," said the young man, angrily, "though perhaps a London cad might prefer Charing Cross to it."

"No other orders, sir?" said Mr. Fisk, curtly.

"No; you may go. Call me at nine—d'ye hear—at nine; and I'll breakfast at ten." And now was Mr. Adolphus Ladarelle alone with his own thoughts.

Though he had rebuked so promptly and so sharply the flippant impertinence of his servant, the young gentleman was by no means persuaded that a sojourn at Dalraderm was likely to prove lively or agreeable. He thought Sir Within a bore, and he felt—very unmistakably felt—that the old baronet regarded himself as a snob. The very way in which the old diplomatist seasoned his talk for his guests, the mode in which he brought all things to the meridian of Piccadilly, showed clearly the estimation in which he held them; and though the elder Ladarelle, whose head carried weightier cares, had no room for such thoughts, the young man brooded over and disliked them.

"By what reprisals should he resent this covert impertinence?" was the question that very often recurred to him. Should he affect to undervalue the place, and all the art treasures? Should he throw out dark hints of how much these tasteful toys might realize at a sale? Should he speculate vaguely on what the Castle would become, if, instead of a show-house, it were to be made what he would call habitable? Or, last of all, what tone should he assume

towards mademoiselle—should he slight her, or make love to her? In these self-discussions he fell asleep at last.

Long before any of his guests were awake the next morning, Sir Within had called for his writing-desk. It was a passion of his to ask for his writing materials before he was up. It smacked of old times, when, remembering something that might very well have been forgotten, he would dash off a few smart lines to a minister or a secretary, "with reference to the brief conversation with which your Excellency honored me yesterday." He was an adept in little notes; he knew how to throw off those small evasive terms which pass for epigrams, and give a sort of glitter to a style that was about as real as a theatrical costume.

He had suddenly bethought him of a case for the exercise of his high gift. It was to address a few neat lines to his recently-arrived neighbor at the Cottage, and ask him that day to dinner. To convert that gentleman's polite attention in sending up to the Castle the pheasant he had shot by mistake, into an excuse for the liberty of inviting him without a previous exchange of visits, constituted exactly the amount of difficulty he could surmount. It was a low wall, and he could leap it splendidly. It must be owned that he succeeded. His note was courteous without familiarity. It was a faint foreshadowing of the pleasure the writer had promised himself in the acquaintance of one so thoroughly imbued with the nicest notions of good breeding.

"I hope," he wrote in conclusion, "you will not, by refusing me this honor, rebuke the liberty by which I have presumed to aspire to it;" and with this he signed himself, with every sense of his most distinguished consideration, "Within Wildrington Wardle."

The reply was prompt—a most cordial acceptance. Sir Within scanned the terms of the note, the handwriting, the paper, the signature, and the seal. He was satisfied with everything. The writer was unquestionably a man of the world, and, in the old envoy's estimation, that meant all, or nearly all, that one could desire in friend or acquaintance; one, in short, who knew how to subordinate passions, feelings, emotions, all selfishness, and all personal objects to the laws of a well-regulated conventionality; and who neither did, nor attempted to do, anything but what society had done already, and declared might be done again.

How far Mr. George Grenfell realized this high estimate, it is not our purpose to

inquire; we turn rather to what we are far more sure of, the delight with which he read Sir Within's invitation.

Grenfell was well known about town to members of two or three good clubs, where he had a certain amount of influence with very young men. He was an excellent whist-player, and very useful on a wine committee; an admirable judge of a horse, though not remarkable as a rider. He knew everybody, but somehow, he went nowhere. There were people—very good people, too, as the world calls them—would gladly have had his society at their tables in town, or in their houses at Christmas; but Grenfell saw that, if once launched amongst these, he must abandon all ambition of everything higher; extrication would be impossible; and so, with a self-denial which only a high purpose ever inspires, he refused invitations here, and rejected advances there, waiting on for the time when the great world would awaken to the conviction of his merits, and say, "This is the very man we wanted!"

Now, the great world was not so prompt in making this discovery as it might have been, and Mr. Grenfell was getting on in years, and not fully as hopeful as when his hair had been thicker and his beard bushier. He had begun, not exactly to sulk, but what the French call to *bouder*—a sort of male pouting—and he thought of going abroad, or going into Parliament, or doing something or other which would give him a new start in life; and it was to ruminate over these plans he had written to his friend Vyner, to say, "Let me, or lend me—I don't care which—your Welsh Cottage, for a month or two;" and by return of post came the answer, saying, "It is yours as long as you like it;" and thus was he there.

Sir Within's note pleased him much. The old envoy was, it is true, a bygone, and a thing of the past; still he was one of those Brahmins whose priesthood always is accredited, and Grenfell knew that to walk into the Travellers' arm in arm with him, would be a great step in advance; for there was no set or knot of men so unapproachable by the outsiders, as the small clique of religionists who scourge themselves with red tape, and worship the great god "F. O!"

"In asking for the Cottage," Grenfell had said, "I should like to have an introduction of some sort to your quondam neighbor, Wardle, who, though too profligate for his neighbors, will not, I apprehend, endanger my morals. Let me have, therefore, a few lines to accredit me, as one

likely to suit his humor." To this Vyner replied, not very clearly: "The intimacy they had used to have with Sir Within had ceased; they held no correspondence now. It was a long story, and would not be worth the telling, nor very intelligible, perhaps, when told; but it was enough to say, that even should they meet now personally, it was by no means sure if they would recognize or address each other. You will use this knowledge for your guidance in case you ever come to know him, and which I hope you may, for he is a very delightful acquaintance, and full of those attentions which render a neighborhood pleasant. I do not say so that you may repeat it; but simply as an admission of what is due—that I deeply regret our estrangement, though I am not certain that it was avoidable." This, which Grenfell deemed somewhat contradictory, served, at all events, to show that he could not make Sir Within's acquaintance through this channel, and he was overjoyed when another and a more direct opening presented itself.

"The hen pheasant I thought would do it," muttered Grenfell, as he read the note. "A punster would say, I had shot up into his acquaintance."

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## CHAPTER XXXV.

### A WALK BEFORE DINNER.

POOR Sir Within! What a change is all this for you! Instead of that pleasant little pottering about from terrace to garden, and from garden to gallery; now in ecstasy over some grand effect of light on a favorite picture, some rich promise of beauty in an opening flower, or, better than either, a chance peep at the fair "ward" as she flitted past, a vision of beauty she well knew how to exaggerate by infrequency—for it was her especial habit to be rarely, if ever, seen of a morning—now he had to devote himself to his guest, the elder Ladarelle, and not even in the office of cicerone or guide over the grounds and the woods, but as the apologist of this, and the explainer of that. It had been settled by law that a certain sum should be expended each year on the demesne at the wise discretion of the life tenant, and now came the moment in which this same wisdom was to be arraigned, and all its tasteful exercise brought to the cold and terrible test of what is called permanency. The rock-work grottoes, the temples, the rustic bridges, and cane pagodas—all that Horace Walpoleism, in fact,



by which the area of domesticity can be so enlarged as to embrace the field, the garden, and the shrubbery—all this, with its varied luxury, and elegance, and beauty, and bad taste, was so repugnant to the mind of the old banker, that he regarded the whole as a tawdry and tasteless extravagance. Structures in stone and iron he could understand. He wanted permanency; and though the old envoy, with a little faint jest, begged to insinuate that he asked more than was supposed to be accorded by the laws of nature, the stern intelligence of the other rejected the pleasantry, and vaguely hinted at a “bill in equity.”

“None of these, sir, not one of them would be ‘allowed,’” was the phrase he repeated again and again. “The discretionary power vested in *you* to-day, or in *me*, as it might be to-morrow—”

“I ask pardon,” broke in the minister; “it is not my present intention to impose the burden upon you so soon. I hope still to live a little longer, with the kind permission of my friends and successors.”

“Humph!” muttered the other, and turned away his head.

“There was an arrangement, however, which I submitted to you four years ago. I am ready—not very willingly, perhaps, but still ready—to return to it.”

“You mean, to commute the life-interest into a sum for immediate surrender of the estate? I remember, we did discuss it formerly. Your demand was, I think, sixty thousand pounds—equal to very close on six years’ income.”

“Yes; that was the sum fixed on.”

“Well, suppose we were to entertain the question now. What proposal are you prepared to make, Sir Within?”

“I am ready to repeat my former offer, sir.”

“Made four years and five months ago?”

“Precisely,” said Sir Within, coloring deeply.

“Four years and a half, Sir Within, at your age or at mine, are a very considerable space of time.”

“I do not deny it, sir; but I feel in the enjoyment of excellent health. I rise at the same hour, and eat my meals as heartily as I did then; with every regret for the inconvenience I’m occasioning, I still profess to believe that my chances of life are pretty much as they were.”

“Actuaries are the only people to entertain these points. Indeed, friends should not discuss them.”

“Our friendship has stood the test of very delicate details so beautifully this morning, that I see no reason why we

should not take all the benefit we can get out of it.”

The fine sarcasm with which he spoke was thoroughly understood, though unnoticed, by the other, who went on—

“When I mentioned actuaries, I merely meant to say that demands of this kind are not arbitrary or capricious—that they are based on laws established by long and abstruse calculations.”

“Perhaps it is my fancy to imagine myself an exceptional case,” said Sir Within, with a faint smile.

“They would take little count of this. They would say, ‘Here is a man aged—’” he paused for the other to fill up the blank.

“Let us say one hundred,” said Sir Within, bowing.

“Who has lived long in warm climates—”

“Participating freely in the dissipations of his class and order,” said Sir Within, throwing back his head, and looking as though, with all the daring of this avowal, he defied scrutiny.

“They’d not say forty thousand. I have my doubts if they’d give you five-and-thirty,” said the banker, curtly.

“And under these circumstances, I should consider it my duty to break off the negotiation, and retire from the conference.”

“Let us suppose, for talk sake, the arrangement possible. I conclude you would not insist upon that other matter—the settlement clause, I mean. You remember that Sir Hugh Rivers decided it was not to be maintained in law?”

“The Attorney-General, with due submission, sir, never saw the original document; he saw the draft, which was subsequently cancelled, and if there be any point upon which I will waive nothing—positively nothing—it is this.”

“When a man insists so positively on his right to make a settlement, it is no unfair presumption to infer that he means to marry.”

“The supposition might certainly be entertained,” said the old envoy, bowing with the courtesy he would have observed in a ministerial conference.

“For *that*”—and the banker laid a most marked and peculiar emphasis on the word—“for that, most assuredly, I was not prepared.”

“Nor can I say,” continued the other, “that I deemed it any part of my duty to submit such a possibility to your consideration.”

“Perhaps not, Sir Within; there was no absolute reason why you should. You

are, of course, the only judge of what concerns your own interests, or—or——”

“Or happiness?”

“I didn't say happiness, simply because I thought it was the very consideration that you were about to omit.”

Sir Within smiled very blandly; he arranged the frill of his shirt—he wore a frilled shirt—and, taking forth a splendidly jewelled box, he offered a pinch to his companion. It was the diplomatic mode of saying that a conference was closed; but Mr. Ladarelle did not understand this nicety.

“After all, Sir Within, neither you nor I are men who can affect to defy the world. What the world thinks and says of us, we cannot undervalue.”

“The world, at *my* age, is the six, perhaps eight, people I could get to dine with me.”

“No, no, sir, don't say that—you can't say that. The world is to you, as to all men who have taken a large part in public affairs, the wide circle of those who bring to their judgment on their fellow men a vast acquaintance with motives, and interests, and reasons; and, besides all these, with conventionalities and decorums. They form the jury who decide on, not alone the good morals of their contemporaries, but on their good taste.”

“Perhaps it might be my fortune to offer them a most undeniable proof of mine,” said the old man, intentionally mistaking what the other had said.

“Take care, Sir Within! Take care. You might be like that case at Guildford t'other day, where the judge said, ‘There is nothing so serious in the indictment against you as your own defence.’”

“I believe you said you never took snuff,” said the envoy, tapping the gorgeous box he still held in his fingers. “That clump of oaks you see yonder,” continued he, pointing with his finger, “shuts out one of the most beautiful bits of landscape I ever saw, and I have only waited for your presence here to decide on cutting them down.”

“I will not consent to fell timber, sir, for the sake of landscape. I am certain Adolphus would agree with me.”

They now walked on, side by side, in silence. How beautiful that wood alley was! How calmly sweet the leafy shade, how deliciously the blackbird carolled from its depths, and how soft the smooth turf beneath their feet, and yet how little they heeded or cared for it all! The banker spoke first: “If you had been prepared to propose terms on which it was possible to

treat, Sir Within, my son, I know—as for myself, the plan has no attractions for me—but my son, I know, would have felt disposed to meet you; but when you start on the basis that an interval of five years, or something akin to it, makes no inroad whatever on a man's life, and then, possibly aided by that theory, hint at the likelihood of having to charge the estate with settlement——”

“My dear Mr. Ladarelle, forgive my interrupting you. All this is very painful, and what is worse, unprofitable. I remember a remark of the charming old Duke of Anhalt to his neighboring sovereign, the Prince of Hohen Altingen: ‘My dear Prince,’ said he ‘whatever our ministers can and ought to discuss together, will always prove a most unseemly topic for us;’ so be assured, sir, that what our lawyers can wrangle over, we will do much better if we leave to them.”

“You know best, I am certain, sir. I feel it is your province to understand these cases; but I own it would never have occurred to me to take a stupid old German potentate as an authority on a matter of business. May I ask what is that edifice yonder, like a piece of confectionary?”

“It is my aviary, which I shall be proud to show you.”

“Excuse me, I know nothing about birds.”

“I shall not insist, for it is the season when they lose their plumage.”

“By Jove! sir, if this system of expense be carried on, I suspect that some of ourselves will be just as devoid of feathers. That gimcrack cost, I should say, seven or eight hundred pounds?”

“You have guessed too low! It will, when finished—for the frescoes are not yet completed—amount to very close on two thousand.”

“For linnets and piping bullfinches!”

“Pardon me, sir; for nothing of the kind. For the blue sparrows of Java, for the crimson owl of Ceylon, for the azure-winged mocking-bird, and the scarlet bustard.”

“Let us see what the master will say to this fine catalogue, when it is presented to him as part of works of permanent value—that's the phrase, sir, permanent and substantial improvements—which scarcely contemplate cockatoos and canaries. And what do I see yonder? Is that the Lord Mayor's state barge, that you have bought in at second hand?”

“This is a little gondola—a caprice of my ward's, sir, and not to be questioned in any way.”



It was the first time since they met that any allusion to Kate had been dropped between them, and already the old envoy's voice showed by its vibration that the theme was one not to be lightly adverted to.

"The young lady's tastes, it would seem, incline to splendor; but possibly her fortune warrants it."

"I am certain that her tastes befit her condition," said the other, with a tone of open defiance.

"I have no doubt of it, not the least doubt of it; I would only observe, that a person so very attractive——"

"Well, sir, go on; finish what you were about to say."

"Certainly not, Sir Within, when the expression with which you hear me declares that I am taking too great a liberty."

"It is too late for apology, sir; you have already transgressed."

"I never intended an apology, Sir Within, for I took care not to incur what might require one. When I saw, or fancied I saw, that my remarks, well meant as they were, might not be as acceptable as I desired, I forbore from completing them, that is all."

"And you did well, sir!" said the other haughtily, while with a proud wave of his hand, he seemed to say the subject must be dropped.

"I mean to return to town to-morrow," said Mr. Ladarelle, after a pause; "but my son, with your kind permission, will be a burden on your hospitality for a few days longer."

"I am proud to have his company," said the old minister, with a courteous bow; but the other, not noticing it, went on: "He wants to see that mill. Hoare says, that without some arrangement about the supply of water, he must insist upon an abatement; that your Neptunes, and Dryads, and river-gods consume far more than goes over his wheel; and though, perhaps, it's a little premature on our part to enter upon this matter, yet, as the man has a lease renewable at his pleasure——"

"With your gracious leave, it is on a question of wine, and not of water, I will ask your opinion. I have got some very old Steinberger, which I propose to have your judgment on, and as I hear the first bell ringing, probably we have not much time to lose. This is the shortest way back to the house."

The banker made no reply; he plodded on moodily towards the castle, and mounted the stairs to his dressing-room, neither pleased with his host nor himself, nor, indeed, with the rest of the world.

It is very probable that Sir Within re-

tired to dress for dinner far more deeply wounded and far more irritated by this interview than his guest. With persons as plain spoken as Mr. Ladarelle, Sir Within had held very little intercourse in life. He had always played the game with those of the most refined and the most susceptible politeness. Men who would no more have committed a rudeness than a murder, and it was no mean trial of his nerves to be told, not merely that he was old, but that he was of that age in which life was something more than precarious. The ex-envoy felt, in fact, as he might have felt had some one ordered his carriage before the time he himself had told his coachman to come; thus intimating, it is possible, from reasons not entered upon or discussed, that he might think proper to leave earlier than he had contemplated. He changed color so often, that he had to supply a little extra rouge to his cheek; and his nerves were so shaken, that he could not descend to the drawing-room without a little dram of Maraschino and ether.

He found Kate alone in the drawing-room as he entered. She was most becomingly dressed, and wore a sprig of lily-of-the-valley in her hair, which became her vastly.

"How well you look, *ma mie*," said he, as he surveyed her through his glass, "and how glad I should be if our guests were more deserving of us both. *You*, however, cannot help being beautiful."

"And you *will* be witty, whether you like it or not, my dear guardian," said she, with a bewitching smile.

"*C'est plus fort que moi!* Kate. The old Duc de Nevers said to me, when I was a very young man, 'Mon cher Wardle, always talk your very best, no matter what the theme, or with whom. Never give yourself the indolent habit of careless expression. There is no such thing in conversation as *dishabille*.'"

"Indeed, sir!"

"Yes, *ma chere*; to be epigrammatic, your faculties must be always in exercise. To let off these brilliant fireworks which astonish the world as wit, the match must be kept ever alight, the hand ready."

"Mr. George Grenfell!" said the servant, throwing wide the door, and after about two seconds' interval, that former acquaintance of our reader entered the room, and was met by Sir Within with a blended polish and cordiality.

"This is a kindness, Mr. Grenfell, that promises well for our future neighborhood. I am most grateful to you for accepting my short time invitation. My ward, Mademoiselle O'Hara."

He introduced her as he had done to the Ladarelles the day before, as mademoiselle ; why, it would not have been so very easy to say ; perhaps to mystify, perhaps to avoid a difficulty, perhaps to create one ; for Sir Within was a diplomatist, and one of these reasons to such a man is own brother of the other.

Grenfell was evidently struck by her beauty ; but there was something besides admiration in his gaze ; he was surprised and more than surprised ; the traits were not altogether new to him, though the expression, lofty—haughty, even—unquestionably was. As for Kate, she had seen too few faces in life to have forgotten any one of them. They were like the books she had read, too remarkable not to be remembered. She knew him, and knew well the very hour and the very spot in which first she saw him.

Either Grenfell had not heard the name O'Hara well, or had not connected it with the past : very possible he had not heard it ever before, for it suggested nothing to him ; still her features continued to puzzle him ; through all, however, was he enough man of the world to conceal any show of this ; and, as he sat down beside the sofa where she sat, opened the usual commonplaces of first acquaintance. He spoke of the country and its charming scenery, especially around Dalradern, which was all new to him ; “for I am ashamed,” added he, “to own I know more of Switzerland than I do of Wales. Perhaps in this, mademoiselle is a defaulter like myself ?”

Here was a question adroitly insinuated, to induce what might lead to some disclosure as to whence she came, or where she had been.

“I am very fond of mountains,” said she, as if mistaking his question.

“Ladies are the less selfish in their love of scenery,” resumed he, with a little smile, “that they do not connect mountains with grouse shooting. Now, I'm afraid a man, in his admiration for the hill-side and the heather, has some lurking dreams about deer-stalking, and in the highland ‘tarn’ his thoughts invariably run on ten pound trout.”

“That is the practical side by which men assert their superiority, I believe ; but perhaps they mistake occasionally ; I suspect they do, at least.”

“You mean that women have the quality also ?”

“I fancy that women are not so prone to parade this egotism,” said she, with a slight flashing of the eye.

“That may mean something very severe,” said he, laughing.

“In which case I could not have said what I intended.”

Though this was said apologetically, there was a saucy defiance in her look that declared anything rather than apology. “Your remark,” said he, “reminds me of an Irish squire I heard of, who, wanting to get rid of the charge in his pistol, fired it out of the window into a crowd, saying, ‘I hope it won't hurt any of you !’ Have you been in Ireland, mademoiselle ?”

“I have seen next to nothing of Ireland ; far too little to have caught up, as you infer, any traits of her nationality.”

There was not the slightest tremor in her voice, nor change in her color as she spoke, though Grenfell watched her with more—far more—intentness than he was aware of or would have permitted himself to bestow, if he had known it.

“I know very little of the green island myself,” said he. “I once made a yachting excursion with a friend to the west—the same friend to whom I am now indebted for the honor of knowing you.”

Kate's cheek grew crimson ; she had mistaken the meaning of his words, and fancied that they referred to his meeting her first in Vyner's company, and not to his possession of Vyner's Cottage.

“Will you let me present my friends—Mr. Ladarelle, Mr. Adolphus Ladarelle, Mr. Grenfell ?” said Sir Within, at this critical moment, “and then, if you will give mademoiselle your arm, we will go to dinner.”

It required all the practised tact and consummate skill in such matters of Sir Within's to carry through that day's dinner.

Kate scarcely spoke at all, the elder Ladarelle very little ; the younger was evidently bent on finding out who Grenfell was, what were his clubs, his houses, and his associates ; and Grenfell, not at all unused to such assaults of curiosity, repelled them by a cold and distant politeness, which gave little aid to table-talk. So that on the old envoy was thrown all the burden of the entertainment.

Where men imagine that in supplying the material wants of humanity they have amply fulfilled the part between host and guest, and that when the viands are good, and the wine exquisite, the whole responsibility is satisfied, it will seem that Sir Within's fears and anxieties were not all reasonable ; but this was not his theory. At a grand dinner, a state occasion, a certain dulness was a part of the solemnity, and full-dress liveries and gold dishes were the natural accompaniments of dreariness and



display ; but a little dinner meant a choice party, a selected few, bound to bring with them their faculties at the brightest ; not sharpening their wits at the moment of exercise, like an unruly orchestra tuning their instruments when they should be playing, but ready to start off at score. What a blank disappointment was here ! The few sallies that relieved the dulness came from the younger Ladarelle, and were neither attic in themselves, or quite unquestionable in point of taste ; and when they arose to take their coffee, the feeling was rather gratification that so much of weariness had been got over, and a hope that there was not much more to come.

"I shall want you to sing, *ma mie* ; I see you won't talk," whispered Sir Within to Kate, as he drew near her.

"No, sir ; I have a headache. I shall go and lie down."

"That is about as much of her company as she has vouchsafed us since we have been here," said Ladarelle the younger to Grenfell, as they stood together in a window.

"Is she haughty ?"

"I don't know."

"Vain I should take her to be, eh ?"

"I don't know."

"Who is she ?" whispered Grenfell, in the confidential tone he knew how to assume with younger men.

"I don't know that, either," said Ladarelle. "The old fellow says his ward ; but I'd not be surprised if one of these days he should say his wife."

"Why, he's seventy."

"Seventy-six—seventy-six ! but he'd like to fancy he was eight-and-thirty."

"A natural sort of self-delusion in its way," said Grenfell, carelessly. "He'd be wrong to marry, though."

"I believe you ; and very hard on me, too."

"How do you mean on you ?"

"Because the estate comes to me ; but he can charge it with a settlement if he marries ; that's what I call hard. Don't you ?"

Grenfell had no time to resolve the question, for Sir Within had already come over to propose a rubber at whist, a party to which, as an old member of Graham's, his appetite was not whetted as young Ladarelle whispered, "I wish you joy of your whist ; old Wardle revokes, and my father never pays if he loses !"

"Come over and dine with me to-morrow," said Grenfell ; "it will not be more dreary than this."

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

## A NEW FRIENDSHIP.

"WHAT a snug place you have here ; it's as pretty as paint, too," said Mr. Adolphus Ladarelle, as he lounged into the Cottage, a few minutes after the time named for dinner.

"It is not mine ; I am only here on sufferance. It belongs to Sir Gervais Vyner," said Grenfell.

"Not the Vyner who sat for Holstead ?"

"The same."

"And the man who bought Cloudsley's yacht *Carinthia*, and then exchanged her for the *Meteor*, that won the Cowes cup two years ago," continued Grenfell, who was watching the altered expression of the other's face, as he learned that he was the guest of one so closely allied in intimacy with one of the leaders of fashion ; for though the Ladarelles were rich people and well placed in society, Vyner moved in a set, and associated with a class, quite apart from and above them.

"I never met Vyner," said Ladarelle, carelessly.

"He is the man I am most intimate with in the world. We chummed together at Cambridge, travelled together, and would have stood side by side in public life together, if I had not been too indolent to fag at official drudgery. But here comes dinner : " and taking his guest's arm, he led him away literally captive—so completely was he overcome by the news that he was dining with the great Sir Gervais Vyner's dearest friend and oldest companion.

Now, though the Ladarelles were not in that class to which Grenfell aspired, and with whom he hoped one day to see himself, they were on the direct road to it. They occupied what represented an intermediate territory, through which he must pass ; and he set himself patiently to cultivate their good opinion—secretly cherishing the hope that a time would come when he could afford to be indifferent to it.

The dinner was exquisite ; and young Ladarelle enjoyed, not alone the good cheer, but the freedom of being alone with one to whom he could talk without any reserve.

"You don't half know what a charity you've done," said he, "in asking me here to-day. That dreary old place was killing me. My governor is not what people call jolly. Old Sir Within is about the greatest prig I ever met ; and as for the ward, she

is either insufferably impertinent, or downright underbred."

"She is exceedingly beautiful, however," said Grenfell, smiling.

"At times—yes; I'll not dispute that. But she has a something half supercilious, half silly, occasionally, that I don't like. Do you think her clever?"

"I have no means of knowing. I never met her till yesterday. Old Wardle declares that there never was her equal—that she learns whatever she likes, without any labor; but it's easy enough to understand infatuation at his age, and he *does* seem to admire her vastly," said Grenfell, slowly.

"I'd say the old fellow was madly in love with her, if the idea was not too absurd; not that it would be a laughing matter for me, though—very far from it."

"How do you mean?"

"I told you last night, that if he were to marry he can charge the estate with a settlement. But that's not the whole of it. Sir Hugh Rivers says that, if he should have a direct heir—O, yes—it's all very fine laughing; but the world has seen some such cases."

"Very true," said Grenfell; "and we all know what Lord Stowell said of them."

"I know nothing about Lord Stowell; but I know this, that it's no pleasant thing to think there's a flaw in what one was once sure of. I used to fancy myself as much the owner of Dalradern as though Sir Within Wardle was only a tenant."

"I scarcely think, if I was in your place, I'd fret myself about the contingency you speak of," said Grenfell.

"I'll not go so far as to say I fret about it. I don't exactly do that; but it worries me in certain ways."

"I understand," said Grenfell; "it makes the Jews more difficult to deal with—more captious about post obits."

"You have it exactly. That fellow Joel—I can't imagine how he came at it—said to me t'other day, 'I don't like my security, Mr. Dolly; it ain't what I used to think it was.' And what do you think I am paying him all the time?"

"Ten—perhaps fifteen—per cent."

"Guess again."

"Twenty?—surely not more than twenty-five?"

"Forty—ay, forty per cent.! And when I was let in so heavily last May on Grampus, I stood for the whole of Cloudsley's lot, old Joel refused to renew under sixty per cent.! He even threatened he'd go up to Leadenhall Street and have a talk with my governor."

"Which might not have been pleasant."

"I believe you. The governor has only to know that I've been betting in the ring to scratch my name out of the bank tomorrow, and cut me off root and branch. You haven't an idea what these old 'dons' in the banking world think of what they call 'the house.' When my father speaks of 'the house,' he means something that represents the honor of all the Ladarelles—not alone since Adam, but the unborn partners that are to discount and keep deposits for centuries to come. Maybe you have not mixed with these sort of people?"

"Very little; but I have heard tell of their prejudices," said Grenfell, with the very faintest tinge of color in his cheek as he spoke.

"That's just what my governor is. After the bank comes the monarchy with him; so that you see I must be cautious."

"I know something of Master Joel. It is rather his interest to stand well with me; and, if you like, I will just give him a gentle hint to keep quiet, and not create any disturbance."

"Oh, would you? By Jove! I'll take it as a great service to me. The fact is, I've been going it rather fast. Hawkshaw 'let me in' pretty heavily on 'Caithness,' and then Blunden, as you know, leant; so that our last settling day was rather a dark morning to me."

"Have you any other creditors than Joel?"

"Nothing very heavy. I owe Davis—"

"Grog?"

"Yes—Grog Davis. I owe him about two thousand; but he never presses. Grog's a gentleman in that respect. It's only when a fellow 'hums' and 'habs' about whether the thing was all square or not; that's what Grog won't stand a moment. He'll insist on his money then; and, what's more, he'll have a shot at you too, if he can get it."

"Yes, but he'll have his money first. I never heard of Grog Davis shooting at a solvent debtor yet."

"You know him, that's plain enough," said Dolly, laughing.

"Who could have been about town the last ten or fifteen years and not know him? I rather like him too."

"So do I," cried Ladarelle, eagerly, and as though it relieved his heart of a weight to make the confession. "Say what they will of Grog Davis, he's a fellow to do a right good-natured thing; and as for advice, there's not a man in the clubs I'd as soon go to as to him."

"He has a deal of worldly wit, that's certain."



"Ay, and he has more. He knows the exact way to treat every one. I've seen him go up and take the Duke of Dullworth by the arm just as familiarly as you'd take me."

"Yes, when the Duke wanted him; he might do that."

Dolly paused for some minutes, and seemed to reflect. He was, indeed, reflecting and considering with himself whether he would make a clean breast of it, and tell Grenfell all—everything that he had on his mind, and everything that he had done in consequence. At length he appeared to have formed his decision; and pushing his glass from before him, he leaned his arm on the table, and addressed Grenfell in a voice of most confidential meaning.

"I wrote to Grog since I came here," said he, significantly. "I told him all about old Wardle, and as much as I could make out about his ward. It wasn't much; but I added whatever I suspected, and I asked what he thought of it. He answered me by the same post."

"And what did he say?" asked Grenfell, for the other had come to a dead stop.

"I only got the letter as I stepped into the carriage, and glanced my eye over it. Shall I read it for you? It's very short."

"Read it then, by all means."

"Here it is," said he, producing a very square-shaped sheet of paper, with a large seal of coarse wax attached, evidence that it had not been encased in an envelope.

"DEAR DOL!—That's his way, he'd be intimate with his Royal Highness—'Dear Dol, your note was writ like one of the queries to *Bell's Life*, and in the same spirit I answer it. The old cove means to marry her—' Eh, what?"

"I did not speak; go on."

"The old cove means to marry her, and cut you out of the estate, just as Tom Barkely was done by Rixley Drummond—only that Tom was offered the girl first, and wouldn't have her."

"He's all right there. Tom Barkely's obstinacy cost him about sixteen thousand a year, and sent him out to India as a major in a marching regiment," said Grenfell. "Go on."

"This is my opinion"—he puts two n's to opinion, and it makes it read all the more stubborn—"and as for the remedy, Master Dolly, all I can say is, there ain't two ways about it—there ain't two ways about it," repeated Ladarelle, slowly, and as though weighing each word as he uttered it. "Now, will you tell me, what does he mean by that?"

"Read it over again."

"This is my opinion; and as for the remedy, Master Dolly, there ain't two ways about it.—Yours, C. D."

Grenfell took the letter from the other's hand, and pored over it in silence for several minutes; then, leisurely folding it, he laid it down on the table.

"How do you understand him?" asked Ladarelle again.

"It's not very easy to understand what he says here; though, if the words had been spoken instead of written, I suspect I could have come at the meaning."

"There ain't two ways about it," repeated Dolly, moodily, "and why not say which is the one way? That would be more to the purpose."

"It's one of two things, evidently; either you are to get rid of Sir Within, or his ward. Grog is not a very scrupulous fellow; but though he would poison a horse he had laid heavily against for the Derby, I don't think he'd go so far in the case of an old diplomatist. It remains, then, to be seen what is to be done with the ward; he probably means you should carry her off yourself."

"Perhaps she wouldn't come; if she has designs on Sir Within, it's almost certain she would not."

Grenfell made no answer, but sat lost in thought for some minutes, when he said: "Yes; that's what Grog advises; his calculation is, that this old man's infatuation, which, uninterfered with, would have led him into a foolish marriage, will, if it be crossed and thwarted, as certainly break him down and kill him."

"Men don't die of these things!"

"Not men like you and me, certainly; but there is a time of life when existence is held on a very frail tenure; and, at that time, a mere hope extinguished serves to crush a vitality."

"And do you really think he'd take it so much to heart?"

"I know too little of him to give an opinion. When I have seen him some half-dozen times more, and seen, besides, something of his manner towards her, I might risk a guess, perhaps."

"If I was quite sure that I 'stood in' for the double event—that is, to stop her marriage and succeed to the estate at once—I almost think I'd do it."

"Yes," said Grenfell, after another pause, "this must be what Grog alludes to, as the one way of dealing with the matter."

"She'd insist on marriage, I suppose?" said Dolly, in a sulky tone,

"Of course she would."

"That's a bit of a bore. I had not calculated on such a step for these six or eight years yet. Then there's another thing to be thought of: my governor, who naturally will not see the necessity of the step, is sure to be outrageous at it. All that he will recognize will be the very thing he most despises in the world—a love match."

"Could he not be brought to see a much more valid reason for this match? Don't you think the matter could be placed before him in such a light that he must accept that view?"

"No. I know him better. I could tell you at once what he'd say."

"And what would it be?"

"He'd say: 'If she must be got out of the way and married off, get some hard-up sub who can't pay his mess debts, or wants to lodge a few hundreds for the next vacancy; or find some Irish squire.' My governor always thinks an Irishman is ready for anything but paying his debts. 'He'd marry her for a couple of thousand down.' That's what my governor would hit on, without taking five minutes to think of it."

"What if *she* would not consent to such an arrangement?"

"That's as it might be. You'll not find my governor giving any one credit for a strong will but himself. He reasons out every question his own way, and never suspects the mere possibility of opposition."

"That may do in the bank, perhaps, where none can gainsay him."

"He'll tell you it does just as well in the world at large; and he'll point to himself as the best proof of the system."

"I should like to hear your father discuss the question with the young lady herself; she, I take it, has a will of her own, also; and the matter would probably be well debated."

"She'd have no chance with my governor."

"I'm not so sure of that. I have a suspicion that she could hold her own in an argument that touched her interest."

"You know more of her than I do. She spoke to *you*, to *me* she barely condescended a few words. No more wine, thanks. I must be thinking of the road. I have got old Sir Within's horses, and the coachman tells me they have never been out after sunset for the last four years, and if they get cold now it may cost him his place."

"Why not come over and stop here, it might bore you less than yonder?"

"I should be delighted; I could ask nothing better; but I am supposed to be

down here on business. My governor is not at all satisfied with the way things are going on. He says Sir Within has cut down too much timber, and he has taken renewals for leases he had no right to grant, and what with his tanks, and fish-ponds, and river-gods, he has left two mills without a drop of water."

"Tell him, with my compliments, Sir Within Wardle will do worse than all these."

"You mean about that girl?"

"Yes."

"That's what Grog says, but I dare not quote *him* to the governor. Tell me, would you have any objection to my telling him that this was *your* opinion?"

"I have not the honor of being known to your father, and a mere surmise of mine would carry no weight with it."

"I don't know that. I fancy he rather took a liking to you last night. What did you do at whist?"

"Lost a few half-crowns."

"Ah, that accounts for it all. He said at breakfast this morning, that though you held only indifferent cards, you played with perfect composure, and it was quite a pleasure to play with you. With a few nights' ill luck you'll stand high in his favor. I promise you."

"It is a cheap friendship after all," said Grenfell, laughing.

"Yes. You may have it for five pounds, but I doubt greatly if you could re-sell it for as many shillings."

"Make use of my favor, therefore, while it lasts, and, if nothing prevent, come and dine here the day after to-morrow," said Grenfell.

"Agreed. Here come the fat coach-horses; see how they heave their flanks, only coming round from the stable-yard. I tell you, Grenfell," said he, in a whisper, "there will be a great sale of stock at Dalradern one of these days; and there's a lot I'll certainly not give orders to have bought in. Good-night—good-night."

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### A WOODLAND RIDE.

It was only at intervals that the sun's rays pierced the leafy shade of a long valley in the woods at Dalradern, where Sir Within and his ward were riding. The tall beech-trees, which stood like the columns of a gigantic cathedral, were met and interwoven above so densely, that the



light struggled with difficulty through the foliage, and fell in fanciful patches on the smooth turf beneath.

With noiseless tread the horses moved over that even turf, so that when the riders were not speaking, not a sound broke the stillness, except the rich carol of the black-bird, or the deep-voiced cooing of the wood-pigeon.

Sir Within rode his strong dark-brown short-legged cob, a beast of grave and dignified deportment, never startled nor surprised by the fretful and uneasy performances of the mettlesome animal at his side, and whose natural hot temper was alternately chafed and caressed at the fancy of his rider; for it was her pleasure to be eternally correcting some imaginary fault, or teaching some new accomplishment. Now, it was his neck that wanted plasticity; now, he bore a little too heavily on the hand; now, the off-shoulder was a thought too prominent in his canter; or, more vexatious than these, he *would* respond to a touch of the spur by a sharp switch of the tail—a breach of good breeding she could not tolerate.

Firmly seated on an animal that defied all sympathy in these mettlesome feats, Sir Within had ample time to admire the exquisite grace with which she rode. It was indeed the very perfection of the accord between horse and rider, which makes the spectator unable to say to which of the two he yields the palm of excellence. No bound nor spring ever took her unawares; and when the animal seemed half mad with excitement, the graceful caress she stooped to bestow appeared to subdue him like a charm.

“Why are you so grave, my dear Gardy? You told me you should be yourself again when that tiresome man was gone, and now he’s off—thank Heaven for it!—but you look so depressed and dispirited as if you had not yet tasted the relief.”

“True, *ma mie*, quite true. I have not quite convinced myself that we are free of him. His son, however, remains, and is to stay till next week.”

“Yes, but how little we see of him. Your kind neighbor, Mr. Grenfell, has him almost every day at dinner.”

“For which I owe him all my gratitude.”

“I take it, Mr. Grenfell invites him to please himself. He is very lonely yonder at the Cottage. He says he has made no acquaintances, and I suppose that even Mr. Adolphus Ladarelle is better than solitude—not that I should think so myself.”

“But you show that too plainly, *ma mie*. There are no feelings we ought so strictly

to control, so far as the manifestations go, as our distastes to people in society.”

“I think he hates *me*.”

“That would be impossible, child. He may be afraid of your wit; he may not like to encounter your repartee; he may feel, and not unreasonably, that he does not stand high in your favor, and this may impart a degree of constraint to his manner.”

“I have not seen the constraint, sir, but I have the dislike, and it was so perfectly mutual, I was glad of it.”

“Another mistake, *ma chère*, and a great mistake. The people who really like us need no caressing. The blandishments should be all reserved for the doubtful—just as we administer cordials to the weak.”

“I do my best, sir, but I own I do not approach it with a good grace. Do you really wish me to become a favorite with this young gentleman?”

“Nay, *ma mie*, you go too far. Your nature is like a pendulum, that swings if it be but breathed on. I did not say so much as that. I simply meant that I should prefer if he were to carry away from us a pleasant impression of his visit. His father and I have had some discussions of a kind I cannot easily forget. In a long life of affairs, I have not met one, no, not one, who carries the virtue of candor to the pitch of my respected relative, or who imparts home truths with a more telling sincerity.”

“Well, sir, if I understand you aright, I am to captivate Mr. Ladarelle, but not to fall in love with him.”

“Mademoiselle,” said he, gravely, “there was not such a word as love dropped in the entire discussion. I have told you that with the relations which subsist between the elder Mr. Ladarelle and myself it would be as well if a kindlier sentiment connected me with the young man. We shall probably have matters to discuss to which each of us ought to bring all the courtesies in his power.”

“Who cut down the large elm, Gardy?” cried she, suddenly, pointing to a clearing in the wood, where a gigantic trunk had just been felled.

“It was I, *ma chère*. I ordered it; intending to make a vista yonder, so that we should see the great tower; but Mr. Ladarelle has stopped me with a protest, and as I abhor a lawsuit, I think I shall submit.”

“Just watch how the Cid will take the timber; he’s glorious over a stump.”

“Kate—my dear Kate—it’s too high; don’t do it. Come back, I entreat; I order you to come back!” cried he, as she dashed

into the open, and with her horse beautifully in hand, cantered him at the tree. Perhaps it was in the seeming carelessness of her hand—for horses have an instinct rarely deceptive as to the intention of the rider—perhaps a mere caprice, but the Cid swerved as he came up and refused the leap.

The bare thought of such rebellion raised the girl's temper at once. She wheeled him suddenly round, and rode back about fifty yards, and then facing him once more in the direction of the tree, she dashed towards it in speed.

"I command you—I order you to come back!" screamed Sir Within; but she heeded nothing, heard nothing. The horse, now irritated and snorting with passion, came too close before he rose to the leap, and though he sprung madly into the air, he touched—a mere touch with his fore-leg—and came tumbling over, head-foremost, to the opposite side, with his rider beneath him.

Sir Within had covered his eyes with one hand, not to see her take the leap, and he remained thus for a few seconds, waiting to hear her voice and the tramp of her horse as she joined him. At last he removed his hand and looked around. She was not to be seen. He cried her name—he screamed it in his agony.

"This way!" cried she; "I'm not hurt—don't be frightened—come and help me."

Dismounting, he made through the tall ferns and the felled branches and soon gained the spot, from which the horse had only now arisen, and stood trembling over the fallen figure of the girl. "Oh, my life—my darling—my heart's dearest," cried he, kneeling down beside her; "tell me you are not crushed—not injured."

"Only stunned, Gardy, nothing more. It was all my own fault. I rode him at speed; he had no time to gather himself, and the martingale—" As she spoke, her voice grew weak, she leaned her head on his shoulder and fainted.

How did the deep woods resound to that poor old man's prayers and cries for help. He shouted—he screamed—he implored; he offered untold gold to him who should come to his aid. He pledged to give half of all he had in the world to any who should succor her. It was by a caprice of Kate's that they rode without a groom, and he inveighed against his own folly now for the compliance. Madly mingling self-reproaches with his cries for assistance, he grew at length hoarse and so faint with his efforts, that he could with difficulty sustain her weight. Just then was it that she rallied, and with a playful smile said,

"Dear Gardy, just pass your hand over Cid's knee. I hope it is not touched."

"What do I care for the horse? are you safe, my own darling—are you not hurt?"

"Not in the least—I think not; my ankle is a little stiff—a mere sprain, no more. This shoulder too—There, don't touch it, only help me up. Yes, of course, I mean to mount again—do tell me if his knee is all right?"

"Only think—without help—without a servant—not a creature near us," muttered he.

"Very dreadful," said she, with an arch smile; "quite compromising, I declare."

"Oh, I have no heart for a jest now!" said he, with a heavy sigh, as he assisted her to rise.

"My sweet little horse," said she, patting him and throwing her arm round his neck. "I did treat you very ill—very ill indeed. It was soft spongy ground, too, and not fair in any way, and you were not in the least to blame. Do you know, Gardy, it was a mere bit of bark that caught his foot; for, after all, it is not above four feet high, is it?"

"I don't know—I don't care how high it is. It very nigh cost you your life, and cost *me* more than I wish to tell;" and he muttered these last words beneath his breath.

"You have never helped me to mount, I think, Gardy! Mind, now, don't touch Cid's bridle; he won't bear it. Just give me a slight lift—that's it; thanks! Oh, how nice to be on the saddle again! If you wouldn't think very ill of me, I'd ask a favor?"

"Anything in the whole world, *ma mie*; what is it?"

"Then, like a dear kind Gardy, let me ride him at it again; I'll do it so quietly—"

"Not for a dukedom—not if you went on your knees to beg it. I declare you have but little feeling in your heart to ask it. Nay, I didn't mean to say that, my sweet child; my head is wandering, and I know not what I say."

"I hope you'll not tell of my disaster, Gardy," said she, as they rode slowly along towards home. "A fall brings one down at once to the level of all the people who do nothing but fall. Don't smile—I mean simply what I say as applied to matters of horseflesh, not morals—and promise you'll not tell of me."

"The doctor must hear of it, certainly."

"No, Gardy, I'll have no doctor."

"I insist upon it—you shall—and you



must, Kate. Surely, when I say it is for my happiness, you will not refuse me."

She made no answer, but passing her reins to her right hand, she laid her left hand over his, and so they rode on without a word on either side.

"Is it not strange that a crush and a tumble over a big tree should make one so very—very happy; but I declare to you, Gardy, I never knew my heart so full of delight as at this moment. Tell me what's the meaning of it?"

"Gratitude for your escape, *ma mie*: the thankfulness that even the most thoughtless feel for preservation through danger."

"No, it's not that; the sort of ecstacy I feel is something quite different from all this. It has nothing to do with peril, and just as little with gratitude. It has more in it of pride—that's not the word, but it will do—of pride, then, that you made so much account of me."

"For a moment I thought I had lost you!" said he, and his voice trembled, and his very cheek shook with emotion as he spoke.

"And would the loss have been a deep sorrow—a very deep sorrow?"

He pressed her hand to his heart, and said, in a low voice, "The deepest—the heaviest that could befall me!"

"Was it not worth a fall to learn this?" said she, laughingly.

"Nay, rather, will it not teach you to take more care of a life of such consequence to others?"

"Don't say others, Gardy—say one other, and I am content." As she said this, she drew her hand hurriedly away, for they were already approaching the great entrance, on the terrace of which Grenfell and young Ladarelle were talking and laughing. "Mind, sir, not a word of my accident!" And with this she sprang to the ground before he could offer his hand, and hurrying up the steps, disappeared within the building.

"Won't you ask Grenfell to stop to dinner, sir?" whispered Dolly, as Sir Within, after a few cold commonplaces, was about to pass on.

"Not to-day."

"But I have half done it already, sir. It was a great liberty on my part, but I blundered into it."

"Will you give us your company at dinner to-morrow, Mr. Grenfell?" said Sir Within, without the hesitation of a moment.

Grenfell accepted, and, as Sir Within moved on, turning to Dolly, he said, "Did you remark his agitation—did you notice the embarrassment of his look and manner?"

"Take my word for it, he has made her an offer."

"Do you know it was passing through my mind, the very same thought; for, as they turned the angle of the copse yonder, I saw her snatch her hand from him."

"Come back and dine with me. Common delicacy forbids you to spoil a *tête-à-tête*."

"I can't take the thing as coolly as you do, Grenfell. It's no laughing matter to me."

"Don't laugh, then, that's all. There can be no reason, however, that you should not dine; so step in, and let's be off."

"I suspect you are right," said Dolly, as they drove away. "The old fool has copped his folly. I whispered to him to ask you to dine."

"I heard you, and I marked the eager way he put it off till to-morrow. His confusion got the better of all his tact, and showed me plainly enough that something had occurred to excite him greatly."

"She passed in, too, without ever looking up; she never bowed to us—did you notice that?"

"I saw it all, and I said to myself that Master Dolly's next dealings with Joel will entail heavy sacrifices."

"It's not done yet," said Ladarelle, with an affected boldness.

"No, nor need be for some weeks to come; but let us talk no more of it till we have dined. Vyner sent me his cellar-key this morning, and we'll see if his old wine cannot suggest some good counsel."

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### SCHEMING.

THEY sat late over their wine, and telling the servants to go to bed, Grenfell ordered that he should not be called before noon on the next day.

According to custom, his servant had left his letters by his bedside, and then retired noiselessly, and without disturbing him. It was already late in the afternoon when Grenfell awoke. The first note he opened was a short one from Sir Within, begging to excuse himself from the expected happiness of receiving Mr. Grenfell that day at dinner, as a sudden attack of his old enemy, the gout, had just laid him up in bed. "If I have only my usual fortune," added he, "my seizure will be a brief one, and I may soon again reckon on the pleasure of seeing you here."

The tidings of the illness was corroborated by Grenfell's valet, who saw the doctor traveling to Dalradern with all the speed of post-horses.

The thought of a courtship that ushered in a fit of the gout was just the sort of drollery that suited Grenfell's taste, and as he lay he laughed in derision of the old man and his schemes of future happiness. He fancied himself telling the story at his club, and he dwelt on the opportunity it would afford to talk of "Wardle" as his friend—one whose eccentricities he had therefore a perfect right to dish-up for the amusement of all others.

"Take this," said he, giving the note to his servant. "to Mr. Ladarelle's room;" and, fancying to himself the various modes with which that young gentleman would con over the intelligence, he lay back again in his bed.

There was no friendship—there was no reason for any—in the apparent interest he had taken in Ladarelle. It was not of the slightest moment to him which of the two, if either, should marry Kate O'Hara, save as to with whom he should stand best, and be most likely to be well received by in the future. Were she to marry Sir Within, the house would, in all likelihood, be closed to him. The old minister was too well versed in worldly matters not to cut off all the traditions of the past. "He's sure either to introduce her into life under the auspices of some of his own high connections, or to live totally estranged from all society. In either case they are lost to me. Should she be married to Ladarelle, I—as the depository of all that was secret in the transaction—I must needs have my influence. The house will of necessity be open to me, and I shall make of it what I please." By this last reflection Grenfell summed up what his experience of life had largely supplied him with—that is, an inordinate liking for those establishments in which a large fortune is allied with something which disqualifies the possessors from taking their rightful position in society. In his estimation, there were no such pleasant houses as those where there was a "screw loose," either in the conduct, the character, or the antecedents of the owners.

These houses were a sort of asylum for that large nomade population of highly amusing qualities and no characters, the men who had not "done" everything, but "done" everybody, and of women still more dubious. In these houses the style of living was usually splendid. Wit has a sort of natural affinity for good cookery, and Beauty knows all the value of the

"costly setting" which splendor confers. Last of all, there was that perfect liberty—the freedom from all the discipline of correcter establishments—which gave to every guest some prerogative of a master. You came as you liked, went as you liked, and very often, too, introduced whom you liked. What more could a man do if he were the rightful owner? Now, Grenfell was free of many such houses, but in none was he supreme. There was not one wherein his authority was dominant and his word a law. This he ambitioned; he craved impatiently for the time he could say to the men in his club, "I'll take you down with me to Ladarelle's—I'll show you some real cock shooting—I'll give you a day or two at Dalradern." Would not that be fame—distinction—triumph? Ladarelle, too, was a man made by nature for such a part—careless, extravagant, sensual, fond of amusement, without caring in the least for the characters of those who contributed towards it, and inherently vain and open to the coarsest flattery. With him, therefore, Grenfell anticipated little trouble; with her he was by no means so sure. She puzzled him, and she seemed determined not to afford him any opportunity of knowing more of her. Her avoidance of him was plain and unmistakable.

"Perhaps she fears, perhaps she distrusts me," thought he. "I'll take the earliest moment to assure her she need do neither, but make me her friend implicitly." He understood a good deal by that same word, which in ordinary life is not imputed to friendship. In fact, by friendship, he—as a great many others do—simply meant conspiracy. Thinking and reflecting in this vein, he lay, when the door opened, and young Ladarelle, in dressing-gown and slippers, entered.

"What's the meaning of all this, Grenfell?" said he. "My fellow, Fisk, who is just come over, says that Sir Within is perfectly well; he was in the stable-yard this morning at seven o'clock, and that it is the ward, mademoiselle herself, is ill."

"He won't have us at dinner, that's all I know," said Grenfell, yawning carelessly.

"He says nothing whatever about me; scarcely civil, I think, considering I am supposed to be his guest."

"I'll give you a dinner. You'll pay me with interest one of these days, when you come to that estate."

"That I will."

"Do you know, as I lay here this last hour, I have been plotting out the sort of life a man could cut out for himself in a place like this? You are the sort of fellow



to have the very pleasantest house in England."

"I should like to try."

"If you try, you'll win. Shall I tell you, Master Dolly, the quality which first attracted me towards you?"

"What was it?"

"It was this. You are one of the very few young fellows I ever met who was not infected with a slavish worship of the titled classes. How, being a Cambridge man, you escaped it, I don't know; but you have escaped it."

"You're right there," said Dolly; but the color that mounted so suddenly to his cheek seemed to imply a certain confusion in making the assertion. "You know we had a peerage once in the family, and it is a hobby of my governor's to try and revive it. He offered the present people to contest any two of the Opposition seats, and proposed to myself to go into the House; but I told him flatly I'd rather get into Graham's than into Parliament."

"A much harder thing to do!"

"You're in Graham's, ain't you?"

"Yes; and so shall you be next ballot, if you really wish for it!"

"What a trump you are! Do you know, Grenfell, I can't make it out at all that I never have met you before?"

"I'm some twelve or fifteen years your senior," said the other, and a slight twitching of the mouth showed a certain irritation as he spoke; "a few years separates men as essentially as a whole hemisphere."

"I suppose so."

"Town life, too, moves in such a routine, that when a man comes to my age, he no more makes a new acquaintance than he acquires a new sensation."

"And, stranger still," continued Dolly, with that persistence that pertains to ill-breeding, "I never so much as heard of you."

"I feel ashamed of my obscurity!" said Grenfell, and his pale cheek became mottled with red.

"No, it ain't that. I meant only to say that I never heard of any Grenfells but the Piccadilly fellows, Cox and Grenfells! 'None genuine but signed by us.' Ha, ha, ha!" and Dolly laughed at his drollery, and the other joined in the mirth quite sufficiently not to attract any especial attention. "Not relatives, I presume?" added Dolly, still laughing.

"Delighted if they were!" said Grenfell, with a sickly smile. "I don't think the dividends would smell of curry powder!"

"That's what Cecil St. John says: 'Let

the greatest scoundrel in England only leave me his money, and I'll honor his memory.' Do you know St. John?"

"One of my most intimate friends."

"I am dying to know him. Grog Davis says he's the only man that ever took the wind out of *his* sails."

"I'll have him to dinner when I go up to town, and get you to meet him," said Grenfell. "It must be on a Sunday, though, for Cecil shuns all others, which he calls dun-days, to distinguish from Sundays."

"I'd like to wipe off every shilling he owes. I'd like to set a fellow like that clear with the world."

"I'll tell him you said so. It will go a very long way towards acquiring his esteem."

"Well, I declare it's a thing I'd do, if I had my property. I've heard wonderful stories about him."

"And he could tell you still more wonderful ones himself. He's one of those men—here Grenfell's voice became authoritative and collected—"one of those men who, if he saw himself in such a position as yours, would no more doubt as to what he would do, than he would hesitate taking a fair fence in a fox-hunt."

"And what would he do *in my* place?"

"He'd reason out the thing somewhat in this way: 'If I suffer the old cove to marry this girl, he'll either hamper the estate with a heavy settlement, or, mayhap, alienate it altogether. I'll marry her myself, or, if she'll not consent, I'll carry her off. Abduction looks very big in the law-books, but it's a light offense, except where the woman is intractable.'"

"And would you carry her off?"

"St. John would, I'll take my oath on it!"

"And not marry her?"

"That's as it might be, and if she insisted; for he has three other wives still living."

"But is the thing possible?"

"Possible! Why, it's done every week of the year in Ireland."

"Ay, but we're not in Ireland, unfortunately."

"That's true; neither are we in France; but it was a French cook dressed that 'supreme' we ate yesterday."

"I see what you mean," said he, pondering slowly over the other's words. "You think one might get fellows who understand how this sort of thing is to be done?"

"If I don't mistake greatly, I know where to go for the very man you want.

In an excursion I once made with Vyner in the west of Ireland, we rambled into a wild district of Donegal, where in a lonely region we chanced on a little inn. It is a flattery to call it an inn. It was a small thatched cabin standing by itself in the midst of the mountains; there was not another habitation, I'm certain, within ten miles of it. The fellow who kept it was as rank a rebel as ever graced the gallows; and made no secret of his treason either, but owned it boldly and impudently. I had more than one discussion with him, and learned that the rascal had all the shrewdness and low cunning that pertains to that class of his countrymen. He had not, however, been well treated by his party, and he was not at all indisposed to betray them if he could see his way to secure his own advantage by it. At all events, it was clear to me, that for a case which required craft, daring, and no interference of scruples of any kind, this fellow was eminently suited; and I have often thought, if I needed a man for an enterprise where the law must be broken, and the penalty incurred a gaol and a long imprisonment, I'd go and look up my friend in Donegal as the man for the occasion—not to say that his house would be the very place to afford a refuge beyond all risk of discovery."

Ladarelle listened with deep attention throughout, and when Grenfell had finished, said: "What do you mean by a refuge beyond all discovery?"

"Simply, that for some short time, marry or not, you must be able to baffle pursuit, and for such a purpose I'd back this spot in the wilds of Donegal against the kingdom."

"Suppose we were to fail?"

"We can't fail; she goes willingly—or, if not, unwillingly; but failure is out of the question. Your object is, that she should not be Lady Wardle: is it not so?"

"Yes, undoubtedly."

"And to secure this, it is worth while incurring some risk?"

"Certainly; but I should like to know the extent of that risk."

"I'm no lawyer, and can't tell you what class of misdemeanor the law makes it; not to say that the offense is one which differs according to the judge who tries it; but the question to which you will have to look is this: If the girl be satisfied that she is really married, however grieved the old man may be, he will never disturb that fact. He'll shut himself up in his castle, and let his beard grow. A great shock at his age lasts for the remainder of life, and he'll nurse his grief till it lays him in the grave."

"Then there must be a marriage?"

"Some sort of marriage, Irish or Scotch—they have them of all sorts and complexities; but English law smashes them, just to show these poor Celts in what a barbarism they are living, and that even their most solemn contracts are a farce, if not ratified by us here."

"So that I could marry again if I wished it?"

"Of course you could. Why, scores of fellows about town have gone through that sort of humbug. Don't you know Lawson—Jim Lawson? Well, he married his sister's governess before he married Lady Lucy King; and they wanted to make a fuss about it; but it was proved that it was only a lark on his part, though *she* was quite serious about it; and the priest, too, was only in deacon's orders, or it was after canonical hours, and it was all irregular, even to the ring on her finger, which Harry Bushe said was copper, and so the Lords smashed it, as they always do these Irish things, and Jimmy married the other woman."

"I wish there was to be no marriage at all."

"Perhaps you do; perhaps you'd like it better if old Sir Within would have the politeness to die off and give you no further trouble?"

"Ah, if he would!"

"But, as he won't—as he is firmly bent not merely on living longer, but actually taking measures to make himself an unpleasant memory when he does go, I suspect you ought to look sharp to your own interests, Master Dolly. But, after all, I find myself pressing like an advocate in a case where the very utmost I ought to do should be to advise as a friend. You know by this time all I think on this matter. It is for you to follow the advice or reject it. Meanwhile, I mean to get up and have a walk before dinner."

"Just one thing more—as to this Irish fellow you speak of. Would he take all the risks—the legal risks—if he were well paid for it?"

"I think it's very likely he would. I don't think he'll bind himself to go to the drop exactly; but I take it he'll not boggle about a reasonable term of imprisonment, and perhaps 'hard labor.'"

"Will you write for him, then?"

"Not without you are fully determined to employ him. If you pledge me your word to this, I will write."

"If I pay him——"

"No, no, I'll have none of that! These Irish fellows, even in their most question-



able dealings, have a point-of-honor sense about them, that makes them very dangerous men to treat with. Let them only suspect any intention of a slight, and their old Spanish blood, I suppose it is, takes fire at once."

"Let me have a night to think it over."

"Take a week, take a month, if Sir Within will give it to you. You are your own master, and need not ask for time from any one."

"I'd like to reflect well on it. It is too serious a thing to do without good consideration."

"Do so by all means, and begin at once, for I want to ring for my servant and have my bath."

"I wish you'd have a little more patience; one can't decide on a thing of this sort in five minutes."

"Who asks you, my dear fellow?—who presses you? I only beg to be allowed to get up and dress myself, and a not very unreasonable request, seeing that it is close on five o'clock, and you have been here since three."

"Well, I'll do it, come what may of it. I'll do it."

"Take the night to consider it."

"No, I am resolved on it. I'll do it."

"Very well; we are too late for the post to-night, but I'll write to this man after dinner, and by that time you will have fully made up your mind. Now go, or I'll begin to regret the day and the hour I ever thought of giving you counsel."

"You are the most impatient fellow I ever met in my life," said Ladarelle, as he rose reluctantly, and with unwilling steps sauntered out of the room.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### WITH DOCTORS.

ON the evening of the same day, Sir Within sat alone in his grand old dining-room. The servants had withdrawn and left him in solitary splendor, for the massive plate glittered on the sideboard, and the blaze of many wax-lights illuminated the three or four great pictures of Rubens' on the walls, and sparkled over the richly-cut glass that figured amongst the dessert, and there, amidst all, sat that old man—pale, wan, and careworn—to all seeming several years older than one short week ago. A small table at his side was littered with letters and law papers; but though he had gone for them to his study, he never

noticed them, so deeply was his mind bent on other thoughts. At last he looked at his watch, and then arising, he rang the bell.

"Doctor Price is still above-stairs?" said he, in a tone of inquiry.

"Yes, Sir Within."

"And you are quite certain you told him to come to me before he left the Castle?"

"Yes, Sir Within."

"That will do," said he, with a sigh.

Scarcely had the servant closed the door than he re-opened it to announce Doctor Price, a small pock-marked sharp-featured man, with an intensely keen eye, and a thin compressed mouth.

"Well, doctor, well?" said Sir Within, as he came forward towards him with a manner of great anxiety.

"Well, Sir Within Wardle, it is as I suspected, a case of concussion; there's no organic mischief—no lesion."

"What's a lesion?"

"There is no fracture, nor any pressure, so far as I can detect; but there is very grave injury of another sort. There is concussion of the brain."

"And is there danger—be frank, doctor, is there danger?"

"Certainly there is danger; but I would not pronounce it to be imminent danger."

"London has some men of great eminence: which of them all would you select to consult with on such a case? I am certain that you would wish a consultation."

"I have no objection to one, Sir Within, and I would name Sir Henry Morland, as the first man in his profession."

"Then write for him, sir—write at once. Here, in this room, here"—and he opened a door into a small cabinet—"you will find everything you want."

"Certainly; I obey your instructions. I will write immediately; but say in what terms. The young lady is your ward—am I to style her by that title or by her name?"

Sir Within blushed, but it was more in anger than shame; the barest approach to any question of Kate's position jarred upon his feelings like an insinuation, and he fixed a steadfast stare on the doctor before he replied, to assure himself that there was no covert impertinence in the request. Apparently he was satisfied, for in a calm voice he said, "It will be unnecessary to say more than that his presence is requested by Sir Within Wildrington Wardle at Dalradern Castle, and with all the speed possible."

While the doctor was writing, Sir Within walked to and fro with short and hurried

steps, his mouth twitched from time to time, and a nervous motion of his fingers betrayed the immense agitation that possessed him, and against which he struggled hard to subdue all outward signs. Had the occasion been a ministerial conference—had the event been one in which a bold front was called for, to cover a weak position, or affront a coming peril—the old envoy would have borne himself well and bravely; no one could have worn an easier look in a trying emergency, or better baffled the searching that would try to detect a secret misgiving. But where was all this subtlety now? Of what did it avail him? He bent before this blow as humbly as a school-girl, and soon even abandoned the attempt to dissimulate, and wrung his hands in passionate sorrow as he went.

"Will that do, then, Sir Within?" asked the doctor, as he handed him the note he had just written.

"I have not my glass," said he, hurriedly, while his fingers held it; "but of course it is all right. You will instruct me as to the fee, you will do whatever is necessary, and you will, also, I trust, remain here. I wish you not to leave the Castle."

"Impossible, Sir Within. Sir Godfrey Wynne is very ill, and I have a very anxious case at Glasswyd."

"But none of them, I will venture to say, so needful of watching as this. You have just told me how precarious these cases are. Remember, sir, I have some claims upon you."

"The very greatest, Sir Within. But for your magnificent donation, I should never have been physician to the Wrexham Hospital."

"I did not mean that," said Sir Within, blushing scarlet; "I did not allude to that. I spoke of old family claims in your father's time. Dulradern was always his staunch supporter."

"I know it well, sir; but a doctor owes allegiance to the very humblest of those who need him."

"A doctor, I presume, is bound to accord the patient whatever of his time he can pay for?"

"Not to the detriment of others who are ill, Sir Within."

"I know of no other than those under this roof, Doctor Price. I insist, therefore, that you remain here."

"I will return before evening, Sir Within."

"If you leave this now, you need not return."

"Let me entreat you to moderate your wrath, and hear me."

"Sir, I accept no lessons on the mode in which I should comport myself. My education is not, I would hope, yet to be made in this respect. You stay now, or you never re-cross this threshold."

"Then I most respectfully take my leave, sir."

As he moved towards the door, Sir Within placed himself against it.

"This is conduct, sir," cried he passionately, "for which I was in no way prepared. It is the first time in my life I have seen a physician refuse his services to those who had the right to call for, and the ability to requite them. I will not suffer it."

The doctor moved his head mournfully, and muttered a few low and indistinct words.

"No, sir, I want no apologies. I will listen to no excuses!" cried Sir Within, whose cheek was in a flame, and his eye flashing with anger. "I have done my best—my very best—to misunderstand your meaning; I have tried my utmost to persuade myself that this was not intentional slight; but apparently, sir, you insist that I should know it, and feel it."

"You distress me greatly, Sir Within—and all the more, that I really cannot follow you in what you imply."

"I never imply, sir—I declare—I assert!" and his voice was now shrill with passion.

"It is no insinuation I make—it is an open declaration—that it is what scandalous tongues have dared to allege against this young lady's residence under my roof is the sole pretext you have to refuse your services here. Don't deny it, sir; I read it in your confusion half an hour ago. You intend to build a character for high morality on this event. You know this country better than I do, and you are a better judge how far your strict virtue will be remunerative; or perhaps you fancy that I will condescend to an explanation with you."

"No, no, Sir Within. You are too unjust—quite too unjust in all this."

The old baronet never heard the interruption, but went on:—

"But, sir, if I have scorned to make explanations to the first gentry of my neighborhood, it is not likely I will descend to them for the satisfaction of a village doctor. Go, sir—go! but at your peril one word to gratify the slanderous temper of your clients; for, if I hear that you have dared to insinuate, however faintly—"

The doctor did not wait for him to finish, but hurried down the stairs, crossed the hall, and hastened to the stable-yard; and in a very few minutes the sharp sound of his horse's feet on the ground declared that he was off at speed.



Sir Within had sunk into the chair beside the door from which the doctor had just issued, powerless and overcome. The outburst of passion, what had been but one exit of an overwhelming sorrow, had run its course, and now he sat there wretched and forlorn. Of his late altercation he remembered positively nothing. Something had occurred—something that excited and agitated him. The doctor had said, or somebody had said, he knew not what; but it shadowed forth a sort of reflection on him—for Heaven knows what; and he wiped the cold perspiration from his brow, and tried to collect himself. At last he arose and rang the bell.

“Will you tell Doctor Price I should like to speak to him,” said he, in his usual bland tone.

“The doctor is gone, Sir Within; he left the Castle half an hour ago.”

He nodded, and the servant retired. After a little while he rang again.

“Let Doctor Price know I wish to see him before he goes away,” said he, in a faint voice.

“The doctor left the Castle some time back, Sir Within,” said the man, in some astonishment.

“Ah!—very true—I remember; that will do.”

Once more alone, he tried to remember what had just occurred—but he could not; and, with weary steps, he mounted the stairs slowly towards the corridor where the sick chamber stood.

“She is sleeping, Sir Within,” said the nurse, who sat outside the door to enforce silence—“sleeping, but dreaming and wandering on continually; and such strange things, too, she says.”

“What does she talk of, nurse?” said he, scarcely conscious of what he asked.

“She be talking, sir, of being a-gathering seaweed on the rocks, and crying out to some one to take care—that the tide is gaining fast. ‘It will soon be on us!’ she cries every moment; ‘make haste, Patsey, or we’ll lose it all!’ And then she’ll wring her hair, as if there was water in it, and tie it up short afterwards on the back of her head. I never see a young lady go on the same way before!”

“Wandering—mere wandering,” said Sir Within, faintly.

“Of course it be, Sir Within; but ain’t it a strange sort of wandering for one bred and brought up as she was?”

“When people rave, they rave,” said Sir Within curtly.

“Yes, sir, so they does; but people born to every comfort and the like seldom talks

of going out to look for firewood, or to bring home the goats from the mountains; and that poor sweet dear there won’t think of anything else.”

“You are a fool, ma’am, or you would never think of attaching importance to what a patient raves about in a fever. I wonder Doctor Price could not have found a more competent person.” And with this rebuke he retraced his steps, and sought his own room.

As he sat there, a servant entered with a note Doctor Price’s servant had just brought. He tore it open impatiently, and read:—

“DEAR SIR—I have accidentally heard that Sir Henry Morland will be at Wrexham this evening. If it be your wish to see him at Dalradern, pray inform me by the bearer.

“Very respectfully your servant,

“PRITCHARD PRICE.”

Sir Within at once addressed a most curt and conciliatory note to Doctor Price, requesting to see him and his colleague as soon as would suit his convenience. That there was something for which an apology was needed, he knew; but what it was, how it occurred, or why it occurred, was totally beyond him; his note, however, was polite in every respect, and its conclusion actually friendly. Doctor Price, however, did not make his appearance, but towards midnight a post-chaise drove into the courtyard, and the great town physician entered the castle. He was a short, stout-built, heavy-browed man, stern, and almost peremptory in his manner, reserving all his mind for his patient, and scarcely condescending to notice the friends of the sick person.

“Who is it?” asked he bluntly of Sir Within, as the old envoy politely handed him a chair.

“My ward, Sir Henry, a young lady not fully seventeen.”

“Humph! I did not know you were married.”

“I am not married, sir. I was not aware that we were discussing that question.”

“Let me speak with your sister, then?”

“I have no sister, sir.”

“I don’t care what the relative is—cousin, aunt, grandmother—if not too old.”

“I repeat, sir, I have no female relative here to whom I can refer you. I shall send for my housekeeper, however, who is a most intelligent person;” and he rang the bell hurriedly.

“And this ward—strange thing a ward

in the house of an unmarried man—what's her name?"

"Miss O'Hara."

"O'Hara! O'Hara! One of the Antrim family?"

"No, sir; no connection even."

"Oh, this is the housekeeper! Show me your patient, and tell me about the case as we go along;" and abruptly returning Sir Within's salutation, he left the room and proceeded up-stairs. "Yes, yes," he muttered, as the housekeeper recounted the symptoms—"yes, I know all that; but I want to hear how it began. Was there any shock—any accident? None? Mere fatigue—a long ride—over-exertion—a very hot day! Yes, yes, quite common—answers at first collectively, and then goes off raving—that's enough!"

The rough, ungracious man, abrupt of speech, and actually rude in manner, became gentle as a woman as he stole up to the bedside and laid his hand on the hot and burning forehead. She raised her hand, tremulous with fever, and placed it upon his, and said: "Yes, the pain is there!"

"Let us see if we cannot cure it," said he softly, as he sat down beside the bed.

She turned her large lustrous eyes upon him—brightened as they were in the glow of fever—and stared at him steadfastly and long. He was counting her pulse, and she watched his lips as they faintly stirred, as though she could read her fate in their motion.

"Well?" cried she—"well?"

"Well, you are about to get better, my dear child; the fever is decreasing, and your head freer."

"Yes," said she, hurriedly, "the horrid fancies that torment me are passing away, and I can think now. Who are you?" asked she, after a pause.

"I am your doctor."

"But your name? I never saw you before."

"I know that! This is my first visit to you. My name is Morland."

"Morland—Morland—I have read that name in the newspapers, Sir William, or Sir something."

"Sir Henry Morland."

"Physician to the king, I declare," said she, raising herself on one arm to look at him; "and you have come here all this way to see me!"

"And very well worth my while it was. It is not every day I chance upon so interesting a patient."

"How kind you are—how pleasant your voice is! it soothes me to listen to it."

"But we must not talk any more now, my child."

"Oh yes, let us talk, it is so delightful; tell me of all the fine people you see daily. Do you speak to them as kindly as to me, or, are you more reserved and distant? Do tell me."

"I will tell you all about these things another time, when it will be safer to hear them. You must have perfect rest and quiet now."

"It would quiet me far more to listen to you than to let me think on and on, as I have been doing. You are going away already!"

"I cannot help it, my child; I have many others waiting for me to see them."

"But you wouldn't hurry away from me in this fashion if I were a great person?"

"Pardon me; you are a very great person to me."

"How so? Tell me what you mean; do tell me," cried she; and she started up and caught his hand with both her own. "I must know what that means."

"Listen to me, my child," and he spoke in a graver, almost in a stern, manner, "I can only do the work of my daily life by being very despotic. I have replied to more questions of yours now, than I should have answered to a royal highness. Good-bye."

"Good-bye!" said she, and pressed his hand to her hot lips. "Good-bye; don't forget me."

As the doctor, followed by Mrs. Simcox, left the room, he stood for a moment in the corridor, deep in thought. "Her mind is collected now," said he, at last; "there is only excitement; there is no aberration."

"She has those intervals every now and then, sir, and she'll speak as sensibly as any one; and, indeed, it's hard to say when she is not talking rational, for she is odd and strange when she is well."

"Yes, I see that; she is no ordinary person."

"And no later than last night, sir, when we imagined that she was talking a mere gibberish of her own, our second housemaid, that was in the room, went over and answered her, and there they talked together for more than a quarter of an hour, sir; and I asked Molly what it was, and she said it was Irish. So, when the girl came into the room this morning, I told her to talk it again; but—would you believe it, sir?—our young lady began to laugh, and asked what the creature meant by that nonsense. She did not know one word, sir, Molly was saying any more than ourselves."

The doctor nodded assentingly, as though such a case was familiar to him, and passed



on. At the foot of the stairs he found Sir Within waiting for him.

"I will talk to Price," said Sir Henry; "I shall see him to-night, and to-morrow I will take another opportunity of seeing her before I return to town."

"Are you hopeful as to the result?" asked Sir Within, with much anxiety in his look.

"She has youth in her favor," said he, as he buttoned up his overcoat.

"And you think well of her case, then?"

"I did not say so, sir: I don't think any man would go so far: for it will be tedious, and consequently precarious. And there are now and then recoveries that can scarcely be called benefits. How many miles do you call it to Wrexham?"

"You speak of the effects upon the brain—the permanent effects?" said Sir Within, with trembling eagerness.

"Brain or membranes, I don't think it signifies much which. And Wrexham—how far is it?"

"Your postboy will tell you, sir; this case is of much more moment to me."

Sir Henry turned a full steady look on the old envoy, as though he were contemplating an order of being wholly new and strange to him; and then turning to the housekeeper, who still stood at his side, said: "Stop the ice—apply mere cold water; don't talk to her, and no more Irish—take care of that—no more Irish." Good-night, Sir Within;" and stepping hastily down the steps, he entered his carriage and drove away.

"What did he mean by that last direction, no more Irish, Mrs. Simeox?" asked Sir Within.

"La, sir, it was about a thing that happened last night;" and she recounted the incident, at somewhat greater length than we have given it.

"Send the girl to me," said Sir Within, as she finished; "let me speak to her in the library."

The interview lasted about half an hour, and at the end of it Molly was seen to hasten to her room, pack her clothes, and descend to the stable-yard where a conveyance was in waiting for her.

"This is a hasty way to leave us, Molly," said one of her fellow-servants, as she mounted the cart.

"It's my mother that was sick, and sent for me," said the girl. "Drive on," added she to the groom, for Sir Within was leaning on the window-sill overhead, and watching the scene.

Sir Henry arrived the next morning to find Kate worse than he had left her; and,

though greatly pressed for time, he remained nigh an hour in consultation with Doctor Price, who had accompanied him. There was more fever, and far more of excitement than on the day before, and she talked incessantly to herself, occasionally giving way to bursts of laughter.

"How grave you both look this morning," said she, with a derisive smile, as they arose to leave her bedside. "I think I can guess what's passing in your mind." Morland shook his head in dissent, and she went on: "Of course you would be reluctant to say it, but the simple truth is, doctor, you think me very, very ill."

"So far, you are right," said he, gently.

"Yes, but you suspect more. You believe that I am dying."

"You have many things in your favor, my dear child. You have youth, you have strength, and you have what is sometimes worth them both—good courage."

"You do me justice, doctor, I have plenty of courage, more even than you know of; and I have another thing," added she, while her eyes flashed wildly and her lip shook with agitation—"I have no great desire to live!"

"Come, come, young lady," broke in Price, "it is not at your age that one is weary of the world."

"I never said I was," cried she, impatiently; and then, turning from him, as though he were not one to understand her aright, she addressed the other. "May I speak to you alone?"

"Certainly; my friend here will have no objection, I'm sure."

"None whatever," said Doctor Price, as he moved towards the door.

"And you, Simeox, you must go too; and take Nelly with you."

"La, miss——"

"Do as you are told," said the doctor, peremptorily.

"And now we are alone, child," said he, as, having closed the door, he returned to the bedside.

"Sit down, sit there," said she, pointing to the chair, "and wait a moment till I collect myself. I don't like that man, his voice jars on me—there is so much in a voice. Yours, for instance, soothes me." He smiled kindly on her, and she continued: "I was not always so captious, but illness makes one very fretful. Ain't it so?"

"Naturally."

"I must be very ill, then, if irritability be the measure. Do you know?"—and here she spoke with immense rapidity, and with a jarring vibration in her voice—"do you

know there are times, mere moments, in which it needs all my self-control not to scream aloud? Yes. I feel as though I would give life itself to cry out—to fling this weary load off my poor heart, and tell all—all!”

“You must be calm, young lady, or I shall think I have done amiss in permitting this interview.”

“Don’t call me young lady. The other, that man I dislike, called me young lady. You must call me Kate.” He only smiled, as she took his hand in her own burning hand, and said, in a coaxing, caressing tone, “Say Kate—Kate!”

“I am very proud that you let me call you Kate.”

“Yes, that’s it; and you say it softly, as it should be spoken. It’s a pretty name, is it not? No, don’t look on me pitifully. If it be even as you fear, there is no cause for sorrow. Answer me one thing,” said she, half sternly, “but answer truly. Shall I die of this? There, there! I do not want any more. You think I shall; but I know better. Ay, doctor, there’s a keener instinct, stronger than all your skill, and it tells me I have years and years before me; years of such trouble, too, it would be a mercy I were taken now!”

“Calm yourself, my child. I like your self-confidence; but be calm.”

“And am I not calm? Count my pulse,” and she bared her arm and held it towards him. “It is a pretty arm? then say so, frankly. What harm can flattery do me now?”

“I must leave you, my dear child. I have a long journey before me, and much hard work at the end of it. I am sorry, very sorry, to go. Don’t shake your head, Kate, it is the simple truth.”

“Then why not stay?”

“I have told you, child, that many others are expecting me.”

“Yes, great people, titled people, people of condition, as they are called; as if we, too, had not our condition. Don’t you hate that word? Don’t you hate every vulgar sneer at the low-born?”

“I like your generosity——”

“My generosity!” cried she, with a wild hysteric laugh——“my generosity! Oh, yes; my generosity has a touch of genius in it. It reveals to me the unseen, the untasted! For, what can I know of such people?”

Her brows were knitted fast as she uttered the last words, and her lips were drawn tight, as though she spoke under the pressure of some intense constraint.

“There, there!” said he, rising. “I knew all this talking was injurious, and I am

much to blame for having permitted it.”

“And you *are* going?”

“I must; I have no choice in the matter.”

“Well, give me a minute more. Sit down again, and I will not detain you more than a minute or two. When I asked to speak with you alone, doctor, it was to beg of you to make my will. You need not be afraid that it will take long. I have only one legacy and one heir. Now mind what I shall say to you. It may happen—I myself think it will happen—that I shall get better of this fever. Much of my raving—what they call my raving—was such wandering as passes through my head any day; so that it may easily be I have never been so ill as I seemed to be, and all the wonderful stories Mrs. Simeox told you in the window last night—my strange fancies about my bare feet bleeding with the sharp stones—no matter, fact or fancy, it was in my head before this. You are attending to me?”

“I am.”

“I was afraid you thought that this explanation was only ‘wandering’ of another sort; but I see you do not. I see you follow me.”

He nodded.

“If, however, *your* skill be better than my second-sight—if I call it so—I have a task for you to do. When it shall be all over, before I am buried, you will take care—but wait, let us do it regularly.” She raised herself on one arm as she spoke, and with the other hand she pointed to a small writing-table at the farther part of the room. “Open that desk, and take out an envelope. It ought to be black-edged for the occasion,” said she, with a sad smile, “but I don’t think it matters much. Yes, that one will do very well. Write now the address I shall give you: ‘Mr. Peter Malone.’ Show it to me—is it large and plain? No; take another. It must be clear, bold writing. I think I ought to write it myself—of course I ought, and I will.”

“All this excitement is wrong.”

“Then don’t prolong it. Give me the pen, and that book to write on. I declare it is *you* that are nervous, doctor. What makes your hand shake?”

“If I am nervous, it is because I feel much self-reproach for all this—this——”

“This—what?” asked she, smiling. “Do give it a name. I am sure you are not angry at my detaining you. You are too kind and too considerate to reckon minutes against one who may have so few of them; and then, as to this task I impose on you,” and she smiled again, “do confess you never



heard of so short a will. There, it is all written now. Read it out, that I may see if it be legible."

"Mr. Peter Malone, to the care of Mr. T. O'Rorke, Vinegar Hill, Cush-ma-Creena, Ireland."

"Your pronunciation is not quite faultless, doctor; but, luckily, you will not be the postman. Mind, now, this is to be posted so soon as all is over. No, no—not as it is. I have not yet enclosed my legacy. Take that scissors you see yonder. Open the shutter—a little more still—yes, that will do. Now come here. Cut off the longest and the brightest lock you can find here," and she unbound her golden hair, and sent it floating in heavy masses over her shoulders and her back, and even her face. "Don't spare it. I mean my last legacy to be munificent. There!" said she, taking the long tress from his fingers, "how soft and silky it is—see, too, if it has not that golden radiance the Venetian painters raved about! The old man to whom that envelope is addressed once asked me to give him a lock of my hair; he begged for it very eagerly, as a parting gift, and I refused him. I can give it now—yes, I can give it now. Ask me nothing—I will tell nothing. I thought to have told you all—the whole long, dreary story—but I cannot. There, you are impatient to be away. I release you; only remember, that if I do not die you are to return that paper to me. Do you understand me?"

"Perfectly, and will obey you to the letter, my dear child, if you will not give me this tress as my fee for having cured you. Perhaps I have as good a claim to it as that other to whom you would bequeath it."

"No, no, no!" cried she, impetuously. "You never cared for me, you never could care for me, as he does; but keep it if you will. Good-bye, good-bye! One instant more. There is another old man to whom I would send a message."

"Your guardian?"

A scornful curl of her lip and an impatient gesture of her head stopped him.

"Tell Sir Within that I was very grateful to him. He did much to make my life a very happy one, and yet I am so glad to leave it! Speak kindly to him, and comfort him; tell him, if you will, that if he would continue to love me, it were best I should die; for if I were to live, doctor"—and here her eyes grew full and wide, and her gaze steadfast—"if I were to live, I should lose that love."

The wild look she gave, the strange vibration of her voice, and her words

themselves, warned the doctor that a period of excitement was approaching, and he drew the curtain and moved away.

## CHAPTER XL.

### A SUDDEN REVERSE.

"You see it is as well I acted with more forethought, and did not send for our Irish friend," said Grenfell, as he sat at breakfast with Ladrelle. "We shall probably not want him."

"I suspect not," said the other; "the last news of her was unfavorable."

Grenfell stole a look at the speaker, and, quick as the glance was, it bespoke a mingled aversion and contempt. The men who have arrived at middle age, either to form a poor opinion of their fellows, or to feign it—it is hard exactly to say which—feel a sort of detestation for younger men who entertain the same sentiments. Whether it be that to have reached that cynicism has cost years of patient study and endurance, and that they are indignant at the pretension that would assume to have acquired the knowledge without the labor; or that, and this more probable, they do not fully trust their own heartlessness—whatever the cause, I can answer for the effect; and that cold, ungenial man now looked upon his younger companion with a sense of little less than disgust.

"So that her death would not shock you?" said Grenfell, as he stirred his tea, without looking up.

"I don't exactly say that. She's a fine girl, young, and very good-looking."

"Beautiful."

"Well, beautiful, if you like, though I'll show scores just as handsome any day in Rotten Row. But the question is, Does she, or does she not, stand between me and a fine estate? You yourself thought that opinion of Palmer's went against me."

"No doubt of it. Palmer concurs with the Attorney-General; indeed, he seems astonished that any other view was ever taken, as he says, 'No provision of a will can override the law.'"

"Which means, that the old cove may marry; and his heir, if he have one, may inherit the property?"

"Just so."

"And then, in the face of that, you ask me if her life is of such consequence to me?"

"No; I asked if her death would shock you."

"I don't well know what you mean by being shocked! If there was a suspicion abroad that I had poisoned her, to get her out of the way, then perhaps I might be shocked."

"Shocked at the imputation, not the consequences?"

"I can't split hairs—I never could. If you want subtle distinctions and fine-drawn differences, you must try elsewhere. What I want to say is simply this: I have no ill-will to the girl; I wish no harm to her; but I'd rather she wasn't *there*."

"By *there*, you mean alive?"

"Well, if there was no other alternative—yes, I do mean that. I'm certain old Wardle would never look out for another, and the great probability is, he'd not trouble us much longer; and, as Tom Scott says, by 'nobbling' one horse you get rid of the whole stable. You look greatly disgusted: are you horrified at my wickedness, Grenfell?"

"No," said he, slowly. "I have met a fair number of young fellows like you, and who fancied that to know life they must begin at the lowest of it; the great misfortune was that they never emerged from it after."

"That's severe, I take it," said Ladarelle, as he lighted a cigarette and began to smoke.

"Feigning virtue will never make a saint," said Grenfell, rising from the table; "but mock wickedness will always end by making a man a rascal!" He left the room as he spoke, and sauntered out to the lawn; and now Ladarelle began to commune with himself—what notice he ought to take, if any, of these words. Were they to be considered as a moral sentiment of general application, or were they addressed specially to himself? The context favored this latter supposition; but then he uttered them as a great truth; he had a trick of that sort of "preaching," and the moment the word preaching crossed him his anger was dispelled, for who minded preaching? Who was ever the better or the worse for it? Who ever deemed its denunciations personal?

The entrance of his man, Mr. Fisk, cut short his reflections, for he had sent him over to Dalradern, with his compliments, to ask after Mademoiselle O'Hara.

"Sir Within's respects, sir; the young lady is better; passed a good night, and seems much refreshed."

"Here's news, Grenfell," cried Ladarelle,

opening the window, and calling out to Grenfell—"here's news; she has had a good night, and is better."

Grenfell, however, had just received his letters from the post, and was already too deeply engrossed by one of them to mind him.

"I say, come here, and listen to the bulletin," cried Ladarelle again; but Grenfell, without deigning the slightest notice to his words, thrust his letters into his pocket and walked hastily away.

The letter he had opened was from Vyncr, and even in the first few lines had so far engaged his interest, that, to read it undisturbed, he set out to gain a little summer-house on a small island—a spot to which Ladarelle could not follow, as there was but one boat on the lake.

Having reached his sanctuary, he took forth the epistle, which, from Vyncr, was an unusually long one, and began to read. It is not necessary that I should ask the reader's attention to the whole of it. It opened by an apology for not having written before:—

"I am ashamed to think, my dear Grenfell, how many of your questions remain unanswered; but as the Cardinal's private secretary wrote to express the grief his Eminence felt at being obliged to die instead of dine out, so I must ask your patience for not replying to you, as I was occupied in being ruined. It is a big word, George, but not too big for the fact. When I gave up politics, for want of something to do, I took up speculation. A very clever rascal—I only found out the rascality later—with whom I made acquaintance at Genoa, induced me to make some railroad ventures, which all turned out successes. From these he led me on to others of a larger kind in Sardinia, and ultimately in Morocco. A great London banking firm was associated with the enterprise, which, of course, gave the air of stability to the operations, and as there was nothing unfair—nothing gambling in the scheme—nothing, in fact, that passed the limits of legitimate commercial enterprise, at the same time that there was everything to interest and amuse, I entered into it with all that ardor for which more than once your prudent temperament has rebuked me. I have not patience to go over the story; besides that the catastrophe tells it all. The original tempter—his name is Gennet—has fled, the great bankers have failed, and I am—I have ascertained—engaged to the full amount of all I have in the world—that is, nothing remains to us but my wife's settlement to live on. A great blow this; I am stagger-



ing under it still. It was precisely the sort of misfortune I had thought myself exempt from, because I never cared much about money-getting; I was richer than I really needed to be; but, as the Spanish proverb says, 'The devil never goes out to fish with only one sort of bait in his boat.' I imagined I was going to be a great philanthropist. If I was to get lead from the Moors, I was to give them civilization, culture, Heaven knows what cravings after good things here and hereafter. Don't laugh, George; I give you my word of honor I believed it. Mr. Ridley Gennet was a great artist, and from the hour he waved his wand over me, I never really awoke, 'till I was beggared.' Now, I do believe that you yourself, with all the craft you boast of, would not have come scathless out of his hands. These fellows are consummately clever, and in nothing more than in the quick reading of the characters they are placed in contact with. You can answer for it that I never was a gambler. I have played, it is true; but with no zest, no passion for play. That man, however, knew more of me than I did of myself; he detected a sort of combative spirit in my nature, which gives results very much like the love of play. It prompts to a rash self-confidence and a dogged resolution not to be beaten—no matter how heavy the odds against one. I say, he saw this, and he determined to make use of it. There was a time at which, at the loss of about twenty-eight or thirty thousand pounds, I might have freed myself of every liability; and, indeed, I was more than half inclined to do it; but the devil, in this fellow's shape, hinted something about being poor-spirited and craven-hearted; said something about men who bore reverses ill, and only spread canvas when the wind was all astern; and that, in fact, the people who carried the day in life were exactly those who never would accept defeat. All he said met a ready concurrence from my own heart, and in I went after my thirty thousand, which soon became eighty. Even then I might have escaped—a heavy loser, of course, but not crushed—but he persuaded me the concern was the finest enterprise in Europe, if emancipated from the influence of two powerful shareholders—men who, since they had joined us, had gone deeply into other speculations, whose prospects would be severely damaged by our success. One of these was La Marque, the Parisian banker, and a great promoter of the 'Credit Mobilier'; the other an English contractor, whose name I may mention one of these days. They were, he said, to be

bought out, and then I should stand the representative of four-sixths of the whole scheme. It reads like infatuation now that I go calmly over it; but I acceded. I commissioned Gennet to treat with these gentlemen, and gave him blank bills for the sums. For a while all seemed to go on admirably. La Marque himself wrote to me; he owned that his other engagements had not left him at liberty to develop the resources of our company to their full extent, and confessed that there were certain changes in the management that must lead to great advantage. With, however, what I thought at the time a most scrupulous honor—though I have come to regard it differently—he hinted to me that while Mr. G.'s position in the 'world of affairs' was above all reproach, the fact of his conducting a transaction with blank acceptances was totally irregular and unbusiness-like; and he begged that I would give him a regular assurance, in a form which he enclosed, that I authenticated G.'s position, and held myself responsible, not merely commercially, but as a man of honor, for such engagements as he should contract in my name. I made a few trifling alterations in the wording of this document, and sent it back with my signature. On the third day after, the London firm smashed, and on the evening that brought the news, G. bolted, and has not since been heard of.

"Since then every post from England tells me of the steps at which my ruin advances. M'Kinlay, overwhelmed, I think, by the calamity, acts with less than his usual skill and cleverness, and continues to insist that I must repudiate my pledge to La Marque, whom he calls a confederate of G.'s; and, indeed, declares that if we could but secure that fellow's person, we should save a large remnant of the property. These are *his* views, they are not *mine*. I cannot consent to remedy my folly at the cost of my character; and though I have agreed to the despatch of detectives to hunt Gennet, I will not, by any act, dishonor my signature.

"It is at this stage we are now arrived. Whether I am to be drowned by six inches over my head, or six fathoms, is not, I opine, a matter of much consequence. Lady Vyner knows it all, and bears it—as I knew she would—nobly. Her sister, too, has shown a fine spirit. Of course, we have kept so much as we can of the calamity from Mrs. Courtenay; but she is more cast down than any of us. As for Ada, she sustains us all. I declare I never knew her before; and if it were not that

the misfortune is to outlive me, I'd say it was worth being ruined to discover the boundless wealth of that dear girl's heart.

"I could fill pages with little traits of her thoughtful affection, evincing a nature, too, that actually seemed to need an opportunity to show it was made for higher and better things than to float along in an existence of indulgence.

"You are impatient to hear how practical we can be. Well, you shall. We have given up our grand palazzo, and retired to a little place about twenty miles off, near Chiavari, where we found a small house to suit us. We have sent off all the servants but three. I doubt if we shall keep old Morris; but it would break his heart to discharge him with the others. I have despatched my horses to be sold at Turin. The yacht is already disposed of. Not bad this in four days, besides writing about a hundred and fifty letters, and giving solemn audience to Mr. Pengrove, of the detective force, come out specially to get from me a detailed description of G.'s person, size, dress, accent and manner. I vow, till I had the happiness of this gentleman's acquaintance, I never knew by how many traits a human creature could stamp his identity; and the way in which he pushed his inquiries, as to matters utterly beyond the realms of all the disguises in use, perfectly amazed me.

"It was not, perhaps, a very acute question of mine, but it dropped from me half unawares. I asked whether he thought G. had fled to America or Australia? He replied, 'No, sir; he never had any dealings in those parts. When men bolt, they always follow out some previously-formed train of circumstances; he'll be somewhere on the African coast—I mean to try Tunis first.'

"You know now, my dear George, more than I really meant to inflict on you of our sad story; but I was, in a measure, forced into some details. First of all, one's friends ought to be in a position to contradict false rumors, and, I take it, I shall have my share of them; and, secondly, you may be disturbed in your present tenure, for the Cottage as well as the Castle goes to the creditors.

"There is, however, a small business matter in which I must have more than your advice—I want your assistance. You may remember that when, on our Irish tour—"

There comes here a sudden stop in the epistle, but, in a hurried and tremulous hand, it was continued in this wise:

"Another great misfortune! Poor

Luttrell's boy is drowned. My wife has just brought me the news. A despatch boat of the Italian navy has picked up at sea an English sailor on a spar, the last of the crew of the American barque *Squash*, commanded by a Captain Dodge. They were attacked by pirates when becalmed off the Riff coast, and the Yankee, rather than surrender, blew up the ship. This man remembers nothing beyond his having leaped overboard when he saw the captain make for the magazine. He was, indeed, insensible when picked up, and even yet his mind wanders at times. So far as his memory would serve he has given the names of the crew, and Luttrell's was amongst them. He said, too, that he saw Luttrell leaning against the tiller-wheel, with his arms folded, and looking quite calm, a moment or two before he jumped over. The Italian steamer returned to the place and cruised for an entire day, in the hope of saving some others, but none were met with, and there is no doubt now that all have perished. I thought only an hour ago that there were few in the world as unfortunate as myself; but what is my loss compared to poor Luttrell's? If I could possibly leave home now, it would be to go over to Ireland and see him. What is to be done? Can you suggest how the tidings could be best broken to him? Would you undertake the charge yourself? If not, M'Kinlay must do it, though, for every reason, I prefer you. I know, my dear Grenfell, that you shrink from painful tasks, but it is *my* load that you will bear on this occasion, and it will strengthen you to remember that you are helping a friend in his great hour of need.

"If you are not able to go, and if M'Kinlay should also be unable, forward the enclosed note to Luttrell.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I have just seen Martin the sailor. He has told us much about young Luttrell, who seems to have been actually beloved on board the ship; his courage, his daring, his coolness, and his unfailing high spirits, made him the idol of the crew; and this fellow declares that, if Luttrell's advice had been listened to, the ship might have been saved; but the American lost his head; and, swearing that the pirates should never have a timber of her, rushed below with a port-fire, and blew her up.

"I am ashamed to send off all the selfish details that fill the first part of this letter. In the presence of such a calamity as poor Luttrell's *my* sorrows are unworthy and contemptible; but who knows when I could



have the time or the temper to go over my dreary story again? And so you shall have it as it is.

"I am not able to read over again what I have written, so that I am not sure whether I have answered all your questions. You will, I am sure, however, forgive me much at such a season; for, though I had screwed up my courage to meet my own disasters, I had no reserve of pluck to sustain me against this sad blow of Luttrell's.

"Do not refuse me, George, this service; believe me, the poor fellow is worthy of all the kindness you can show him. More than ever do I feel the wrong that we have done him, since every misfortune of his life has sprung from it.

"I must finish to catch the post. I enclose you a copy of the deposition of the seaman made before the consul at Genoa, and an extract from the log of *St. Genaro*, the despatch-boat. If you do go—indeed, in any case—write to me at once, and believe me, meanwhile,

"Your faithful friend,  
"GERVAIS VYNER."

"A hearty letter from Lord B. has just come. He says he has just heard of my smash, and offers me my choice of something at home, or in the colonies. Time enough to think of this; for the present, we shall have to live on about what my guardian allowed me at Christchurch. Address, La Boschetta, Chiavari."

With much attention, Grenfell read this letter to the end, and then re-read it, pondering over certain parts as he went. He was certainly grieved as much as he could well be for any misfortune not his own. He liked Vyner as well as it was in his nature to like any one; not, indeed, for his fine and generous qualities, his manliness, and his rectitude—he liked him simply because Vyner had always stood by *him*. Vyner had sustained him in a set, which, but for such backing, would not have accepted him. Every real step he had made in life had been through Vyner's assistance; and he well knew that Vyner's fall would extend its influence to himself.

Then came other thoughts: "He should have to leave the Cottage, where he had hoped to have remained for the cock shooting at least, perhaps a little longer; for this same Welsh life was a great economy. He was living for 'half nothing'; no rent, no servants to pay; horses, a fine garden, a capital cellar, all at his disposal. What, in the name of all foolishness, could make a

man with double what he could spend, go and squander the whole in rotten speculations? He says he did not want to be richer! What *did* he want, then? How can men tell such lies to their own hearts? Of course, he intended to be a Rothschild. It was some cursed thirsting after enormous wealth—wealth, that was to be expressed by figures on paper—not felt, not enjoyed, not lived up to; *that* was the whole sum and substance of the temptation. Why not have the honesty to say so? As for Luttrell, I only wonder how he can think of *him* at such a time. I imagine if I were to awake some fine morning to hear I was a beggar, I should take all the other calamities of the world with a marvelous philosophy. It's a bore to be drowned, particularly if there was no necessity for it; but the young fellow had the worst of it; and after all, I don't see that he had a great deal to live for. The island that formed his patrimony would certainly never have seduced *me* into any inordinate desire to prolong existence. Perhaps I must go there. It is a great annoyance. I hate the journey, and I hate the duty; but to refuse would, in all probability, offend Vyner. It is just the time men are unreasonably thin-skinned, fancying that all the world has turned its back on them, because they have sent off their French cook. Vulgar nonsense! Perhaps Vyner would not take that view; but his women would, I'm certain!"

Now, Mr. Grenfell knew nothing whatever of "the women" in question, and that was the precise reason that he included them in his spiteful censure.

"And then to fancy that his money-seeking was philanthropy! Was there ever delusion like it? Your virtuous people have such a habit of self-esteem; they actually believe the thing must be right, because they do it."

Grumbling sorely over that "Irish journey," he sauntered back to the house, in the porch of which Ladarelle was standing, with an open letter in his hand.

"I say," cried he, "here's a go! The house of Fletcher and Davis, one of the oldest in London, smashed!"

"I know it," said Grenfell, dryly.

"Then you know, perhaps, how your friend, Sir Gervais Vyner, has let them in for nigh a quarter of a million?"

"I know more; for I know that *you* know nothing of the matter; but to turn to something that concerns ourselves. I must start by the mail train to-night for Holyhead."

"Which means, that I must evacuate my

quarters. I must say, you give your tenants short notice to quit."

"Stay, by all means. All I have to say is, that I cannot keep you company. Rickards will take excellent care of you till I come back."

"Which will be——?"

"I can't name the day; but I hope it will be an early one."

"A mysterious journey—eh?"

"No; but one which it is not at all necessary to take an opinion upon."

"By the way, you wrote the letter to that Irish fellow the other evening—what did you do with it?"

"It is on the writing-table."

"And I suppose I may make use of it, if I need it?"

"Yes; it's a matter that other things have driven out of my head; but the letter is yours, if you wish."

"And you will stand by me, I hope, if I get into a scrape?"

"Don't count on me. I'm a capricious fellow, and whenever a thing does not come off at once, I never can vouch for the spirit in which I may resume it."

"That's hearty, at all events!"

"No; but it is unmistakable. Rickards, hurry the cook, if he will let you, and order the carriage for eight o'clock."

"And posters for me at Dalradern at the same hour," said Ladarelle. "Grog is worth a score of such fellows!" muttered he below his breath, as he strolled to his room. "Grog would never strike out a plan, and leave a man in the lurch afterwards."

When they met at dinner, Grenfell took care that the conversation should be as general as possible, never by a chance alluding to any subject of personal interest to either of them; and, as the clock struck eight, and he heard the tramp of the horses on the gravel, he arose and said:

"Don't forget to say all sorts of things to Sir Within for me, and to mademoiselle, too, when she is visible. Good-bye, and *'bonne chance!'*"

"Good-bye! I wish I could have had a few words with you before you started. I wish you would have told me something more definite about the plan. I wish——" What he continued to wish is not on record, for once more Grenfell uttered his good-bye, and the next moment he was gone.

## CHAPTER XLI.

### THE DARK TIDINGS.

It was a dull, lowering October day, sky and sea alike lead-colored, when the boat

that bore Grenfell rounded the southern point of Arran, and opened a view of the island in all its extent. His first visit there had not left any favorable impressions of the place, though then he saw it in sunshine, warm-tinted and softened; now all was hard, bleak, and cold, and the ruined Abbey stood out amongst the leafless trees, like the ghost of a civilization long dead and buried.

"There he is himself, sir," said the steersman to Grenfell, as he pointed to a lone rock on the extreme point of a promontory. "You'd think he was paid for sitting there, to watch all the vessels that go north about to America. He can see every craft, big and little, from Belmullet to Craig's Creek."

"And does he stay there in bad weather?"

"I never missed him any day I came by, no matter how hard it blew."

"It's a dreary look-out."

"Indeed it is, your honor! more by token, when a man has a comfortable house and a good fire to sit at, as Mr. Luttrell has, if he liked it."

"Perhaps he thinks it less lonely to sit there than to mope over his hearth by himself. He lives all alone, I believe?"

"He does, sir; and it's what he likes best. I took a party of gentlemen over from Westport last summer; they wanted to see the curiosities of the place, and look at the old Abbey, and they sent me up with a civil message, to say what they came for and who they were—one of them was a lord—and what d'ye think, sir?" instead of being glad to see the face of a Christian, and having a bit of chat over what was doing beyond there, he says to me, 'Barny Moore,' says he, 'you want to make a trade,' says he, 'of showing me like a wild baste; but I know your landlord, Mr. Creagh, and as sure as my name's John Luttrell,' says he, 'I'll have you turned out of your holding; so just take your friends and yourself off the way you came!' And when I told the gentlemen, they took it mighty good-humored, and only said, 'After all, if a man comes so far as this for quietness, it's rather hard if he wouldn't get it;' and we went off that night. I am tellin' your honor this," added he, in a low confidential tone, "because, if he asks you what boat you came in, you would say it was Tom McCaffray's—that man there in the bow—he's from Kilrush, and a stranger; for I wouldn't put it past John Luttrell to do me harm, if I crossed him."

"But, is he not certain to see you?"

"No, sir; not if I don't put myself in



his way. Look now, sir, look, he's off already!"

"Off! where to?"

"To the Abbey, sir, to bar himself in. He saw that the yawl was coming in to anchor, and he'll not look back now till he's safe in his own four walls."

"But I want to speak with him—is it likely he'll refuse to see me?"

"Just as like as not. May I never but he's running, he's so afraid we'll be on shore before he gets in."

At no time had Grenfell been much in love with his mission; he was still less pleased with it as he stepped on the shingly shore, and turned to make his way over a pathless waste to the Abbey. He walked slowly along, conning over to himself what he had got to do, and how he should do it. "At all events," thought he, "the more boorish and uncivil the man may be, the less demand will be made on me for courtesy. If he be rude, I can be concise; nor need I have any hesitation in showing him that I never volunteered for this expedition, and only came because Vyner begged me to come."

He had seen no one since he left the boat, and even now, as he arrived close to the house, no living thing appeared. He walked round on one side. It was the side of the old aisle, and there was no door to be found. He turned to the other, and found his progress interrupted by a low hedge, looking over which he fancied he saw an entrance. He stepped, therefore, over the enclosure; but by the noise of the smashing twigs a dog was aroused, a wild wolfish-looking animal, that rushed fiercely at him with a yelping bark. Grenfell stood fast, and prepared to defend himself with a strong stick, when suddenly a harsh voice cried out, "Morrah! come back, Morrah! Don't strike the dog, sir, or he'll tear you to pieces!" And then a tall, thin man, much stooped in the shoulders, and miserably dressed, came forward, and motioned the dog to retire.

"Is he savage?" said Grenfell.

"Not savage enough to keep off intruders, it seems," was the uncourteous reply.

"Is your business with me, sir?"

"If I speak to Mr. Luttrell, it is."

"My name is Luttrell."

"Mine is Grenfell; but I may be better known as the friend of your old friend, Sir Gervais Vyner."

"Grenfell—Grenfell! to be sure. I know the name—we all know it," said Luttrell, with a sort of sneer. "Is Vyner come—is he with you?"

"No, sir," said Grenfell, smarting under

the sting of what he felt to be an insult. "It is because he could not come that he asked me to see you."

Luttrell made no reply, but stood waiting for the other to continue.

"I have come on a gloomy errand, Mr. Luttrell, and wish you would prepare yourself to hear very, very sad news."

"What do you call prepare?" cried Luttrell, in a voice almost a shriek. "I know of nothing that prepares a man for misfortune except its frequency," muttered he, in a low tone. "What is it? Is it of Harry—of my boy?"

Grenfell nodded.

"Wait," said Luttrell, pressing his hand over his brow. "Let me go in. No, sir; I can walk without help." He grasped the door-post as he spoke, and stumbling onward, clutching the different objects as he went, gained a chair and sank into it. "Tell me now," said he, in a faint whisper.

"Be calm, Mr. Luttrell," said Grenfell, gently. "I have no need to say, take courage."

Luttrell stared vacantly at him, his lips parted, and his whole expression that of one who was stunned and overcome. "Go on," said he, in a hoarse whisper—"go on."

"Compose yourself first," said Grenfell.

"Is Harry—is he dead?"

Grenfell made a faint motion of his head.

"There—leave me—let me be alone!" said Luttrell, pointing to the door; and his words were spoken in a stern and imperative tone.

Grenfell waited for a few seconds, and then withdrew noiselessly, and strolled out into the open air.

"A dreary mission and a drearier spot!" said he, as he sauntered along, turning his eyes from the mountain, half hid in mist, to the lowering sea. "One would imagine that he who lived here must have little love of life, or little care how others fared in it." After walking about a mile he sat down on a rock, and began to consider what further remained for him to do. To pass an entire day in such a place was more than he could endure; and, perhaps, more than Luttrell himself would wish. Vyner's letter and its enclosures would convey all the sorrowful details of the calamity; and, doubtless, Luttrell was a man who would not expose his grief, but give free course to it in secret.

He resolved, therefore, that he would go back to the Abbey, and, with a few lines from himself, enclose these papers to Lut-

trell, stating that he would not leave the island, which it was his intention to have done that night, if Luttrell desired to see him again, and at the same time adding that he possessed no other information but such as these documents afforded. This he did, to avoid, if it could be, another interview. In a word, he wanted to finish all that he had to do as speedily as might be, and yet omit nothing that decorum required. He knew how Vyner would question and cross-question him, besides; and he desired that, as he had taken the trouble to come, he should appear to have acquitted himself creditably.

"The room is ready for your honor," said Molly, as Grenfell appeared again at the door; "and the master said that your honor would order dinner whenever you liked, and excuse himself to-day, by rayson he wasn't well."

"Thank you," said Grenfell; "I will step in and write a few words to your master, and you will bring me the answer here."

Half a dozen lines sufficed for all he had to say, and, enclosing the other documents, he sat down to await the reply.

In less time than he expected, the door opened. Luttrell himself appeared. Wretched and careworn as he seemed before, a dozen years of suffering could scarcely have made more impress on him than that last hour; clammy sweat covered his brow and cheeks, and his white lips trembled unceasingly; but in nothing was the change greater than in his eye. All its proud defiance was gone; the fierce energy had passed away, and its look was now one of weariness and exhaustion. He sat down in front of Grenfell, and for a minute or so did not speak. At last he said:—

"You will wish to get back—to get away from this dreary place: do not remain on *my* account. Tell Vyner I will try and go over to him. He's in Wales, isn't he?"

"No; he is in Italy."

"In Italy! I cannot go so far," said he, with a deep sigh.

"I was not willing to obtrude other sorrows in the midst of your own heavier one; but you will hear the news in a day or two, perhaps, that our poor friend Vyner has lost everything he had in the world."

"Is his daughter dead?" gasped out Luttrell, eagerly.

"No; I spoke of his fortune; his whole estate is gone."

"That is sad, very sad," sighed Luttrell; "but not the saddest! One may be poor,

and hope; one may be sick, almost to the last, and hope; one may be bereft of friends, and yet think that better days will come; but to be childless—to be robbed of that which was to have treasured your memory when you passed away, and think lovingly on you years after you were dust—this is the great, the great affliction!" As he spoke, the large tears rolled down his face, and his lank cheeks trembled. "None will know this better than Vyner," said he, after a pause.

"You do him no more than justice; he thought little of his own misfortune in presence of yours."

"It was like him."

"May I read you his own words?"

"No; it is enough that I know his heart. Go back, and say I thank him. It was thoughtful of him at such a time to remember me; few but himself could have done it!" He paused for a few seconds, and then in a stronger, fuller voice continued: "Tell him to send this sailor to me; he may live here, if he will. At all events, he shall not want, wherever he goes. Vyner will ask you how I bore this blow, sir. I trust to you to say the strict truth, that I bore it well. Is that not so?" Grenfell bowed his head slightly. "Bore it," continued Luttrell, "as a man may, who now can defy Fortune, and say, 'See, you have laid your heaviest load on me, and I do not even stagger under it!' Remember, sir, that you tell Vyner that. That I listened to the darkest news a man can hear, and never so much as winced. There is no fever in that hand, sir; touch it!"

"I had rather that you would not make this effort, Mr. Luttrell. I had far rather tell my friend that your grief was taking the course that nature meant for it."

"Sir!" said Luttrell, haughtily, "it is not to-day that misfortune and I have made acquaintance. Sorrow has sat at my hearthstone—my one companion—for many a year! I knew no other guest, and had any other come, I would not have known how to receive him! Look around you and say, is it to such a place as this a man comes if the world has gone well with him?"

"It is not yet too late——"

"Yes, it is, sir; far too late," broke in Luttrell, impatiently. "I know my own nature better than you ever knew it. Forgiven me, if I am rude. Misery has robbed me of all—even the manners of a gentleman. It would be only a mockery to offer you such hospitality as I have here, but if, before leaving, you would eat something——"



Grenfell made some hurried excuses; he had eaten on board the boat—he was not hungry—and he was impatient to get back in time for the morning mail.

“Of course, no one could wish to tarry here,” said Luttrell. “Tell Vyner I will try and write to him—if not soon, when I can. Good-bye, sir! You have been very kind to me, and I thank you.”

Grenfell shook his cold hand and turned away, more moved, perhaps, than if he had witnessed a greater show of sorrow. Scarcely, however, had he closed the door after him, than a dull heavy sound startled him. He opened the door softly, and saw that Luttrell had fallen on the ground, and, with his hands over his face, lay sobbing in all the bitterness of intense grief. Grenfell retired noiselessly and unseen. It was a sorrow that none should witness; and, worldling as he was, he felt it. He stopped twice on his way down to the shore, uncertain whether he ought not to go back, and try to comfort that desolate man. But how comfort him? How speak of hope to one who mocked all hope, and actually seemed to cling to his misery?

“They cry out against the worldling, and rail at his egotism, and the rest of it,” muttered he; “but the selfishness that withdraws from all contact with others is a hundred times worse! Had that man lived in town, and had his club to stroll down to, the morning papers would have shown him that he was not more unlucky than his fellows, and that a large proportion of his acquaintances carried crape on their hats, whether they had sorrow in their hearts or not.”

It was with a mind relieved that he reached Holyhead the next day, and set out for the Cottage. Vyner had begged him to secure certain papers and letters of his that were there; and for this purpose he turned off on his way to town to visit Dinaslyu for the last time.

“The young gentleman went away the night you left, sir,” said Rickards, without being questioned; “but he came over this morning to ask if you had returned.”

“What news of the young lady who was so ill at Dalradern?”

“Out of danger, sir. The London doctor was the saving of her life, sir; he has ordered her to the sea-side as soon as she is fit to move, and Sir Within sent off Carter yesterday to Milford Haven, to take the handsomest house he can find there, and never think of the cost.”

“Rich men can do these things, Rickards!”

“Yes, sir. Sir Within and my master

haven’t to ask what’s the price when an article strikes their fancy.”

Grenfell looked to see if the remark was intended to explode a mine, or a mere chance shot. The stolid face of the butler reassured him in an instant, and he said, “I shall want candles in the library, and you will call me to-morrow early—say seven.”

When Grenfell had covered the library table with papers and parchments innumerable, title-deeds of centuries old, and grants from the Crown to Vyner’s ancestors in different reigns, he could not restrain a passionate invective against the man who had, out of mere levity, forfeited a noble fortune.

Contemptible as young Ladarelle was—mean, low-lived, and vulgar—the fellow’s ambition to be rich, the desire to have the power that wealth confers, raised him in Grenfell’s esteem above “that weak-minded enthusiast”—so he called him—who must needs beggar himself, because he had nothing to do.

He emptied drawer after drawer, burning, as Vyner had bade him, rolls of letters, parliamentary papers, and such like, till, in tossing over heaps of rubbish, he came upon a piece of stout card-board, and on turning it about saw the sketch Vyner had made of the Irish peasant child in Donegal. Who was it so like? Surely he knew that expression, the peculiar look of the eyes, sad and thoughtful, and yet defiant? He went over, in his mind, one after another of those town-bred beauties he had met in the season, when, suddenly, he exclaimed, “What a fool I have been all this time! It is the girl at Dalradern, the ‘ward,’”—here he laughed in derision—“the ‘ward’ of Sir Within Wardle. Ay, and she knew me, too, I could swear. All her evasive answers about Ireland show it.” He turned hastily to Vyner’s letter, and surmised that it was to this very point he was coming, when the news of young Luttrell’s death was brought him. “What can be her position now, and how came she beneath that old man’s roof? With what craft and what boldness she played her game! The girl who has head enough for that has cleverness to know that I am not a man to be despised. She should have made me her friend at once. Who could counsel her so well, or tell her the shoals and quicksands before her? She ought to have done this, and she shall, too. I will go over to-morrow to Dalradern; I will take her this sketch; we shall see if it will not be a bond of friendship between us.”

When, true to the pledge he had made with himself, he went over to Dalradern

the next morning, it was to discover that Sir Within and his ward had taken their departure two hours before. The servants were busily engaged in dismantling the rooms, and preparing to close the Castle against all visitors.

To his inquiries, ingenious enough, he could get no satisfactory answer as to the direction they had gone, or to what time their absence might be protracted, and Grenfell, disappointed and baffled, returned to the cottage to pass his last evening, ere he quitted it forever.

## CHAPTER XLII.

### THE SANDS AT SUNSET.

TOWARDS the close of a day in the late autumn, when the declining sun was throwing a long column of golden light over the sea, a little group was gathered on the shore at Ostend, the last, it seemed, of all the summer visitors who had repaired there for the season. The group consisted of a young girl, whose attitude, as she lay reclined in a bath-chair, bespoke extreme debility, and an old man who stood at her side, directing her attention, as his gestures indicated, to different objects in the landscape.

Two servants in livery, and a somewhat demurely-dressed maid, stood at a little distance off, in deferential attendance on the others.

Greatly changed, indeed paler and thinner, with dark circles round the eyes, and a faint hectic spot on each cheek, Kate O'Hara looked even more beautiful than ever; the extreme delicacy of every lineament, the faultless regularity of outline, were as conspicuous now, as before was that brightness which she derived from expression. If her eyes had no longer their look of haughty and defiant meaning, they seemed to have acquired a greater depth of color and an expression of intense softness; and her lips, so ready once to curl into mockery at a moment, now appeared as if they faintly stirred with a smile, as some fancy crossed her.

She was dressed in deep mourning, which heightened still more the statue-like character of her features. What a contrast to this placid loveliness was the careworn, feverish look of the old man at her side! Sir Within had aged by years within a few weeks, and in the anxious expression of his face, and his quick uneasy glances around

him, might be read the fretful conflict of hope and fear within him.

While he continued to speak, and describe the features of the scene before them, though she smiled at times, or assented by a slight gesture of the head, her mind was wandering—far, far away—to other thoughts and other places, and her fingers played feverishly with a letter, which she opened and closed up again time after time.

"I am afraid, *ma mie*," said he, with a tone of half reproach, "that your letter there has usurped all your interest, and my eloquence as *cicerone* gone quite for nothing."

"No, Gardy, I heard you with much pleasure. What did you say that rock was called?"

"That rock, mademoiselle," said he, dryly, "is a wreck, and I was vain enough to have believed that my narrative of the incident had moved you."

"I am so weak, Gardy, so very weak," said she, plaintively, as she laid her hand on the back of his, "that I follow anything with difficulty."

"My sweet child, how cruel of me to forget it! Are we lingering too long on these sands?"

"Oh, no; let us stay here some time longer. I want to see the sun go down, it is so long since I saw a sunset."

He drew her shawl around her carefully, and sheltered her with his umbrella against the scarcely breathing wind.

"How kind you are, how good!" said she, softly; and then, with a playful lightness, added, "how courtier-like, too!"

"Why courtier-like, *ma mie*?" said he.

"Is it not like a courtier," said she, "to treat a peasant-girl as if she were a princess? You would not even ask me when I saw my last sunset, lest I should have to tell you that it was as I stood barefooted on the beach, the tangled seaweed dripping over me."

"How can you like to pain me by talking of these things?"

"But we must talk of them, Gardy. You know we think of them; and this letter—this letter," said she, tapping it with her finger impatiently, "must be answered one day."

"And there is but one answer to give, Kate," said he, sharply. "I will not consent. He who now assumes the uncle—"

"He *is* my uncle, sir," said she, haughtily. "It is scarcely generous to deny me whatever good blood I can lay claim to."

"My child, my dear child, if you but knew how I love whatever loves you, you would not have uttered this reproach."



"My mother's sister's husband is surely my uncle," said she, coldly, and not heeding his protestation. "I never heard that a *mésalliance* could cancel the ties of kindred."

"None ever said so, Kate."

"You said as much, sir; you said, 'assumes the uncle!'"

"I meant in a different sense, my dear child. I meant that he wanted to impose an authority which mere relationship would not give him."

"Read his letter again, sir—pray read it."

"No, my child; it has given me too much pain already."

"I think you are not just to him, Gardy," she said, caressingly. "May I read it to you? Well, a part of it?"

"Once more, no, Kate. His argument is, that, as he is now childless, he has the right to claim your love and affection, to replace what he has lost; that, as your nearest of kin, you cannot refuse him; and that, if you do—mark the insinuation—the reasons will be, perhaps, based on considerations apart from all affection."

"I think he had the right to say that," said she, firmly.

"There was one thing, however, he had no right to say," said the old man, haughtily: "that to continue to reside under my roof was to challenge the opinion of a world never slow to be censorious."

"And there, again, I think he was not wrong."

"Then you love me no longer, Kate!" said he, with intense emotion.

"Not love you—not love you! Then, what do I love? Is it nothing to know that every happiness I have I owe to you—that all the enjoyment of a life more bright than a fairy tale comes from you? That from your generous indulgence I have learned to think mere existence something like ecstasy, and awake each day as to a fête?"

"Say on, dearest, say on; your words thrill me like a gentle music."

"He does not offer me these; but he says, 'Come to what you shall call your home, and never blush to say so.'"

"It is too insolent!"

"He says, 'As my daughter by adoption you shall bear my name.' I am to be a Luttrell—Kate Luttrell, of Arran!"

"And for this poor name you would barter all my love, all my affection, all my hope?"

"It is a great and noble name, sir! There were Lords of Arran called Luttrell in the thirteenth century!"

"You have told me of them," said he, peevishly.

"Too proud and too haughty to accept titles, sir."

"I have a name that the first in the land would not scorn," said he, in a voice of blended pride and anger; "and my fortune is certainly the equal of a barren rock in the Atlantic."

"You are not my uncle, sir," said she, softly.

"No, Kate; but——" He stopped, the color fled from his cheek, and he seemed unable to continue. "Has any tender love for you equalled mine?"

"Stop there!" said she, fiercely; "my favor is not put up to auction, and to fall to the highest bidder. When you have said that my uncle is poor, you have said all that can be laid to his charge." She closed her eyes, and, seeming to speak to herself, murmured: "The poorer, the more need has he of affection."

"I see it all—all!" said he, bitterly. "You wish to leave me."

She made no answer, but sat staring vacantly over the sea.

"Better to say so, my child—better to own that this life has ceased to give you pleasure. But if you told me, Kate, that you would like to travel, to see other countries, to mix with the world, and partake of the enjoyments——"

"How—as what?" said she, impatiently. "It was but a few months ago you received some strangers at your house, and have you forgotten how they treated me? And do you believe, sir, that the world will have more reserve than the guests under your roof? Who is she? is not answered so easily as one may think. It would take blood to wash out the stain of 'What is she?'"

The old man walked rapidly up and down; he wiped the drops that stood on his brow, and muttered uneasily to himself: "And why not? To whom have I to render an account? Who shall dare to question me? Am I to be turned from my path by a sneer and a sarcasm? Is the ribald gossiping of a club to be of more weight with me than my whole happiness?"

She watched the conflict and saw every struggle that shook him; she could even mark the vacillating fortunes of the fight—when he conquered, and when he fell back, discomfited and beaten.

"Tell me, Kate," said he, at last, as he approached her, "is there any condition you can propose by which I may secure myself against desertion?"

"There would be no desertion, Gardy. You could come and see me in my new home. I would do my utmost to hide its poverty. Who knows if my ingenious devices might not amuse you. My uncle, too, might permit me—no, perhaps not that——" said she, stopping in some confusion.

"What is it he wouldn't permit, Kate?"

"I don't know; I was talking to myself, I believe, and I feel weary and feverish too. Gardy, let us not speak more of this now; it oppresses me. And see! there goes down the sun, and I have not enjoyed all its gorgeous color over the waters."

"I wish you would tell me what Mr. Luttrell might not permit."

"He'd not permit me to stay out on the sea-shore till the evening dew had fallen," said she, laughing. "Tell them to take me back."

"Yes, darling, we have lingered here too long. It was my fault."

And now the little procession moved slowly across the sands towards the town; passing through small, mean-looking streets, they gained the place where their hotel stood. Groups of idlers were about—townsfolk and a few strangers—who made way for them to pass. Some respectfully enough—the show of rank suffices at times to exact this—others, more venturesome, stared at the beautiful girl, and then looked at the worn and feeble figure who walked beside her. That they were English was plain enough, and was taken as a reason to comment on them without reserve.

Sir Within turned looks of anger and defiance around him; he gave them to understand that he could overhear their insolence, and he sought with his eye through the crowd to see one—even one—sufficiently like a gentleman to hold him responsible for the impertinence.

"Neither wife nor daughter, I'll wager a 'cent-sous' piece," said one, as they passed under the arched doorway.

Sir Within stepped back, when Kate said, suddenly, "I mean to walk upstairs; give me your arm, sir;" and as they moved slowly on, she whispered, "How can it be helped, Gardy?" and then, with a laugh, added, "It is a maxim of your own, that it is the unmannerly people take care of the public morals."

It was a subtle flattery to quote himself, which Sir Within thoroughly appreciated, and as he took leave of her at the door of her room he was almost calm again.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

## THE INSULT.

WHEN Kate had gained her room she locked the door, and throwing off her shawl and bonnet, sat down before the glass; her hair fell heavily down in the rude carelessness with which she flung her bonnet from her, and now, with a faint tinge of color in her cheek—the flush of a passing excitement—she looked very beautiful.

"So," said she, smiling at her image, "it is the old story, '*Qu'en dira le Monde?*' The dear old man was very, very fond. He admired me very much; I pleased him—I amused him—I made his life somewhat brighter than he would have found it rambling amongst his Titians and Peruginos; but, with all that, he couldn't face the terrible question, What will the world say? *Ma foi*, Mademoiselle Kate, the confession is not flattering to you! Most people would call me very inexperienced that I had not made that grand old place my own before this. I had the field all to myself—no rivalry, no interference—and certainly it was a great opportunity. Perhaps I was too much occupied in enjoying my happiness; perhaps I took no note of time; and, perhaps, if I ever thought at all, I thought I could win the game whenever I liked, and now I awake to discover that there is something that he fears more than he loves me; and that the dear old dowager world, that shakes down reputations with a nod and blasts pretensions with a stare, will declare a strict blockade against the distinguished Sir Within Wardle and that girl—lucky if they do not say, 'that creature'—he married. Ought he not to have had a spirit above this? Ought he not to have been able to say, 'I am rich enough to buy this bauble, and if the wearing it gives me pleasure, I can forget your sarcasms. I like the life she can throw around me: which of you all could give such color to my existence?' He might have said this, but he did not. He heard me talk of a new home and a new name, and he would not offer me his own. He saw and felt bitterly, too, how my position compromised me. I took care he should see it, but no thought of separation crossed him, or, if it did, stronger than all was the dread query, '*Qu'en dira le Monde?*'"

"There are things one cannot believe possible till they have happened; and, even then, some strange uncertainty pervades the mind that they have not been



read aright. This is one of them. No one could have persuaded me this morning that this prize was not mine whenever I cared to claim it. What a fall to my pride! How little must I feel myself, that after all these years of subtle flattery I might as well have been with the Vyners—living with creatures of my own nature—giving affection and getting it—cultivating the heart in the rich soil of hopes and fears, and loves and trials, and not wearing a mask till it had stiffened into my very features. And he refused me—yes, refused me; for there was no maiden bashfulness in the terms of my offer. I said, I go back to be the niece, or I stay to be the wife; and his reply was, ‘*Qu’en dira le Monde?*’ I suppose he was right—I am sure he was; but I hate him for it—how I hate him!” She arose and walked the room with long and measured steps for a while in silence, and then burst out: “What would I not give to be revenged for this? Some vengeance there are he would feel bitterly. Should he meet me in the world—the great world, for instance—the wife of some one, his equal, see me courted, and fêted and flattered; hear of me at all times and all places, and learn that this ‘*Monde*’—that is his god—had adopted me amongst his spoiled children, I think I know the dark despair that would gather around him as he muttered to himself, ‘And she might have been mine—she had been mine for the asking—she offered herself:’ ay, he might say so, if he wished to add insult to my memory: ‘and I only replied, “The world would not bear it!”’ How I hate him! How I hate him! If I cannot be revenged as I wish, I will be revenged as I can. I shall leave him—go at once. He has passed his last of those blissful days, as he loves to call them; and he shall awake to see his life in all the weariness of desolation. Not a look, not a sound; not a laugh, not a song to cheer him. With every spot full of memories of me, he shall be haunted by a happiness that will never return to him. I know that in his misery he will ask me to forgive the past and be his wife; and if the alternative were to be the wretchedness I sprang from, I’d go back to it!

“I do not know—in all likelihood I shall never know—what this heart of mine could feel of love, but I know its power of hatred, and so shall Sir Within, though it may cost me dear to buy it.

“Your repentance may come as early as you please, it shall avail you nothing. It may be even now—I almost thought I heard his foot on the stair—and I know not

whether I would not rather it came now, or after months of heart-suffering and sorrow. I was slighted—he weighed the beauty that he admired, and the love he thought he had gained, against the mockeries of some score of people whose very faces he has forgotten, and ‘*Qu’en dira le Monde*’ had more power over him than all my tenderness, all my wit, and all my beauty.

“Is it not strange that, with all his boasted keenness to read people’s natures, he should know so little of mine? To think that I could stand there and see the struggle between his pride of station and what he would call his ‘passion’—that I could tamely wait and see how I was weighed in the balance and found wanting—that I could bear all this unmoved, and then return to my daily life, without an attempt to resent it?”

“It is true, till this letter came from my uncle, there was no pressure upon him. None in the wide world was more friendless than myself. His life might have gone on as heretofore, and if a thought of me or of my fate invaded, he might have dismissed it with the excuse that he could mention me in his will; he could have bequeathed me enough to make me a desirable match for the land-steward or the gardener!

“How I bless my uncle Luttrell for his remembrance of me! It is like a reprieve arriving when the victim was on the scaffold. He shall see with what gladness I accept his offer. If the conditions had been ten times as hard, I would not quarrel with one of them. Now, then, to answer him, and that done, Sir Within, you run no danger of that scandal-loving world you dread so much. For, if you came with the offer of all your fortune at my feet, I’d spurn you!”

She opened her writing-desk, and sat down before it. She then took out Luttrell’s letter, and read it carefully over. “I must take care that my answer be as calm and as unimpassioned as his own note. He makes no protestation of affection—neither shall I. He says nothing of any pleasure that he anticipates from my companionship—I will be as guarded as himself.” She paused for a moment or two, and then wrote:

“MY DEAR UNCLE,—though your letter found me weak and low after a severe illness, its purport has given me strength to answer you at once. I accept.

“It would be agreeable to me if I could close this letter with these words, and not impose any further thought of myself upon you; but it is better, perhaps, if I tell you, now and forever, that you may discharge

your mind of all fears as to what you call the sacrifices I shall have to make. I hope to show you that all the indulgences in which I have lived make no part of my real nature. You have one boon to confer on me worth all that wealth and splendor could offer—your name. By making me a Luttrell, you fill the full measure of my ambition.

“For whatever share of your confidence and affection you may vouchsafe me, I will try to be worthy; but I will not importune for either, but patiently endeavor to deserve them. My life has not hitherto taught many lessons of utility. I hope duty will be a better teacher than self-indulgence. Lastly, have no fears that my presence under your roof will draw closer around you the ties and the claims of those humble people with whom I am connected. I know as little of them as you do. They certainly fill no place in my affection; nor have I the pretense to think I have any share in theirs. One old man alone have I any recollection of—my mother’s father—and if I may judge by the past, he will continue to be more influenced by what tends to my advantage, than what might minister to the indulgence of his own pride. He neither came to see me at Sir Gervais Vyner’s, nor Dalradern; and though I have written to him once or twice, he never sought to impose himself as a burden upon me. Of course, it will be for you to say if this correspondence should be discontinued.

“You will see in these pledges, that I give in all frankness, how much it will be my ambition to be worthy of the noble name you allow me to bear.

“There is no necessity to remit me any money. I have ample means to pay for my journey; and as there are circumstances which I can tell you of more easily than I can write, requiring that I should leave this at once, I will do so immediately after posting the present letter. I will go direct to the hotel you speak of at Holyhead, and remain there till your messenger arrives to meet me.

“You distress me, my dear uncle, when you suggest that I should mention any articles that I might require to be added to your household for my comfort or convenience. Do not forget, I beg, that I was not born to these luxuries, and that they only attach to me as the accidents of a station which I relinquish with delight, when I know that it gives me the right to sign myself,

“Your loving niece,  
“KATE LUTTRELL.”

## CHAPTER XLIV.

## THE FLIGHT.

THE day was just breaking as Kate, carrying a small bundle in her hand, issued noiselessly from the deep porch of the hotel, and hastened to the pier.

The steamboat was about to start, and she was the last to reach the deck, as the vessel moved off. It was a raw and gusty morning, and the passengers had all sought shelter below, so that she was free to seek a spot to herself unmolested and unobserved.

As she turned her farewell look at the sands, where she had walked on the evening before, she could not believe that one night—one short night—had merely filled the interval. Why, it seemed as if half a lifetime had been crowded into the space. Within those few hours how much had happened! A grand dream of ambition scattered to the winds—a dream that for many a day had filled her whole thoughts, working its way into every crevice of her mind, and so coloring all her fancies that she had not even a caprice untinged by it. To be the mistress of that old feudal castle—to own its vast halls and its tall towers—to gaze on the deep-bosomed woods that stretched for miles away, and feel that they were her own! To know that at last she had gained a station and a position that none dared dispute: “For,” as she would say, “the world may say its worst of that old man’s folly; they may ridicule and deride him. Of me they can but say that I played boldly, and won the great stake I played for.” And now the game was over, and she had lost! What a reverse was this! “Yesterday surrounded with wealth, cared for, courted, my slightest wish consulted, how fair the prospect looked! And now, alone, and more friendless than the meanest around me! And was the fault mine? How hard to tell! Was it that I gave him too much of my confidence, or too little? Was my mistake to let him dwell too much on the ways and opinions of that great world that he loved so well? Should I not have tried rather to disparage than exalt it? And should I not have sought to inspire him with a desire for a quiet, tranquil existence—such a life as he might have dreamed to lead in those deep old woods around his home? To the last,” cried she, to herself—“to the last, I never could believe that he would consent to lose me! Perhaps he never thought it would come to this; perhaps he fancied that I could not face that



wretchedness from which I came; perhaps he might have thought that I myself was not one to relinquish so good a game, and rise from the table at the first reverse. But what a reverse! To be so near the winning-post, and yet lose the race! And how will he bear it? Will he sink under the blow, or will that old pride of blood of which he boasts so much come to his aid and carry him through it? How I wish—oh, what would I not give to see him, as he tears open my last letter, and sees all his presents returned to him! Ah, if he could but feel with what a pang I parted with them! If he but knew the tears the leave-taking cost me! If he but saw me as I took off that necklace I was never to wear again, feeling like one who was laying down her beauty to go forth into the world without a charm, he might, perchance, hope to win me back again. And would that be possible? My heart says, no. My heart tells me, that before I can think of a fortune to achieve, there is an insult to avenge. He slighted me—yes, he slighted me! There was a price too high for all my love, and he let me see it. There was his fault—he let me see it! It was my dream for many a year to show the humble folk from whom I came what my ambition and my capacity could make me; and I thought of myself as the proud mistress of Dalradern without a pang for all the misery the victory would cost me. Now the victory has escaped me, and I go back, so far as my own efforts are concerned, defeated! What next—ay, what next?”

As the day wore on, every incident of her ordinary life rose before her. Nine o'clock. It was the hour the carriage came to take her to her bath. She bethought her of all the obsequious attention of her maid, that quiet watchfulness of cunning service, the mindful observance that supplies a want and yet obtrudes no thought of it. The very bustle of her arrival at the bathing place had its own flattery. The eager attention, the zealous anxiety of the servants, that showed how, in her presence, all others were for the time forgotten. She knew well—is beauty ever deficient in the knowledge?—that many came each morning only to catch a glimpse of her. Her practiced eye had taught her, even as she passed, to note what amount of tribute each rendered to her loveliness; and she could mark the wondering veneration here, the almost rapturous gaze of this one, and not unfrequently the jealous depreciation of that other.

Eleven o'clock. She was at breakfast

with Sir Within, and he was asking her for all the little events of the morning. And what were these? A bantering narrative of her own triumphs—how well she had looked—how tastefully she was dressed—how spitefully the women had criticised the lovely hat she swam in, and which she gave to some poor girl as she came out of the water—a trifle that had cost some “louis” a few days before.

It was noon—the hour the mail arrived from Brussels—and Sir Within would come to present her with the rich bouquet of rare flowers, dispatched each morning from the capital. It was a piece of homage he delighted to pay, and she was wont to accept it with a queen-like condescension. “What a strange life of dreary indulgence—of enjoyments multiplied too fast to taste—of luxuries so lavish as almost to be a burden—and how unreal it was all!” so thought she, as they drew near the tall chalk cliffs of the English coast, and the deck grew crowded with those who were eagerly impatient to quit their prison-house.

For the first time for a long while did she find herself unnoticed and unattended to; none of that watchful, obsequious attention that used to track her steps was there. Now people hurried hither and thither, collecting their scattered effects, and preparing to land. No one to care for her, who only yesterday was waited on like royalty!

“Is this your trunk, miss?” asked a porter.

“No, this is mine,” said she, pointing to a bundle.

“Shall I carry it for you, my dear?” said a vulgar-looking and over-dressed young fellow, who had put his glass in his eye to stare at her.

She muttered but one word, but that it was enough seemed clear, as his companion said, “I declare I think you deserved it!”

“It has begun already,” said she to herself, as she walked slowly along towards the town. “The bitter conflict with the world, of which I have only heard hitherto, I now must face. By this time he knows it; he knows that he is desolate, and that he shall never see me more. All the misery is not, therefore, mine; nor is mine the greater. I have youth and can hope; he cannot hope; he can but grieve on to the last. Well, let him go to the world he loves so dearly, and ask it to console him. It will say by its thousand tongues, ‘You have done well, Sir Within. Why should you have allied yourself with a low-born peasant-girl? How could her beauty have reconciled you to her want of refinement, her

ignorance, her coarse breeding?" Ah, what an answer could his heart give, if he but dared to utter it; for he could tell them I was their equal in all their vaunted captivations! Will he have the courage to do this? Or will he seek comfort in the falsehood that belies me?"

In thoughts like these, ever revolving around herself and her altered fortunes, she journeyed on, and by the third day arrived at Holyhead. The rendezvous was given at a small inn outside the town called "The Kid," and directions for her reception had been already forwarded there. Two days elapsed before her uncle's messenger arrived—two days that seemed to extend to as many years! How did her ever-active mind go over in that space all her past life, from the cruel sorrows of her early days, to the pampered existence she had led at Dalradern! She fancied what she might have been, if she had never left her lowly station, but grown up amongst the hardships and privations of her humble condition. She canvassed in her mind the way in which she might have either conformed to that life, or struggled against it. "I cannot believe," said she, with a saucy laugh, as she stood and looked at herself in the glass, that these arms were meant to carry sea-wrack, or that these feet were fashioned to climb shoeless up the rocks! And yet if destiny had fixed me here, how should I have escaped? I cannot tell, any more than I can tell what is yet before me. And what a fascination there is in this uncertainty! What a wondrous influence has the unknown! How eventful does the slightest action become, when it may lead to that which can determine a life's fortune! Even now, how much is in my power! I might go back, throw myself at that old man's feet, and tell him that it was in vain I tried it—I could not leave him. I might kneel there till he raised me, and when he did so, I should be his wife, a titled lady, and mistress of that grand old castle! Could I do this? No; no more than I could go and beg the Vyners to have pity on me and take me back; that my heart clung to the happiness I had learned to feel amongst them; and that I would rather serve them as a menial than live away from them. Better to die than this. And what will this life at Arran be? This uncle, too, I dread him; and yet I long to see him. I want to hear him call me by his own name, and acknowledge me as a Luttrell. Oh, if he had but done this before—before I had traveled this weary road of deception and falsehood! Who knows? Who knows?"

"Are you the young lady, miss, that's expecting an elderly gentleman?" said the housemaid, entering hastily.

"Where from? How did he come?" cried Kate, eagerly; for her first thought was, it might be Sir Within.

"He came by the Irish packet, Miss."

"Yes, that is quite right. If he asks for Miss Luttrell, you may say I am ready to see him."

In a minute or two after she had given this order, the girl again opened the door, saying—"Mr. Coles, miss;" and introduced a florid, fussy-looking little man, with a manner compounded of courtesy and command.

"You may leave the room, young woman," said he to the maid; and then approaching Kate, added, "I have the honor to speak to Miss Luttrell?"

She bowed a quiet assent, and he went on:—

"I'm chief managing clerk of Cane & Co., Miss Luttrell, from whom I received instructions to wait on you here, and accompany you to Westport, where Mr. John Luttrell will have a boat ready for you."

He delivered this speech with a something half peremptory, as though he either suspected some amount of resistance to his authority, or imagined that his credentials might be questioned.

"Have you no letter for me, sir?" asked she, calmly.

"There was a letter from Mr. Luttrell to Mr. George Cane, Miss Luttrell, explaining why he was not himself able to come over and meet you."

"Was he ill, sir?"

"No, not exactly ill, Miss Luttrell, though he is never what one can call well."

"I am astonished he did not write to me," said she, in a low, thoughtful tone.

"He is not much given to writing, Miss Luttrell, at any time, and of late we have rarely heard of him beyond a line or two. Indeed, with respect to my present journey, all he says is, 'Send some one in your confidence over to Holyhead by the first packet to inquire for Miss Luttrell or Miss O'Hara—she may be known by either name—and conduct her to Eldridge's Hotel, Westport. The young lady is to be treated with all consideration.' These are his words, miss, and I hope to follow them."

"It is very kind," said she, slowly, and half to herself.

"It's a Frenchified sort of phrase, 'all consideration,' but I take its meaning to be, with every deference to your wishes—how would you like to travel, and where to stop. Mr. George, however, told me to



add, 'If Miss Luttrell desires to make any purchases, or requires anything in town, she is to have full liberty to obtain it.' He did not mention to what amount, but of course he intended the exercise of a certain discretion."

"I want nothing, sir."

"That is what Mrs. Coles remarked to me: If the young lady only saw the place she was going to, she'd not think of shopping."

Kate made no answer.

"Not but, as Mrs. Coles observed, some good substantial winter clothing—that capital stuff they make now for Lower Canada—would be an excellent thing to take. You are aware, miss, it is a perpetual winter there?"

A short nod, that might mean anything, was all her reply.

"And above all, Miss Luttrell," continued he, unabashed by her cold manner—"above all, a few books! Mr. L., from what I hear, has none that would suit a young lady's reading. His studies, it seems, are of an antiquarian order; some say—of course people *will* say so—he dips a little into magic and the black art." Perhaps after all it was the study most appropriate to the place.

"I suppose it is a lonesome spot?" said she, with a faint sigh, and not well heeding what she said.

"Desolate is the name for it—desolate and deserted! I only know it by the map; but I declare to you, I'd not pass a week on it to own the fee simple."

"And yet I am going there of my own free-will, sir," said she, with a strangely meaning smile.

"That's exactly what puzzles Mrs. C. and myself," said he, bluntly; "and, indeed, my wife went so far as to say, 'Has the dear young creature nobody to tell her what the place is like? Has she no friend to warn her against the life she is going to?'"

"Tell her from me, sir, that I know it all. I saw it when I was a child, and my memory is a tenacious one. And tell her, too, that, bleak and dreary as it is, I look forward to it with a longing desire, as an escape from a world of which even the very little I have seen has not enamored me. And now, sir, enough of me and my fortunes; let us talk of the road. Whenever you are sufficiently rested to begin your journey, you will find me ready."

"You'll stop probably a day in Dublin?"

"Not an hour, sir, if I can get on. Can we leave this to-night?"

"Yes; I have ordered the carriage to take us to the pier at nine, and a cart for your luggage."

"My luggage is there, sir," said she, pointing to the bundle, and smiling at the astonishment his face betrayed; "and when you tell your wife that, sir, she will, perhaps, see I am better fitted for Arran than she suspected."

Albeit the daily life of Mr. Coles gave little scope to the faculty, he was by nature of an inquiring disposition, not to add that he well knew to what a rigid cross-examination he would be subjected on his return to his wife, not merely as to the look, manner, and mien of the young lady, but as to what account she gave of herself, where she came from, and, more important still, why she came.

It was his fancy, too, to imagine that he was especially adroit in extracting confidences: a belief, be it observed, very generally held by people whose palpable and pushing curiosity invariably revolts a stranger, and disposes him to extreme reserve.

As they walked the deck of the steamer together, then, with a calm sea and a stilly night, he deemed the moment favorable to open his investigations.

"Ah, yes!" said he, as though addressing some interlocutor within his own bosom—"ah, yes! she will indeed feel it a terrible contrast. None of the pleasures, none of the habits, of her former life; none of the joys of the family, and none of the endearments of a home!"

"Of whom were you speaking, sir?" asked she, with a faint smile.

"Dear me! dear me! what a man I am! That's a habit my wife has been trying to break me of these fifteen years, Miss Luttrell; as she says: 'Coles, take care that you never commit a murder, or you're sure to tell it to the first person you meet.' And so is it when anything occurs to engage my deepest interest—my strongest sympathy; it's no use; do what I will, out it will come in spite of me."

"And I, sir," said she, with a slow and measured utterance, "am exactly the reverse. I no more think of speaking my thoughts aloud than I should dream of imparting my family secrets, if I had any. To the first stranger whose impertinent curiosity might dispose him to penetrate them."

"Indeed!" cried he, reddening with shame.

"Quite true, I assure you, sir; and now I will wish you a good-night, for it grows chilly here."

## CHAPTER XLV.

ON ARRAN.

KATE was awoke from the deep sleep by the noise of the boat coming to anchor. She started up, and looked around her, unable for several seconds to recall where she was. Behind the little land-locked bay the tall mountains rose, wild and fanciful on every side; the dark sky studded with stars above, and the still darker sea beneath, still and waveless; and then the shore, where lights moved rapidly hither and thither: making up a picture strangely interesting to one to whom that lone rock was to be a home, that dreary spot in the wild ocean her whole world.

There were a great many people on the shore awaiting her, partly out of curiosity, in part out of respect, and Molly Ryan had come down to say that his honor was not well enough to meet her, but he hoped in the morning he would be able. "You're to be the same as himself here, he says; and every word you say is to be minded as if it was his own."

"I almost think I remember you; your face, and your voice too, seem to me as though I knew them before."

"So you may, miss. You saw me here at the mistress's wake, but don't let on to the master, for he doesn't like that any of us should think you was ever here afore. This is the path here, miss; it's a rough bit for your tender feet."

"Have we much farther to go, Molly? I am rather tired to-day."

"No, miss; a few minutes more will bring us to the Abbey; but sure we'd send for a chair and carry you——"

"No, no; on no account. It is only to-night I feel fatigued. My uncle's illness is nothing serious, I hope?"

"'Tis more grief than sickness, miss. It's sorrow is killin' him. Any one that saw him last year wouldn't know him now; his hair is white as snow, and his voice is weak as a child's. Here we are now—here's the gate. It isn't much of a garden, nobody minds it; and yonder, where you see the light, that's his honor's room, beside the big tower there, and you are to have the two rooms that my mistress lived in." And, still speaking, she led the way through a low, arched passage into a small clean-looking chamber, within which lay another with a neatly-arranged bed, and a few attempts at comfortable furniture. "We did our best, miss, Sam and myself," said Molly; "but we hadn't much time, for we only knew you was coming on Tuesday night."

"It is all very nice and clean, Molly—your name is Molly, isn't it?"

"Yes, miss," said she curtesying, and deeply gratified.

"I want nothing better!" said Kate, as she sat down on the bed, and took off her bonnet.

"If you don't need me now, miss, I'll go and bring you your tea; it's all ready in the kitchen."

"Very well, Molly; leave it for me in the outer room, and I'll take it when I am inclined."

Molly saw that she desired to be alone, and withdrew without a word; and Kate, now free of all restraint, buried her face in the pillow and wept bitterly. Never, till the very spot was before her—till the dark shadows of the rugged rocks crossed her path, and the wild solitude of the dreary island appealed to her, by the poor appearance of the people, their savage looks and their destitution—never till then had she fully realized to her mind all the force of the step she had taken. "What have I done? What have I done?" sobbed she, hysterically, over and over. "Why have I left all that makes life an ecstasy, to come and drag out an existence of misery and gloom? Is this the fruit of all my ambition? Is this the prize for which I have left myself without one affection or one sentiment, sacrificing all to that station I had set before me as a goal? I'll not bear it. I'll not endure it. Time enough to come here when my hopes are bankrupt, and my fortune shipwrecked. I have youth, and, better, I have beauty. Shall I stay here till a blight has fallen on both? Why, the very misery I came from as a child was less dreary and desolate than this! There was at least companionship there! There was sympathy, for there was fellow-suffering. But here! what is there here but a tomb in which life is to waste out, and the creature feel himself the corpse before he dies?" She started up and looked around her, turning her eyes from one object to the other in the room. "And it is for this splendor, for all this costly magnificence, I am to surrender the love of those humble people, who, after all, loved me for myself! It was of *me* they thought, for me they prayed, for my success they implored the saints; and it is for this"—and she gazed contemptuously on the lowly decorations of the chamber—"I am to give them up forever, and refuse even to see them! The proud old Sir Within never proposed so hard a bargain! He did not dare to tell me I should deny my own. To be sure," cried she, with a scornful laugh, "I was



forgetting a material part of the price. I am a Luttrell—Kate Luttrell of Arran—and I shall be one day, perhaps, mistress of this grand ancestral seat, the Abbey of St. Finbar! Would that I could share the grandeur with them at once, and lie down there in that old aisle, as dreamless as my noble kinsfolk!”

In alternate bursts of sorrow over the past, and scornful ridicule of the present, she passed the greater part of the night; and at last, exhausted and weary with the conflict, she leaned her head on the side of her bed, and, kneeling as she was, fell off to sleep. When she awoke it was bright day, the sea-breeze playing softly through a honeysuckle that covered the open window, filled the room with a pleasant perfume, and cooled her heated brow. She looked out on the scarcely ruffled bay, and saw the fishing-boats standing out to sea, while on shore all were busy launching or stowing away tackle; the very children aiding where they could, carrying down baskets, or such small gear as their strength could master. It was life and movement, and cheerfulness too—for so the voices sounded in the thin morning air—not a tone of complaint, not one utterance that indicated discontent, and the very cheer which accompanied the sliding craft as she rushed down to the sea seemed to come from hearts that were above repining. The scene was better to her than all her self-arguing. There they were, the very class she sprang from; the men and women like her own nearest kindred; the very children recalling the days when she played barefooted on the beach, and chased the retiring waves back into the sea. They were there, toiling ever on, no hope of any day of better fortune, no thought of any other rest than the last long sleep of all, and why should *she* complain? That late life of luxury and splendor was not without its drawbacks. The incessant watchfulness it exacted, lest in some unguarded moment she should forget the part she was playing—and part it was—the ever-present need of that insidious flattery by which she maintained her influence over Sir Within, and, above all, the dread of her humble origin being discovered, and becoming the table-talk of the servants' hall. These were a heavy price to pay for a life of luxurious indulgence.

“Here, at least,” cried she, “I shall be real. I am the niece and the adopted daughter of the lord of the soil; none can gainsay or deny me; a Luttrell of Arran, I can assert myself against the world; poverty is only an infliction when side by side with affluence; we are the great and the

rich here. Let me only forget the past, and this life can be enjoyable enough. I used to fancy, long ago, as I walked the garden alone at Dinashlyn, that no condition of life would ever find me unprepared to meet it. Here is a case to prove my theory; and now to be an Arran islander.”

As she said this, she began to arrange her room, and place the different articles in it more to her own taste. Her care was to make her little chamber as comfortable as she could. She was rather an adept in this sort of achievement—at least she thought she could impart to a room a character distinctly her own, giving it its *cachet* of homeliness, or comfort, or elegance, or simplicity, as she wished it. The noise of her preparations brought Molly to her aid, and she despatched the amazed countrywoman to bring her an armful of the purple heath that covered the mountain near, and as many wild flowers as she could find.

“To-morrow, Molly,” said she, “I will go in search of them myself, but to-day I must put things to rights here. Now, Molly,” said she, as they both were busied in filling two large jugs with the best flowers they could find, “remember that I’m an old maid.”

“Lawk, miss, indeed you arn’t!”

“Well, never mind, I mean to be just as particular, just as severe as one; and remember, that wherever I put a table, a chest of drawers, or even a cup with a flower in it, you must never displace it. No matter how careless I may seem, leave everything here as you find it.”

“That’s the master’s own way, miss; his honor would go mad if I touched a book as he was readin’.”

It was a very pleasant flattery that the poor woman thus unconsciously insinuated, nor could anything have been more in time, for Kate was longing to identify herself with the Luttrells, to be one of them in their ways, and their very prejudices.

Scarcely had Molly left the room than a light tap came to the door, and a weak voice asked—

“May I come in?”

Kate hastened to open it, but she was anticipated, and her uncle slowly entered, and stood before her.

“My dear, dear uncle,” cried she, taking his hand, and pressing it to her lips.

He pressed her in his arms, and kissed her forehead twice, and then, with a hand on either shoulder, held her for a moment at arms’ length, while he looked at her. Hers was not a nature to flinch under such a scrutiny, and yet she blushed at last under the steadiness of his gaze.

"Let us sit down," said he, at length : and he handed her to a seat with much courtesy. "Had I seen you, Miss Luttrell—"

"Oh, sir, say Kate—call me Kate," cried she, eagerly.

"Had I seen you before, Kate," continued he—and there was a touch of feeling as he spoke the name—"I do not think I could have dared to ask you to come here!"

"Oh, dear uncle! have I so disappointed you?"

"You have amazed me, Kate. I was not prepared to see you as you are. I speak not of your beauty, my child: I was prepared for that. It is your air, your bearing, that look, that reminds me of long, long ago. It is years since I saw a lady, my dear Kate, and the sight of you has brought up memories I had believed were dead and buried."

"Then I do not displease you, uncle?"

"I am angry with myself, child. I should never have brought you to this barbarism."

"You have given me a home, sir," said she fondly; but he only sighed, and she went on—"a home and a name!"

"A name! Yes," said he proudly, "a name that well befits you, but a home—how unworthy of you! What ignorance in me not to know that you would be like this!" And again he gazed at her with intense admiration. "But see, my child, to what this life of groveling monotony conduces. Because I had not seen you and heard your voice, I could not picture to my poor besotted mind that, besides beauty, you should have that gracefulness the world deems higher than even beauty. Nay, Kate, I am no flatterer; and, moreover, I will not speak of this again."

"I will try to make you satisfied that you did well to send for me, sir," said she meekly; and her heart felt almost bursting with delight at the words of praise she had just heard.

"How did you induce them to part with you?" asked he, calmly.

"I gave no choice in the matter, sir. I showed your letter to Sir Within Wardle, and he would not hear of my leaving. I tried to discuss the matter, and he only grew impatient. I hinted at what your letter had vaguely insinuated—a certain awkwardness in my position—and this made him downright angry. We parted, and I went to my room. Once alone, I took counsel with myself. The result was, that I wrote that letter which you received; and I came away the same morning I wrote it."

"Alone?"

"Yes, sir, alone."

"And without a leave-taking?"

"Even so, sir. It was the only way in which I could have come, and I had made up my mind to it."

"There was something of the Luttrell there!" said he turning his eyes full upon her features, which now had caught an expression of calm and resolute meaning. "You will become the name, Kate!"

"It shall be my endeavor, sir."

"And yet," added he, after a pause, "you were very happy there. Tell me the sort of life you used to lead."

"One day will serve for all, uncle; they were exactly alike. My mornings were all my own. If my masters came I studied, or I dismissed them as I pleased; if I felt indisposed to read, I sung; if I did not like music, I drew; if I did not care for drawing landscape, I caricatured my master and made a doggerel poem on his indignation. In a word, I trifled over the day till luncheon. After that I rode in the woods, alone if I could, sometimes with Sir Within; often I had time to do both. Then came dressing—a long affair—for I was expected to be fine enough for company each day, though we saw no one. After that, most wearisome of all the day, came dinner—two hours and a half—services of which we never ate; wines we did not care to drink, but all repeated regularly; a solemn mock banquet my guardian—so I called him—loved immensely, and would have prolonged, if he but knew how, till midnight. Evening brought our one guest, a French abbé, with whom I sung or played chess till I could engage Sir Within and himself in a discussion about Mirabeau or St. Just, when I would slip away and be free. Then, if the night were moonlit, I would drive out in the park, or have a row on the lake; if dark, I would have the conservatory lighted, set the fountains a-playing, and drive the gardener distracted by 'awakening' all his drowsy plants. In a word, I could do what I pleased, and I pleased to do whatever struck me at the moment. I ordered all that I liked from town—books, dress, objects of art, prints—and was just as weary of them all before I saw them as after they had palled upon me. It was a life of intense indulgence, and I'm not sure if one could but fight off occasional *ennui*, that it wasn't the happiest thing could be made of existence, for it was very dreamy withal, very full of innumerable futures, all rose-colored, all beautiful."

"And what are you to make of this?" asked Luttrell, almost sternly, as he moved



his arm around to indicate the new realm about her. "Here there is no luxury, no wealth, none of the refinement that comes of wealth, not one of the resources that fill the time of cultivated leisure; all is hardship, privation, self-denial. Go abroad, too, beyond the walls of this poor old ruin, and it will be to witness misery and destitution greater still."

"I am going to try if I shall not like the real conflict better than the mock combat," said she, calmly.

"What a change will be your life here, my poor child—what a change! Let it not, however, be worse than it need be. So far as this poor place will permit, be your own mistress—live in your own fashion—keep your own hours—come to me only when you like, never from any sense of duty. I am too inured to solitude to want companionship, though I can be grateful when it is offered me. I have a few books—some of them may interest you; my pursuits, too—what once were my pursuits," said he with a sigh, "might amuse you. At all events," added he, rising, "try—try, if you can bear it; it need not be your prison if you cannot."

He again kissed her forehead, and, motioning a good-bye with his hand, moved slowly away.

"Perhaps I shall acquit myself better than he thinks," said she to herself. "Perhaps—who knows if I may not find some place or thing to please me here? It is very grand 'savagery,' and if one wanted to test their powers of defying the world in every shape, this is the spot. What is this you have brought me to eat, Molly?"

"It's a bit of fried skate, miss, and I'm sorry it's no better, but the potatoes is beautiful."

"Then let me have them and some milk. No milk—is that so?"

"There's only one cow, miss, on the island, and she's only milked in the evening; but St. Finbar's Well is the finest water ever was tasted."

"To your good health, then, and St. Finbar's!" said she, lifting a goblet to her lips. "You are right, Molly; it is ice-cold and delicious!" And now, as she began her meal, she went on inquiring which of the men about the place would be most likely as a gardener, what things could be got to grow, on which side came the worst winds, and where any shelter could be found. "Perhaps I shall have to take to fishing, Molly," said she, laughing, "for something I must do."

"You could make the nets, anyhow, miss," said Molly, in admiration of the

white and graceful hands, and thinking what ought to be their most congenial labor.

"I can row a boat well, Molly," said Kate, proudly.

"Whatever you'd do, you'd do it well, God bless you!" cried the other; for, in that hearty delight in beauty, so natural to the Irish peasant nature, she imagined her to be perfection, and the honest creature turned, ere she left the room, to give her a look of admiration little short of rapture.

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## CHAPTER XLVI.

### THE STRANGER AT THE WELL.

BEFORE a couple of weeks passed over, Kate had contrived to divide her days so regularly, to establish for herself a certain routine of little duties, that the time slipped by—as the time ever will do in monotony—unfelt. The season was the autumn, and the wild hills and mountains were gorgeous in all the brilliant colors of the ever-varied heaths. In the little clefts and valleys, too, where shelter favored, foxgloves and purple mallows grew with a rare luxuriance, while on every side was met the arbutus, its crimson berries hanging in festoons over rock and crag. The sudden unexpected sight of the sea, penetrating by many a fissure, as it were, between the mountains, gave unceasing interest to the wild landscape, and over the pathless moors that she strayed, not a living thing to be seen, was the sense of being the first wayfarer who had ever trod these wastes.

As Kate wandered whole days alone, over and over again came the doubt across her, which was it—the brilliant past, with all its splendor and luxury, or the solitary present—was the dream? Surely they could not both be real! Was the bygone a fancy built out of some gorgeous fragments of things read, heard, or imagined, or was this—this actual scene around her—a vision that was to move past, and leave her to awake to all her former splendor?

Great as the revulsion was to her former life, it was in nothing greater than in the difference between her uncle's cold, sad, distant manner, for so after the first meeting had it become, and the ever-watchful anxiety, the courteous attention to her slightest wish, of Sir Within.

She never ceased canvassing with herself how he had borne her desertion; whether he had sunk under it into a hopeless despondency, or called upon his pride to sus-

tain him above any show of indignation. Reading it as the world must read it, there never was such ingratitude; but then the world could never know the provocation, nor ever know by what personal sacrifice she had avenged the slight passed upon her. "My story," said she, "can never be told; his, he may tell how it suits him."

At moments, a sort of romantic exaltation and a sense of freedom would make her believe that she had done well to exchange the splendid bondage of the past for the untrammelled liberty of the present; and then, at other times, the terrible contrast would so overcome her, that she would sit and cry as if her heart was breaking.

"Would my 'old Gardy' pity or exult over me if he saw me now? What would he, who would not suffer me to tread on an uncarpeted step, say if he saw me alone, and poorly clad, clambering up these rugged cliffs to reach some point, where, for an instant, I may forget myself? Surely he would not triumph over my fall!

"Such a life as this is meant to expiate great crimes. Men are sent to wild and desolate islands in the ocean, to wear out days of hopeless misery, because they have warred against their fellows. But what have I done? whom have I injured? Others had friends to love and to guide them; I had none. The very worst that can be alleged against me is, that I was rash and headstrong—too prone to resent; and what has it cost me!

"My uncle said, indeed, this need not be my prison if I could not endure its privations. But what did that mean—what alternative did he point to? Was it that I was to go lower still, and fall back upon all the wretchedness I sprang from? That, never! The barren glory of calling myself a Luttrell may be a sorry price for forfeited luxury and splendor; but I have it, and I will hold it. I am a Luttrell now, and one day, perhaps, these dreary hills shall own me their mistress."

In some such thoughts as these, crossed and recrossed by regrets and half-shadowed hopes, she was returning one night to the Abbey, when Molly met her. There was such evident anxiety and eagerness in the woman's face, that Kate quickly asked her—

"What is it? What has happened?"

"Nothing, miss, nothing at all. 'Tis only a man is come. He's down at the Holy Well, and wants to speak to you."

"Who is he? What is he?"

"I never seen him before, miss, but he comes from beyant there"—she motioned towards the mainland of Ireland—"and says that you know him well."

"Have you told my uncle of him?"

"No, miss, for the man said I was to tell no living soul but yourself, and to tell you quick, too, for he was in a hurry, and wanted to get away with the evening's tide, and his boat was more than a mile off."

"Molly Ryan," said the girl, calmly, almost sternly, "you heard the orders that my uncle gave. You heard him tell me that I was not to see, nor speak to, nor hold any intercourse with any of those belonging to my mother's family. Is this man one of them?"

"No, miss. 'Tis what I asked him. 'Tis the very first question I put to him. And he said, 'I'm no more to them than you are, Mrs. Ryan,' says he; 'and what's more,' says he, 'if it's any comfort to you to know it, I don't even come from this part of Ireland; so you may make yourself easy about that,' says he. I was puttin' more questions to him, and he stopped me, and said, 'You're just wasting precious time,' says he, 'and if she comes back and finds it too late'—he meant yourself, miss—'she won't forgive you in a hurry for what you've done, for I can't come here again.'"

"You are sure and certain that he was not one of those I spoke of?"

"I know them all well, miss—barrin' the three that was transported—and he's not any of them I ever saw before."

"But he might exactly be one of those who *was* transported, and certainly if I knew that I'd not see him."

"He swore to me he wasn't, miss; and what's more, he said that what he came about wasn't his own business at all, but concerned *you*. That's his whistle now—he gave one a while ago—and he said, 'When I give three,' says he, 'I'm gone, for I'll not lose the tide, whether she comes or not.'"

"Go back to the house, Molly. I'll go down and speak to him."

"Wouldn't you let me follow you, miss, to be near in case of anything?"

"No, Molly. I'm no coward; and I know, besides, that no man who meant harm to me would ever come here to attempt it."

"At any rate, he'd never go back again;" said the woman fiercely. "Don't be long, miss, or I'll be uneasy."

Kate now turned aside, and hastened down a little steep path which led to the Holy Well. The well itself was a sort of shrine built over a little spring, and shaded by a clump of dwindled oak-trees—almost the only ones in the island. As Kate drew



nigh, she saw a man walking up and down beneath the trees, with the quick short step that implied impatience. It was her gift never to forget a face, and in one glance she recognized one she had not seen for years—O'Rorke of Vinegar Hill.

"I thought you'd never come," cried he, as she descended the steps that led down to the well. "I have been waiting here about an hour!"

He held out his hand to shake hands with her, but she drew back, and crossing her shawl in front of her, showed that she declined this greeting.

"Are you too proud to shake hands with me?" asked he, insolently.

"Whatever you have to say to me can be said just as well without."

"What if I wouldn't say it, then, Kitty O'Hara? What if I was to go back the way I came, and leave you to rue the day you insulted me? Do you know, young woman, that it wasn't on my own account I came here—that it was to serve others?"

"They chose a bad messenger if they thought you'd be a welcome one."

"May I never see glory if I'm not tempted to turn away and leave you without telling one word I came for. Where's John Luttrell? for I think I'll tell it to himself."

"My uncle is at the Abby, if you want him."

"Your uncle!" said he, jeeringly. "Why wasn't he your uncle when you were up at Cush-ma-Creena, without a shoe to your foot, or enough rags to cover you well? You were bare up to this, when I saw you last." And he put his hand to his knee.

"It was a national costume!" said she with a quiet laugh, "and a patriot like Mr. O'Rorke should not find fault with it."

"Be gorra, it was your own self said that! and it was a lie they tould when they said you were altered!" And almost as if by magic the fellow's ill temper gave way, and he laughed heartily. "Listen to me now, Miss O'Hara, or Miss Luttrell, or whatever you call yourself."

"My name is Luttrell," said she calmly.

"Well, Luttrell, then; it's the same to me. As I told you already, I came here more on *your* account than my own; and here's what brought me. You know that lodge, or cottage, or whatever they call it, that Vyner built up here in the glen? Well, there's creditors of his now wanting to get possession of it."

"Creditors of Sir Gervais Vyner? Impossible!"

"Possible, or impossible, it's true, that I

can vouch for, for I saw the bailiffs that came down with the notices. At any rate, your old grandfather thought that after Vyner himself *he* had the best right to the house and the bit of land, for Vyner told him one day that he'd settle it on you for a marriage portion, and there was others by when he said it; so your grandfather went up and told Tom Crowe, the attorney, how it was, and Tom said, 'Keep it open, Malone,' says he—'keep it open till we see what's to be done in it. Don't let the other creditors get a hold of the place till I get an opinion for you.' And on that, old Peter goes back and gets a few boys together, and they go down to the glen just in time to see the sub-sheriff, Barty Lambert, riding up the lawn, with six or eight men after him. The minute Lambert saw your grandfather, he cried out, 'Here's Peter, "the Smasher";' save yourselves, boys!' And he rode his horse at a wall, jumped it, and made off as hard as he could. Two of the others followed, but the rest stood their ground. Old Peter then stepped out, and ordered them to lay down their arms, and give up the writ, and whatever papers they had. Some were for this, and some against; and Peter, wanting to finish the business at once, stepped up to Joe Maher, the sub-sheriff's man, and said: 'Joe,' says he, 'I made you ate a process once before, wax and all, and maybe I'd have to do the same now. Give it up this minute, or——' Just then Maher drew out a pistol, but before he could level it, old Peter was in on him, and they grappled each other, and a terrible struggle it was, for the others never interfered, but left them to fight it out fair! At last the pistol went off, and the ball passed through old Peter's cheek; but if it did, it didn't prevent him getting over Joe's breast as he fell, and beating his head against the ground, till he rolled over him himself out of weakness and fatigue; and when Peter came to himself—Maher didn't, for he was dead!"

"Dead!" exclaimed she—"murdered!"

"Not a bit murdered, but killed fair! Anyhow, the others ran away, and old Peter, as soon as he was able, made off too, and got into the mountains, and now the police is after him, and a reward of fifty pounds offered for him, as if he was a wild beast. British law and justice, my darling; the beautiful code of laws that was made to civilize Ireland four centuries ago, and hasn't done much to talk about up to this!"

"This is a very dreadful story," said she, after some time of silence. "And what is to become of this poor old man?"

"That depends on you, Miss Kate—Luttrell," added he, after a brief struggle with himself.

"On me? How can it depend upon me?"

"Here's how it is, then. If they catch Peter, what between the character he has already, and what's known of his sons, they'll make short work of it. He'll swing, as sure as you are there this minute. So there's nothing for it but to get him away to America by any of the ships coming round from the north, and it would be easy enough for him to get on board; but what's not so easy, Miss Kate, is to pay his passage. He hasn't one shilling in the world. The boys got together last night, and all they could make up was eleven and fourpence; there it is, and a pawn ticket for an old pistol that nobody would give half a crown for——"

"But what can I do?" broke she in, passionately. "What can I do?"

"Help him with a few pounds. Give it or lend it; but let him have enough to make his escape, and not go to the 'drop' for want of a little help."

"There's not one belonging to him poorer than me," began she. "Why do you shake your head? Do you disbelieve me?"

"I do; that's just it."

"Shall I swear it—shall I take my oath to you, that except the trifle that remains to me of what I had to pay my journey here, I have not one farthing in the world?"

"Then what's the fine story of the great castle where you were living, and the grand clothes and the jewels you used to wear? Do you mean to tell me that you left them all behind when you came away?"

"It is true. I did so."

"And came off with nothing?"

She nodded, and he stared at her, partly in astonishment, and partly with some show of admiration; for even to his nature this conduct of hers displayed a degree of character that might be capable of great sacrifices.

"And so," said he, after a pause, "you can do nothing for him?"

"What can I do?" asked she, almost imploringly.

"I'll tell you," said he, calmly. "Go up to John Luttrell, and say, 'My grandfather is hiding from the police; they have a warrant out against him, and if he's taken he's sure to be condemned; and we know what mercy a Malone will meet at the assizes of Donegal.' Tell him—it's just the one thing he'll care for—that it wouldn't be pleasant for him to be sum-

moned as a witness to character, and have to declare in open court that he married the prisoner's daughter. Say a ten-pound note, or even five, is a cheap price to pay for escaping all this disgrace and shame; and tell him, besides, when old Peter goes, you've seen the last of the family. He'll think a good deal of that, I promise you——"

"Stop," said she, boldly. "You know nothing of the temper of the man you talk of; but it is enough that I tell you he has got no money. Listen to me, O'Rorke. It was but yesterday he sent off a little ornament his wife used to wear, to have it sold to pay a county rate they were threatening to distrain for——"

"Where did you get all your law?" said he, jeeringly; but, not heeding the gibe, she went on—

"I would have offered him the few shillings I had, but I was ashamed and afraid."

"How much is it?"

"A little more than two pounds. You shall have it; but remember, I can do no more. I have nothing I could sell—not a ring, nor a brooch—not even a pin."

"It's better than nothing," muttered he, surlily, below his breath. "Let me have it."

"It's up at the Abbey. Wait, and I'll fetch it. I'll not be an instant." And before he could answer she was gone. In less time than seemed possible she was back again, breathless and agitated. "Here it is," said she, placing the money in his hand. "If you should see him, tell him how grieved I am to be of such little service to him, and give him this silk handkerchief; tell him I used to wear it round my neck, and that I sent a kiss to him in it—poor fellow! I almost wish I was with him," muttered she, as she turned away her head, for the hot tears filled her eyes—she felt weak and sick.

"I'm afraid this will do little good," said O'Rorke, looking at the money in his open palm.

"And yet I can do no more!" said she, with deep sorrow.

"Wouldn't you venture to tell your uncle how it is? Sure he might see that the disgrace, if this old man is caught and brought to trial, will spread to himself?"

"I dare not—I will not," said she, firmly.

"Then I suppose the story is true, though old Peter wouldn't believe it, that John Luttrell made you sign a paper never to see nor speak to one of your own again?"



"I signed no paper, sir, nor ever was asked to sign any. What pledges I have given my uncle are not to be discussed with you."

"Well, you don't deny it, that's clear."

"Have you anything more that you wish to say to me?" asked she, controlling every show of temper.

"No—not a word," said he, turning to go away. "Only, if I see old Peter—it's not unlike that I may—he'll be asking me how tall you are, and how you're looking. Will you just come out from under the shade of that tree and let me have a fair look at you?"

Kate took off her bonnet and threw her shawl from her, and stood forward with an air as composed and assured as might be.

"Shall I tell you what I'll say to him?" said O'Rorke, with an impudent half-grin on his face.

"You need not, sir. It has no interest whatever for me. Good-bye!" She took up her shawl as she spoke, and walked slowly away.

O'Rorke looked after her; the mocking expression of his features changed to a look of almost hatred, and he muttered some angry words between his teeth. "I read you right, Miss Katty, when you weren't much higher than my knee. I read you right! You may have plenty in love with you, but by my conscience you'll never have Tim O'Rorke."

## CHAPTER XLVII.

### HOW KATE WAS TASKED.

For several days after this scene, Kate thought of nothing but her old grandfather, whether he still wandered an out-cast through the wild mountains of Donegal, or had succeeded in making his escape to America. At moments her anxieties became so intense, from fears lest she herself might prove blamable if his escape could not be effected, that she was almost resolved to go to her uncle and reveal all to him. Luttrell's manner had, however, been unusually cold and reserved for some time back, and she had not courage to take this step. Indeed, whole days would now pass with nothing but a mere greeting between them, and at length, one entire day went over without her seeing him at all. It was said that he was very busy, had received a number of letters by the post, and was engaged a great part of the

night in answering them. On the morning that followed this day, Kate was preparing the little basket in which she carried her luncheon with her to the hills, whenever she meditated a longer excursion than usual, when her uncle entered hastily, and with evident signs of agitation in his face.

"I have had disagreeable tidings," said he, with a forced calm of manner and voice. "I would have kept them from you if I could, but it is not possible. Some weeks ago there was a resistance to the sheriff by a party of country people, led on by that old man—no stranger to such conflicts—Malone. There was a fight, and a man, the sheriff's bailiff, was killed. There was no doubt who killed him. It was Malone. He made his escape, however, into West Donegal, waiting, as it was supposed, till by some ship passing—north about—he could reach America. The police, however, got possession of his plan, secured a revenue-cutter, and, lying in wait, arrested him in the very act of getting on board. Another struggle ensued here, and Malone fought with such desperation that one of the men is badly wounded, and another drowned, for the small boat was upset in the conflict, and it is said that, had not Malone's arm been broken by a pistol-shot, he might yet have escaped by swimming around the ship, which was in full trim to have made sail when he should get on board. They captured him, however, and he is now in gaol; he will be tried at the next assizes, and of his fate there can be no doubt."

"Condemned?" said she, in a low voice.

"Yes," he continued, "that he must be executed is also clear. The very name he bears is an indictment against him. The fellow, however, is full of the impression that everything he has done was in self-defense; he maintains that he merely resisted a personal attack, and he has the madness, in the face of all the convictions that have befallen his family, to declare that he belongs to a most irreproachable set of people, long known and respected in this neighborhood, and he has the daring effrontery—here in my hand is the letter that conveys it—to require that I should come forward to vouch for his character and acknowledge the relationship between us. Nor is this all," added he, in a voice husky with passion; "he demands—it is no prayer, no entreaty—he demands from me a sum sufficient to defray the costs of his defense. He asserts that though he himself is ready to take his chance, and, if need be, brave the worst the law can do to

him, it might not suit Luttrell of Arran to sit under a two hours' cross-examination, and have his whole life laid bare for the amusement of the world. You cannot, without knowing the man, believe how seriously these threats are uttered; he is the most recklessly daring fellow I ever knew, and I can well conceive what questions he will suggest to his counsel to put to me if I once appear on the table. To-night I am to give my answer. The man he sends over here to receive it is the most offensive messenger he could have found had he searched Europe from one end to the other. He is a fellow named O'Rorke, who once before placed me in a position almost similar to what I am now threatened with, and drove me to seek the shelter of this desolate spot. On that occasion, however, I escaped the indignity of personal exposure, and of that open shame, that rise now before me. The demand is precise and clear. Twenty pounds down, fifty on the day before the trial comes on, and my name to a bill for fifty more if the jury bring in a verdict of not guilty. For this he pledges himself—these are his words—'never to be any longer a charge to me nor mine.' I am well aware that the letter I hold here is not his own, for he cannot write, but I can trace through certain expressions—and, above all, certain repetitions—phrases inserted at his instance."

"Am I spoken of, sir? Does he allude to me at all?"

"Never; not once. Indeed, he even says, 'I hope that whatever you decide to do in this business will be your honor's own mind and nobody else's, for I write this in confidence between man and man, and only want Yes or No between us.'"

"And what will you do, sir? Have you come to any resolve?"

"Yes, I have made up my mind as to what is to be done immediately. I have examined my agent's accounts, and I find that by the eighth of next month I shall have to my credit about seventy pounds. The assizes are fixed for the twelfth. I will give an order for half of this sum at once. Cane will pay it, I have no doubt, when he sees my necessity. I will also engage to pay the remainder on the eighth, the day I shall receive it; but on one condition, Kate—only one condition—which is, that no matter what course the defense may take, I am not to be summoned as a witness. No one knows better than Malone himself how valueless would any testimony of mine be to him; he knows, besides, what detriment it would be to him if I

should be cross-examined; the man's character will not bear sifting, and he is insane to provoke it. If, however, he should persist—and such is the fellow's nature that it is likely he will—in his own plan, we must leave this."

"Leave this! And for where, sir?"

"How can I tell? I only know that I mean to save myself from this shame at any cost. A few days would carry us over to Holland or to France. In either of these I should be safe. I have written to my agent, and consented to all his conditions as to the sale of a certain small estate I possess in Mayo. We must seek out a new banishment, Kate. You will say it can scarcely be drearier than the old one; but you don't know, you could not know, how sorrow endears a spot, and ties it to the heart of him who lives only to mourn! These rugged cliffs, these pathless moors, these barren hills, and sea-lashed promontories, have been my friends for years—the only friends who have never changed to me. Let me now, however, think only of the present. This man is to be here to-night. It is more than likely he will be able to answer me at once, and declare whether Malone will accept my conditions."

"What think you, uncle, if I were to speak with him? Might it not be possible I could make some terms which you wouldn't have patience to treat about?"

"I thought of that, too, Kate, but the man is one of a class you have not met for many a year. It is not that he is not a gentleman, but he is not a peasant. You cannot appeal to him on the claim of honor, and as little on the plea of generosity. He is a cold, harsh, unfeeling fellow, distrustful and false. How could you deal with such a man?"

"A woman will always deal better with a man like this than a fellow-man, if only from the fact that he will be less on his guard before her, and more disposed to think little of her intelligence. Let me try it, uncle."

"You have half persuaded me; but still, Kate, what terms could you propose that I cannot offer myself?"

"True, sir; but I could press them in a way that your pride might not stoop to, and so let me try."

He paused to consider, and she went on:—

"Yes, dear uncle, trust the whole of this negotiation to me; it will be a task far too painful for you. Let me speak to him. Remember that the links that bind me to the class he belongs to have only been loosened a year or two back. I have a



closer view of such men's natures than you could ever have, and in recognizing this he will be franker with me."

"If you really think——"

"I think and I know it, uncle."

"Take this then, Kate," said he, handing her his purse. "It is all the ready money I have. It may help you to deal with him, Kate. I have told you everything. Do the best you can for us." These words he muttered as if to himself, and then turned away and left the room.

Kate spread the money on the table before her, and sat down, supporting her head between her hands, and gazing steadfastly at the pieces. "To think," said she, bitterly—"to think that a few more or a few less of these shall tilt the scale of our fortune, and decide not alone whether we be happy or wretched, but whether we hold a high head in life or stand in a felon's dock! And what scores of them have I not squandered in foolish wastefulness!—sums that any one of them now might rescue this poor old man from a dreadful fate, and set him at liberty. Has not my whole life been just as spendthrift—have I not wasted every gift I possessed, and ended just where I begun?"

"The master sent me," cried Molly, entering, "to say that there's a boat comin' in now, and, maybe, one you know would be aboard of her."

"Very well, Molly. If a stranger should land and ask for his honor or myself, show him in here."

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### HOW THE TASK TRIED HER.

KATE dressed herself with more than usual care—simply, indeed, but with a degree of attention to becomingness that was truly remarkable. Twice did she alter the arrangement of her hair, and more than once did she try what colored ribbon would best suit the style she had chosen. A man might have passed without notice the little details by which she heightened the charms that were natural to her, but a woman would quickly have detected small traits of coquetry in the loose falling curls that fell upon her neck, and the open sleeve that displayed her finely-turned arm; nor would the sprig of dark purple heath she wore in her bosom have escaped the critical eye, well knowing how its sombre coloring "brought out" the transparent brilliancy of the fair skin beneath it.

She had but completed her studied but simple toilet, when Molly ushered into the room, "The strange man, miss, that wants to see the master."

"And that is only to see the mistress, I'm told," added Mr. O'Rorke, as he seated himself, and laid his hat on the floor beside him. It was then that Kate entered, and as the fellow arose to greet her, his looks of admiring wonder sufficiently told what success had waited on her efforts.

"My uncle is not well enough to see you," said she, as she sat down, "but he has told me everything that he would say, and I have ventured to assure him that, as you and I are somewhat old friends, we should soon come to an understanding together; the more as we can have but the same wish in the object before us."

"May I never, but you're grown an elegant woman!" cried O'Rorke. "'Tisn't out of flattery I say it, but I don't think there's your equal in Dublin."

"I'm very proud of your approval," said she, with a faint smile, but with the most perfect composure.

"And it's honest—all honest," added he. "It isn't as if you was made up with paint, and false hair, and fine lace, and stiff silk. There you are, as simple as the turnpike man's daughter, and by the harp of old Ireland, I'll back you against any beauty in St. James's this day."

"My dear Mr. O'Rorke, it's not quite fair to turn my head in this fashion. Don't forget that these are the sort of things I'm not accustomed to hear in this place."

"By my conscience, then, you'll hear them in many another place before you die. Listen to me now, Miss Luttrell. It's a shame and a scandal to them that could help it that you're not at the court of France this day. I'm talking good sense when I say you'd make a sensation there such as they never knew since that old blackguard Louis the Fourteenth gathered all the beauties in the world round him instead of pictures and statues. More by token, he wasn't wrong; flesh and blood beats white marble and canvas easily."

"I suspect I see what sort of a king Mr. O'Rorke would have been!" said she, archly.

"Liberty, first of all, darling," said he, recalled by the personal appeal to the stock theme of his life; "'tis the birthright of the man as he steps on his native earth; 'tis the first whisper of the human heart, whether in the frozen regions of eternal snow, or the sun-scorched plains of the tropics. 'Tis for sacred liberty our fathers fought

for seven centuries, and we'll fight for seven more.

'Erin go Bragh is a nation's cry,  
'Tis millions that sing it in chorus,  
And to that tune, before we die,  
We'll chase the Saxon before us.'

Oh dear! oh dear!" cried he, wiping his brow. "Why did you set me off so? I took an oath on Saturday last that I'd think of nothing but old Peter till the trial was over, and here I am, talking of Erin's woes just as if I was at Burgh Quay, and O'Connell in the chair."

"Let us talk of Peter, then. I am longing to hear of him."

"It's a short story. They caught him at sea, in an open boat; he was making for a brig bound for Newfoundland. They caught him, but they had a fight for it, and they got the worst of it, too. Old Peter wasn't a man to be taken with his arms crossed. But it was all the worse, for Tom Crowe says the last business will go harder with him than the first, and Tom say's what's true. They'd rather hang Peter Malone than any other ten men in the west of Ireland. This is the fifth time they've had him in the dock; but to be sure he had a fine bar the last trial. He had Daniel O'Connell and Dick Sheil."

"And who will defend him now?" asked she, eagerly.

"That's what your uncle Luttrell must answer, Miss Kate; he is the only one who can reply to that question."

"Listen to me now attentively, and I will explain to you my uncle's position; a very few words will suffice, and you are not a man to require more than are necessary. He has by great effort and at heavy sacrifice got a small sum of money——"

"What do you call a small sum?" broke he in. "Is it a hundred?"

"No; not fifty!"

A long whistle was O'Rorke's reply, as he arose and took up his hat.

"You had better hear me out," said she, calmly. "This sum I have here—it is thirty-five pounds; he empowers me to place it in your hands to-day, with the promise of as much more the day before the assizes open."

"And why not at once? Why not now?"

"You shall hear. He desires and demands, in return for this aid, that he be not summoned as a witness on the trial. To call him would be a needless exposure—a mere valueless cruelty."

"It would not," cried the other, fiercely.

"It's not at this time of day any one has

to know the effect of putting a gentleman in the witness-box, when it is a poor laboring man in the dock. Let John Luttrell come into court, and after sitting beside the Chief Baron on the Bench, get up on the table and take his oath that he has known Peter Malone, the prisoner, for more than twenty years, as a hard-working, quiet, decent man, trying to bring up his family respectably, and, indeed, with such a desire to better their condition in life, that he, John Luttrell of Arran, was not ashamed to make one of that same Peter Malone's daughters his wife, so well brought up, so well educated were they——"

"Stop! this cannot be. I tell you it is impossible."

"And why is it impossible? It is true what I am saying. Was Peter Malone's daughter John Hamilton Luttrell's wife or not? There's the whole question. And what sort of a man or gentleman is he that is ashamed to own his wife?"

"Do not speak so loud; and now listen to me. My uncle, for his own good reasons, will not face the exposure of a public trial and the insolence of the Crown lawyers, who would not hesitate to rake up long buried accusations against him, and revive sorrows which even in their decay embitter his life. He will not endure this, and he is right."

"Right to deny a man his chance of life!"

"You know well—none better—how little my uncle's testimony could serve this poor man. His case is too serious for that."

"I won't go over that again," said he, impatiently. "I haven't any time to throw away in arguments. If you put the whole seventy pounds down on the table it would not do! No, it would not. It will take thirty, to begin with, to get Billy Sloane out of the country, and he it is the Crown relies on for the first charge; he saw old Peter strike the bailiff first. M'Nulty is the cheapest of the 'silk gowns,' and he won't come under fifty, and a retainer of ten more. The *Westport Star* wants ten pounds to put in the article threatening the jury, if they don't bring in a verdict of 'Not Guilty,' because, as Mr. Potter says, 'Word it as carefully as you like, it's a contempt of court, and may send me for a year to gaol.' Make money of that, Miss Kitty. Thirty and fifty is eighty, and ten more, ninety, and ten to the newspaper is a hundred; and after that there is the cost to Tom Crowe, and the expenses of the case, not to speak of the daily livin' in the gaol, that's something terrible. There's







The Stranger at the Well.



not a pint of sperits doesn't cost three shillings."

"But if we have no more?—if we have given every farthing we can raise?"

"'Tis a nice confession for an estated gentleman, for the man that writes himself Luttrell of Arran, that, to save his father, or father-in-law, from the death of a felon, he could only scrape together seventy pounds!"

"You have only to look around you, and see how we are living, to see that it is the truth."

"Many a miser that won't give himself bread passes the night counting over his guineas."

"He is no miser, sir," said she, indignantly, for all her self-control failed her at this point. "If he were not a generous gentleman, he would never have made the proposal I have now told you of."

"Tell the generous gentleman, then, to keep his money, young *lady*," and he laid a sarcastic emphasis on the word. "Tell him I'll not touch a shilling of it. And I'll tell you more that you may tell him: say that he'll want it all to buy himself a new suit of clothes to make a decent appearance when he's summoned to come forward at the trial."

"You'd no more dare to utter this insolence to his face, than you'd brave the anger of his people here when they heard he was insulted; and take my word for it, Tim O'Rorke, I'm only hesitating this moment whether I'll not tell them."

As she spoke, she flung wide the window, and looked out upon the shore beneath, where some thirty wild islanders were listlessly lounging and waiting for the tide to ebb.

O'Rorke grew lividly pale at a threat so significant. If there was anything that had a greater terror for him than another, it was a popular vengeance.

"Well, sir, do you like the prospect from this window?" asked she. "Come here, and tell me if it is not interesting."

"It's wild enough, if you mean that," said he, with a forced effort to seem calm.

"Tim O'Rorke," said she, laying her hand on his arm, and looking at him with an expression of kindly meaning, "it is not in their trouble that friends should fall out. I know what affection you have for my poor old grandfather——"

"So, then, you own him?" cried he, scoffingly.

"When did I disown him?"

"Maybe not; but it's the first time since I entered this room that you called him by that name."

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She flushed up; but after a moment, repressing her anger, she said—

"Let us think only of him whose life is in peril. What do you advise?—what do you wish?"

"I have no more to say, Miss Kate. I have told you what the defense will cost, I have told you that we have nobody to look to but yourselves, and *you* have just told me that it's a broken reed we're leaning on, and now I don't think there's much more to be said by either of us."

She leaned her forehead against the wall and seemed deeply lost in thought.

"I mustn't lose the tide, any way," said he, taking up his hat and stick, and laying them on the table. "I may as well put old Peter out of pain, for anxiety is the greatest of all pain, and tell him that John Luttrell won't help him."

"Not will not—say that he cannot help him."

"'Tis little difference it makes whether it's the will or the way is wanting when a drowning man cries out, and nobody gives him a hand. And yet," added he, "it will be hard to persuade old Peter that his daughter's husband could be so cold-hearted. I'm thinking you ought to write a line or two with your own hand, and saying that it was no fault of mine that I didn't bring better news back with me."

She made him no answer, and, after a pause, he went on—

"There's his money, miss—give it back to him; much good may it do him. He has the comfort of thinking that if he didn't get a fortune with his wife, her relations never cost him much either." He moved away towards the door. "Good-bye, Miss Kate. Tell your uncle that Peter's case is the third on the list, and he'll be time enough if he leaves home on the ninth—that will be Tuesday week."

She turned hastily round, and overtook him as he laid his hand on the lock of the door.

"One word—only one word more, O'Rorke!" cried she, impassionately. "I have told you faithfully what my uncle charged me with. I swear to you, before Heaven, I do not know of any help he can offer except this. Now, if there is any way that you can think of to serve this poor old man, say so, and I swear to you again, if it depends on me, I'll do it!"

"Would it be too late to write to Vynner?" asked he, half-doggedly.

"Utterly. He is in Italy. Besides, my uncle tells me he is in some great trouble himself about money."

“What of that other—I forget his name—where you were living last?”

“Sir Within Wardle? Impossible!—impossible!”

“And why?”

“I cannot tell you. But I may say this, that I'd rather beg in the street than I'd stoop to ask him.”

“Isn't he rich?”

“Immensely rich.”

“And he is generous and free of his money, you always said?”

“I never heard of one more so.”

“There's the two things we want—money, and the man that will give it. Sit down there, and write these lines to him: ‘My grandfather is to be tried this assizes on a charge of willful murder. I have no money to pay for his defense. Will you help me?’”

“Oh, no, no! I could not!—I could not!” cried she, covering her face with both her hands.

“Why, it's only this minute you were ready to swear to me that you'd do anything in the world to save him, and now that I've hit on this, you cry out, ‘No—no!’ as if I was proposing something to shame and disgrace you.”

“Shame and disgrace, indeed!” burst she out, as a sickly color came over her, and she looked like one recovering after a fainting-fit.

“Well, I'm no judge of these things,” muttered he, “but I'd like to know what it is that would be harder to feel than the sight of an old man of eighty-two going to the gallows!”

She gave a sharp cry, and held her head with both hands, as if some sudden sharp pang shot through her.

“Do not—do not, Tim O'Rorke! I can't bear it!” she screamed out, in a voice of wild, harsh meaning.

“I'll never ask you again,” said he, slowly; “but maybe the day will come when you'll be sorry that I did not! Good-bye.”

She made no answer, but sat with her face hid in her hands, and turned towards the wall.

“Good-bye, Miss Kate,” repeated he once more; and, opening the door slowly, he went out, and closed it after him.

She never stirred nor raised her head, till, by a rustling sound of the branches at the window, she was startled, and looked up. It was O'Rorke, who was leaning on the sill of the window, and looking in.

“Would you give me a scrap of something you were wearing—a bit of ribbon, or the like; I know you are not fond of

cutting off your hair—to give the old man? He'd rather have it than a crown jewel——”

“Take this!” cried she, snatching up a scissors, and cutting off the long and silky lock that fell in a curl upon her neck; and turning to the table, she folded it neatly in a piece of paper. She took up her pen, too, but the thought that he could not read deterred her; for what she would have written she could not bear that other eyes than his own should trace, and she sat thinking for some minutes, when suddenly, through what train of thought impelled it is not easy to say, she cried out, “Yes, I will do it! Come back—wait a moment—or, better still, leave me to myself an instant, and I shall be ready.”

He left the window, and she sat down at the table. Without a moment's hesitation or reflection she wrote thus:—

“ST. FINBAR'S, ARRAN.

“SIR:—I make no attempt to deprecate your anger, or palliate the wrong I have done you. My offense is one that only a free pardon could cover, and I do not dare to entreat for this. It is for something more and less than forgiveness, I have now to ask you.

“My grandfather, a man of eighty, is in gaol, about to be tried on a charge of felony; he declares his innocence, but having no means to pay counsel, despairs of establishing the fact. My uncle cannot help him; will you?”

“When I think of the time that I had not to speak a wish till I saw it gratified, I sicken over the ingratitude which drives me to approach you as a suppliant, while I promise never again to address you.

“The bearer of the present note will take charge of your answer, should you deign to reply to your unhappy, because unworthy,

“KATE LUTTRELL.”

“Are you ready with the letter?” asked O'Rorke, as he leaned his arms on the window-sill and looked into the room.

“Yes,” said she, folding and addressing it. “You will set out immediately, and deliver this into the hands of Sir Within Wardle, at Dalradern Castle. It is about fourteen miles from Wrexham. Mind! into his own hands, for I am not sure how or by whom he may now be surrounded. As little can I guess what sort of a reply he may give; he may reject my entreaty; he may even refuse to answer it. He would have every right to do either. Let it be your care to note him closely as he reads



my letter, and mark what effect it produces. I shall question you, when you come back, on the minutest details of your meeting—of all that he says, of his manner, of his looks; whether he speaks of me, and how. You know well—few better—how to acquit yourself in such a scene, and be sure that you address your sharpest wits to it. If he be ill and cannot write, tell him that he may trust you with a verbal answer. I have not said so in my note, but *you* may, and he will believe you; he reads men quickly, and he will see that you are in my confidence. If he asks you about me and my life here, answer freely whatever your own judgment prompts; he may question you about the place I live in; tell him what it is like.”

“Don’t give me any more directions, if you don’t want me to forget some of them; only tell me one thing. If he asks me as to what amount might be required for the defense, am I to say the highest figure or the lowest?”

“You are to adhere to the strict truth, O’Rorke, and for this reason, if for no other, that you will be in the presence of a man well accustomed to deal with craftier men than yourself, and that all your attempts at deception would go for nothing.”

“And if he says: ‘Why don’t Mr. Luttrell come forward to help one of his own near relations?’”

“He will not ask this.”

“And why wouldn’t he?”

“Because he is a gentleman, sir.”

“Oh, that’s the reason,” said O’Rorke, sneeringly. “Well, I think by this time I know as much about him as I am likely to do till I see him, so I’ll be going.”

“Have you any money for this journey?”

“Of course I haven’t. I suppose I’ll need five pounds to come and go.”

“Take ten,” said she, pushing the notes towards him. “I will try and settle matters with my uncle later.”

“By St. Peter! you ought to have been born a lady with a fine estate,” cried he, rapturously. “You have a grand way of doing things, anyhow!”

She smiled at the flattery; it was not at all displeasing to her, and she held out her hand to him as she said “Good-bye.”

“You’ll see me here by Saturday next, if I’m alive.”

“May it be with good news,” said she, waving a good-bye. “My love to old grandfather.” Scarcely was the last word uttered, when Luttrell opened the door stealthily, and peeped in.

“How long this interview has lasted, Kate!” said he; “what have you done?”

“You must wait till next Saturday, uncle, for my answer, and I hope it will content you.”

“Why not tell me now?”

“Because I could not tell you enough, sir.”

“I am not wont to be treated as a child whose fortunes are to be in the keeping of others!” said he, sternly. “When Saturday comes, it may be to hear that which I cannot approve of—which I will not accept.”

“Yes, sir, you will,” said she, calmly. “You charged me to do my best, and when I shall have done so you will not discredit me.”

## CHAPTER XLIX.

### MR. O’RORKE ABROAD.

ALBEIT Mr. O’Rorke had no partiality for the Saxon, he did not dislike his English tour. It was an occasion for much enjoyment in the present, with a prospect of considerable expatriation over in the future. He traveled—and it is a mode which occasionally enhances the enjoyment of travel—at another’s expense; and he indulged in many little luxuries not known to his daily life.

It was towards the close of a glorious day, mellow in all the richness of autumn, that he first caught sight of the great massive towers and battlemented walls of Dalradern Castle. The setting sun had just fallen on the windows, and the vast frontage was illuminated with a golden glory that relieved the stern severity of the heavy masonry, and gave warmth and color to its cold and stately feudalism.

“And she left this for that rock—that miserable rock in the ocean!” cried he. “What could possess her to do it? She was no fool—that was clear enough. It was no fool could have made herself what she was; and what else but folly could make any one exchange that princely place for the wild and dreary desolation of Arran? There’s more in this than one sees on the surface,” thought O’Rorke. “It’s not in human nature to believe that she did not enjoy the grand life such a house must supply—the very aspect of it suggested everything that wealth could compass, and it could not be that she did not attach herself to its enjoyments. No; there must have been a reason, or something that she thought was a reason, for it. Ay, and that same reason, whatever it was, must have been the source of her great unwillingness

to address Sir Within. She left him in anger, that's plain enough; and about what could it be? Had she wearied him? Had her temper, or her caprice, or her extravagance tired out his patience? Was it that the self-indulgence of the spoiled child had at last revolted the very spirit that had spoiled her? or was it"—and, to O'Rorke's thinking, this seemed not improbable—"Sir Within had made her some proposals, not merely offensive to her dignity, but an outrage to her ambition? If I know you, Miss Katty," said he, aloud, "you never lived in that grand house without dreaming of the time you'd be the mistress of it. And what made you give up the game? That's what I'd like to know, and it's what I'll try to find out before I leave this."

As he drew near the castle, the stately grandeur of the place impressed him still more. Never had he seen such magnificent timber—never before had he witnessed that marvelous order and propriety which give even to a vast park all the elegance of a garden. The clumps of flowery shrubs, in spots that few would probably ever visit—rare trees in out-of-the-way places—seemed to show what immense resources existed where so much that was valuable could be squandered uncareful for.

One of the keepers, by whom he was accompanied from the gate-lodge, discoursed to him freely as they went along, telling of the hundreds of acres enclosed within the demesne, the extensive gardens and pleasure-grounds, to keep which in order required quite a regiment of laborers, "and all," as the man added, "for an old man that sits all day at a window, and only comes out of an evening to take the air on a terrace, never sees any one, nor goes anywhere; and won't even dine with his young relation, Mr. Ladarelle, who is down here for the shooting."

O'Rorke skirmished, cautiously, of course, to ascertain whether the man could tell him anything of Kate, but he found that he had only lately entered the service, and never heard of her. He had heard, however, that Sir Within was greatly changed of late; some heavy blow, of what sort he knew not, had befallen him, and he now neither rode out nor drove, did not care to enter the garden, and, in fact, seemed weary of his life, and indifferent to everything.

"There he is now on the terrace, taking his evening walk. I mustn't go any farther with you; but when you pass the two large oaks yonder, you'll see the great entrance, ring the bell, and some one will come to you."

O'Rorke went on his way, but had not gone far when he was overtaken by a servant in livery, who, bare-headed and almost breathless from running, demanded angrily, "What he was doing there?"

"I have a letter for your master that I wish to deliver at once," replied he, firmly.

"Give it here, and wait for your answer round there, by the stables."

"No such thing, my smart fellow; I am to deliver your letter into your master's hands, and I will give it to no other."

"You're more likely, then, to take it back with you," said the other, jeeringly, and turned away.

"Tell your master that my letter comes from Ireland," cried O'Rorke after him, "and that it is one won't brook delay." But whether the fellow heard him or not he could not say.

In less time, however, than he believed it possible for the man to have given his message, came a demure-looking man in black from the castle, who beckoned him to come forward.

"Are you the bearer of a letter from Ireland?" asked he.

"Yes. It is to be given to Sir Within Wardle's own hand."

"Come along with me, then."

O'Rorke was too much excited by the thought of the presence he was about to stand in, to note more than generally the spacious hall and the immense marble stairs that led from it. The lofty corridor, whose windows of stained glass threw a rose-colored glow over walls and pavement, together with the rich perfume of flowers, made his head feel confused and addled.

As the servant ushered him on the terrace, he whispered, "Go forward," and then retired. O'Rorke advanced to where Sir Within was now seated, one arm leaning on the table beside him.

"You said you came from Ireland," asked he, in a weak voice; "is it from Arran?"

"It is, sir."

"Thank Heaven!" muttered he to himself. "Give me your letter. Go down yonder"—and he pointed to the extreme end of the terrace—"I shall call you when I want you."

When O'Rorke reached the end of the terrace, he turned a cautious, furtive look towards the old man, who still sat with the unopened letter in his hand, and did not move. At last he broke the seal, but such seemed the agitation of his feelings that he could scarcely read it, for he twice laid it on the table and hid his face between his hands. Suddenly he looked up and



beckoned O'Rorke towards him, and said :—

"Tell me, my good man, do you know the contents of this letter?"

"I know what it is about, sir."

"Were you with her when she wrote it?"

"I was."

"Was it of her own will—at the suggestion of her own thoughts? I mean, did she write this willingly, and without a struggle?"

"That she didn't! She wrote it just because that without it her old grandfather wouldn't have even a chance for his life! She wrote it, crying bitterly all the time, and sobbing as if her heart was breaking."

The old man turned away his head, but with his hand motioned to the other to cease speaking. Either O'Rorke, however, did not understand the gesture, or he unheeded it. He went on :—

"'I'd rather,' says she, 'see my right hand cut off, than see it write these lines,' says she."

"There! there!" burst in Sir Within, "that will do—that is enough—say no more of this!"

But O'Rorke, intent on finding out what had been the relations between them, and why they had been severed, in spite of all admonition, continued :—

"'Sure, Miss Kate,' says I, 'it is not one that was once so kind and so generous to you will see you in trouble for a trifle like this.' For of course it would be a trifle to your honor!"

"And yet she felt it a humiliation to ask me?" said he, despondingly.

"She did, indeed! 'For,' says she, 'he may refuse me.'"

"No, no; she never thought that; she knew me better than to believe it."

"Well, indeed, sir, it was what I thought myself, and I said in my own mind, 'it's more ashamed she is than afraid.'"

"Ashamed of what?" cried Sir Within, passionately. "What has shame to do with it?"

The subtle peasant saw through what a channel the misconception came, and, still bent on tracing out the mysterious tie between them, said :—

"After all, sir, for a young lady, and a handsome one, too, to ask a great favor of a gentleman not belonging to her, kith or kin, is a thing that bad tongues would make the worst of if they got hold of it."

Sir Within's sallow cheek flushed up, and in a broken voice he said :—

"Bad tongues are only tyrants to those who cannot brave them. Miss Kate Luttrell is not of their number. You shall

soon see if these same bad tongues have any terrors for me."

"I'm a poor man, but I wasn't so always," said O'Rorke, "and I know well that it was slander and lying crushed *me*."

The diversion was intended to have awakened some curiosity as to his former condition, but Sir Within was perfectly indifferent on the subject. All the interest the messenger had in *his* eyes came from the fact that he came from *her*, that he had seen *her*, and was near her when she wrote.

"This island—I only know it by the map," said Sir Within, trying to talk in an easy, unconcerned strain—"it's very poor, I believe?"

"You might say wretched, and be nearer the mark."

"Is it celebrated for sport? Is the shooting or the fishing the great attraction?"

"There's no shooting, nor any fishing but the deep sea fishery; and more men are lost in that than there are fortunes made of it."

"And what could have induced Mr. Luttrell to take up his abode in such a spot?"

"The same thing that sends men off to America, and Australia and New Zealand; the same thing that makes a man eat black bread when he can't get white; the same thing that—But what's the use of telling you about the symptoms when you never so much as heard of the disease?"

"Miss Luttrell's life must be a very lonely one," said Sir Within, with every effort to talk in a tone of unconcern.

"'Tis the wonder of wonders how she bears it. I asked the woman that lives with them how she passed her time and what she did, and she said, 'She takes up everything for a week or ten days, and goes at it as if her life depended on it.' One time it was gathering plants, and sprigs of heath, and moss, and the like—even seaweed she'd bring home—going after them up crags and cliffs that a goat couldn't climb. Then she'd give up that and take to gardening, and work all day long; then it was making fishing-nets; then it was keeping a school, and teaching the fishermen's children; she even tried to teach them to sing, till a sudden thought struck her that they ought to have a lifeboat on the island, and she sat to writing to all the people that she could think of to send a plan of one, meaning, I suppose"—here he grinned—"to make it herself afterwards."

Sir Within listened eagerly to all this, and then asked :—

“And her uncle—does he aid her in these projects?”

“He! It’s little he troubles himself about her. Why, it’s often three days that they don’t even meet. They never take their meals together. It’s a wonder of kindness from him the day that he’ll tap the window of her room with his knuckles and say ‘Good morning,’ and when she’d get up to open the window to answer him, he’d be gone.”

“How desolate—how dreary!” muttered the old man. “Does this wearisome life prey upon her? Is she altered in appearance—thinner or paler?”

“I’ll tell you how she looks, and there’s not a man in Ireland understands a woman’s face better than him before you, and here’s what it means in three words: It means scorn for a world that could let the like of her wither and waste on that lonely rock, for it’s not alone beauty she has, but she has grace and elegance, and a way of charming about her that’s more than beauty, and there’s a something in her voice—what it is I don’t know, but it goes on thrilling into you after she has done speaking, till you just feel that a spell was working in you, and making you a slave.”

“And *you* have felt this?” said the old man, as though involuntarily demanding an avowal that would have set the seal of confirmation on her magic.

And the cunning Celt felt all the force of the sarcasm, while it did not suit his purpose to confess it. And yet it needed great self-control to suppress his rising anger, and keep him from declaring that in a matter of sentiment, or on a question of female captivation, he, Tim O’Rorke, patriot, martyr, and Paddy as he was, yielded to no man.

“Would you kindly ring that bell beside you, Mr.—Mr.—”

“O’Rorke, sir.”

“Mr. O’Rorke, I am diffident about my pronunciation of Irish names,” added the old diplomatist, cautiously veiling the sin of his forgetfulness. A servant speedily appeared, and Sir Within ordered him to take every care for “this gentleman’s accommodation.” “I shall be able to prepare my reply to this letter to-night, Mr. O’Rorke, and you will be free to leave this at any hour that may suit you in the morning.”

O’Rorke retired from the presence, well satisfied with himself, and with the way he had acquitted himself.

“Would you like to have the papers, sir, or would you prefer seeing the gallery,

while supper is getting ready?” asked the obsequious servant.

“I’ll take a look at your pictures. I have a few myself,” said Mr. O’Rorke; which was perfectly true, though they were not in the first taste as objects of art, being certain colored prints of Hempenstall, the walking gallows, the capture of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and a few similar subjects from the year ’98, in which, *certes*, the countenances bestowed on the Royalists essentially distinguished them in the most crowded *mélées* from all honest patriots.

Leaving Mr. O’Rorke, then, to examine at his leisure Sir Within’s varied treasures, we make no excuse to our reader for not recording the criticism he passed upon them.

## CHAPTER L.

### TWO OF A TRADE.

WHETHER an uneasy consciousness that he might not be able to display a proper spirit of connoisseurship before that bland, soft-spoken domestic who accompanied him through the picture-gallery, and who, doubtless, had enjoyed various opportunities of imbibing critical notions on art, disposed Mr. O’Rorke—or whether he deemed that his own enjoyment of the splendor would be higher if unwitnessed, is not given to us to pronounce; but so it was, that he dismissed his guide very soon, and declared that he preferred to ramble about quite alone. The well-trained servant bowed and withdrew, and Mr. O’Rorke was left to revel at will amidst the magnificence of Dalradern.

There were art treasures there to have fixed the attention and captivated the gaze of more cultivated admirers; but these attracted less of his notice than the splendid furniture, the inlaid tables, the richly-encrusted cabinets, the gorgeously gilded “consoles,” which, as he surveyed, he appraised, till he actually lost himself in the arithmetic of his valuation. Nor was this mere unprofitable speculation; far from it. Mr. O’Rorke was a most practical individual, and the point to which his calculation led him was this: How much depletion will all this plethora admit of? What amount of money may be a fair sum to extract from a man of such boundless wealth? “I’d have let him off for a hundred pounds,” said he to himself, “as I came up the avenue, and I wouldn’t take three now, to give him a receipt in full!”



In the true spirit of a brigand, he estimated that his prisoner's ransom should be assessed by the measure of his fortune.

Wandering on from room to room, still amazed at the extent and splendor he surveyed, he opened the door, and suddenly found himself in a large room brilliantly lighted, and with a table copiously covered with fruit and wine. As he stood, astonished at the sight, a voice cried out, "Holloa, who's that? What do you want?" And though O'Rorke would willingly have retreated he was so much embarrassed by his intrusion that he could not move.

"Who the —— are you?" cried out the voice again. And now O'Rorke perceived that a young man was half-sitting, half-lying in the recess of a very deep chair beside the fire, with his legs resting on another chair. "I say," cried he again, "what brings you here?" And as it was young Ladarelle that spoke, the reader may possibly imagine that the tone was not over conciliatory.

Retreat was now out of the question, not to say that Mr. O'Rorke had regained his self-possession, and was once more assured and collected. Advancing, therefore, till he came in front of the other, he made his apologies for the accident of his intrusion, and explained how he happened to be there.

"And where's the letter you say you brought?" broke in Ladarelle, hurriedly.

"I gave it to Sir Within Wardle; he has it now."

"Where did it come from? Who wrote it?"

"It came from Ireland, and from a part of Ireland that, maybe, you never heard of."

"And the writer—who was he?"

"That's no business of *mine*," said O'Rorke; but he contrived to give the words the significance that would mean, "Nor of *yours* either."

"I think I can guess without your help, my worthy friend; and I have suspected it would come to this for many a day. What relation are you to her?"

"Your honor must explain yourself better, if you want a clear answer," replied he, in some confusion.

"Don't fence with me, my fine fellow. I'm more than your match at that game. I see the whole thing with half an eye. She wants to come back!"

As he said the last words he sat up straight in the chair, and darted a searching, stern look at the other.

"Faix, this is all riddles to *me*," said O'Rorke, folding his hands, and looking

his very utmost to seem like one puzzled and confused.

"What a —— fool you are!" cried Ladarelle, passionately, "not to see that you may as well tell me now what, before two hours are over, I shall know for nothing; out with it. What was in the letter?"

"How can I tell what's in a sealed letter?" said O'Rorke, sulkily, for he was not very patient under this mode of interrogation.

"You know who wrote it, at all events?"

"I'll tell you what I know," said O'Rorke, resolutely: "that I'll not answer any more questions, and that I'll leave this room now."

As he turned towards the door, Ladarelle sprang up and said, "You mistake me, my good fellow, if you think I want all this for nothing. If you knew a little more of me you'd see I was a pleasanter fellow to deal with than my old relation yonder. What is your name?"

"My name," said he, with a sort of dogged pride—"my name is O'Rorke."

"Timothy O'Rorke? Ain't I right?"

"You are indeed, however you knew it."

"You shall soon see. I have had a letter for you in my writing-desk for many a long day. Timothy O'Rorke, Vinegar Hill, Cush——something or other, Ireland."

"And who wrote it, sir?" said O'Rorke, approaching him, and speaking in a low, anxious voice.

"I'll be more frank with you than you are with me. I'll give you the letter, O'Rorke."

"But tell me who wrote it?"

"One who was your well-wisher, and who told me I might trust you."

There was never a more puzzling reply than this, for Mr. O'Rorke well knew that there were few who thought well of him, and fewer who trusted him.

"Sit down. Take a glass of wine. Drink this." And as he spoke he filled a large goblet with sherry.

O'Rorke drained it, and looked happier.

"Take another," said Ladarelle, as he filled it out, and O'Rorke complied, smacking his lips with satisfaction as he finished.

"When you have read the letter I'll give you this evening, O'Rorke, you'll see that we are two men who will readily understand each other. My friend Grenfell said——"

"Was it Mr. Grenfell wrote it?" broke in O'Rorke.

"It was. You remember him, then? He was afraid you might have forgotten his name."

"That's what I never did yet."

"All right then. What he said was, 'Show O'Rorke that you mean to deal liberally with him. Let him see that you don't want to drive a hard bargain, and he'll stand by you like a man.'"

"When he said that, he knew me well."

"He said that you were a fine-hearted, plucky fellow, who had not the success he deserved in life."

"And he said true; and he might have said that others made a stepping-stone of me, and left me to my fate when they passed over me!"

The door opened at this moment, and the bland butler announced that the "gentleman's supper was served."

"Come in here, Mr. O'Rorke, when you have finished, and I'll give you a segar. I want to hear more about the snipe-shooting," said Ladarelle, carelessly; and, without noticing the other's leave-takings, he returned to his easy-chair and his musings.

"I wonder which of the two is best to deal with," muttered O'Rorke to himself, and on this text he speculated as he ate his meal. It was a very grand moment of his existence, certainly; he was served on silver, fed by a French cook, and waited on by two servants—one being the black-coated gentleman, whose duty seemed to be in anticipating Mr. O'Rorke's desires for food or drink, and whose marvelous instincts were never mistaken. "Port, always port," said he, holding up his glass. "It is the wine that I generally drink at home."

"This is fourteen, sir; and considered very good," said the butler, obsequiously; for, humble as the guest appeared, his master's orders were to treat him with every deference and attention.

"Fourteen or fifteen, I don't care which," said O'Rorke, not aware to what the date referred; "but the wine pleases me, and I'll have another bottle of it."

He prolonged his beatitude till midnight, and though Mr. Fisk came twice to suggest that Mr. Ladarelle would like to see him, O'Rorke's answer was, each time, "The day for business, the evening for relaxation. Them's my sentiments, young man."

At last a more peremptory message arrived, that Mr. Ladarelle wanted him at once, and O'Rorke, with a promptitude that astonished the messenger, arose, and, cooling his brow and bathing his temples with a wet napkin, seemed in an instant to restore himself to his habitual calm.

"Where is he?" asked he.

"In his dressing-room. I'll show you the way," said Fisk. "I don't think you'll

find him in a pleasant humor, though. You've tried his patience a bit."

"Not so easy to get speech of you, Mr. O'Rorke," said Ladarelle, when they were alone. "'This is about the third or fourth time I have sent to say I wanted you.'"

"The port, sir, the port! It was impossible to leave it. Indeed, I don't know how I tore myself away at last."

"It will be your own fault if you haven't a bin of it in your cellar at home."

"How so?"

"I mean that, as this old place and all belonging to it must one day be mine, it will be no very difficult matter to me to recompense the man who has done me a service."

"And are you the heir, sir?" asked O'Rorke, for the first time his voice indicating a tone of deference.

"Yes, it all comes to me; but my old relative is bent on trying my patience. What would you say his age was?"

"He's not far off eighty."

"He wants six or seven years of it. Indeed, until the other day, he did not look seventy. He broke down all at once."

"That's the way they all do," said O'Rorke, sententiously.

"Yes, but now and then they make a rally, Master O'Rorke, and that's what I don't fancy; do you understand me?"

In the piercing look that accompanied these words, there seemed no common significance, and O'Rorke, drawing closer to the speaker, dropped his voice to a mere whisper, and said, "Do you want to get rid of him?"

"I'd be much obliged to him if he would die," said the other, with a laugh.

"Of course—of course that's what I mean," said O'Rorke, who now began to suspect he was going too fast.

"I'll be frank with you, O'Rorke, because I want you; but, first of all, there's the letter I had for you," and he pitched the document across the table.

O'Rorke drew the candle towards him, and perused the paper slowly and carefully.

"Well!" said Ladarelle, when he had finished—"well! what do you say to that?"

"I say two things to it," said O'Rorke, calmly. "The first is, What am I to do? and the second is, What am I to get for it?"

"What you are to do is this: you are to serve my interest, and help me in every way in your power."

"Am I to break the law?" burst in O'Rorke.

"No—at least, no very serious breach."

"Nothing against the old man up there?"



And he made a strange and significant gesture, implying violence.

"No, no, nothing of the kind. You don't think me such a fool as to risk a halter out of mere impatience. I'll run neither you nor myself into such danger as that. When I said you were to serve me, it was in such ways as a man may help another by zeal, activity, ready-wittedness, and now and then, perhaps, throwing overboard a few scruples, and proving his friendship by straining his conscience."

"Well, I won't haggle about that. My conscience is a mighty polite conscience, and never drops in on me without an invitation."

"The man I want—the very man. Grenfell told me you were," said Ladarelle, taking his hand, and shaking it cordially. "Now let me see if you can be as frank with me as I have been with you, O'Rorke. What was this letter that you brought here this evening? Was it from *her*?"

"It was."

"From herself—by her own hand?"

"By her own hand."

"Are you perfectly sure of that?"

"I saw her write it."

Ladarelle took a turn up and down the room after this without speaking. At last he broke out:—

"And this is the high spirit and the pride they've been cramming me with! This is the girl they affected to say would die of hunger rather than ask forgiveness!"

"And they knew her well that said it. It's just what she'd do."

"How can you say that now? Here she is begging to be taken back again!"

"Who says so?"

"Was not that the meaning of the letter?"

"It was not—the devil a bit of it! I know well what was in it, though I didn't read it. It was to ask Sir Within Wardle to send her some money to pay for the defence of her grandfather, that's to be tried for murder next Tuesday week. It nearly broke her heart to stoop to it, but I made her do it. She called it a shame and a disgrace, and the tears ran down her face; and, by my soul, it's not a trifle would make the same young lady cry!"

"After all, the intention is to open the way to come back here?"

"I don't believe it."

"I suspect, Master O'Rorke, this is rather a pleasanter place to live in than the Arran Islands."

"So it is; there's no doubt of that! But she is young, and thinks more about

her pride than her profit—not to say that she comes of a stock that's as haughty in their own wild way as ever a peer in the land."

"There never was a better bait to catch that old man there than this same pride. She has just hit upon the key to move him. What did he say when he read the letter?"

"He couldn't speak for a while, but kept wiping his eyes and trembling all over."

"And then?"

"And then he said, 'Stop here to-night, Mr. O'Rorke, and I'll have your answer ready for you in the morning.'"

"And shall I tell you what it will be? It will be to implore her to come back here. She can have her own terms now; and she may be my Lady."

"Do you mean his wife?"

"I do."

O'Rorke gave a long whistle, and stood a perfect picture of amazement and wonder.

"That *was* playing for a big stake! May I never, if I thought she was bowled enough for that."

"That she was. And how she missed it to this hour I never knew. But whatever happened between them was one evening, on the strand, at a sea-side place abroad. That much I learned from her maid, who was in my pay; and it must have been serious, for she left the house that night, and never returned; and, what is more, never wrote one line to him till this letter that you carried here yesterday."

So astounded was O'Rorke by what he heard, that for some minutes he scarcely followed what Ladarelle was saying.

"So that," continued Ladarelle, "it may not be impossible that he had the hardihood to make her some such proposal."

"Do you mean without marriage?" broke in O'Rorke, suddenly catching the clue. "Do you mean that?"

The other nodded.

"No, by all that's holy!" cried O'Rorke. "That he never did! You might trick her, you might cheat her—and it wouldn't be easy to do it, either—but take my word for it, the man that would insult her, and get off free, isn't yet born!"

"What could she do, except go off?" said Ladarelle, scoffingly.

"That's not the stuff they're made of where she comes from, young man."

And, in his eagerness, he for a moment forgot all respect and deference; nor did the other seem to resent the liberty, for he only smiled as he heard it, and then said:—

"All I have been telling you now is merely to prepare you for what I want you to do, and mind, if you stand by me faithfully and well, your fortune is made. I ask no man's help without being ready and willing to pay for it—to pay handsomely, too! Is that intelligible?"

"Quite intelligible."

"Now, the short and the long of the story is this: if this old fool were to marry that girl, he could encumber my estate—for it is mine—with a jointure, and I have no fancy to pay some twelve or fifteen hundred a year—perhaps more—to Biddy somebody, and have, besides, a lawsuit for plate, or pictures, or china, or jewels, that she claimed as matter of gift—and all this, that an old worn-out rake should end his life with an act of absurdity!"

"And he could leave her fifteen hundred a year forever," muttered O'Rorke, thoughtfully.

"Nothing of the kind. For her life only; and even that, I believe, we might break by law—at least, Palmer says so."

All this Ladarelle said hastily, for he half suspected he had made a grievous blunder in pointing out the wealth to which she would succeed as Sir Within's widow.

"I see—I see!" muttered O'Rorke, thoughtfully; which simply meant that there was a great deal to be said for each side of the question.

"What are you thinking of?" said Ladarelle at last, losing patience at his prolonged silence.

"I'm just wondering to myself if she ever knew how near she was to being My Lady."

"How near, or how far off, you mean."

"No, I don't! I just mean what I said—how near. You don't know her as well as I do, that's clear!" Another long pause followed these words, and each followed out his own train of thought. At length, Ladarelle, not at all satisfied, as it seemed, with his own diplomacy, said, half-impatiently: "My friend Grenfell said, if there was any one who would understand how to deal with this matter, you were the man; and it was with that view he gave me the letter you have just read."

"Oh! there's many a way to deal with it," said O'Rorke, who was not insensible to the flattery. "That is to say, if she was anything else but the girl she is, there would be no trouble at all in it."

"You want me to believe that she is something very uncommon, and that she knows the world, like a woman of fashion."

"I know nothing about women of fashion, but I never saw man or woman

yet was 'enter than Katty O'Hara, or Luttrell, as she calls herself now."

"She did not play her cards here so cunningly, that's plain," said Ladarelle, with a sneer.

"Maybe I can guess why."

"What is your guess, then?"

"Something happened that wounded her pride! If anything did *that*, she'd forget herself and her advantage—ay, her very life—and she'd think of nothing but being revenged. That's the blood that's in her!"

"So that her pride is her weak point?"

"You have it now! That's it! I think she'd rather have died than write that letter the other morning, and if the answer isn't what she expects, I don't think she'll get over it! Without," added he, quickly, "it would drive her to some vengeance or other, if she was to see the way to any."

"I begin to understand her," said Ladarelle, thoughtfully.

"The devil a bit of you! And if you were to think of it for twenty years, you wouldn't understand her! She beats *me*, and I don't suspect that *you* do."

This was one of those thrusts it was very hard to bear without wincing, but Ladarelle turned away, and concealed the pain he felt.

"It is evident, then, Mr. O'Rorke, that you don't feel yourself her match?"

"I didn't say that, but it would be no disgrace if I *did* say it," was the cautious answer.

"Mr. Grenfell assured me that, with a man like yourself to aid me, I need not be afraid of any difficulty. Do you feel as if he said too much for you, or has he promised more than you like to fulfill? You see, by what I've told you, that I should be very sorry to see that girl here again, or know that she was likely to regain any part of her old influence over my relative. Now, though her present letter does not touch either of these points, it opens a correspondence; don't you perceive that?"

"Go on," said O'Rorke, half sulkily, for a sort of doubt was creeping over him, that possibly his services ought to be retained by the other party.

"And if they once begin writing letters, and if she only be as ready with her pen as you say she is with her tongue, there's nothing to prevent her being back here this day week, on any terms she pleases."

"Faix, and there are worse places! May I never if I'd wonder that she'd like to be mistress of it."

For the second time had Ladarelle blundered in his negotiation, and he was vexed and angry as he perceived it.



"That's all not so plain and easy, Mr. O'Rorke, as you imagine. When old men make fools of themselves, the law occasionally takes them at their word, and pronounces them insane. So long as Sir Within's eccentricities were harmless, we bore them, but I'll not promise our patience for serious injury."

If O'Rorke was not convinced by this threat, he was sufficiently staggered by it to become more thoughtful, and at last he said:—

"And what is it you'd propose to do?"

"I'd rather put that question to *you*," said Ladarelle, softly. "You have the case before you; what's your remedy?"

"If she was any other girl, I'd say, give her a couple of hundred pounds, and get her married and out of the way."

"And why not do so here?"

"Because it would be no use; that's the why."

"Is she not a peasant? Are not all belonging to her people in the very humblest station, and not blest with the best possible reputations?"

"They're poor enough, if that's what you mean; and they're the very sort of men that would make mighty short work of *you*, if you were to harm one belonging to them."

"I promise you faithfully I'll not go to reside in the neighborhood," said Ladarelle, with a laugh.

"I've known them track a man to America before now."

"Come, come, Mr. O'Rorke, your countrymen may be as like red Indians as you please, but they have no terrors for *me*."

"So much the better; but I've seen just as big men as yourself afraid of them."

The quiet coolness of this speech sent a far stronger sense of fear through the other's heart than any words of menace could have done, and it required a great effort on his part to seem collected.

"You say she cannot be bought over, O'Rorke; now, what other line is open to us?"

O'Rorke made no reply, but seemed lost in thought.

"What if she were to believe that Sir Within wouldn't receive her letter, or read it, and sent back a cold, unfeeling answer?" Still no answer passed his lips. "If," continued Ladarelle, "you were to return and say you had failed, what would she do then? She'd never write to him again, I suppose?"

"Never, that you may depend upon, but it wouldn't be so easy to make her believe it."

"That might be managed. First of all, tell me how she would take the tidings."

"I don't know. I could not even guess."

"At all events she'd not write to him again?"

"For that I'll answer. I believe I could take my oath on it."

"Now, then, the game is easy enough," said Ladarelle, with a more assured tone.

"You are to have Sir Within's answer to-morrow. When you get it, set out for Wrexham, where I'll meet you. We'll open it and read it. If it be a simple acceptance of her note, and a mere compliance with her request, I'll re-seal with his crest, and you shall take it on to her; but if, as I suspect, the old man will make an effort to renew their former relations, and throw out any bait to induce her to come back here—"

"Well, what then?" asked O'Rorke, after waiting a few seconds for the other to continue.

"In that case we must lay our heads together, O'Rorke, and see what's best to be done."

"And the old man that's in gaol, and that's to be tried on the 19th, what's to be done about him?"

"I'll think of that."

"He hasn't a great chance anyway, but if there's no defense, it's all up with him."

"I'll think of that."

"Then, there's myself," said O'Rorke, drawing his figure up to his full height, as though the subject was one that entailed no painful modesty. "What about *me*?"

"I have thought of that already. Put that in your pocket for the present"—and he pressed a note into his hand—"and when to-morrow comes you shall name your own conditions. Only stand by me to the end—mind that."

O'Rorke opened the bank-note leisurely, and muttered the word "Twenty;" and certainly nothing in the accent showed enthusiastic gratitude.

"I can give you an order on my banker to-morrow," said Ladarelle, hurriedly, "but I am rather low in cash here, just now; and I repeat it—your own terms, O'Rorke, your own terms."

"I suppose so," was the dry rejoinder.

"It's not everybody would make you the same proposal."

"It's not everybody has so much need of me as you have."

Ladarelle tried to laugh as he wished him good-night, but the attempt was a poor one, and all he could say as they parted, was:—

"Wrexham—the Boar's Head—the inn

on the left hand as you enter the town. I'll be on the look-out for you myself."

O'Rorke nodded and withdrew.

"Vulgar scoundrel! I wish I had never spoken to him!" said Ladarelle, as soon as the door closed. "This is all Grenfell's doing; he has just shoved me into the hands of a fellow that will only serve me till he finds a higher bidder. What a fool I have been to open myself to him; and he sees it well! And as for the ready-wittedness and expediency, I wonder where they are! Why, the rascal had not a single suggestion to offer; he kept on harping about the difficulties, and never a word did he drop as to how to meet them."

And, with a hearty malediction on him, Ladarelle concluded his meditation, and went off to sleep.

## CHAPTER LI.

### THE BOAR'S HEAD.

LADARELLE stood at a window of the Boar's Head which commanded a view of the road into the town, and waited, watch in hand, for O'Rorke's coming. The morning passed, the noon, and it was late in the day when a wearied horse, over-driven and steaming, drew up at the door, and the long-looked-for traveler alighted.

Though burning with impatience to learn his news, Ladarelle saw the necessity of concealing his anxiety, and, opening his writing-desk, he affected to be deeply engaged writing when, conducted by a waiter, O'Rorke appeared.

A single glance as he passed the threshold told Ladarelle that his tidings were important. Already the fellow's swagger declared it, and in the easy confidence with which he sat down, and in the careless way he rather threw than laid his hat on the table, might be seen that he felt himself "master of the situation."

"You are later than I expected," said Ladarelle, carelessly.

"I didn't leave the place till after twelve. He made me go over the gardens and the forcing-houses, and after that the stables, till at one time I thought I'd not get away till to-morrow."

"And what do you think of it all?"

"Grand!—grand! It's the finest place I ever saw, and well kept up, too. There's eight men in the garden, and the head gardener told me he might have as many more, if he wanted them."

"The horses are over-fed; they are like prize oxen."

"They're fat, to be sure; but it's fine to see them standing there, with their glossy skins, and their names over them, and their tails hanging down like tassels, and no more call for them to work than if they were lords themselves."

"I'll make a grand clearance of all that rubbish one day. I'll have none of those German elephants, I promise you, when I come to the property."

"He isn't going to make room for you yet awhile, he says," said O'Rorke, with a grin.

"What do you mean?"

"If what he said to me this morning is to be relied on, he means to marry."

"And have a family, perhaps?" added Ladarelle, with a laugh.

"He said nothing about that; he talked like a man that hoped to see many years, and happy ones."

"No one ever lived the longer for wishing it, or else we heirs-expectant would have a bad time of it. But this is not the question. What answer did he give you?"

"There it is."

And, as he spoke, he drew from his breast-pocket a large square-shaped letter, massively sealed, and after showing the address, "Miss Luttrell," on the cover, he replaced it in his pocket.

"Do you know what's in it?" asked Ladarelle, sharply.

"Only that there's money, that's all, for he said to me, 'Any banker will cash it.'"

Ladarelle took a couple of turns of the room without speaking; then, coming directly in front of the other, he said:—

"Now, then, Mr. O'Rorke, which horse do you back? Where do you stand to win? I mean, are you going to serve Sir Within or me?"

"He is the bird in the hand, any way!" said O'Rorke, with a grin of malicious meaning.

"Well, if you think so, I have no more to say, only that as shrewd a man as you are might see that an old fellow on the verge of the grave is not likely to be as lasting a friend as a man like myself. In other words, which life would you prefer in your lease?"

O'Rorke made no answer, but seemed sunk in thought.

"I'll put the case before you in three words. You might help this girl in her plans—you might aid her so far that she could come back here, and remain either as this old man's wife or mistress—I don't know that there would be much difference, in fact, as the law stands, between the two—but how long would you be a welcome



visitor here after that? You speculate on being able to come and go, and stay here, just as you please; you'd like to have this place as a home you could come to whenever you pleased, and be treated not merely with respect and attention, but with cordiality. Now, I just ask you, from what you have yourself told me of this girl, is that what you would expect when she was the mistress? Is she so staunch to her own people that she would be true to *you*?"

For some minutes O'Rorke made no answer, and then, leaning both arms on the table before him, he said, in a slow, measured voice, "What do you offer me yourself?"

"I said last night, and I repeat it now, make your own terms."

O'Rorke shook his head, and was silent.

"I am willing," resumed Ladarelle, "to make you my land-steward, give you a house and a plot of ground rent free, and pay you eighty pounds a year. I'll make it a hundred if I see you stand well to me!"

"I've got some debts," muttered O'Rorke, in a low voice.

"What do they amount to?"

"Oh, they're heavy enough; but I could settle them for a couple of hundreds."

"I'll pay them, then."

"And, after that, I'd rather go abroad. I'd like to go and settle in Australia."

"How much money would that require?"

"I want to set up a newspaper, and I couldn't do it under two thousand pounds."

"That's a big sum, Master O'Rorke."

"The devil a much the old man at the Castle there would think of it, if it helped him to what he wanted."

"I mean, it's a big sum to raise at a moment, but I don't say it would be impossible."

"Will you give it then? That's the short way to put it. Will you give it?"

"First let me ask for what am I to give it? Is it that you will stand by me in this business to the very end, doing whatever I ask you, flinching at nothing, and taking every risk equally with myself?"

"And no risk that you don't share yourself?"

"None!"

"It's worth thinking about, anyhow," said O'Rorke, as he arose and paced the room, with his hands deep in his pockets; "that is, if the money is paid down—down on the nail—for I won't take a bill, mind."

"I'm afraid, O'Rorke, your experiences in life have not taught you to be very confiding."

"I'll tell you what they've taught me:

they've taught me that wherever there's money in anything, a man ought not to trust his own mother."

In a few hurried words, Ladarelle explained that, till he came to his estate, all his dealings for ready money were of the most ruinous kind; that to raise two thousand would cost him eventually nearly four; and, as he phrased it, "I'd rather see the difference in the pocket of an honest fellow who stood to me, than a rascally Jew who rogued me. I'll give you a post-obit on Sir Within's estate for three thousand, and, so far as a hundred pounds goes to pay your voyage, you shall not want it."

O'Rorke did not at first like the terms. Whenever he ventured his chances in life, things had turned out ill; all his lottery tickets were blanks, and he shook his head doubtfully, and made no reply.

"Five o'clock already! I must be going," said Ladarelle, suddenly looking at his watch.

"That's a fine watch," said O'Rorke, as he gazed at the richly-embossed crest on the case.

"If having my arms on the back is no objection to you, O'Rorke, take it. I make you a present of it."

O'Rorke peered into his face with an inquisitiveness so full of unbelief as almost to be laughable, but the expression changed to a look of delight as Ladarelle took the chain from off his neck and handed the whole to him.

"May I never," cried O'Rorke, "if I won't be your equal! There's the letter!" And he drew forth Sir Within's despatch, and placed it in his hands.

Concealing all the delight he felt at this unlooked-for success, Ladarelle retired to the window to read the letter; nor did he at once break the seal. Some scruple—there were not many left him—did still linger amidst the wreck of his nature, and he felt that what he was about to do was a step lower in baseness than he had hitherto encountered. "After all," muttered he, "if I hesitate about this, how am I to meet what is before me?" And so he broke the seal and tore open the envelope. "The old fool! the infatuated old fool!" broke from him, in an accent of bitter scorn, as he ran his eye over the three lines which a trembling hand had traced. "I knew it would come to this. I said so all along. Here's an order to pay Miss Luttrell or bearer two hundred pounds!" said he, turning to O'Rorke. "We must not cash this, or we should get into a precious scrape."

"And what's in the letter?" asked O'Rorke, carelessly.

"Nothing beyond his readiness to be of use, and all that. He writes with difficulty, he says, and that's not hard to believe—an infernal scrawl it is—and he promises to send a long letter by the post to-morrow. By the way, how do they get the letters at Arran?"

"They send for them once a week to the mainland; on Saturdays, if I remember aright."

"We must arrest this correspondence, then, or we shall be discovered at once. How can we obtain her letters?"

"Easy enough. I know the boy that comes for them, and he can't read, though he can tell the number of letters that he should have. I'll have one ready to substitute for any that should be to her address."

"Well thought of. I see, O'Rorke, you *are* the man I wanted; now listen to me attentively, and hear my plan. I must return to the Castle, and pretend that I have pressing business in town. Instead of taking the London mail, however, I shall proceed to Holyhead, where you must wait for me at the inn, the Watkins' Arms. I hope to be there to-morrow morning early, but it may be evening before I can arrive. Wait, at all events, for my coming."

"Remember that I promised to be back in Arran, with the answer to her letter, by Saturday."

"So you shall. It is fully as important for *me* that you should keep your word."

"Does he want her back again?" said O'Rorke, not fully satisfied that he had not seen Sir Within's note.

"No, not exactly; at least, it is evasive, and very short. It is simply to this purport: 'I conclude you have made a mistake by leaving me, and think you might have humility enough to acknowledge it; meanwhile, I send you a check for two hundred. I shall write to-morrow more fully.'"

O'Rorke was thoroughly aware, by the stammering confusion of the other's manner, that these were not the terms of the note; but it was a matter which interested him very little, and he let it pass unchallenged. His calculation—and he had given a whole night to it—was briefly this: "If I serve Sir Within, I may possibly be well and handsomely rewarded, but I shall obtain no power of pressure upon him; under no circumstances can I extort from him one shilling beyond what he may be disposed to give me. If, on the other hand, I stand by Ladarelle, his whole character is in my hands. He is too unscrupulous not to compromise himself, and

though his accomplice, I shall do everything in such a way that one day, if I need it, I may appear to have been his dupe. And such a position as this can be the source of untold money."

Nor was it a small inducement to him to think that the side he adopted was adverse to Kate. Why he disliked her, he knew not—that is, he would not have been well able to say why. Perhaps he might not readily have admitted the fact, though he knew well that to see her great, and prosperous, and high-placed, a winner in that great lottery of life where he had failed so egregiously, would be to him the most intense misery, and he would have done much to prevent it.

Along with these thoughts were others, speculating on Ladarelle himself, and whom he was sorely puzzled whether to regard more as a knave or fool, or an equal mixture of the two. "He'll soon see that, whatever he does, he mustn't try to cheat Tim O'Rorke," muttered he; "and when he gets that far, I'll not trouble myself more about his education."

## CHAPTER LII.

### THE NIGHT AT SEA.

THE Saturday—the eventful day on which Kate was to have her answer from Sir Within—came at last. It was a dark, lowering morning, and though there was scarcely an air of wind, the sea rolled heavily in, and broke in great showers of spray over the rocks—sure sign that a storm was raging at a distance.

From an early hour she had been down to the shore to watch if any boat could be seen, but not a sail could be descried, and the fishermen told her that, though the wind had a faint sound in it, there were few Westport men would like to venture out in such a sea.

"If you cannot see a boat before noon, Tim Hennesy," said she, to one of the boatmen, "you'll have to man the yawl, for I mean to go over myself."

"It will be a hard beat against the wind, miss," said the man. "It will take you an hour to get out of the bay here."

"I suppose we shall reach Westport before morning?"

"It will be no bad job if we get in by this time to-morrow."

She turned angrily away; she hated opposition in every shape, and even the seem-



blance of anything like discouragement chafed and irritated her.

"No sign of your messenger?" said Luttrell, from the window of the tower, whither he had gone to have a look out over the sea.

"It is early yet, sir. If they came out on the ebb we should not see them for at least another hour."

He made no answer, but closed the window and withdrew.

"Get me a loaf of bread, Molly, and some hard eggs and a bottle of milk," said Kate, as she entered the house.

"And sure, miss, it's not off to the mountains you'll be going such a day as this. It will be a down-pour of rain before evening, and you have a bad cough on you already."

"You must lend me your cloak, too, Molly," said she, not heeding the remonstrance; "it's much warmer than my own."

"Ain't I proud that it would be on your back, the Heavens bless and protect you! But where are you going that you want a cloak?"

"Go and ask my uncle if I may speak to him."

Molly went, and came back at once to say that Mr. Luttrell was in his room below, and she might come there when she pleased.

"I am thinking of going over to Westport, sir," said Kate, as she passed the threshold. "My impatience is fevering me, and I want to do something."

"Listen to the sea, young woman; it is no day to go out, and those drifting clouds tell that it will be worse by-and-by."

"All the better if it blows a little, it will take me off thinking of other cares."

"I'll not hear of it—there!"

And he waved his hand as though to dismiss her, but she never moved, but stood calm and collected where she was.

"You remember, sir, to-day is Saturday, and very little time is now left us for preparation. By going over to the mainland I shall meet O'Rourke, and save his journey here and back again, and the chances are, that, seeing the day rough, he'd not like to leave Westport this morning."

"I have told you my mind, that is enough," said he, with an impatient gesture; but she stood still, and never quitted the spot. "I don't suppose you have heard me, Miss Luttrell," said he, with a tone of suppressed passion.

"Yes, sir, I have heard you, but you have not heard *me*. My poor old grand-

father's case is imminent; whatever measures are to be taken for his defense cannot be deferred much longer. If the plan I adopted should turn out a failure, I must think of another, and that quickly."

"What is this old peasant to me?" broke out Luttrell, fiercely. "Is this low-lived family to persecute me to my last day? You must not leave me—you shall not—I am not to be deserted for the sake of a felon!—I'll not hear of it!—Go! Leave me!"

She moved gently towards him, and laid her hand on the back of his chair.

"Dear uncle," said she, in a low, soft voice, "it would grieve you sorely if aught befel this poor old man—aught, I mean, that we could have prevented. Let me go and see if I cannot be of some use to him."

"Go?—go where?—do you mean to the gaol?"

"Yes, sir, I mean to see him."

"The very thing I have forbidden. The express compact by which you came here was, no intercourse with this—this—family, and now that the contact has become a stain and a disgrace, now is the moment you take to draw closer to them."

"I want to show I am worthy to be a Luttrell, sir. It was their boast that they never deserted their wounded."

"They never linked their fortunes to felons and murderers, young woman. I will hear no more of this."

"I hope to be back here by to-morrow night, uncle," said she, softly, and she bent down her head over him till the long silky curls of her golden hair grazed his temple.

He brushed them rudely back, and in a stern tone said:—

"To such as leave this without my consent there is no road back. Do you hear me?"

"I do," said she, faintly.

"Do you understand me?"

"Yes."

"Enough, then. Leave me now, and let me have peace."

"Uncle, dear uncle," she began; but he stopped her at once.

"None of this—none of this with me, young woman. You are free to make your choice; you are my adopted daughter, or, you are the grandchild of a man whose claim to be notorious will soon dispute with ours. It is an easy thing to make up your mind upon."

"I have done so already, sir."

"Very well, so much the better. Leave me now. I wish to be alone."

“Let me say good-bye, sir; let me kiss your hand, and say, for the last time, how grateful I am for all your past kindness.”

He never spoke, but continued to stare at her with an expression of wonderment and surprise.

“Would you leave me, then?—would you leave me, Kate?” muttered he, at last.

“No, sir, if the door be not closed against me—never!”

“None but yourself can close that door against you.”

“Dear, kind uncle, only hear me. It may be that I have failed in the scheme I planned; it may be that some other road must be found to help this poor, forlorn, friendless old man. Let me at least see him; let me give him what comfort a few kind words can give: let him know that he has sympathy in his hour of sadness.”

“Sympathy with the felon—sympathy with the murderer, I have none. I feel shame—bitter, bitter shame—that I cannot disclaim him—disavow him. My own miserable rashness and folly brought me to this, but when I descended to their poverty, I did not descend to their crimes.”

“Well,” said she, haughtily, “I have no such excuses to shelter me. I am of them by blood, as I am in heart. I’ll not desert him.”

“May your choice be fortunate,” said he with mockery; “but remember, young woman, that when once you pass under the lintel of the gaol, you forfeit every right to enter here again. It is but fair that you know it.”

“I know it, sir; good-bye.” She stooped to take his hand, but he drew it rudely from her, and she raised the skirt of his coat to her lips and kissed it.

“Remember, young woman, if the time comes that you shall tell of this desertion of me—this cold, unfeeling desertion—take care you tell the truth. No harping on Luttrell pride, or Luttrell sternness—no pretending that it was the man of birth could not accept companionship of misery with the plebeian; but the simple fact, that when the hour of a decided allegiance came, you stood by the criminal and abandoned the gentleman. There is the simple fact: deny it if you dare!”

“There is not one will dare to question me, sir, and your caution is unneeded.”

“Your present conduct is no guarantee for future prudence.”

“Dear uncle——” she began; but he stopped her hastily, and said:—

“It is useless to recall our relationship when you have dissolved its ties.”

“Oh, sir, do not cast me off because I am unhappy.”

“Here is your home, Kate,” said he coldly. “Whenever you leave it, it is of your own free will, not of mine. Go now, if you wish, but, remember, you go at your peril.”

She darted a fierce look at him as he uttered the last word, as though it had pierced her like a dart, and for a moment she seemed as if her temper could no longer be kept under; but with an effort she conquered, and simply saying, “I accept the peril, sir,” she turned and left the room.

She gave her orders to the crew of the launch to get ready at once, and sent down to the boat her little basket, and then, while Molly Ryan was absent, she packed her trunk with whatever she possessed, and prepared to leave Arran, if it might be, forever. Her tears ran fast as she lent over her task, and they relieved her overwrought mind, for she was racked and torn by a conflict—a hard conflict—in which different hopes and fears and ambitions warred and struggled for the mastery.

“Here is the hour of destitution—the long-dreaded hour come at last, and it finds me less prepared to brave it than I thought for. By this time to-morrow the sun will not shine on one more friendless than myself. I used to fancy with what courage I could meet this fall, and even dare it. Where is all my bravery now?”

“’Tis blowin’ harder, Miss Kate; and Tim Hennesy says it’s only the beginnin’ of it, and that he’s not easy at all about taking you out in such weather.”

“Tell Tim Hennesy that if I hear any more of his fears I’ll not take *him*. Let them carry that trunk down, Molly; I shall be away some days, and those things there are for you.”

“Sure, ain’t you coming back, miss?” cried the woman, whose cheeks became ashy-pale with terror.

“I have told you I am going for a few days; and, Molly, till I *do* come, be more attentive than ever to my uncle; he may miss me, and he is not well just now, and be sure you look to him. Keep the key, too, of this room of mine, unless my uncle asks for it.”

“Oh, you’re not coming back to us—you’ll never come back!” cried the poor creature, in an agony of sorrow. And she fell at Kate’s feet, and grasped her dress as though to detain her.

“There, there, this is all childishness, Molly. You will dispense me if you go on so. Was that thunder I heard?”

As she asked, a knock came to the door,



and the captain of the boat's crew, Tim Hennesy, put in his head. "If you are bent on goin', miss, the tide is on the turn, and there's no time to lose."

"You're a hard man to ask her, Tim Hennesy;" said the woman, rising and speaking with a fierce vehemence. "You're a hard man, after losing your own brother at sea, to take her out in weather like this."

Kate gave a hurried look over the room, and then, as if not trusting her control over her feelings, she went quietly out, and hastened down to the shore.

There was, indeed, no time to be lost, and all the efforts of the sailors were barely enough to save the small boat that lay next the pier from being crushed against the rocks with each breaking wave.

"Get on board, miss; now's the moment!" cried one of the men. And, just as he spoke, she made a bold spring and lighted safely in the stern.

The strong arms strained to the oars, and in a few seconds they were on board the yawl. The last few turns of the capstan were needed to raise the anchor, and now the jib was set to "pay her head round," and amidst a perfect shower of spray as the craft swung "about," the mainsail was hoisted, and they were away.

"What's the signal flying from the tower for?" said one of the sailors. And he pointed to a strip of dark-colored bunting that now floated from the flagstaff.

"That's his honor's way of bidding us good-bye," said Hennesy. "I've never seen it these twelve years."

"How can we answer it, Tim?" said Kate, eagerly.

"We'll show him his own colors, miss," said the man. And, knotting the Luttrell flag on the halyard, he hoisted it in a moment. "Ay, he sees it now. Down comes his own ensign now to tell us that we're answered."

"Was it to say good-bye, or was it to recall her?—was it a last greeting of love and affection, or was it a word of scorn?" Such were Kate's musings as the craft heaved and worked in the strong sea, while the waves broke on the bow, and scattered great sheets of water over them.

"I wish there was a dry spot to shelter you, miss," said Tim, as he saw the poor girl shivering and dripping from head to foot. "But it's worse now than farther out; the squalls are stronger here under the land."

"Ay; but we'll have a heavier sea outside," said another, who would willingly have seen her change her mind even now, and return to the island.

"It's a fine wind for America, if that was where we were going," said a third, laughingly.

Kate smiled; she had almost said, "It matters little to me where;" but she caught herself, and was silent. Hour after hour went over, and they seemed—to her, at least—to have made no way whatever, for there rose the great mountain-peaks; the well-known cliffs of Arran frowned down dark and sullen, just as when they had left the harbor. She could count one by one the lights along the bay, and knew each cabin they belonged to; and there, high up, shone out a lonely star from the tower of St. Finbar, bringing back to her mind the solitary watcher who sat to sorrow over her desertion. The night at last fell, but the wind increased, and so rough was the sea that she was forced to take shelter in the bottom of the boat, where they made shift to cover her with a coarse canopy of tarpaulin.

Like some dreadful dream drawn out to the length of years, the hours of that night went over. The howling storm, the thundering crash of the sea, and at times a quivering motion in the craft, as though her timbers were about to part, and, more even than these, the wild voices of the men, obliged to shout that they might be heard amongst the din, made up a mass of horrors that appalled her. Sometimes the danger seemed imminent, for to the loud words and cries of the men a sudden silence would succeed, while floods of water would pour over the sides, and threaten them with instant drowning. The agony she pictured to herself of a last struggle for life was more terrible far than her fear of death; and yet, through all these, came the thought: "Might it not be better thus? Should I not have left to the few who knew me dearer, fonder memories, than my life, if I am yet to live, will bequeath?" Worn out by these anxieties, and exhausted too, she fell into a deep sleep—so deep, that all the warring noises of the storm never awoke her; nor was she conscious that a new morning had dawned, and a bright noon followed it, as the launch entered the bay of Westport, and beat up for the harbor.

When Hennesy awoke her, to say that they were close in to shore, she neither could collect herself nor answer him; benumbed with cold and wet, she could barely muster strength to arise and sit down in the stern-sheets.

"That's the spire of the town, miss, under the hill there."

"It was a wild night, Tim?" said she, inquiringly.

"I have seen as rough a sea, but I never was out in a stronger gale."

"Mind that you tell my uncle so when you get back; and be sure to say that I bore it well."

"Why wouldn't I? The sorrow a word ever crossed your lips. No man ever was braver."

"That's true," muttered the others.

"Get me a piece of bread out of that basket. Tim; and don't forget to tell my uncle how I ate, and ate heartily."

## CHAPTER LIII.

### THE GAOL PARLOR.

At the time of which our story treats, the old gaols of Ireland were very unlike those edifices which modern humanity has erected to be the safeguards of prisoners. They were small, confined, generally ruinous in condition, and always ill ventilated and dirty. So limited was the space, that all classification of crime was impossible, and, worse still, the untried prisoners were confined indiscriminately along with those whom the law had already sentenced, and who only awaited the hour of execution.

The extent of favor shown to those who were waiting for trial consisted in the privilege of seeing their legal advisers, or their friends, in a small cell used for such colloquies, and to which they succeeded by rotation, and for half an hour at a time. They whose means were unequal to the cost of a legal defense, or whose friends took little trouble in their behalf, were occasionally not unwilling to sell this privilege to their luckier companions; and a gill of whisky, or a few ounces of tobacco, were gladly accepted in lieu of a right that would have been profitless to claim.

As the day for trial grew nearer, the price of this privilege rose considerably. There were so many things the prisoner wanted to hear or to tell; secrets he had kept for weeks long locked close in his breast, would now find vent; details that he had determined should go with him to the grave, he could no longer abstain from communicating. The agonies of feverish expectation, the sleepless nights—or worse, far worse, those dreamful ones—would have begun to tell upon the strongest and boldest; and spirits, that a few weeks back would have seemed to defy every terror, now became fidgety and fretful, eager to hear what men said without, and how the newspapers talked of them.

While the assizes were distant, the prisoners gave themselves up, so far as their position permitted, to the habits and ways of their ordinary lives. Some brooded, some bullied, some looked steeped in a sort of stupid indifference, not caring for anything, or minding anything; others gave way to a jollity which, whether real or feigned, affected those around, and disposed them to scenes of riot and uproar. When, however, the time for trial drew nigh, all these signs merged into one pervading sentiment of intense anxiety, and nothing was said, nothing heard, but questions as to who were to be the judges—a point to which immense importance was attached—some supposed tendency to mercy or severity being ascribed to each in turn; and the characters of the Crown lawyers were discussed with a shrewdness that indicated how far less the debaters thought of the law itself than of the traits and tempers of those who were to administer it.

From the day that old Malone entered the gaol, his ascendancy was at once acknowledged. It was not merely that in the old man's character there were those features of steadfast determination and unswerving courage which the Irish of every class place at the top of all virtues, but he was, so to say, a sort of patriarchal law-breaker; he had twice stood in the dock under charge for the greatest of crimes, and five times had he braved the risk of transportation. If ever there seemed a charmed life, it was his. And though the Crown prosecutors were wont to regard him as one whose successive escapes were a sort of reflection on their skill, the juries who tried him could not divest themselves of a sympathy for the hardy old fellow, who, never daunted by danger, no sooner issued from one scrape than he was ready to involve himself in another.

Peter Malone was not only the hero of the gaol, he was the law adviser. Around him they gathered to tell their several cases, and consult him as to their likely issue. It was not merely that he was quick in detecting where a flaw or break-down of evidence might be looked for, but he knew—and it was wonderful how well—the sort of testimony that would tell with a jury, and the class of witness which it would be advisable to produce or to withhold, according to the character of the judge that presided. It would have doubtless been very damaging to this ascendancy of his if it got abroad that he himself, while distributing his counsels to this man and his warnings to that, should be unprotected and undefended, and so the brave



old fellow, locking up his sorrows in his own heart, never betrayed his friendlessness. On the contrary, he scrupulously maintained his privilege to "the Parlor," as it was called, and would, when his turn came, stalk away to the little cell, to sit down in his solitude, and think, with a swelling heart, over his comfortless fortune.

The turnkey alone knew his secret, and kept it loyally. Malone had been in his hands many times, and always conducted himself well, so that whenever the time came round for old Peter's visit to the Parlor, Mr. Meekins would call out from the door in an audible and imposing voice, "Here's Counsellor Fitzgibbon," or "Serjeant Taate," or some other equally well-known leader at the bar, "wants to speak to Peter Malone," and poor old Peter would get up from his seat, and smooth his hair, and adjust his neckcloth, and walk proudly away to hide his misery in the half-darkened cell, and rock himself to and fro in all the sorrow of his friendless and deserted fortune.

Terrible as the mockery was, it sustained him; for, though the straw will not support the drowning man, it will feed his hope even in death, and smooth the last agony of the heart, whose sharpest pang is desertion.

When, therefore, Mr. Meekins, instead of the usual pompous announcement, simply called out, "Peter Malone, to the Parlor," without any intimation of a learned visitor awaiting him, the old man heard the words in amazement, and not without fear. Had his friend betrayed him? Had he divulged the little fraud, and exposed him to his fellows? Or had he—and this most probable—had he, as the real day of reckoning drew nigh, revolted at a deception which a few hours must unveil, and which, even to the heart that encouraged it, bore its own cruel punishment. "He knows that I'm only giving myself false hopes," muttered the old fellow, as with sunken head and downcast eyes he moved slowly away.

As the door of the little cell clanked behind him, the turnkey with scrupulous tenacity bolting the small portal on the outside as rigorously as though it were the last protection of the criminal, Peter sat down on a small stool, and buried his face between his hands. Never before had his fate seemed so dark and gloomy. The little fiction he loved to maintain withdrawn, all the intensity of his loneliness stood before him at once. "I may as well say it at once," muttered he, "when I go back, that Peter Malone has no friend in the wide world, not a man to speak a word for him,

but must stand up in the dock and say, 'No counsel, my lord.'" As if the bitter moment of the humiliation had arrived, the old fellow rocked to and fro in his agony, and groaned bitterly.

What was that which broke the stillness? Was it a sigh, and then a sob? Was his mind wandering? Was the misery too much for his reason? He rubbed his eyes and looked up.

"Merciful Mother! Blessed Virgin! is it yourself is come to comfort me?" cried he, as he dropped on his knees, while the tears streamed down his hard and wrinkled cheeks. "Oh, Holy Mother! Tower of Ivory! do I see you there, or is my ould eyes deceivin' me?"

The heart-wrung prayer was addressed to a figure on which the solitary pane of a small window high up in the wall threw a ray of sunlight, so that the braided hair glowed like burnished gold, and the pale cheeks caught a slightly warm tint, less like life than like a beautiful picture.

"Don't you know me, grandfather? Don't you know your own dear Katey?" said she, moving slowly forward; and then, kneeling down in front of him, clasped him in her arms.

It was more than he could bear, and he heaved a heavy sigh, and rolled back against the wall.

It was long before he rallied; old age stands so near the last threshold, there is but little space to recover breath in; and when he did rally, he could not be sure that his mind was not astray, or that his sight was not deceiving him.

"Tell me something of long ago, darlin'! tell me something, that I'll know you are my own."

"Shall I tell you of the day I found the penny in the well, and you told me it was for good luck, and never to lose it? Do you remember, grandfather, how you bored a hole in it, and I used to wear it around my neck with a string?"

"I do, I do," cried he, as the tears came faster and faster; "and you lost it after all; didn't you lose it?"

"Yes; but, grandfather, I shall find others, and golden ones, too."

"Tell me more about them times, or I won't believe you," cried he, half peevishly.

"I'll talk to you all the evening about them; I remember them all, dear old granddaddy."

"That's the word I wanted; that's it, my darlin'! the light of my ould eyes!" And he fell on her neck and sobbed aloud.

In his ecstasy and delight to weave the long past into the present, he forgot to ask her how she came there, and by what fortune she had remembered him. It was the old life in the mountains that filled his whole being. The wild cliffs and solitary lakes, dear to him by the thought of her who never left him, trotting beside him as he went, or cowering at his knee as he sat over the turf fire. So immersed was he in these memories, that, though she talked on, he heard nothing; he would look at her, and smile, and say, "God bless her," and then go back again to his own dreamy thoughts.

"I'm thinking we'll have to cut the oats, green as it is, Kitty," said he, after a long pause. "It's late in the year now, and there'll be no fine days."

She could not speak, but her lips trembled, and her heart felt as if it would burst.

"There's a lamb astray these two days," muttered he. "I hope the eagles hasn't got it; but I heard one screeching last night. Light the fire, any way, darlin', for it's cowl here."

With what art and patience and gentle forbearance did she labor to bring those erring faculties back, and fix them on the great reality that portended. It was long, indeed, before she succeeded. The old man loved to revel in the bygone life, wherein, with all its hardships, his fierce nature enjoyed such independence; and every now and then, after she had, as she hoped, centered his thoughts upon the approaching trial, he would break out into some wild triumph over an act of lawless daring, some insolent defiance he had hurled at the minions who were afraid to come and look for him in his mountain home.

At last she did manage to get him to speak of his present condition, and to give a narrative—it was none of the clearest—of his encounter with the sheriff's people. He made no attempt to screen himself, nor did he even pretend that he had not been the aggressor, but he insisted, and he believed, too, that he was perfectly justified in all he had done. His notion was that he was simply defending what was his own. The scrupulous regard the law observes towards him who is in possession is not unfrequently translated by the impetuous intelligence of the Irish peasant into a *bona fide* and undeniable right. Malone reasoned in this way, and with this addition: "It's just as good for me to die in a fair fight as be starved and ruined."

How hard was Kate's task, to eke out means for a defense from such materials as

this! Indeed, no indictment that ever was drawn could be more condemnatory than the man's own admissions. Still, she persisted in sifting the whole story over and over, till she had at least such a knowledge of the details as would enable her to confer with a lawyer and obtain his opinion.

"And who is to defend me, darlin'?" asked he, in the cheerful tone of a heart perfectly at ease.

"We have not fixed upon that yet. We are not quite sure," murmured she, as her racked brain beat and throbbed with intense thinking.

"I'd like to have Mr. O'Connell, Kate," said he, proudly. "It would warm my ould heart to hear how he'd give it to them, the scoundrels! that would turn a poor man out of his own, and send him to sleep under a ditch. There's not his like in all Ireland to lash a landlord. It's there he's at home."

"I must be going now, granddaddy."

"Going, acushla! And will you leave me?"

"I must, there's no help for it; they wouldn't let me stay here."

"Begorra!" cried he, wildly, "I forgot I was in gaol! May I never, if I didn't think I was at home again, and that we were only waiting for the boys to have our supper!"

"My poor old granddaddy," said she, stooping and kissing his forehead, "I'll come back to-morrow, and stay a long time with you. I have a great deal to say to you that I can't think of to-day. Here's a little basket, with something to eat, and some tobacco, too; the gaoler gave me leave to bring it in. And you'll drink my health to-night, granddaddy, won't you?"

"My darlin'—my own darlin', that I will! And where did you come from now—was it from England?"

"No, granddaddy. It was a long way off, but not from England."

"And who are you living with? Is it with that ould man in Wales?"

"No, not with him. I'll tell you all to-morrow."

"They tell me he's mighty rich."

She evidently had not heard his words, for she stood pressing her temples with both hands, and as if endeavoring to repress some severe pain.

"It's your head's aching, you darlin'!" said he, compassionately.

"Head and heart!" muttered she, drearily. "Good-bye, my dear old granddaddy—good-bye!" And, not able to control her emotion, she turned her face away.

"You'll have to call out through that



gratin' before they'll open the door," said he, half sulkily. "You'd think we was all sentenced and condimned, the way they lock us up here! But I hear him coming now. You'll let her in to see me to-morrow, Mr. Meekins, won't you?" said he, in an imploring tone. "She's my daughter's child, and nearly the last of us now."

"By my conscience, she's a fine creature!" said the turnkey, as she moved past. "It's mighty seldom the likes of her is seen in such a place as this!"

When Kate gained the street, the rain was falling heavily, and as she stood uncertain which way to turn, for the town was strange to her, O'Rorke came up.

"Haven't you as much as an umbrella, Miss Kate," said he, "or a cloak, in this dreadful weather?"

"I was not thinking of either. Which way do we go towards the inn?"

"I'd advise you to take shelter in a shop here, miss; the shower is too heavy to last long."

"I have no time for this; I want to catch the post, and I believe it leaves at six o'clock."

"You'll be drowned with this rain," muttered he. "But come along. I'll show you the way."

As they went, neither spoke; indeed, the noise of the plashing rain, and the sharp gusts of the sweeping wind, would have made it almost impossible to converse, and they plodded onward through the dreary and deserted streets, for even the poorest had now sought shelter. The inn was at the very end of a long straggling street, and, when they reached it, they were completely soaked through with rain.

"You have ordered a room for me here, you said?" asked Kate, as they entered.

"Yes, it's all ready, and your dinner too, whenever you like to eat it. This is the young lady, ma'am," continued he, addressing the landlady, "that's coming to stop here; she's wet through, and I hope you'll take care of her, that she doesn't catch cold."

"Will you show me my room?" asked Kate, quietly. But the landlady never moved, but stood scrutinizing her with an eye the very reverse of kindly.

"She's asking you where's her room," broke in O'Rorke.

"I hear her, and I think this isn't the house for her."

"How do you mean?—what are you saying?" cried he, angrily.

"She'll be better and more at home at Tom M'Caferly's, that's what I mean," said she, sturdily.

"But I took a room here."

"And you'll not get it," rejoined she, setting her arms akimbo; "and if you want to know why, maybe you'd hear it, and hear more than you like."

"Come away—come away; let us find out this other place, wherever it be," said Kate, hurriedly.

"The other place is down there, where you see the red sign," said the landlady, half pushing her, as she spoke, into the street.

Shivering with cold, and wet through, Kate reached the little "sheebreen," or carrier's inn, where, however, they received her with kindness and civility, the woman giving up to her her own room, and doing her very best to wait on her and assist her. As her trunk had been forgotten at the inn, however, Kate had to wait till O'Rorke fetched it; and as Mr. O'Rorke took the opportunity of the visit to enter on a very strong discussion with the landlady for her insolent refusal to admit them, it was nigh an hour before he got back again.

By this time, what with the effects of cold and wet, and what with the intense anxieties of the morning, Kate's head began to ache violently, and frequent shiverings gave warning of the approach of fever. Her impatience, too, to be in time for the post became extreme. She wanted to write to her uncle; she was confident that, by a frank open statement of what she had done, and said, and seen, she could deprecate his anger. The few words in which she could describe her old grandfather's condition would, she felt certain, move her uncle to thoughts of forgiveness. "Is he coming?—can you see him with my trunk?—why does he delay?" cried she at every instant. "No, no, don't talk to me of change of clothes; there is something else to be thought of first. What can it be that keeps him so long? Surely it is only a few steps away. At last!—at last!" exclaimed she, as she heard O'Rorke's voice in the passage. "There—there, do not delay me any longer. Give me that desk; I don't want the other. It is my desk, my writing-desk, I want. Leave me now, my good woman—leave me now to myself."

"But your shoes, miss; let me just take off your shoes. It will kill you to sit that way, dripping and wet through."

"I tell you I will not be dictated to!" cried she, wildly, for her face was now crimson with excitement, and her brain burning. "By what right do you come here into my room, and order me to do this or that? Do you know to whom you speak? I am a Luttrell of Arran. Ask

him—that man below—if I am not speaking the truth. Is it not honor enough for your poor house that a Luttrell should stop here, but that you must command me, as if I were your servant? There—there, don't cry; I did not mean to be unkind! Oh! if you but knew how my poor head is aching, and what a heavy, heavy load I'm carrying here!" And she pressed her hand to her heart. And, with this, she fell upon her bed, and sobbed long and bitterly. At last she arose, and, assuring the hostess that after she had written a few lines she would do all that she asked her, she persuaded the kind-hearted woman to leave her, and sat down to the table to write. What she wrote, how she wrote, she knew not, but the words followed fast, and page after page lay before her as the clock struck six. "What!" cried she, opening her door, "is it too late for the post? I hear it striking six!"

"I'll take it over myself to the office," said O'Rorke, "and by paying a trifle more they'll take it in."

"Oh do! Lose no time, and I'll bless you for it!" said she, as she gave him the letter.

"Come up here and sit with me," said Kate to the woman of the house; and the honest creature gladly complied. "What a nice little place you have here!" said Kate, speaking with intense rapidity. "It is all so clean and so neat, and you seem so happy in it. Ain't you very happy?"

"Indeed, miss, I have no reason to be anything else."

"Yes; I knew it—I knew it!" broke in Kate, rapidly. "It is the striving to be something above their reach makes people unhappy. You never asked nor wished for better than this?"

"Never, miss. Indeed, it's better than ever I thought to be. I was the daughter of a poor laborin' man up at Belmullet, when my husband took me."

"What a dreary place Belmullet is! I saw it once," said Kate, half speaking to herself.

"Ah! you don't know how poor it is, miss! The like of *you* could never know what lives the people lead in them poor places with only the fishin' to look to, God help them! And when it's too rough to go to sea, as it often is for weeks long, there they are with nothing but one meal a day of wet potatoes, and nothing but water to drink."

"And *you* think I know nothing about all that!" cried Kate, wildly—"nothing of the rain pouring down through the wet thatch—nothing of the turf too wet to

burn, and only smouldering and smoking, till it is better to creep under the boat that lies keel uppermost on the beach, than stay in the wretched hovel—nothing of the poor mother, with fever, in one corner, and the child with small-pox, in the other—nothing of the two or three strong men huddled together under the lee of the house, debating whether it wouldn't be better to go out to sea at any risk, and meet the worst that could happen, than sit down there to die of starvation?"

"In the name of the Blessed Virgin, miss, who towld you all about that?"

"Oh, that I never knew worse! Oh, that I had never left it!" burst out Kate, as, kneeling down, she buried her head in the bed, and sobbed as if her heart were breaking.

The poor woman did her very best to console and comfort her, but Kate was unconscious of all her kindness, and only continued to mutter unceasingly to herself, till at last, worn out and exhausted, she leaned her head on the other's shoulder and fell off into a sort of disturbed sleep, broken by incessant starts.

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## CHAPTER LIV.

### IN CONCLAVE.

WHEN O'Rorke left Kate, it was not the direction of the post-office that he took; he went straight to the head inn of the town, on the doorsteps of which he stationed himself, anxiously watching for the arrival of another traveler. Nor had he long to wait; for, as the town clock struck the half-hour, a chaise and pair galloped up to the door, and young Ladarelle cried out from the window, "The last seven miles in forty-six minutes! What do you say to that? Is dinner ready?" asked he, as he descended.

"Everything's ready, sir," said O'Rorke, obsequiously, as, pushing the landlord aside, he assumed the office of showing the way upstairs himself.

"Tell Morse to unpack some of that sherry," said Ladarelle; and then laughingly added, "Order your own tap, Master O'Rorke, for I'm not going to throw away Dalradern wine upon *you*."

O'Rorke laughed too—perhaps not as genially, but he could afford to relish such a small joke even against himself—not to say that it conveyed an assurance he was well pleased with, that Ladarelle meant him to dine along with himself.



As the dinner was served, Ladarelle talked away about everything. It was his first visit to Ireland, and, though it amused him, he said he hoped his last also. Everything was absurd, laughable, and poverty-stricken to his eyes; that is to say, pauperism was so apparent on all sides, the whole business of life seemed to be carried on by make-shifts.

The patriot O'Rorke had need of much forbearance as he listened to the unfeeling comments and ignorant inferences of the "Saxon." He heard him, however, without one word of disclaimer, and with a little grin on his face, that if Ladarelle had been an Irishman, and had one drop of Irish blood in his body, he would not have accepted as any evidence of pleasure or satisfaction.

"Order whatever you mean to have," said Ladarelle, as the meal was concluded, "and don't let us have that fellow coming into the room every moment."

O'Rorke made his provision accordingly, and having secured a kettle, in case it should be his caprice to make punch, he bolted the door and resumed his place.

"There's your letter!" said Ladarelle, throwing a coarse-looking scrawl, sealed with green wax, on the table; "and I'll be shot if I understand one line of it!"

"And why not?" asked the other, angrily. "Is it the writing's so bad?"

"No; the writing can be made out. I don't complain of that. It's your blessed style that floors me! Now, for instance, what does this mean?—'Impelled by the exuberant indignation that in the Celtic heart rises to the height of the grandest sacrifices, whether on the altars——'"

O'Rorke snatched the letter from his hand, crushed it into a ball, and threw it into the fire. "You'll not have it to laugh at another time," cried he, sternly, and with a stare so full of defiance that Ladarelle looked at him for some seconds in amazement, without speaking.

"My good friend," said he, at last, with a calm, measured voice, "it is something new to me to meet conduct like this."

"Not a bit newer or stranger than for me to be laughed at. Bigger and stronger fellows than you never tried that game with me."

"I certainly never suspected you would take it so ill. I thought if any one knew what a joke meant, it was an Irishman."

"And so he does; none better. The mistake was, you thought an Englishman knew how to make one."

"Let there be an end of this," said Ladarelle, haughtily. "If I had kept you

in your proper place, you would never have forgotten yourself!" And as he spoke, he flung his segar into the fire, and arose and walked up and down the room.

O'Rorke hung his head for a moment, and then, in a tone of almost abject contrition, said, "I ask your pardon, sir. It was just as you say; my head was turned by good treatment."

If Ladarelle had been a physiognomist he would not have liked the expression of the other's face, the hue of utter sickness in the cheek, while the eyes flashed with a fiery energy; but he noted none of these, and merely said, as he resumed his place:—

"Don't let it happen again, that's all. Tell me now what occurred when you got back to Westport, for the only thing I know is that you met her there the morning you arrived."

"I'll tell it in three words. She was on the quay, just come after a severe night at sea, when I was trying to make a bargain with a fisherman to take me over to the island. I didn't see her till her hand was on my arm and her lips close to my ear, as she whispered:—

"What news have you for me?"

"Bad news," says I; "the sorrow worse."

"She staggered back, and sat down on the stock of an anchor that was there, and drew the tail of her cloak over her face, and that's the way she remained for about a quarter of an hour.

"Tell it to me now, Mr. O'Rorke," said she, "and as you hope to see glory, tell me the truth, and nothing more."

"It's little I have to tell," says I, sitting down beside her. "The ould man was out on a terrace when I gave him your letter. He took it this way, turning it all round, and then looking up at me, he says: 'I know this handwriting,' says he, 'and I think I know what's inside of it, but you may tell her it's too late.' He then muttered something about a sea-bathing place abroad that I couldn't catch, and he went on: 'She didn't know when she was well——'"

"No, no, that he never said!" says she, bursting in—"that he never said!"

"Not in them words," says I, "certainly not, but it came to the same, for he said she used to be as happy here as the days was long!"

"True; it was all true," said she to herself. "Go on."

"Go back," says he, "and say, that sorry as I was at first, I'm getting over it now, and it wouldn't be better for either of

us to hold any more correspondence." And with that he gave me the letter back, sealed as it was."

"What made you say that?" cried Laddarelle.

"Because I knew she'd never ask for it; or, if she did, I'd say, 'I had it in my trunk at home.' The first thing was to get her to believe me, at any cost."

"Is *that* her way?" asked the other, thoughtfully.

"That's her way. She's not given to have suspicions, you can see that. If you talk to her straight ahead, and never break down in what you say, she'll look at you openly, and believe it all; but if ever she sees you stop, or look confused, or if she catches you taking a sly look at her under the eyes, you're done—done entirely! The devil a lawyer from this to Dublin would put you through such a cross-examination; and I defy the cleverest fellow that ever sat in the witness-box to baffle her. And she begins quite regular—quiet, soft, and smooth as a cat."

"What do I care for all this? She may be as shrewd as she pleases this day fortnight, Master O'Rorke. Let us only have the balls our own, and we'll win the game before she gets a hazard."

This illustration from the billiard-table was not fully intelligible to O'Rorke, but he saw its drift, and he assented.

"Where was I? Oh, I remember. 'He gave me the letter back,' says I, 'and told the servants to see I had my supper, and everything I wanted.'

"He did this with his hand, as much as to say, 'You may go away;' but I made as if I didn't understand him, and I waited till the servant left the place, and then I drew near him, and said:—

"'I think,' says I, 'it would be better your honor read the letter, anyhow. Maybe there's something in it that you don't suspect.'

"'Who are you?' says he, 'that's teaching *me* manners?'"

"I didn't say them was his words, but something that meant the same.

"'I know every line that's in it. I know far better than you—ay, or than she suspects—the game she would play.'"

"She gave a little cry, as if something stung her. Indeed, I asked her, What was it hurt her? But she never answered me, but stood up straight, and, with a hand up this way, she said something to herself, as if she was making a vow or taking an oath. After that, it wasn't much she minded one word I said, and lucky for me it was, for I was coming to the hard part of my

story—about your honor; how you heard from the servants that I was in the house, and sent for me to your own room, and asked me hundreds of questions about her. Where she was, and who with, and what she wrote about, and then how angry you grew with your uncle—I called him your uncle, I don't know why—and how you said he was an unfeeling old savage, that it was the same way he treated yourself, pampering you one day, turning you out of doors the next. 'And at last,' says I—'I couldn't keep it in any longer—I up and told him what I came about, and that your letter was asking a trifle of money to defend your grandfather for his life.'

"Sorrow matter what I said, she never listened to me. I told her you swore that her grandfather should have the first lawyer in the land, and that you'd come over yourself to the assizes. I told her how you put twenty pounds into my hand, and said, 'Tim'—no, not Tim—'Mr. O'Rorke, there's a few pounds to begin. Go back and tell Miss Kate she has a better and truer friend than the one she lost; one that never forgot the first evening he seen her, and would give his heart's blood to save her.'

"She gave a little smile—it was almost a laugh once—and I thought she was pleased at what I was telling her. Not a bit of it. It was something about the old man was in her mind, and something that didn't mean any good to him either, for she said, 'He shall rue it yet.' And after that, though I talked for an hour, she never minded me more than them fire-irons! At last she clutched my arm in her fingers, and said:—

"'Do you know that my uncle declares I am never to go back again? I came away against his will, and he swore that if I crossed the threshold to come here, I should never re-cross it again. Do you know,' says she, 'I have no home nor friend now in the whole world, and I don't know what's to become of me?'"

"I tried to comfort her, and say that your honor would never see her in any distress; but she wasn't minding me, and only went on saying something about being back again; but whether it meant at the Castle, or over in Arran, or, as I once thought, back as a child, when she used to play in the caves along the sea-shore, I couldn't say, but she cried bitterly, and for the whole day never tasted bit or sup. We stopped at a small house outside the town, and I told them it was a young creature that lost her mother; and the next day she looked so ill and wasted, I was getting afraid she was going to have a



fever; but she said she was strong enough, and asked me to bring her on here to the gaol, for she wanted to see her grandfather.

"It was only this morning, however, I got the order from the sub-sheriff; and indeed he wouldn't have given it but that he seen her out of the window, for in all her distress, and with her clothes wet and draggled, she's as beautiful a creature as ever walked."

"Why not marry her yourself, O'Rorke? By Jove you're head and ears in love already. I'll make you a handsome settlement, on my oath I will."

"There's two small objections, sir. First, there's another Mrs. O'Rorke, though I'm not quite sure where at the present sitting; and even if there wasn't, she wouldn't have me."

"I don't see that; and if it be only the bigamy you're afraid of, go off to Australia or America, and your first wife will never trace you."

O'Rorke shook his head, and to strengthen his determination perhaps, he mixed himself a strong tumbler of punch.

"And where are we now?" asked Laddelle.

O'Rorke, perhaps, did not fully understand the question, for he looked at him inquiringly.

"I ask you where are we now? Don't you understand me?"

"We're pretty much where we were yesterday; that is, we're waiting to know what's to be done for the ould man in the gaol, and what your honor intends to do about"—he hesitated and stammered and at last said—"about the other business."

"Well it's the other business, as you neatly call it, Mr. O'Rorke, that interests me at present. Sir Within has written twice to Mr. Luttrell since you left the Castle. One of his letters I stopped before it reached the office, the other I suppose has come to hand."

"No fault of mine, if it has, sir," broke in O'Rorke, hastily, for he saw the displeasure in the other's look. "I was twice at the office at Westport, and there wasn't a line there for Mr. Luttrell. Did you read the other letter, sir?" added he, eagerly, after a moment's silence.

"I know what's in it," muttered Laddelle, in confusion, for he was not quite injured to the baseness he had sunk to.

"And what is it, sir?"

"Just what I expected; that besotted old fool wants to marry her. He tells Mr. Luttrell, and tells it fairly enough, how the estate is settled, and he offers the largest

settlement the entail will permit of; but he forgets to add that the same day he takes out his license to marry we'll move for a commission of lunacy. I have been eight weeks there lately, and not idle, I promise you. I have got plenty of evidence against him. How he goes into the room she occupied at the Castle, and has all her rings and bracelets laid out on the toilet-table, and candles lighted, as if she was coming to dress for dinner, and makes her maid wait there, telling her Madame is out on horseback, or she is in the garden, she'll be in presently. One day, too, he made us wait dinner for her till eight o'clock; and when at last the real state of the case broke on him, he had to get up and go to his room, and Holmes, his man, told me that he sobbed the whole night through, like a child."

"And you think that all them will prove him mad?" asked O'Rorke, with a jeering laugh.

"Why not? If a man cannot understand that a person who has not been under his roof for six or eight months, and is some hundred miles away, may want candles in her dressing-room, and may come down any minute to dinner in that very house—"

"Oddity—eccentricity—want of memory—nothing more! There's never a jury in England would call a man mad for all that."

"You are a great lawyer, Mr. O'Rorke, but it is right to say you differ here from the Attorney-General."

"No great harm in that same—when he's in the wrong."

"I might possibly be rash enough to question your knowledge of law, but certainly I'll never dispute your modesty."

"My modesty is like any other part of me, and I didn't make myself; but I'll stick to this—that ould man is not mad, and nobody could make him out mad."

"Mr. Grenfell will not agree with you in that. He was over at the Castle the night I came away, and he saw the gardener carrying up three immense nosegays of flowers, for it was her birthday, it seemed, however any one knew it, and Sir Within had ordered the band from Wrexham to play under her window at nightfall; and as Mr. Grenfell said, 'That ould gent's brain seems about as soft as his heart!' Not bad, was it?—his brain as soft as his heart!"

"He's no more mad than I am, and I don't care who says the contrary."

"Perhaps you speculate on being called as a witness to his sanity?" said Laddelle, with a sneer.

"I do not, sir; but if I was I'd be a mighty troublesome one to the other side."

"What the deuce led us into this foolish discussion? As if it signified one rush to me whether he was to be thought the wisest sage or the greatest fool in Christendom. What I want, and what I am determined on, is that we are not to be dragged into Chancery, and made town talk of, because a cunning minx has turned an old rake's head. I'd be hunted by a set of hungry rascals of creditors to-morrow if the old man were to marry. There's not one of them that wouldn't believe that my chance of the estate was all 'up.'"

"There's sense in *that*: there is reason in that you say now," said O'Rorke.

"And that's not the worst of it, either," continued Ladarelle, who, like all weak men, accepted any flattery, even at the expense of the object he sought; "but my governor would soon know how deep I am, and he'd cast me adrift. Not a pleasant prospect, Master O'Rorke, to a fellow who ought to succeed to about twelve thousand a year."

"Could he do it by law?"

"Some say one thing, some another; but this I know, that if my creditors get hold of me now, as the fox said, there would be very little running left in me when they'd done with me. But here's the short and the long of it. We must not let Sir Within marry, that's the first thing; and the second is, there would be no objection to any plan that would give him such a shock—he's just ready for a shock—that he wouldn't recover from. Do you see it now?"

"I see it all, only I don't see how it's to be done."

"I wonder what you are here for, then?" asked the other, angrily. "I took you into my pay, thinking I had a fellow with expedients at his fingers' ends; and, except to see you make objections, and discover obstacles, I'll be hanged if I know what you're good for."

"Go on, sir, go on," said O'Rorke, with a malicious grin.

"In one word what do you propose?" said Ladarelle, sternly.

"Here's what I propose, then," said O'Rorke, pushing the glasses and decanters from him, and planting his arms on the table in a sturdy fashion—"I propose, first of all, that you'll see Mr. Crowe, the attorney, and give him instructions to defend Malone, and get him the best bar on the circuit. She'll insist upon that, that's the first thing. The second is, that you come down to where she is, and tell her that

when you heard of her trouble that you started off to help her and stand by her. I don't mean to say it will be an easy thing to get her to believe it, or, even after she believes it, to take advantage of it, for she is prouder than you think. Well, toss your head if you like, but you don't know her, nor them she comes from; but if you know how to make her think that by what she'll do she'll spite the ould man that insulted her, if you could just persuade her that there wasn't another way in life so sure to break his heart, I think she'd comply, and agree to marry you."

"Upon my soul, the condescension overcomes me! You think—you actually think—she'd consent to be the wife of a man in such a position as mine?"

"Well, as I said a while ago, I wouldn't be easy."

"You don't seem to know, my good friend, that you are immensely impertinent!"

"I do not," was the reply, and he gave it calmly and slowly. At the same instant a knock came to the door, and the waiter motioned to O'Rorke that a woman wanted to speak to him outside. "I'm wanted for a few minutes, sir, down at the place she's stopping. The woman says she's very ill, and wandering in her mind. I'll be back presently."

"Well, don't delay too long. I'm between two minds already whether I'll not go back and give up the whole business."

## CHAPTER LV.

### STILL CONSPIRING.

"SHE'S worse, sir," whispered the woman, as she crossed the threshold of her door, and exchanged a word with her daughter.

"Biddy says she's clean out of her mind now—listen to that! The Lord have mercy on us!"

It was a wild scream rang through the house, followed by a burst of fearful laughter.

"Ask her if she'll see me," said O'Rorke, in a low voice.

"That's O'Rorke's voice!" Kate cried out from the top of the stairs. "Let him come up. I want to see him. Come up!" She leaned over the railing of the stairs as she spoke, and even O'Rorke was horror-struck at the ashy paleness of her face, and a fearful brilliancy that shone in her eyes. "It's a very humble place, Mr. O'Rorke, I



am obliged to receive you in," said she with a strange smile, as he entered; "but I have only just arrived here; you see I have not even changed my dress; pray sit down, if you can find a chair; all is in disorder here, and—would you believe it?"—here her manner became suddenly earnest, and her voice dropped to a whisper—"would you believe it?—my maid has never come to me, never asked me if I wanted her since I came. It's getting dark, too, and must be late."

"Listen to me now, Miss Kate," said he, with a touch almost of pity in his voice, "listen to me. You're not well, you're tired and exhausted, so I'll send the woman of the house to you, and get to bed, and I'll find out a doctor to order you something."

"Yes, I should like to see a doctor! that kind person I saw before, Sir Henry something—what was it? You will see it in the Court Guide—he attends the Queen."

"To be sure, to be sure, we'll have the man that attends the Queen!" said he, giving his concurrence to what he imagined to be the fancy of an erring brain.

"And if he should ask why I am here," added she, in a whisper, "make out some sort of excuse, but don't mention my grandfather; these fashionable physicians are such snobs, they cannot abide visiting any but great folk. Isn't it true?"

"Yes, dear, it is true," said he, still humoring her.

"The fact is," said she, in a low, confiding voice, "I may confess it to you, but the fact is, I don't well know why I am here myself! I suppose Sir Within knows—perhaps my uncle may." And in her vague, meaningless look might now be seen how purposeless and unguided were all her speculations. "There, go now, and send my maid to me. Tell Coles, as you pass down, he may put up the horses. I'll not ride this evening. Do you know, I feel—it is a silly fancy, I suppose—but I feel ill; not actually ill so much as odd."

He cast one glance, not without compassion, on her, and went out.

"There's a young woman above-stairs mighty like 'in' for a fever," said he to the hostess. "Get a doctor to see her as soon as you can, and I'll be back soon to hear what he says."

While the woman of the house, with all that kindness which attaches to her class and nation, busied herself in cares for Kate, O'Rorke hastily made his way back to the inn.

"What is it? What called you away?" asked Ladarelle as he entered the room.

"She's out of her mind! that's what it is," said O'Rorke, as he sat down, doggedly, and filled out a bumper of sherry to rally his courage. "What, with anxiety, and fatigue, and fretting, she couldn't bear up any more, and there she is, struck down by fever and raving."

"Poor thing!" said Ladarelle; but there was no pity in the tone, not a shade of feeling in his countenance; he said the words merely that he might say something.

"Yes, indeed! Ye may well say 'Poor thing!'" chimed in O'Rorke. "It wouldn't be easy to find a poorer!"

"Do you suspect the thing is serious?" said Ladarelle, with a deep interest in his manner. "Do you think her life's in danger?"

"I do."

"Do you really?" And now, through the anxiety in which he spoke, there pierced a trait of a most triumphant satisfaction; so palpable was it that O'Rorke laid down the glass he had half raised to his lips, and stared at the speaker. "Don't mistake—don't misunderstand me!" blurted out Ladarelle, in confusion. "I wish the poor girl no ill. Why should I?"

"At any rate you think it would be a good thing for *you*!" said O'Rorke, sternly.

"Well, I must own I don't think it would be a bad one; that is, I mean it would relieve me of a deal of anxiety, and save me no end of trouble."

"Just so!" said O'Rorke, who, leaning his head on his hand, addressed his thoughts to the very serious question of how all these things would affect himself. Nor did it take him long to see that, from the hour Ladarelle ceased to need him, all their ties were broken, and that the fashionable young gentleman who now sat at table with him in all familiarity would not deem him fit company for his valet.

"This is the fifth time, Master O'Rorke, you have repeated the words, 'Just so!' Will you tell me what they refer to? What is it that is 'Just so'?"

"I was thinking of something," said O'Rorke.

"And what was it? Let us have the benefit of your profound reflections."

"Well, then, my profound reflections was telling me that if this girl was to die, your honor wouldn't be very long about cutting my acquaintance, and that, maybe, this is the last time I'd have the pleasure of saying, 'Will you pass me the wine?'"

"What are you drinking? This is Madeira," said Ladarelle, as he pushed the decanter towards him, and affecting to mistake his meaning.

"No, sir; I'm drinking port wine," was the curt reply, for he saw the evasion, and resented it.

"As to that other matter—I mean as to 'cutting you,' O'Rorke—I don't see it—don't see it at all!"

"How do you mean, 'you don't see it'?"

"I mean it is not necessary."

"Isn't it likely?"

"No; certainly not."

"Isn't it possible, then?"

"Everything is possible in this world of debts and difficulties, but no gentleman ever thinks of throwing off the man that has stood to him in his hour of need. Is that enough?"

O'Rorke made no answer, and in the attitude of deep thought he assumed, and in his intense look of reflection, it was pretty plain that he did not deem the explanation all-sufficient. "Here's how it is, sir!" burst he out, suddenly. "If this girl dies, you won't want me; and if you won't want me, it's very unlikely the pleasure of my society will make you come after me; so that I'd like to understand how it's to be between us."

"I must say, my worthy friend, everything I have seen of you goes very far to refute the popular notion abroad about Irish improvidence; for a man so careful of himself under every contingency—one who looked to his own interests in all aspects and with all casualties—I never met before."

"Well, sir, you meet him now. He is here before you; and what do you say to him?" said O'Rorke, with a cool audacity that was actually startling.

It was very probably fortunate for both of them, so far as their present good relations were concerned, that an interruption took place in their colloquy in the shape of a sharp knock at the door. It was a person wanted to see Mr. O'Rorke.

"Mr. O'Rorke's in request to-night," said Ladarelle, mockingly, as the other left the room.

"Are you the friend of that young lady, sir, that's down at M'Cafferty's?"

"Yes, I'm her friend," was the dry answer.

"Then I've come to tell you she's going fast into a fever—a brain fever, too."

"That's bad," muttered O'Rorke below his breath.

"One ought to know something about her—whence she came, and how she came. There are symptoms that ought to be traced to their causes, for she raves away about people and things the most opposite and unlike——"

"Are you able to cure her? that's the question," said O'Rorke.

"No doctor could ever promise that much yet."

"I thought as much," said O'Rorke, with an insolent toss of his head.

"I am willing to do my best," said the doctor, not noticing the offensive gesture; "and if you want other advice, there's Dr. Rogan of Westport can be had easy enough."

"Send for him, then, and hold a consultation; her life is of consequence, mind that!"

"I may as well tell you that Dr. Rogan will require to know what may lead him to a history of her case, and he won't treat her if there's to be any mystery about it."

O'Rorke's eyes flashed, as if an insolent answer was on his lips, and then, as quickly controlling himself, said, "Go and have your consultation, and then come back here to me; but mind you ask for me—Mr. O'Rorke—and don't speak to any one else than myself."

The doctor took his leave, and O'Rorke, instead of returning to the room, slowly descended the stairs and strolled out into the street.

It was night; there were few about; and he had ample opportunity for a quiet commune with himself, and that species of "audit" in which a man strikes the balance of all that may be *pro* or *contra* in any line of action. He knew well he was on dangerous ground with Ladarelle. It needed not an intelligence sharp as his own to show that a deep mistrust existed between them, and that each only waited for an opportunity to shake himself free of the other. "If I was to go over to the old man and tell him the whole plot, I wonder how it would be?" muttered he to himself. "I wonder would he trust me? and, if he was to trust me, how would he pay me?—that's the question—how would he pay me?" The quick tread of feet behind him made him turn at this moment. It was the waiter of the inn coming to tell him that the post had just brought two letters to the gentleman he had dined with, and he wished to see him at once.

"Shut the door—turn the key in it," said Ladarelle, as O'Rorke entered. "Here's something has just come by the mail. I knew you'd blunder about those letters," added he, angrily; "one has reached Luttrell already, and, for aught I know, another may have come to hand since this was written. There, there, what's the use of your excuses? You promised me the thing should be done, and it was not done. It does not signify a brass farthing to me to



know why. You're very vain of your Irish craft and readiness, and yet I tell you, if I had entrusted this to my fellow Fisk, cockney as he is, I'd not have been disappointed."

"Very like," said O'Rorke, sullenly. "He's more used to dirty work than I am."

Ladarelle had just begun to run his eyes over one of the letters when he heard these words, and the paper shook in his hand with passion, and the color came and went in his face, but he still affected to read on, and never took his gaze from the letter. At last he said, in a shaken voice, which all his efforts could not render calm, "This is a few lines from Fisk, enclosing a letter from Luttrell for Sir William. Fisk secured it before it reached its destination."

To this insinuated rebuke O'Rorke made no rejoinder, and, after a pause, the other continued: "Fisk says little, but it is all to the purpose. He has reduced every day to a few lines in journal fashion, so that I know what goes on at Dalradern as if I were there myself."

O'Rorke kept an unbroken silence, and Ladarelle went on: "The day you left the Castle, Sir Within wrote to Calvert and Mills, his solicitors, and despatched by post a mass of documents and parchments. The next day he wrote to Mr. Luttrell of Arran, posting the letter himself as he drove through Wrexham."

"That letter was the one I stopped at Westport," broke in O'Rorke.

"I suppose it was. Fisk writes: 'The servants all remarked a wonderful change had come over Sir W.; he gave orders through the house as if he expected company, and seemed in such spirits as he had not been for months. Next morning very anxious for the post to come in, and greatly disappointed at not seeing some letter he expected. The late post brought a letter from Mills to say he would be down by the morning's mail—that the matter presented no difficulty whatever, and was exactly as Sir Within represented it.' Fisk managed to read this and re-seal it before it got to hand. That's what I call a smart scoundrel!"

"So he is—every inch of one!" was O'Rorke's rejoinder.

"Here he continues," said Ladarelle: "'Thursday—No letter, nor any tidings of Mills. Sir Within greatly agitated. Post-horses ordered for Chester, and countermanded. All sorts of contradictory commands given during the day. The upholsterers have arrived from town, but

told not to take down the hangings, nor do anything till to-morrow. Mr. Grenfell called, but not admitted; a message sent after him to ask him to dinner to-morrow; he comes. Friday—Arrived at Wrexham. As the mail came in, saw Mr. Mills order horses for Dalradern; waited for the post delivery, and secured the enclosed. No time for more, as the Irish mail leaves in an hour.'

"Now for Luttrell. Let's see his side in the correspondence," said Ladarelle, breaking the seal; "though, perhaps, I know it as well as if I read it."

"You do not," said the other, sturdily.

"What do you mean by 'I do not'?"

"I suspect I know what you're thinking of; and it's just this—that John Luttrell is out of himself with joy because that old fool's in love with his niece."

"He might well be what you call out of himself with joy if he thought she was to be mistress of Dalradern."

"It's much you know him," said O'Rorke, with an insolent mockery in his voice and look. "A Luttrell of Arran wouldn't think a prince of the blood too good for one belonging to him. Laugh away, laugh away; it's safe to do it here, for John Luttrell's on the island beyond."

"You are about the most——"

"The most what? Say it out. Surely you ain't afraid to finish your sentence, sir!"

"I find it very hard, Mr. O'Rorke, to conduct an affair to its end in conjunction with one who never omits an occasion to say, or at least insinuate, a rudeness."

"Devil a bit of insinuation about *me*. Whatever I have to say, I say it out, in the first words that come to me; and I'm generally pretty intelligible, too. And now, if it's the same thing to you, what was it you were going to call me? I was the most—something or other—what was it?"

"I'll tell you what I am," said Ladarelle, with a bitter grin—"about the most patient man that ever breathed."

Neither spoke for some time, and then Ladarelle opened the letter he still held in his hand, and began to read it.

"Well," cried he, "of all the writing I ever encountered, this is the most illegible; and not merely that, but there are words erased and words omitted, and sentences left unfinished, or finished with a dash of the pen."

"Are you going to read it out?" asked O'Rorke; and in his voice there rang something almost like a command, for the man's native insolence grew stronger at

every new conflict, and with the impression—well or ill-founded—that the other was afraid of him.

“I’ll try what I can do,” said Ladarelle, repressing his irritation. “It is dated St. Finbar’s, 16th:—

“SIR:—I know nothing of your letter of the 12th instant. If I ever received, I have forgotten and mislaid it. I answered yours of the 9th, and hoped I had done with this correspondence. I have seen your name in the newspaper, and have been—have been, I suppose it is—‘accustomed’—yes, accustomed—‘to look on you as a person in high employ, and worthy of the’—here the word is left out—‘who employed him. If, however, you be, as you state, in your’—this may be a nine or seven, I suppose it is seven—in your seventy-fourth year, your proposal to a girl of twenty is little short of—’ Another lapse; I wish we had his word, it was evidently no compliment. ‘That is, however, more your question than mine. Such follies as these ask for no comment; they usually—And well it is it should be so.

“Fortune, however, befriends you, more than your own foresight. It is your good luck rescues you from this—She has left this—gone away—deserted *me*, as she once deserted *you*, and would in all likelihood when sorry insolent airs of your connections to resent unpardonable. Without you are as bereft as myself, you must surely have relations, of whom choice and certainly more suitable than one whose age and decrepitude might in pity and compassion sentiment.

“But she is gone! Warning is, therefore, needless. You cannot if you would this folly. She is gone and on a bed of sickness, to which the only hope and that speedily.

“If by such hurt you.”

Line after line had been here erased and re-written, but all illegibly; nor was it till after long puzzling and exploring, the last words could be made out to be: “All further interchange of letters is a task beyond my strength. It is all said when I write, She is gone, no more to nor would I now—A few hours more I pray not days.

“Faithful servant

“J. H. LUTTRELL.”

“It’s clear he’ll have no more correspondence,” said Ladarelle, with a half-triumphant manner, as he closed the letter.

“And the other! What will the other do?”

“Do you mean Sir Within?”

“Yes.”

“It’s not easy to say. It seems plain we’re not to expect anything very sensible from him. He is determined to make a fool of himself, and it only remains to see how he is to do it.”

“And how do you think it will be?” In spite of himself, O’Rorke threw into his question that amount of eagerness that showed how much interest he felt in the matter. Ladarelle was quick enough to see this, and turned his eyes full upon him, and thus they stood for nigh half a minute, each steadfastly staring at the other. “Well! do you see anything very wonderful in my face that you look so hard at me?” asked O’Rorke.

“I do.”

“And what is it, if I might make so bold?”

“I see a man who doubts how far he’ll go on the road he was paid to travel—that’s what I see!”

“And do you know why?” rejoined O’Rorke, defiantly. “Do you know why?”

“No.”

“Then I’ll tell you! It’s because the man that was to show me the way hasn’t the courage to do it! There’s the whole of it. You brought me over here telling me one thing, and now you’re bent on another; and to-morrow, if anything cheaper turns up, you’ll be for *that*. Is it likely that I’d risk myself far with a man that doesn’t know his mind, or trust his own courage?”

“I suppose I understand my own affairs best!”

“Well! that’s what I think about *mine*, too.”

Ladarelle took an impatient turn or two up and down the room before he spoke, and it was easy to see that he was exerting himself to the very utmost to be calm. “If this girl’s flight from Arran has served us in one way, her illness has just done us as much harm in another—I mean, of course, if she should not die—because my venerable relation is just as much determined to marry her as ever he was. Are you attending to me?”

“To every word, sir,” said O’Rorke, obsequiously; and, indeed, it was strangely like magnetism the effect produced upon him, when Ladarelle assumed the tone and manner of a superior.

“I want to have done with the business, then, at once,” continued Ladarelle. “Find out from the doctor—and find it out accurately—what are her chances of life. If she is likely to live, learn how



soon she could be removed from this, and whither to, as Sir Within is sure to trace her to this place. As soon as possible, we must manage some sort of mock marriage, for I believe it is the only sure way of stopping this old man in his folly. Now, I leave it to *you* to contrive the plan for this. There's another demand for you. See who is at the door."

"Mr. O'Rorke is wanted at M'Cafferty's," said a voice outside.

"I'll be back in a few minutes, sir."

"Well, I shall go to bed, and don't disturb me if there be nothing important to tell me. Order breakfast for ten to-morrow, and let me see you there."

O'Rorke bowed respectfully, and went out.

"I'd give fifty pounds to hear that you had broken your neck on the staircase!" muttered Ladarelle, as he saw the door close; "and I'd give a hundred had I never seen you!"

## CHAPTER LVI.

### A HEAVY BLOW.

IN the grand old dining-room of Dalrader Castle, Sir Within was seated with his guest, Mr. Grenfell. The ample wood-fire on the hearth, the costly pictures on the walls, the table covered with decanters and flasks of various forms, the ample old chairs in which they lounged, suggested luxurious ease and enjoyment; and perhaps Grenfell, as he smoked his segar, in accordance with the gracious permission of his host, *did* feel that it was a supreme moment of life; while certainly he, to whom all the precious appliances belonged, was ill at ease and uncomfortable, answering occasionally at random, and showing in many ways that his mind was deeply and far from pleasantly preoccupied.

Grenfell had been some days at the Castle, and liked his quarters. There were, it is true, many things he wished changed; some of them, he fancied, could be altered by a little adroit diplomacy with the butler and the housekeeper, and other heads of departments; others, of a more serious kind, he reserved to be dealt with when the time should come that he would be regarded in that house as little less than a master. He had weighed the matter carefully with himself, and determined that it was better to stand by Sir Within, old as he was, than to depend on the friendship of young Ladarelle, whose innate vulgarity would have made all companionship

irksome, and whose inveterate obstinacy would have made guidance impossible.

The house had, indeed, great capabilities, and, with Sir Within's means, might be made all that one could wish for. With the smallest imaginable addition to the household, thirty, ay, forty guests could be easily accommodated, and he, Grenfell, knew of such delightful people—such charming people—who would be in ecstasies to stop at a house where was no mistress, where no return civilities were wanted, where each guest might be a law to himself as to his mode of life, and where the cellar was immaculate, and the cook better than at the Travelers'.

"If I could only get him out of this stupid isolation—if I could persuade him that all England is not like a Welsh county, and that this demure neighborhood, with its antiquated prudery, has no resemblance to the charming world of seductive sinners I could bring around him, what a victory it would be!" To this end the first grand requisite was, that the old man should not marry. "If he marry," argued Grenfell, "he will be so deplorably in love, that, what between his passion and his jealousy, he'll shut up the house, and nothing younger than the old French abbé will ever cross the threshold."

Now, Grenfell had not of late kept up any relations of intercourse with Ladarelle; indeed, in his life in town, he had avoided intimacy with one, all of whose associates were evidently taken from the lowest ranks of the turf, and the slang set of second-rate theaters. Grenfell could not, consequently, know what plan of campaign this promising young gentleman was following out; but when he learned that it was quite suddenly he had quitted the Castle, and that his servant, Mr. Fisk, had been left behind, he very soon established such a watch on the accomplished valet's movements as satisfied him that he was there on duty as a spy, and that his daily visits to the post-office signified how industriously he despatched his intelligence. At first, Grenfell was disposed to make advances to Fisk, and win his confidence—a task not difficult to one whose whole life had been a series of such seductions; but he subsequently thought it might be better to hold himself quite aloof from all intercourse with the younger branch, and stand firmly by the head of the dynasty. "If Ladarelle be really gone after this girl, to marry her, or to run off with her, it matters not which, he is playing *my* game. All I ask is, that Sir Within be not the bridegroom. If the shock of the disaster should not overwhelm

him, there is nothing else to be dreaded." There, indeed, lay the great peril; nor was Grenfell a man to undervalue it. In his contempt for all emotions, he naturally ascribed their strongest influences to those whose age had weakened their faculties and impaired their judgments. Love was a folly with the young; but with the old, it was the stupidest of all infatuations, and the reckless way in which an old man would resign fortune, station, and the whole world's opinion on such an issue, was, to his thinking, the strongest possible evidence of second childhood.

"If I could make him feel the ridiculous part of the calamity, he would gain courage to brave the disaster," thought he. And while he thus thought he smoked on in silence, neither uttering a word.

"Nine o'clock!" said Sir Within, as he counted the strokes of the timepiece. "Nine, and the post not in!"

"How easily one takes the delay of the mail when 'the House' is up," said Grenfell, purposely saying what might possibly suggest some sort of dissent or opinion; but the old diplomatist had been too well schooled to fall into such indiscretion, and simply said, "It is true, we all hibernate when the autumn begins."

Grenfell saw that his shell had not exploded, and began to talk at random about how much pleasanter it was to have one's post of a morning—that letters should always come in with the eggs at breakfast—that people exchanged their gossip more genially then than at any other time; and at last arrived at what he sought to portray, the tableau of a charming party in a delightful country-house: "The best thing we have in England; and, indeed, the best thing the world has anywhere."

"I quite agree with you," said Sir Within, blandly. And he wiped the beautiful miniature of Marie Antoinette that adorned the lid of his snuff-box, and gazed with admiration at the lovely features.

"I fancy they know very little abroad of what we call country-house life?" half asked Grenfell.

"They have their gatherings at 'the chateau' in France, and in Italy they have their villeggiatura—Ah, there he comes; I hear the clank of the post-bag!" He caught himself quickly, and resumed: "I rather like the villeggiatura; there is not much trouble taken to entertain you, but you are free to dispose of yourself how you like. What has kept him so late, Fry?" said he, as the butler entered with the bag; "take it up to my room."

"Oh, let us hear who has won the Can-

telupe!" said Grenfell. "I have backed Grimsby's horse, Black Ruin, at three to eight against the field."

"Here's the key, then," said Sir Within with well-feigned indifference.

As Grenfell emptied the contents of the bag on the table, a square-shaped, somewhat heavy packet fell to the floor, at Sir Within's feet. The old man lifted it up and laid it on the table, but on doing so, his hand trembled, and his color changed.

"What about your race—has your horse won?" asked he, as Grenfell turned over the paper to find the sporting intelligence.

"Oh, here it is—a dead heat between Black Ruin and Attila. Why, he's Grimsby's also. 'Second heat, Attila walked over.' What a sell! I see there's a long letter about it from the correspondent; shall I read it for you?"

"By all means," said Sir Within, not sorry to give him any occupation at the moment that might screen himself from all scrutiny.

"The long-expected match between Lord St. Dunstan's well-known Carib Chief and Mr. Grimsby's Black Ruin—for, in reality, the large field of outsiders, fourteen in number, might as well been centering over an American savannah—took place yesterday." He read on and on—the fluent commonplaces—about the course crowded with rank and fashion, amongst whom were noticed the usual celebrities of the turf, and was getting to the description of the scene at the weighing-stand, when a dull, heavy sound startled him. He looked down, and saw that Sir Within had fallen from his chair to the floor, and lay stretched and motionless, with one arm across the fender.

Lifting him up, Grenfell carried him to a sofa. His face and forehead were crimson, and a strange sound came from the half-open lips, like a faint whistle. "This is apoplexy," muttered Grenfell; and he turned to ring the bell and summon aid, but, as he did so, he perceived that several papers lay on the floor, and the envelope of a recently-opened packet amongst them. "Ah, here is what has done it!" muttered he to himself; and he held a square-shaped piece of coarse paper to the light, and read the following, written in a bold, irregular hand:—

"I, Paul O'Rafferty, P. P. of Drumcahill and Ardmorran, hereby certify that I have this day united in the bonds of holy matrimony, Adolphus Ladarelle, Esq., of Upper Portland Street, London, and the 'Downs,' in Herefordshire, to Kate



Luttrell, niece and sole heiress of John Hamilton Luttrell, Esq., of Arran; and that the ceremony was duly performed according to the rights and usages of the Holy Catholic Church, and witnessed by those whose names are attached to this document.

“Jane M’Cafferty, her mark X.

“Timothy O’Rorke, of Cusma-na-Creena.

“Given on this eighteenth of November, 18—.”

Grenfell had not time to look at the other papers, for he heard a step in the corridor, and, thrusting them hastily into his pocket, he rang the bell violently, nor desisted till the door opened, and Mr. Fisk appeared.

“Call the people here—send for a doctor!” cried Grenfell. “Sir Within has been taken with a fit.”

“A fit, sir! Indeed, how very dreadful,” said Fisk; but who, instead of hurrying off to obey the order, walked deliberately over and stared at the sick man. “He’ll not come round, sir, take my word for it, Mr. Grenfell. It’s no use doing anything—it’s all up.”

“Go, send for a doctor at once,” said Grenfell, angrily.

“I assure you, sir, it’s too late,” said the impassive valet, as he left the room in the same slow and measured pace he had entered.

Several servants, however, rushed now to answer the bell, which Grenfell rang unceasingly, and by them Sir Within was carried to his room, while messengers were despatched in all directions for medical aid. Once alone in his own room, and with the door locked, Grenfell re-read the document which had caused the disaster. He was not one of those men who suffer from the pangs of conscience on ordinary occasions, but he had his misgivings here that a certain piece of counsel he had once given might just as well have been withheld. If the shock should kill the old man, it would defeat all that policy to which he had been of late devoting himself. Young Ladarelle would have learned from Fisk enough about his, Grenfell’s, influence with Sir Within to shut the doors against him when he had succeeded to the estate. These were painful reflections, and made him think that very probably he had “been backing the wrong stable.”

“Is the fellow really married?” muttered he, as he sat examining the paper. “This document does not seem to me very formal. It is not like the copy of a registry,

and, if the marriage were duly solemnized, why is it not stated where it took place?”

He turned to the long letter which accompanied the certificate. It was from Ladarelle, half apologetically announcing his marriage, and stating that the intelligence could doubtless only prove gratifying to Sir Within, since the object of his choice had so long been the recipient of so many favors from Sir Within himself, and one whose gratitude had already cemented the ties of relationship which bound her to the family. It was long and commonplace throughout, and bore, to the keen eyes of him who read it, the evidence of being written to sustain a fraud.

“There has been no marriage,” said Grenfell, as he closed the letter. “She has been duped and tricked, but how, and to what extent, I know not. If I were to send for Fisk, and tell him that I had just received this letter from his master, the fellow might accord me his confidence, and tell me everything.”

He rang the bell at once, but, when the servant answered the summons, he said that Mr. Fisk had left the Castle with post-horses, half an hour before—it was supposed, for town.

Ladarelle’s letter finished by saying, “We are off to Paris, where we remain. Hotel Grammont, Rue Royale, till the 30th; thence we shall probably go south—not quite certain where.”

“No, no, there has been no marriage—not even a mock one. All these details are far too minute and circumstantial, and these messages of ‘my dear wife’ are all unreal. But what can it matter? If the old man should only rally, it is all for the best.”

A knock came to the door. It was Doctor Price. “All is going on favorably. It was shock—only shock of the nervous system—nothing paralytic,” said he; “and he is more concerned to know that his face was not bruised, nor his hands scratched, than anything else. He wishes to see you immediately.”

“Is it quite prudent to go and talk to him just yet?”

“Better than render him irritable by refusing to see him. You will, of course, use your discretion on the topic you discuss with him.”

Grenfell was soon at the sick man’s bedside, none but themselves in the room.

“We are alone, are we?” asked Sir Within, faintly.

“Quite alone.”

“Yates says there were no letters or papers to be found when he entered the room——”

"I placed them all in my pocket," interrupted Grenfell. "There were so many people about, and that fellow of young Ladarelle's, too, that I thought it best not to leave anything at their mercy."

"It was very kind and very thoughtful. Where are they?"

"Here. I sealed them up in their own envelope."

The old man took the paper with a trembling hand, and placed it under his pillow. He had little doubt but that they had been read—his old experiences in diplomacy gave no credit to any sense of honor on this head—but he said not a word of this.

"Adolphus has married the girl you saw here—my ward, he used to call her," said he, in a low whisper.

"Indeed! Is it a good match? Has she fortune?"

"Not a shilling. Neither fortune nor family."

"Then you are not pleased with the connection?"

Sir Within drew a long sigh, and said, "It is no affair of mine. His father will, perhaps, not like it."

"How did it come about? Where did it take place?"

"Nothing—nothing but misery before her!" muttered the old man, unheeding his question.

"Do you think he will treat her ill?"

"A life of sorrow—of sorrow and shame!" murmured he, still lower. "Poor girl—poor, unhappy girl!"

Grenfell was silent, and the other, after a pause, went on:—

"His father is sure to be displeased; he is a violent man, too, and one can't say to what lengths temper may carry him. And all this will fall upon *her*!"

"Do you think so?"

"I know him well!" He mused for several minutes, and then said to himself: "I could not—I could not—not for worlds!" And then aloud: "But I could leave this—leave the castle, and let them come here. How she loved it once! Oh, if you knew how happy she was here!" He covered his face with his hands, and lay thus a considerable time.

"And do you mean to invite them here?" asked Grenfell, at last.

"You can write it for me," said he, still pursuing his own train of thought. "You can tell him that, not being well—having some difficulty in holding a pen—I have begged of you to say that the Castle is at their disposal—that I mean to leave this—where shall I say for?—to leave this for the south of France or Italy."

"Are you equal to such a journey? Have you strength for it?"

"Far more than to stay here and meet her—*them*—meet *them*," added he, almost peevishly. "I have not health nor spirits for seeing company, and of course people will call, and there will be dinners and receptions—all, things I am unfit for. Say this for me, dear Mr. Grenfell, and tell Yates that I mean to go up to town to-morrow."

Grenfell shook his head to imply dissent, but the other resumed:—

"If you knew me better, sir, you would know that my energy never failed me when I called upon it. I have been tried pretty sorely one or twice in life, and yet no disaster has found me faint-hearted!" As he spoke a gleam of pride lighted up his features, and he looked all that he thought himself. "Will you take this key of the gem-room," said he, after a pause, "and in the second drawer of the large ebony cabinet you will find a green morocco-case; it has my mother's name on it, Oliver Trevor. Do me the favor to bring it to me. This was a wedding present some eighty years ago, Mr. Grenfell," said he, as he unclasped the casket that the other placed in his hands. "It was the fashion of those days to set gems on either side, and here you have emeralds, and here are opals. Ladies were wont to turn their necklaces in the course of an entertainment; they are content with less costly changes now; they merely change their affections." He tried to smile, but his lips trembled, and his voice all but failed him.

"It is very magnificent!" exclaimed Grenfell, who was truly surprised at the splendor of the jewels.

"The Margravine of Anhalt's present to my mother, sir!" As the glow of pride the recollection imparted to his face faded away, a sickly pallor succeeded, and, in a tone of broken and difficult utterance, he said: "Be kind enough to place this in an envelope, seal it with my arms, and address it, 'Mrs. A. Ladarelle, *de la part de W. W.*' That will be quite sufficient."

"They are splendid stones!" said Grenfell, who seemed never to weary of his admiration.

"They will become her, sir, and *she* will become *them*!" said the old man, with an immense effort to seem calm and collected. "I believe," said he at last, with a faint smile, "I am overtaxing this poor strength of mine. Price warned me to be careful. Will you forgive me if I ask you to leave me to my own sorry company? You'll come back in the evening, won't you?"



Thanks—my best thanks!” And he smiled his most gracious smile, and made a little familiar gesture with his hand; and then as the door closed, and he felt that none saw him, he turned his face to the pillow and sobbed—sobbed convulsively.

Although Grenfell had acceded to Sir Within's request to write the invitation to Ladarelle, he secretly determined that he would not commit himself to the step without previously ascertaining if the marriage had really taken place, because, as he said to himself, this young fellow must never get it into his head that he has deceived such a man as me. He therefore wrote a short, half-jocular note, addressed to Ladarelle at his club in town, saying that he had read his letter to Sir Within, and was not one-half so much overcome by the tidings as his respected relative. “In fact,” said he, “I have arrived at that time of life in which men believe very little of what they hear, and attach even less of importance to that little. At all events, Sir Within will not remain here; he means to go abroad at once, and Dalradern will soon be at your disposal, either to pass your honeymoon, or rejoice over your bachelor freedom in, and I offer myself as your guest under either casualty.” “The answer will show me,” muttered he, “what are to be our future relations towards each other. And now for a good sleep, as befits a man with an easy conscience.”

## CHAPTER LVII.

### THE HOME OF SORROW.

IT was six weeks after the events in which we last saw Kate Luttrell that she was sufficiently able to rise from her sick-bed, and sit at the little window of her room. She was wan, and worn, and wasted, her eyes deep sunken, and her cheeks hollow. Beautiful was she still in all the delicate outline of her features, the finely-rounded nostril and gracefully-turned chin almost gaining by the absence of the brilliant coloring which had at one time, in a measure, absorbed all the admiration of her loveliness. Her long luxuriant hair—spared by a sort of pity by her doctor, who, in his despair of resending her from her fever, yielded to her raving entreaties not to cut it off—this now fell in wavy masses over her neck and shoulders, and in its golden richness rendering her pale face the semblance of marble. Each day had the doctor revealed to her some detail of what

had happened during her illness: how she had been “given over,” and received the last rites of the Church; how, after this, one who called himself her brother had arrived, and insisted on seeing her: how he came with the man named O'Rorke and the priest O'Rafferty, and remained a few seconds in her room, and left, never to return again; indeed, all three of them had left the town within an hour after their visit.

She heard all this in mute amazement, nor even was she certain that her faculties yet served her aright, so strange and incomprehensible was it all. Yet she rarely asked a question, or demanded any explanation, hearing all in silence, as though hoping that with time and patience her powers of mind would enable her to surmount the difficulties that now confronted and defied her.

For days and days did she labor to remember what great event it was had first led her to this town of Lifford, the very name of which was strange to her. The same dislike to ask a question pursued her here, and she pondered and pondered over the knotty point, till at last, of a sudden, just as though the light broke instantaneously upon her, she cried out:—

“I remember it all! I know it now! Has the trial come off? What tidings of my grandfather?” The poor woman to whom this was addressed imagined it was a return of her raving, and quietly brought the doctor to her side. “Are the assizes over?” whispered Kate in his ear.

“More than a month ago.”

“There was an old man—Malone. Is he tried?”

“The murder case? I was at it.”

“And the verdict?”

“The verdict was guilty, with a recommendation to mercy for his great age, and the want of premeditation in the crime.”

“Well, go on.”

“The judge concurred, and he will not be executed.”

“He will be banished, however—banished for life,” said she, in a low, faltering voice.

“To believe himself, he asks no better. He made a speech of nigh an hour in his defense, and if it had not been that at the last he attempted a sort of justification of what he had done, the judge would not, in all probability, have charged against him; but the old fellow insisted so strongly on the point that a poor man must always look to himself and not to the law for justice, that he destroyed his case.”

“And was there not one to advise him?”

"Apparently not; and when the Chief Baron named a lawyer to defend him, the old fellow refused the aid, and said: 'The work that's done for nothing is worth nothing. I'll just speak for myself.'"

"And this other man—O'Rorke, I mean—where was he?—what did he do?"

"He left this the night before the trial came on, with that young gentleman that was here."

"Ah, he left him! Deserted him in his last need!" cried she, faintly, but with an intense agony in the tone.

"Had they been friends?" asked the doctor; but she never heard the question, and sat with her hands clasped before her, motionless and silent.

"Were you there through the whole trial?" asked she, at last.

"No; I was present only on the last day, and I heard his speech."

"Tell me how he looked; was he broken or depressed?"

"The very reverse. It would have been better for him if he had looked cast down or in grief. It was too bold and too defiant he was, and this grew on him as he spoke, till, towards the end of his speech, he all but said, 'I dare you to find me guilty!'"

"The brave old man!" muttered she below her breath.

"When the crowd in the court cheered him, I knew what would happen. No judge in the land could have said a word for him after that."

"The brave old man!" muttered she again.

"It seemed at one time he was going to call witnesses to character, and he had a list of them in his hand, but he suddenly changed his mind, and said, 'No, my lord, whatever you're going to do with me this day, I'll do my best to meet it, but I won't make any one stand up here, and have the shame to say he knows a man that the mere turn of a straw might send to the gallows.'"

"Did he say that?" cried she, wildly.

"He did; and he looked at the jury all the while, as though to say, 'Take care what you do; it's a man's life is on it!'"

"Did he ever mention my name? Did he ask for any one in particular, did you hear?" asked she, faintly.

"No; but before he began his speech he looked all over the court for full five minutes or more, as if in search of some one, and even motioned some people in the gallery to stand aside that he might see better, and then he drew a long breath—either disappointment or relief; it might be either."

"How could they have the heart to say guilty?" said she.

"There was no other word to say. They were on their oaths, and so the judge told them, and the whole country was looking at them."

"And where is he now?" asked she, eagerly.

"All the prisoners for transportation have been sent on to Dublin. They'll not leave the country before spring."

She hid her head between her hands, and sat for a long time without speaking. At last she raised her face, and her eyes were red with weeping, and her cheeks furrowed.

"Doctor," said she, plaintively, "have I strength enough to go to him?"

He shook his head mournfully, in token of dissent.

"Am I too ill?"

"You are too weak, my poor child; you have not strength for such a journey."

"But I have great courage, doctor, and I can bear far more fatigue than you would think."

He shook his head again.

"You do not know," said she, in a low but earnest voice, "that I was reared in hardship, brought up in want and cold and misery. Ay, and I have never forgotten it!"

He smiled; it was half in compassion, half in disbelief.

"Do you know me?—do you know who I am?" asked she, eagerly.

"I know it all, my poor child—I know it all," said he, sadly.

"Know it all? What does your phrase mean? How all?"

He arose, but she grasped his hand with both hers, and held him fast.

"You shall not leave this till you have answered me!" cried she. "Is it not enough that I am sick and friendless? Why should you add the torture of doubt to such misery as mine? Tell me, I beseech you—I entreat of you, tell me what you have heard of me? I will deny nothing that is true!"

He pleaded warmly at first to be let off altogether, and then to be allowed further time—some period when she had grown to be stronger and better able to bear what he should have to tell her. Her entreaties only became more urgent, and she at last evinced such excitement, that, in terror lest a return of her brain fever might be feared, he yielded, promising that the confidence reposed in him was a trust nothing should induce him to break.

There is no need that the reader should



pass through the sad ordeal of Kate's suffering, even as a witness. No need is there that her shame, her sorrow, her misery, and, last of all, her passionate indignation, should be displayed before him; nor that he should see her as she sat there wrung with affliction or half maddened with rage. Compressing the doctor's story into the fewest words, it was this:—

“Kate had met young Ladarelle at Dalradern Castle, where a passion had grown up between them. The young man, heir to a vast fortune, and sure of a high position, did not scruple to avail himself of what advantages his brilliant station conferred—won her affections, and seduced her with the promise of a speedy marriage. Wearied out at the unfulfilment of this pledge, she had fled from Dalradern, and sought refuge at Arran, intending to reveal all to her uncle, whose pride would inevitably have sought out her betrayer and avenged her wrong, when she yielded to O'Rourke's persuasion to meet her lover at Westport, where, as he assured her, every preparation for their marriage had been arranged. Thus induced, she had quitted her uncle's house, and met Ladarelle. A mock marriage, performed by a degraded priest, had united them, and they were about to set out for the continent, when she was struck down by brain fever. The fear of being recognized, as the town was then filling for the assizes, determined Ladarelle and his friend to take their departure. There was deposited with the doctor a sum sufficient to defray every charge of her illness, with strict injunctions to keep all secret, and induce her, if she recovered, to proceed to Paris, where, at a given address, she would be welcomed and well received.”

This was the substance of a narrative that took long in the telling, not alone for the number of incidents it recorded, but that, as he proceeded, the unlucky doctor's difficulties increased as some point of unusual delicacy would intervene, or some revelation would be required, which, in the presence of the principal actor in it, became a matter of no small embarrassment to relate.

“And how much of all this, sir, do you believe?” said she, calmly, as he concluded.

He was silent, for the question impugned more than his credulity, and he hesitated what to answer.

“I ask you, sir, how much of this story do you believe?”

“There is a color to part of it.” said he diffidently.

“And what part?”

“The part which refers to the marriage here.”

“What do you mean, sir?”

“When you lay on that bed yonder, with fixed eyes, motionless, unconscious, and, as all believed, dying, a priest muttered some words over you, and placed your hand in that of this young man I spoke of. The woman of the house saw this through the keyhole of the door; she saw a ring produced, too, but it fell to the ground, and the priest laughingly said, ‘It's just as good without the ring;’ and, after they had gone, the woman picked it up beneath the bed, and has it now. She saw them, besides, when they came downstairs, sit down at a table and draw up a paper, to which the priest ordered her to be a witness by her mark, as she cannot write; and this paper she believes to have had some reference to the scene she saw above. All this I believe, for she who told it to me is truthful and honest.”

Kate passed her hand across her forehead like one trying to clear her faculties for better reflection, and then said: “But this is no marriage!”

“Certainly not; nor could it have been had recourse to, to quiet scruples of yours, since you were unconscious of all that went on.”

“And with what object, then, was it done?”

This was what he could not answer, and he sat silent and thoughtful; at last he said, “Were you not at this castle in Wales I spoke of?”

“Yes.”

“And left it for Arran?”

“Yes,” said she again, “that also is true; and I left it to come and see that old man whose trial you witnessed. He was my grandfather.”

“Your grandfather! Surely I am speaking to Miss Luttrell of Arran?”

She nodded, and, after a moment, said: “That old man was my mother's father, and I journeyed here for no other end than to see him and comfort him. Of all these schemes and plots I know nothing, nor have I the strength now to attempt to think of them. Which of us will you believe, sir—them or me?”

“I believe you—every word you have told me,” said he; “but can you forgive me for the tale I have told you?”

“Enough, now, that you do not believe it. And yet what can it matter to me how I am thought of? The opinion of the world is only of moment to those who have friends. I have not one!”

He did his best to comfort and to cheer her; he said all those kind things which even the humblest of his walk know how to pour into the ear of affliction, and he urged her to go back at once to Arran—to her uncle.

The counsel came well timed, and she caught at it eagerly. "My wretchedness will plead for me if I cannot speak for myself," said she, half aloud; and now all her thoughts were how to reach Westport, and take boat for the island. The doctor volunteered to see her so far on her journey, and they set out the same evening.

Arrived at Westport, tired and fatigued as she was, she would not stay to rest, but embarked at once. The night was a bright and pleasant one, with a light land breeze, and, as she stepped into the boat, she said, "The sea has given me the feeling of health again. I begin to hope I shall live to see you and thank you for all your friendship. Good-bye." And as she spoke, the craft was away, and she saw no more.

The poor suffering frame was so overcome by fatigue, that they were already at anchor in the harbor of Arran before she awoke. When she did so, her sensations were so confused that she was almost afraid to speak or question the boatmen, lest her words should seem wild and unconnected.

"Are you coming back with us, miss?" asked one of the men as she stepped on shore.

"No—yes—I believe not; it may be—but I hope not," said she, in a broken accent.

"Are we to wait for you?" repeated he.

"I cannot say. No, no—this is my home."

"A dreary home it is, then!" said the man, turning away; and the words fell heavily on her heart, and she sat down on a stone, and gazed at the wild bleak mountain, and the little group of stunted trees amidst which the Abbey stood; and truly had he called it a dreary home.

The dawn was just breaking as she reached the door, and ere she had time to knock, Molly saw her from her window, and rushed out to meet her and welcome her home. Almost hysterical with joy and grief together, the poor creature clung to her wildly. "It's in time you're come, darlin'," she cried, amidst her sobs; "he's going fast, sleeping away like a child, but asking for you every time he wakes up, and we have to tell him that you were tired, and were gone to lie down, and then he matters some words and goes off again."

It needed but this sorrow, Kate thought, to fill up the measure of her misery; and

she tottered into the little room and sat down without uttering a word, while the woman went on with the story of her master's illness.

"A mere cold at first, brought on by going down to the point of rocks at day-break to watch the boats. He thought he'd see you coming back. At last, when he was so ill that he couldn't leave the house, he said that the man that brought him the first news you were coming, he'd give him hothouse and garden rent-free for his life, and it didn't need that same to make us long to see you! Then came the fever, and for a while he forgot everything, but he talked away about poor Master Harry, and what a differ we'll feel when *he* was the master, raving, raving on, and never ceasing. After that he came back to his senses, and began to ask where you were, and why you didn't sit with him. There he is now! Hear that! that's your name he's trying to say. Come to him while it's time."

Kate arose. She never spoke, but followed the woman through the passage, and entered the little bedroom, where a faint lamp blended its light with the breaking day.

The sick man's eager eye saw her as she crossed the threshold, and in a vague, discordant voice he cried out, "I knew you'd come to me. Sit here—sit down here and hold my hand. Such stories as they told me!" muttered he, as he caught her hand in his grasp. "They can't make that drink for me, Kate," said he, in a low, whining voice.

"I'll make it, dearest uncle. I'll be your nurse now," said she, stooping and kissing his forehead.

"No, no; I'll not let you leave me again. You must sit there and speak to me. When you go away, I feel as if you had gone for weeks."

"My dear, dear uncle!"

"Strange! how strange!" whispered he. "I knew well you were there—there, in that room yonder, asleep, but my thoughts would wander away till I came to think you had left me—deserted me! Don't cry, darling. I felt that tear; it fell on my cheek. I do believe," cried he, aloud, "they wished me to think I was deserted—a Luttrell of Arran dying without a friend or a kinsman to close his eyes. And the last Luttrell, too! The haughty Luttrells, they called us once! Look around you, girl, at this misery, this want, this destitution! Are these the signs that show wealth and power? And it is all that is left to us! All!"

"My own dear uncle, if you but get



well, and be yourself once more, it is enough of wealth for us."

"Are we alone, Kate?" asked he, stealthily.

"No, sir; poor Molly is here."

"Tell her to go. I have something to say to you. Look in that top drawer for a paper tied with a string. No, not that—that is a direction for my funeral; the other—yes, you have it now—is my will. Arran will be yours, Kate. You will love it through all its barrenness, and never part with it. Promise me that."

She muttered something through her sobs.

"Be kind to these poor people. I have never been to them as I ought, but I brought them a broken heart as well as a broken fortune. And wherever you live, come back sometimes to see these old rocks, and sit in that old chair; for, solitary as it all is, it would grieve me bitterly if I thought it were to be deserted!"

She tried to speak, but could not.

"If those on the mainland should try to encroach—if they should come upon your fishing-grounds, girl—defend your rights. We have had these royalties for more than three hundred years. Be firm, be bold!" He muttered on for some moments, and the last words his lips uttered were, "A Luttrell of Arran!" His eyes closed as he said it, and he covered his face with his hand. Kate thought it was sleep, but it was the last sleep of all.

## CHAPTER LVIII.

### SIR WITHIN ABROAD.

SIR WITHIN, accompanied by Grenfell, who was now become an "indispensable" to him, left Dalradern for the continent. The old man neither knew nor cared what direction he should take. The consciousness that any avowal of his love for Kate would but expose him to bitter raillery and ridicule debarred him from all the sympathy he so much needed. Such a passion at his age was exactly one of those follies that all concur to laugh at, and it is precisely in the class that this old man pertained to, these dowagers of the world of statecraft, that ridicule is most powerful. The man who deems a witty *mot* a triumph is just as ready to accept a severe epigram as a death-wound.

One would not have believed how a few days of sorrow could have aged him. It was not alone that a stern melancholy sat

on his features, but that even his erect carriage and firm step had left him, and he walked now with bent-down head feebly and uncertainly. Arrived at Paris, Grenfell endeavored to interest him by some of the pleasures of that marvelous capital. He induced him to dine at the "Rocher," and to drive in the Bois; he narrated all the passing gossip of the day; told him the scandals in vogue, and showed him the actors in them as they drove by on the Boulevards; but it seemed as though all the world of these vanities had closed for him, and he neither smiled nor vouchsafed a word as he listened.

Only once did he betray the slightest animation of voice or manner; it was when Grenfell pointed out to him in a carriage one of the great beauties of the time. The old man looked fixedly for an instant at her, and then, turning away his head, muttered, "*She is infinitely more beautiful.*"

Paris he soon discovered to be too noisy and too bustling. For Switzerland, the season was already late, and the climate was severe. Spain or Italy remained, and he was yet hesitating which to take, when Grenfell mentioned that he saw Mr. M'Kinlay's name amongst the arrivals at the hotel, and, on inquiry, learned that he was on his way out to Italy to see Vyner, and was to leave Paris that night.

"I think I should like to see Vyner too; that is, if he would receive me," said Sir Within, feebly. "Could you manage to catch this Mr. M'Kinlay?"

"Shall we have him to dinner to-day?"

"No; I think not. I'm not equal to it."

"Suppose you were to try. He's not a person to make much ceremony with. If he bores you, pretend indisposition, and leave him."

The old man smiled—a strange, dubious sort of smile it was; perhaps it amused him to receive a lesson in social craft or address from "a Mr. George Grenfell." At all events, Grenfell read the smile as a partial concurrence with his suggestion, and went on:—

"M'Kinlay would be flattered by the invitation; and, if you should want him in any other way, he will be all the more tractable.

"*That is certainly something,*" replied he, musing.

"Not to say," added Grenfell, laughing, "that we run no great risk in being tired of him, since the mail leaves at ten, and he'll scarcely remain after nine!"

"*That is also something,*" said Sir Within again.

"Here goes, then, for a note; or stay, I'll just see if he be in the house. We shall say six o'clock dinner, and alone; these men abhor the idea of dressing, if they can help it."

Sir Within merely raised his eyebrows, half pitifully, that there were such people; and Grenfell hastened away on his mission. He was back in a moment. "Just caught him getting into a cab; he'll be delighted—he *was* delighted when I gave him your message. He goes off to-night, as the waiter said, and apparently full of important news. Vyner, it would seem, has come all right. All he told me was, 'Sir Gervais will be on his legs again;' but we'll have it all after dinner."

Sir Within heard the tidings with far less interest than Grenfell looked for. He smiled benignly, indeed; he muttered something about being "charmed to hear it;" and then heaved a heavy sigh and sat down with his back to the light. How heartless and unfeeling did it seem to him to have so much compassion for loss of mere fortune, and not one word of sympathy for a broken and bereaved heart! What a world it was! What a world of perverted feeling and misapplied generosity!

Grenfell said something about the epicurism of the lawyer class, and went off to give special directions about the dinner; and the old man dozed, and woke, and wandered on in thought over the past, and dozed again, till his servant came to apprise him it was time to dress.

It was the first time he was to encounter the presence of a stranger, after some months of seclusion, and he shrank from the effort, and would have retreated altogether if he could only have found a pretext. Conventionalities are, however, the tyrants of such men as himself, and the bare idea of anything unseemly in politeness was unendurable. He suffered his valet, therefore, to restore him to something of his former appearance. His eyebrows were newly tinted and well arched; his furrowed cheeks were skillfully smoothed over and suffused with a soft, permanent blush; and his whiskers were ingeniously brought into keeping with the vigorous darkness of his raven wig, imparting to him altogether a sort of surcharged vitality, that, to an acute observer, might have imparted a sense little short of horror. The very brilliants of his rings caught a twinkling luster from his tremulous hands, as though to impress the beholder with the contrast between splendor and decay.

Nor was his manner less unreal than his appearance. With his darkened eyebrows

and his diamond studs he had put on his old tone of soft insinuation, and all that was natural in the man was merged in the crafty devices of the minister. No wonder was it M'Kinlay was charmed with a tone and address that had done service in courts. Sir Within thus "warmed to his work," and actually at last began to feel pleasure in the success he had achieved; and even Grenfell, long trained to the habits of the world, was astonished at conversational resources for which he had never given him credit.

Thus happily did the dinner proceed; and when the servants retired, M'Kinlay had arrived at that point of beatitude in which he regarded the company as something superlatively high, and himself fully worthy of it.

"You are on your way to my old friend Vyner, I think?" said Sir Within, with a heartiness that ignored all estrangement between them.

"Yes, sir; on a pleasanter mission, I rejoice to say, than when I last traveled the same road."

"He is all right again, I hear," said Grenfell, who meant, by an abrupt declaration, to disarm all the conventional reserve of the lawyer.

"Well, that would be saying too much, perhaps—too much; but I hope, Mr. Grenfell, he is on the way to it."

"With M'Kinlay for his pilot, he'll make the harbor, I have no doubt whatever," said Sir Within, smiling graciously.

"I shall certainly do my best, sir," said the other, bowing. "Not alone because it is my duty, but that Sir Gervais has been good enough to regard me, for many years back, in the light of his friend as well as his lawyer."

"Of that I am well aware," said Sir Within, lifting his glass and appearing to be quietly pledging Mr. M'Kinlay to himself as a toast.

"Has the scoundrel who ran away with his securities been caught?" asked Grenfell, impatiently.

"No, sir; he is beyond being caught—he is dead." After a pause, which Sir Within and Grenfell saw all the importance of not breaking, but leaving to M'Kinlay the task of continuing his narrative, that gentleman went on: "It is quite a romance—positively a romance in real life. I'm afraid," said he, looking at his watch, "I shall not have time to tell you the story in all its details. I must start by the twenty train for Lyons."

"We are only a few minutes after eight now," said Grenfell. "Let us hear the story."



“Even in outline,” chimed in Sir Within, blandly. “Pray help yourself to the wine—it is beside you.”

“I can give you but a sketch—a mere sketch, sir. It would seem, sir, that ever since the French conquest of Algeria, a French company has been engaged in the supply of munitions of war to the Arabs, and to this end had established agents at Tripoli, Tunis, and Morocco, who were thus enabled to transport these supplies into the interior of Africa. The director of this company was La Harpe, the Parisian banker, with whom Sir Gervais became acquainted through Mr. Gennet, himself the owner of several shares in the undertaking.”

Grenfell sighed wearily at the long-windedness which he saw awaited them; but Sir Within looked intensely interested, and M'Kinlay went on, and, with a prolixity that I have no desire to imitate, entered upon the nature of this company, its operations, and its gains. With a painstaking minuteness he described the false trade-marks used to prevent discovery, and how the weapons, which were forged in France, bore the stamp of Sheffield or Birmingham.

“Giving ‘*la perfide*’ Albion all the credit of the treachery,” said Sir Within, smiling.

“Precisely, sir,” said M'Kinlay, delighted at the attention so graciously vouchsafed him. “I see you understand it all. Indeed, I may remark here, that a very sharp interchange of notes took place between the two governments on the subject, the French alleging, and with apparent reason—”

“Get on, in Heaven's name, to what concerns Vynier,” cried Grenfell. “for it only wants a quarter to nine, otherwise you'll have to leave us without the catastrophe.”

“I obey, sir,” said M'Kinlay, with a certain irritation of voice at the same time. “I must observe, you will find it very difficult to fill up for yourselves the gaps you insist on my passing over. Mr. Gennet, then, for it is of him you wish me to speak, very soon perceiving that Sir Gervais Vynier was not a man to be drawn into such an illicit traffic, assumed to have obtained from the Bey of Tunis and others most valuable concessions to mines of various kinds, and, by specimens of ore, reports of scientific mineralogists, and such like, imposed on him so far as to induce him to enter largely into the speculation, not at all aware that every shilling he advanced was directed to the great enterprise of La Harpe and Company. It was not a

very difficult task for an accomplished swindler like Gennet to show that the mines, which had no existence, had proved a failure. Indeed, the disastrous issue of the enterprise was so plausibly described, and the affairs were wound up with such apparent fairness, that it was no wonder if poor Sir Gervais actually pitied Gennet, and went so far as to beg he might not be molested. I assure you, sir, I have a letter in my desk that says—”

“Nine o'clock!” solemnly ejaculated Grenfell, as the hour rang out from a neighboring steeple.

“I hear it, sir, and regret much that my time should be so limited; but to resume: So soon as Gennet had established the fact of the mock bankruptcy, he fled from Europe, and it was believed took refuge in America, where he had lived many years as partner in a mercantile house—the firm of Reay, Pate, and Brothers, Forty-sixth Street, New York, large ship-owners, and importers on their own account. I feel I am prolix, Mr. Grenfell, even without the admonition of that painful sigh. But really, gentlemen, I am merely selecting the salient points of a very complicated incident, and not entering upon any but the strictly essential details.”

Sir Within assured him he felt an unbounded confidence in his discretion, and he resumed:—

“There chanced to be in the employ of that firm a merchant captain named Dodge, a man of a remarkable energy of character and great daring; and here I may mention, as a curious circumstance, that I once happened by a singular coincidence to meet with this man, and be his fellow-traveler, under no common circumstances.”

“I believe I can recall them,” said Sir Within. “I was the guest of my friend Sir Gervais on the night you told a very remarkable story, in which this man's name occurred. The name was a strange one, and it held a place in my memory. If I mistake not, you crossed over to the Arran Islands in his company?”

“I am much flattered to find, Sir Within, that you remember the incident, though I see how trying it proves to Mr. Grenfell's patience.”

“Not in the least, if you will only consent to start by the morning's train instead of to-night's. Do that and you will find you never had a more patient nor more interested listener.”

“Perfectly impossible, sir. I have timed the whole journey by Bradshaw, and to catch the mail-boat—the *Queen Hortense*—

at Marseilles, on Saturday, I must arrive by the early train, and there is the half-hour now chiming. I trust Sir Within Wardle will forgive my abrupt leave-taking. One more glass of this excellent claret, and I am off."

"Pray give my very kindest regards to Sir Gervais, and my most respectful homage to the ladies. Though I am not permitted to learn how the good fortune came, let me, I beg, be associated with every congratulation the event inspires." And with this Frenchified expression of his satisfaction, the old diplomatist drew himself up like one who felt that he stood once more on his native heath.

So wrapt up was he, indeed, in this revival of an old part he had so long played with success, that he never noticed how Grenfell had left the room along with M'Kinlay, and he sat gazing at the fire and thinking over by-gones. Nor was he aware how time flitted past, when Grenfell returned and took his place opposite him.

"I was determined to have all I could get out of him," said Grenfell. "I jumped into the cab with him, and went to the railroad station. What between his dreary tiresomeness and the street noises as we rattled along, I gained very little; but this much I have learned: That the man Gennet, who had once, as the lawyers call it, 'compassed' the life of Dodge, by sending him to sea in a rotten vessel, immensely insured, and predestined to shipwreck, was recognized by this same skipper in the street of Tripoli. Dodge, it seems, had just been landed, with one other survivor of his crew, having blown up his vessel to prevent its falling into the hands of some Riff pirates, and after unheard-of peril and sufferings was picked up at sea with his companion, both badly wounded by the explosion, though they had thrown themselves into the sea before the vessel blew up. All I could do would not hurry M'Kinlay over this part of the story, which I believe he imagined he told effectively, and I had only got him to Tripoli as we drove into the yard of the station. While higgling with the cabman and the porters, he stammered out something about Dodge standing at his Consul's door as Gennet rode past with a large suite of Arab followers; that the skipper sprang upon him like a tiger and tore him from his horse. A dreadful struggle must have ensued, for Gennet died of his wounds that night, and Dodge was nearly cut to pieces by the guard, his life being saved by the desperate bravery of his friend, who was at last rescued by the members of the

Consulate. The bell rang as we arrived at this critical moment, but I followed him to his compartment, and, at the risk of being carried off, sat down beside him. The miserable proser wanted to involve me in an account of the criminal law of Tripoli when any one holding office under the Bey should have been the victim of attack, but I swore I knew it perfectly, and asked what about Gennet? He then began to narrate how the French Consul, having intervened to defend the interests of his countryman, discovered the whole plot against France, found all the details of the purchase of war materials, bills of lading, and such like; and, besides these, masses of Vyner's acceptances which had never been negotiated. Another—the last—bell now rang out, and as I sprang from my seat he leaned out of the widow, and said: 'Dodge, it is thought, will recover; his friend is now with Sir Gervais, at Chiavari, and turns out to be Luttrell, the young fellow whom we picked up—' When, where, or how, I cannot say, for the train now moved on, and the tiresome old dog was carried off at a very different pace from that of his narrative."

Sir Within listened with all the semblance of interest and attention. Once or twice he interjected an "Ah!" or, "How strange!" But it is only truthful to own that he paid very little real attention to the story, and could not well have said at the end whether Dodge was not the villain of the piece, and young Luttrell his guilty accomplice.

Very grateful was he, however, when it ended, and when Grenfell said, "I suppose Vyner has had enough of speculation now to last his lifetime."

"I trust so sincerely," said Sir Within, with a smile.

"It is such rank folly for a man to adventure into a career of which he knows nothing, and take up as his associates a set of men totally unlike any he has ever lived with."

"I perfectly agree with you," said the other, with an urbane bow. "You have admirably expressed the sentiment I experience at this moment; and even with my brief opportunity of arriving at a judgment, I am free to confess that I thought this gentleman who has just left us—Mr. M'Kinlay, I think he is called—a very dangerous man—a most dangerous man."

Grenfell looked at him, and fortunate was it that Sir Within did not note that look, so full was it of pitiless contempt; and then rising, he said, "It is later than I thought. You said something



about Versailles for to-morrow, didn't you?"

"I have not heard whether his Majesty will receive me."

Grenfell started, and stared at him. Had it come to this already? Was the mind gone and the intellect shattered?

"You spoke of a day in the country somewhere," reiterated Grenfell, "St. Germain or Versailles."

"Very true. I am most grateful for your reminder. It will be charming, I am quite in a humor for a few pleasant people, and I hope the weather will favor us."

"Good-night," said Grenfell, abruptly, and left the room.

## CHAPTER LIX.

### MR. GRENFELL'S ROOM.

MR. GRENFELL sat in an easy-chair, wrapped in a most comfortable dressing-gown, and his feet encased in the softest of slippers, before a cheery wood fire, smoking. His reflections were not depressing. The scene from which he had just come satisfied him as to a fact—which men like Grenfell have a sort of greedy appetite to be daily assured of—that "money is not everything in this world." Simple as the proposition seems, it takes a long and varied knowledge of life to bring home that conviction forcibly and effectually. Men are much more prone to utter it than to believe it, and more ready to believe it than to act upon it.

Now, though Grenfell was ready to admit that "money was not everything," he coupled it with what he believed to be just as true—that it was a man's own fault that made it so. He instanced to his mind the old man he had just quitted, and who, except in the quality of years, was surrounded with everything one could desire—name, fortune, station, more than average abilities, and good health—and yet he must needs fall in love! By what fatality was it that a man always chose the worst road? What malevolent ingenuity ever selected the precise path that led to ruin? Were there no other vices he could have taken to? Wine, gambling, gluttony, would have spared his intellect for a year or two certainly. The brains of old people stand common wear and tear pretty well; it is only when the affections come to bear upon the mind that the system gives way. That a man should assume old age gracefully and becomingly, the heart ought to decay and grow

callous, just as naturally as hair whitens and teeth fail. Nature never contemplated such a compact as that the blood at seventy should circulate as at thirty, and that the case-hardened, world-worn man should have a revival of hope, trustfulness, and self-delusion. It was thus Grenfell regarded the question, and the view was not the less pleasing that he felt how safely he stood as regards all those seductions which fool other men and render their lives ridiculous. At all events, the world should not laugh at *him*. This is a philosophy that suffices for a large number of people in life; and simple as the first element of it may seem, it involves more hard-heartedness, more cruel indifference to others, and a more practical selfishness, than any other code I know of.

If he was well pleased that Vyner should "come all right again," it was because he liked a rich friend far better than a poor one; but there mingled with his satisfaction a regret that he had not made overtures to the Vyners—the "women," he called them—in their hour of dark fortune, and established with them a position he could continue to maintain in their prosperity. "Yes," thought he, "I ought to have been taught by those people who always courted the Bourbons in their exile, and speculated on their restoration." But the restoration of the Vyner dynasty was a thing he had never dreamed of. Had he only had the very faintest clue to it, what a game he might have played! What generous proffers he might have made, how ready he might have been with his aid! It is only just to him to own that he very rarely was wanting in such prescience; he studied life pretty much as a physician studies disease, and argued from the presence of one symptom which was to follow it.

His present speculations took this form: Vyner will at once return to England, and go back to "the House;" he'll want occupation, and he'll want, besides, to reinstate himself with the world. With his position and his abilities—fair abilities they were—he may aspire to office, and Grenfell liked official people. They were a sort of priesthood, who could slip a friend into the sanctuary occasionally; not to add, that all privileged classes have an immense attraction for the man whose birth has debarred him from their intimacy. Now, he could not present himself more auspiciously to the Vyners than in the company of Sir Within Wardle, who was most eager to renew all his former relations with them. Nor was it quite impossible but that Gren-

fell might seem to be the agency by which the reconciliation was brought about. A clever stroke of poney that, and one which would doubtless go far to render him acceptable to the "women."

If we must invade the secrecy of a very secret nature, we must confess that Mr. Grenfell, in his gloomier hours, in his dark days at home, when dyspeptic and depressed, speculated on the possible event that he might at last be driven to marry. He thought of it the way men think of the precautions instilled by a certain time of life, the necessity of more care in diet, more regular hours, and such like. There would come a time, he suspected, when country-houses would be less eager for him, and the young fellows who now courted and surrounded him would have themselves slipped into "mediævalty," and need him no more. It was sad enough to think of, but he saw it, he knew it. Nothing, then, remained but a wife.

It was all-essential—indeed indispensable—that she should be a person of family and connections; one, in fact, that might be able to keep open the door of society—even half ajar—but still enough to let him slip in and mingle with those inside. Vyner's sister-in-law was pretty much what he wanted. She was no longer young, and consequently her market-value placed her nearer to his hopes; and although Sir Gervais had never yet made him known to Lady Vyner or Georgina, things were constantly done abroad that could not have occurred at home. Men were dear friends on the Tiber who would not have been known to each other on the Thames. The result of all his meditations was, that he must persuade Sir Within to cross the Alps, and then, by some lucky chance or other, come unexpectedly upon the Vyners. Fortune should take care of the rest.

Arrived at this conclusion, and his third segar all but smoked out, he was thinking of bed, when a tap came to his door. Before he had well time to say "Come in," the door opened, and young Ladarelle's valet, Mr. Fisk, stood before him.

"I hope you'll forgive me, sir," said he, submissively, "for obtruding upon you at such an hour, but I have been all over Paris, and only found out where you were this minute. I was at the station this evening when you drove up there, but I lost you in the crowd, and never could find you again."

"All which zeal implies that you had some business with me," said Grenfell, slowly.

"Yes, sir, certainly. It is what I mean, sir," said he, wiping his forehead, and be-

traying by his manner a considerable amount of agitation.

"Now, then, what is it?"

"It is my master, sir, Mr. Adolphus Ladarelle, has got into trouble—very serious trouble, I'm afraid, too—and if *you* can't help him through it, there's nobody can, I'm sure."

"A duel?"

"No, sir; he don't fight."

"Debt?"

"Not exactly debt, sir; but he has been arrested within the last few hours."

"Out with it. What's the story?"

"You have heard about that Irish business, I suppose, sir—that story of the young girl he pretended to have married to prevent Sir Within making her my lady—"

"I know it all; go on."

"Well, sir, the worst of all that affair was, that it brought my master into close intimacy with a very dangerous fellow called O'Rorke, and though Mr. Ladarelle paid him—and paid him handsomely, too—for all he had done, and took his passage out to Melbourne, the fellow wouldn't go. No, sir, he swore he'd see Paris, and enjoy a little of Paris life, before he'd sail. I was for getting him aboard when he was half drunk, and shipping him off before he was aware of it; but my master was afraid of him, and declared that he was quite capable of coming back from the farthest end of the world to 'serve him out' for anything like 'a cross.'"

"Go on—come to the arrest—what was it for?" broke in Grenfell, impatiently.

"Cheating at cards, sir," plumped out the other, half vexed at being deemed prosy. "That's the charge, sir; false cards and cogged dice, and the police have them in their hands this minute. It was all this fellow's doing, sir; it was he persuaded Mr. Dolly to set up the rooms and the tables, and here's what it's come to!"

"And there *was* false play?"

"So they say, sir. One of the ladies that was taken up is well known to the police; she is an Italian marchioness—at least they call her so—and the story goes 'well protected,' as they say here."

"I don't see that there's anything to be done in the matter, Fisk; the law will deal with them, and pretty sharply, too, and none can interfere with it. Are you compromised yourself?"

"No, sir, not in the least. I was back and forward to town once or twice a week, getting bills discounted and the like, but I never went near the rooms. I took good care of that."



“Such being the case, I suspect your affection for your master will not prove fatal to you—eh?”

“Perhaps not, sir; a strong constitution and regular habit may help me over it, but there’s another point I ain’t so easy about. Mr. Dolly has got a matter of nigh four hundred pounds of mine. I lent it at twenty-five per cent. to him last year, and I begin to fear the security is not what it ought to be.”

“There’s something in that, certainly,” said Grenfell, slowly.

“Yes, sir, there’s a great deal in it, because they say here, if Mr. Dolly should be sent to the galleys ever so short a time, he loses civil rights, and when he loses *them*, he needn’t pay no debts to any one.”

“Blessed invention those galleys must be, if they could give the immunity you mention!” said Grenfell, laughing; “but I opine your law is not quite accurate—at any rate, Fisk, there’s nothing to be done for him. If he stood alone in the case, it is just possible there would be a chance of helping him, but here he must accept the lot of his associates. By the way, what did he mean by that mock marriage? What was the object of it?” This query of Grenfell’s was thrown out in a sort of random carelessness, its real object being to see if Mr. Fisk was on “the square” with him.

“Don’t you know, sir, that he wanted to prevent the old gent at Dalradern from marrying her? One of the great lawyers thinks that the estate doesn’t go to the Ladarelles at all if Sir Within had an heir, and though it’s not very likely, sir, it might be possible. Master Dolly, at all events, was mortally afraid of it, and he always said that the mere chance cost him from fifteen to twenty per cent. in his dealings with money-lenders.”

“Are you known to Sir Within, Fisk? Has he seen you at the Castle?”

“Not to know me, sir; he never notices any of *us* at all. Yates, his man, knows me.”

“Yates is not with him. He has got a French valet who lived with him some years ago, and so I was thinking, perhaps the best way to serve you would be to take you myself. What do you say to it?”

“I’m ever grateful, sir, to you. I couldn’t wish for anything better.”

“It will be pleasanter than ‘Clichy,’ at all events, Fisk, and there’s no doubt the police here will look out for you when they discover you were in Mr. Ladarelle’s service.”

“And am I safe here, sir?”

“You’ll be safe, because we leave here

to-morrow. So come over here after breakfast, and we’ll settle everything. By the way, I’d not go near Mr. Ladarelle if I were you; you can’t be of use to him, and it’s as well to take care of yourself.”

“I was just thinking that same, sir; not to say that if that fellow O’Rorke saw me, it’s just as likely he’d say I was one of the gang.”

“Quite so. Be here about twelve or one, not later.”

“What do you think about my money, sir—the loan to Mr. Dolly, I mean?”

“It’s not a choice investment, Fisk—at least, there are securities I would certainly prefer to it.”

“Three years’ wages and perquisites, sir!” cried he, mournfully.

“Well, your master will probably have five years to ruminate over the wrong he has done you.”

“At the galleys? Do you really mean the galleys, sir?”

“I really mean at the galleys, Fisk; and if he be not a more amusing companion there than I have found him in ordinary life, I can only say I do not envy the man he will be chained to.”

Mr. Fisk grinned a very hearty concurrence with the sentiment, and took a respectful leave, and withdrew.

## CHAPTER LX.

### MR. M’KINLAY IN THE TOILS.

MR. M’KINLAY was too acute an observer not to see that his arrival at the Boschetto was matter of general satisfaction, and his welcome peculiarly cordial. The Vyners had just escaped from a heavy calamity, and were profuse of grateful emotions to all who had assisted them in their troubles.

Now, M’Kinlay had not been extravagant in his offices of friendship, but, with a sort of professional instinct, he had always contemplated the possibility of a restoration, and had never betrayed by his manner any falling off from his old terms of loyalty and devotion.

The Vyners, however, had their acute attack of gratitude, and they felt very warmly towards him, and even went so far as to designate by the word “delicacy” the cold reserve which he had once or twice manifested. Vyner gave him up his own room, and the little study adjoining it, and Georgina—the haughty Georgina—vouchsafed to look over its internal econo-

mies, and see that it was perfect in all its comforts. She went further; she actually avowed to him the part she had taken in his reception, and coquettishly engaged him to remember how much of his accommodation had depended on *her* foresight.

Mr. M'Kinlay was delighted; he had not been without certain misgivings, as he journeyed along over the Alps, that he might have shown himself a stronger, stauncher friend to Vyner in his hour of adversity. He had his doubts as to whether he had not been betrayed once or twice into a tone of rebuke or censure, and he knew he had assumed a manner of more freedom than consorted with their former relations. Would these lapses be remembered against him now? Should he find them all colder, stiffer, haughtier than ever?

What a relief to him was the gracious, the more than gracious, reception he met with! How pleasant to be thanked most enthusiastically for the long journey he had come, with the consciousness he was to be paid for it as handsomely afterwards! How lightly he took his fatigues, how cheerily he talked of everything, slyly insinuating now and then that if they would look back to his letters they would see that he always pointed to this issue to the ease, and for his part never felt that the matter was so serious as they deemed it. "Not that I ever permitted myself to hold out hopes which might prove delusive," added he, "for I belong to a profession whose first maxim is, 'Nothing is certain?'"

Nor was it merely kind or complimentary they were; they were confidential. Vyner would sit down at the fire with him and tell all the little family secrets that are usually reserved for the members themselves; and Georgina would join him in the garden, to explain how she long foresaw the infatuation of her brother-in-law, but was powerless to arrest it; and even Lady Vyner—the cold and distant Lady Vyner—informed him, in the strictest secrecy, that her dear mother had latterly taken a fondness for Malaga, and actually drank two full glasses of it every day more than the doctor permitted. What may not the man do in the household who is thus accepted and trusted? So, certainly, thought Mr. M'Kinlay, and as he strolled in the garden, apparently deep in thought over the Vyner complications, his real cares were, How was he himself to derive the fullest advantages of "the situation"?

"It is while towing the wreck into harbor the best bargain can be made for sal-

vage," muttered M'Kinlay. "I must employ the present moments well, since, once reinstated in their old prosperity, the old pride is sure to return." He hesitated long what course to take. Prudence suggested the slow, cautious, patient approach; but then Miss Courtenay was one of those capricious natures whose sudden turns disconcert all regular siege. And, on the other hand, if he were to attempt a "surprise," and failed, he should never recover it. He had ascertained that her fortune was safe; he had also learned that Mrs. Courtenay had made a will in her favor, though to what precise amount he could not tell; and he fancied—nor was it mere fancy—that she inclined far more to his society than heretofore, and seemed to encourage him to a greater frankness than he had yet dared to employ in his intercourse with her.

Partly because of the arduous task of investigating Vyner's accounts, and partly that he was a man who required abundant time and quiet before he could make up his mind on any difficulty, he breakfasted alone in his own room, and rarely mixed with the family before dinner-hour. He knew well how all this seeming industry redounded to his credit; the little entreaties to him to take some fresh air, or take a walk or a drive, were all so many assurances of friendly interest in his behalf; and when Vyner would say, "Have a care, M'Kinlay; remember what's to become of *us* if you knock up," Lady Vyner's glance of gratitude, and Miss Courtenay's air of half-confusion, were an incense that positively intoxicated him with ecstasy.

A short stroll in the garden he at last permitted himself to take, and of this brief period of relaxation he made a little daily history—one of those small jokes great men weave out of some little personal detail, which they have a conscious sense, perhaps, history will yet deal with more pompously.

"Five times from the orangery to the far summer-house to-day! There's dissipation for you," would he say, as he entered the drawing-room before dinner. "Really, I feel like a pedestrian training for a race." And how pleasantly would they laugh at his drollery, as we all do laugh every day at some stupid attempt at fun by those whose services we stand in need of, flattering ourselves the while that our sycophancy is but politeness.

Vyner was absent one day, and Mr. M'Kinlay took the head of the table, and did the honors with somewhat more pre-



tension than the position required, alluding jocularly to his high estate and its onerous responsibilities, but the ladies liked his pleasantries, and treasured up little details of it to tell Sir Gervais on his return.

When they left him to his coffee and his cigar on the terrace his feeling was little less than triumphant. "Yes," thought he, "I have won the race; I may claim the cup when I please." While he thus reveled, he saw, or fancied he saw, the flutter of a muslin dress in the garden beneath. Was it Georgina? Could it be that she had gone there designedly to draw him on to a declaration? If Mr. McKinlay appear to my fair readers less gallant than he might be, let them bear in mind that his years were not those which dispose to romance, and that he was only a "solicitor" by profession.

"Now or never, then," said he, finishing a second liqueur-glass of brandy, and descending the steps into the garden.

Though within a few days of Christmas, the evening was mild and even genial, for Chiavari is one of those sheltered nooks where the oranges live out of doors through the winter, and enjoy a climate like that of Naples. It was some time before he could detect her he was in search of, and at last came suddenly to where she was gathering some fresh violets for a bouquet.

"What a climate—what a heavenly climate this is, Miss Courtenay!" said he, in a tone purposely softened and subdued for the occasion; and she started and exclaimed:—

"Oh! how you frightened me, my dear McKinlay! I never heard you coming. I am in search of violets; come and help me, but only take the deep blue ones."

Now, if Mr. McKinlay had been perfectly sure—which he was not—that her eyes were blue, he would have adventured on a pretty compliment, but, as a lawyer, he knew the consequences of "misdescription," and he contented himself with expressing all the happiness he felt at being associated with her in any pursuit.

"Has my sister told you what Gervais has gone about?" asked she, still stooping to cull the flowers.

"Not a word of it."

"Then I will, though certainly you scarcely deserve such a proof of my confidence, seeing how very guarded you are as to your own secrets."

"I, my dear Miss Courtenay? I guarded, and towards *you*? I pray you tell me what you allude to."

"By and by, perhaps; for the present I

want to speak of our own mysteries. Know, then; that my brother has gone to Genoa to bring back with him the young gentleman through whose means much of our late discovery has been made, and who turns out to be Mr. Luttrell. He was here for a couple of days already, but so overwhelmed by the news of his father's death that we scarcely saw anything of him. He then left us to go back and nurse his wounded friend, the captain, who insists, it seems, on being treated in the public hospital."

"Luttrell!—Luttrell! You mean one of that family who lived on the rock off the Irish coast?"

"His son."

"The boy I remember having rescued at the peril of my own life! I wonder will his memory recall it? And why is Sir Gervais——"

He stopped; he was about to ask what interest could attach to any one so devoid of fortune, friends, or station, and she saw the meaning of his question, and said, though not without a certain confusion:—

"My brother-in-law and this young man's father were once on a time very intimate; he used to be a great deal with us—I am speaking of very long ago—and then we lost sight of him. A remote residence and an imprudent marriage estranged him from us, and the merest accident led my brother to where he lived—the barren island you spoke of—and renewed in some sort their old friendship—in so far, at least, that Gervais promised to be the guardian of his friend's son——"

"I remember it all; I took a part in the arrangements."

"But it turns out there is nothing to take charge of. In a letter that my brother got from Mr. Grenfell some time since we find that Mr. Luttrell has left everything he possessed to a certain niece or daughter. Which was she, Mr. McKinlay?"

"Niece, I always understood."

"Which did you always believe?" said she, looking at him with a steady, unflinching stare.

"Niece, certainly."

"Indeed?"

"On my word of honor."

"And all this wonderful story about her beauty and captivity, and the running away, and the secret marriage, how much of *that* does Mr. McKinlay believe?"

"I don't know one word of what you allude to."

"Oh, Mr. McKinlay, this is more than lawyer-like reserve!"

"I will swear it, if you desire."

"But surely you'll not say that you did not dine with Sir Within Wardle at the Hotel Windsor, as you came through Paris?"

"I have not the slightest intention to deny it."

"And is it possible, Mr. M'Kinlay, that nothing of what I have just mentioned was dropped during the dinner? No allusion to the beautiful Miss Luttrell or Mrs. Ladarelle?—Mr. Grenfell is in doubt which to call her."

"Not a syllable; her name was never uttered."

"And what did you talk of, in Heaven's name?" cried she, impatiently. "Was it town gossip and scandal?"

For a moment Mr. M'Kinlay was almost scared by her impetuosity, but he rallied, and assured her that Sir Within spoke with the warmest interest of Sir Gervais, and alluded in the most cordial way to their old relations of friendship, and with what pleasure he would renew them. "He charged me with innumerable kind messages, and almost his last word was a hope that he should be fortunate enough to meet you again."

"And through all this no mention of the 'beauty'—I mean, of Miss Luttrell?"

"Not a word."

"How strange—how incomprehensible!" said she, pausing, and seeming to reflect.

"Remember, my dear Miss Courtenay, it was a very hurried meeting altogether. We dined at half-past six, and at ten I was on the railroad."

"Did Sir Within strike you as looking so very ill—so much cut up—as Mr. Grenfell phrases it?"

"I thought him looking remarkably well; for a man of his age, wonderfully well. He must be—let me see—he must be not very far from eighty."

"Not within ten years of it, sir, I'm confident," broke she in, almost fiercely. "There's no error more common than to overrate the age of distinguished men. The public infers that familiarity with their name implies long acquaintance, and it is a most absurd mistake."

Now, Mr. M'Kinlay thoroughly understood that he was typified under that same public, who only knew great men by report, and misrepresented them through ignorance. He was, however, so strong in "his brief" that he would not submit to be put down; he had taken pains to look over a record of Sir Within's services, and had seen that he was attached to the Russian embassy fifty-two years ago.

"What do you say to that, Miss Courtenay—fifty-two years ago?"

"I say, sir, that I don't care for arithmetic, and never settle any question by a reference to mere figures. When I last saw Sir Within he was in the prime of life, and if great social talents and agreeability were to be any test, one of the youngest persons of the company."

"Oh, I am the first to extol his conversational powers. He is a perfect mine of good stories."

"I detest good stories. I like conversation, I like reply, rejoinder, even amplification at times; anecdote is almost always a mistake."

Mr. M'Kinlay was aghast. How disagreeable he must have made himself, to render her so sharp and so incisive all at once!

"I can say all this to *you*," said she with a sweet tone, "for it is a fault you never commit. And so you remark that Sir Within showed no remarkable gloom or depression—nothing, in fact, that argued he had met with any great shock?"

"My impression was that I saw him in high spirits and in the best possible health."

"I thought so!" cried she, almost triumphantly. "I declare I thought so!" But why she thought so, or what she thought, or how it could be matter of such pleasure, she did not go on to explain. After a moment she resumed: "And was there nothing said about why he had left Dalradern, and what induced him to come abroad?"

"Nothing—positively nothing."

"Well," said she with a haughty toss of her head, "it is very possible that the whole subject occupies a much larger space in Mr. Grenfell's letter than in Sir Within's mind; and, for my own part, I only inquired about the matter as it was once the cause of a certain coldness, a half-estrangement between Dalradern and ourselves, and which, as my brother takes much pleasure in Sir Within's society, I rejoice to perceive exists no longer."

All this was a perfect riddle to Mr. M'Kinlay, who had nothing for it but to utter a wise sentiment on the happiness of reconciliation. Even this was unfortunate, for she tartly told him "that there could be no reconciliation where there was no quarrel;" and then dryly added, "Is it not cold out here?"

"I protest I think it delightful," said he. "Well, then, it is damp, or it's something or other," said she, carelessly, and turned towards the house.

M'Kinlay followed her; gloomy enough



was he. Here was the opportunity he had so long wished for, and what had he made of it? It had opened, too, favorably; their first meeting was cordial; had he said anything that might have offended her? or had he—this was his last thought as they reached the porch—had he *not* said what she expected he ought to have said? *That* supposition would at once explain her chagrin and irritation.

“Miss Georgina,” said he, with a sort of reckless daring, “I have an entreaty to make of you—I ask a favor at your hands.”

“It is granted, Mr. M’Kinlay,” said she, smiling. “I guess it already.”

“You guess it already, and you grant it!” cried he, in ecstasy.

“Yes,” said she, still graciously, as she threw off her shawl. “You are impatient for your tea, and you shall have it at once.”

And with that she moved hurriedly forward, and left him overwhelmed with shame and anger.

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## CHAPTER LXI.

### MR. M’KINLAY’S “INSTRUCTIONS.”

THE party at the Villa were seated at breakfast the following morning when Vyner arrived with his young guest—a fine, manly-looking, determined fellow, whose frank bearing and unaffected demeanor interested the ladies strongly in his favor at once; nor did the tone of sorrow and sadness in his manner detract from the good impression he produced. The tidings of his father’s death had met him as he landed at Genoa, and overwhelmed him with affliction—such utter friendlessness was his—so bereft was he of all that meant kindred or relationship. His captain was, indeed, now all that remained to him, and he had nursed and tended him in his long illness with untiring devotion, insomuch, indeed, that it was with difficulty Vyner could persuade him to come down to the Boschetto for a few days to rally his strength and spirits by change of air and scene.

Sir Gervais had very early observed that the young sailor possessed the characteristic reserve of his family, and avoided, whenever possible, all reference to himself. Strange and eventful as his last few years had been, he never referred to them, or did so in that careless, passing way that showed he would not willingly make them matter to dwell upon; and yet, with all

this, there was an openness when questioned, a frank readiness to answer whatever was asked, that plainly proved his reserve was mere shyness—the modest dislike to make himself or his story foreground objects.

Lady Vyner, not usually attracted by new acquaintances, liked him much, and saw him, without any motherly misgivings, constantly in Ada’s society. They walked together over the olive hills and along the sea-shore every morning. Once or twice, too, they had taken out Vyner’s little sail-boat, and made excursions to Sestri or to Recco; and in the grave, respectful, almost distant manner of Harry Luttrell, there seemed that sort of security which the mammas of handsome heiresses deem sufficient. Ada, too—frankness and honesty itself—spoke of him to her mother as a sister might have spoken of a dear brother.

If he had been more confidential with her than with the others—and his confessions were even marked with a sort of strange deference, as though made to one who could not well realize to her mind the humble fortunes of a mere adventurer like himself—there was also a kind of rugged pride in the way he presented himself even in his character of a sailor—one who had not the slightest pretension to rank or condition whatever—that showed how he regarded the gulf between them.

It was strange, inexplicably strange, what distance separated him from Miss Courtenay. Neither would—perhaps neither could—make any advances to the other. “She is so unlike your mother, Ada,” blurted he out one day, ere he knew what he had said. “He is painfully like his father,” was Georgina’s comment on himself.

“You have had a long visit from young Luttrell, Mr. M’Kinlay,” said she, on the day after his arrival, when they had been closeted together for nigh two hours.

“Yes, Sir Gervais begged me to explain to him some of the circumstances which led his father to will away the Arran property, and to inform him that the present owner was his cousin. I suspect Sir Gervais shrank from the unpleasant task of entering upon the low connections of the family, and which, of course, gave *me* no manner of inconvenience. I told him who she was, and he remembered her at once. I was going on to speak of her having been adopted by your brother, and the other incidents of her childhood, but he stopped me by saying, ‘Would it be possible to make any barter of the Roscommon property, which goes to the heir-at-law, and who is now myself, for the Arran estate,

for I hold much to it?" I explained to him that his being alive broke the will, and that Arran was as much his as the rest of the estate. But he would not hear of this, and kept on repeating, "My father gave it, and without she is disposed to part with it for a liberal equivalent, I'll not disturb the possession."

"The Luttrells were all so," said she; "half worldly, half romantic, and one never knew which side was uppermost."

"He means to go over to Arran; he wants to see the place where his father is buried. The pride of race is very strong in him, and the mere utterance of the word Luttrell brings it up in full force."

"What a pity she's married!" said she, insolently, but in so faint a voice he could not catch the words, and asked her to repeat them. "I was only talking to myself, Mr. M'Kinlay," said she.

"I pressed him," continued the other, "to give me some instructions, for I can't suppose he intends to let his fortune slip out of his hands altogether. I told him that it was as much as to impugn his legitimacy; and he gave me a look that frightened me, and, for a moment, I wished myself anywhere else than in the room with him. 'He must be something younger, and bolder, and braver than you, sir, that will ever dare to utter such a doubt as that,' said he; and he was almost purple with passion as he spoke."

"They are all violent; at least, they were!" said she, with a sneering smile. "I hope you encouraged the notion of going to Arran. I should be so glad if he were to do it at once."

"Indeed?"

"Can you doubt it, Mr. M'Kinlay? Is it a person so acute and observant as yourself need be told that my niece, Ada, should not be thrown into constant companionship with a young fellow, whose very adventures impart a sort of interest to him?"

"But a sailor, Miss Courtenay!—a mere sailor!"

"Very well, sir; and a mere sailor, to a very young girl who has seen nothing of life, would possibly be fully as attractive as a member of Parliament. The faculty to find out what is suitable to us, Mr. M'Kinlay, does not usually occur in very early life."

There was a marked emphasis in the word "suitable" that made the old lawyer's heart throb fast and full. Was this thrown out for encouragement—was it to inspire hope, or suggest warning? What would he not have given to be certain which of the two it meant.

"Ah, Miss Courtenay," said he, with a most imploring look, "if I could only assure myself that in the words you have just spoken there lay one spark of hope—I mean, if I could but believe that this would be the proper moment——"

"My dear Mr. M'Kinlay, let me stop you. There are many things to be done before I can let you even finish your sentence; and mind me, sir, this 'without prejudice,' as you lawyers say, to my own exercise of judgment afterwards; and the first of these is to send this young man away. I own to you, frankly, he is no favorite of mine. I call ruggedness what they call frankness; and his pride of name and birth are, when unattached to either fortune or position, simply insufferable. Get rid of him; send him to Arran, if he won't go to Japan. You can do it without inhospitality, or even awkwardness. You can hint to him that people rarely remain beyond two or three days on a visit; that his intimacy with Ada gives pain, uneasiness to her family; that, in short, he ought to go. I know," added she, with a bewitching smile "how little there is for me to instruct Mr. M'Kinlay on a point where tact and delicacy are the weapons to be employed. I feel all the presumption of such a pretense, and therefore I merely say, induce him to go his way, and let him do it in such guise that my brother may not suspect our interference."

"There is nothing I would not do, Miss Courtenay, with the mere possibility that you would deem it a service. All I ask is the assurance——"

"Must I stop you again?" said she, with a sweet smile. "Must I remind you that he who stipulates for his reward risks in some sort his character for generosity, and, worse still, implies a distrust of the one he serves?"

"I am your slave, Miss Courtenay—your humble slave!" said he, bowing with a deep humility.

"It is what I intend you should be," muttered she to herself; and then added aloud: "Lose no time about this; my brother mentions that he accidentally met Sir Within Wardle in the doorway of the hotel at Genoa; that they embraced most cordially, and parted with Sir Within's promise to come over and pass some days here, and I believe he may be expected tomorrow; and of course it would be more convenient to have this young man's room, all the more that Mr. Grenfell also is expected."

"I'll set about my negotiation at once."

"Don't call it negotiation, my dear Mr.



M'Kinlay. It must be far more effectual and more peremptory. To present this sailor lad as an acquaintance to Sir Within would be monstrous. The pleasure of his visit will depend on his coming actually amongst all his old friends."

Ah, Mr. M'Kinlay, how your heart swelled proudly at that flattery! How exquisite it was to feel you were a member of an order to which, in your proudest day-dreams, you had not aspired!

"There now, you have your instructions. You'll find me here about four o'clock to report progress, or, rather, as I trust, to announce success."

"I have an excellent opportunity," cried M'Kinlay, as she moved away. "He has asked me to go out fishing with him in the boat to-day. It will be just the time to fall into confidential discourse. At four expect me."

## CHAPTER LXII.

### FISHING IN TROUBLED WATERS.

ON gaining the beach where he had appointed to meet Harry Luttrell, Mr. M'Kinlay discovered that his young friend had gone off already, taking Ada with him. He could, indeed, detect the form of a lady in the stern of the boat, as she slipped along over the calm sea, and mark that Luttrell was seated at her side.

Here was imprudence, rashness, willful rashness, all the more reprehensible in a man like Vyner, who knew, or ought to know, the world by this time. "How is that sailor there to remember that he is only a sailor? and how is that young heiress to call to mind that she is an heiress? Why should people ever be placed in a position in which the impossible ceases to look impossible, and even gets a look of the probable?" Such were some of the wise reflections of the sage moralist, though it is but truth to say he never once thought of applying any one of them to his own case.

"What would Miss Courtenay say, too," thought he, "when she discovered that he had been so neglectful of the mission entrusted to him?" He looked about for another boat to go after them. It was a strong measure, but it was a time for strong measures. No boat, however, was to be had. He bethought him of hailing them, or trying to attract their attention by signals, and to this end he mounted a rock, and, attaching his handkerchief to his umbrella, waved it frantically to and fro,

screaming out "Boat ahoy!" in a voice he meant to be intensely maritime.

"Shout away, old fellow!" muttered Harry, whose well-practiced eye and ear detected the signal-maker. "I'm not going back for *you*."

"Do you see any one, Harry?" asked Ada. "Who is it?"

"That old lawyer—I forget his name, but he's the only creature in the house that I can't bear. You wouldn't believe it, but he came up to me yesterday evening and asked if I had any recollection of his having saved my life. But I stopped him full, for I said, 'I remember well how Captain Dodge picked me up off a spar at sea, and had to threaten to throw yourself overboard for opposing it.'"

"Well, but, Harry," said she, gently, "people don't say such unpleasant things—I mean when they meet in the world: when thrown together in society they forgive little grudges, if they cannot forget them."

"Don't you know that we Luttrells do neither? I can no more forget a wrong than a kindness. Mind me, though," added he, quickly, "I do not ask to clear off scores with the lawyer, only let him not claim to make me his debtor. Shout away, it will stretch your lungs for the Old Bailey, or wherever it is that you make your living."

"If your memory be as good as you say, Harry," said she, smiling, "can you recall the time papa's yacht, the *Meteor*, anchored in the little bay at Arran?"

"I can. I remember it all."

"And how you came on board in one of our boats?"

"Ay, and how you called me Robinson. Don't get so red; I wasn't offended then, and I'm sure I'm not now. You said it in a whisper to your father, but I overheard you; and I think I said I should like well to be Robinson Crusoe, and have an island all my own."

"And so you have. Arran is yours."

"No. Arran was mine, or ought to have been mine, but my father, believing me dead, left it to my cousin."

"Oh, how I long to see her again!" cried Ada, passionately. "You know how we were brought up together."

"Your father told me all about it; but I never well understood how or why she was sent away again. Were you disappointed in her?"

"Oh, no, no. Nothing of the kind. She was cleverer, and more beautiful, and more attractive than any one could have anticipated. The lesson that would take

me days to learn, she had but to glance at and she knew it. The governess was in despair how to keep in advance of her. And then there was a charm in her manner that made the veriest trifle she did a sort of fascination."

"And were these the traits to send back into hardship and barbarism?"

"To this very hour I never knew how or why she went back, nor to what she went. I must tell you a secret, a great secret, it is, Harry, and you will promise never to reveal it." He nodded, and she went on, "Aunt Georgina never liked Kate. She could not help owning that she was very beautiful, and very gifted, and very graceful, but nothing would wring from her one word of affection, nor even a smile of kindly meaning."

"It is exactly how she treats me. She is all courtesy and politeness; but it is a courtesy that chills me to the heart, and ever seems to say, 'Don't forget the distance that separates us.' Perhaps," added he, laughing, "my cousin Kate and I have some family resemblance to each other?"

"Don't indulge any such flattery, Harry," said she, laughing. "Kate was beautiful."

"Come, come, I never meant in face. I only suspected that it was the marvelous gift of fascination we held in common." And he laughed good-humoredly at his own expense. "But to be serious. Was it quite fair to send such a girl as you have described back to all the miseries and sufferings of a peasant's life?"

"I'm not sure that this was done. I mean, that after she went to live at Dalrader—for Sir Within Wardle became her guardian when we came abroad—I never knew what happened; my Aunt Georgina actually forbade the merest mention of her."

"I wonder would she tell me why, if I were to ask her?"

"Oh, Harry, I implore you not to do so. It would be at once to betray the confidence I have placed in you. She would know who had told you of her dislike to Kate."

"The lawyer could tell it. I'm certain," muttered Harry; "that fellow watches us all. I have marked him, as we sat in the drawing-room, studying the looks of each in turn, and pausing over chance words, as if they could mean more than they seemed to say."

"How acute you want to be thought!" said she, laughing.

"I have sailed in two ships where the crews mutinied, Miss Ada, and a man learns to have his wits about him where he suspects mischief, after that. There! look at

the lawyer in the boat; he has got a boat at last, and is going to give us a chase. Shall we run for it, Ada, or stand and fight him?"

"What wickedness are you muttering under your breath, there, sir?" asked she, with a mock imperiousness.

"Well. I was just saying to myself that, if you hadn't been here, I'd even run foul of him and upset us both. I'd like to see the old fellow in the water. Oh! I see I must behave well, Miss Courtenay is in the boat too!"

"Which means a reproof to me, Harry. My aunt never comes out on any less solemn mission."

"And why a reproof? What have you done?"

"Have I not gone off sailing all alone with that wild scamp, Harry Luttrell—that buccancer who respects neither laws nor proprieties! But that's my aunt's voice! What is she saying?"

"She's telling the lawyer that it's all his fault, or Sir Gervais's fault, or somebody's fault, and that it's a shame and disgrace, and I don't know well what else besides."

"What can it be?"

"Just what you said a minute ago. There! I'll wait for them. I'll slack off and let them come up."

Whatever might have been the rebukeful tone of Miss Courtenay's voice a few moments before, now, as the boat drew up beside Luttrell's, her tones were softened and subdued, and it was with her most silvery accent she told Ada that some visitors had just arrived, and begged her to return with her to receive them, while Mr. M'Kinlay would join Mr. Luttrell, and obtain the lesson in sea-fishing he was so eager for.

"Come along," said Harry. "It looks fresh outside, and may turn out a nice mackerel day, calm as it seems here."

"With your good leave, sir, I shall decline a nice mackerel day. I'm a very fair-weather sailor."

A hurried whisper from Georgina seemed, however, to arrest him in his excuses, and she added aloud:—

"Of course Mr. Luttrell has no intention of venturing out to sea farther than you like, sir. He goes for your pleasure and amusement, and not to educate you for the navy."

Another hurried whisper followed this pert speech, and poor M'Kinlay, with the air of a condemned man, stepped into Luttrell's boat with a heavy sigh, and a look of positive misery.

"No, no, not on any account," were the



last words of Ada into Harry's ear, as he helped her to her place.

"Remember we dine at six!" said Georgina, as she waved them an adieu; and young Luttrell cried out, "All right!" as he slacked off his sheet, and let the boat run broad and full towards the open sea.

"It is fresher, far fresher than I thought!" said M'Kinlay, whose transition from a row-boat to a sailing one imparted the impression of a strong breeze.

"Cat's-paws! light airs of wind that die away every moment. But I see it looks bluer out yonder, and now and then I see a white curl on the water that may mean a little wind."

"Then I beseech you, sir, let us keep where we are!"

"Don't you want me to teach you something about fishing? You said you wished to know what 'trawling' meant."

"Not to-day; not on this occasion, my young friend. It was another errand brought me here this morning. Could you not draw that thing a little closer, and do something to make us go somewhat steadier?"

"I'll close-haul, if you prefer it," said Harry, taking a strong pull at the sheet, and, with his helm hard up, sending the skiff along under a full wind. She leaned over so much, too, that it required all M'Kinlay's strength, with both arms outside the gunwale, to keep his position. "That's pleasanter, ain't it?" asked Harry.

"I'll not say I like it, either."

"You will when the wind steadies; it's squally just now, and she feels it, for she has no keel."

"No keel! And ought she to have a keel?"

"Well, I think she'd be the better of one," said Harry, smiling.

"Let us get back, sir—let us get back at once! This is the reverse of agreeable to me; I don't understand, and I don't enjoy it. Put me ashore anywhere, and leave me to find my way how I can. There—yonder, where you see the rocks—land me there!"

"If I tried it, you'd find your way sure enough, but it would be into the next world! Don't you see the white line there? Those are breakers!"

"Then turn back, sir, I command—I implore you," cried he, with a voice shaking with terror.

"I'll put about when the wind slackens. I can't do it just yet. Have a little patience. Take the rudder a moment."

"No, sir; I refuse—I decidedly refuse. I protest against any share in what may happen."

"Perhaps it will be past protesting if you don't do what I tell you. Hold this, and mind my orders. Keep the tiller so till I cry out, hard down; mind me now—no mistake." And not waiting for more, he sprang into the bow of the boat as she ran up into the wind, and held out the foresail to the breeze. "Down helm—hard down!" cried he; and round she spun at once, and so rapidly, that the lee gunwale went under water, and M'Kinlay, believing she had upset, uttered one wild cry and fell senseless into the bottom of the boat. Not much grieved at his condition—perhaps, on the whole, almost glad to be rid of his company—Harry lighted a segar and steered for shore. In less than half an hour they gained the slack water of the little bay, and M'Kinlay, gathering himself up, asked if they were high land.

"Close in; get up and have a segar," said Harry, curtly.

"No, sir; I will not."

"I thought you liked a weed," said Harry, carelessly.

"My likings or my dislikings must be a matter of perfect indifference to you, sir, or I should not be wet to the skin and shivering as I am now."

"Take a go of brandy, and you'll be all right," said Harry, throwing his flask to him.

Though not very graciously offered, M'Kinlay accepted the dram, and then looked over the side towards the shore with an air of greater contentment. "Considering, sir, that I came here to-day on *your* account, I think I might have been treated with somewhat more deference to my tastes," said he, at last.

"On *my* account? And in what way on *my* account?"

"If we are not likely to have any more storms of wind, I can perhaps tell you."

"No, no, it's still as a fishpond here. Go on."

"Before I go on—before I even begin, Mr. Luttrell, I must have your promise that you will not mention to any one what shall pass between us to-day. It is on a subject which concerns *you*—but still concerns others more nearly."

"All right. I'll not speak of it."

"You will give me your word?"

"I *have* given it. Didn't you hear me say I'd not speak of it?"

"Well, sir, the matter is this: Great uneasiness is being felt here at the intimacy that has grown up between you and Miss Vyner. Motives of extreme delicacy towards *you*—who, of course, not having lived much in the world, could not be ex-

pected to weigh such considerations—but motives of great delicacy, as I say, have prevented any notice being taken of this intimacy, and a hope has been felt that you yourself, once awakened to the fact of the long interval that separates *her* condition from *yours*, would soon see the propriety, indeed the necessity, of another line of conduct, and thus not require what may seem an admonition, though I really intend you should receive it as the warning counsel of a friend."

"Have you been commissioned to say this to me?" asked Luttrell, haughtily.

"Though I had decided with myself not to answer any questions, I will reply to this one—and this only. I have."

"Who gave you this charge?"

M'Kinlay shook his head, and was silent.

"Was it Sir Gervais Vyner?"

Another shake of the head was the reply.

"I thought not. I am certain, too, it was not Lady Vyner. Be frank, sir, and tell me candidly. It was Miss Courtenay employed you on this errand?"

"I really see no necessity for any explanation on my part, Mr. Luttrell. I have already transgressed the limits of mere prudence in the avowal I have made you. I trust you will be satisfied with my candor."

"Let me ask for a little more of that same candor. I want to know what is expected of me. What am I to do?"

"Really, sir, you make my position a very painful one. You insist upon my being extremely disagreeable to you."

"Listen to reason. I am telling you that I found myself in considerable embarrassment, and I entreat of you, as a favor, to show me the way out of it. Am I to discontinue all intimacy with Miss Vyner? Am I to avoid her? Am I to leave this and not return?"

"That I opine to be the most fitting course under the circumstances," said M'Kinlay, bowing.

"I see," said Harry, pondering for some seconds—"I see." And then, with a more fervid manner, resuming, "But if I know, sir—if I feel—that all this caution is unnecessary, that I have not—that I never had—the slightest pretensions such as you speak of, that Miss Vyner's manner to me, in its very freedom, repels any suspicion of the kind—I ask you, is it not a little hard to deny me the greatest happiness I have ever tasted in life—the first holiday after a long spell of work and hardship? Why should I not go straight to Sir Gervais and say this?"

"You forget your promise to yourself."

"Ay, to be sure, *that* is a barrier. I suppose you are right. The best, the only way, is to go off; and I own I feel ashamed to make this return for all the generous kindness I have met here; and what an insufferable coxcomb must it stamp me, if it ever comes out that I left on such grounds as these."

"That is not how the world regards such things, sir. Men are not supposed to measure their affections by their circumstances. If it were so, we should not see so many *mésalliances*."

"I don't know how to go about it. I'm a precious bungler at making excuses, and, whenever I have told a lie in my life, my own shame and confusion have always convicted me; help me to some ingenious pretext for a sudden departure."

"You can have law business. Your agents wish to see you."

"But I have no property, or next to none. No, no, that won't do."

"You desire to visit your friends in Ireland."

"Just as bad. I have as little friends as fortune. Try again."

"Why should not Captain Dodge have sent for you? you left him very ill, and confined to bed, I understand."

"He told Sir Gervais to keep me as long as possible; that the air of the hospital was bad for me, and had brought back my ague."

"If you are so very scrupulous, sir, as to what people generally regard as a mere conventionality, I should say, pack up and be off without an explanation at all."

"I believe you are right. It is the old story of paying one's debts with the top-sail sheet. Shabby, enough, too, but it can't be helped. Perhaps, Mr. M'Kinlay, if occasion should occur, you would find means to let Sir Gervais know that I am not the ungrateful dog my want of manners might bespeak me; perhaps you would convey to him that this step of mine had been suggested by yourself."

"It is possible, Mr. Luttrell, that a fortuitous moment for an explanation of the kind you mention might occur, and, if so, you may rely on my willingness to profit by it. You mean to go at once?"

"I suppose so. Is it not what you advise?"

"Most certainly."

"Here goes, then! I'll start this instant. They are all out driving, except Miss Courtenay. I see her in the garden yonder. She, I know, will forgive me my abrupt departure, and you'll make the best



story you can out of it, Mr. M'Kinlay. As I was last seen in your company, you'll be obliged, for your own sake, to say something plausible."

"I will do my best, sir. The eccentric habits of a sea-life must bear the burden of the explanation."

"It's poor comfort that I can't be much missed! Good-bye!" And, without any more cordial leave-taking, Luttrell turned into a side-path that led directly to the house, while M'Kinlay entered the garden and made straight for the sea-wall, on which Miss Courtenay was sitting, awaiting him.

"Well?" said she, impatiently, as he came forward—"well?"

"It is done—all finished!"

"In what way? How is it finished?"

"He goes away—goes at once!"

"Of course he writes a note, and makes some sort of excuse to my brother-in-law for his hurried departure?"

"I believe not. I fear—that is, I apprehend—he is one of those not very tractable people who always do an awkward thing in the awkwardest way; for, when I explained to him that his position here was—what shall I say?—an indiscretion, and that Miss Vyner's friends saw with uneasiness the growing intimacy between them——"

"You did not speak of me—you did not mention my name, I hope?" broke she in, in an imperious tone.

"You could not suppose me guilty of such imprudence, Miss Courtenay!" said he, in an offended manner.

"No matter what I suppose, sir. I want you to tell me that my name was not uttered during your interview."

"Not by *me*—certainly not by *me*!" said he, timidly.

"Was it by *him*, sir? Answer me that!"

"Well, I rather think that he did say that I had been deputed by you to convey the message to him."

"What insolence! And how did you reply?"

"I observed that I was not there exactly for the purpose of a cross-examination; that in my capacity as a friendly adviser, I declined all interrogation."

"Fiddle faddle, sir! It would have been far more to the purpose to have said, 'Miss Courtenay has nothing whatever to do with this communication.' I really feel ashamed to think I should play the prompter to a professor in subtleties; but I still think that your ingenuity might have hit upon a reason for his going, without any refer-

ence to *us* or to *our* wishes. Did it never occur to you, for instance, that the arrival of Sir Within Wardle might offer a convenient plea?"

"Indeed! I might have mentioned that," said he, in some confusion. "The house does not admit of much accommodation for strangers, and an additional room would be of consequence just now."

"I think, sir," said she, haughtily, "you might have put the matter in a better light than by making it a domestic question. This young man might have been brought to see that the gentleman who was so ungratefully treated—I might say, so shamefully treated—by his near relative, could not be the pleasantest person for him to meet in a narrow family circle."

"I might. It is quite true I might have insinuated that consideration," said he, with a crestfallen air and look.

"I suppose you did your best, sir!" said she, with a sigh; and he felt all the sarcastic significance of its compassion. "Indeed, I am certain you did, and I thank you." With these words, not conveyed in any excess of warmth or gratitude, she moved away, and M'Kinlay stood a picture of doubt, confusion, and dismay, muttering to himself some unintelligible words, whose import was, however, the hope of that day coming when these and many similar small scores might be all wiped out together.

## CHAPTER LXIII.

### WITH LAWYERS.

"WHAT! that you, Harry? How comes it you have left all the fine folks so soon?" cried Captain Dodge, as he suddenly awoke and saw young Luttrell at his bedside. "Why, lad, I didn't expect to see you back here these ten days to come. Warn't they polite and civil to you?"

"That they were. They could not have treated me better if I had been their own son."

"How comes it, then, that you slipped your moorings?"

"Well, I can't well say. There were new guests just arriving, and people I never saw, and so, with one thing or other, I thought I'd just move off; and—here I am."

It was not difficult to see that this very lame excuse covered some other motive, and the old skipper was not the man to be put off by a flimsy pretext; but, rough sailor and buccancer as he was, he could re-

spect the feelings that he thought might be matter of secret meaning, and merely said: "I'm glad to see you back, at all events. I have no one to speak to in this place, and, as I lie here, I get so impatient, that I forgot my smashed thigh-bone, and want to be up and about again."

"So you will, very soon, I hope."

"Not so soon, lad!" said he, sorrowfully. "It's a big spar to splice, the surgeon says, and will take three months; though how I'm to lie here three months is more than I can tell."

"I'll do my best to make it endurable for you. I'll get books—they've plenty of books here—and maps, and drawings; and I saw a draught-board this morning, and you'll see the time won't hang so heavily as you feared."

"That ain't it at all, Harry. You've got to go to Liverpool, to Towers and Smales—they's the fellows know me well. Smales sailed with me as a youngster, and you'll hand them a letter I'll write, and they'll look about for the sort of craft we're wanting—something bark-rigged, or a three-masted schooner. I was dreaming of one last night—such a clipper on a wind! The French are blockading Vera Cruz just now, and if we could slip past them and get in, one trip would set us all right again."

"I think I should like that well!" cried the youth.

"Like it! Why wouldn't you like it? There ain't nothing to compare with blockade running in this life: stealing carefully up till you see the moment to make a dash—watching your wind, and then with every inch of canvas you can spread, go at it till the knee timbers crack again, and the planks work and writhe like the twigs of a wicker basket, and all the ships of war flying this signal and that to each other, till at last comes a gun across your bows, and you run up a flag of some sort—English belike, for the French never suspect John Bull of having a clipper. Then comes the order to round to, and you pretend to mind it; and just as they man their boat, dead at them you go, swamp every man of them, and hold on, while they fire away, at the risk of hulling each other, and never take more notice of them than one discharge from your pivot-gun, just by way of returning their salute. That's what I call sport, boy; and I only wish I was at it this fine morning."

"And what happens if you're taken?"

"That depends on whether you showed fight or not: if you fired a shotted gun, they hang you."

Luttrell shook his head, and muttered: "A dog's death; I don't like that."

"That's prejudice, sir; nothing more. Every death a man meets bravely is a fine death! I'd just as lieve be hanged as flayed alive by the Choctaws!"

"Perhaps so would I."

"Well, there's what you've got to do. Towers and Smales, shipbuilders!—they're the men to find what we want, and they know a clipper well; they've built more slavers than any house in the trade."

Harry made a wry face; the skipper saw it, and said: "There's more prejudice; but when you've been at sea as long as I have, you'll think less about the cargo than what you get per ton for the freight."

"I'd not turn slaver, anyhow; that much I can tell you," said he, stoutly.

"I'd not do it myself, sir, except when business was slack and freights low. It ain't cheering, noways; and there's a certain risk in it besides. Towers and Smales—Towers and Smales!" muttered he over to himself three or four times. "They'd not be the men they are to-day, I can tell you, if they never traded in ebony ware! Had you any talk with your grand friend, Sir Gervais, about that loan he offered me?" asked he, after a pause.

"Not a word. I came away hurriedly. I had no good opportunity to speak about it."

"He said, 'Two thousand, and pay when I like;' not hard terms certainly."

"And yet I'd rather you'd not accept them," said Harry, slowly.

"Not take money without interest charged or security asked? What do you mean?"

"I mean, I'd rather you'd wait till I've seen those lawyers that managed my father's affairs, and see whether they can't sell that trifle of property that comes to me."

"Why, didn't you tell me your father willed it away to some peasant girl?"

"Yes, the island, for the entail had been broken by my grandfather, but the small estate in Rosecommon goes to the next-of-kin, and that happens to be myself. It must be very little worth, but it may help us at least to get a ship, and we'll soon do the rest ourselves."

"That will we, Harry. This is the fourth time in my life I've had to begin all over again, and I'm as fresh for it as on the first day."

They went on now to talk of the future and all their plans like men who felt the struggle with life a fair stand-up fight, that none with a stout heart ought ever to think of declining. The skipper had not



only been in every corner of the globe, but had brought back from each spot some memories of gain, or pleasure, or peril—sensations pretty much alike to his appreciation—and whether he commanded a whale-boat at Behring's Straits, or took in his ship store of cocoa-nuts and yams at the Spice Islands, adventure ever tracked his steps. Dashed with the love of danger was the love of gain, and in his narrative one never could say whether there prevailed more of the spirit of enterprise or the temper of the trader.

"We'll want that loan from Vyner yet, I see, Harry," said he, at the end of a long calculation of necessary outgoings; "and I see no reason against taking it."

"I do, though," said the other, gravely.

"Mayhap some sentimental reason that I'd not give a red cent for, boy. What is it?"

"I'll not trouble you with the sentimental reasons," said Luttrell, smiling, "though perhaps I'm not without some of them. What I'll give you will suffice. While I was one morning with Sir Gervais, going over all about my father and his affairs, of which he knew far more than I did, he opened his writing-desk, and took out a great mass of letters. 'These,' said he, 'are in your father's hand; read them, and you'll be better acquainted with him than you have yet been.' They were on all manner of themes—of society, field sports, books, and much about politics—and interested me vastly, till at last I came upon one which certainly Sir Gervais would not have suffered me to see had he been aware it was amongst them. It was the last letter my father had ever written to him, and was almost entirely about myself. He spoke of the semi-barbarism I had been reared in, and the humble prospects before me, and he told about my disposition, and my faults of temper—the old family faults, he called them—that made us all 'intractable to our friends, and intolerable to all who were not friends.' At the end he asked Vyner to be my guardian, and he added these words: 'Be a friend to my boy in all ways that your kindness, your sympathy, your counsel can dictate. Guide, direct, encourage, or if need be, reprove him, but never, whatever you do, aid him with your purse. It is on this condition I commit him to you. Remember.'"

"Well, I'd be no ways obliged to my father if he had made any such condition about me. I've never been much the better for all the good advice I've got, but

I've found the man that lent me a thousand dollars uncommon useful."

"I am telling you of what my father wished and asked for," said Harry, proudly, "not of anything else."

"And that's just what I'm objectin' to, youngster. It was his pride to take no help, and it brought him to live and die on a barren rock in the ocean; but I don't intend to do that, nor to let you do it. We've got to say to the world, 'Sheer off there, I'm a-comin', and I mean comin' when I say it. There's maybe room enough for us all, but I'll be smashed and chawed up but I'll have room for me!'"

Whether it was the fierce energy with which he spoke this, or the fact that in a few rough words he had embodied his whole theory of life, but certainly Harry looked at him with a sort of wonder blended with amusement.

"Besides this," resumed Dodge, with the same decision of tone, "your father might say, if he pleased, 'You shan't help Harry Luttrell,' but he never could say, 'You mustn't help Hierodotus Dodge.' No, sir!"

"At all events," said Harry, "you'll let me try my own plan first. If that fail, there will be time enough to consider the other. I'll start to-night for Liverpool. After I have seen your friends there, I'll go over and consult my lawyers in Dublin; and I mean to run across and see Arran—the old rock—once more. It shall be my last look at it."

"It ain't a beauty, that's a fact," said Dodge, who saw nothing of the agitation in the other's voice or manner. "Give me an hour or two, and I'll write the letters for you, and I'll tell Smales that if you want any money—"

"I shall not want it."

"Then you'll be unlike any other man that ever wore shoes, sir, that's all!" And Dodge stuffed a formidable piece of tobacco into his mouth, as though to arrest his eloquence and stop the current of his displeasure, while Harry waved him a good-bye, and went out.

The same evening he started for Liverpool. The skipper's friends were most cordial and hospitable to him. They had had long dealings with Dodge, and found him ever honorable and trustworthy, and Harry heard with sincere pleasure the praises of his friend. It was evident, too, that they were taken with young Luttrell, for they brought him about amongst their friends, introducing him everywhere, and extending to him every hospitality of their hospitable city. If Harry was very grateful

for all this kindness, his mind continually reverted to the society he had so lately mixed in, and whose charm he appreciated, new as he was to life and the world, with an intense zest: the polished urbanity of Sir Gervais; the thoughtful good-nature of Lady Vyner; the gentle gracefulness of Ada; even Miss Courtenay—no favorite of his, nor he of hers—yet even she possessed a winning elegance of manner that was very captivating.

Very unlike all these were the attentions that now surrounded him, and many were the unfavorable comparisons he drew between his present friends and their predecessors. Not that he was in love with Ada: he had asked himself the question more than once, and always had he given the same answer: "If I had been a man of rank and fortune, I'd have deemed my lot perfect to have had such a sister." And really it was sister-like she had been to him; so candid, so frank, so full of those little cares that other "love" shrinks from, and dares not deal in. She had pressed him eagerly, too, to accept assistance from her father—a step she never could have taken had love been there—and he had refused on grounds which showed he could speak with a frankness love cannot speak with.

"I take it," muttered he to himself one day, after long reflection—"I take it that my Luttrell blood moves too slowly for passionate affection, and that the energy of my nature must seek its exercise in hatred, not love; and if this be so, what a life is before me!"

At last the ship-builders discovered the craft that Dodge was in search of. She was a slaver recently captured off Bahia, and ordered to be sold by the Admiralty. A few lines from Harry described her with all the enthusiasm that her beauty and fine lines could merit, and he smiled to himself as he read over the expressions of admiration which no loveliness in human form could have wrung from him.

He sailed for Ireland on the night he wrote, but carried his letter with him, to relate what he might have to say of his meeting with his lawyer. A little event that occurred at his landing was also mentioned:—

"As I was stepping into the boat that was to take me ashore, we were hailed by a large ship-rigged vessel just getting under weigh, and from which several boats, crowded with people, were just leaving. We rowed towards her, and found that they wanted us to take on shore a young lady whose class evidently prevented her mixing

with the vulgar herd that filled the other boats. She was in deep mourning, and so overwhelmed with grief, that she was almost unconscious as they lifted her into the boat. I caught a mere glimpse of her face, and never saw anything so beautiful in my life. Only think! the vessel was a convict-ship, and she had gone there to take a last farewell of some father or brother, perhaps—husband it could scarcely be, she was too young for that. Can you imagine anything more dreadful? One evidently of rank and birth—there were unmistakable signs of both about her—mixing even for an instant with all the pollution of crime and wickedness that crowd the deck of a convict ship! I asked leave to accompany her to her house or hotel, or wherever she was going, but she made a gesture of refusal; and, though I'd have given more than I dare tell to have known more about her, I thought it would be so unworthy to follow her, that I left her the moment we landed, and never saw her more.

"I am sure I did what was right and becoming, but if you knew how sorry I am to have been obliged to do it—if you knew how, now that it is all done and passed, I think of her incessantly—ay, and follow every one I see in mourning till I discover that it is not she—you'd wonder what change has come over this thick blood of mine, and set it boiling and bubbling as it never used to do."

He went on next to tell of his visit to the agents of his father's property. Messrs. Cane and Carter had been duly apprised by Sir Gervais Vyner that Harry Luttrell was alive, and it scarcely needed the letter which he carried as a credential, to authenticate him, so striking was the resemblance he bore to his father.

"You should have been here yesterday, Mr. Luttrell," said Cane. "You would have met your cousin. She has left this for Arran this morning."

Harry muttered something about their not being known to each other, and Cane continued:—

"You'd scarcely guess what brought her here. It was to make over to you, as the rightful owner, the property on the Arran Islands. We explained to her that it was a distinct deed of gift—that your late father bequeathed it to her as a means of support—for she has really nothing else—and that legally her claim was unassailable. She was not to be shaken from her resolution. No matter how we put the case—either as one of law or as one of necessity, for it is a necessity—her invariable reply was, 'My



mind is made up, and on grounds very different from any you have touched on; and she left us with full directions to make the requisite conveyances of the estate in your favor. I entreated her to defer her final determination for a week or two, and all I could obtain was a promise that, if she should change her mind between that time and the day of signing the papers, she would let me know. She has also given us directions about taking a passage for her to Australia; she is going out to seek occupation as a governess if she can, as a servant if she must."

Harry started, and grew pale and red by turns as the other said this. He thought, indeed, there was some want of delicacy in thus talking to him of one so nearly allied to him. His ignorance of life, and the Irish attachment to kindred together, made him feel the speech a hard one.

"How will it be, sir," asked he, curtly, "if I refuse to accept this cession?"

"The law has no means of enforcing it, sir. There is no statute which compels a man to take an estate against his will. She, however, can no more be bound to retain, than you to receive, this property."

"We had three hours' talk," said Harry, in writing this to Captain Dodge, "and I ascertained that this very property she is now so anxious to be free of, had formed up to this the pride and enjoyment of her life. She had labored incessantly to improve it and the condition of the people who lived on it. She had built a school-house and a small hospital, and strange enough, too, a little inn, for the place was in request with tourists, who now found they could make their visits with comfort and convenience. Cane also showed me the drawing of a monument to my father's memory, the 'Last Luttrell of Arran,' she called him; and I own I was amazed at the simple elegance and taste of the design made by this poor peasant girl. Even if all these had not shown me that our old home has fallen into worthy hands, I feel determined not to be outdone in generosity by this daughter of the people. She shall see that a Luttrell understands his name and his station. I have told Cane to inform her that I distinctly refuse to accept the cession; she may endow her school or her hospital with it; she may partition it out amongst the cottier occupiers; she may leave it—I believe I said so in my warmth—to be worked out in masses for her soul—if she be still a Catholic—if all this while none of her own kith and kin are in want of assistance; and certainly times must have greatly changed with them if

it be not so. At all events, I'll not accept it. I own to you I was proud to think of the high-hearted girl, bred up in poverty, and tried by the terrible test of 'adoption' to forget her humble origin. It was very fine and very noble of her; and only that I fear if I were to see her the illusion might be destroyed, and some coarse-featured, vulgar creature ront forever the pleasant image my mind has formed, I'd certainly make her a visit. Cane presses me much to do so, but I will not. I shall go over to the island to see the last resting-place of my poor father, and then leave it forever. I have made Cane give me his word of honor not to divulge my secret, nor even admit that he has more than seen me, and I intend to-morrow to set out for Arran.

"I asked Cane, when I was leaving him, what she was like, and he laughingly answered, 'Can't you imagine it?' And so I see I was right. They were a wild, fierce, proud set, all these of my mother's family, with plenty of traditions amongst them of heavy retributions exacted for wrongs, and they were a strong, well-grown, and well-featured race, but, after all, not the stuff of which ladies and gentlemen are made, in *my* country at least. You have told me a different story as regards *yours*."

"You shall hear from me from the island if I remain there longer than a day, but, if my present mood endure, that event is very unlikely."

## CHAPTER LXIV.

### ON THE ISLAND.

It was late at night when Harry landed on Arran. Dark as it was, however, his sailor's eye could mark that the little jetty was in trim order, and that steps now led down to the water where formerly it was necessary to clamber over rugged rocks and slippery seaweed. A boatman took his carpet-bag as matter of course, too, as he stepped on shore, and trifling as was the service, it had a certain significance as to the advance of civilization in that wild spot. More striking, again, than these was the aspect of the comfortable little inn into which he was ushered. Small and unpretending, indeed, but very clean, and not destitute of little ornaments, sketches of the scenery of the island, and specimens of ore, or curious rock, or strange fern, that were to be found there. A few books, too, were scattered about, some of them presents from former visitors, with graceful

testimonies of the pleasure they had found in the trip to Arran, and how gratefully they cherished the memory of its simple people.

Harry amused himself turning over these, as he sat at the great turf fire waiting for his supper. Of those who served him there was not one he recognized. Their looks and their language bespoke them as belonging to the mainland, but they spoke of the island with pride, and told how, in the season, about July or August, as many as fifteen or twenty strangers occasionally came over to visit it.

"There *was* a day," said the man, "in the late Mr. Luttrell's time, when nobody dare come here; he'd as soon see ould Nick as a stranger; and if a boat was to put in out of bad weather or the like, the first moment the wind would drop ever so little, down would come a message to tell them to be off."

Harry shook his head; an unconscious protest of dissent it was, but the other, interpreting the sign as condemnation, went on:—

"Ay, he was a hard man! But they tell me it wasn't his fault; the world went wrong with him, and he turned against it."

"He had a son, hadn't he?" asked Harry.

"He had, sir. I never saw him, but they tell me he was a fine boy, and when he was only ten years old, got a broken arm fighting with a seal in one of the caves on the shore; and, what's more, he didn't like to own it, because the seal got away from him."

"What became of him?"

"He was lost at sea, sir. I believe he turned pirate or slaver himself, and it was no great matter what became of him. They were all unlucky, men and women. No one ever heard of a Luttrell coming to good yet."

"That's a hard sentence."

"You'd not think so, sir, if you knew them; at least, so the men tell me about here. They liked the man that was here last well enough, but they said that nothing he could do would ever prosper."

"And who owns it now?"

"Kitty O'Hara that was—Neal O'Hara's daughter—he that was transported long ago—she's now the mistress of the whole island, and her name—she took it by his will—is Luttrell—Luttrell of Arran."

"Do the people like her?"

"Why wouldn't they like her? Isn't she working and slaving for them all day long, nursing them at the hospital, visit-

ing them in their cabins, teaching them in the school, getting them seed potatoes from Belmullet, and hasn't she set up a store there on the shore, where they can buy pitch, and hemp, and sailcloth, and all kinds of cordage, for less than half what it costs at Castlebar?"

"How has she money to do all this?"

"Just because she lives like the rest of us. Sorrow bit better dinner or supper she has, and it's a red cloak she wears, like Molly Ryan, and she makes her own shoes, and purfier ones you never looked at."

"And who taught her to manage all this so cleverly?"

"She taught herself out of books; she reads all night through. Come here, now, sir! Do you see that light there? That's her window, and there she'll be till, maybe, nigh five o'clock, studyin' hard. Molly says there's nights she never goes to bed at all."

"That light comes from the tower."

"So it does, sir, however you knew it," said the man; "but it was the favorite room of him that's gone, and she always sits there."

"And are strangers permitted to see the Abbey?" asked Harry.

"Yes, sir. All they've to do is to write their names in this book and send up a message that they want to see the place, and they'd see every bit of it but the two little rooms Mr. Luttrell that was, used to keep for himself."

"And if one wished to see these also?"

"He couldn't do it, that's all; at least, I'd not be the man that axed her leave!"

"Take my name up there in the morning," said Harry, as he wrote "II. Hamilton" in the book, that being a second name by which he was called after his father, though he had long ceased to use it.

The supper made its appearance at this moment, and little other conversation passed between them. As the man came and went, however, he continued to speak of Miss Luttrell, and all she had done for the people, in terms of warmest praise, winding up all with the remark, "That no one who had not lived the life of hardship and struggle of a poor person could ever be able to know what were the wants that press hardest—what the privations that cut deepest into the nature of the poor. And that's the reason," he said, "that she'll never let any one be cruel to the children, for it was as a child herself she knew sorrow!"

Long after the man had left him, Harry sat at the fire thinking over all he had heard. Nor was it, let us own, without a



certain irritation that he thought of the contrast the man drew between his father and this girl—his father, the man of mind and intellect, the scholar, the orator, the man whose early career had been a blaze of success, and yet all his acquirements and all his knowledge paled beside the active energy of a mere peasant. The reflection pained him; it chafed him sorely to admit, even to his own heart, that birth and blood were not always the superiors, and he casuistically suspected that much of the praise he had heard bestowed upon this girl was little other than the reflex of that selfish esteem the people felt for qualities like their own.

And out of these confused and conflicting thoughts he set to work to paint her to his mind and imagine what she must be. He pictured her a coarse, masculine, determined woman; active, courageous, and full of expedients, with some ability, but far more of self-confidence, the great quality of those who have been their own teachers. From what Mr. Cane had told him, she was one who could take a proud view of life and its duties. That very resolve to cede the property, when she heard that there was yet a Luttrell alive to inherit it, showed there was stuff of no mean order in her nature. "And yet," he thought, "all this could consist with vulgar looks and vulgar manners, and a coarseness of feeling that would be repugnant." With these imaginings he went to bed, and dreamed the whole night of this girl.

"Have you taken my message up to the Abbey?" asked he, as he sat at breakfast.

"Yes, sir; and Miss Luttrell says you are to go where you like. She's off to the far part of the island this morning to see a woman in fever, and won't be back till night."

"Then, perhaps, I may be able to see those two rooms you speak of?"

The man shook his head in silence, perhaps not over-pleased at the obstinacy of the stranger to investigate what was deemed sacred.

"I want no guide," said Harry. "I see the Abbey, and I'll find my own way to it."

And with these words he sauntered along, every step and every stone of the path familiar to him. As he drew nigh he saw some changes. The railing of the little garden had been repaired, and the garden itself was better tilled than of yore, and close by the wall of the Abbey, where shelter favored, a few flowers were growing, and some attempt there seemed mak-

ing to train a creeper to reach the window-sill.

Molly Ryan was out, and a strange face that Harry knew not received him at the door, leaving him, as he entered, to go where he pleased, simply saying, "There's the way to the Abbey, and there's where *she* lives."

He turned first to the aisle of the church, paved with the tombstones of bygone Luttrells, and where now a cross in blue limestone marked his father's grave. The inscription was, "To the memory of the last of the Luttrells, by one who loved him, but not merited his love."

"Strange that she should have said so," thought he, as he sat down upon the stone. But it was soon of the long past his mind was filled with. Of the days of his boyhood—no happy, careless, sunny youth was it, but a time of loneliness and sorrow—of long solitary rambles through the island, and a return at nightfall to a home of melancholy and gloom. He bethought him of his poor mother's tears as they would fall hot upon his face, and the few words, stern and harsh, his father would meet him with; and yet, now in his utter desolation, what would he not give to hear that voice again whose accents were wont to terrify him?—what would he not give to see the face whose slightest sign of reproof had once overwhelmed him with shame?

How fervently, how faithfully, will the heart cling to some memory of kindness for those whose severity had once been almost a terror! What a sifting process do our affections go through where death has come, tearing away the recollections of what once had grieved and pained us, and leaving only the memory of the blessed word that healed, of the loving look that rallied us. John Luttrell had been a hard, stern, unforgiving man: it was but seldom that he suffered his heart to sway him, but there had been moments when his love overcame him, and it was of these Harry now bethought him, and it was in such guise he pictured his father now before him.

"Oh! if he were here to welcome me back—to let me feel I was not homeless in the world—what a moment of joy and happiness had this been!" How keen can sorrow make memory! There was not a little passing word of praise his father ever spoke—there was not a kindly look, nor a little gesture of fondness, that did not recur to him as he sat there and wept.

With slow steps and heavy heart he turned into the house, and sought the little

room where his father usually sat during the day. There was the great old chair of bog oak, and there the massive table, and over the fire-place the great two-handed sword, and the stone-headed javelin cross-wise over the ox-hide shield; all these he knew, but other objects there were new and strange to him—so strange, that he could not but wonder at them. A half-finished water-color on an easel, done by no common hand, was at one side of the window, and in a deep chair, as though left hurriedly there, was a guitar. Music, and pen sketches, and books, were strewn about, and a solitary rose in a glass of water bore an almost painful testimony to the rareness of flowers on the spot. A basket of some sewing work—capcs of frieze for her school children—stood beside the fire. It was plain to see that this peasant girl had caught up tastes and pursuits which belong to another sphere, and Harry pondered over it, and questioned himself if she were the happier for this cultivation. Was it better for her, or worse, to be endowed with what, in imparting a resource, removes a sympathy?

Seated on the little window-stool—the same spot where he had often sat silent for hours—he fell into a train of melancholy thought. His poor father—the broken-down, crushed man, without a companion or a friend—rose before his mind, and filled each spot he turned to, and it was with a feeling of deep self-reproach he recalled how he himself had left him—deserted him, he called it now—to live on in sorrow and die forlorn. Out of this dreamy half-stupor, he was roused by the woman hurriedly telling him that her mistress was coming up the path to the house, and entreating him to go away before she entered. He arose at once, and, passing through the kitchen, issued forth by the back of the Abbey at the very instant that Kate crossed the door.

“Who has been here, Jane? Whose cane is this?” said she, taking up a stick Harry had forgotten in his haste.

The woman explained it was the young gentleman to whom her mistress gave permission that morning to see the Abbey, and who had only just taken his departure.

“The whole day here!” exclaimed Kate.

“True enough, miss. He was two hours and more in the Abbey, and I thought he was asleep, for he was lying on the master's grave with his face hid; but when I spoke he answered me. It was what he wished, miss, was to be let go up into the tower and have a view from the top; but I told him your own rooms was

there, and nobody ever got leave to see them.”

“I mean to go to the Murra Glen tomorrow, Molly,” said Kate, turning to her old and faithful servant. “and you may let this stranger go over the Abbey in every part; so that he be away before nightfall, the whole is at his disposal. Go down this evening to the inn, and take his stick to him, with this message.”

Seated at her tea, Kate was thinking over the long sea voyage that lay before her, and the new land in which she was to seek her fortune, when a wild, shrill scream startled her, and, at the same instant, Molly rushed into the room, and when she had reached the middle of it, staggered back, and leaned, half-fainting, against the wall.

“What's the matter, Molly? What has happened?” cried Kate, eagerly.

“May the blessed saints protect and guard us, miss, but I seen him as plain as I see you.”

“Whom did you see?”

“Himself that's gone—the master! Glory to him, and peace, too, if it was God's will,” said the woman, falteringly.

“How foolish this is, Molly! I scarcely expected this from you.”

“I don't care. I'll swear it on the book I saw him, and heard him, too. ‘Would you be so kind——’ says he; and at that I let a screech out of me and ran in here.”

“This is too absurd,” said Kate, with some irritation in her voice. “Go and see what this man wants.”

“Not if you were to give me a hatful of gold, Miss Kate. May I never, if I'd go there again to be Queen of England.”

“I am not pleased with you, Molly,” said Kate, taking a candle in her hand and moving towards the door. The woman threw herself at her feet to prevent her, but, with a haughty gesture, she motioned her away, and passed out.

A man was standing in the doorway, who courteously removed his hat as she came forward, and said, “I am sorry to have alarmed your servant, Miss Luttrell, but I had left my walking-stick here this morning and came to get it.”

Screening the light from her with one hand, she threw the full glare on the other's face, and, in a voice of deep emotion, said, “I see well why she was frightened. Your name is Luttrell?”

“I must not deny it to the only one that remains of all my kin. Are you not my cousin Kate?”

She held out her hand to him, and, in a voice quivering and broken, said, “How



glad I am to see you—and to see you here under your own roof!”

“There must be two words more before that be settled, Kate,” said he, kindly, as, still holding her hand in his own, he walked back with her to her room.

“There, Molly—there’s your young master; perhaps you will be less frightened now that you see him at my side.”

While the poor woman gave way to a transport of joy and tears, Harry continued to gaze at Kate with an intense eagerness. “Tell me one thing, cousin Kate,” said he, in a whisper; “answer me truly: were you on board of a convict ship in Kingstown harbor on Tuesday last, as she was getting under weigh?”

She nodded assent.

“Then it was I who lifted you into the boat, and asked your leave to see you safely on shore.”

“I’m ashamed to seem ungrateful, but I have no memory of your kindness. I had too much sorrow on my heart that morning.”

“Oh, if you knew how I longed to meet you again—how I walked and walked incessantly to try and come up with you, never dreaming of such happiness as this—that when we met I could claim you as my own dear cousin!”

“And was it right, cousin Harry, for you to come here in disguise and visit the Abbey like a stranger? Was that an evidence of the affection you speak of?”

“You forget, Kate, I didn’t know whom I was to meet. If I had known that you were the girl whom I carried down the ladder to the boat I’d have gone to the world’s end to see you again. How came you to be there?”

“You shall hear it all when you have time and patience. We each have much to tell, and you shall begin, but not to-night, Harry; let us be satisfied to make acquaintance now. Why do you stare at me?”

“Because you are so beautiful—because I never saw any one so beautiful before.”

“A very frank compliment, and I suppose too frank to be construed into what is called flattery.”

“To think of you living here!—*you*, in such a place as this! Why, it is downright monstrous.”

“Cousin Harry,” said she gravely, “if you are to do nothing but to make me compliments, our intimacy will have but a sorry chance to make any progress. I have no doubt I’m pretty, but remember that in this place here there are scores of things you’ll be struck by, simply because they come upon you unexpectedly. Look at my

little tea equipage, for instance; could you have dreamed of anything so tasteful on the island of Arran?”

The playful raillery of this speech could not turn his thoughts from herself. Nor was it alone her beauty that amazed him, but her exquisite grace of manner, the sweet-toned voice, low and gentle, her every movement and gesture, and then her bearing towards himself, so nicely balanced between the reserve of a maidenly bashfulness and the freedom of a near relative.

“We will have our tea together, Harry,” said she, “and you shall tell me all your adventures. You could not readily find a listener more eager for all that is strange, or wild, or exciting. Let me hear of the scenes you have gone through, and I’ll be able to make some guess of what manner of a man my cousin is.”

“My rough life is little more than a long catalogue of common-place hardships—hardships that sailors come at last to look at as the ordinary events of existence, but which certainly tend to make us somewhat careless about life, but very ready to enjoy it. Where am I to begin?”

“At the beginning, of course. I want to see you as a boy before I hear of you as a man.”

With manly frankness, and a modesty totally devoid of any affectation, he told the story of his sea life; the strange lands and people he had seen; the wild spots he had visited; the hopes of fortune at one time full and radiant, at another dashed and destroyed by disaster; dreams of wealth and affluence rudely dispelled by mischances; and, last of all—the crowning calamity—the attack made by the Riffs, and his captivity amongst the Moors.

“Was home very often in your thoughts through these reverses?” asked she, gravely.

“Seldom out of my thoughts, Kate. It had not been, as you may know, a very cheerful or a happy home. It was a lonely, gloomy life I led here, but I believe sorrows can attach just as well as joys, and I longed to see the old rock again, and I used to fancy how much more companionable I could be to my poor father now that I had grown up and had learnt something of the world and its ways. All my misfortunes were nothing compared to the sorrowful tidings that met me as I landed at Genoa, and learned I was alone in the world, without even one to care for me.”

“You went at once to Sir Gervais Vyner’s. Tell me about *them*.”

“You know them better than I do, Kate,” said he, smiling. “Ada told me of all her love for you—it was the theme she

never tired of—your beauty, your wit, your gracefulness, your talent at everything—till I grew half-angry. She would talk of nothing else.”

“And Ada herself—what is she like? She was, as a child, almost perfectly beautiful.”

“She is very handsome. Her features are all regular, and her smile is very sweet, and her manner very gentle, and her voice singularly silvery and musical.”

“So that you fell in love with her?”

“No,” said he, shaking his head—“no, I did not.”

“Yes, yes, you did! That list of her perfections was given too readily not to have been conned over.”

“I tell you again I felt no love for her. We were whole days together, and lived as a brother and a sister might, talking of whatever interested us most, but one word of love never passed between us.”

“A look, then?”

“Not even that. Just think one moment, Kate. Who is she, and who am I?”

“What would that signify if your hearts caught fire? Do you think the affections ask leave of title-deeds?”

“Mine certainly did not. They had no need to do so. I was as frank with Ada as with you.” Scarcely was the last word out than a deep crimson flush covered his cheek, and he felt overwhelmed with confusion, for he had said what, if true in one sense, might possibly convey a very different meaning in another. “I mean,” added he, stammeringly, “I told her all I have told you about my sea-life.”

“You are a puzzle to me, Harry,” said she, after a pause. “You can enumerate a number of qualities with enthusiasm, and still declare that they had no influence over you. Is this the sailor temperament?”

“I suspect not,” said he, smiling. “I rather opine we salt-water folks are too free of our hearts.”

“But why were you not in love with her?” cried she, as she arose impatiently, and walked up and down the room. “You come off a life of hardships and perils into what, of all things, is the most entrancing—the daily life of people bred up to all the courtesies and charms that embellish existence—and you find there a very beautiful girl, well disposed to accept your intimacy and your friendship—how can you stop at friendship? I want to hear that.”

“I never knew there was any difficulty in the task till now that you have told me of it,” said he, smiling.

She opened a little drawer in a cabinet as she stood with her back towards him, and

drew on her finger a ring—a certain plain gold ring—which recalled a time of bygone sorrow and suffering, and then, coming close to him, laid her hand upon his arm, so that he could not but notice the ring, and said:—

“I ought to have remembered you were a Luttrell, Harry—the proud race who never minded what might bechance their heads, though they took precious care of their hearts!”

“What does that mean?” said he, pointing to the ring; and a paleness like death spread over his face.

“What does such an emblem always mean?” said she, calmly.

“It is not that you are married, Kate?”

“Surely you have heard the story. Mr. M’Kinlay could not have been a week at the Vyners’ without telling it.”

“I have heard nothing, I know nothing. Tell me at once, are you a wife?—have you a husband living?”

“You must be patient, Harry, if you want a somewhat long history.”

“I want no more than what I asked you. Are you a married woman? Answer me that.”

“Be calm, and be quiet and listen to me,” said she, sitting down at his side. “You can answer your own question when I shall have finished.”

“Why not tell me in one word? A Yes or a No cannot cost *you* so much, though one of them may cost *me* heavily.”

“What if I could not so answer you? What if no such answer was possible? Will you hear me now?”

“Say on,” muttered he, burying his face between his hands—“say on!”

“I have a long story to tell you, Harry, and I will tell it all; first, because you shall give me your counsel; and secondly, because, if you should hear others speak of me, you will know where is the truth. You will believe me? Is it not so?”

“That I will. Go on.”

“It would be well if I could speak of myself as one simply unlucky,” said she, in a tone of deep melancholy, “but this may not be! I have gone through heavy trials, but there was not one of them, perhaps, not self-incurred.”

“Oh, Kate, if you would not break my heart with anxiety, tell me at once this ring means nothing—tell me you are free!”

“Be patient, Harry, and hear me. Trust me, I have no wish to linger over a narrative which has so little to be proud of. It is a story of defeat—defeat and humiliation from beginning to end.”

She began, and it was already daybreak







Mo'ly sees the Ghost of "The Master."



ere she came to the end. Tracking the events of her life from her first days at the Vyners', she related an inner history of her own longings, and ambitions, and fears, and sufferings, as a child ripening into the character of womanhood, and making her, in spite of herself, a plotter and a contriver. The whole fabric of her station was so frail, so unreal, it seemed to demand incessant effort to support and sustain it. At Dalrader, where she ruled as mistress, an accident, a word, might depose her. She abhorred the *equivoque* of her life, but could not overcome it. She owned frankly that she had brought herself to believe that the prize of wealth was worth every sacrifice; that heart, and affection, and feeling were all cheap in comparison with boundless affluence.

"You may imagine what I felt," said she, "when after all I had done to lower myself in my own esteem—crushed within me every sentiment of womanly affection—when, after all this, I came to learn that my sacrifice had been for nothing—that there was a sentiment this old man cared for, more than he cared for me—that there was a judgment he regarded more anxiously than all I could say—the opinion of the world; and it actually needed the crushing sorrow of desertion to convince him that it was better to brave the world than to leave it forever. Till it became a question of his life he would not yield. The same lesson that brought *him* so low served to elevate *me*. I was then here—here in Arran—holding no feigned position. I was surrounded with no luxuries, but there were no delusions. Your father gave me his own proud name, and the people gave me the respect that was due to it. I was real at last. Oh, Harry, I cannot tell you all that means! I have no words to convey to you the sense of calm happiness I felt at being what none could gainsay—none question. It was like health after the flush and madness of fever. This wild spot seemed to my eyes a Paradise! Day by day duties grew on me, and I learned to meet them. All the splendid past, the great life of wealth and its appliances, was beginning to fade away from my mind, or only to be remembered as a bright and gorgeous dream, when I was suddenly turned from my little daily routine by an unhappy disaster. It came in this wise." She then went on to tell of her grandfather's imprisonment and trial, and the steps by which she was led to ask Sir Within's assistance in his behalf. On one side she had to befriend this poor old man, deserted and forlorn, and, on the other, she had to be-

think her of her uncle, whose horror at the thought of a public exposure in a court was more than he had strength to endure. If she dwelt but passingly on the description, her shaken voice and trembling lip told too well what the sacrifice had cost her. "The messenger to whom I entrusted my letter, and whom I believed interested almost equally with myself in its success, brought me back for answer that my letter would not be even opened, that Sir Within refused to renew any relations with me whatever—in a word, that we had separated forever and in everything. I cannot tell now what project was in my head, or how I proposed to myself to befriend my grandfather; some thought, I know, passed through my head about making a statement of his case, so far as I could pick it up from himself, and going personally with this to one of the leading lawyers on the circuit, and imploring his aid. I always had immense confidence in myself, or in whatever I could do by a personal effort. If I have learned to think more meanly of my own powers, the lesson has been rudely taught me. What between the mental strain from this attempt, anxiety, privation, and exposure to bad weather, I fell ill, and my malady turned to brain-fever. It was during this time that this man O'Rorke, of whom I have told you, returned, bringing with him Mr. Ladarelle, a young relative of Sir Within's. On the pretext of giving me the rites of my church, a priest was admitted to see me, and some mockery of a marriage ceremony was gone through by this clergyman, who, I am told, united me, unconscious, and to all seeming dying, to this same young gentleman. These details I learned later, for long, long before I had recovered sufficient strength or sense to understand what was said to me, my bridegroom had gone off and left the country."

"And with what object was this marriage ceremony performed?" asked Luttrell.

"I have discovered at last. I have found it out through certain letters which came into my hands in looking over your father's papers. You shall see them yourself to-morrow. Enough now that I say that Sir Within had never rejected my prayer for help; on the contrary, he had most nobly and liberally responded to it. He wrote, besides, to your father a formal proposal to make me his wife. To prevent the possibility of such an event, Ladarelle planned the whole scheme I have detailed, and when your father wrote to Sir Within that I had left Arran—'deserted him,' he called it—and Ladarelle forwarded a pretended certificate

of our marriage, no further proof seemed wanting that I was one utterly unworthy of all interest or regard. I came here in time—not to receive my dear uncle's forgiveness, for he had long ceased to accuse me—his last thoughts of me were kind and loving ones. Since then," said she, "my life has had but one severe trial—my leaving with my poor old grandfather; but for this it has been like a strange dream, so much of active employment and duty blending with memories of a kind utterly unlike everything about me, that I am ever asking myself, 'Is it the present or the past is the unreal?'"

"The marriage is, however, a mockery, Kate," said Luttrell; and taking her hand he drew off the ring and threw it into the fire.

"You are sure it gives him no claim—no power over me?" asked she.

"Claim!—power! None. I'm no lawyer, but I could almost swear that his act would subject him to severe punishment: at all events, you have a cousin, Kate, who will not see you insulted. I'll find out this fellow, if I search ten years for him."

"No, no, Harry. To publish this story would be to draw shame upon me. It was your own father said, 'A woman is worse with an imputed blame than is a man after a convicted fault.' Let me not be town-talk, and I will bear my sorrows patiently."

"That's not the Luttrell way to look at it!" said he fiercely.

"Remember, Harry, I am only Luttrell by adoption," said she, rising and approaching the fire.

"What are you looking for there in the embers, Kate?"

"My ring," said she, drawing the charred and blackened ring out from the ashes. "I mean to keep this—an emblem of a sorrow and a shame which should not be forgotten."

"What do you mean? It was by no fault of yours this trick worked!"

"No; but it was my own heartless ambition that provoked it, Harry. I wanted to be a great lady, at the cost of all that gives life a charm."

"You surely would not have married this old man—this Sir Within you speak of?"

"I would," said she, coldly.

"Oh Kate! unsay that. Tell me that you only said this in levity or jest!"

"I will not tell you one word of myself which is not true," said she, in a tone firm and collected.

"And you would have married a man you

could not love—a decrepit old man, whose very attentions must have been odious to you?"

"I never forgot the misery I was reared in. I shrank with terror at the thought of going back to it. I used to dream of cold, and want and privation. I used to ramble in my sleep about the weary load I had to carry up the slippery rocks with bleeding feet, and then wake to see myself waited on like a queen, my slightest word obeyed, my merest whim fulfilled. Are these small things—or, if they be, what are the great ones?"

"The great ones are a fearless heart and a loving nature!" said Harry, fiercely; and his dark face almost grew purple as he darted an angry look at her.

"So they are," said she, calmly. "I had them once too; but I had to lay them down—lay them down as stakes on the table for the prize I played for."

"Oh, this is too bad—too sordid!" cried he, madly.

"Say on, you cannot speak more cruelly than I have spoken to my own heart. All these have I told myself over and over!"

"Forgive me, my dear cousin Kate, but if you knew with what agency your words wring me—"

"I can believe it, Harry; better and purer natures than mine could not stand the test of such confessions, but you would have them, remember *that*. You said, 'No concealments,' and now you are shocked at the naked truth. With very little aid from self-deception I could have given you a more flattering view of my heart and its affections. I could have told you, as I often told myself, that I wished to be better—that I longed to be better—that the only ones I ever envied were those whose fate entailed no such struggle as mine—a struggle, remember, not to gain smooth water and a calmer sea, but to save life—to escape drowning! To fall from the high place I held was to fall to the lowest depth of all! I had plenty of such casuistry as this ready, had you asked for it. You preferred to have me truthful, you ought not to shrink from the price!"

"Had you no friend to counsel—to guide you?"

"None."

"Was there none to take you away from the danger you lived in?"

"I could have gone back to the cabin I came from; do you think I was well suited to meet its hardships?"

"But my father—surely my father's house was open to you?"

"Not till he believed that he was child-



less. It was when the tidings of your shipwreck came that he asked me to come here. All his generosity to me, his very affections, were given on a false assumption. He gave me his love, as he gave me his fortune, because he did not know that the rightful heir to both was living."

"No, no. I have heard, in the few hours that I have been here, of your tender care of him, and how he loved you."

"He had none other," said she, sorrowfully.

"Oh, Kate, how differently others speak of you than you yourself! What have I not heard of your devotion to these poor islanders; your kindness to them in sickness, and your cheering encouragement to them in their health! The very children told me of your goodness as I came along."

"You gave me the true epithet a while ago, Harry."

"I? What did I say?"

"You used a hard word, but a true one. You called me sordid," said she, in a low, tremulous voice.

"Oh no, no! Never! I never said so. Oh, dear Kate, do not believe I could couple such a word with you!"

"I will not any more, since you have forgotten it; but in honest truth it was the very epithet my conduct merited. Let us speak of it no more since it pains you. And now, Harry, there is daybreak. I must not ask you to stay here—here, in your own house. I, the mere intruder, must play churlish host, and send you off to your inn."

"This house is yours, Kate. I will never consent to regard it otherwise. You would not have me dishonor my father's name, and take back what he had given?"

"It is too late in the night to open a knotty discussion. Say good-bye, and come back here to breakfast," said she, gaily; "and remember to make your appearance in becoming guise, for I mean to present the lieges to their master."

"I wish you would not send me away so soon; I have many things to ask you."

"And is there not all to-morrow before you? I am going to see Inchegora after breakfast; a very important mission, touching a lime-kiln in dispute there. You shall sit on the bench with me, and aid justice by your counsels."

"Can you not give all to-morrow to me, and leave these cares for another time?"

"No, sir. 'We belong to our people,' as Elizabeth said. Good-night—good-night."

With a most reluctant heart he answered,

"Good-night," and pressing her hand with a cordial grasp, he kissed it twice and turned away.

Sleep was out of the question—his mind was too full of all he had heard to admit of slumber—and so he strolled down to the shore, losing himself amongst the wild fantastic rocks, or catching glimpses of the old Abbey at times between their spiked and craggy outlines.

"What a creature, in what a place!" muttered he. "Such beauty, such grace, such fascination, in the midst of all this rugged barbarism!" And what a terrible story was that she told him! the long struggle she had endured, the defeat, and then the victory—the victory over herself at last, for at last she saw and owned how ignoble was the prize for which she had perilled her very existence. "What a noble nature it must be, too," thought he, "that could deal so candidly with its own shortcomings, for, as she said truly, 'I could have made out a case for myself, if I would.' But she would not stoop to *that*—her proud heart could not brook the falsehood—and oh, how I love her for it! How beautiful she looked, too, throughout it all; I cannot say whether more beautiful in her moments of self-accusing sorrow, or in the haughty assertion of her own dignity."

One thing puzzled him, she had not dropped one word as to the future. The half-jesting allusion to himself as the Lord of Arran dimly shadowed forth that resolve of which Cane had told him.

"This must not be, whatever shall happen," said he. "*She* shall not go seek her fortune over the seas while I remain here to enjoy her heritage. To-morrow—to-day, I mean," muttered he, "I will lead her to talk of what is to come, and then——" As to the "then," he could not form any notion to himself. It meant everything. It meant his whole happiness, his very life, for so was it, she had won his heart just as completely as though by the work of years.

Where love steals into the nature day by day, infiltrating its sentiments, as it were, through every crevice of the being, it will enlist every selfish trait into the service, so that he who loves is half enamored of himself; but where the passion comes with the overwhelming force of a sudden conviction, where the whole heart is captivated at once, self is forgotten, and the image of the loved one is all that presents itself. This was Harry Luttrell's case, and if life be capable of ecstacy, it is when lost in such a dream.

## CHAPTER LXV.

## THE LUTTRELL BLOOD.

"Look at this, Harry," said Kate, as he came into the room where she was preparing breakfast. "Read that note; it bears upon what I was telling you about last night."

"What a scoundrel!" cried Harry, as his eye ran over the lines. "He scarcely seems to know whether the better game will be menace or entreaty."

"He inclines to menace, however, for he says, 'The shame of an exposure, which certainly you would not be willing to incur.'"

"What may that mean?"

"To connect my name, perhaps, with that of my poor old grandfather; to talk of me as the felon's granddaughter. I am not going to disown the relationship."

"And this fellow says he will arrive to-night to take your answer. He has courage, certainly."

"Come, come, Harry, don't look so fiercely. Remember, first of all, he is, or he was, a priest."

"No reason that I shouldn't throw him over the Clunck rock!" said Luttrell, doggedly.

"I think we might feel somewhat more benevolently towards him," said she, with a malicious twinkle of the eye, "seeing how generously he offers to go all the way to Italy to see Sir Within, and explain to him that my marriage with Mr. Ladarelle was a mockery, and that I am still open to a more advantageous offer."

"How can you talk of this so lightly?"

"If I could not it would break my heart!" said she, and her lip trembled with agitation. She leaned her head upon her hand for some minutes in deep thought, and then, as though having made up her mind how to act, said, "I wish much, cousin Harry, that you would see this man for me, only——"

"Only what?"

"Well, I must say it, I'm afraid of your temper."

"The Luttrell temper?" said he, with a cold smile.

"Just so. It reaches the boiling-point so very quickly, that one is not rightly prepared for the warmth till he is scalded."

"Come, I will be lukewarm to-day—cold as the spring well yonder, if you like. Give me my instructions. What am I to do?"

"I shall be away all day. I have a long walk before me, and a good deal to do, and

I want you to receive this man. He will soon moderate his tone when he finds that I am not friendless; he will be less exacting in his demands when he sees that he is dealing with a Luttrell. Ascertain what is his menace, and what the price of it."

"You are not going to buy him off, surely?" cried Harry, angrily.

"I would not willingly bring any shame on the proud name I have borne even on sufferance. I know well how your father felt about these things, and I will try to be loyal to his memory, though I am never again to hear him praise me for it. Mr. Cane already wrote to me about this man, and advised that some means might be taken to avoid publicity. Indeed, he offered his own mediation to effect its settlement, but I was angry at the thought of such submission, and wrote back, I fear, a hasty, perhaps ill-tempered, answer. Since then Cane has not written, but a letter might come any moment—perhaps to-day. The post will be here by one o'clock; wait for its arrival, and do not see the priest till the letters have come. Open them till you find Cane's, and when you are in possession of what he counsels, you will be the better able to deal with this fellow."

"And is all your correspondence at my mercy?"

"All!"

"Are you quite sure that you are prudent in such frankness?"

"I don't know that it will tempt you to any very close scrutiny. I expect an invoice about some rapeseed, I look for a small package of spelling-books, I hope to receive some glasses of vaccine matter to inoculate with, and tidings, perhaps, of a roll of flannel that a benevolent visitor promised me for my poor."

"And no secrets?"

"Only one; a sketch of Life on Arran, which I sent to a London periodical, but which is to be returned to me, as too dull, or too melancholy, or too something or other for publication. I warn you about this, as the editor has already pronounced sentence upon it."

"May I read it, Kate?"

"Of course. I shall be very proud to have even one to represent the public I aspired to. Read it by all means, and tell me when I come back that it was admirable, and that the man that rejected it was a fool. If you can pick up any especial bit for praise or quotation, commit it to memory, and you can't think how happy you'll make me, for I delight in laudation, and I do—get—so—very—little of it," said she, pausing after each word, with a look



of comic distress that was indescribably droll; and yet there was a quivering of the voice and a painful anxiety in her eye that seemed to say the drollery was but a cover to a very different sentiment. It was in this more serious light that Harry regarded her, and his look was one of deepest interest. "You have your instructions now!" said she, turning away to hide the flush his steady gaze had brought to her cheek; "and so good-bye!"

"I'd much rather go with you, Kate," said he, as she moved away.

"No, no," said she, smiling, "you will be better here. There is plenty of work for each of us. Good-bye!"

Harry's wish to have accompanied her, thus thwarted, by no means rendered him better-disposed towards him who was the cause of the disappointment, and as he paced the room alone he coned over various modes of "clearing off scores" with this fallen priest. "I hope the fellow will be insolent! How I wish he may be exacting and defiant!" As he muttered this below his breath, he tried to assume a manner of great humility—something so intensely submissive as might draw the other on to greater pretension. "I think I'll persuade him that we are at his mercy—absolutely at his mercy!" muttered he. But had he only glanced at his face in the glass as he said it, he would have seen that his features were scarcely in accordance with the mood of one asking for quarter. The boat which should bring the letters was late, and his impatience chafed and angered him. Three several times had he rehearsed to himself the mock humility with which he meant to lure on the priest to his destruction; he had planned all, even to the veriest detail of the interview, where he would sit, where he should place his visitor, the few bland words he would utter to receive him; but when he came to think of the turning-point of the discussion, of that moment when, all reserve abandoned, he should address the man in the voice of one whose indignation had been so long pent up that he could barely control himself to delay his vengeance—when he came to this, he could plan no more. Passion swept all his intentions to the winds, and his mind became a chaos.

At last the post arrived, but brought only one letter. It was in Cane's writing. He opened it eagerly, and read:—

"DEAR MADAM:—I am happy to inform you that you are not likely to be further molested by applications from the priest O'Rafferty. He no sooner heard

that young Mr. Luttrell was alive, and in Ireland, than he at once changed his tone of menace for one of abject solicitation. He came here yesterday to entreat me to use my influence with you to forgive him his part in an odious conspiracy, and to bestow on him a trifle—a mere trifle—to enable him to leave the country, never to return to it.

"I took the great—I hope not unpardonable—liberty to act for you in this matter, and gave him five pounds, for which I took a formal receipt, including a pledge of his immediate departure. Might I plead, in justification of the authority I thus assumed, my fears that if young Mr. Luttrell should by any mischance have met this man, the very gravest disasters might have ensued. His family traits of rashness and violence being, I am informed, only more strikingly developed by his life and experiences as a sailor."

Harry read over this passage three several times, pausing and pondering over each word of it.

"Indeed!" muttered he. "Is this the character I have brought back with me? Is it thus my acquaintances are pleased to regard me? The ungovernable tempers of our race have brought a heavy punishment on us, when our conduct in every possible contingency exposes us to such comment as this! I wonder is this the estimate Kate forms of us? Is it thus she judges the relatives who have shared their name with her?"

To his first sense of disappointment that the priest should escape him, succeeded a calmer, better feeling—that of gratitude that Kate should be no more harassed by these cares. Poor girl! had she not troubles enough to confront in life without the terror of a painful publicity? He read on:—

"Of Mr. Ladarelle himself you are not like to hear more. He has been tried and convicted of swindling, in France, and sentenced to five years' reclusion, with labor. His father, I learn, is taking steps to disinherit him, and there is no wrong he has done you without its full meed of punishment.

"It was quite possible that he and his accomplice, O'Rorke, might have escaped had they not quarreled, and each was the chief instrument in the conviction of the other. The scene of violent invective and abuse that occurred between them exceeded, it is said, even the widest latitude of a French criminal court.

"I thought to have concluded my letter

here, but I believe I ought to inform you, and in the strictest confidence, that we had a visit from young Mr. Luttrell on Wednesday last. We were much struck by the resemblance he bore to his late father in voice and manners, as well in face as in figure. When I hinted to him—I only hinted passingly—certain scruples of yours about retaining the Arran property, he declared, and in such a way as showed a decided resolve, that, come what might, the estate should not revert to him. ‘It was yours,’ he said, ‘and it was for you to dispose of it.’ When he put the question on the ground of a dishonor to his father’s memory, I forbore to press it further. The Luttrell element in his nature showed itself strongly, and warned me to avoid any inopportune pressure.

“You will, I suspect, find it exceedingly difficult to carry out your intentions in this matter, and I hope you will allow me to entreat a reconsideration of the whole project; all the more, since every information I have obtained as to the chance of employment in Australia is decidedly unfavorable. Except for the mechanic, it is said, there is now no demand. The governess and tutor market is greatly overstocked, and persons of education are far less in request than strong-bodied laborers.

“I hope sincerely I may be able to dissuade you from what I cannot but call a rash scheme. In the first place, it will not accomplish what you intended regarding the Arran property; and secondly, it will as surely involve yourself in grave difficulty and hardship. I know well how much may be expected from what you call your ‘courage,’ but ‘courage’ that will brave great dangers will also occasionally succumb to small daily privations and miseries. There is no doubt whatever how you would behave in the great trial. It is in meeting the slights and injuries that are associated with humble fortune that I really feel you will be unequal.

“Should you, however, persist in your resolve, I shall be able to secure you a passage to Melbourne under favorable circumstances, as a distant relative of my wife’s. Captain Crowther, of the *Orion*, will sail from Liverpool on Thursday, the seventh of next month. This gives you still seventeen days; might I hope for such reflection as will induce you to forego a step so full of danger, present and future? Indeed, from Captain Crowther himself I have heard much that ought to dissuade you from the attempt. He went so far as to say yesterday that he believed he had already brought back to England nearly

every one of those he had taken out with hopes of literary employment.

“I think I know what you would reply to this. I have only to call upon my memory of our last conversation to remind me of the daring speech you made when I ventured to hint at the difficulty of finding employment; and once more, my dear Miss Luttrell, let me entreat you to remember you have not the habits, the strength, the temperament, that go with menial labor. You have yourself admitted to me that your early sorrows and sufferings are nightmares to you in your sleep—that you are never feverish or ill that they do not recur—that when your head wanders it is about the days of your childish troubles: surely it is not with habits of luxury and refinement you hope to combat these enemies?

“Do not persist in believing that what you call your peasant nature is a garment only laid aside, but which can be resumed at any moment: take my word for it, there is not a trace of it left in you!

“If your desire for independence must be complied with, why not remain and achieve it at home? Mrs. Cane is ready and willing to serve you in any way; and it will be a sincere pleasure to us both if we can acquit towards you any portion of the debt we have long owed your late uncle.

“I wish much you would consult Mr. Luttrell on this subject; indeed, he would have a right to feel he ought to be consulted upon it; and, although his experiences of life may not be large or wide, his near relationship to you gives him a claim to have his opinion cared for.

“You will see from all this insistence, my dear Miss Luttrell, how eager I am to dissuade you from a step which, if taken, will be the great disaster of your whole life. Remember that you are about to act not alone for the present, but for the events and contingencies which are to occur years hence.”

The letter wound up with many assurances of esteem, and most cordial offers of every service in the writer’s power. A postscript added: “On reconsideration, I see that you must absolutely speak to Mr. Luttrell about your project, since in my notes I find that he positively declines to accept your gift of the Arran estate except in exchange for the larger property in Roscommon. In all my varied experiences, two such clients as yourself and your cousin have never occurred to me.”

It was as he was finishing the reading of this letter for the third time that Harry Luttrell felt a hand laid gently on his shoulder. He turned, and saw Kate stand-



ing behind him. Her cheek was flushed with the fresh glow of exercise, and her hair, partly disordered, fell in heavy masses beneath her bonnet on her neck and shoulders, while her full lustrous eyes shone with a dazzling brilliancy. It was one of those moments in which every trait that formed her beauty had attained its most perfect development. Harry stared at her with a wondering admiration.

"Well, sir?" cried she, as if asking what his look implied—"well, sir?" But, unable to maintain the cool indifference she had attempted, and feeling that her cheek was growing hot and red, she added, quickly: "What have you done?—have you seen him?—has he been here?" He stared on without a word, his eager eyes seeming to drink in delight without slaking, till she turned away abashed and half vexed. "I don't suppose you heard my question?" said she, curtly.

"Of course I heard it, but it was of what I saw I was thinking, not of what I heard."

"Which, after all, was not quite polite, Harry."

"Politeness was not much in my thoughts either," said he. "I couldn't believe any one could be so beautiful."

"What a nice rough compliment, what a dear piece of savage flattery! What would you say, sir, if you had seen me, in my days of finery, decked out in lace and jewels, Harry? And, dear me, don't they make a wondrous difference! I used to come down to dinner at Dalradern at times powdered, or with my hair in short curls, *à la Séigné*, and my costume all to suit: and you should have seen the worshipful homage of old Sir Within, as he presented me with my bouquet, and kissed the extreme tips of my fingers. Oh dear, what a delightful dream it was, all of it!"

"What a coquette you must be! What a coquette you are!" muttered he, savagely.

"Of course I am, Harry. Do you think I would deny it? Coquetry is the desire to please, as a means of self-gratification. I accept the imputation."

"It means intense vanity, though," said he roughly.

"And why not vanity, any less than courage or compassion, or a dozen other things one prides himself on having?"

"I think you are saying these things to vex me, Kate. I'll swear you don't feel them."

"No matter what I feel, sir. I am certainly vain enough to believe I can keep *that* for myself. Tell me of this man. Have you seen him?"

"No, he has not come; he *will* not come."

"Not come! And why?"

"Here's a letter from Cane will explain it all; a letter which I suppose you would not have let me read had you seen it first. You said you had no secrets, but it turns out that you had."

"What do you mean?" said she, snatching the letter eagerly from him.

"I read every word of it three times. I know it almost by heart," said he, as he watched her running her eyes over the letter.

"When I said I had no secrets," said she, gravely, "I meant with regard to my past life. Of *that* assuredly I have told you all, freely and candidly. The future is my own, at least so far as what I intend by it."

"And you persist in this scheme?"

"Don't look so sternly—don't speak so harshly, Harry. Let me enjoy the good news of Cane's letter, in so far as this priest is concerned. It is a great weight off my heart to know that my name is not to be bandied about by gossips and news-mongers—that name your poor father treasured with such care, and for whose safeguard he would have made any sacrifice."

"Tell me you will give up this scheme, Kate; tell me you will make Arran your home," cried he, earnestly.

"I mustn't tell you an untruth, Harry. Arran is yours."

"And if it be mine," said he, seizing her hand, "share it with me, Kate. Yes, dearest, be mine also. Oh, do not turn away from me! I know too well how little I resemble those gifted and graceful people your life has been passed with. I am a rough sailor, but remember, Kate, the heart of a gentleman beats under this coarse jacket. I am a Luttrell still."

"And the Luttrells have passed their ordeal, Harry. Three generations of them married peasants to teach their proud hearts humility. Go practice the lesson your fathers have bought so dearly; it will be better than to repeat it. As for me, my mind is made up. Hear me out, Harry. I promised my poor old grandfather to aid him on his trial. Illness overtook me, and I was in a raging fever on the day he was sentenced. It was not for months after that I was able to go to him, and the poor old man, who had believed himself forgotten and deserted, no sooner saw me than he forgave all, and pressed me to his heart with rapturous affection. I told him then—I gave him my solemn pledge—that so

soon as I had arranged certain details here, I would follow him across the seas. There are many ways by which a resident can lighten the pains and penalties of a prisoner. I learned these, and know all about them, and I have determined to pay off some part of the debt I owe him, for he loved me—he loved me more than all the world. The very crime for which he is suffering was committed on my behalf: he thought this property should have been mine, and he was ready to stake his life upon it.”

“And must he be more to you than I?” said Harry, sadly.

“I must pay what I owe, Harry, before I incur a new debt,” said she, with a smile of deep melancholy.

“Why did I ever come here? What evil destiny ever brought me to know you?” cried he, passionately. “A week ago—one short week—and I had courage to go anywhere, dare anything, and now the whole world is a blank to me.”

“Where are you going? Don’t go away, Harry. Sit down, like a dear, kind cousin, and hear me. First of all, bear in mind, people cannot always do what is pleasantest in life”——

A heavy bang at the door stopped her, and he was gone!

## CHAPTER LXVI.

### A CHRISTMAS AT ARRAN.

FOR two entire days Harry Luttrell wandered over the island alone and miserable, partly resolved never to see Kate again, yet he had not resolution to leave the spot. She sent frequent messages and notes to him, entreating he would come up to the Abbey, but he gave mere verbal replies, and never went.

“Here’s Miss Kate at the door, sir, asking if you are in the house,” said the woman of the inn; “what am I to tell her?”

Harry arose, and went out.

“Come and have a walk with me, Harry,” said she, holding out her hand cordially towards him. “This is Christmas-day—not a morning to remember one’s grudges. Come along; I have many things to say to you.”

He drew her arm silently within his own, and walked on. After a few half-jesting reproaches for his avoidance of her, she became more serious in manner, and went on to talk of Arran and its future. She told of what she had done, and what she meant

to do, not claiming as her own many of the projects, but honestly saying that the first suggestions of them she had found amongst his father’s papers.

“It is of these same papers,” said she, more earnestly, “I desire to speak. I want you to read them, and to read them carefully, Harry. You will see that the struggle of a proud man against an unequal marriage marred the whole success of a life; you will see that it was this ‘low-lived herd’—the hard words are his own—that had stamped ruin upon him. The disappointment he had met with might have driven him for a while from the world, but, after a year or two, he would have gone back to it more eager for success, more determined to assert himself, than ever. It was the bane of a low connection poisoned all hope of recovery. How could he free himself from the claims of this lawless brood? His journals are filled with this complaint. It is evident, too, from the letters of his friends, how he must have betrayed his misery to them, proud and reserved as he was. There are constant allusions through them to his stern refusal of all invitations, and to his haughty rejection of all their friendly devices to draw him back amongst them.

“It was in some moment of rash vengeance for an injury real or supposed,” said she, “that he plunged into this marriage, and completed his ruin. If there was a lesson he desired to teach his son, it was this one; if there was a point which he regarded as the very pivot of a man’s fortune, it was the belongings which surround and cling to him, for better or for worse, on his journey through life. I will show you not one, but fifty—ay, twice fifty—passages in his diary that mark the deep sense he had of this misfortune. When the terrible tidings reached him that you were lost, he ceased to make entries regularly in his journal, but on your birthday recurring, there is this one: ‘Would have been twenty-two to-day. Who knows which for the best? No need of my warnings now; no need to say, Do not as I have done!’ Are you listening to me, Harry?” asked she, at length, as he never by a word or sign seemed to acknowledge what she was saying.

“Yes, I hear you,” said he, in a low voice.

“And you see why, my dear Harry, I tell you of these things. They are more than warnings; they are the last wishes, the dying behests, of a loving father; and he loved you, Harry—he loved you dearly. Now listen to me attentively, and mind well what I say. If these be all warnings



to *you*, what are they to *me*? Do you imagine it is only the well-born and the noble who have pride? Do you fancy that we poor creatures of the soil do not resent in our hearts the haughty contempt by which you separate your lot from ours? Do you believe it is in human nature to concede a superiority which is to extend not to mere modes of life and enjoyments, to power and place and influence, but to feelings, to sentiments, to affections? In one word, are you to have the whole monopoly of pride, and only leave to us so much as the honor of 'pertaining' to you? Or is it to be enough for us to know that we have dragged down the man who tried to raise us? Reflect a little over this, dear cousin, and you will see that, painful as it is to stoop, it is worse—ten thousand times worse—to be stooped to! Leave me, then, to my own road in life—leave me, and forget me, and if you want to remember me, let it be in some connection with these poor people, whom I have loved so well, and whose love will follow me; and above all, Harry, don't shake my self-confidence as to the future. It is my only capital; if I lose it, I am penniless. Are you listening to me?"

"I hear you but too well," muttered he. "All I gather from your words is that, while accusing us of pride, *you* confess to having ten times more yourself. Perhaps, if I had not been a poor sailor, without friends or fortune, that same haughty spirit of yours had been less stubborn."

"What do you mean?" said she, disengaging herself from his arm, and staring at him with wide-opened flashing eyes. "Of what meanness is this you dare to accuse me?"

"You have angered me, and I know not what I say."

"That is not enough, sir. You must unsay it. After all that I have told you of my early life, such an imputation is an insult."

"I unsay it. I ask pardon that I ever said it. Oh, if you but knew the wretchedness of my heart, you would see it is my misery, not myself that speaks!"

"Be as brave as I am—or as I mean to be, Harry. Don't refuse to meet the coming struggle—whatever it be—in life; meet it like a man. Take my word for it, had your father lived, he would have backed every syllable I have spoken to you. Come back to the Abbey now, and give me your best counsel. You can tell me about this long voyage that is before me. There are many things I want to ask you."

As they turned towards the house, she

went on talking, but in short broken sentences, endeavoring, as it were, to say something, anything that should leave no pause for thought. The old doorway was decked with holly-boughs and arbutus-twigs, in tasteful honor of the day, and she directed his attention to the graceful courtesy of the poor people, who had bethought them of this attention; and simple as the act was, it revealed to Harry the wondrous change which had come over these wild natives, now that their hearts had been touched by sympathy and kindness. In the old days of long ago there were none of these things. Times or seasons met no recognition. The dark shadow of melancholy brooded drearily over all; none sought to dispel it.

The little children of the school, dressed in their best, were all drawn up in the Abbey, to wish their benefactress a happy Christmas; and Kate had provided a store of little toys from Westport that was certain to render the happiness reciprocal. And there were, too, in the background, the hardy fishermen and their wives, eager to "pay their duty;" and venerable old heads, white with years, were there, to bless her who had made so many hearts light, and so many homes cheery.

"Here is your Master Harry, that you all loved so well," said Kate, as she gained the midst of them. "Here he is, come back to live with you."

And a wild cheer of joy rang through the old walls, while a tumultuous rush was made to grasp his hand, or even touch his coat. What blessings were uttered upon him! What honest praises of his handsome face and manly figure! How like he was to "his Honor," but far stronger and more upstanding than his father, in the days they knew him!

They overwhelmed him with questions about his shipwreck and his perils, and his frank simple manner delighted them. Their own hardy natures could feel for such dangers as he told of, and knew how to prize the courage that had confronted them.

"These are all our guests to-day, Harry," said Kate. "We'll come back and see them by and by. Meanwhile, come with me. It is our first Christmas dinner together; who knows what long years and time may do? It may not be our last."

With all those varied powers of pleasing she was mistress of, she made the time pass delightfully. She told little incidents of her Dalradern life, with humorous sketches of the society there; she described the old Castle itself, and the woods around

it, with the feeling of a painter; and then she sang for him snatches of Italian or Spanish "romance" to the guitar, till Harry, in the ecstacy of his enjoyment, almost forgot his grief.

From time to time, too, they would pass out and visit the revelers in the Abbey, where, close packed together, the hardy peasantry sat drinking to the happy Christmas that had restored to them the Luttrell of Arran.

The wild cheer with which they greeted Harry as he came amongst them sent a thrill through his heart. "Yes, this was home; these were his own!"

It was almost daybreak ere the festivities concluded, and Kate whispered in Harry's ear: "You'll have a commission from me to-morrow. I shall want you to go to Dublin for me. Will you go?"

"If I can leave you," muttered he, as with bent-down head he moved away.

## CHAPTER LXVII.

### A CHRISTMAS ABROAD.

LET us turn one moment to another Christmas. A far more splendid table was that around which the guests were seated. Glittering glass and silver adorned it, and the company was a courtly and distinguished one.

Sir Gervais Vyner sat surrounded with his friends, happy in the escape from late calamity, and brilliant in all the glow of recovered buoyancy and spirits. Nor were the ladies of the house less disposed to enjoyment. The world was again about to dawn upon them in rosy sunshine, and they hailed its coming with true delight.

Not one of all these was, however, happier than Mr. M'Kinlay. The occasion represented to his mind something very little short of Elysium. To be ministered to by a French cook, in the midst of a distinguished company who paid him honor, was Paradise itself. To feel that while his baser wants were luxuriously provided for, all his intellectual sallies—small and humble as they were—were met with a hearty acceptance—was a very intoxicating sensation. Thus, as with half-closed eyes he slowly drew in his Burgundy, his ears drew in, not less ecstasically, such words: "How well said!" "How neatly put!" "Have you heard Mr. M'Kinlay's last?" or, better than all, Sir Gervais himself "repeating him," endorsing, as it were, the little bill he was drawing on Fame.

In happiness only inferior to this, Mr. Grenfell sat opposite him. Grenfell was at last where he had striven for years to be. The haughty "woman," who used to look so coldly on him in the park, now smiled graciously when he talked, and vouchsafed towards him a manner positively cordial. Georgina had said: "I almost feel as if we were old friends, Mr. Grenfell, hearing of you so constantly from my brother;" and then little playful recognitions of his humor or his taste would be let fall, as, "Of course *you* will say *this*, or think *that*?" all showing how well his nature had been understood, and his very influence felt, years before he was personally known.

These are real flatteries; they are the sort of delicate incense which regale sensitive organizations long called to grosser worship. Your thorough man of the world does not want to be "praised;" he asks to be "understood," because, in his intense self-love, he believes that such means more than praise. It is the delicate appreciation of himself he asks for, that you should know what wealth there is in him, even though he has no mind to display it.

He was an adept in the art of insinuation; besides that, he knew "every one." And these are the really amusing people of society, infinitely more so than those who know "everything." For all purposes of engaging attention there is no theme like humanity. Look at it as long and closely as you will, and you will see that in this great game we call "life" no two players play alike. The first move or two may be the same, and then, all is different.

There was a third guest; he sat next Lady Vyner, in the place of honor. With a wig, the last triumph of Parisian skill, a delicate bloom upon his cheek no peach could rival, Sir Within sat glittering in diamond studs and opal buttons, and his grand Cross of the Bath. He was finer than the *épergne*; and the waxlights twinkled and sparkled on him as though he were frosted silver and filigree. His eyes had their luster, too—uneasy, fitful brightness—as though the brain that ministered to them worked with moments of intermission; but more significantly painful than all was the little meaningless smile that sat upon his mouth, and never changed, whether he spoke or listened.

He had told some pointless rambling story about an archduchess and a court jeweler and a celebrated Jew banker, which none could follow or fathom; and simperingly finished by assuring them that all



other versions were incorrect. And there was a pause—a very painful silence that lasted above a minute. Very awful such moments are, when, in the midst of our laughter and our cheer, a terrible warning would seem to whisper to our hearts that all was not joy or gladness there; and that Decay, perhaps Death, was at the board amongst them.

Grenfell, with the hardihood that became him, tried to rally the company, and told the story of the last current scandal, the card-cheating adventure, in which young Ladarrelle was mixed up. "They've given him five years at the galleys, I see, Sir Within," said he; "and, I remember, you often predicted some such finish to his career."

"Yes," smiled the old man, tapping his jeweled snuff-box—"yes, you are quite right, Mr. Grenfell—quite right."

"He goes off to Toulon this very day," resumed Grenfell.

"He was a *charmant garçon*," said the old man, with another smile; "and will be an acquisition to any society he enters."

To the first provocative to laughter this mistake excited, there quickly succeeded a far sadder, darker sentiment, and Lady Vyner arose, and the party retired to the drawing-room.

"I think our dining-room was most uncomfortably warm to-day, Sir Within," said Georgina; "come and see if this little saloon here with the open window is not very refreshing after it." And Sir Within bowed and followed her.

"What do you call *that*, sir?" whispered M'Kinlay to Grenfell, as they stood taking their coffee at a window. "He has just turned the corner; he has been so long loitering about. The head is gone now, and, I suppose, gone forever."

"My position," whispered M'Kinlay again, "is a very painful one; he sent to me this morning about a codicil he wants executed."

"Does he intend to make me his heir?" asked the other, laughing.

"I opine not, sir. It is of that girl—Miss Luttrell, they pretend to call her now—he was thinking; but really he is not in that state the law requires."

"The disposing mind—ch?"

"Just so, sir. I could not bring myself to face a cross-examination on the subject."

"Very proper on your part; proper and prudent both."

"You see, sir, the very servants noticed the way he was in to-day. Harris actually passed him twice without giving him Hock; he saw his state."

"Cruel condition, when the very flunkeys feel for one!"

"I thought at the time what evidence Harris would give—I did, indeed, sir. No solicitor of rank in the profession could lend himself to such a proceeding."

"Don't do it, then," said Grenfell, bluntly.

"Ah! it's very well saying, don't do it, Mr. Grenfell, but it's not so easy when you have to explain to your client why you 'won't do it.'"

Grenfell lit a cigarette, and smoked on without reply.

"It was finding myself in this difficulty," continued M'Kinlay, "I thought I'd apply to you."

"To me! And why, in Heaven's name, to me?"

"Simply, sir, as Sir Within's most intimate friend—the person, of all others, most likely to enjoy his confidence."

"That may be true enough in one sense," said Grenfell, evidently liking the flattery of the position attributed to him; "but though we are, as you observe, on the most intimate terms with each other, I give you my solemn word of honor he never so much as hinted to me that he was going mad."

Mr. M'Kinlay turned angrily away; such levity was, he felt, unbecoming and misplaced, nor was he altogether easy in his mind as to the use a man so unscrupulous and indelicate might make of a privileged communication. While he stood thus irresolute, Grenfell came over to him, and, laying a finger on his arm, said:—

"I'll tell you who'll manage this matter for you better—ininitely better—than either of us. Miss Courtenay."

"Miss Courtenay!" repeated the lawyer, with astonishment.

"Yes, Miss Courtenay. You have only to see, by the refined attention she bestows on him, how thoroughly she understands the break-up that has come upon his mind; her watchful anxiety to screen him from any awkward exposure; how carefully she smooths down the little difficulties he occasionally finds at catching the clue of any theme. She sees what he is coming to, and would evidently like to spare *him* the pain of seeing it while his consciousness yet remains."

"I almost think I have remarked that. I really believe you are right. And what could she do—I mean, what could I ask her to do—in this case?"

"Whatever you were about to ask me! I'm sure I'm not very clear what that was, whether to urge upon Sir Within the inexpediency of giving away a large portion

of his fortune to a stranger, or the impropriety of falling into idiocy and the hands of commissioners in lunacy."

Again was Mr. M'Kinlay driven to the limit of his temper, but he saw, or thought he saw, that this man's levity was his nature, and must be borne with.

"And you advise my consulting Miss Courtenay upon it?"

"I know of none so capable to give good counsel; and here she comes. She has deposited the old man in that easy chair for a doze, I fancy. Strange enough, the faculties that do nothing, occasionally stand in need of rest and repose!"

Miss Courtenay, after consigning Sir Within to the comforts of a deep arm-chair, turned again into the garden. There was the first quarter of a clear sharp moon in the sky, and the season, though mid-winter, was mild and genial, like spring. Mr. M'Kinlay was not sorry to have received this piece of advice from Grenfell. There was a little suit of his own he wanted to press, and, by a lucky chance, he could now do so, while affecting to be engaged by other interests. Down the steps he hastened at once, and came up with her as she stood at the little balustrade over the sea. Had he been a fine observer, or had he even had the common tact of those who frequent women's society, he would have seen that she was not pleased to have been followed, and that it was her humor to be alone, and with her own thoughts. To his little commonplaces about the lovely night and the perfumed air, she merely muttered an indistinct assent. He tried a higher strain, and enlisted the stars and the moon, but she only answered with a dry, "Yes, very bright."

"Very few more of such exquisite nights are to fall to my lot, Miss Georgina," said he, sighing. "A day or two more must see me plodding my weary way northward, over the Mont Cenis pass."

"I wonder you don't go by Marseilles, or by the Corniche," said she, carelessly, as though the route itself was the point at issue.

"What matters the road which leads me away from where I have been so—happy?" He was going to say "blest;" but he had not been blessed, and he was too technically honest to misdirect in his brief. No rejoinder of any kind followed on this declaration. He paused, and asked himself, "What next? Is the court with me?" Oh! what stores of law lore, what wealth of crown cases reserved, what arguments in Banco, would he not have given, at that moment, for a little insight into

that cunning labyrinth, a woman's heart! Willingly would he have bartered the craft it had taken years to accumulate for that small knowledge of the sex your raw *attaché* or rarer ensign seems to have as a birthright. "I am too abrupt," thought he. "I must make my approaches more patiently—more insidiously. I'll mask my attack, and begin with Sir Within."

"I have been plotting all day, Miss Courtenay," said he, in a calmer tone, "how to get speech of you. I am in great want of your wise counsel and kindly assistance. May I indulge the hope that they will not be denied me?"

"Let me learn something of the cause, sir, in which they are to be exercised."

"One for which you feel interested; so much I can at least assure you. Indeed," added he, with a more rhetorical flourish of manner, "it is a case that would enlist the kindly sympathies of every generous heart."

"Yes, yes—I understand; a poor family—a distressed tradesman—a sick wife—ailing children. Don't tell me any details! they are always the same—always painful. I will subscribe of course. I only wonder how you chanced upon them. But never mind; count on me, Mr. M'Kinlay; pray do."

She was turning impatiently away, when he followed, and said: "You have totally misapprehended me, Miss Courtenay. It was not of a very poor person I was thinking at all; it was of a very rich one. I was about to bespeak your interest for Sir Within Wardle."

"For Sir Within Wardle! What do you mean, sir?" said she, in a voice tremulous with feeling, and with a flush on her cheek, which, in the faint light, fortunately, Mr. M'Kinlay failed to remark.

"Yes, Miss Courtenay. It is of him I have come to speak. It is possible I might not have taken this liberty, but in a recent conversation I have held with Mr. Grenfell, he assured me that you, of all others, were the person to whom I ought to address myself."

"Indeed, sir," said she, with a stern, cold manner. "May I ask what led your friend to this conclusion?"

"The great friendship felt by this family for Sir Within, the sincere interest taken by all in his welfare," said he, hurriedly and confusedly, for her tone had alarmed him, without his knowing why or for what.

"Go on, sir; finish what you have begun."

"I was going to mention to you, Miss Courtenay," resumed he, in a most confidential voice, "that Sir Within had sent



for me to his room yesterday morning, to confer with him on certain matters touching his property. I was not aware before what a large amount was at his disposal, nor how free he was to burden the landed estate, for it seems that his life-interest was the result of a certain family compact. But I ask your pardon for details that can only weary you."

"On the contrary, M'Kinlay, it is a subject you have already made as interesting as a novel. Pray go on."

And he did go on; not the less diffusely that she gave him the closest attention, and showed, by an occasional shrewd or pertinent question, with what interest she listened. We are not to suppose the reader as eager for these details, however, and we skip them altogether, merely arriving at that point of the narrative where Mr. M'Kinlay recounted the various provisions in Sir Within's last will, and the desire expressed by him to append a codicil.

"He wants, my dear Miss Courtenay," said he, warming with his theme—"he wants to make a sort of provision for this girl he called his ward—Miss Luttrell, he styles her; a project, of course, to which I have no right to offer objection, unless proposed in the manner in which I heard it, and maintained on such grounds as Sir Within was pleased to uphold it."

"And what were these, pray?" said she, scftly.

"It will tax your gravity if I tell you, Miss Courtenay," said he, holding his handkerchief to his mouth, as though the temptation to laugh could not be repressed. "I assure you it tried me sorely when I heard him."

"I have much control over my feelings, sir. Go on."

"You'll scarce believe me, Miss Courtenay. I'm certain you'll think me romancing."

"I hope I form a very different estimate of your character, sir."

"Well," said he, "I should like you to make a codicil, to include a bequest to Miss Luttrell; because, in the event of my marrying—don't laugh, Miss Courtenay; on my honor he said it—in the event of my marrying, it would be more satisfactory that this matter were previously disposed of."

"Well, sir!" said she; and, short as that speech was, it banished every mirthful emotion out of Mr. M'Kinlay's heart and sent a cold thrill through him.

"It was not the thought of providing for this young lady made me laugh, Miss Courtenay; far from it. I thought it

laudable—very laudable; indeed, if certain stories were to be believed, Sir Within was only just, not generous. What amused me was the pretext, the possible event of his marrying. It was that which overcame me completely."

"And to which, as you say, you offered strenuous objections?"

"No, Miss Courtenay, no. Nothing of the kind. I objected to entertain the question of altering the will, accompanied as the request was by what I could not help regarding as symptoms of a wandering, incoherent intellect."

"What do you mean, sir? Do you intend to insinuate that Sir Within Wardle is insane? Is that your meaning?"

"I should certainly say his mind is verging on imbecility. I don't think the opinion will be disputed by any one who sat at table with him to-day."

"I declare, sir, you amaze me!" cried she, in a voice of terror. "You amaze and you frighten me. Are there any others of us in whom you detect incipient madness? Did you remark any wildness in my sister's eyes, or any traits of eccentricity in my mother's manner? To common, vulgar apprehensions—to my brother's and my own—Sir Within was most agreeable to-day. We thought him charming in those little reminiscences of a life where, be it remembered, the weapons are not the coarse armor of every-day society, but the polished courtesies that kings and princes deal in. I repeat, sir, to our notions his anecdotes and illustrations were most interesting."

Mr. M'Kinlay stood aghast. What could have brought down upon him this avalanche of indignation and eloquence? Surely, in his remark on that old man's imbecility, he could not be supposed to insinuate anything against the sanity of the others! His first sensation was that of terror; his second was anger. He was offended—"sorely hurt," he would have called it—to be told that in a matter of social usage, in what touched on conventionalities, he was not an efficient testimony.

"I am aware, fully aware, Miss Courtenay," said he, gravely, "that Sir Within's society is not my society; that neither our associations, our topics, or our ways of life are alike; but on a question which my professional opinion might determine—and such a question might well arise—I will say that there are few men at the English Bar would be listened to with more deference."

"Fiddle-faddle, sir! We have nothing to do with the bar or barristers, here. I have a great esteem for you—we all have—

and I assure you I can give no better proof of it than by promising that I will entirely forget this conversation—every word of it.”

She waved her hand as she said “Bye-bye!” and flitted rather than walked away, leaving Mr. M’Kinlay in a state of mingled shame and resentment that perfectly overwhelmed him.

For the honor of his gallantry I will not record the expressions with which he coupled her name; they were severe—they were even unprofessional; but he walked the garden alone till a late hour of the evening, and when Sir Gervais went at last in search of him, he refused to come in to tea, alleging much pre-occupation of mind, and hinting that an urgent demand for his presence in London might possibly—he was not yet quite certain—oblige him to take a very hurried leave of his kind hosts.

In fact, Mr. M’Kinlay was in the act of determining with himself the propriety of a formal demand for Miss Courtenay in marriage, and endeavoring to make it appear that he “owed it to himself,” but, in reality, was almost indifferent as to the upshot. There are such self-delusions in the lives of very shrewd men when they come to deal with women, and in the toils of one of these we leave him.

## CHAPTER LXVIII.

### TRUSTFULNESS.

PERHAPS the night brought reflection; at all events Mr. M’Kinlay had so far recovered himself, that he came down to breakfast with a smile on his face and a mass of fresh-opened letters in his hand, with whose contents he purposed to amuse the company.

Miss Courtenay’s manner was so kind, so actually cordial, too, that he felt perfectly reassured on the score of their last interview; and as Sir Within was not present—he never made his appearance till late in the afternoon—all went on pleasantly and well.

Giving the precedence to “fashionable intelligence,” Mr. M’Kinlay related how certain great people were about to marry certain other great people, with intimations as to the settlements, and, in some cases, a minute account of the costly presents to the bride, all circumstances which, somehow, seem to have their interest for every age, and class, and condition of humanity. Some of these were known to Vyner, and he asked about them with

eagerness. Grenfell knew none of them except by name, but he spoke of them with all the confidence of an old and intimate friend—of the “men,” without using their titles; of the women as dear Lady Fanny, or that charming little Lady Grace. So that hearing him was actually imbibing an atmosphere of aristocracy, inhaling the pcentage at every respiration.

“What is the large packet with all the seals on it, Mr. M’Kinlay,” asked Georgina. “It has been torturing my curiosity in the most painful manner these last ten minutes.”

“This, my dear Miss Courtenay,” said he, laying his hand on a somewhat bulky parcel, “is not for me, though it came under cover to my address. It is for Sir Within Wardle, in a lady’s handwriting.”

“I think I know the hand,” said Miss Courtenay, as she bent her head over it.

“Of course you do, Aunt Georgy. It is Kate’s. Nobody ever made those dear little round symbols but herself. It is the very prettiest writing in the world.”

“By the way,” said Mr. M’Kinlay, searching amongst the papers before him, “there is something here—I just glanced at it—from that young lady. Ay, here it is! You know, Sir Gervais, that you instructed me to write to the land agents of the late Mr. Luttrell, and inform them of your intention to confirm the deed of gift of the lodge in Donegal on Miss Luttrell; in consequence of which I wrote to Messrs. Cane and Carter, and here is their reply. But perhaps I had better keep these business matters for another opportunity?”

“Not at all. We are all friends here, and all about equally interested in these affairs,” said Sir Gervais. “Go on.”

Mr. M’Kinlay mumbled over, in an indistinct tone, something that sounded like an apology for not having more promptly answered his late communication. “‘It was only yesterday,’” he read aloud, “‘that we were in receipt of Miss Luttrell’s reply. The young lady refuses to accept of the property in question. She declines to admit that it had been at any time in the possession of her family, and desires me, while expressing her deep sense of gratitude, to explain that, associated as the spot is to her with a great calamity, it never could be an object of her desire or ambition.’”

“She refers to that scrimmage where her old grandfather killed a man,” said Grenfell, stirring his tea. “Really, I fancied they took these things much easier in Ireland.”

“Don’t you see that the young lady is



of the exalted school? Not to say that, as she always gambled for a high stake, she can't abide low play."

This bitter speech Georgina addressed directly to Grenfell, as the one person in the company adapted to comprehend it. He nodded and smiled a perfect acquiescence with her, and Mr. M'Kinlay read on:—

"For your own guidance, therefore, as well as Sir Gervais Vyner's—if you should desire to make the communication to him—I may remark that any further insistence on this project would be perfectly ineffectual. Everything I have seen of Miss Luttrell has shown her to be a person of most inflexible will, and a determination far beyond the common. This will be apparent to you when you hear that she is equally resolved to make over the Arran estate, bequeathed to her by her late uncle, to the present Mr. Luttrell, leaving herself, as I may say, totally penniless and unprovided for."

"What a noble-hearted, generous girl!" cried Vyner.

"The dear, high-hearted Kate!" murmured Ada.

"A most artful, designing minx!" whispered Georgina to Grenfell; "but I suspect that her scheme will not have the success she anticipates."

"Of course," read on M'Kinlay, "I mention the last in perfect confidence to you."

"Oh, of course!" broke in Georgina. "My dear Mr. M'Kinlay, the very first trait I discover in myself of angelic self-devotion, I'll certainly impart it to you under the seal of inviolable secrecy. Mind, therefore, that you tell nobody what a mine of goodness, of charity, and self-denial I am."

Mr. M'Kinlay bowed an acquiescence, not aware in the least to what he was acceding, so overcome was he by the astounding assurance that the world contained one creature who refused to accept a legacy or avail herself of a gift.

"I am such a poor, weak-minded, vacillatory being myself," said Georgina, still turning to Grenfell as most likely to appreciate her meaning, "that I really feel terrified in the presence of these great-souled creatures, who refuse to be stirred by the common motives of humanity."

"The girl must be a fool!" muttered M'Kinlay, with his eyes fixed on a postscript of Cane's letter—"a perfect fool!" But without explaining why he thought so, he bundled up his papers and hurried away.

"What is the mysterious parcel? I am

dying to know the contents of it," said Georgina, as she stood at the window with Grenfell.

"I think I could guess," said he, slowly.

"You think you could guess! And you have the coolness to tell me this, seeing all the tortures of my curiosity!"

"It is by the shape of the packet that I am disposed to believe I know what is in it."

"Pray tell me! Do tell me!" said she, entreatingly.

"I don't think I can. I don't think I ought. I mean," said he, in a more apologetic tone—"I mean, it is not *my* secret. It is another's—that is, if my guess be the right one."

"And you have the courage to heighten my eagerness by all this preamble! Why, my dear Mr. Grenfell, they told me that, of all the men about town, none knew women as you did."

"Who told you that?" asked, he eagerly.

"Scores of people." And she quoted at random the most distinguished names of her acquaintance, every syllable of their high-sounding titles falling on Grenfell's ear with a cadence perfectly entrancing. "Come, now," said she, with a look of entreaty, "don't worry me any longer. You see I know more than one-half of the secret, if it be a secret, already; from whom it comes, and to whom it is addressed."

"I am in your hands," said he, in a tone of submission. "Come out into the garden, and I'll tell you all I know."

Georgina accepted his arm as he spoke, and they passed out into a shady alley that led down to the sea.

"If I be right," said he, "and I'd go the length of a wager that I am, the packet you saw on the breakfast-table contains one of the most costly ornaments a woman ever wore. It was a royal present on the wedding-day of Sir Within Wardle's mother, and sent by him to fulfil the same office to Miss Luttrell on becoming Mrs. Ladarelle."

"You know this?" said she, in a slow, collected tone.

"I know it because he sent me to his gem-room at Dalradern to fetch it. He opened the casket in my presence, he showed me the jewels, he explained to me the peculiar setting. Emeralds on one side, opals on the other, so as to present two distinct *suites* of ornaments. I remember his words, and how his lips trembled as he said, 'Ladies in those times were wont to turn their necklaces, now they only change their affections!' You'd scarcely believe it, Miss Courtenay, but it is fact,

positive fact, the poor old man had been in love with her."

"I certainly cannot stretch my credulity to that extent, Mr. Grenfell," said she, with a shade of vexation in her voice, "though I could readily believe how an artful, unprincipled girl, with a field all her own, could manage to ensnare a most gentle, confiding nature into a degree of interest for her, that she would speedily assume to be a more tender feeling. And was the casket sent to *her*, Mr. Grenfell?" asked she, in a suddenly altered tone.

"Yes, I enclosed it, with an inscription dictated by Sir Within himself."

"And she sends it back to him?" said she, pondering over each word as though it were charged with a deep significance.

"It would seem so."

"I think you guess why. I am certain, if I have not taken a very wrong measure of Mr. Grenfell's acuteness, that he reads this riddle pretty much as I do myself."

"It is by no means improbable," said Grenfell, who quickly saw the line her suspicions had taken. "I think it very likely the same interpretation has occurred to each of us."

"Give me yours," said she, eagerly.

"My reading is this," replied he: "she has returned his present on the ground that, not being Mrs. Ladarelle, she has no claim to it; the restitution serving to show at the same moment a punctilious sense of honor, and, what she is fully as eager to establish, the fact that, being still unmarried, there is nothing to prevent Sir Within himself from a renewal of his former pretensions."

"How well you know her! How thoroughly you appreciate her wily, subtle nature!" cried she, in warm admiration.

"Not that the game will succeed," added he; "the poor old man is now beyond such captivations as once enthralled him."

"How so? What do you mean?" asked she, sharply.

"I mean simply what we all see. He is rapidly sinking into second childhood."

"I declare, Mr. Grenfell, you astonish me!" said she, with an almost impetuous force of manner. "At one moment you display a most remarkable acuteness in reading motives and deciphering intentions, and now you make an observation actually worthy of Mr. M'Kinlay."

"And so you do not agree with me?" asked he.

"Agree with you! certainly not. Sir Within Wardle is an old friend of ours. Certain peculiarities of manner he has. In a great measure they have been impressed

upon him by the circumstances of his station. An ambassador, a great man himself, is constantly in the presence of a sovereign, who is still greater. The conflict of dignity with the respect due to royalty makes up a very intricate code of conduct and manner of which the possessor cannot always disembarrass himself, even in the society of his equals. Something of this you may have remarked in Sir Within's manner; nothing beyond it, I am confident!"

"I only hope, my dear Miss Courtenay, that, if the day should come when my own faculties begin to fail me, I may be fortunate enough to secure you for my defender."

"The way to insure my advocacy will certainly not be by attacking an old and dear friend!" said she, with deep resentment in tone; and she turned abruptly and entered the house.

Mr. Grenfell looked after her for a moment in some astonishment. He was evidently unprepared for this sudden outburst of passion, but he quickly recovered himself, and, after a brief pause, resumed his walk, muttering below his breath as he went: "So, then, *this* is the game! What a stupid fool I have been not to have seen it before! All happening under my very eyes too! I must say, she has done it cleverly, very cleverly." And with this cordial appreciation of female skill, he lit his segar, and seating himself on the sea-wall, smoked and ruminated during the morning. There were many aspects of the question that struck him, and he turned from the present to the future with all that ready-wittedness that had so long favored him in life.

He heard the bell ring for luncheon, but he never stirred; he was not hungry, neither particularly anxious to meet Miss Courtenay again. He preferred to have some few words with her alone ere they met in society. He thought he had tact enough to intimate that he saw her project, and was quite ready to abet it without anything which could offend her dignity. This done, they would be sworn friends ever after. As he sat thus thinking, he heard a quiet step approaching. It was doubtless a servant sent to tell him that luncheon was served, and while doubting what reply to make, he heard M'Kinlay call out, "I have found you at last! I have been all over the house in search of you."

"What is the matter? What has happened? Why are you so flurried—eh?"

"I am not flurried. I am perfectly calm, perfectly collected—at least, as collected as a man can hope to be who has



had to listen for half an hour to such revelations as I have had made me; but it is all over now, and I am thankful it is. All over and finished!"

"What is over? What is finished?"

"Everything, sir—everything! I leave this within an hour—earlier if I can. I have sent two messengers for the horses, and I'd leave on foot—ay, sir, on foot—rather than pass another day under this roof!"

"Will you have the extreme kindness to tell me why you are going off in this fashion?"

Instead of complying with this reasonable request, Mr. M'Kinlay burst out into a passionate torrent, in which the words, "Dupe!" "Fool!" and "Cajoled!" were alone very audible, but his indignation subsided after a while sufficiently to enable him to state that he had been sent for by Sir Within, after breakfast, to confer with him on the subject of that codicil he had spoken of on the previous day.

"He was more eager than ever about it, sir," said he. "The girl had written him some very touching lines of adieu, and I found him in tears as I came to his bedside. I must own, too, that he talked more sensibly and more collectedly than before, and said, in a tone of much meaning: 'When a man is so old and so friendless as I am, he ought to be thankful to do all the good he can, and not speculate on any returns either in feeling or affection.' I left him, sir, to make a brief draft of what he had been intimating to me. It would take me, I told him, about a couple of hours, but I hoped I could complete it in that time. Punctual to a minute, I was at his door at one o'clock; but guess my surprise when Miss Courtenay's voice said, 'Come in!' Sir Within was in his dressing-gown, seated at the fire, the table before him covered with gems and trinkets, with which he appeared to be intently occupied. 'Sit down, M'Kinlay,' said he, courteously. 'I want you to choose something here—something that Mrs. M'Kinlay would honor me by accepting.' She whispered a word or two hastily in his ear, and he corrected himself at once, saying, 'I ask pardon! I meant your respected mother. I remember you are a widower.' To withdraw his mind from this painful wandering, I opened my roll of papers, and mentioned their contents. Again she whispered him something, but he was evidently unable to follow her meaning; for he stared blankly at her, then at me, and said, 'Yes, certainly, I acquiesce in everything.' 'It will be better, perhaps, to defer these little matters, Miss

Courtenay,' said I, 'to some moment when Sir Within may feel more equal to the fatigue of business.' She stooped down and said something to him, and suddenly his eyes sparkled, his cheek flushed, and laying his hand with emphasis on the table, he said: 'I have no need of law or lawyers, sir! This lady, in doing me the honor to accord me her hand, has made her gift to me more precious by a boundless act of confidence; she will accept of no settlements.' 'Great Heavens! Miss Courtenay,' whispered I, 'is he not wandering in his mind? Surely this is raving!' 'I think, sir, you will find that the only person present whose faculties are at fault is Mr. M'Kinlay. Certainly I claim exemption both for Sir Within Wardle and myself.' It was all true, sir—true as I stand here! She is to be his wife. As to her generosity about the settlements, I understood it at once. She had got the whole detail of the property from me only yesterday, and knew that provision was made—a splendid provision, too—for whomsoever he might marry. So much for the trustfulness!"

"But what does it signify to *you*, M'Kinlay? You are not a Lord Chancellor, with a function to look after deranged old men and fatherless young ladies, and I don't suppose the loss of a settlement to draw will be a heart-break to you."

"No, sir; but lawyer as I am, there are depths of perfidy I'm not prepared for."

"Come in and wish them joy, M'Kinlay. Take my word for it, it might have been worse. Old Sir Within's misfortune might have befallen you or myself!"

## CHAPTER LXIX.

THE END.

"You see, sir, she is obstinate," said Mr. Cane to Harry Luttrell, as they sat closeted together in his private office. "She is determined to make over the Arran estate to you, and equally determined to sail for Australia on the 8th of next month."

"I can be obstinate too," said Harry, with a bent brow and a dark frown—"I can be obstinate too, as you will see, perhaps, in a day or two."

"After all, sir, one must really respect her scruples. It is clear enough, if your father had not believed in your death, he never would have made the will in her favor."

"It is not of that I am thinking," said Luttrell, with a tone of half-irritation; and then, seeing by the blank look of astonishment in the other's face that some explanation was necessary, he added: "It was about this foolish journey, this voyage, my thoughts were busy. Is there no way to put her off it?"

"I am afraid not. All I have said—all my wife has said—has gone for nothing. Some notion in her head about the gratitude she owes this old man overbears every other consideration, and she goes on repeating, 'I am the only living thing he trusts in. I must not let him die in disbelief of all humanity.'" Harry made a gesture of impatient meaning, but said nothing, and Cane went on: "I don't believe it is possible to say more than my wife has said on the subject, but all in vain; and, indeed, at last, Miss Luttrell closed the discussion by saying: 'I know you'd like that we should part good friends; well, then, let us not discuss this any more. You may shake the courage I shall need to carry me through my project, but you'll not change my determination to attempt it.' These were her last words here."

"They were all the same!" muttered Harry, impatiently, as he walked up and down the room. "All the same."

"It was what she hinted, sir."

"How do you mean—in what way did she hint it?"

"She said one morning—she was unusually excited that day—something about the willfulness of peasant natures, that all the gilding good fortune could lay on them never succeeded in hiding the base metal beneath; and at last, as if carried away by passion, and unable to control herself, she exclaimed, 'I'll do it, if it was only to let me feel real for once! I'm sick of shams!—a sham position, a sham name, and a sham fortune!'"

"I offered her the share of mine, and she refused me," said Luttrell, with a bitterness that revealed his feeling.

"You offered to make her your wife, sir?" cried Cane, in astonishment.

"What so surprises you in that," said Harry, hastily, "except it be," added he, after a moment, "my presumption in aspiring to one so far superior to me?"

"I wish you would speak to Mrs. Cane, Mr. Luttrell. I really am very anxious you would speak to her."

"I guess your meaning—at least, I suspect I do. You intend that your wife should tell me that scandal about the secret marriage, that dark story of her departure from Arran, and her repentant re-

turn to it; but I know it all, every word of it, already."

"And from whom?"

"From herself—from her own lips; confirmed, if I wanted confirmation, by other testimony."

"I think she did well to tell you," said Cane, in a half-uncertain tone.

"Of course she did right. It was for me to vindicate her, if she had been wronged, and I would have done so, too, if the law had not been before me. You know that the scoundrel is sentenced to the galleys?"

Cane did not know it, and heard the story with astonishment, and so much of what indicated curiosity, that Harry repeated all Kate had told him from the beginning to the end.

"Would you do me the great favor to repeat this to my wife? She is sincerely attached to Miss Luttrell, and this narrative will give her unspeakable pleasure."

"Tell her from me that her affection is not misplaced—she deserves it all!" muttered Harry, as he laid his head moodily against the window, and stood lost in thought.

"Here comes the postman. I am expecting a letter from the captain of the Australian packet-ship, in answer to some inquiries I have made in Miss Luttrell's behalf."

The servant entered with a packet of letters as he spoke, from which Cane quickly selected one.

"This is what I looked for. Let us see what it says:—

"DEAR SIR:—I find that I shall be able to place the poop cabin at Miss L.'s disposal, as my owner's sister will not go out this spring. It is necessary she should come over here at once, if there be any trifling changes she would like made in its interior arrangement. The terms, I believe, are already well understood between us. By the Hamburg packet-ship, *Drei Heilige*, we learn that the last outward-bound vessels have met rough weather, and a convict-ship, the *Blast*, was still more unfortunate. Cholera broke out on board, and carried off seventy-three of the prisoners in eleven days."

There was a postscript marked confidential, but Cane read it aloud:—

"Can you tell me if a certain Harry Luttrell, who has signed articles with me as second mate, is any relation of Miss L.'s? He has given me a deposit of twenty



pounds, but my men think he is no seaman, nor has ever been at sea. Do you know anything of him, and what?"

"Yes!" said Harry, boldly. "Tell him you know him well; that he was with you when you read aloud that passage in his letter; assure him—as you may with a safe conscience—that he is a good sailor, and add, on my part, that he has no right to make any other inquiries about him."

"And do you really intend to make this voyage?"

"Of course I do. I told you a while ago I could be as obstinate as my cousin. You'll see if I don't keep my word. Mind me, however; no word of this to Miss Luttrell. I charge you that!"

"And the property, sir! What are your views respecting the estate?"

"I shall write to you. I'll think of it," said Harry, carelessly. After a few words more, they parted. Harry had some things to buy in the city, some small preparations for the long voyage before him; but promising Cane to come back and take a family dinner with him, he went his way. For some hours he walked the streets half unconsciously, a vague impression over him that there was something he had to do, certain people to see, certain places to visit; but so engaged was he with the thought of Kate and her fortunes, his mind had no room for more. "She shall see," muttered he to himself, "that I am not to be shaken off. My Luttrell obstinacy, if she will call it so, is as fixed as her own. Country has no tie for me. Where she is, there shall be my country." Some fears he had lest Cane should tell her of his determination to sail in the same ship with her. She was quite capable of outwitting him if she only could get a clue to this. Would Cane dare to disobey him? Would he face the consequences of his betrayal? From these thoughts he wandered on to others as to how Kate would behave when she found he had followed her. Would this proof of attachment move her? Would she resent it as a persecution? Hers was so strange a nature, anything might come of it. "The same pride that made her refuse me may urge her to do more. As she said so haughtily to me at Arran, 'The peasant remedy has failed to cure the Luttrell malady; another cure must be sought for!'"

Harry had scarcely knocked at Cane's door, when it was opened by himself, who hurriedly said: "I have been waiting for you. Come in here;" and led him into his own room. "She's above-stairs. She has just come," whispered he.

"Who?" asked Harry, eagerly. "Who?"

"Your cousin—Miss Luttrell. A letter from the surgeon of the convict-ship has conveyed news of old Malone's death, and she has come up to free herself from her arrangement with the captain. And——"

He stopped and hesitated with such evident confusion, that Harry said: "Go on, sir; finish what you were about to say."

"It is her secret, not mine, Mr. Luttrell; and I know it only through my wife."

"I insist on hearing it. I am her nearest of kin, and I have a right to know whatever concerns her."

"I have already told you what I promised to keep secret. I was pledged not to say she was here. I came down to make some excuse for not receiving you to-day at dinner—some pretext of my wife's illness. I beg, I entreat, you will not ask me for more."

"I insist upon all you know," was Harry's stern reply.

"How do I even know it," cried Cane, in despair, "from a few incoherent words my wife whispered in my ear as she passed me? Were I to tell, it may be only to mislead you."

"Tell me, whatever may come of it."

Cane took a turn or two up and down the room, and at last, coming in front of Luttrell, said: "She is about to take back her old name, and with it the humble fortune that belonged to it. She says you and yours have suffered enough from the unhappy tie that bound you to her family. She is resolved you shall never see, never hear of her again. She took her last look at Arran last night. To-morrow she declares she will go away from this, where none shall trace her. There's her secret! I charge you not to betray how you came by it."

"Let me see her; let me speak with her."

"How can I? I have promised already that you should not hear she is here."

"Send for your wife, and let me speak to her. I must—I will speak to her."

"Go into that room for a moment, then, and I will advise with my wife what is to be done."

Harry passed into the room and sat down. He heard Cane's bell ring, and soon afterwards could mark the tread of a foot on the stairs, and then the sound of voices talking eagerly in the adjoining room. His impatience nearly maddened him; his heart beat so that he felt as if his chest could not contain it; the vessels of his neck, too, throbbled powerfully. He opened the window for air, and then, as

though the space was too confined, flung wide a door at the side of the room. As he did this, he saw that it led to the stairs. Quicker than all thought, his impulse urged him. He dashed up and entered the drawing-room, where Kate sat alone, and with her head buried between her hands.

She looked up, startled by his sudden entrance, and then, resuming her former attitude, said in a low muffled voice: "You have heard what has befallen me. I am not fated to acquit the debt I owe."

Harry sat down beside her in silence, and she went on: "I was hoping that this pain might have been spared us—I mean, this meeting—it is only more sorrow. However, as we are once more together, let me thank you. I know all that you intended, all that you meant by me. I know that you would have come with me, too. I know all! Now, Harry," said she, in a more resolute voice, "listen to me calmly. What I say to you is no caprice, no passing thought, but the long-earned conviction of much reflection. From *my* people came every misfortune that has crushed *yours*. Your father's long life of suffering—told in his own words—his diaries—revealed in the letters from his friends—I have read them over and over—was caused by this fatal connection. Are these things to be forgotten? or are you cruel enough to ask me to repeat the experiment that broke your mother's heart, and left your father friendless and forsaken? Where is your pride, sir? And if *you* have none, where would be mine, if I were to listen to you?"

"There comes the truth!" cried he, wildly. "It is your pride that rejects me.

You who have lived in great houses and mixed with great people, cannot see in me anything but the sailor."

"Oh! no, no, no!" cried she, bitterly.

"I know it—I feel it, Kate," continued he. "I feel ashamed when my coarse hand touches your taper fingers. I shrink back with misgiving at any little familiarity that seems so inconsistent between us. Even my love for you—and God knows how I love you!—cannot make me think myself your equal!"

"Oh, Harry, do not say such things as these; do not—do not!"

"I say it—I swear it; the highest ambition of my heart would be to think I could deserve you."

She hid her face between her hands, and he went on, madly, wildly, incoherently; now telling her what her love might make him—now darkly hinting at the despair rejection might drive him to. He contrasted all the qualities of *her* gifted nature, so sure to attract friendship and interest, with the ruggedness of his character, as certain to render him friendless; and on his knees at her feet, he implored her, if any gratitude for all his father's love could move her, to take pity on and hear him.

There was a step on the stair as Harry seized her hand and said: "Let this be mine, Kate; give it to me, and make me happier than all I ever dreamed of. One word—one word, dearest." And he drew her face towards him and kissed her.

"The Lattrell spirit is low enough, I take it, now," said she, blushing. "If their pride can survive this, no peasant blood can be ~~the~~ *the* remedy."



# THE BRAMLEIGHS OF BISHOP'S FOLLY.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE BISHOP'S FOLLY.

TOWARDS the close of the last century there was a very remarkable man, Bishop of Down, in Ireland; a Liberal in politics, in an age when Liberalism lay close on the confines of disloyalty; splendidly hospitable, at a period when hospitality verged on utter recklessness; he carried all his opinions to extremes. He had great taste, which had been cultivated by foreign travel, and having an ample fortune, was able to indulge in many whims and caprices, by which some were led to doubt of his sanity; but others, who judged him better, ascribed them to the self-indulgence of a man out of harmony with his time, and contemptuously indifferent to what the world might say of him.

He had passed many years in Italy, and had formed a great attachment to that country. He liked the people and their mode of life; he liked the old cities, so rich in art treasures and so teeming with associations of a picturesque past; and he especially liked their villa architecture, which seemed so essentially suited to a grand and costly style of living. The great reception-rooms, spacious and lofty; the ample ante-chambers, made for crowds of attendants; and the stairs wide enough for even equipages to ascend them. No more striking illustration of his capricious turn of mind need be given than the fact that it was his pleasure to build one of these magnificent edifices in an Irish county!—a costly whim, obliging him to bring over from Italy a whole troop of stucco-men and painters, men skilled in fresco-work and carving—an extravagance on which he spent thousands. Nor did he live to witness the completion of his splendid mansion.

After his death the building gradually fell into decay. His heirs, not improbably,

little caring for a project which had engulfed so large a share of their fortune, made no efforts to arrest the destroying influences of time and climate, and "Bishop's Folly"—for such was the name given to it by the country people—soon became a ruin. In some places the roof had fallen in, the doors and windows had all been carried away by the peasants, and in many a cabin or humble shealing, in the county around, slabs of colored marble or fragments of costly carving might be met with, over which the skill of a cunning workman had been bestowed for days long. The mansion stood on the side of a mountain which sloped gradually to the sea. The demesne, well wooded, but with young timber, was beautifully varied in surface, one deep glen running, as it were, from the very base of the house to the beach, and showing glimpses, through the trees, of a bright and rapid river tumbling onward to the sea. Seen in its dilapidation and decay, the aspect of the place was dreary and depressing, and led many to wonder how the bishop could ever have selected such a spot; for it was not only placed in the midst of a wild mountain region, but many miles away from anything that could be called a neighborhood. But the same haughty defiance he gave the world in other things urged him here to show that he cared little for the judgments which might be passed upon him, or even for the circumstances which would have influenced other men. "When it is my pleasure to receive company, I shall have my house full, no matter where I live," was his haughty speech, and certainly the whole character of his life went to confirm his words.

Some question of disputed title, after the bishop's death, threw the estate into Chancery, and so it remained till, by the operation of the new law touching encumbered property, it became marketable, and was purchased by a rich London banker,

who had declared his intention of coming to live upon it.

That any one rich enough to buy such a property, able to restore such a costly house, and maintain a style of living proportionate to its pretensions, should come to reside in the solitude and obscurity of an Irish county, seemed all but impossible; and when the matter became assured by the visit of a well-known architect, and afterwards by the arrival of a troop of workmen, the puzzle then became to guess how it chanced that the great head of a rich banking firm, the chairman of this, the director of that, the promoter of Heaven knows what scores of industrial schemes for fortune, should withdraw from the great bustle of life to accept an existence of complete oblivion.

In the little village of Portshandon—which straggled along the beach, and where, with a few exceptions, none but fishermen and their families lived—this question was hotly debated; an old half-pay lieutenant, who by courtesy was called Captain, being at the head of those who first denied the possibility of the Bramleights coming at all, and when that matter was removed beyond a doubt, next taking his stand on the fact that nothing short of some disaster in fortune, or some aspersion on character, could ever have driven a man out of the great world to finish his days in the exile of Ireland.

"I suppose you'll give in at last, Captain Craufurd," said Mrs. Bayley, the postmistress of Portshandon, as she pointed to a pile of letters and newspapers all addressed to "Castello," and which more than quadrupled the other correspondence of the locality.

"I didn't pretend they were not coming, Mrs. Bayley," said he, in the cracked and cantankerous tone he invariably spoke in. "I simply observed that I'd be thankful for any one telling me why they were coming. That's the puzzle—why they're coming?"

"I suppose because they like it, and they can afford it," said she, with a toss of her head.

"Like it!" cried he, in derision. "Like it! Look out of the window there beside you, Mrs. Bayley, and say, isn't it a lovely prospect, that beggarly village, and the old rotten boats, keel uppermost, with the dead fish and the oyster-shells, and the torn nets, and the dirty children? Isn't it an elegant sight after Hyde Park and the Queen's palace?"

"I never saw the Queen's palace nor the other place you talk of, but I think

there's worse towns to live in than Portshandon."

"And do they think they'll make it better by calling it Castello?" said he, as with a contemptuous gesture he threw from him one of the newspapers with this address. "If they want to think they're in Italy they ought to come down here in November with the Channel fogs sweeping up through the mountains, and the wind beating the rain against the windows. I hope they'll think they're in Naples. Why can't they call the place by the name we all know it by? It was Bishop's Folly when I was a boy, and it will be Bishop's Folly after I'm dead."

"I suppose people can call their house whatever they like? Nobody objects to your calling your place Craufurd's Lea."

"I'd like to see them object to it," cried he fiercely. "It's Craufurd's Lea in Digge's *Survey of Down*, 1714. It's Craufurd's Lea in the *Anthologia Hibernica*, and it's down, too, in Joyce's *Irish Fisheries*; and we were Craufurds of Craufurd's Lea before one stone of that big barrack up there was laid, and maybe we'll be so after it's a ruin again."

"I hope it's not going to be a ruin any more, Captain Craufurd, all the same," said the postmistress, tartly, for she was not disposed to undervalue the increased importance the neighborhood was about to derive from the rich family coming to live in it.

"Well, there's one thing I can tell you, Mrs. Bayley," said he, with his usual grin. "The devil a bit of Ireland they'd ever come to, if they could live in England. Mind my words, and see if they'll not come true. It's either the bank is in a bad way, or this or that company is going to smash, or it's his wife has run away, or one of the daughters married the footman—something or other has happened, you'll see, or we would never have the honor of their distinguished company down here."

"It's a bad wind blows nobody good," said Mrs. Bayley. "It's luck for us, anyhow."

"I don't perceive the luck of it either, ma'am," said the Captain, with increased peevishness. "Chickens will be eightpence a couple, eggs a halfpenny apiece. I'd like to know what you'll pay for a codfish, such as I bought yesterday for fourpence?"

"It's better for them that has to sell them."

"Ay, but I'm talking of them that have to buy them, ma'am, and I'm thinking



how a born gentleman with a fixed income is to compete with one of these fellows that gets his gold from California at market price, and makes more out of one morning's robbery on the Stock Exchange, than a Lieutenant-General receives after thirty years' service."

A sharp tap at the window-pane interrupted the discussion at this critical moment, and Mrs. Bayley perceived it was Mr. Dorose, Colonel Bramleigh's valet, who had come for the letters for the great house.

"Only these, Mrs. Bayley?" said he, half contemptuously.

"Well, indeed, sir, it's a good-sized bundle after all. There's eleven letters, and about fifteen papers and two books."

"Send them all on to Brighton, Mrs. Bayley. We shall not come down here till the end of the month. Just give me the *Times*, however;" and, tearing open the cover, he turned to the city article. "I hope you've nothing in Ecuador, Mrs. Bayley? they look shaky. I'm 'hit,' too, in my Turks. I see no dividend this half." Here he leaned forward, so as to whisper in her ear, and said, "Whenever you want a snug thing, Mrs. B., you're always safe with Brazilians;" and with this he moved off, leaving the postmistress in a flurry of shame and confusion as to what precise character of transaction his counsel applied.

"Upon my conscience, we're come to a pretty pass!" exclaimed the Captain, as, buttoning his coat, he issued forth into the street; nor was his temper much improved by finding the way blocked up by a string of carts and drays, slowly proceeding towards the great house, all loaded with furniture and kitchen utensils, and the other details of a large household. A bystander remarked that four saddle-horses had passed through at daybreak, and one of the grooms had said, "It was nothing to what was coming in a few days."

Two days after this, and quite unexpectedly by all, the village awoke to see a large flag waving from the flagstaff over the chief tower of Castello; and the tidings were speedily circulated that the great people had arrived. A few skeptics, determining to decide the point for themselves, set out to go up to the house; but the lodge-gate was closed, and the gatekeeper answered them from behind it, saying that no visitors were to be admitted; a small incident, in its way, but, after all, it is by small incidents that men speculate on the tastes and tempers of a new dynasty.

## CHAPTER II.

## LADY AUGUSTA'S LETTER.

It will save some time, both to writer and reader, while it will also serve to explain certain particulars about those we are interested in, if I give in this place a letter which was written by Lady Augusta Bramleigh, the Colonel's young wife, to a married sister at Rome. It ran thus:—

"Hanover Square, Nov. 10. 18—.

"DEAREST DOROTHY:—

"Here we are back in town, at a season, too, when we find ourselves the only people left; and if I wanted to make a long story of how it happens, there is the material; but it is precisely what I desire to avoid, and at the risk of being barely intelligible, I will be brief. We have left Earlshepe, and, indeed, Herefordshire for good. Our campaign there was a social failure, but just such a failure as I predicted it would and must be; and although, possibly, I might have liked to have been spared some of the mortifications we met with, I am too much pleased with the results to quarrel over the means.

"You are already in possession of what we intended by the purchase of Earlshepe—how we meant to become county magnates, marry our sons and daughters to neighboring magnates, and live as though we had been rooted to the soil for centuries. I say 'we,' my dear, because I am too good a wife to separate myself from Col. B. in all these projects; but I am fain to own that, as I only saw defeat in the plan, I opposed it from the first. Here, in town, money will do anything; at least, anything that one has any right to do. There may be a set or a clique to which it will not give admission; but who wants them, who needs them?"

"There's always a wonderful Van Eyck or a Memling in a Dutch town, to obtain the sight of which you have to petition the authorities, or implore the Stadtholder; but I never knew any one admit that success repaid the trouble; and the chances are that you come away from the sight fully convinced that you have seen scores of old pictures exactly like it, and that all that could be said was, it was as brown, and as dusky, and as generally disappointing, as its fellows. So it is with these small exclusive societies. It may be a great triumph of ingenuity to pick the lock; but there's nothing in the coffer to reward it. I repeat, then, with money—and we had money—London was open to us. All

the more, too, that for some years back society has taken a speculative turn; and it is nothing derogatory to find people 'to go in,' as it is called, for a good thing, in 'Turks' or 'Brazilians,' in patent fuel or a new loan to the children of Egypt. To these, and such like, your City man and banker is esteemed a safe pilot; and you would be amused at the amount of attention Col. B. was accustomed to meet with from men who regarded themselves as immeasurably above him, and who, all question of profit apart, would have hesitated at admitting him to their acquaintance.

"I tell you all these very commonplace truths, my dear Dorothy, because they may not, indeed cannot, be such truisms to you—you, who live in a grand old city, with noble traditions, and the refinements that come transmitted from centuries of high habits; and I feel, as I write, how puzzled you will often be to follow me. London was, as I have twice said, our home; but for that very reason we could not be content with it. Earlshope, by ill luck, was for sale, and we bought it. I am afraid to tell you the height of our castle-building; but, as we were all engaged, the work went on briskly, every day adding at least a story to the edifice. We were to start as high-sheriff, then represent the county. I am not quite clear, I think we never settled the point as to the lord-lieutenancy; but I know the exact way, and the very time, in which we demanded our peerage. How we threatened to sulk, and did sulk; how we actually sat a whole night on the back benches; and how we made our eldest son dance twice with a daughter of the 'Opposition,'—menaces that no intelligent Cabinet or conscientious 'Whip' could for a moment misunderstand. And oh! my dear Dora, as I write these things, how forcibly I feel the prudence of that step which once we all were so ready to condemn you for having taken. You were indeed right to marry a foreigner. That an English girl should address herself to the married life of England, the first condition is she should never have left England, not even for that holiday-trip to Paris and Switzerland, which people now do, as once they were wont to 'do Margate.' The whole game of existence is such a scramble with us: we scramble for social rank, for place, for influence, for Court favor, for patronage; and all these call for so much intrigue and plotting, that I vow to you I'd as soon be a Carbonara or a Sanfedista as the wife of an aspiring middle-class Englishman.

"But to return. The county would not

have us—we were rich, and we were City folk, and they deemed it an unpardonable pretension in us to come down amongst them. They refused our invitations, and sent us none of their own. We split with them, contested the election against them, and got beaten. We spent unheard-of moneys, and bribed everybody that had not a vote for ten miles round. With universal suffrage, which I believe we promised them, we should have been at the head of the poll; but the freeholders were to a man opposed to us.

"I am told that our opponents behaved ungenerously and unjustly—perhaps they did; at all events, the end of the contest left us without a single acquaintance, and we stood alone in our glory of beaten candidateship, after three months of unheard-of fatigue, and more meanness than I care to mention. The end of all was, to shake the dust off our feet at Herefordshire, and advertise Earlshope for sale. Meanwhile we returned to town; just as shipwrecked men clamber up the first rock in sight, not feeling in their danger what desolation is before them. I take it that the generals of a beaten army talk very little over their late defeat. At all events we observed a most scrupulous reserve, and I don't think that a word was dropped amongst us for a month that could have led a stranger to believe that we had just been beaten in an election, and hunted out of the county.

"I was just beginning to feel that our lesson, a severe one, it is true, might rebound to our future benefit, when our eldest-born—I call them all mine, Dora, though not one of them will say mamma to me—discovered that there was an Irish estate to be sold, with a fine house and fine grounds, and that if we couldn't be great folk in the grander kingdom, there was no saying what we might not be in the smaller one. This was too much for me. I accepted the Herefordshire expedition because it smacked of active service. I knew well we should be defeated, and I knew there would be a battle, but I could not consent to banishment. What had I done, I asked myself over and over, that I should be sent to live in Ireland?

"I tried to get up a party against the project, and failed. Augustus Bramleigh—our heir—was in its favor, indeed its chief promoter. Temple, the second son, who is a secretary of embassy, and the most insufferable of puppies, thought it a 'nice place for us,' and certain to save us money; and John—Jack, they call him—who is in the navy, thinks land to be land, besides that, he was once stationed at Cork,



and thought it a paradise. If I could do little with the young men, I did less with the girls. Marion, the eldest, who deems her papa a sort of divine-right head of a family, would not discuss the scheme; and Eleanor, who goes in for nature and spontaneous feeling, replied that she was overjoyed at the thought of Ireland, and even half gave me to understand that she was only sorry it was not Africa. I was thus driven to a last resource. I sent for our old friend, Dr. Bartlet, and told him frankly that he must order me abroad to a dry, warm climate, where there were few changes of temperature, and nothing depressing in the air. He did the thing to perfection; he called in Forbes to consult with him. The case was very serious, he said. The lung was not yet attacked, but the bronchial tubes were affected. Oh, how grateful I felt to my dear bronchial tubes, for they have sent me to Italy! Yes, Dolly dearest, I am off on Wednesday, and hope within a week after this reaches you to be at your side, pouring out all my sorrows, and asking for that consolation you never yet refused me. And now, to be eminently practical, can you obtain for me that beautiful little villa that overlooked the Borghese Gardens?—it was called the Villino Altieri. The old Prince Giuseppe Altieri, who used to be an adorer of mine, if he be alive, may like to resume his ancient passion, and accept me for a tenant; all the more that I can afford to be liberal. Col. B. behaves well always where money enters. I shall want servants, as I only mean to take from this Rose and my groom. You know the sort of creatures I like; but, for my sake, be particular about the cook—I can't eat 'Romanesque'—and if there be a stray Frenchman wandering about, secure him. Do you remember dear old Paoletti, Dolly, who used to serve up those delicious little macaroni suppers long ago in our own room?—cheating us into gormandism by the trick of deceit! Oh, what would I give to be as young again! To be soaring up to heaven, as I listened with closed eyes to the chant in the Sistine Chapel, or ascending to another elysium of delight, as I gazed at the 'noble guard' of the Pope, who, while his black charger was caracoling, and he was holding on by the mane, yet managed to dart towards me such a look of love and devotion! and you remember, Dolly, we lived 'secondo piano' at the time, and it was plucky of the man, considering how badly he rode. I yearn to go back there. I yearn for those sunsets from the Pincian, and those long rambling rides over the

Campagna, leading to nothing but an everlasting dreaminess, and an intense desire that one could go on day after day in the same delicious life of unreality; for it is so, Dolly. Your Roman existence is as much a trance as anything ever was—not a sight nor sound to shock it. The swell of the organ and the odor of the incense follow you even to your pleasures, and, just as the light streams in through the painted windows with its radiance of gold and amber and rose, so does the Church tinge with its mellow luster all that goes on within its shadow. And how sweet and soothing it all is! I don't know, I cannot know, if it lead to heaven, but it certainly goes in that direction, so far as peace of mind is concerned. What has become of Carlo Lambruschini? is he married? How good-looking he was, and how he sung! I never heard Mario without thinking of him. How is it that our people never have that velvety softness in their tenor voices; there is no richness, no latent depth of tone, and consequently no power of expression? Will his Eminence of the Palazzo Antinori know me again? I was only a child when he saw me last, and used to give me his 'benedizione.' Be sure you bespeak for me the same condescending favor again, heretic though I be. Don't be shocked, dearest Dora, but I mean to be half converted, that is, to have a sort of serious flirtation with the Church; something that is to touch my affections, and yet not wound my principles; something that will surround me with all the fervor of the faith, and yet not ask me to sign the ordinances. I hope I can do this. I eagerly hope it, for it will supply a void in my heart which certainly neither the money article, nor the share list, nor even the details of a county contest, have sufficed to fill. Where are poor little Santa Rosa and his guitar? I want them, Dolly—I want them both. His little tinkling barcaroles were as pleasant as the drip of a fountain on a sultry night; and am I not a highly imaginative creature, who can write of a sultry night in this land of fog, east wind, gust, and gaslight? How my heart bounds to think how soon I shall leave it! How I could travesty the refrain, and cry, 'Rendez moi mon passeport, ou laissez moi mourir.' And now, Dolly darling, I have done. Secure me the villa, engage my people. 'Tanti saluti' to the dear cardinal—as many loves to all who are kind enough to remember me. Send me a 'lascia-passare' for my luggage—it is voluminous—to the care of the consul at Civita Vecchia, and tell him to look out for me by the arrival of the French

boat, somewhere about the 20th or 21st; he can be useful with the custom-house creatures, and obtain me a carriage all to myself in the train.

"It is always more 'carino' to talk of a husband at the last line of a letter, and so I say, give dear Tino all my loves, quite apart and distinct from my other legacies of the like nature. Tell him, I am more tolerant than I used to be—he will know my meaning—that I make paper cigarettes just as well, and occasionally, when in high good-humor, even condescend to smoke one, too. Say also, that I have a little chestnut cob, quiet enough for his riding, which shall be always at his orders; that he may dine with me every Sunday, and have one dish—I know well what it will be, I smell the garlic of it even now—of his own dictating; and if these be not enough, add that he may make love to me during the whole of Lent; and with this, believe me

"Your own doating sister,

"AUGUSTA BRAMLEIGH."

"After much thought and many misgivings I deemed it advisable to offer to take one of the girls with me, leaving it open, to mark my indifference, as to which it should be. They both, however, refused, and, to my intense relief, declared that they did not care to come abroad; Augustus also protesting that it was a plan he could not approve of. The diplomatist alone opined that the project had anything to recommend it; but as his authority, like my own, in the family, carries little weight, we were happily outvoted. I have, therefore, the supreme satisfaction—and is it not such?—of knowing that I have done the right thing, and it has cost me nothing; like those excellent people who throw very devout looks towards heaven, without the remotest desire to be there."

### CHAPTER III.

"THE EVENING AFTER A HARD RUN."

It was between eight and nine o'clock of a wintry evening near Christmas; a cold drizzle of rain was falling, which on the mountains might have been snow, as Mr. Drayton, the butler at the great house, as Castello was called in the village, stood austere with his back to the fire in the dining-room, and, as he surveyed the table, wondered within himself what could possibly have detained the young gentlemen so

late. The hounds had met that day about eight miles off, and Colonel Bramleigh had actually put off dinner half an hour for them, but to no avail; and now Mr. Drayton, whose whole personal arrangements for the evening had been so thoughtlessly interfered with, stood there musing over the wayward nature of youth, and inwardly longing for the time when, retiring from active service, he should enjoy the ease and indulgence his long life of fatigue and hardship had earned.

"They're coming now, Mr. Drayton," said a livery-servant, entering hastily. "George saw the light of their cigars as they came up the avenue."

"Bring in the soup, then, at once, and send George here with another log for the fire. There'll be no dressing for dinner to-day, I'll be bound;" and imparting a sort of sarcastic bitterness to his speech, he filled himself a glass of sherry at the side board and tossed it off—only just in time, for the door opened, and a very noisy, merry party of four entered the room, and made for the fire.

"As soon as you like, Drayton," said Augustus, the eldest Bramleigh, a tall, good-looking, but somewhat stern-featured man of about eight-and-twenty. The second, Temple Bramleigh, was middle-sized, with a handsome but somewhat over-delicate-looking face, to which a simpering affectation of imperturbable self-conceit gave a sort of puppyism; while the youngest, Jack, was a bronzed, bright-eyed, fine-looking fellow, manly, energetic, and determined, but with a sweetness, when he smiled and showed his good teeth, that implied a soft and very impressionable nature. They were all in scarlet coats, and presented a group strikingly good-looking and manly. The fourth of the party was, however, so eminently handsome, and so superior in expression as well as lineament, that the others almost seemed vulgar beside him. He was in black coat and cords, a checked cravat seeming to indicate that he was verging, so far as he might, on the limits of hunting costume; for George L'Estrange was in orders, and the curate of the parish in which Castello stood. It is not necessary to detain the reader by any lengthened narrative of the handsome young parson. Enough to say, that it was not all from choice he had entered the Church—narrow fortune, and the hope of a small family living, deciding him to adopt a career which, to one who had a passion for field-sports, seemed the very last to gratify his tastes. As a horseman he was confessedly the first in the country round; although



his one horse—he was unable to keep a second—condemned him to rare appearance at the meets. The sight of the parson and his black mare, Nora Creina, in the field, were treated with a cheer, for he was a universal favorite, and if a general suffrage could have conferred the episcopate, George would have had his miter many a day ago.

So sure a seat and so perfect a hand needed never to have wanted a mount. There was not a man with a stable who would not have been well pleased to see his horse ridden by such a rider; but L'Estrange declined all such offers—a sensitive fear of being called a hunting parson deterred him; indeed it was easy to see, by the rarity with which he permitted himself the loved indulgence, what a struggle he maintained between will and temptation, and how keenly he felt the sacrifice he imposed upon himself.

Such, in brief, was the party who were now seated at table, well pleased to find themselves in presence of an admirable dinner, in a room replete with every comfort. The day's run, of course, formed the one topic of their talk, and a great deal of merriment went on about the sailor-like performances of Jack, who had been thrown twice, but on the whole acquitted himself creditably, and had taken one high bank so splendidly as to win a cheer from all who saw him.

"I wish you had not asked that poor Frenchman to follow you, Jack," said Augustus; "he was really riding very nicely till he came to that unlucky fence."

"I only cried out, 'Venez done, monsieur,' and when I turned my head, after clearing the bank, I saw his horse with his legs in the air and monsieur underneath."

"When I picked him up," broke in L'Estrange, "he said, 'Merci mille fois, monsieur,' and then fainted off, the poor fellow's face actually wearing the smile of courtesy he had got up to thank me."

"Why will Frenchmen try things that are quite out of their beat?" said Jack.

"That's a most absurd prejudice of yours, Master Jack," cried the diplomatist. "Frenchmen ride admirably nowadays. I've seen a steeple-chase in Normandy, over as stiff a course, and as well ridden, as ever Leicestershire witnessed."

"Yes, yes; I've heard all that," said the sailor, "just as I've heard that their iron fleet is as good, if not better than, our own."

"I think our own newspapers rather hint that," said L'Estrange.

"They do more," said Temple; "they prove it. They show a numerical superi-

ority in ships, and they give an account of guns and weight of metal dead against us."

"I'll not say anything of the French; but this much I will say," cried the sailor; "the question will have to be settled one of these days, and I am right glad to think that it cannot be done by writers in newspapers."

"May I come in?" cried a soft voice; and a very pretty head, with long, fair ringlets, appeared at the door.

"Yes. Come by all means," said Jack; "perhaps we shall be able, by your help, to talk of something besides fighting Frenchmen."

While he spoke, L'Estrange had risen, and approached to shake hands with her.

"Sit down with us, Nelly," said Augustus, "or George will get no dinner."

"Give me a chair, Drayton," said she; and, turning to her brother, added, "I only came in to ask some tidings about an unlucky foreigner; the servants have it he was cruelly hurt, some think hopelessly."

"There's the culprit who did the mischief," said Temple, pointing to Jack; "let him recount his feat."

"I'm not to blame in the least, Nelly. I took a smashing high bank, and the little Frenchman tried to follow me and came to grief."

"Ay, but you challenged him to come on," said Temple. "Now, Master Jack, people don't do that sort of thing in the hunting-field."

"I said, 'Come along, monsieur,' to give him pluck. I never thought for a moment he was to suffer for it."

"But is he seriously hurt?" asked she.

"I think not," said L'Estrange; "he seemed to me more stunned than actually injured. Fortunately for him they had not far to take him, for the disaster occurred quite close to Duckett's Wood, where he is stopping."

"Is he at Longworth's?" asked Augustus.

"Yes. Longworth met him up the Nile, and they traveled together for some months, and, when they parted, it was agreed they were to meet here at Christmas; and though Longworth had written to apprise his people they were coming, he has not appeared himself, and the Frenchman is waiting patiently for his host's arrival."

"And laming his best horse in the meanwhile. That dark bay will never do another day with hounds," said Temple.

"She was shaky before, but she is certainly not the better of this day's work. I'd

blister her, and turn her out for a full year," said Augustus.

"I suppose that's another of those things in which the French are our superiors," muttered Jack; "but I suspect I'd think twice about it before I'd install myself in a man's house, and ride his horses in his absence."

"It was the host's duty to be there to receive him," said Temple, who was always on the watch to make the sailor feel how little he knew of society and its ways.

"I hope when you've finished your wine," said Ellen, "you'll not steal off to bed, as you did the other night, without ever appearing in the drawing-room."

"L'Estrange shall go, at all events," cried Augustus. "The Church shall represent the laity."

"I'm not in trim to enter a drawing-room, Miss Bramleigh," said the curate, blushing. "I wouldn't dare to present myself in such a costume."

"I declare," said Jack, "I think it becomes you better than your Sunday rig; don't you, Nelly?"

"Papa will be greatly disappointed, Mr. L'Estrange, if he should not see you," said she, rising to leave the room; "he wants to hear all about your day's sport, and especially about that poor Frenchman. Do you know his name?"

"Yes, here's his card — Anatole de Pracontal."

"A good name," said Temple, "but the fellow himself looks a snob."

"I call that very hard," said Jack, "to say what any fellow looks like when he is covered with slush and dirt, his hat smashed, and his mouth full of mud."

"Don't forget that we expect to see you," said Ellen, with a nod and a smile to the curate, and left the room.

"And who or what is Mr. Longworth?" said Temple.

"I never met him. All I know is, that he owns that very ugly red-brick house, with the three gables in front, on the hillside as you go towards Newry," said Augustus.

"I think I can tell you something about him," said the parson; "his father was my grandfather's agent. I believe he began as his steward, when we had property in this county; he must have been a shrewd sort of man, for he raised himself from a very humble origin to become a small estated proprietor and justice of the peace; and when he died, about four years ago, he left Philip Longworth something like a thousand a year in landed property, and some ready money besides."

"And this Longworth, as you call him — what is he like?"

"A good sort of fellow, who would be better if he was not possessed by a craving ambition to know fine people, and move in their society. Not being able to attain the place he aspires to in his own county, he has gone abroad, and affects to have a horror of English life and ways, the real grievance being his own personal inability to meet acceptance in a certain set. This is what I hear of him; my own knowledge is very slight. I have ever found him well-mannered and polite, and, except a slight sign of condescension, I should say pleasant."

"I take it," said the sailor, "he must be an arant snob."

"Not necessarily, Jack," said Temple. "There is nothing ignoble in a man's desire to live with the best people, if he do nothing mean to reach that goal."

"Whom do you call the best people, Temple?" asked the other.

"By the best people, I mean the first in rank and station. I am not speaking of their moral excellence, but of their social superiority, and of that pre-eminence which comes of an indisputable position, high name, fortune, and the world's regards. These I call the best people to live with."

"And I do not," said Jack, rising, and throwing his napkin on the table, "not at least for men like myself. I want to associate with my equals. I want to mix with men who cannot overbear me by any accident of their wealth or title."

"Jack should never have gone into the navy, that's clear," said Augustus, laughing; "but let us draw round the fire and have a cigar."

"You'll have to pay your visit to the drawing-room, L'Estrange," said Jack, "before we begin to smoke, for the governor hates tobacco, and detects it in an instant."

"I declare," said the parson, as he looked at his splashed cords and dirty boots, "I have no courage to present myself in such a trim as this."

"Report yourself and come back at once," cried Jack.

"I'd say, don't go in at all," said Temple.

"That's what I should do, certainly," said Augustus. "Sit down here. What are you drinking? This is Pomare, and better than claret of a cold evening."

And the curate yielded to the soft persuasion, and seated around the fire, the young men talked horses, dogs, and field-



sports, till the butler came to say that tea was served in the drawing-room, when, rising, they declared themselves too tired to stay up longer, and wishing each other good night they sauntered up to their rooms to bed.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### ON THE CROQUET LAWN.

THE day after a hard run, like the day after a battle, is often spent in endeavors to repair the disasters of the struggle. So was it here. The young men passed the morning in the stables, or going back and forward with bandages and liniments. There was a tendon to be cared for, a sore back to be attended to. Benbo, too, wouldn't feed; the groom said he had got a surfeit; which malady, in stable *parlance*, applies to excess of work, as well as excess of diet.

Augustus Bramleigh was, as becomes an eldest son, grandly imperious and dictatorial, and looked at his poor discomfited beast, as he stood with hanging head and heaving flanks, as though to say it was a disgraceful thing for an animal that had the honor to carry him to look so craven and disheartened. Temple, with the instincts of his craft and calling, cared little for the past, and took but small interest in the horse that was not likely to be soon of use to him; while Jack, with all a sailor's energy, worked away manfully, and assisted the grooms in every way he could. It was at the end of a very active morning that Jack was returning to the house, when he saw L'Estrange's pony-chaise at the door, with black Nora in the shafts, as fresh and hearty to all seeming as though she had not carried her heavy owner through one of the stiffest runs of the season only the day before.

"Is your master here, Bill?" asked Jack of the small urchin, who barely reached the bar of the bit.

"No, sir; it's Miss Julia has druv over. Master's fishing this morning."

Now Julia L'Estrange was a very pretty girl, and with a captivation of manner which to the young sailor was irresistible. She had been brought up in France, and imbibed that peculiar quiet coquetry which, in its quaint demureness, suggests just enough doubt of its sincerity to be provocative. She was dark enough to be a Spaniard from the south of Spain, and her long black eyelashes were darker even than her eyes. In her walk and her gesture

there was that also which reminded one of Spain: the same blended litheness and dignity; and there was a firmness in her tread which took nothing from its elasticity.

When Jack heard that she was in the house, instead of hurrying in to meet her, he sat moodily down on the steps of the door and lighted his cigar. "What's the use?" muttered he, and the same depressing sentence recurred to him again and again. They are very dark moments in life in which we have to confess to ourselves that, fight how we may, fate must beat us; that the very utmost we can do is to maintain a fierce struggle with destiny, but that in the end we must succumb. The more frequently poor Jack saw her, the more hopelessly he felt his lot. What was he—what could he ever be—to aspire to such a girl as Julia? Was not the very presumption a thing to laugh at? He thought of how his elder brother would entertain such a notion; the cold solemnity with which he would ridicule his pretensions; and then Temple would treat him to some profound reflections on the misery of poor marriages; while Marion would chime in with some cutting reproaches on the selfishness with which, to gratify a caprice—she would call it a caprice—he ignored the just pretensions of his family, and the imperative necessity that pressed them to secure their position in the world by great alliances. This was Marion's code: it took three generations to make a family; the first must be wealthy; the second, by the united force of money and ability, secure a certain station of power and social influence; the third must fortify these by marriages—marriages of distinction; after which mere time would do the rest.

She had hoped much from her father's second marriage, and was grievously disappointed on finding how her stepmother's family affected displeasure at the match as a reason for a coldness towards them; while Lady Augusta herself as openly showed that she had stooped to the union merely to secure herself against the accidents of life, and raise her above the misery of living on a very small income.

Jack was thinking moodily over all these things as he sat there, and with such depression of spirit that he half resolved, instead of staying out his full leave, to return to his ship at Portsmouth, and so forget shore life and all its fascinations. He heard the sound of a piano, and shortly after the rich delicious tones of Julia's voice. It was that mellow quality of

sound that musicians call mezzo soprano, whose gift it is to steal softly over the senses and steep them in a sweet rapture of peaceful delight. As the strains floated out, he felt as though the measure of incantation was running over for him, and he arose with a bound and hurried off into the wood. "I'll start to-morrow. I'll not let this folly master me," muttered he. "A fellow who can't stand up against his own fancies is not worth his salt. I'll go on board again and think of my duty," and he tried to assure himself that of all living men a sailor had least excuse for such weaknesses as these.

He had not much sympathy with the family ambitions. He thought that as they had wealth enough to live well and handsomely, a good station in the world, and not any one detracting element from their good luck, either as regarded character or health, it was downright ingratitude to go in search of disappointments and defeats. It was, to his thinking, like a ship with plenty of sea-room rushing madly on to her ruin amongst the breakers. "I think Nelly is of my own mind," said he, "but who can say how long she will continue to be so? these stupid notions of being great folk will get hold of her at last. The high-minded Marion and that great genius, Temple, are certain to prevail in the end, and I shall always be a splendid example to point at and show the melancholy consequences of degenerate tastes and ignoble ambitions."

The sharp trot of a horse on the gravel road beside him startled him in his musings, and the pony-carriage whisked rapidly by, Augustus driving and Julia at his side. She was laughing. Her merry laugh rang out above the brisk jingle of horse and harness, and to the poor sailor it sounded like the knell of all his hopes. "What a confounded fool I was not to remember I had an elder brother!" said he, bitterly. That he added something inaudible about the perfidious nature of girls is possibly true, but, not being in evidence, it is not necessary to record it.

Let us turn from the disconsolate youth to what is *certainly* a prettier picture—the croquet lawn behind the house, where the two sisters, with the accomplished Temple, were engaged at a game.

"I hope, girls," said he, in one of his very finest drawls, "the future head of house and hopes is not going to make a precious fool of himself."

"You mean with the curate's sister," said Marion, with a saucy toss of her head. "I scarcely think he could be so absurd."

"I can't see the absurdity," broke in Ellen. "I think a duke might make her a duchess, and no great condescension in the act."

"Quite true, Nelly," said Temple; "that's exactly what a duke might do; but Mr. Bramleigh cannot. When you are at the top of the ladder, there's nothing left for you but to come down again; but the man at the bottom has to try to go up."

"But why must there be a ladder at all, Temple?" asked she, eagerly.

"Isn't that speech Nelly all over?" cried Marion, haughtily.

"I hope it is," said Ellen, "if it serves to convey what I faithfully believe—that we are great fools in not enjoying a very pleasant lot in life instead of addressing ourselves to ambitions far and away beyond us."

"And which be they?" asked Temple, crossing his arms over his mallet, and standing like a soldier on guard.

"To be high and titled, or, if not titled, to be accepted among that class, and treated as their equals in rank and condition."

"And why not, Nelly? What is this wonderful ten thousand that we all worship? Whence is it recruited, and how? These double wallflowers are not of Nature's making; they all come of culture, of fine mould, careful watering, and good gardening. They were single-petaled once on a time, like ourselves. Mind, it is no radical says this, girls—*moi qui vous parle* am no revolutionist, no leveler! I like these grand conditions, because they give existence its best stimulus, its noblest aspirations. The higher one goes in life—as on a mountain—the more pure the air, and the wider the view."

"And do you mean to tell me that Augustus would consult his happiness better in marrying some fine lady, like our grand stepmamma, for instance, than a charming girl like Julia?" said Ellen.

"If Augustus' notions of happiness were to be measured by mine, I should say, yes, unquestionably yes. Love is a very fleeting sentiment. The cost of the article, too, suggests most uncomfortable reflections. All the more as the memory comes when the acquisition itself is beginning to lose value. My former chief at Munich—the cleverest man of the world I ever met—used to say, as an investment, a pretty wife was a mistake. 'If,' said he, 'you laid out your money on a picture, your venture might turn out a bargain; if you bought a colt, your two-year-old might win a Derby; but your beauty of to-day will be



barely good-looking in five years, and will be a positive fright in fifteen."

"Your accomplished friend was an odious beast!" said Nelly. "What was his name, Temple?"

"Lord Culduff, one of the first diplomatists in Europe."

"Culduff? How strange! Papa's agent, Mr. Harding, mentioned the name at breakfast. He said there was a nobleman come over from Germany to see his estates in the north of Down, where they had some hopes of having discovered coal."

"Is it possible Lord Culduff could be in our neighborhood? The governor must ask him here at once," said Temple, with an animation of manner most unusual with him. "There must be no time lost about this. Finish your game without me, girls, for this matter is imminent;" and so saying, he resigned his mallet and hastened away to the house.

"I never saw Temple so eager about anything before," said Nelly. "It's quite charming to see how the mere mention of a grand name can call forth all his energy."

"Temple knows the world very well; and he knows how the whole game of life is conducted by a very few players, and that every one who desires to push his way must secure the intimacy, if he can, or at least the acquaintance, of these." And Marion delivered this speech with a most oracular and pretentious tone.

"Yes," said Nelly, with a droll sparkle in her eye; "he declared that profound statement last evening in the very same words. Who shall say it is not an immense advantage to have a brother so full of sage maxims, while his sisters are seen to catch up his words of wisdom, and actually believe them to be their own?"

"Temple may not be a Talleyrand; but he is certainly as brilliant as the charming carate," said Marion, tartly.

"Oh, poor George!" cried Nelly; and her cheek flushed while she tried to seem indifferent. "Nobody ever called him a genius. When one says he is very good-looking and very good-humored, *tout est dit!*"

"He is very much out of place as a parson."

"Granted. I suspect he thinks so himself."

"Men usually feel that they cannot take orders without some stronger impulse than a mere desire to gain a livelihood."

"I have never talked to him on the matter; but perhaps he had no great choice of a career."

"He might have gone into the army, I suppose? He'd have found scores of creatures there with about his own measure of intelligence."

"I fancied you like George, Marion," said the other. And there was something half tender, half reproachful, in her tone.

"I liked him so far, that it was a boon to find anything so like a gentleman in this wild savagery; but if you mean that I would have endured him in town, or would have noticed him in society, you are strangely mistaken."

"Poor George!" and there was something comic in her glance as she sighed these words out.

"There; you have won," said Marion, throwing down her mallet. "I must go and hear what Temple is going to do. It would be a great blessing to see a man of the world and a man of mark in this dreary spot, and I hope papa will not lose the present opportunity to secure him."

"Are you alone, Nelly?" said her eldest brother, some time after, as he came up, and found her sitting, lost in thought, under a tree.

"Yes. Marion got tired and went in, and Temple went to ask papa about inviting some high and mighty personage who chances to be in our neighborhood."

"Who is he?"

"Lord Culduff, he called him."

"Oh! a tremendous swell: an ambassador somewhere. What brings him down here?"

"I forget. Yes! it was something about a mine; he has found tin, or copper, or coal, I don't remember which, on some property of his here. By the way, Augustus, do you really think George L'Estrange a fool?"

"Think him a fool?"

"I mean," said she, blushing deeply, "Marion holds his intelligence so cheaply that she is quite shocked at his presuming to be in orders."

"Well, I don't think him exactly what Temple calls an *esprit fort*, but he is a very nice fellow, very companionable, and a thorough gentleman in all respects."

"How well you have said it, dear Augustus," said she, with a face beaming with delight. "Where are you off to? Where are you going?"

"I am going to see the yearlings, in the paddock below the river."

"May I go with you, Gussy?" said she, drawing her arm within his. "I do like a brisk walk with you; and you always go like one with a purpose."

## CHAPTER V.

## CONFIDENTIAL TALK.

TEMPLE found his father in his study, deeply engaged with a mass of papers and letters, and by the worn and fatigued expression of his face showing that he had passed a day of hard work.

"I hope I do not disturb you," said Temple, as he leaned on the table at which the other was seated.

"Throw that cigar away and I'll tell you," said the old man, with a faint smile. "I never can conquer my aversion to tobacco. What do you want to say? Is it anything we cannot talk over at dinner or after dinner?—for this post leaves at such an inconvenient hour, it gives me scant time to write."

"I beg a thousand pardons, sir; but I have just heard that a very distinguished member of our corps—I mean the diplomatic corps—is down in this neighborhood, and I want your permission to ask him over here."

"Who is he?"

"Lord Culduff."

"What! that old scamp who ran away with Lady Clifford? I thought he couldn't come to England?"

"Why, sir, he is one of the first men we have. It was he that negotiated the Erzeroum treaty, and I heard Sir Stamford Bolter say he was the only man in England who understood the Sound dues."

"He ran off with another man's wife, and I don't like that."

"Well, sir, as he didn't marry her afterwards, it was clear it was only a passing indiscretion."

"Oh, indeed! that view of it never occurred to me. I suppose, then, it is in this light the corps regards it?"

"I trust so, sir. Where there is no complication, there is no loss of character; and as Lord Culduff is received everywhere, and courted in the very best circles, I think it would be somewhat strange if we were to set up to teach the world how it ought to treat him."

"I have no such pretension. I simply claim the right to choose the people I invite to my house."

"He may be my chief to-morrow or next day," said Temple.

"So much the worse for you."

"Certainly not, sir, if we seize the opportunity to show him some attentions. He is a most high-bred gentleman, and from his abilities, his rank, and his connections, sure to be at the head of the line;

and I confess I'd be very much ashamed if he were to hear, as he is sure to hear, that I was in his vicinity without my ever having gone to wait on him."

"Go by all means, then. Wait upon him at once, Temple; but I tell you frankly, I don't fancy presenting such a man to your sisters."

"Why, sir, there is not a more unobjectionable man in all England; his manners are the very type of respectful deference towards ladies. He belongs to that old school which professes to be shocked with modern levity, while his whole conversation is a sort of quiet homage."

"Well, well; how long would he stay—a week?"

"A couple of days, perhaps, if he came at all. Indeed, I greatly doubt that he would come. They say he is here about some coal-mine they have discovered on his property."

"What! has he found coal?" cried the old man, eagerly.

"So it is said, sir; or, at least, he hopes so."

"It's only lignite. I'm certain it's only lignite. I have been deceived myself twice or thrice, and I don't believe coal—real coal—exists in this part of Ireland."

"Of that I can tell you nothing; he, however, will only be too glad to talk the matter over with you."

"Yes; it is an interesting topic—very interesting. Snell says that the great carboniferous strata are all in Ireland, but that they lie deep and demand vast capital to work them. He predicts a great manufacturing prosperity to the country when Manchester and Birmingham will have sunk into ruins. He opines that this lignite is a mere indication of the immense vein of true carbon beneath. But what should this old debauchee know of a great industrial theme? His whole anxiety will be to turn it to some immediate profit. He'll be looking for a loan, you'll see. Mark my words, Temple, he'll want an advance on his colliery." And he gave one of those rich chuckling laughs which are as peculiar to the moneyed classes as ever a simpering smile was to enameled beauty.

"I don't say," added he, after a moment, "that the scheme may not be a good one—an excellent one. Sampson says that all manufactures will be transferred to Ireland yet—that this will be in some future time the great seat of national industry and national wealth. Let your grand friend come, then, by all means; there is at least one topic we can talk over together."

Too happy to risk the success he had







On the Croquet Lawn.

[THE FRAMLEIGHS.—FRONTISPIECE. p. 269.]



obtained by any further discussion, Temple hurried away to give orders for the great man's reception. There was a small suite of rooms, which had been furnished with unusual care and elegance when it was believed that Lady Augusta would have honored Castello with her presence. Indeed, she had so far favored the belief as to design some of the decorations herself, and had photographs taken of the rooms and the furniture, as well as of the views which presented themselves from the windows.

Though these rooms were on the second floor, they were accessible from without by a carriage-drive, which wound gradually up among the terraced gardens to a sort of plateau, where a marble fountain stood, with a group of Naiads in the midst, over whom a perpetual spray fell like a veil; the whole surrounded with flowery shrubs and rare plants, sheltered from east and north by a straggling belt of trees, and actually imparting to the favored spot the character of a southern climate and country.

As the gardener was careful to replace the exhausted or faded flowers by others in full bloom, and as on every available day he displayed here the richest treasures of his conservatory, there was something singularly beautiful in the contrast of this foreground, glowing in tropical luxuriance, with the massive forest-trees down below, and farther in the distance the stern and rugged lines of the Mourne Mountains, as they frowned on the sea.

Within doors, everything that wealth could contribute to comfort was present, and though there was magnificence in the costly silk of the hangings and the velvety richness of the carpets, the prevailing impression was that it was enjoyment, not splendor, was sought for. There were few pictures—a Ruysdael over the fireplace in the drawing-room, and two or three Onyxs—placid scenes of low-lying landscapes, bathed in soft sunsets. The doors were all hidden by heavy curtains, and a sense of voluptuous snugness seemed the spirit of the place.

The keys of this precious suite were in Marion's keeping, and as she walked through the rooms with Temple, and expatiated on the reckless expenditure bestowed on them, she owned that for any less distinguished guest than the great diplomatist she would never have consented to their being opened. Temple, however, was loud in his praises, went over his high connections and titled relatives, his great services, and the immense reputation they had given him, and, last of all, he spoke of his personal qualities, the charm of his

manner, and the captivation of his address, so that, finally, she became as eager as himself to see this great and gifted man beneath their roof.

During the evening they talked much together of what they should do to entertain their illustrious guest. There was, so to say, no neighborhood, nor any possibility of having people to meet him, and they must, consequently, look to their home resources to amuse him.

"I hope Augustus will be properly attentive," said Temple.

"I'm certain he will. I'm more afraid of Nelly, if there be anything strange or peculiar in Lord Cuduff's manner. She never puts any curb on her enjoyment of an oddity, and you'll certainly have to caution her that her humoristic talents must be kept in abeyance just now."

"I can trust Lord Cuduff's manner to repress any tendency of this kind. Rely upon it, his courtly urbanity and high tone will protect him from all indiscretions; and Nelly—I'm sorry to say it, Marion—but Nelly is vulgar."

"She is certainly too familiar on fresh acquaintance. I have told her more than once that you do not always please people by showing you are on good terms with yourself. It is a great misfortune to her that she never was 'out' before she came here. One season in town would have done more for her than all our precepts."

"Particularly as she heeds them so little," said Temple, snappishly.

"Cannot we manage to have some people to meet Lord Cuduff at dinner? Who are the Gages who left their cards?"

"They sent them—not left them. Montifort Gage is the master of the hounds, and, I believe, a person of some consideration here. He does not, however, appear to invite much intimacy. His note acknowledging our subscription—it was a hundred pounds, too—was of the coldest, and we exchanged a very few formal words at the meet yesterday."

"Are we going to repeat the Herefordshire experiment here, then?" And she asked the question, with a sparkling eye and a flushed cheek, as though the feeling it excited was not easily to be repressed.

"There's a Sir Roger Kennedy, too, has called."

"Yes, and Harding says he is married; but his wife's name is not on the card."

"—take it, they know very little of the habits of the world. Let us remember, Marion, where we are. Iceland is next door but one. I thought Harding would have looked to all this; he ought to have

taken care that the county was properly attentive. An agent never wishes to see his chief reside on the property. It is like in my own career: one is only *charge-d'affaires* when the head of the legation is on leave."

"And this was the county we were told was ready to receive us with a sort of frantic enthusiasm. I wonder, Temple, do people ever tell the truth?"

"Yes, when they want you not to believe them. You see, Marion, we blundered here pretty much as we blundered in England. You'll not get the governor to believe it, nor perhaps even Augustus, but there is a diplomacy of every-day life, and people who fancy they can dispense with it invariably come to grief. Now, I always told them—indeed, I grew tired telling them—every mile that separates you from a capital diminishes the power of your money. In the city you reign supreme, but to be a county magistrate you need scores of things beside a long credit at your banker's."

A very impatient toss of the head showed that Marion herself was not fully a convert to these sage opinions, and it was with a half-rude abruptness that she broke in by asking how he intended to convey his invitation to Lord Culduff.

"There's the difficulty," said he, gravely. "He is going about from one place to another. Harding says he was at Rathbeggan on Sunday last, and was going on to Dinasker next day. I have been looking over the map, but I see no roads to these places. I think our best plan is to dispatch Lacy with a letter. Lacy is the smartest fellow we have, and I think will be sure to find him. But the letter, too, is a puzzle."

"Why should it be? It will be, I suppose, a mere formal invitation?"

"No, no. It would never do to say, Colonel Bramleigh presents his compliments, and requests—and so on. The thing must have another tone. It ought to have a certain turn of expression."

"I am not aware of what amount of acquaintanceship exists between you and Lord Culduff," said she, stiffly.

"The very least in life. I suspect if we met in a club we should pass without speaking. I arrived at his Legation on the morning he was starting on leave. I remember he asked me to breakfast, but I declined, as I had been three days and nights on the road, and wanted to get to bed. I never met him since. What makes you look so serious, Marion?"

"I'm thinking what we shall do with

him if he comes. Does he shoot, or hunt, or fish?—can you give him any out-o'-door occupation?"

"I'm quite abroad as to all his tastes and habits. I only know so much of him as pertains to his character in the 'line,' but I'll go and write my note. I'll come back and show you what I have said," added he, as he gained the door.

When Marion was left alone to reflect over her brother's words, she was not altogether pleased. She was no convert to his opinions as to the necessity of any peculiar stratagem in the campaign of life. She had seen the house in town crowded with very great and distinguished company; she had observed how wealth asserted itself in society, and she could not perceive that in their acceptance by the world there was any, the slightest, deficiency of deference and respect. If they had failed in their county experiment in England, it was, she thought, because her father rashly took up an extreme position in politics—a mistake which Augustus indeed saw and protested against, but which some rash advisers were able to over-persuade the Colonel into adopting.

Lady Augusta, too, was an evidence that the better classes did not decline this alliance, and on the whole she felt that Temple's reasonings were the offshoots of his peculiar set; that small priesthood of society who hold themselves so essentially above the great body of mankind.

"Not that we must make any more mistakes, however," thought she. "Not that we can afford another defeat;" and as she arrived at this safe judgment, Temple entered, with some sheets of notepaper in his hand.

"I'm not quite satisfied with any of these, Marion; I suspect I must just content myself with a mere formal, 'requests the company.'"

"Let me hear what you have said."

"Here's the first," said he reading.

"My dear lord—The lucky accident of your lordship's presence in this neighborhood—which I have only accidentally learned."

"O dear, no! that's a chapter of 'accidents.'"

"Well; listen to this one: 'If I can trust to a rumor that has just reached us here, but which, it is possible, our hopes may have given a credence to, that stern fact will subsequently deny, or reject, or contradict.' I'm not fully sure which verb to take."

"Much worse than the other," said Marion.



"It's all the confounded language; I could turn it in French to perfection."

"But I fancied your whole life was passed in this sort of phrase-fashioning, Temple?" said she, half smiling.

"Nothing of the kind. We keep the vernacular only for post-paper, and it always begins: 'My lord—Since by my despatch No. 7,028, in which I reported to your lordship the details of an interview accorded me by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of this Government;' and so on. Now all this, to the polite intercourse of society, is pretty much what singlestick is to the rapier. I wish you'd do this for me, Marion. After so many banks, one always ends by a tumble."

"I declare I see no occasion for smartness or epigram. I'd simply say, 'I have only just heard that you are in our neighborhood, and I beg to convey my father's hope and request that you will not leave it without giving us the honor of your company here.' You can throw in as many of your personal sentiments as may serve, like wool in a packing-case, to keep the whole tight and compact; but I think something like that would suffice."

"Perhaps so," said he, musingly, as he once more returned to his room. When he reappeared, after some minutes, it was with the air and look of a man who had just thrown off some weighty burden. "Thank heaven, it's done and despatched," said he. "I have been looking over the F. O. Guide, to see whether I addressed him aright. I fancied he was a Privy Councillor, and I find he is not; he is a K. C. B., however, and a Guelph, with leave to wear the star."

"Very gratifying to us—I mean if he should come here," said she, with a mocking smile.

"Don't pretend you do not value all these things fully as much as myself, Marion. You know well what the world thinks of them. These distinctions were no more made by us than the money of the realm; but we use one of them like the other, well aware that it represents a certain value, and is never disputed."

"How old is your friend?"

"Well, he is certainly not young. Here's what F. O. contributes to his biography: 'Entered the army as cornet in the 2nd Life Guards, 1816.' A precious long time ago that. 'First groom of the bedchamber—promoted—placed on half-pay—entered diplomatic service—in—'19; special commission to Hanover—made K. C. B.—contested Essex, and returned on a petition—went back to diplomacy,

and named special envoy to Teheran.' Ah! now we are coming to his real career."

"Oh, dear! I'd rather hear about him somewhat earlier," said she, taking the book out of his hand, and throwing it on the table. "It is a great penalty to pay for greatness to be gibbeted in this fashion. Don't you think so, Temple?"

"I wish I could see myself gibbeted, as you call it."

"If the will makes the way, we ought to be very great people," said she, with a smile, half derisive, half real. "Jack, perhaps not; nor Ellen. They have booked themselves in second-class carriages."

"I'll go and look up Harding; he is a secret sort of a fellow. I believe all agents assume that manner to every one but the head of the house and the heir. But perhaps I could manage to find out why these people have not called upon us; there must be something in it."

"I protest I think we ought to feel grateful to them; an exchange of hospitalities with them would be awful."

"Very likely; but I think we ought to have had the choice, and this they have not given us."

"And even for that I am grateful," said she, as with a haughty look she rose and left the room.

## CHAPTER VI.

### UP IN THE MOUNTAINS.

ABOUT eighteen miles from Bishop's Folly, and in the very midst of the Mourne Mountains, a low spur of land projects into the sea by a thin narrow promontory—so narrow, indeed, that in days of heavy sea and strong wind, the waves have been seen to meet across it. Some benevolent individual had once conceived the idea of planting a small lighthouse here, as a boon to the fishermen who frequent the coast. The lighthouse was built, but never occupied, and after standing some years in a state of half-ruin, was turned into a sort of humble inn or shebeen, most probably a mere pretext to cover its real employment as a depôt for smuggled goods; for in the days of high duties French silks and brandies found many channels into Ireland beside the road that lay through her Majesty's customs. Mr., or, as he was more generally called, Tim Mackessy, the proprietor, was a well-known man in those parts. He followed what in Ireland for some years back has been as much a profes-

sion as law or physic, and occasionally a more lucrative line than either—patriotism. He was one of those ready, voluble, self-asserting fellows, who abound in Ireland, but whose favor is not the less with their countrymen from the fact of their frequency. He had, he said, a father, who suffered for his country in ninety-eight; and he had himself maintained the family traditions by being twice imprisoned in Carrickfergus Gaol, and narrowly escaping transportation for life. On the credit of this martyrdom, and the fact that Mr. O'Connell once called him "honest Tim Mackessy," he had lived in honor and repute amongst such of his countrymen as "feel the yoke and abhor the rule of the Saxon."

For the present, we are, however, less occupied by Tim and his political opinions than by two guests, who had arrived a couple of days before, and were now seated at breakfast in that modest apartment called the best parlor. Two men less like in appearance might not readily be found. One, thin, fresh-looking, with handsome but haughty features, slightly stooped, but to all seeming as much from habit as from any debility, was Lord Culduff; his age might be computed by some reference to the list of his services, but would have been a puzzling calculation from a mere inspection of himself. In figure and build, he might be anything from five-and-thirty to two or three-and-forty; in face, at a close inspection, he might have been high up in the sixties.

His companion was a middle-sized, middle-aged man, with a mass of bushy curly black hair, a round bullet head, wide-set eyes, and a short nose, of the leonine pattern; his mouth, large and thick-lipped, had all that mobility that denotes talker and eater: for Mr. Cutbill, civil engineer and architect, was both garrulous and gourmand, and lived in the happy enjoyment of being thought excellent company, and a first-rate judge of a dinner. He was musical too; he played the violoncello with some skill, and was an associate of various philharmonics, who performed fantasias and fugues to dreary old ladies and snuffy old bachelors, who found the amusement an economy that exacted nothing more costly than a little patience. Amongst these Tom Cutbill was a man of wit and a man of the world. His career brought him from time to time into contact with persons of high station and rank, and these he ventilated amongst his set in the most easy manner, familiarly talking of Beaufort, and Argyle, and Cleveland, as though they were household words.

It was reported that he had some cleverness as an actor; and he might have had, for the man treated life as a drama, and was eternally representing something—some imaginary character—till any little fragment of reality in him had been entirely rubbed out by the process, and he remained the mere personation of whatever the society he chanced to be in wanted or demanded of him.

He had been recommended to Lord Culduff's notice by his lordship's London agent, who had said, "He knows the scientific part of his business as well as the great swells of his profession, and he knows the world a precious sight better than they do. *They* could tell you if you had coal, but he will do that and more; *he* will tell you what to do with it." It was on the advice thus given Lord Culduff had secured his services, and taken him over to Ireland. It was a bitter pill to swallow for this old broken-down man of fashion, self-indulgent, fastidious, and refined, to travel in such company; but his affairs were in a sad state, from years of extravagance and high living, and it was only by the supposed discovery of these mines on this unprofitable part of his estate that his creditors consented to defer that settlement which might sweep away almost all that remained to him. Cutbill was told, too—"His lordship is rather hard up just now, and cannot be liberal as he could wish; but he is a charming person to know, and will treat you like a brother." The one chink in this shrewd fellow's armor was his snobbery. It was told of him once, in a very dangerous illness, when all means of inducing perspiration had failed, that some one said—"Try him with a lord, it never failed with Tom yet." If an untitled squire had proposed to take Mr. Cutbill over special to Ireland for a hundred-pound note and his expenses, he would have indignantly refused the offer, and assisted the proposer, besides, to some unpalatable reflections on his knowledge of life; the thought, however, of journeying as Lord Culduff's intimate friend, being treated as his brother, thrown, from the very nature of the country they traveled in, into close relations, and left free to improve the acquaintance by all those social wiles and accomplishments on which he felt he could pride himself, was a bribe not to be resisted. And thus was it that these two men, so unlike in every respect, found themselves fellow-travelers and companions.

A number of papers, plans, and drawings littered the breakfast-table at which they were seated, and one of these, representing



the little promontory of arid rock, tastefully colored and converted into a handsome pier, with flights of steps descending to the water, and massive cranes swinging bulky masses of merchandise into tall-masted ships, was just then beneath his lordship's double eyeglass.

"Where may all this be, Cutbill? is it Irish?" asked he.

"It is to be out yonder, my lord," said he, pointing through the little window to the rugged line of rock, over which the sea was breaking in measured rhythm.

"You don't mean there?" said Lord Cuduff, half horrified.

"Yes, my lord, there! Your lordship is doubtless not aware that of all her Majesty's faithful lieges the speculative are the least gifted with the imaginative faculty, and to supply this unhappy want in their natures, we, whose function it is to suggest great industrial schemes or large undertakings—we 'promoters,' as we are called, are obliged to supply, not merely by description, but actually pictorially, the results which success will in due time arrive at. We have, as the poet says, to annihilate 'both time and space,' and arrive at a goal which no effort of these worthy people's minds could possibly attain to. What your lordship is now looking at is a case in point, and however little promising the present aspect of that coast-line may seem, time and money—yes, my lord, time and money—the two springs of all success—will make even greater change than you see depicted here."

Mr. Cutbill delivered these words with a somewhat pompous tone, and in a voice such as he might have used in addressing an acting committee or a special board of works; for one of his fancies was to believe himself an orator of no mean power.

"I trust—I fervently trust, Mr. Cutbill," said his lordship, nervously, "that the coal-fields are somewhat nigher the stage of being remunerative than that broken line of rock is to this fanciful picture before me."

"Wealth, my lord, like heat, has its latent conditions."

"Condescend to a more commonplace tone, sir, in consideration of my ignorance, and tell me frankly, is the mine as far from reality as that reef there?"

Fortunately for Mr. Cutbill perhaps, the door was opened at this critical juncture, and the landlord presented himself with a note, stating that the groom who brought it would wait for the answer.

Somewhat agitated by the turn of his

conversation with the engineer, Lord Cuduff tore open the letter, and ran his eye towards the end to see the signature.

"Who is Bramleigh—Temple Bramleigh? Oh, I remember, an *attaché*. What's all this about Castello? Where's Castello?"

"That's the name they give the Bishop's Folly, my lord," said the landlord, with a half-grin.

"What business have these people to know I am here at all? Why must they persecute me? You told me, Cutbill, that I was not to be discovered."

"So I did, my lord, and I made the *Down Express* call you Mr. Morris, of Charing Cross."

His lordship winced a little at the thought of such a liberty, even for a disguise, but he was now engaged with the note, and read on without speaking.

"Nothing could be more courteous, certainly," said he, folding it up, and laying it beside him on the table. "They invite me over to—what's the name?—Castello, and promise me perfect liberty as regards my time. 'To make the place my headquarters' as he says. Who are these Bramleighs? You know every one, Cutbill; who are they?"

"Bramleigh and Underwood are bankers, a very old established firm. Old Bramleigh was a brewer, at Slough; George the Third never would drink any other stout than Bramleigh's. There was a large silver flagon, called the 'King's Quaigh,' always brought out when his Majesty rode by, and very vain old Bramleigh used to be of it, though I don't think it figures now on the son's sideboard—they have leased the brewery."

"Oh, they have leased the brewery, have they?"

"That they have; the present man got himself made Colonel of militia, and meant to be a county member, and he might, too, if he hadn't been in too great a hurry about it; but county people won't stand being carried by assault. Then they made other mistakes; tried it on with the Liberals, in a shire where everything that called itself gentleman was Tory; in fact, they plunged from one hole into another, till they regularly swamped themselves; and as their house held a large mortgage on these estates in Ireland, they paid off the other incumbrances and have come to live here. I know the whole story, for it was an old friend of mine who made the plans for restoring the mansion."

"I suspect that the men in your profession, Cutbill, know as much of the private

history of English families as any in the land?"

"More, my lord: far more even than the solicitors, for people suspect the solicitors, and they never suspect us. We are detectives in plain clothes."

The pleasant chuckle with which Mr. Cutbill finished his speech was not responded to by his lordship, who felt that the other should have accepted his compliment, without any attempt on his own part to "cap" it.

"How long do you imagine I may be detained here, Cutbill?" asked he, after a pause.

"Let us say a week, my lord, or ten days at furthest. We ought certainly to see that new pit opened before you leave."

"In that case I may as well accept this invitation. I can bear a little boredom if they have only a good cook. Do you suppose they have a good cook?"

"The agent, Jos Harding, told me they had a Frenchman, and that the house is splendidly got up."

"What's to be done with *you*, Cutbill, eh?"

"I am at your lordship's orders," said he, with a very quiet composure.

"You have nothing to do over at that place just now? I mean at the mine."

"No, my lord. Till Pollard makes his report, I have nothing to call me over there."

"And here, I take it, we have seen everything," and he gave a very hopeless look through the little window as he spoke.

"There it is, my lord," said Cutbill, taking up the colored picture of the pier, with its busy crowds, and its bustling porters. "There it is!"

"I should say, Cutbill, there it is not!" observed the other bitterly. "Anything more unlike the reality is hard to conceive."

"Few things are as like a cornet in the Life Guards as a child in a perambulator—"

"Very well, all that," interrupted Lord Culduff, impatiently. "I know that sort of argument perfectly. I have been pestered with the acorn, or rather, with the unborn forests in the heart of the acorn, for many a day. Let us get a stride in advance of these platitudes. Is the whole thing like this?" and he threw the drawing across the table contemptuously as he spoke. "Is it all of this pattern, eh?"

"In one sense it is very like," said the other, with a greater amount of decision in his tone than usual.

"In which case, then, the sooner we abandon it the better," said Lord Culduff, rising, and standing with his back to the fire, his head high, and his look intensely haughty.

"It is not for me to dictate to your lordship—I could never presume to do so—but certainly it is not every one in Great Britain who could reconcile himself to relinquish one of the largest sources of wealth in the kingdom. Taking the lowest estimate of Carrick Nuish mine alone—and when I say the lowest, I mean throwing the whole thing into a company of shareholders and neither working nor risking a shilling yourself—you may put from twenty to five-and-twenty thousand pounds into your pocket within a twelvemonth."

"Who will guarantee that, Cutbill?" said Lord Culduff, with a faint smile.

"I am ready myself to do so, provided my counsels be strictly followed. I will do so, with my whole professional reputation."

"I am charmed to hear you say so. It is a very gratifying piece of news for me. You feel, therefore, certain that we have struck coal?"

"My lord, when a young man enters life from one of the universities, with a high reputation for ability, he can go a long way—if he only be prudent—living on his capital. It is the same thing in a great industrial enterprise; you must start at speed, and with a high pressure—get way on you, as the sailors say—and you will skim along for half a mile after the steam is off."

"I come back to my former question. Have we found coal?"

"I hope so. I trust we have. Indeed, there is every reason to say we have found coal. What we need most at this moment is a man like that gentleman whose note is on the table—a large capitalist, a great City name. Let him associate himself in the project, and success is as certain as that we stand here."

"But you have just told me he has given up his business life—retired from affairs altogether."

"My lord, these men never give up. They buy estates, they can live at Rome or Paris, and take a chateau at Cannes, and try to forget Mincing Lane and the rest of it; but if you watch them, you'll see it's the money article in the *Times* they read before the leader. They have but one barometer for everything that happens in Europe—how are the exchanges? and they are just as greedy of a good thing as on any morning they hurried down to the City in a hansom to buy in or sell out. See if I'm not right. Just throw out a hint, no



more, that you'd like a word of advice from Colonel Bramleigh about your project; say it's a large thing—too large for an individual to cope with—that you are yourself the least possible of a business man, being always engaged in very different occupations—and ask what course he would counsel you to take.”

“I might show him these drawings—these colored plans.”

“Well, indeed, my lord,” said Cutbill, brushing his mouth with his hand, to hide a smile of malicious drollery, “I'd say I'd not show him the plans. The pictorial rarely appeals to men of his stamp. It's the multiplication-table they like, and, if all the world were like them, one would never throw poetry into a project.”

“You'll have to come with me, Cutbill; I see that,” said his lordship, reflectingly.

“My lord, I am completely at your orders.”

“Yes; this is a sort of negotiation you will conduct better than myself. I am not conversant with this sort of thing, nor the men who deal in them. A great treaty, a question of boundary, a royal marriage—any of these would find me ready and prepared, but with the diplomacy of dividends I own myself little acquainted. You must come with me.”

Cutbill bowed in acquiescence, and was silent.

## CHAPTER VII.

### AT LUNCHEON.

As the family at the great house were gathered together at luncheon on the day after the events we have just recorded, Lord Culduff's answer to Temple Bramleigh's note was fully and freely discussed.

“Of course,” said Jack, “I speak under correction; but how comes it that your high and mighty friend brings another man with him? Is Cutbill an *attaché*? Is he one of what you call ‘the line’?”

“I am happy to contribute the correction you ask for,” said Temple, haughtily. “Mr. Cutbill is not a member of the diplomatic body, and though such a name might not impossibly be found in the navy list, you'll scarcely chance upon it at F. O.”

“My chief question is, however, still to be answered. On what pretext does he bring him here?” said Jack, with unbroken good-humor.

“As to that,” broke in Augustus,

“Lord Culduff's note is perfectly explanatory. He says his friend is traveling with him; they came here on a matter of business, and, in fact, there would be an awkwardness on his part in separating from him, and on ours, if we did not prevent such a contingency.”

“Quite so,” chimed in Temple. “Nothing could be more guarded or courteous than Lord Culduff's reply. It wasn't in the least like an Admiralty minute, Jack, or an order to Commander Spiggins, of the *Snarler*, to take in five hundred firkins of pork.”

“I might say, now, that you'll not find that name in the navy list, Temple,” said the sailor, laughing.

“Do they arrive to-day?” asked Marion, not a little uncomfortable at this exchange of tart things.

“To dinner,” said Temple.

“I suppose we have seen the last leg of mutton we are to meet with till he goes?” cried Jack. “That precious French fellow will now give his genius full play, and we'll have to dine off ‘salmis’ and ‘suprêmes,’ or make our dinner off bread-and-cheese.”

“Perhaps you would initiate Bertond into the mystery of a sea-pie, Jack,” said Temple, with a smile.

“And a precious mess the fellow would make of it! He'd fill it with cocks'-combs and mushrooms, and stick two skewers in it with a half-boiled truffle on each—lucky if there wouldn't be a British flag in spun sugar between them; and he'd call the abomination ‘pâte à la gun-room,’ or some such confounded name.”

A low, quiet laugh was now heard from the end of the table, and the company remembered, apparently for the first time, that Mr. Harding, the agent, was there, and very busily engaged with a broiled chicken.

“Ain't I right, Mr. Harding?” cried Jack, as he heard the low chuckle of the small, meek, submissive-looking little man, at the other end of the table—“ain't I right?”

“I have met with very good French versions of English cookery abroad, Captain Bramleigh.”

“Don't call me ‘captain’ or I'll suspect your accuracy about the cookery,” interrupted Jack. “I fear I'm about as far off that rank as Bertond is from the sea-pie.”

“Do you know Cutbill, Harding?” said Augustus, addressing the agent in the tone of an heir expectant.

“Yes. We were both examined in the

same case before a committee of the House, and I made his acquaintance then."

"What sort of person is he?" asked Temple.

"Is he jolly, Mr. Harding?—that's the question," cried Jack. "I suspect we shall be overborne by greatness, and a jolly fellow would be a boon from heaven."

"I believe he is what might be called jolly," said Harding, cautiously.

"Jolly sounds like a familiar word for vulgar," said Marion. "I hope Mr. Harding does not mean that."

"Mr. Harding means nothing of that kind, I'll be sworn," broke in Jack. "He means an easy-tempered fellow, amusing and amiable. Well, Nelly, if it's not English, I can't help it—it ought to be; but when one wants ammunition, one takes the first heavy thing at hand. Egad! I'd ram down a minister plenipotentiary, rather than fire blank-cartridge."

"Is Lord Calduff also jolly, Mr. Harding?" asked Eleanor, now looking up with a sparkle in her eye.

"I scarcely know—I have the least possible acquaintance with his lordship; I doubt, indeed, if he will recollect me," said Harding, with diffidence.

"What are we to do with this heavy swell when he comes in the puzzle to me," said Augustus, gravely. "How is he to be entertained—how amused? Here's a county with nothing to see—nothing to interest—without a neighborhood. What *are* we to do with him?"

"The more one is a man of the world, in the best sense of that phrase, the more easily he finds how to shape his life to any and every circumstance," said Temple, with a sententious tone and manner.

"Which means, I suppose, that he'll make the best of a bad case, and bear our tiresomeness with bland urbanity?" said Jack. "Let us only hope, for all our sakes, that his trial may not be a long one."

"Just to think of such a country!" exclaimed Marion; "there is absolutely no one we could have to meet him."

"What's the name of that half-pay captain who called here t'other morning?—the fellow who sat from luncheon till night dusk?" asked Jack.

"Captain Craufurd," replied Marion. "I hope nobody thinks of inviting *him*; he is insufferably vulgar, and presuming besides."

"Wasn't that the man, Marion, who told you that as my father and Lady Augusta didn't live together the county gentry couldn't be expected to call on us?" asked Augustus, laughing.

"He did more: he entered into an explanation of the peculiar tenets of the neighborhood, and told me if we had had the good luck to have settled in the south or west of Ireland, they'd not have minded it; 'but here,' he added, 'we are great sticklers for morality.'"

"And what reply did you make him, Marion?" asked Jack.

"I was so choked with passion that I couldn't speak, or if I did say anything I have forgotten it. At all events, he set me off laughing immediately after, as he said: 'As for myself, I don't care a rush. I'm a bachelor, and a bachelor can go anywhere.'"

She gave these words with such a close mimicry of his voice and manner, that a general burst of laughter followed them.

"There's the very fellow we want," cried Jack. "That's the man to meet our distinguished guest; he'll not let him escape without a wholesome hint or two."

"I'd as soon see a gentleman exposed to the assault of a mastiff as to the insulting coarseness of such a fellow as that," said Temple, passionately.

"The mischief's done already; I heard the governor say, as he took leave: 'Captain Craufurd, are you too strait-laced to dine out on a Sunday? if not, will you honor us with your company at eight o'clock?' And though he repeated the words 'eight o'clock' with a groan like a protest, he muttered something about being happy, a phrase that evidently cost him dearly, for he went shuffling down the avenue afterwards with his hat over his eyes, and gesticulating with his hands as if some new immorality had suddenly broke in upon his mind."

"You mean to say that he is coming to dinner here next Sunday?" asked Temple, horrified.

"A little tact and good management are always sufficient to keep these sort of men down," said Augustus.

"I hope we don't ask a man to dinner with the intention to 'keep him down,'" said Jack, sturdily.

"At all events," cried Temple, "he need not be presented to Lord Calduff."

"I suspect you will see very little of him after dinner," observed Harding, in his meek fashion. "That wonderful '32 port will prove a detainer impossible to get away from."

"I'll keep him company, then. I rather like to meet one of those cross-grained dogs occasionally."

"Not impossibly you'll learn something more of that same 'public opinion' of our



neighbors regarding us," said Marion, haughtily.

"With all my heart," cried the sailor, gaily; "they'll not ruffle my temper, even if they won't flatter my vanity."

"Have you asked the L'Estranges, Marion?" said Augustus.

"We always ask them after church; they are sure to be disengaged," said she. "I wish, Nelly, that you, who are such a dear friend of Julia's, would try and persuade her to wear something else than that eternal black silk. She is so intently bent on being an Andalusian. Some one unluckily said she looked so Spanish, that she has got up the dress and the little fan coquetry, and the rest of it, in the most absurd fashion."

"Her grandmother was a Spaniard," broke in Nelly, warmly.

"So they say," said the other, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"There's a good deal of style about her," said Temple, with the tone of one who was criticising what he understood. "She sings prettily."

"Prettily?" groaned Jack. "Why, where, except amongst the professionals, did you ever hear her equal?"

"She sings divinely," said Ellen; "and it is, after all, one of her least attractions."

"No heroics, for heaven's sake; leave that to your brothers. Nelly, who are fully equal to it. I really meant my remark about her gown for good-nature."

"She's a nice girl," said Augustus, "though she is certainly a bit of a coquette."

"True; but it is very good coquetry," drawled out Temple. "It's not that jerking, uncertain, unpurpose-like style of affectation your English coquette displays. It is not the eternal demand for attention or admiration. It is simply a desire to please thrown into a thousand little graceful ways, each too slight and too faint to be singled out for notice, but making up a whole of wonderful captivation."

"Well done, diplomacy! egad, I didn't know there was that much blood in the Foreign Office," cried Jack, laughing; "and now I'm off to look after my night-lines. I quite forgot all about them till this minute."

"Take me with you, Jack," said Nelly, and hastened after him, hat in hand.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE ARRIVAL OF A GREAT MAN.

It was within a quarter of eight o'clock—forty-five minutes after the usual dinner-

hour—when Lord Culduff's carriage drove up to the door.

"The roads are atrocious down here," said Temple, apologizing in advance for an offense which his father rarely, if ever, forgave. "Don't you think you ought to go out to meet him, sir?" asked he, half timidly.

"It would only create more delay; he'll appear, I take it, when he is dressed," was the curt rejoinder, but it was scarcely uttered when the door was thrown wide-open, and Lord Culduff and Mr. Cutbill were announced.

Seen in the subdued light of a drawing-room before dinner, Lord Culduff did not appear more than half his real age, and the jaunty stride and the bland smile he wore—as he made his round of acquaintance—might have passed muster for five-and-thirty; nor was the round vulgar figure of the engineer, awkward and familiar alternately, a bad foil for the very graceful attractions of his lordship's manner.

"We should have been here two hours ago," said he, "but my friend here insisted on our coming coastwise to see a wonderful bay—a natural harbor one might call it. What's the name, Cutbill?"

"Portness, my lord."

"Ah, to be sure, Portness. On your property, I believe?"

"I am proud to say it is. I have seen nothing finer in the kingdom," said Bramleigh; "and if Ireland were anything but Ireland, that harbor would be crowded with shipping, and this coast one of the most prosperous and busy shores on the island."

"Who knows if we may not live to see it such? Cutbill's projects are very grand, and I declare that, though I deemed them Arabian Night stories a few weeks back, I am a convert now. Another advantage we gained," said he, turning to Marion; "we came up through a new shrubbery, which we were told had been all planned by you."

"My sister designed it," said she, as she smiled and made a gesture towards Ellen.

"May I offer you my most respectful compliments on your success? I am an enthusiast about landscape-gardening, and though our English climate gives us many a sore rebuff in our attempts, the soil and the varied nature of the surface lend themselves happily to the pursuit. I think you were at the Hague with me, Bramleigh?" asked he of Temple.

"Does he know how late it is?" whispered Augustus to his father. "Does he know we are waiting dinner?"

"I'll tell him," and Colonel Bramleigh walked forward from his place before the

fire. "I'm afraid, my lord, the cold air of our hills has not given you an appetite?"

"Quite the contrary, I assure you. I am very hungry."

"By Jove, and so are we!" blurted out Jack; "and it's striking eight this instant."

"What is your dinner-hour?"

"It ought to be seven," answered Jack.

"Why, Cutbill, you told me nine."

Cutbill muttered something below his breath, and turned away; and Lord Culduff laughingly said, "I declare I don't perceive the connection. My friend, Colonel Bramleigh, opines that a French cook always means nine-o'clock dinner. I'm horrified at this delay: let us make a hasty toilet, and repair our fault at once."

"Let me show you where you are lodged," said Temple, not sorry to escape from the drawing-room at a moment when his friend's character and claims were likely to be sharply criticised.

"Cutty's a vulgar dog," said Jack, as they left the room. "But I'll be shot if he's not the best of the two."

A haughty toss of Marion's head showed that she was no concurring party to the sentiment.

"I'm amazed to see so young a man," said Colonel Bramleigh. "In look at least, he isn't forty."

"It's all make-up," cried Jack.

"He can't be a great deal under seventy, taking the list of his services. He was at Vienna as private secretary to Lord Borchester—" As Augustus pronounced the words Lord Culduff entered the room in a fragrance of perfume and a brilliancy of color that was quite effective; for he wore his red ribbon, and his blue coat was lined with white silk, and his cheeks glowed with a bloom that youth itself could not rival.

"Who talks of old Borchester?" said he, gaily. "My father used to tell me such stories of him. They sent him over to Hanover once, to report on the available Princesses to marry the Prince: and, egad! he played his part so well that one of them—Princess Helena, I think it was—fell in love with him; and if it wasn't that he had been married already—May I offer my arm?" And the rest of the story was probably told as he led Miss Bramleigh in to dinner.

Mr. Cutbill only arrived as they took their places, and slunk into a seat beside Jack, who, of all the company, he judged would be the person he could feel most at ease with.

"What a fop!" whispered Jack, with a glance at the peer.

"Isn't he an old humbug?" muttered Cutbill. "Do you know how he managed to appear in so short a time?" We stopped two hours at a little inn on the road while he made his toilet: and the whole get-up—paint and padding and all—was done then. The great fur pelisse in which he made his entrance into the drawing-room removed, he was in full dinner-dress underneath. He's the best actor living."

"Have you known him long?"

"Oh, yes! I know all of them," said he, with a little gesture of his hand: "that is, they take devilish good care to know *me*."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Jack, in the tone which seemed to ask for some explanation.

"You see, here's how it is," said Cutbill, as he bent over his plate and talked in a tone cautiously subdued: "All those swells—especially that generation yonder—are pretty nigh aground. They have been living for forty or fifty years at something like five times their income; and if it hadn't been for this sudden rush of prosperity in England, caused by railroads, mines, quarries, or the like, these fellows would have been swept clean away. He's watching me now. I'll go on by and by. Have you any good hunting down here, Colonel Bramleigh?" asked he of the host, who sat half hid by a massive centrepiece.

"You'll have to ask my sons what it's like; and, I take it, they'll give you a mount too."

"With pleasure, Mr. Cutbill," cried Augustus. "If we have no frost, we'll show you some sport on Monday next."

"Delighted—I like hunting of all things."

"And you, my lord, is it a favorite sport of yours?" asked Temple.

"A long life out of England—which has unfortunately been my case—makes a man sadly out of gear in all these things; but I ride, of course," and he said the last words as though he meant to imply, "because I do everything."

"I'll send over to L'Estrange," said Augustus; "he's sure to know where the meet is for Monday."

"Who is L'Estrange?" asked his lordship.

"Our curate here," replied Colonel Bramleigh, smiling. "An excellent fellow, and a very agreeable neighbor."

"Our only one, by Jove!" cried Jack. "How gallant to forget Julia!" said Nelly, tartly.

"And the fair Julia—who is she?" asked Lord Culduff.

"L'Estrange's sister," replied Augustus.



"And now, my lord," chimed in Jack, "you know the whole neighborhood, if we don't throw in a cross-gained old fellow, a half-pay lieutenant of the Buffs."

"Small but select," said Lord Culduff, quietly. "May I venture to ask you, Colonel Bramleigh, what determined you in your choice of a residence here?"

"I suppose I must confess it was mainly a money consideration. The bank held some rather heavy mortgages over this property, which they were somewhat disposed to consider as capable of great improvement, and as I was growing a little wearied of city life, I fancied I'd come over here and——"

"Regenerate Ireland, eh?"

"Or, at least, live very economically," added he, laughing.

"I may be permitted to doubt that part of the experiment," said Lord Culduff, as his eyes ranged over the table, set forth in all the splendor that plate and glass could bestow.

"I suspect papa means a relative economy," said Marion, "something very different from our late life in England."

"Yes, my last three years have been very costly ones," said Colonel Bramleigh, sighing. "I lost heavily by the sale of Earlshope, and my unfortunate election, too, was an expensive business. It will take some retrenchment to make up for all this. I tell the boys they'll have to sell their hunters, or be satisfied, like the parson, to hunt one day a week." The self-complacent, mock humility of this speech was all too apparent.

"I take it," said Culduff, authoritatively, "that every gentleman"—and he laid a marked emphasis on the "gentleman"—"must at some period or the other of his life have spent more money than he ought—more than was subsequently found to be convenient."

"I have repeatedly done so," broke in Cutbill, "and invariably been sorry for it afterwards, inasmuch as each time one does it the difficulty increases."

"Harder to get credit, you mean?" cried Jack, laughing.

"Just so; and one's friends get tired of helping one. Just as they told me there was a fellow at Blackwall used to live by drowning himself. He was regularly fished up once a week, and stomach-pumped and 'cordialled' and hot-blanketed, and brought round by the Humane Society's people, till at last they came to discover the dodge, and refused to restore him any more; and now he's reduced to earn his bread as a water-bailiff—cruel hard on a fellow of such an ingenious turn of mind."

While the younger men laughed at Cutbill's story, Lord Culduff gave him a reproving glance from the other end of the table, palpably intended to recall him to a more sedate and restricted conviviality.

"Are we not to accompany you?" said Lord Culduff to Marion, as she and her sister arose to retire. "Is this barbarism of sitting after dinner maintained here?"

"Only till we finish this decanter of claret, my lord," said Colonel Bramleigh, who caught what was not intended for his ears.

"Ask the governor to give you a cigar," whispered Jack to Cutbill; "he has some rare Cubans."

"Now, this is what I call regular jolly," said Cutbill, as he drew a small spider table to his side, and furnished himself with a glass and a decanter of Madeira, "and," added he in a whisper to Jack, "let us not be in a hurry to leave it. We only want one thing to be perfect, Colonel Bramleigh."

"If I can only supply it, pray command me, Mr. Cutbill."

"I want this then," said Cutbill, pursing up his mouth at one side, while he opened the other as if to emit the smoke of a cigar.

"Do you mean smoking?" asked Colonel Bramleigh, in a half-irritable tone.

"You have it."

"Are you a smoker, my lord?" asked the host, turning to Lord Culduff.

"A very moderate one. A cigarette after breakfast, and another at bed-time, are about my excesses in that direction."

"Then I am afraid I must defraud you of the full measure of your enjoyment, Mr. Cutbill; we never smoke in the dining-room. Indeed, I myself have a strong aversion to tobacco, and though I consented to build a smoking-room, it is as far off from me as I have been able to contrive it."

"And what about his choice Cubans, eh?" whispered Cutbill to Jack.

"All hypocrisy. You'll find a box of them in your dressing-room," said Jack in an undertone, "when you go upstairs."

Temple now led his distinguished friend into those charming pasturages where the flocks of diplomacy love to dwell, and where none other save themselves could find herbage. Nor was it amongst great political events, of peace or war, alliances or treaties, they wandered—for, perhaps, in these the outer world, taught as they are by newspapers, might have taken some interest and some share. No; their talk was all of personalities, of Russian princes and

grandees of Spain, archduchesses and "marchesas," whose crafts and subtleties, and pomps and vanities, make up a world like no other world, and play a drama of life—happily it may be for humanity—like no other drama that other men and women ever figured in. Now it is a strange fact—and I appeal to my readers if their experience will not corroborate mine—that when two men thoroughly versed in these themes will talk together upon them, exchanging their stories and mingling their comments, the rest of the company will be struck with a perfect silence, unable to join in the subject discussed, and half-ashamed to introduce any ordinary matter into such high and distinguished society. And thus Lord Cuduff and Temple went on for full an hour or more, pelting each other with little court scandals and small state intrigues, till Colonel Bramleigh fell asleep, and Cutbill, having finished his Madeira, would probably have followed his host's example, when a servant announced tea, adding, in a whisper, that Mr. L'Es-trange and his sister were in the drawing-room.

## CHAPTER IX.

### OVER THE FIRE.

IN a large room, comfortably furnished, but in which there was a certain blending of the articles of the drawing-room with those of the dining-room, showing unmistakably the bachelor character of the owner, sat two young men at opposite sides of an ample fireplace. One sat, or rather reclined, on a small leather sofa, his bandaged leg resting on a pillow, and his pale and somewhat shrunken face evidencing the results of pain and confinement to the house. His close-cropt head and square-cut beard, and a certain mingled drollery and fierceness in the eyes, proclaimed him French, and so M. Anatole Pracontal was; though it would have been difficult to declare as much from his English, which he spoke with singular purity and the very faintest peculiarity of accent.

Opposite him sat a tall, well-built man of about thirty-four or five, with regular and almost handsome features, marred, indeed, in expression by the extreme closeness of the eyes, and a somewhat long upper lip, which latter defect an incipient moustache was already concealing. The color of his hair was, however, that shade of auburn which verges on red, and is so commonly accompanied by a much freckled skin.

This same hair and hands and feet, almost enormous in size, were the afflictions which imparted bitterness to a lot which many regarded as very enviable in life; for Mr. Philip Longworth was his own master, free to go where he pleased, and the owner of a very sufficient fortune. He had been brought up at Ascot, and imbibed, with a very fair share of knowledge, a large stock of that general mistrust and suspicion which is the fortune of those entrusted to priestly teaching, and which, though he had traveled largely and mixed freely with the world, still continued to cling to his manner, which might be characterized by the one word—furtive.

Longworth had only arrived that day for dinner, and the two friends were now exchanging their experience since they had parted some eight months before at the second cataract of the Nile.

"And so, Pracontal, you never got one of my letters?"

"Not one—on my honor. Indeed, if it were not that I learned by a chance meeting with a party of English tourists at Cannes that they had met you at Cairo, I'd have begun to suspect you had taken a plunge into the Nile, or into Mohammedom, for which latter you were showing some disposition, you remember, when we parted."

"True enough; and if one was sure never to turn westward again, there are many things in favor of the turban. It is the most sublime conception of egotism possible to imagine."

"Egotism is a mistake, *mon cher*," said the other; "a man's own heart, make it as comfortable as he may, is too small an apartment to live in. I do not say this in any grand, benevolent spirit. There's no humbug of philanthropy in the opinion."

"Of that I'm fully assured," said Longworth, with a gravity which made the other laugh.

"No," continued he, still laughing, "I want a larger field, a wider hunting-ground for my diversion than my own nature."

"A disciple, in fact, of your great model, Louis Napoleon. You incline to annexations. By the way, how fares it with your new projects? Have you seen the lawyer I gave you the letter to?"

"Yes. I stayed eight days in town to confer with him. I heard from him this very day."

"Well, what says he?"

"His letter is a very savage one. He is angry with me for having come here at all; and particularly angry because I have broken my leg and can't come away."



“What does he think of your case, however?”

“He thinks it manageable. He says—as of course I knew he would say—that it demands most cautious treatment and great acuteness. There are blanks, historical blanks, to be filled up; links to connect, and such like, which will demand some time and some money. I have told him I have an inexhaustible supply of the one, but for the other I am occasionally slightly pinched.”

“It promises well, however?”

“Most hopefully. And when once I have proved myself—not always so easy as it seems—the son of my father, I am to go over and see him again in consultation.”

“Kelson is a man of station and character, and if he undertakes your cause it is in itself a strong guarantee of its goodness.”

“Why, these men take all that is offered them. They no more refuse a bad suit than a doctor rejects a hopeless patient.”

“And so will a doctor, if he happen to be an honest man,” said Longworth, half-peevishly. “Just as he would also refuse to treat one who would persist in following his own caprices in defiance of all advice.”

“Which touches me. Is not it so?” said the other, laughing. “Well, I think I ought to have stayed quietly here, and not shown myself in public. All the more, since it has cost me this,” and he pointed to his leg as he spoke. “But I can’t help confessing it, Philip, the sight of those fellows in their gay scarlet, caracoling over the sward, and popping over the walls and hedges, provoked me. It was exactly like a challenge; so I felt it, at least. It was as though they said, ‘What! you come here to pit your claims against ours, and you are still not gentleman enough to meet us in a fair field and face the same perils that we do!’ And this, be it remembered, to one who had served in a cavalry regiment, and made campaigns with the Chasseurs d’Afrique. I couldn’t stand it, and after the second day I mounted, and——” A motion of his hand finished the sentence.

“All that sort of reasoning is so totally different from an Englishman’s that I am unable even to discuss it. I do not pretend to understand the refined sensibility that resents provocations that were never offered.”

“I know you don’t, and I know your countrymen do not either. You are such a practical people that your very policemen never interfere with a criminal till he has fully committed himself.”

“In plain words, we do not content our-

selves with inferences. But tell me, did any of these people call to see you, or ask after you?”

“Yes, they sent the day after my disaster, and they also told the doctor to say how happy they should be if they could be of service to me. And a young naval commander—his card is yonder—came, I think, three times, and would have come up if I had wished to receive him; but Kelson’s letter, so angry about my great indiscretion, as he called it, made me decline the visit, and confine my acknowledgment to thanks.”

“I wonder what my old gatekeeper thought when he saw them, or their liveries, in this avenue?” said Longworth, with a peculiar bitterness in his tone.

“Why, what should he think—was there any feud between the families?”

“How could there be? These people have not been many months in Ireland. What I meant was with reference to the feud that is six centuries old—the old open ulcer, that makes all rule in this country a struggle, and all resistance to it a patriotism. Don’t you know,” asked he, almost sternly, “that I am a Papist?”

“Yes, you told me so.”

“And don’t you know that my religion is not a mere barrier to my advancement in many careers of life, but is a social disqualification—that it is, like the trace of black blood in a creole, a ban excluding him from intercourse with his better-born neighbors—that I belong to a class just as much shut out from all the relations of society as were the Jews in the fifteenth century?”

“I remember that you told me so once, but I own I never fully comprehended it, nor understood how the question of a man’s faith was to decide his standing in this world, and that, being the equal of those about you in birth and condition, your religion should stamp you with inferiority.”

“But I did not tell you I was their equal,” said Longworth, with a slow and painful distinctness. “We are *novi homines* here; a couple of generations back we were peasants—as poor as anything you could see out of that window. By hard work and some good luck—of course there was luck in it—we emerged, and got enough together to live upon, and I was sent to a costly school, and then to college, that I might start in life the equal of my fellows. But what avails it all? To hold a station in life, to mix with the world, to associate with men educated and brought up like myself, I must quit my own country and live abroad. I know, I see, you can

make nothing of this. It is out and out incomprehensible. You made a clean sweep of these things with your great Revolution of '93. Ours is yet to come."

"*Per Dio!* I'd not stand it," cried the other passionately.

"You couldn't help it. You must stand it; at least, till such time as a good many others, equally aggrieved as yourself, resolve to risk something to change it; and this is remote enough, for there is nothing that men—I mean educated and cultivated men—are more averse to, than any open confession of feeling a social disqualification. I may tell it to you here, as we sit over the fire, but I'll not go out and proclaim it, I promise you. These are confessions one keeps for the fireside."

"And will not these people visit you?"

"Nothing less likely."

"Nor you call upon them?"

"Certainly not."

"And will you continue to live within an hour's drive of each other without acquaintance or recognition?"

"Probably—at least we may salute when we meet."

"Then I say the guillotine has done more for civilization than the school-master," cried the other. "And all this because you are a Papist?"

"Just so. I belong to a faith so deeply associated with a bygone inferiority that I am not to be permitted to emerge from it—there's the secret of it all."

"I'd rebel. I'd descend into the streets!"

"And you'd get hanged for your pains."

A shrug of the shoulders was all the reply, and Longworth went on:—

"Some one once said, 'It was better economy in a state to teach people not to steal than to build gaols for the thieves;' and so I would say to our rulers, it would be cheaper to give us some of the things we ask for than to enact all the expensive measures that are taken to repress us."

"What chance have I, then, of justice in such a country?" cried the foreigner, passionately.

"Better than in any land of Europe. Indeed I will go further, and say it is the one land in Europe where corruption is impossible on the seat of judgment. If you make out your claim, as fully as you detailed it to me, if evidence will sustain your allegations, your flag will as certainly wave over that high tower yonder as that decanter stands there."

"Here's to *la bonne chance*," said the other, filling a bumper and drinking it off.

"You will need to be very prudent, very circumspect: two things which I suspect

will cost you some trouble," said Longworth. "The very name you will have to go by will be a difficulty. To call yourself Bramleigh will be an open declaration of war; to write yourself Pracontal is an admission that you have no claim to the other appellation."

"It was my mother's name. She was of a Provençal family, and the Pracontals were people of good blood."

"But your father was always called Bramleigh?"

"My father, *mon cher*, had fifty aliases; he was Louis Lagrange under the Empire, Victor Cassagnac at the Restoration, Carlo Salvi when sentenced to the galleys at Naples, Niccolo Baldassare when he shot the Austrian colonel at Capua, and I believe, when he was last heard of, the captain of a slaver. He was called, for shortness' sake, 'Brutto,' for he was not personally attractive."

"Then when and where was he known as Bramleigh?"

"Whenever he wrote to England. Whenever he asked for money, which, on the whole, was pretty often, he was Montagu Bramleigh."

"To whom were these letters addressed?"

"To his father, Montagu Bramleigh, Portland Place, London. I have it all in my note-book."

"And these appeals were responded to?"

"Not so satisfactorily as one might wish. The replies were flat refusals to give money, and rather unpleasant menaces as to police measures if the insistence were continued."

"You have some of these letters?"

"The lawyer has, I think, four of them. The last contained a bank order for five hundred francs, payable to Giacomo Lami, or order."

"Who was Lami?"

"Lami was the name of my grandmother; her father was Giacomo. He was the old fresco-painter who came over from Rome to paint the walls of that great house yonder, and it was his daughter that Bramleigh married."

"Which Bramleigh was the father of the present possessor of Castello?"

"Precisely. Montagu Bramleigh married my grandmother here in Ireland, and when the troubles broke out, either to save her father from the laws or to get rid of him, managed to smuggle him out of the country over to Holland—the last supposition, and the more likely, is that he sent his wife off with her father."

"What evidence is there of this marriage?"



"It was registered in some parish authority; at least so old Giacomo's journal records, for we have the journal, and without it we might never have known of our claim; but besides that, there are two letters of Montagu Bramleigh's to my grandmother, written when he had occasion to leave her about ten days after their marriage, and they begin, 'My dearest wife,' and are signed, 'Your affectionate husband, M. Bramleigh.' The lawyer has all these."

"How did it come about that a rich London banker, as Bramleigh was, should ally himself with the daughter of a working Italian tradesman?"

"Here's the story as conveyed by old Giacomo's notes. Bramleigh came over here to look after the progress of the works for a great man, a bishop and a lord marquis, too, who was the owner of the place; he made the acquaintance of Lami and his daughters; there were two; the younger only a child, however. The eldest, Enrichetta, was very beautiful—so beautiful indeed, that Giacomo was eternally introducing her head into all his frescoes; she was a blonde Italian, and made a most lovely Madonna. Old Giacomo's journal mentions no less than eight altar-pieces where she figures, not to say that she takes her place pretty frequently in heathen society also; and, if I be rightly informed, she is the centre figure of a fresco in this very house of Castello, in a small octagon tower, the whole of which Lami painted with his own hand. Bramleigh fell in love with this girl and married her."

"But she was a Catholic?"

"No. Lami was originally a Waldensian, and held some sort of faith, I don't exactly know what, that claimed affinity with the English Church; at all events, the vicar here, a certain Robert Mathews—his name is in the precious journal—married them, and man and wife they were."

"When and how did all these facts come to your knowledge?"

"As to the when and the how, the same answer will suffice. I was serving as sous-lieutenant of cavalry in Africa when news reached me that the *Astradella*, the ship in which my father sailed, was lost off the Cape Verde islands, with all on board. I hastened off to Naples, where a Mr. Bolton lived, who was chief owner of the vessel, to hear what tidings had reached him of the disaster, and to learn something of my father's affairs, for he had been, if I might employ so fine a word for so small a function, his banker for years. Indeed, but for Bolton's friendship and protection—

how earned, I never knew—my father would have come to grief years before, for he was a thorough Italian, and always up to the neck in conspiracies; he had been in that Bonapartist affair at Rome; was a Carbonaro and a Camorrist, and heaven knows what besides. And though Bolton was a man very unlikely to sympathize with these opinions, I take it, my respected parent must have been a *bon diable* that men who knew him would not willingly see wrecked and ruined. Bolton was most kind to myself personally. He received me with many signs of friendship, and without troubling me with any more details of law than were positively unavoidable, put me in possession of the little my father had left behind him, which consisted of a few hundred francs of savings and an old chest, with some old clothes and a mass of papers and letters—dangerous enough, as I discovered, to have compromised scores of people—and a strange old manuscript book, clasped and locked, called the *Diary of Giacomo Lami*, with matter in it for half a dozen romances; for Giacomo, too, had the conspirator's taste, had known Danton intimately, and was deep in the confidence of all the Irish republicans who were affiliated with the French revolutionary party. But besides this the book contained a quantity of original letters; and when mention was made in the text of this or that event, the letter which related to it, or replied to some communication about it, was appended in the original. I made this curious volume my study for weeks, till, in fact, I came to know far more about old Giacomo and his times than I ever knew about my father and his epoch. There was not a country in Europe in which he had not lived, nor, I believe, one in which he had not involved himself in some trouble. He loved his art, but he loved political plotting and conspiracy even more, and was ever ready to resign his most profitable engagement for a scheme that promised to overturn a government or unthrone a sovereign. My first thought on reading his curious reminiscences was to make them the basis of a memoir for publication. Of course they were fearfully indiscreet, and involved reputations that no one had ever thought of assailing; but they were chiefly of persons dead and gone, and it was only their memory that could suffer. I spoke to Bolton about this. He approved of the notion, principally as a means of helping me to a little money, which I stood much in need of, and gave me a letter to a friend in Paris, the well-known publisher, Lecoq, of the Rue St. Honoré.

"As I was dealing with a man of honor and high character, I had no scruple in leaving the volume of old Giacomo's memoirs in Lecoq's hands; and after about a week I returned to learn what he thought of it. He was frank enough to say that no such diary had ever come before him—that it cleared up a vast number of points hitherto doubtful and obscure, and showed an amount of knowledge of the private life of the period absolutely marvelous; 'but,' said he, 'it would never do to make it public. Most of these men are now forgotten, it is true, but their descendants remain, and live in honor amongst us. What a terrible scandal it would be to proclaim to the world that of these people many were illegitimate, many in the enjoyment of large fortunes to which they had not a shadow of a title; in fact,' said he, 'it would be to hurl a live shell in the very midst of society, leaving the havoc and destruction it might cause to blind chance. But,' added he, 'it strikes me there is a more profitable use the volume might be put to. Have you read the narrative of your grandmother's marriage in Ireland with that rich Englishman?' I owned I had read it carelessly, and without bestowing much interest on the theme. 'Go back and re-read it,' said he, 'and come and talk it over with me to-morrow evening.' As I entered his room the next night he arose ceremoniously from his chair, and said, in a tone of well-assumed obsequiousness, 'Si je ne me trompe pas, j'ai l'honneur de voir Monsieur Bramleigh, n'est-ce pas?' I laughed, and replied, 'Je ne m'y oppose pas, monsieur;' and we at once launched out into the details of the story, of which each of us had formed precisely the same opinion.

"Ill luck would have it, that as I went back to my lodgings on that night I should meet Bertani, and Varese, and Manini, and be persuaded to go and sup with them. They were all suspected by the police, from their connection with Fieschi; and on the morning after I received an order from the Minister of War to join my regiment at Oran, and an intimation that, my character being fully known, it behoved me to take care. I gave no grounds for more stringent measures towards me. I understood the 'caution,' and, not wishing to compromise M. Lecoq, who had been so friendly in all his relations with me, I left France, without even an opportunity of getting back my precious volume, which I never saw again till I revisited Paris eight years after, having given in my demission from the service. Lecoq obtained for me that

small appointment I held under M. Lesseps in Egypt, and which I had given up a few weeks before I met you on the Nile. I ought to tell you that Lecoq, for what reason I can't tell, was not so fully persuaded that my claim was as direct as he had at first thought it; and indeed his advice to me was rather to address myself seriously to some means of livelihood, or to try and make some compromise with the Bramleighs, with whom he deemed a mere penniless pretender would not have the smallest chance of success. I hesitated a good deal over his counsel. There was much in it that weighed with me, perhaps convinced me: but I was always more or less of a gambler, and more than once have I risked a stake, which, if I lost, would have left me penniless; and at last I resolved to say, *Va Banque*, here goes; all or nothing. There's my story, *mon cher*, without any digressions, even one of which, if I had permitted myself to be led into it, would have proved twice as long."

"The strength of a chain is the strength of its weakest link, the engineers tell us," said Longworth, "and it is the same with evidence. I'd like to hear what Kelson says of the case."

"That I can scarcely give you. His last letter to me is full of questions which I cannot answer; but you shall read it for yourself. Will you send up-stairs for my writing-desk?"

"We'll con that over to-morrow after breakfast, when our heads will be clearer and brighter. Have you old Lami's journal with you?"

"No. All my papers are with Kelson. The only thing I have here is a sketch in colored chalk of my grandmother, in her eighteenth year, as a Flora, and, from the date, it must have been done in Ireland, when Giacomo was working at the frescoes."

"That my father," said Pracontal, after a pause, "counted with certainty on this succession, all his own papers show, as well as the care he bestowed on my early education, and the importance he attached to my knowing and speaking English perfectly. But my father cared far more for a conspiracy than a fortune. He was one of those men who only seem to live when they are confronted by a great danger, and I believe there has not been a great plot in Europe these last five-and-thirty years without his name being in it. He was twice handed over to the French authorities by the English Government, and there is some reason to believe that the Bramleighs were



the secret instigators of the extradition. There was no easier way of getting rid of his claims."

"These are disabilities which do not attach to you."

"No, thank Heaven. I have gone no farther with these men than mere acquaintance. I know them all, and they know me well enough to know that I deem it the greatest disaster of my life that my father was one of them. It is not too much to say that a small part of the energy he bestowed on schemes of peril and ruin would have sufficed to have vindicated his claim to wealth and fortune."

"You told me, I think, that Kelson hinted at the possibility of some compromise—something which, sparing *them* the penalty of publicity, would still secure to *you* an ample fortune."

"Yes. What he said was, 'Juries are, with all their honesty of intention, capricious things to trust to;' and that, not being rich enough to suffer repeated defeats, an adverse verdict might be fatal to me. I didn't like the reasoning altogether, but I was so completely in his hands that I forbore to make any objection, and so the matter remained."

"I suspect he was right," said Longworth, thoughtfully. "At the same time, the case must be strong enough to promise victory, to sustain the proposal of a compromise."

"And if I can show the game in my hand, why should I not claim the stakes?"

"Because the other party may delay the settlement. They may challenge the cards, accuse you of 'a rook,' put out the lights—anything, in short, that shall break up the game."

"I see," said Pracontal, gravely; "the lawyer's notion may be better than I thought it."

A long silence ensued between them, then Longworth, looking at his watch, exclaimed, "Who'd believe it? It wants only a few minutes to two o'clock. Good-night."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE DROPPINGS OF A GREAT DIPLOMATIST.

WHEN a man's manner and address are very successful with the world—when he possesses that power of captivation which extends to people of totally different tastes and habits, and is equally at home, equally at his ease, with young and old, with men of grave pursuits and men of pleasure—it

is somewhat hard to believe that there must not be some strong sterling quality in his nature; for we know that the base metals never bear gilding, and that it is only a waste of gold to cover them with it.

It would be, therefore, very pleasant to think that if people should not be altogether as admirable as they were agreeable, yet that the qualities which made the companionship so delightful should be indications of deeper and more solid gifts beneath. Yet I am afraid the theory will not hold. I suspect that there are a considerable number of people in this world who go through life trading on credit, and who renew their bills with humanity so gracefully and so cleverly, they are never found out to be bankrupts till they die.

A very accomplished specimen of this order was Lord Culduff. He was a man of very ordinary abilities, commonplace in every way, and who had yet contrived to impress the world with the notion of his capacity. He did a little of almost everything. He sang a little, played a little on two or three instruments, talked a little of several languages, and had smatterings of all games and field-sports, so that, to every seeming, nothing came amiss to him. Nature had been gracious to him personally, and he had a voice very soft and low and insinuating.

He was not an impostor, for the simple reason that he believed in himself. He actually had negotiated his false coinage so long that he got to regard it as bullion, and imagined himself to be one of the first men of his age.

The bad bank-note, which has been circulating freely from hand to hand, no sooner comes under the scrutiny of a sharp-eyed functionary of the bank than it is denounced and branded; and so Culduff would speedily have been treated by any one of those keen men who, as Ministers, grow to acquire a knowledge of human nature as thorough as of the actual events of the time.

The world at large, however, had not this estimate of him. They read of him as a special envoy here, an extraordinary minister there, now negotiating a secret treaty, now investing a Pasha of Egypt with the Bath; and they deemed him not only a trusty servant of the Crown, but a skilled negotiator, a deep and accomplished diplomatist.

He was a little short-sighted, and it enabled him to pass objectionable people without causing offense. He was slightly deaf, and it gave him an air of deference in conversation which many were charmed

with ; for, whenever he failed to catch what was said, his smile was perfectly captivating. It was assent, but dashed with a sort of sly flattery, as though it was to the speaker's ingenuity he yielded, as much as to the force of the conviction.

He was a great favorite with women. Old ladies regarded him as a model of good *ton* ; younger ones discovered other qualities in him that amused them as much. His life had been anything but blameless, but he had contrived to make the world believe he was more sinned against than sinning, and that every mischance that befell him came of that unsuspecting nature and easy disposition of which even all his experience of life could not rob him.

Cutbill read him thoroughly : but though Lord Culduff saw this, it did not prevent him trying all his little pretty devices of pleasing on the man of culverts and cuttings. In fact, he seemed to feel that, though he could not bring down the bird, it was better not to spoil his gun by a change of cartridge, and so he fired away his usual little pleasantries, well aware that none of them were successful.

He had now been three days with the Bramleighs, and certainly had won the suffrages, though in different degrees, of them all. He had put himself so frankly and unreservedly in Colonel Bramleigh's hands about the coal-mine, candidly confessing the whole thing was new to him, he was a child in money matters, that the banker was positively delighted with him.

With Augustus he had talked politics confidentially—not questions of policy or government, but the more subtle and ingenious points as to what party a young man entering life ought to join, what set he should attach himself to, and what line he should take to ensure future distinction and office. He was well up in the gossip of the House, and knew who was disgusted with such a one, and why so-and-so "wouldn't stand it" any longer.

To Temple Bramleigh he was charming. Of the "line," as they love to call it, he knew positively everything. Nor was it merely how this or that legation was conducted, how this man got on with his chief, or why that other had asked to be transferred; but he knew all the mysterious goings-on of that wonderful old repository they call "the Office." "That's what you must look to, Bramleigh," he would say, clapping him on the shoulder. "The men who make plenipos and envoys are not in the Cabinet, nor do they dine at Osborne ; they are fel-

lows in seedy black, with brown umbrellas, who cross the Green Park every morning about eleven o'clock, and come back over the self-same track by six of an evening. Staid old dogs, with crape on their hats, and hard lines round their mouths, fond of fresh caviare from Russia, and much given to cursing the messengers."

He was, in a word, the incarnation of a very well-bred selfishness, that had learned how much it redounds to a man's personal comfort that he is popular, and that even a weak swimmer who goes with the tide makes a better figure than the strongest and bravest who attempts to stem the current. He was, in his way, a keen observer ; and a certain haughty tone, a kind of self-assertion in Marion's manner, so distinguished her from her sister, that he set Cutbill to ascertain if it had any other foundation than mere temperament ; and the wily agent was not long in learning that a legacy of twenty thousand pounds in her own absolute right from her mother's side accounted for these pretensions.

"I tell you, Cutty, it's only an old diplomatist, like myself, would have detected the share that bank debentures had in that girl's demeanor. Confess, sir, it was a clever hit."

"It was certainly neat, my lord."

"It was more, Cutty ; it was deep—downright deep. I saw where the idiosyncrasy stopped, and where the dividends came in."

Cutbill smiled an approving smile, and his lordship turned to the glass over the chimney-piece and looked admiringly at himself.

"Was it twenty thousand you said?" asked he, indolently.

"Yes, my lord, twenty. Her father will probably give her as much more. Harding told me yesterday that all the younger children are to have share and share alike—no distinction made between sons and daughters."

"So that she'll have what a Frenchman would call '*un million de dot*.'"

"Just about what we want, my lord, to start our enterprise."

"Ah, yes. I suppose that would do ; but we shall do this by a company, Cutty. Have you said anything to Bramleigh yet on the subject?"

"Nothing further than what I told you yesterday. I gave him the papers with the surveys and the specifications, and he said he'd look over them this morning, and that I might drop in upon him to-night in the library after ten. It is the time he likes best for a little quiet chat."



"He seems a very cautious, I'd almost say, a timid man."

"The city men are all like that, my lord. They're always cold enough in entering on a project, though they'll go rashly on after they've put their money in it."

"What's the eldest son?"

"A fool—just a fool. He urged his father to contest a county, to lay a claim for a peerage. They lost the election and lost their money; but Augustus Bramleigh persists in thinking that the party are still their debtors."

"Very hard to make ministers believe that," said Culduff, with a grin. "A vote in the House is like a bird in the hand. The second fellow, Temple, is a poor creature."

"Ain't he? Not that he thinks so."

"No; they never do," said Culduff, caressing his whiskers, and looking pleasantly at himself in the glass. "They see one or two men of mark in their career, and they fancy—heaven knows why—that they must be like them; that identity of pursuit implies equality of intellect; and so these creatures spread out their little sails, and imagine they are going to make a grand voyage."

"But Miss Bramleigh told me yesterday you had a high opinion of her brother Temple."

"I believe I said so," said he, with a soft smile. "One says these sort of things every day, irresponsibly, Cutty, irresponsibly, just as one gives his autograph, but would think twice before signing his name on a stamped paper."

Mr. Cutbill laughed at this sally, and seemed, by the motion of his lips, as though he were repeating it to himself for future retail; but in what spirit, it would not be safe perhaps to inquire.

Though Lord Culduff did not present himself at the family breakfast-table, and but rarely appeared at luncheon, pretexting that his mornings were always given up to business and letter-writing, he usually came down in the afternoon in some toilet admirably suited to the occasion, whatever it might be, of riding, driving, or walking. In fact, a mere glance at his lordship's costume would have unmistakably shown whether a canter, the croquet lawn, or a brisk walk through the shrubberies, were in the order of the day.

"Do you remember, Cutty," said he, suddenly, "what was my engagement for this morning? I promised somebody to go somewhere and do something; and I'll be shot if I can recollect."

"I am totally unable to assist your lord-

ship," said the other, with a smile. "The young men, I know, are out shooting, and Miss Eleanor Bramleigh is profiting by the snow to have a day's sledging. She proposed to me to join her, but I didn't see it."

"Ah! I have it now, Cutty. I was to walk over to Portshandon, to return the curate's call. Miss Bramleigh was to come with me."

"It was scarcely gallant, my lord, to forget so charming a project," said the other, slyly.

"Gallantry went out, Cutty, with slashed doublets. The height and the boast of our modern civilization is to make women our perfect equals, and to play the game of life with them on an absolutely equal footing."

"Is that quite fair?"

"I protest I think it is; except in a few rare instances, where the men unite to the hardier qualities of the masculine intelligence, the nicer, finer, more susceptible instincts of the other sex—the organization that more than any other touches on excellence—except, I say, in these cases, the women have the best of it. Now, what chance, I ask you, would *you* have, pitted against such a girl as the elder Bramleigh?"

"I'm afraid, a very poor one!" said Cutbill, with a look of deep humility.

"Just so, Cutty, a very poor one. I give you my word of honor, I have learned more diplomacy beside the drawing-room fire than I ever acquired in the pages of the blue-books. You see it's a quite different school of fence they practice; the thrusts are different and the guards are different. A day for furs essentially, a day for furs," broke he in, as he drew on a coat lined with sable, and profusely braided and ornamented. "What was I saying—where were we?"

"You were talking of women, my lord."

"The faintest tint of scarlet in the under vest—it was a device of the Regent's in his really great day—is always effective in cold, bright, frosty weather. The tint is carried on to the cheek, and adds brilliancy to the eye. In duller weather a coral pin in the cravat will suffice; but, as David Wilkie used to say, 'Nature must have her bit of red.'"

"I wish you would finish what you were saying about women, my lord. Your remarks were full of originality."

"Finish! finish, Cutty! It would take as many volumes as the 'Abridgment of the Statutes' to contain one-half of what I could say about them; and, after all, it would be Sanscrit to you." His lordship

now placed his hat on his head, slightly on one side. It was the "tigerism" of a past period, and which he could no more abandon than he could give up the jaunty swagger of his walk, or the bland smile which he kept ready for recognition.

"I have not, I rejoice to say, arrived at that time of life when I can affect to praise by-gones; but I own, Cutty, they did everything much better five-and-twenty years ago than now. They dined better, they dressed better, they drove better, they turned out better in the field and in the park, and they talked better."

"How do you account for this, my lord?"

"Simply in this way, Cutty. We have lowered our standard in taste just as we have lowered our standard for the army. We take fellows five feet seven into grenadier companies now; that is, we admit into society men of mere wealth—the banker, the brewer, the railway director, and the rest of them; and with these people we admit their ways, their tastes, their very expressions. I know it is said that we gain in breadth; yet, as I told Lord Cocklethorpe (the *mot* had its success), what we gain in breadth, said I, we lose in height. Neat, Cutty, wasn't it? As neat as a *mot* well can be in our clumsy language."

And with this, and a familiar "Bye-bye," he strolled away, leaving Cutbill to practice before the glass such an imitation of him as might serve, at some future time, to convulse with laughter a select and admiring audience.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A WINTER DAY'S WALK.

LORD CULDUFF and Marion set out for their walk. It was a sharp, frosty morning, with a blue sky above and crisp snow beneath. We have already seen that his lordship had not been inattentive to the charms of costume. Marion was no less so; her dark silk dress, looped over a scarlet petticoat, and a tasteful hat of black astracan, well suited the character of looks where the striking and brilliant were as conspicuous as dark eyes, long lashes, and a bright complexion could make them.

"I'll take you by the shrubberies, my lord, which is somewhat longer, but pleasanter walking, and, if you like it, we'll come back by the hill path, which is much shorter."

"The longer the road the more of your

company, Miss Bramleigh. Therein lies my chief interest," said he, bowing.

They talked away pleasantly as they went along, of the country and the scenery, of which new glimpses continually presented themselves, and of the country people and their ways, so new to each of them. They agreed wonderfully on almost everything, but especially as to the character of the Irish—so simple, so confiding, so trustful, so grateful for benefits, and so eager to be well governed! They knew it all, the whole complex web of Irish difficulty and English misrule was clear and plain before them; and then, as they talked, they gained a height from which the blue broad sea was visible, and thence descried a solitary sail afar off, that set them speculating on what the island might become when commerce and trade should visit her, and rich cargoes should cumber her quays, and crowd her harbors. Marion was strong in her knowledge of industrial resources; but as an accomplished aide-de-camp always rides a little behind his chief, so did she restrain her acquaintance with these topics, and keep them slightly to the rear of all his lordship advanced. And then he grew confidential, and talked of coal, which ultimately led him to himself, the theme of all he liked the best. And how differently did he talk now! What vigor and animation, what spirit did he not throw into his sketch! It was the story of a great man, unjustly, hardly dealt with, persecuted by an ungenerous rivalry, the victim of envy. For half, ay, for the tithe of what he had done, others had got their advancement in the peerage—their blue ribbons and the rest of it; but Canning had been jealous of him, and the Duke was jealous of him, and Palmerston never liked him. "Of course," he said, "these are things a man buries in his own breast. Of all the sorrows one encounters in life, the slights are those he last confesses; how I came to speak of them now I can't imagine—can you?" and he turned fully towards her, and saw that she blushed and cast down her eyes at the question.

"But, my lord," said she, evading the reply, "you give me the idea of one who would not readily succumb to an injustice. Am I right in my reading of you?"

"I trust and hope you are," said he, haughtily; "and it is my pride to think I have inspired that impression on so brief an acquaintance."

"It is my own temper, too," she added. "You may convince; you cannot coerce me."



"I wish I might try the former," said he, in a tone of much meaning.

"We agree in so many things, my lord," said she, laughingly, "that there is little occasion for your persuasive power. There, do you see that smoke-wreath yonder? that's from the cottage where we're going."

"I wish I knew where we were going," said he, with a sigh of wonderful tenderness.

"To Roseneath, my lord. I told you the L'Estranges lived there."

"Yes; but it was not that I meant," added he feelingly.

"And a pretty spot it is," continued she, purposely misunderstanding him; "so sheltered and secluded. By the way, what do you think of the curate's sister? She is very beautiful, isn't she?"

"Am I to say the truth?"

"Of course you are."

"I mean, may I speak as though we knew each other very well, and could talk in confidence together?"

"That is what I mean."

"And wish?" added he.

"Well, and wish, if you will supply the word."

"If I am to be frank, then, I don't admire her."

"Not think her beautiful?"

"Yes; there is some beauty—a good deal of beauty, if you like; but somehow it is not allied with that brightness that seems to accentuate beauty. She is tame and cold."

"I think men generally accuse her of coquetry."

"And there is coquetry, too; but of that character the French call *minauderie*, the weapon of a very small enchantress, I assure you."

"You are, then, for the captivations that give no quarter?" said she, smiling.

"It is a glory to be so vanquished," said he, heroically.

"My sister declared the other night, after Julia had sung that *barcarole*, that you were fatally smitten."

"And did you concur in the judgment?" asked he, tenderly.

"At first, perhaps I did, but when I came to know you a little better——"

"After our talk on the terrace?"

"And even before that. When Julia was singing for you—clearly for you, there was no disguise in the matter—and I whispered you, 'What courage you have!' you said, 'I have been so often under fire—from that instant I knew you.'"

"Knew me—how far?"

"Enough to know that it was not to such captivations you would yield—that you had seen a great deal of that sort of thing."

"Oh, have I not!"

"Perhaps not always unscathed," said she, with a sly glance.

"I will scarcely go that far," replied he, with the air of a man on the best possible terms with himself. "They say he is the best rider who has had the most falls. At least, it may be said that he who has met no disasters has encountered few perils."

"Now, my lord, you can see the cottage completely. Is it not very pretty and very picturesque, and is there not something very interesting—touching almost, in the thought of beauty and captivation dwelling in this untraveled wilderness?"

He almost gave a little shudder, as his eye followed the line of the rugged mountain, till it blended with the bleak and shingly shore on which the waves were now washing in measured plash—the one sound in the universal silence around.

"Nothing but being desperately in love could make this solitude endurable," said he at last.

"Why not try that resource, my lord? I could almost promise you that the young lady who lives yonder is quite ready to be adored and worshiped, and all that sort of thing; and it would be such a boon on the frosty days, when the ground is too hard for hunting, to have this little bit of romance awaiting you."

"Coquetry and French cookery pall upon a man who has lived all his life abroad, and he actually longs for a little plain diet, in manners as well as meals."

"And then you have seen all the pretty acts of our very pretty neighbor so much better done?"

"Done by real artists," added he.

"Just so. Amateurship is always a poor thing. This is the way, my lord. If you will follow me, I will be your guide here; the path here is very slippery, and you must take care how you go."

"When I fall it shall be at your feet," said he, with his hand on his heart.

As they gained the bottom of the little ravine down which the footpath lay, they found Julia, hoe in hand, at work in the garden before the door. Her dark woollen dress and her straw hat were only relieved in color by a blue ribbon round her throat, but she was slightly flushed by exercise, and a little flurried, perhaps, by the surprise of seeing them, and her beauty, this time, certainly lacked nothing of that bril-

lianey which Lord Culduff had pronounced it deficient in.

"My brother will be so sorry to have missed you, my lord," said she, leading the way into the little drawing-room, where, amidst many signs of narrow fortune, there were two or three of those indications which vouch for cultivated tastes and pleasures.

"I had told Lord Culduff so much about your cottage, Julia," said Marion, "that he insisted on coming to see it, without even apprising you of his intention."

"It is just as well," said she, artlessly. "A little more or less sun gives the only change in its appearance. Lord Culduff sees it now as it looks nearly every day."

"And very charming that is," said he, walking to the window and looking out; and then he asked the name of a headland, and how a small rocky island was called, and on which side lay the village of Portshandon, and at what distance was the church, the replies to which seemed to afford him unmixed satisfaction, for, as he resumed his seat, he muttered several times to himself, "Very delightful, indeed; very pleasing in every way."

"Lord Culduff was asking me, as he came along," said Marion, "whether I thought the solitude—I think he called it the savagery of this spot—was likely to be better borne by one native to such wildness, or by one so graced and gifted as yourself, and I protest he puzzled me."

"I used to think it very lonely when I came here first, but I believe I should be sorry to leave it now," said Julia, calmly.

"There, my lord," said Marion, "you are to pick your answer out of that."

"As to those resources, which you are so flattering as to call my gifts and graces," said Julia, laughing, "such of them at least as lighten the solitude were all learned here. I never took to gardening before; I never fed poultry."

"Oh, Julia! have mercy on our illusions."

"You must tell me what they are, before I can spare them. The curate's sister has no claim to be thought an enchanted princess."

"It is all enchantment!" said Lord Culduff, who had only very imperfectly caught what she said.

"Then, I suppose, my lord," said Marion, haughtily, "I ought to rescue you before the spell is complete, as I came here in quality of guide." And she rose as she spoke. "The piano has not been opened to-day, Julia. I take it you seldom sing of a morning?"

"Very seldom, indeed."

"So I told Lord Culduff; but I promised him his recompense in the evening. You are coming to us to-morrow, ain't you?"

"I fear not. I think George made our excuses. We are to have Mr. Longworth and a French friend of his here with us."

"You see, my lord, what a gay neighborhood we have; here is a rival dinner-party," said Marion.

"There's no question of a dinner: they come to tea, I assure you," said Julia, laughing.

"No, my lord; it's useless, quite hopeless. I assure you she'll not sing for you of a morning." This speech was addressed to Lord Culduff, as he was turning over some music-books on the piano.

"Have I your permission to look at these?" said he to Julia, as he opened a book of drawings in water-colors.

"Of course, my lord. They are mere sketches taken in the neighborhood here, and, as you will see, very hurriedly done."

"And have you such coast scenery as this?" asked he, in some astonishment, while he held up a rocky headland of several hundred feet, out of the caves at whose base a tumultuous sea was tumbling.

"I could show you finer and bolder bits than even that."

"Do you hear, my lord?" said Marion, in a low tone, only audible to himself. "The fair Julia is offering to be your guide. I'm afraid it is growing late. One does forget time at this cottage. It was only the last day I came here I got scolded for being late at dinner."

And now ensued one of those little bustling scenes of shawling and embracing with which young ladies separate. They talked together, and laughed, and kissed, and answered half-uttered sentences, and even seemed after parting to have something more to say; they were by turns sad, and playful, and saucy—all of these moods being duly accompanied by graceful action, and a chance display of a hand or foot, as it might be, and then they parted.

"Well, my lord," said Marion, as they ascended the steep path that led homewards, "what do you say now? Is Julia as cold and impassive as you pronounced her, or are you ungrateful enough to ignore fascinations all displayed and developed for your own especial captivation?"

"It was very pretty coquetry, all of it," said he, smiling. "Her eyelashes are even longer than I thought them."

"I saw that you remarked them, and she was gracious enough to remain looking at



the drawing sufficiently long to allow you full time for the enjoyment."

The steep and rugged paths were quite as much as Lord Culduff could manage without talking, and he toiled along after her in silence, till they gained the beach.

"At last a bit of even ground," exclaimed he, with a sigh.

"You'll think nothing of the hill, my lord, when you've come it three or four times," said she, with a malicious twinkle of the eye.

"Which is precisely what I have no intention of doing."

"What! not cultivate the acquaintance so auspiciously opened?"

"Not at this price," said he, looking at his splashed boots.

"And that excursion, that ramble, or whatever be the name for it, you were to take together?"

"It is a bliss, I am afraid, I must deny myself."

"You are wrong, my lord; very wrong. My brothers at least assure me that Julia is charming *en tête-à-tête*. Indeed, Augustus says one does not know her at all till you have passed an hour or two in such confidential intimacy. He says 'she comes out'—whatever that may be—wonderfully."

"Oh, she comes out, does she?" said he, caressing his whiskers.

"That was his phrase for it. I take it to mean that she ventures to talk with a freedom more common on the Continent than in these islands. Is that coming out, my lord?"

"Well, I half suspect it is," said he, smiling faintly.

"And I suppose men like that?"

"I'm afraid, my dear Miss Bramleigh," said he, with a mock air of deploring—"I'm afraid that in these degenerate days men are very prone to like whatever gives them least trouble in everything, and if a woman will condescend to talk to us on our own topics, and treat them pretty much in our own way, we like it, simply because it diminishes the distance between us, and saves us that uphill clamber we are obliged to take when you insist upon our scrambling up to the high level you live in."

"It is somewhat of an ignoble confession you have made there," said she, haughtily.

"I know it—I feel it—I deplore it," said he, affectedly.

"If men will, out of mere indolence—no matter," said she, biting her lip. "I'll not say what I was going to say."

"Pray do. I beseech you finish what you have so well begun."

"Were I to do so, my lord," said she, gravely, "it might finish more than that. It might at least go some way towards finishing our acquaintanceship. I'm sorely afraid you'd not have forgiven me had you heard me out."

"I'd never have forgiven myself, if I were the cause of it."

For some time they walked along in silence, and now the great house came into view—its windows all glowing and glittering in the blaze of a setting sun, while a fair + breeze lazily moved the heavy folds of the enormous flag that floated over the high tower.

"I call that a very princely place," said he, stopping to admire it.

"What a caprice to have built it in such a spot!" said she. The country people were not far wrong when they called it Bishop's Folly."

"They gave it that name, did they?"

"Yes, my lord. It is one of the ways in which humble folks reconcile themselves to lowly fortune; they ridicule their betters." And now she gave a little low laugh to herself as if some unuttered notion had just amused her.

"What made you smile?" asked he.

"A very absurd fancy struck me."

"Let me hear it. Why not let me share in its oddity?"

"It might not amuse you as much as it amused me."

"I am the only one who can decide that point."

"Then I am not so certain it might not annoy you."

"I can assure you on that head," said he, gallantly.

"Well, then, you shall hear it. The erprice of a great divine has, so to say, registered itself yonder, and will live so long as stone and mortar endure, as Bishop's Folly; and I was just thinking how strange it would be if another caprice just as unaccountable were to give a name to a less pretentious edifice, and a certain charming cottage be known to posterity as the Viscount's Folly. You're not angry with me, are you?"

"I'd be very angry indeed with you, with myself and with the whole world, if I thought such a casualty a possibility."

"I assure you, when I said it I didn't believe it, my lord," said she, looking at him with much graciousness; "and, indeed, I would never have uttered the impertinence if you had not forced me. There, there goes the first bell; we shall have short time to dress." And, with a very meaningful smile and a familiar gesture of her

hand, she tripped up the steps and disappeared.

"I think I'm all right in that quarter," was his lordship's reflection as he mounted the stairs to his room.

## CHAPTER XII.

### AN EVENING BELOW AND ABOVE STAIRS.

It was not very willingly that Mr. Cutbill left the drawing-room, where he had been performing a violoncello accompaniment to one of the young ladies in the execution of something very Mendelssohnian and profoundly puzzling to the uninitiated in harmonics. After the peerage he loved counterpoint; and it was really hard to tear himself away from passages of almost piercing shrillness, or those still more suggestive moanings of a double bass, to talk stock and share-list with Colonel Bramleigh in the library. Resisting all the assurances that "papa wouldn't mind it; that any other time would do quite as well," and such like, he went up to his room for his books and papers, and then repaired to his rendezvous.

"I'm sorry to take you away from the drawing-room, Mr. Cutbill," said Bramleigh, as he entered, "but I am half-expecting a summons to town, and could not exactly be sure of an opportunity to talk over this matter on which Lord Culduff is very urgent to have my opinion."

"It is not easy, I confess, to tear one's self away from such society. Your daughters are charming musicians, Colonel. Miss Bramleigh's style is as brilliant as Meyer's; and Miss Eleanor has a delicacy of touch I never heard surpassed."

"This is very flattering, coming from so consummate a judge as yourself."

"All the teaching in the world will not impart that sensitive organization which sends some tones into the heart like the drip, drip of water on a heated brow. Oh, dear! music is too much for me; it totally subverts all my sentiments. I'm not fit for business after it, Colonel Bramleigh, that's the fact."

"Take a glass of that 'Bra Mouton.' You will find it good. It has been eight-and-thirty years in my cellar, and I never think of bringing it out except for a connoisseur in wine."

"Nectar, positively nectar," said he, smacking his lips. "You are quite right not to give this to the public. They would drink it like a mere full-bodied

Bordeaux. That velvety softness— that subdued strength, faintly recalling Burgundy, and that delicious bouquet, would all be clean thrown away on most people. I declare, I believe, a refined palate is just as rare as a correct ear; don't you think so?"

"I'm glad you like the wine. Don't spare it. The cellar is not far off. Now then, let us see. These papers contain Mr. Stebbing's report. I have only glanced my eye over it, but it seems like every other report. They have, I think, a stereotyped formula for these things. They all set out with their bit of geological learning; but you know, Mr. Cutbill, far better than I can tell you, you know sandstone doesn't always mean coal?"

"If it doesn't, it ought to," said Cutbill, with a laugh, for the wine had made him jolly, and familiar besides.

"There are many things in this world which ought to be, but which, unhappily, are not," said Bramleigh, in a tone evidently meant to be half-reproachful. "And as I have already observed to you, mere geological formation is not sufficient. We want the mineral, sir; we want the fact."

"There you have it; there it is for you," said Cutbill, pointing to a somewhat bulky parcel in brown paper in the center of the table.

"This is not real coal, Mr. Cutbill," said Bramleigh, as he tore open the covering, and exposed a black misshapen lump. "You would not call this real coal?"

"I'd not call it Swansea nor Cardiff, Colonel, any more than I'd say the claret we had after dinner to day was 'Mouton;' but still I'd call each of them very good in their way."

"I return you my thanks, sir, in the name of my wine-merchant. But to come to the coal question—what could you do with this?"

"What could I do with it? Scores of things—if I had only enough of it. Burn it in grates—cook with it—smelt metals with it—burn lime with it—drive engines, not locomotives, but stationaries, with it. I tell you what, Colonel Bramleigh," said he, with the air of a man who was asserting what he would not suffer to be gainsaid, "it's coal quite enough to start a company on; coal within the meaning of the act, as the lawyers would say."

"You appear to have rather loose notions of joint-stock enterprises, Mr. Cutbill," said Bramleigh, haughtily.

"I must say, Colonel, they do not invariably inspire me with sentiments of absolute veneration."

"I hope, however, you feel, sir, that in



any enterprise—in any undertaking—where my name is to stand forth, either as promoter or abettor, that the world is to see in such guarantee the assurance of solvency and stability.”

“That is precisely what made me think of you; precisely what led me to say to Culduff, ‘Bramleigh is the man to carry the scheme out.’”

Now the familiarity that spoke of Culduff thus unceremoniously in great part reconciled Bramleigh to hear his own name treated in like fashion, all the more that it was in a quotation; but still he winced under the cool impertinence of the man, and grieved to think how far his own priceless wine had contributed towards it. The Colonel therefore merely bowed his acknowledgment and was silent.

“I’ll be frank with you,” said Cutbill, emptying the last of the decanter into his glass as he spoke. “I’ll be frank with you. We’ve got coal; whether it be much or little, there it is. As to quality, as I said before, it isn’t Cardiff. It won’t set the Thames on fire, any more than the noble lord that owns it; but coal it is, and it will burn as coal—and yield gas as coal—and make coke as coal, and who wants more? As to working it himself, Culduff might just as soon pretend he’d pay the National Debt. He is over head and ears already; he has been in bondage with the children of Israel this many a day, and if he wasn’t a peer he could not show; but that’s neither here nor there. To set the concern a-going we must either have a loan or a company. I’m for a company.”

“You are for a company?” reiterated Bramleigh, slowly, as he fixed his eyes calmly but steadily on him.

“Yes, I’m for a company. With a company, Bramleigh,” said he, as he tossed off the last glass of wine, “there’s always more of P. E.”

“Of what?”

“Of P. E. — Preliminary expenses! There’s a commission to inquire into this, and a deputation to investigate that. No men on earth dine like deputations. I never knew what dining was till I was named on a deputation. It was on sewerage. And didn’t the champagne flow! There was a viaduct to be constructed to lead into the Thames, and I never think of that viaduct without the taste of turtle in my mouth, and a genial feeling of milk-punch all over me. The assurance offices say that there was scarcely such a thing known as a gout premium in the City till the joint-stock companies came in; now they have them every day.”

“*Revenons à nos moutons*, as the French say, Mr. Cutbill,” said Bramleigh, gravely.

“If it’s a pun you mean, and that we’re to have another bottle of the same, I second the motion.”

Bramleigh gave a sickly smile as he rang the bell, but neither the jest nor the jester much pleased him.

“Bring another bottle of ‘Mouton,’ Drayton, and fresh glasses,” said he, as the butler appeared.

“I’ll keep mine, it is warm and mellow,” said Cutbill. “The only fault with that last bottle was the slight chill on it.”

“You have been frank with me, Mr. Cutbill,” said Bramleigh, as soon as the servant withdrew, “and I will be no less so with you. I have retired from the world of business—I have quitted the active sphere where I have passed some thirty odd years, and have surrendered ambition, either of money-making, or place, or rank, and come over here with one single desire, one single wish—I want to see what’s to be done for Ireland.”

Cutbill lifted his glass to his lips, but scarcely in time to hide the smile of incredulous drollery which curled them, and which the other’s quick glance detected.

“There is nothing to sneer at, sir, in what I said, and I will repeat my words. I want to see what’s to be done for Ireland.”

“It’s very laudable in you, there can be no doubt,” said Cutbill, gravely.

“I am well aware of the peril incurred by addressing to men like yourself, Mr. Cutbill, any opinions—any sentiments—which savor of disinterestedness, or—

or—”

“Poetry,” suggested Cutbill.

“No, sir; patriotism was the word I sought for. And it is not by any means necessary that a man should be an Irishman to care for Ireland. I think, sir, there is nothing in that sentiment at least which will move your ridicule.”

“Quite the reverse. I have drunk ‘Prosperity to Ireland’ at public dinners for twenty years; and in very good liquor, too, occasionally.”

“I am happy to address a gentleman so graciously disposed to listen to me,” said Bramleigh, whose face was now crimson with anger. “There is only one thing more to be wished for—that he would join some amount of trustfulness to his politeness; with that he would be perfect.”

“Here goes, then, for perfection,” cried Cutbill, gaily. “I’m ready from this time to believe anything you tell me.”

“Sir, I will not draw largely on the fund you so generously place at my dis-

posal. I will simply ask you to believe me a man of honor."

"Only that? No more than that?"

"No more, I pledge you my word."

"My dear Bramleigh, your return for the income-tax is enough to prove that. Nothing short of high integrity ever possessed as good a fortune as yours."

"You are speaking of my fortune, Mr. Cutbill, not of my character."

"Ain't they the same? Ain't they one and the same? Show me your dividends, and I will show you your disposition—that's as true as the Bible."

"I will not follow you into this mee inquiry. I will simply return to where I started from, and repeat, I want to do something for Ireland."

"Do it, in God's name; and I hope you'll like it when it's done. I have known some half-dozen men in my time who had the same sort of ambition. One of them tried a cotton-mill on the Liffey, and they burned him down. Another went in for patent fuel, and they shot his steward. A third tried Galway marble, and then shot himself. But after all there's more honor where there's more danger. What, may I ask, is your little game for Ireland?"

"I begin to suspect that a better time for business, Mr. Cutbill, might be an hour after breakfast. Shall we adjourn till tomorrow morning?"

"I am completely at your orders. For my own part, I never felt clearer in my life than I do this minute. I'm ready to go into coal with you: from the time of sinking the shaft to riddling the slack, my little calculations are all made. I could address a board of managing directors here as I sit; and say, what for dividend, what for repairs, what for a reserved fund, and what for the small robberies."

The unparalleled coolness of the man had now pushed Bramleigh's patience to its last limit; but a latent fear of what such a fellow might be in his enmity restrained him and compelled him to be cautious.

"What sum do you think the project will require, Mr. Cutbill?"

"I think about eighty thousand; but I'd say one hundred and fifty—it's always more respectable. Small investments are seldom liked; and then the margin—the margin is broader."

"Yes, certainly; the margin is much broader."

"Fifty-pound shares, with a call of five every three months, will start us. The chief thing is to begin with a large hand." Here he made a wide sweep of his arm.

"For coal like that yonder," said Bramleigh, pointing to the specimen, "you'd not get ten shillings the ton."

"Fifteen—fifteen. I'd make it the test of a man's patriotism to use it. I'd get the viceroy to burn it, and the Chief Secretary, and the Archbishop, and Father Cullen. I'd beat St. Patrick's with it, and the national schools. There could be no disguise about it; like the native whisky, it would be known by the smell of the smoke."

"You have drawn up some sort of prospectus?"

"Some sort of prospectus! I think I have. There's a document there on the table might go before the House of Commons this minute; and the short and the long of it is, Bramleigh"—here he crossed his arms on the table, and dropped his voice to a tone of great confidence—"it is a good thing—a right good thing. There's coal there, of one kind or other, for five-and-twenty years, perhaps more. The real, I may say, the only difficulty of the whole scheme will be to keep old Cuduff from running off with all the profits. As soon as the money comes rolling in, he'll set off shelling it out; he's just as wasteful as he was thirty years ago."

"That will be impossible when a company is once regularly formed."

"I know that, I know that; but men of his stamp say, 'We know nothing about trade. We haven't been bred up to office-stools and big ledgers; and when we want money, we get it how we can.'"

"We can't prevent him selling out or mortgaging his shares. You mean, in short, that he should not be on the direction?" added he.

"That's it; that's exactly it," said Cutbill, joyously.

"Will he like that? Will he submit to it?"

"He'll like whatever promises to put him most speedily into funds; he'll submit to whatever threatens to stop the supplies. Don't you know these men better than I do, who pass lives of absenteeism from their country; how little they care how or whence money comes, provided they get it? They neither know, nor want to know, about good or bad seasons, whether harvests are fine, or trade profitable; their one question is, 'Can you answer my draft at thirty-one days?'"

"Ah, yes; there is too much, far too much, of what you say in the world," said Bramleigh, sighing.

"These are not the men who want to do something for Ireland," said the other, quizzically.



"Sir, it may save us both time and temper if I tell you I have never been 'chaffed.'"

"That sounds to me like a man saying, I have never been out in the rain; but as it is so, there's no more to be said."

"Nothing, sir. Positively nothing on that head."

"Nor indeed on any other. Men in my line of life couldn't get on without it. Chaff lubricates business just the way grease oils machinery. There would be too much friction in life without chaff, Bramleigh."

"I look upon it as directly the opposite. I regard it as I would a pebble getting amongst the wheels, and causing jar and disturbance, sir."

"Well, then," said Cutbill, emptying the last drop into his glass, "I take it I need not go over all the details you will find in those papers. There are plans, and specifications, and estimates, and computations, showing what we mean to do, and how; and as I really could add nothing to the report, I suppose I may wish you a good night."

"I am very sorry, Mr. Cutbill, if my inability to be jocular should deprive me of the pleasure of your society, but there are still many points on which I desire to be informed."

"It's all there. If you were to bray me in a mortar you couldn't get more out of me than you'll find in those papers; and whether it's the heat of the room, or the wine, or the subject, but I am awfully sleepy," and he backed this assurance with a hearty yawn.

"Well, sir, I must submit to your dictation. I will try and master these details before I go to bed, and will take some favorable moment to-morrow to talk them over."

"That's said like a sensible man," said Cutbill, clapping him familiarly on the shoulder, and steadying himself the while; for, as he stood up to go, he found that the wine had been stronger than he suspected. "When we see a little more of each other," said he, in the oracular tone of a man who had drunk too much—"when we see a little more of each other, we'll get on famously. You know the world, and I know the world. You have had your dealings with men, and I have had my dealings with men, and we know what's what. Ain't I right, Bramleigh?"

"I have no doubt there is much truth in what you say."

"Truth, truth, it's true as gospel! There's only one thing, however, to be

settled between us. Each must make his little concession with reciprocity—reciprocity, ain't it?"

"Quite so; but I don't see your meaning."

"Here it is then, Bramleigh; here's what I mean. If we're to march together we must start fair. No man is to have more baggage than his neighbor. If I'm to give up chaff, do you see, you must give up humbug. If I'm not to have my bit of fun, old boy, you're not to come over me about doing something for Ireland, that's all," and with this he lounged out, banging the door after him as he went.

Mr. Cutbill, as he went to his room, had a certain vague suspicion that he had drunk more wine than was strictly necessary, and that the liquor was not impossibly stronger than he had suspected. He felt, too, in the same vague way, that there had been a passage of arms between his host and himself, but as to what it was about, and who was the victor, he had not the shadow of a conception.

Neither did his ordinary remedy of pouring the contents of his water-jug over his head aid him on this occasion.

"I'm not a bit sleepy; nonsense!" muttered he, "so I'll go and see what they are doing in the smoking-room."

Here he found the three young men of the house in that semi-thoughtful dreariness which is supposed to be the captivation of tobacco; as if the mass of young Englishmen needed anything to deepen the habitual gloom of their natures, or thicken the sluggish apathy that follows them into all inactivity.

"How jolly!" cried Cutbill, as he entered. "I'll be shot if I believed as I came up the stairs that there was any one here. You haven't even got brandy and seltzer."

"If you touch that bell, they'll bring it," said Augustus, languidly.

"Some Moselle for me," said Temple, as the servant entered.

"I'm glad you've come, Cutty," cried Jack; "as old Kemp used to say, anything is better than a dead calm, even a mutiny."

"What an infernal old hurdy-gurdy! Why haven't you a decent piano here, if you have one at all?" said Cutbill, as he ran his hands over the keys of a discordant old instrument that actually shook on its legs as he struck the chords.

"I suspect it was mere accident brought it here," said Augustus. "It was invalidated out of the girls' schoolroom, and sent up here to be got rid of."

"Sing us something, Cutty," said Jack; "it will be a real boon at this moment."

"I'll sing like a grove of nightingales for you, when I have wet my lips; but I am parched in the mouth, like a Cape parrot. I've had two hours of your governor below stairs. Very dry work, I promise you."

"Did he offer you nothing to drink?" asked Jack.

"Yes, we had two bottles of very tidy claret. He called it 'Mouton.'"

"By Jove!" said Augustus, "you must have been high in the governor's favor to be treated to his 'Bra Mouton.'"

"We had a round with the gloves, nevertheless," said Cutbill, "and exchanged some ugly blows. I don't exactly know about what or how it began, or even how it ended; but I know there was a black eye somewhere. He's passionate, rather."

"He has the spirit that should animate every gentleman," said Temple.

"That's exactly what I have. I'll stand anything, I don't care what, if it be fun. Say it's a 'joke,' and you'll never see me show bad temper; but if any fellow tries it on with me because he fancies himself a swell, or has a handle to his name, he'll soon discover his mistake. Old Culduff began that way. You'd laugh if you saw how he floundered out of the swamp afterwards."

"Tell us about it, Cutty," said Jack, encouragingly.

"I beg to say I should prefer not hearing anything which might, even by inference, reflect on a person holding Lord Culduff's position in my profession," said Temple, haughtily.

"Is that the quarter the wind's in?" asked Cutbill, with a not very sober expression in his face.

"Sing us a song, Cutty. It will be better than all this sparring," said Jack.

"What shall it be?" said Cutbill, seating himself at the piano, and running over the keys with no small skill. "Shall I describe my journey to Ireland?"

"By all means let's hear it," said Augustus.

"I forget how it goes. Indeed, some verses I was making on the curate's sister have driven the others out of my head."

Jack drew nigh and leaning over his shoulder, whispered something in his ear.

"What!" cried Cutbill, starting up; "he says he'll pitch me neck and crop out of the window."

"Not unless you deserve it—add that," said Jack, sternly.

"I must have an apology for those words, sir. I shall insist on your recalling them, and expressing your sincere regret for having ever used them."

"So you shall, Cutty. I completely forgot that this tower was ninety feet high; but I'll pitch you downstairs, which will do as well."

There was a terrible gleam of earnestness in Jack's eye as he spoke this laughingly, which appalled Cutbill far more than any bluster, and he stammered out: "Let us have no practical jokes; they're bad taste. You'd be a great fool, admiral"—this was a familiarity he occasionally used with Jack—"you'd be a great fool to quarrel with me. I can do more with the fellows at Somerset House than most men going; and when the day comes that they'll give you a command, and you'll want twelve or fifteen hundred to set you afloat, Tom Cutbill is not the worst man to know in the City. Not to say, that if things go right down here, I could help you to something very snug in our mine. Won't we come out strong then, eh?"

Here he rattled over the keys once more; and after humming to himself for a second or two, burst out with a rattling, merry air, to which he sung:—

"With crests on our harness and breechin,  
In a carriage and four we shall roll,  
With a splendid French cook in the kitchen,  
If we only succeed to find coal.  
Coal!  
If we only are sure to find coal."

"A barcarole, I declare," said Lord Culduff, entering. "It was a good inspiration led me up here."

A jolly roar of laughter at his mistake welcomed him; and Cutty, with an aside, cried out, "He's deaf as a post," and continued:—

"If we marry, we'll marry a beauty,  
If single we'll try and control  
Our tastes within limits of duty,  
And make ourselves jolly with coal,  
Coal!  
And make ourselves jolly with coal."

"They may talk of the mines of Golcondar,  
Or the shafts of Puebla del Sol;  
But to fill a man's pocket, I wonder  
If there's anything equal to coal,  
Coal!  
If there's anything equal to coal."

"At Naples we'll live on the Chiaja,  
With our schooner-yacht close to the Mole,  
And make daily picknicks to Baja,  
If we only come down upon coal,  
Coal!  
If we only come down upon coal."

"One of the fishermen's songs," said Lord Culduff, as he beat time on the table.



"I've passed many a night on the Bay of Naples listening to them."

And a wild, tumultuous laugh now convulsed the company, and Cutbill, himself overwhelmed by the absurdity, rushed to the door, and made his escape without waiting for more.

## CHAPTER XIII.

AT THE COTTAGE.

JULIA L'ESTRANGE was busily engaged in arranging some flowers in certain vases in her little drawing-room, and, with a taste all her own, draping a small hanging lamp with creepers, when Jack Bramleigh appeared at the open window, and leaning on the sill, cried out, "Good morning."

"I came over to scold you, Julia," said he. "It was very cruel of you to desert us last evening, and we had a most dreary time of it in consequence."

"Come round and hold this chair for me, and don't talk nonsense."

"And what are all these fine preparations for? You are decking out your room as if for a village fête," said he, not moving from his place nor heeding her request.

"I fancy that young Frenchman who was here last night," said she, saucily, "would have responded to my invitation if I had asked him to hold the chair I was standing on."

"I've no doubt of it," said he, gravely. "Frenchmen are vastly more gallant than we are."

"Do you know, Jack," said she again, "he is most amusing?"

"Very probably."

"And has such a perfect accent; that sort of purring French one only hears from a Parisian."

"I am charmed to hear it."

"It charmed me to hear it, I assure you. One does so long for the sounds that recall bright scenes and pleasant people; one has such a zest for the most commonplace things that bring back the memory of very happy days."

"What a lucky Frenchman to do all this!"

"What a lucky Irish girl to have met with him!" said she, gaily.

"And how did you come to know him, may I ask?"

"George had been several times over to inquire after him, and out of gratitude Count Pracontal—I am not sure that he is count though, but it is of no moment—made it a point to come here the first day

he was able to drive out. Mr. Longworth drove him over in his pony carriage, and George was so pleased with them both that he asked them to tea last evening, and they dine here to-day."

"Hence these decorations?"

"Precisely."

"What a brilliant neighborhood we have! And there are people will tell you that this is all barbarism here."

"Come over this evening, Jack, and hear M. Pracontal sing—he has a delicious tenor voice—and you'll never believe in that story of barbarism again. We had quite a little *salon* last night."

"I must take your word for his attractive qualities," said Jack, as his brow contracted and his face grew darker. "I thought your brother rather stood aloof from Mr. Longworth. I was scarcely prepared to hear of his inviting him here."

"So he did; but he found him so different from what he expected—so quiet, so well-bred, that George, who always is in a hurry to make an *amende* when he thinks he has wronged anyone, actually rushed into acquaintance with him at once."

"And his sister Julia," asked Jack, with a look of impertinent irony, "was she, too, as impulsive in her friendship?"

"I think pretty much the same."

"It must have been a charming party."

"I flatter myself it was. They stayed till midnight; and M. Pracontal declared he'd break his other leg to-morrow if it would ensure him another such evening in his convalescence."

"Fulsome rascal! I protest it lowers my opinion of women altogether when I think these are the fellows that always meet their favor."

"Women would be very ungrateful if they did not like the people who try to please them. Now, certainly, as a rule, Jack, you will admit foreigners are somewhat more eager about this than you gentlemen of England."

"I have about as much of this as I am likely to bear well from my distinguished stepmother," said he, roughly, "so don't push my patience further."

"What do you say to our little *salon* now?" said she. "Have you ever seen ferns and variegated ivy disposed more tastefully?"

"I wish—I wish," stammered he out, and then seemed unable to go on.

"And what do you wish?"

"I suppose I must not say it. You might feel offended besides."

"Not a bit, Jack. I am sure it never

could be your intention to offend me, and a mere blunder could not do so."

"Well, I'll go round and tell you what it is I wish;" and with this he entered the house and passed on into the drawing-room; and, taking his place at one side of the fire, while she stood at the other, said seriously, "I was wishing, Julia, that you were less of a coquette."

"You don't mean that?" said she, roughly, dropping her long eyelashes, as she looked down immediately after.

"I mean it seriously, Julia. It is your one fault; but it is an immense one."

"My dear Jack," said she, very gravely, "you men are such churls that you are never grateful for any attempts to please you except they be limited strictly to yourselves. You would never have dared to call any little devices, by which I sought to amuse or interest you, coquetry, so long as they were only employed on your own behalf. My real offense is that I thought the world consisted of you and some others."

"I am not your match in these sort of subtle discussions," said he, bluntly, "but I know what I say is fact."

"That I'm a coquette?" said she, with so much feigned horror that Jack could scarcely keep down the temptation to laugh.

"Just so; for the mere pleasure of displaying some grace or some attraction, you'd half kill a fellow with jealousy, or drive him clean mad with uncertainty. You insist on admiration—or what you call 'homage,' which I trust is only a French name for it—and what's the end of it all? You get plenty of this same homage; but—but—never mind. I suppose I'm a fool to talk this way. You're laughing at me, besides, all this while. I see it—I see it in your eyes."

"I wasn't laughing, Jack, I assure you. I was simply thinking that this discovery—I mean of my coquetry—wasn't yours at all. Come, be frank and own it. Who told you I was a coquette, Jack?"

"You regard me as too dull-witted to have found it out, do you?"

"No, Jack. Too honest-hearted—too unsuspecting, too generous, to put an ill construction where a better one would do as well."

"If you mean that there are others who agree with me, you're quite right."

"And who may they be?" asked she, with a quiet smile. "Come, I have a right to know."

"I don't see the right."

"Certainly I have. It would be very

ungenerous and very unjust to let me continue to exercise all those pleasing devices you have just stigmatized for the delectation of people who condemn them."

"Oh, you couldn't help that. You'd do it just to amuse yourself, as I'm sure was the case yesterday, when you put forth all your captivations for that stupid old Viscount."

"Did I?"

"Did you? You have the face to ask it?"

"I have, Jack. I have courage for even more, for I will ask you, was it not Marion said this? Was it not Marion who was so severe on all my little gracefulnesses? Well, you need not answer if you don't like. I'll not press my question: but own, it is not fair for Marion, with every advantage, her beauty and her surroundings——"

"Her what?"

"Well, I would not use a French word; but I meant to say, those accessories which are represented by dress and 'toilette'—not mean things in female estimation. With all these, why not have a little mercy for the poor curate's sister, reduced to enter the lists with very uncount weapons?"

"You won't deny that Ellen loves you?" said he, suddenly.

"I'd be sorry, very sorry, to doubt it; but she never said I was a coquette?"

"I'm sure she knows you are," said he, doggedly.

"Oh, Jack, I hope this is not the way you try people on court-martial?"

"It's the fairest way ever a fellow was tried; and if one doesn't feel him guilty he'd never condemn him."

"I'd rather people would feel less, and think a little more, if I was to be 'the accused,'" said she, half pettishly.

"You got that, Master Jack; that round shot was for *you*," said he, not without some irritation in his tone.

"Well," said she, good-humoredly, "I believe we are firing into each other this morning, and I declare I cannot see for what."

"I'll tell you, Julia. You grew very cross with me, because I accused you of being a coquette—a charge you'd have thought pretty lightly of if you hadn't known it was deserved."

"Might there not have been another reason for the crossness, supposing it to have existed?" said she, quietly.

"I cannot imagine one; at least, I can't imagine what reason you point at."

"Simply this," said she, half carelessly, "that it could have been no part of your duty to have told me so."



"You mean that it was a great liberty on my part—an unwarrantable liberty?"

"Something like it."

"That the terms which existed between us"—and now he spoke with a tremulous voice, and a look of much agitation—"could not have warranted my daring to point out a fault, even in your manner; for I am sure, after all, your nature had nothing to do with it?"

She nodded, and was silent.

"That's pretty plain, anyhow," said he, moving towards the table, where he had placed his hat. "It's a sharp lesson to give a fellow though, all the more when he was unprepared for it."

"You forget that the first sharp lesson came from *you*."

"All true; there's no denying it." He took up his hat as she spoke, and moved, half-awkwardly, towards the window. "I had a message for you from the girls, if I could only remember it. Do you happen to guess what it was about?"

She shrugged her shoulders slightly as a negative, and was silent.

"I'll be shot if I can think what it was," muttered he; "the chances are, however, it was to ask you to do something or other, and as, in your present temper, that would be hopeless, it matters little that I have forgotten it."

She made no answer to this speech, but quietly occupied herself arranging a braid of her hair that had just fallen down.

"Miss L'Estrange!" said he, in a haughty and somewhat bold tone.

"Mr. Bramleigh!" replied she, turning and facing him with perfect gravity, though her tremulous lip and sparkling eye showed what the effort to seem serious cost her.

"If you will condescend to be real, to be natural, for about a minute and a half, it may save us, or at least one of us, a world of trouble and unhappiness."

"It's not a very courteous supposition of yours that implies that I am unreal or unnatural," said she, calmly; "but no matter, go on; say what you desire to say, and you shall find me pretty attentive."

"What I want to say is this, then," said he, approaching where she stood, and leaning one arm on the chimney close to where her own arm was resting; "I wanted to tell—no, I wanted to ask you, if the old relations between us are to be considered as bygone—if I am to go away from this to-day believing that all I have ever said to you, all that you heard—for you *did* hear me, Julia—"

"Julia!" repeated she, in mock amaze-

ment. "What liberty is this, sir?" and she almost laughed out as she spoke.

"I knew well how it would be," said he, angrily. "There is a heartless levity in your nature that nothing represses. I asked you to be serious for one brief instant."

"And you shall find that I can," said she, quickly. "If I have not been more so hitherto, it has been in mercy to yourself."

"In mercy to me? To me! What do you mean?"

"Simply this. You came here to give me a lesson this morning. But it was at your sister's suggestion. It was her criticism that prompted you to the task. I read it all. I saw how ill prepared you were. You have mistaken some things, forgotten others; and, in fact, you showed me that you were far more anxious I should exculpate myself than that you yourself should be the victor. It was for this reason that I was really annoyed—seriously annoyed, at what you said to me; and I called in what you are so polite as to style my 'levity' to help me through my difficulty. Now, however, you have made me serious enough; and it is in this mood I say: Don't charge yourself another time with such a mission. Reprove whatever you like, but let it come from yourself. Don't think light-heartedness—I'll not say levity—bad in morals, because it may be bad in taste. There's a lesson for you, sir." And she held out her hand as if in reconciliation.

"But you haven't answered my question, Julia," said he tremulously.

"And what was your question?"

"I asked you if the past—if all that had taken place between us—was to be now forgotten?"

"I declare here is George," said she, bounding towards the window and opening it, "What a splendid fish, George! Did you take it yourself?"

"Yes, and he cost me the top joint of my rod; and I'd have lost him after all if Laferty had not waded out and landed him. I'm between two minds, Julia, whether I'll send him up to the Bramleighs."

She put her finger to her lip to impose caution, and said, "The admiral"—the nickname by which Jack was known—"is here."

"All right," replied L'Estrange. "We'll try and keep him for dinner, and eat the fish at home." He entered as he spoke. "Where's Jack? Didn't you say he was here?"

"So he was when I spoke. He must have slipped away without my seeing it. He is really gone."

"I hear he is gazetted—appointed to some ship on a foreign station. Did he tell you of it?"

"Not a word. Indeed, he had little time, for we did nothing but squabble since he came in."

"It was Harding told me. He said that Jack did not seem overjoyed at his good luck; and declared that he was not quite sure he would accept it."

"Indeed," said she, thoughtfully.

"That's not the only news. Colonel Bramleigh was summoned to town by a telegram this morning, but what about I didn't hear. If Harding knew—and I'm not sure that he did—he was too discreet to tell. But I am not at the end of my tidings. It seems they have discovered coal on Lord Culduff's estate, and a great share company is going to be formed, and untold wealth to be distributed amongst the subscribers."

"I wonder why Jack did not tell me he was going away?" said she.

"Perhaps he does not intend to go; perhaps the Colonel has gone up to try and get something better for him; perhaps——"

"Any perhaps will do, George," said she, like one willing to change the theme. "What do you say to my decorations? Have you no compliments to make me on my exquisite taste?"

"Harding certainly thinks well of it," said he, not heeding her question.

"Thinks well of what, George?"

"He's a shrewd fellow," continued he; "and if he deems the investment good enough to venture his own money in, I suspect, Ju, we might risk ours."

"I wish you would tell me what you are talking about; for all this is a perfect riddle to me."

"It's about vesting your two thousand pounds, Julia, which now return about seventy pounds a year, in the coal speculation. That's what I am thinking of. Harding says that, taking a very low estimate of the success, there ought to be a profit on the shares of fifteen per cent. In fact, he said he wouldn't go into it himself for less."

"Why, George, why did he say this? Is there anything wrong or immoral about coal?"

"Try and be serious for one moment, Ju," said he, with a slight touch of irritation in his voice. "What Harding evidently meant was, that a speculative enterprise was not to be deemed good if it yielded less. These shrewd men, I believe, never lay out their money without large profit."

"And, my dear George, why come and consult me about these things? Can you imagine more hopeless ignorance than mine must be on all such questions?"

"You can understand that a sum of money yielding three hundred a year is more profitably employed than when it only returned seventy."

"Yes; I think my intelligence can rise to that height."

"And you can estimate, also, what increase of comfort we should have if our present income were to be more than doubled—which it would be in this way?"

"I'd deem it positive affluence, George."

"That's all I want you to comprehend. The next question is to get Vickars to consent; he is the surviving trustee, and you'll have to write to him, Ju. It will come better from you than me, and say—what you can say with a safe conscience—that we are miserably poor, and that, though we pinch and save in every way we can, there's no reaching the end of the year without a deficit in the budget."

"I used that unlucky phrase once before, George, and he replied, 'Why don't you cut down the estimates?'"

"I know he did. The old curmudgeon meant I should sell Nora, and he has a son, a gentleman commoner at Cambridge, that spends more in wine-parties than our whole income."

"But it's his own, George. It is not our money he is wasting."

"Of course it is not; but does that exempt him from all comment? Not that it matters to us, however," added he, in a lighter tone. "Sit down, and try what you can do with the old fellow. You used to be a great pet of his once on a time."

"Yes, he went so far as to say that if I had even twenty thousand pounds, he didn't know a girl he'd rather have for a daughter-in-law."

"He didn't tell you that, Ju?" said L'Estrange, growing almost purple with shame and rage together.

"I pledge you my word he said it."

"And what did you say? What did you do?"

"I wiped my eyes with my handkerchief, and told him it was for the first time in my life I felt the misery of being poor."

"And I wager that you burst out laughing."

"I did, George. I laughed till my sides ached. I laughed till he rushed out of the room in a fit of passion, and I declare, I don't think he ever spoke ten words to me after."







Looking down from the cliff.



"This gives me scant hope of your chance of success with him."

"I don't know, George. All this happened ten months ago, when he came down here for the snipe-shooting. He may have forgiven, or better still, forgotten it. In any case, tell me exactly what I'm to write, and I'll see what I can do with him."

"You're to say that your brother has just heard from a person, in whom he places the most perfect confidence, say Harding in short—Colonel Bramleigh's agent—that an enterprise which will shortly be opened here offers an admirable opportunity of investment, and that as your small fortune in Consols—"

"In what?"

"No matter. Say that as your two thousand pounds—which now yield an interest of seventy—could secure you an income fully four times that sum, you hope he will give his consent to withdraw the money from the Funds, and employ it in this speculation. I'd not say speculation, I'd call it mine at once—coal-mine."

"But if I own this money, why must I ask Mr. Vickars' leave to make use of it as I please?"

"He is your trustee, and the law gives him this power, Ju, till you are nineteen, which you will not be till May next."

"He'll scarcely be disagreeable, when his opposition must end in five months."

"That's what I think too, but, before that five months run over, the share list may be filled, and these debentures be probably double the present price."

"I'm not sure I understand your reasoning, but I'll go and write my letter, and you shall see if I have said all that you wished."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### OFFICIAL CONFIDENCES.

LORD CULDUFF accompanied Colonel Bramleigh to town. He wanted a renewal of his leave, and deemed it better to see the head of the department in person than to address a formal demand to the office. Colonel Bramleigh, too, thought that his lordship's presence might be useful when the day of action had arrived respecting the share company—a lord in the City having as palpable a value as the most favorable news that ever sent up the Funds.

When they reached London they separated, Bramleigh taking up his quarters in the Burlington, while Lord Culduff—on pretense of running down to some noble

duke's villa near Richmond—snugly installed himself in a very modest lodging off St. James's Street, where a former valet acted as his cook and landlord, and on days of dining out assisted at the wonderful toilet, whose success was alike the marvel and the envy of Culduff's contemporaries.

Though a man of several clubs, his lordship's favorite haunt was a small unimposing-looking house close to St. James's Square, called the "Plenipo." Its members were all diplomatists, nothing below the head of a mission being eligible for ballot. A masonic mystery pervaded all the doings of that austere temple, whose dinners were reported to be exquisite, and whose cellar had such a fame that "Plenipo Lafitte" had a European reputation.

Now veteran asylums have many things commendatory about them, but from Greenwich and the Invalides downwards there is one especial vice that clings to them—they are haunts of everlasting complaint. The men who frequent them all belong to the past; their sympathies, their associations, their triumphs and successes, all pertain to the bygone. Harping eternally over the frivolity, the emptiness, and sometimes the vulgarity of the present, they urge each other on to most exaggerated notions of the time when they were young, and a depreciatory estimate of the world then around them.

It is not alone that the days of good dinners and good conversation have passed away, but even good manners have gone, and more strangely too, good looks. "I protest you don't see such women now"—one of these bewigged and rouged old debauchees would say, as he gazed at the slow procession moving on to a drawing-room, and his compeers would concur with him, and wonderingly declare that the thing was inexplicable.

In the somber-looking breakfast-room of this austere temple, Lord Culduff sat reading the *Times*. A mild, soft rain was falling without; the water dripping tepid and dirty through the heavy canopy of a London fog; and a large coal fire blazed within—that fierce furnace which seems so congenial to English taste; not impossibly because it recalls the factory and the smelting-house—the "sacred fire" that seems to inspire patriotism by the suggestion of industry.

Two or three others sat at tables through the room, all so wonderfully alike in dress, feature and general appearance, that they almost seemed reproductions of the same figure by a series of mirrors; but they were priests of the same "caste," whose forms

of thought and expression were precisely the same; and thus as they dropped their scant remarks on the topics of the day, there was not an observation or a phrase of one that might not have fallen from any of the others.

"So," cried one, "they're going to send the Grand Cross to the Duke of Hochmaringen. That will be a special mission. I wonder who'll get it?"

"Cloudesley, I'd say," observed another; "he's always on the watch for anything that comes into the 'extraordinaries.'"

"It will not be Cloudesley," said a third. "He stayed away a year and eight months when they sent him to Tripoli, and there was a rare jaw about it for the estimates."

"Hochmaringen is near Baden, and not a bad place for the summer," said Culduff. "The duchess, I think, was daughter of the margravine."

"Niece, not daughter," said a stern-looking man, who never turned his eyes from his newspaper.

"Niece or daughter, it matters little which," said Culduff, irritated at correction on such a point.

"I protest I'd rather take a turn in South Africa," cried another, "than accept one of those missions to Central Germany."

"You're right, Upton," said a voice from the end of the room; "the cookery is insufferable."

"And the hours. You retire to bed at ten."

"And the ceremonial. Blounte never threw off the lumbago he got from bowing at the court of Bratsendorf."

"They're ignoble sort of things, at the best, and should never be imposed on diplomatic men. These investitures should always be entrusted to court functionaries," said Culduff, haughtily. "If I were at the head of F. O., I'd refuse to charge one of the 'line' with such a mission."

And now something that almost verged on an animated discussion ensued as to what was and what was not the real province of diplomacy; a majority inclining to the opinion that it was derogatory to the high dignity of the calling to meddle with what, at best, was the function of the mere courtier.

"Is that Culduff driving away in that cab?" cried one, as he stood at the window.

"He has carried away my hat, I see, by mistake," said another. "What is he up to at this hour of the morning?"

"I think I can guess," said the grim individual who had corrected him in the

matter of genealogy; "he's off to F. O. to ask for the special mission he has just declared that none of us should stoop to accept."

"You've hit it, Grindesley," cried another. "I'll wager a pony you're right."

"It's so like him."

"After all, it's the sort of thing he's best up to. La Ferronaye told me he was the best master of the ceremonies in Europe."

"Why come amongst us at all, then? Why not get himself made a gold-stick, and follow the instincts of his genius?"

"Well, I believe he wants it badly," said one who affected a tone of half-kindliness. "They tell me he has not eight hundred a year left him."

"Not four. I doubt if he could lay claim to three."

"He never had in his best day above four or five thousand, though he tells you of his twenty-seven or twenty-eight."

"He had originally about six; but he always lived at the rate of twelve or fifteen, and in mere ostentation too."

"So I've always heard." And then there followed a number of little anecdotes of Culduff's selfishness, his avarice, his meanness, and such like, told with such exactitude as to show that every act of these men's lives was scrupulously watched, and when occasion offered mercilessly recorded.

While they thus sat in judgment over him, Lord Culduff himself was seated at a fire in a dingy old room in Downing Street, the Chief Secretary of Foreign Affairs opposite him. They were talking in a tone of easy familiarity, as men might who occupied the same social station, a certain air of superiority, however, being always apparent in the manner of the Minister towards the subordinate.

"I don't think you can ask for this, Culduff," said the great man, as he puffed his cigar tranquilly in front of him. "You've had three of these special missions already."

"And for the simple reason that I was the one man in England who knew how to do them."

"We don't dispute the way you did them; we only say all the prizes in the wheel should not fall to the same man."

"You have had my proxy for the last five years."

"And we have acknowledged the support—acknowledged it by more than professions."

"I can only say this, that if I had been with the other side, I'd have met somewhat different treatment."



• Don't believe it, Culduff. Every party that is in power inherits its share of obligations. We have never disowned those we owe to you."

"And why am I refused this, then?"

"If you wanted other reasons than those I have given you, I might be able to adduce them—not willingly indeed—but under pressure, and especially in strict confidence."

"Reasons against my having the mission?"

"Reasons against your having the mission."

"You amaze me, my lord. I almost doubt that I have heard you aright. I must, however, insist on your explaining yourself. Am I to understand that there are personal grounds of unfitness?"

The other bowed in assent.

"Have the kindness to let me know them."

"First of all, Culduff, this is to be a family mission—the duchess is a connection of our own royal house—and a certain degree of display, and consequent expense, will be required. Your fortune does not admit of this."

"Push on to the more cogent reason, my lord," said Culduff, stiffly.

"Here, then, is the more cogent reason. The court has not forgotten—what possibly the world may have forgotten—some of those passages in your life for which you, perhaps, have no other remorse than that they are not likely to recur; and as you have given no hostages for good behavior, in the shape of a wife, the court, I say, is sure to veto your appointment. You see it all as clearly as I do."

"So far as I do see," said Culduff, slowly, "the first objection is my want of fortune; the second, my want of a wife?"

"Exactly so."

"Well, my lord, I am able to meet each of these obstacles; my agent has just discovered coal on one of my Irish estates, and I am now in town to make arrangements on a large scale to develop the source of wealth. As to the second disability, I shall pledge myself to present the Viscountess Culduff at the next drawing-room."

"Married already?"

"No, but I may be within a few weeks. In fact, I mean to place myself in such a position that no one holding your office can pass me over by a pretext, or affect to ignore my claim by affirming that I labor under a disability."

"This sounds like menace, does it not?" said the other, as he threw his cigar impatiently from him.

"A mere protocol, my lord, to denote intention."

"Well, I'll submit your name. I'll go further—I'll support it. Don't leave town for a day or two. Call on Beadlesworth and see Repsley; tell him what you've said to me. If you could promise it was one of his old maiden sisters that you thought of making Lady Culduff, the thing could be clenched at once. But I take it you have other views?"

"I have other views," said he, gravely.

"I'm not indiscreet, and I shall not ask you more on that head. By the way, isn't your leave up, or nearly up?"

"It expired on Wednesday last, and I want it renewed for two months."

"Of course, if we send you on this mission, you'll not want the leave? I had something else to say. What was it?"

"I have not the very vaguest idea."

"Oh! I remember. It was to recommend you not to take your wife from the stage. There's a strong prejudice in a certain quarter as to that—in fact, I may say it couldn't be got over."

"I may relieve you of any apprehensions on that score. Indeed, I don't know what fact in my life should expose me to the mere suspicion."

"Nothing, nothing—except that impulsive generosity of your disposition which might lead you to do what other men would stop short to count the cost of."

"It would never lead me to derogate, my lord," said he, proudly, as he took his hat, and bowing haughtily, left the room.

"The greatest ass in the whole career, and the word is a bold one," said the Minister, as the door closed. "Meanwhile, I must send in his name for this mission, which he is fully equal to. What a happy arrangement it is, that in an age when our flunkies aspire to be gentlemen, there are gentlemen who ask nothing better than to be flunkies!"

## CHAPTER XV.

WITH HIS LAWYER.

THOUGH Colonel Bramleigh's visit to town was supposed to be in furtherance of that speculation by which Lord Culduff calculated on wealth and splendor, he had really another object; and while Culduff imagined him to be busy in the City, and deep in shares and stock lists, he was closely closeted with his lawyer, and earnestly pouring over a mass of time-worn letters and documents, carefully noting down

dates, docketing, and annotating, in a way that showed what importance he attached to the task before him.

"I tell you what, Sedley," said he, as he threw his pen disdainfully from him, and lay back in his chair, "the whole of this move is a party dodge. It is part and parcel of that vile persecution with which the Tory faction pursued me during my late canvass. You remember their vulgar allusions to my father, the brewer, and their coarse jests about my frothy oratory. This attack is but the second act of the same drama."

"I don't think so," mildly rejoined the other party. "Conflicts are sharp enough while the struggle lasts; but they rarely carry their bitterness beyond the day of battle."

"That is an agent's view of the matter," said Bramleigh, with asperity. "The agent always persists in believing the whole thing a sham fight; but though men do talk a great deal of rot and humbug about their principles on the hustings, their personal feelings are just as real, just as acute, and occasionally just as painful, as on any occasion in their lives; and I repeat to you, the trumped-up claim of this foreigner is neither more nor less than a piece of party malignity."

"I cannot agree with you. The correspondence we have just been looking at shows how upwards of forty years ago the same pretensions were put forward, and a man calling himself Montagu Lami Bramleigh declared he was the rightful heir to your estate."

"A rightful heir whose claims could be always compromised by a ten-pound note was scarcely very dangerous."

"Why make any compromise at all if the fellow was clearly an impostor?"

"For the very reason that you yourself now counsel a similar course: to avoid the scandal of a public trial. To escape all those insolent comments which a party press is certain to pass on a political opponent."

"That could scarcely have been apprehended from the Bramleigh I speak of, who was clearly poor, illiterate, and friendless; whereas the present man has, from some source or other, funds to engage eminent counsel and retain one of the first men at the bar."

"I protest, Sedley, you puzzle me," said Bramleigh, with an angry sparkle in his his eye. "A few moments back you treated all this pretension as a mere pretext for extorting money, and now you talk of this fellow and his claim as subjects that may

one day be matter for the decision of a jury. Can you reconcile two views so diametrically opposite?"

"I think I can. It is at law as in war. The feint may be carried on to a real attack whenever the position assailed be possessed of an over-confidence or but ill defended. It might be easy enough, perhaps, to deal with this man. Let him have some small success, however; let him gain a verdict, for instance, in one of those petty suits for ejection, and his case at once becomes formidable."

"All this," said Bramleigh, "proceeds on the assumption that there is something in the fellow's claim?"

"Unquestionably."

"I declare," said Bramleigh, rising and pacing the room, "I have not temper for this discussion. My mind has not been disciplined to that degree of refinement that I can accept a downright swindle as a demand founded on justice."

"Let us prove it a swindle, and there is an end of it."

"And will you tell me, sir," said he, passionately, "that every gentleman holds his estates on the condition that the title may be contested by any impostor who can dupe people into advancing money to set the law in motion?"

"When such proceedings are fraudulent a very heavy punishment awaits them."

"And what punishment of the knave equals the penalty inflicted on the honest man in exposure, shame, insolent remarks, and, worse than even these, a contemptuous pity for that reverse of fortune which newspaper writers always announce as an inevitable consummation?"

"These are all hard things to bear, but I don't suspect they ever deterred any man from holding an estate."

The half-jocular tone of his remark rather jarred on Bramleigh's sensibilities, and he continued to walk the room in silence; at last, stopping short, he wheeled round and said:—

"Do you adhere to your former opinion? would you try a compromise?"

"I would. The man has a case quite good enough to interest a speculative lawyer—good enough to go before a jury—good enough for everything but success. One-half what the defense would cost you will probably satisfy his expectations, not to speak of all you will spare yourself in unpleasantness and exposure."

"It is a hard thing to stoop to," said Bramleigh, painfully.

"It need not be, at least not to the extent you imagine; and when you throw



your eye over your lawyer's bill of cost, the phrase 'incidental expenses' will spare your feelings any more distinct reference to this transaction."

"A most considerate attention. And now for the practical part. Who is this man's lawyer?"

"A most respectable practitioner. Kelson, of Temple Court. A personal friend of my own."

"And what terms would you propose?"

"I'd offer five thousand, and be prepared to go to eight, possibly to ten."

"To silence a mere menace."

"Exactly. It's a mere menace to-day, but six months hence it may be something more formidable. It is a curious case, cleverly contrived and ingeniously put together. I don't say that we couldn't smash it; such carpentry always has a chink or an open somewhere. Meanwhile the scandal is spreading over not only England, but over the world, and no matter how favorable the ultimate issue, there will always remain in men's minds the recollection that the right to your estate was contested, and that you had to defend your possession."

"I had always thought till now," said Bramleigh, slowly, "that the legal mind attached very little importance to the flying scandals that amuse society. You appear to accord them weight and influence."

"I am not less a man of the world because I am a lawyer, Colonel Bramleigh," said the other, half tartly.

"If this must be done the sooner it be over the better. A man of high station—a peer—is at this moment paying such attention to one of my daughters that I may expect at any moment, to-day perhaps, to receive a formal proposal for her hand. I do not suspect that the threat of an unknown claimant to my property would disturb his lordship's faith in my security or my station, but the sensitive dislike of men of his class to all publicity that does not redound to honor or distinction—the repugnance to whatever draws attention to them for aught but court favor or advancement—might well be supposed to have its influence with him, and I think it would be better to spare him—to spare us, too—this exposure."

"I'll attend to it immediately. Kelson hinted to me that the claimant was now in England."

"I was not aware of that."

"Yes, he is over here now, and I gather, too, has contrived to interest some people in his pretensions."

"Does he affect the station of a gentleman?"

"Thoroughly; he is, I am told, well-mannered, prepossessing in appearance, and presentable in every respect."

"Let us ask him over to Castello, Sedley," said Bramleigh, laughing.

"I've known of worse strategy," said the lawyer, dryly.

"What! are you actually serious?"

"I say that such a move might not be the worst step to an amicable settlement. In admitting the assailant to see all the worth and value of the fortress, it would also show him the resources for defense, and he might readily compute what poor chances were his against such odds."

"Still, I doubt if I could bring myself to consent to it. There is a positive indignity in making any concession to such a palpable imposture."

"Not palpable till proven. The most unlikely cases have now and then pushed some of our ablest men to upset. Attack can always choose its own time, its own ground, and is master of almost every condition of the combat."

"I declare, Sedley, if this man had retained your services to make a good bargain for him, he could scarcely have selected a more able agent."

"You could not more highly compliment the zeal I am exercising in your service."

"Well, I take it, I must leave the whole thing in your hands. I shall not prolong my stay in town. I wanted to do something in the city, but I find these late crashes in the banks have spread such terror and apprehension, that nobody will advance a guinea on anything. There is an admirable opening just now—coal."

"In Egypt?"

"No, in Ireland."

"Ah, in Ireland? That's very different. You surely cannot expect capital will take that channel?"

"You are an admirable lawyer, Sedley. I am told London has not your equal as a special pleader, but let me tell you you are not either a projector or a politician. I am both, and I declare to you that this country which you deride and distrust is the California of Great Britain. Write to me at your earliest; finish this business if you can, out of hand, and if you make good terms for me I'll send you some shares in an enterprise—an Irish enterprise—which will pay you a better dividend than some of your East county railroads."

"Have you changed the name of your place? Your son, Mr. John Bramleigh,

writes 'Bishop's Folly' at the top of his letter."

"It is called Castello, sir. I am not responsible for the silly caprices of a sailor."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### SOME MISUNDERSTANDINGS.

LORD CULDUFF and Colonel Bramleigh spoke little to each other as they journeyed back to Ireland. Each fell back upon the theme personally interesting to him, and cared not to impart it to his neighbor. They were not like men who had so long travelled the same road in life that by a dropping word a whole train of associations can be conjured up, and familiar scenes and people be passed in review before the mind.

A few curt sentences uttered by Bramleigh told how matters stood in the City—money was "tight" being the text of all he said; but of that financial sensitiveness that shrinks timidly from all enterprise after a period of crash and bankruptcy, Culduff could make nothing. In his own craft nobody dreaded the fire because his neighbor's child was burned, and he could not see why capitalists should not learn something from diplomacy.

Nor was Colonel Bramleigh, on his side, much better able to follow the subjects which had interest for his companion. The rise and fall of kingdoms, the varying fortunes of states, impressed themselves upon the City man by the condition of financial credit they implied; and a mere glance at the price of a foreign loan conveyed to his appreciation a more correct notion of a people than all the blue-books and all the correspondence with plenipotentiaries.

These were not Culduff's views. His code—it is the code of all his calling—was: No country of any pretensions, no more than any gentleman of blood and family, ever became bankrupt. Pressed, hard-pushed, he would say: Yes! we all of us have our difficulties, and to surmount them occasionally we are driven to make unprofitable bargains, but we "rub through," and so will Greece and Spain and those other countries where they are borrowing at twelve or twenty per cent., and raise a loan each year to discharge the dividends.

Not only, then, were these two little gifted with qualities to render them companionable to each other, but from the totally different way every event and every circumstance presented itself to their minds,

each grew to conceive for the other a sort of depreciatory estimate as of one who only could see a very small part of any subject, and even that colored and tinted by the hues of his own daily calling.

"So, then," said Culduff, after listening to a somewhat lengthy explanation from Bramleigh of why and how it was that there was nothing to be done financially at the moment—"so, then, I am to gather the plan of a company to work the mines is out of the question?"

"I would rather call it deferred than abandoned," was the cautious reply.

"In my career what we postpone we generally prohibit. And what other course is open to us?"

"We can wait, my lord, we can wait. Coal is not like indigo or tobacco; it is not a question of hours—whether the crop can be saved or ruined. We can wait."

"Very true, sir; but I cannot wait. There are some urgent calls upon me just now, the men who are pressing which will not be so complaisant as to wait either."

"I was always under the impression, my lord, that your position as a peer, and the nature of the services that you were engaged in, were sufficient to relieve you from all the embarrassments that attach to humbler men in difficulties?"

"They don't arrest, but they dun us, sir; and they dun with an insistence and an amount of menace, too, that middle-class people can form no conception of. They besiege the departments we serve under with their vulgar complaints, and if the rumor gets abroad that one of us is about to be advanced to a governorship or an embassy, they assemble in Downing Street like a Reform demonstration. I declare to you I had to make my way through a lane of creditors from the Privy Council Office to the private entrance to F. O., my hands full of their confounded accounts—one fellow, a bootmaker, actually having pinned his bill to the skirt of my coat as I went. And the worst of these impertinences is, that they give a Minister who is indisposed towards you a handle for refusing your just claims. I have just come through such an ordeal: I have been told that my debts are to be a bar to my promotion."

The almost tremulous horror which he gave to this last expression—as of an outrage unknown to mankind—warned Bramleigh to be silent.

"I perceive that you do not find it easy to believe this, but I pledge my word to you it is true. It is not forty-eight hours since a Secretary of State assumed to make



my personal liabilities—the things which, if any things are a man's own, are certainly so—to make these an objection to my taking a mission of importance. I believe he was sorry for his indiscretion; I have reason to suppose that it was a blunder he will not readily repeat.”

“And you obtained your appointment?” asked Bramleigh.

“Minister extraordinary and plenipotentiary to the court of Hochmaringen,” said Culduff, with a slow and pompous enunciation.

Bramleigh, pardonably ignorant of the geography of the important state alluded to, merely bowed in acknowledgment. “Is there much—much to do at one of these courts?” asked he, diffidently, after a pause.

“In one sense there is a great deal. In Germany the action of the greater cabinets is always to be discovered in the intrigues of the small dukedoms, just as you gather the temper of the huntsman from the way he lashes the hounds. You may, therefore, send a ‘crétin,’ if you like, to Berlin or Vienna; you want a man of tact and address at Sigmaringen or Kleinesel-stadt. They begin to see that here at home, but it took them years to arrive at it.”

Whether Bramleigh was confounded by the depth of this remark, or annoyed by the man who made it, he relapsed into a dreamy silence that soon passed into sleep, into which state the illustrious diplomatist followed, and thus was the journey made till the tall towers of Castello came into view, and they found themselves rapidly carcering along with four posters towards the grand entrance. The tidings of their coming soon reached the drawing-room, and the hall was filled by the young members of the family to welcome them. “Remember,” said Bramleigh, “we have had nothing but a light luncheon since morning. Come and join us, if you like, in the dining-room, but let us have some dinner as soon as may be.”

It is not pleasant, perhaps, to be talked to while eating by persons quite unemphatically employed by the pleasures of the table; but there is a sort of “free and easy” at such times not wholly un conducive to agreeable intercourse, and many little cares and attentions, impossible or unmeaning in the more formal habits of the table, are now graceful adjuncts to the incident. Thus was it that Marion contrived by some slight service or other to indicate to Lord Culduff that he was an honored guest; and when she filled his glass with champagne, and poured a little into her own to pledge him,

the great man felt a sense of triumph that warmed the whole of that region where, anatomically, his heart was situated. While the others around were engaged in general conversation, she led him to talk of his journey to town, and what he had done there; and he told her somewhat proudly of the high mission about to be entrusted to him, not omitting to speak of the haughty tone he had used towards the Minister, and the spirit he had evinced in asserting his just claims. “We had what threatened at one time to be a stormy interview. When a man like myself has to recall the list of his services, the case may well be considered imminent. He pushed me to this, and I accepted his challenge. I told him, if I am not rich, it is because I have spent my fortune in maintaining the dignity of the high stations I have filled. The breaches in my fortune are all honorable wounds. He next objected to what I could not but admit as a more valid barrier to my claims. Can you guess it?”

She shook her head in dissent. It could not be his rank, or anything that bore upon his rank. Was it possible that official prudery had been shocked by the noble lord's social derelictions? Had the scandal of that old elopement survived to tarnish his fame and injure his success? And she blushed as she thought of the theme to which he invited her approach.

“I see you do divine it,” said he, smiling courteously.

“I suspect not,” said she, diffidently, and still blushing deeper.

“It would be a great boon to me—a most encouraging assurance,” said he, in a low and earnest voice, “if I could believe that your interest in me went so far as actually to read the story and anticipate the catastrophe of my life. Tell me, then, I entreat you, that you know what I allude to.”

She hesitated. “Was it possible,” thought she, “that he wished me to admit that my opinion of him was not prejudiced by this ‘escapade’ of thirty years ago? Is he asking me to own that I am tolerant towards such offenses?” His age, his tone generally, his essentially foreign breeding, made this very possible. Her perplexity was great, and her confusion increased with every minute.

At this critical moment there was a general move to go into the drawing-room, and, as he gave her his arm, Lord Culduff drew her gently towards him, and said, in his most insinuating voice, “Let me hear my fate.”

"I declare, my lord," said she, hesitatingly, "I don't know what to say. Moralists and worldly people have two different measures for these things. I have no pretensions to claim a place with the former, and I rather shrink from accepting all the ideas of the latter. At all events, I would suppose that after a certain lapse of time, when years have gone over—profitably, I would hope—in fact, I mean—in short, I do not know what I mean."

"You mean, perhaps, that it is not at my time of life men take such a step with prudence. Is that it?" asked he, trying in vain to keep down the irritation that moved him.

"Well, my lord, I believe about the prudence there can scarcely be two opinions, whether a man be young or old. These things are wrong in themselves, and nothing can make them right."

"I protest I am unable to follow you," said he, tartly.

"All the better, my lord, if I be only leading you where you have no inclination to wander. I see Nelly wants me at the piano."

"And you prefer accompanying *her* to *me*?" said he, reproachfully.

"At least, my lord, we shall be in harmony, which is scarcely our case here."

He sighed, almost theatrically, as he relinquished her arm, and, retiring to a remote part of the room, affected to read a newspaper. Mr. Cutbill, however, soon drew a chair near, and engaged him in conversation.

"So Bramleigh has done nothing," whispered Cutbill, as he bent forward. "He did not, so far as I gather, even speak of the mine in the City."

"He said it was of no use; the time was unfavorable."

"Did you ever know it otherwise? Isn't it with that same cant of an unfavorable time these men always add so much to the premium on every undertaking?"

"Sir, I am unable to answer your question. It is my first—I would I may be able to say, and my last—occasion to deal with this class of people."

"They're not a bad set, after all. Only you must take them in the way they're used to—the way they understand."

"It is a language I have yet to learn, Mr. Cutbill."

"The sooner your lordship sets to work at it the better then."

Lord Cudduff wheeled round in his chair, and stared with amazement at the man before him. He saw, however, the unmistakable signs of his having drunk freely, and

his bloodshot eyes declared that the moment was not favorable for calm discussion.

"It would be as well, perhaps, to adjourn this conversation," said Cudduff.

"I'm for business—anywhere and at any moment. I made one of the best hits I ever chanced upon after a smash on the Trent Valley line. There was Boulders—of the firm of Skale and Boulders Brothers—had his shoulder dislocated and two of his front teeth knocked out. He was lying with a lot of scantling and barrel-staves over him, and he cried out, 'Is there any one there?' I said, 'Yes; Cutbill. Tom Cutbill, of Viceregal Terrace, St. John's Wood.'"

Lord Cudduff's patience could stand no more, and he arose with a slight bow and moved haughtily away. Cutbill, however, was quickly at his side. "You must hear the rest of this; it was a matter of close on ten thousand pounds to me, and this is the way it came out——"

"I felicitate you heartily, sir, on your success, but beg I may be spared the story of it."

"You've heard worse. Egad, I'd not say you haven't told worse. It's not every fellow, I promise you, has his wits about him at a moment when people are shouting for help, and an express train standing on its head in a cutting, and a tender hanging over a viaduct."

"Sir, there are worse inflictions than even this."

"Eh, what?" said Cutbill, crossing his arms on his chest, and looking fully in the other's face; but Lord Cudduff moved quietly on, and, approaching a table where Ellen was seated, said, "I'm coming to beg for a cup of tea;" not a trace of excitement or irritation to be detected in his voice or manner. He loitered for a few moments at the table, talking lightly and pleasantly on indifferent subjects, and then moved carelessly away till he found himself near the door, when he made a precipitate escape and hurried up to his room.

It was his invariable custom to look at himself carefully in the glass whenever he came home at night. As a general might have examined the list of killed and wounded after an action, computing with himself the cost of victory or defeat, so did this veteran warrior of a world's campaign go carefully over all the signs of wear and tear, the hard lines of pain or chequered coloring of agitation, which his last engagement might have inflicted.

As he sat down before his mirror now, he was actually shocked to see what ravages a single evening had produced. The circles



around his eyes were deeply indented, the corners of his mouth drawn down so fixedly and firmly that all attempts to conjure up a smile were failures, while a purple tint beneath his rouge totally destroyed that delicate coloring which was wont to impart the youthful look to his features.

The vulgar impertinence of Cutbill made indeed but little impression upon him. An annoyance while it lasted, it still left nothing for memory that could not be dismissed with ease. It was Marion. It was what she had said that weighed so painfully on his heart, wounding where he was most intensely and delicately sensitive. She had told him—what had she told him? He tried to recall her exact words, but he could not. They were in reply to remarks of his own, and owed all their significance to the context. One thing she certainly had said—that there were certain steps in life about which the world held but one opinion, and the allusion was to men marrying late in life; and then she added a remark as to the want of “sympathy”—or was it “harmony” she called it?—between them. How strange that he could not remember more exactly all that passed—he, who, after his interviews with Ministers and great men, could go home and send off in an official dispatch the whole dialogue of the audience! But why seek for the precise expressions she employed? The meaning should surely be enough for him, and that was—there was no denying it—that the disparity of their ages was a bar to his pretensions. “Had our ranks in life been alike, there might have been force in her observation; but she forgets that a coronet encircles a brow like a wreath of youth;” and he adjusted the curls of his wig as he spoke, and smiled at himself more successfully than he had done before.

“On the whole, perhaps it is better,” said he, as he arose and walked the room. “A mésalliance can only be justified by great beauty or great wealth. One must do a consumedly rash thing, or a wonderfully sharp one, to come out well with the world. Forty thousand, and a good-looking girl—she isn’t more—would not satisfy the just expectations of society, which, with men like myself, are severely exacting.”

He had met with a repulse, he could not deny it, and the sense of pain it inflicted galled him to the quick. To be sure, the thing occurred in a remote, out-of-the-way spot, where there were no people to discover or retail the story. It was not as if it chanced in some cognate land of society, where such incidents get immediate currency and form the gossip of every coterie.

Who was ever to hear of what passed in an Irish country-house? Marion herself indeed might write it—she mest probably would—but to whom? To some friend as little in the world as herself, and none knew better than Lord Culduff of how few people the “world” was composed. It was a defeat, but a defeat that need never be gazetted. And, after all, are not the worst things in all our reverses the comments that are passed upon them? Are not the censures of our enemies and the condolences of our friends sometimes harder to bear than the misfortunes that have evoked them?

What Marion’s manner towards him might be in future, was also a painful reflection. It would naturally be a triumphant incident in her life to have rejected such an offer. Would she be eager to parade this fact before the world? Would she try to let people know that she had refused him? This was possible. He felt that such a slight would tarnish the whole glory of his life, whose boast was to have done many things that were actually wicked, but not one that was merely weak.

The imminent matter was to get out of his present situation without defeat—to quit the field, but not as a beaten army; and revolving how this was to be done he sunk off to sleep.

## CHAPTER XVII.

AT CASTELLO.

A PRIVATE letter from a friend had told Jack Bramleigh that his father’s opposition to the Government had considerably damaged his chance of being employed, but that he possibly might get a small command on the African station. With what joy, then, did he receive the “official,” marked on H.M.’s service, informing him that he was appointed to the *Sneezer* despatch gunboat, to serve in the Mediterranean, and enjoining him to repair to town without unnecessary delay, to receive further orders.

He had forborne, as we have seen, to tell Julia his former tidings. They were not indeed of a nature to rejoice over, but here was great news. He only wanted two more years to be qualified for his “post,” and once a captain, he would have a position which might warrant his asking Julia to be his wife, and thus was it that the great dream of his whole existence was interwoven into his career, and his advancement as a sailor linked with his hopes as a

lover; and surely it is well for us that ambitions in life appeal to us in other and humbler ways than by the sense of triumph, and that there are better rewards for success than either the favor of princes or the insignia of rank.

To poor Jack, looking beyond that two years, it was not a three-decker, nor even a frigate, it was the paradise of a cottage overgrown with sweetbriar and honeysuckle, that presented itself—and a certain graceful figure, gauzy and floating, sitting in the porch, while he lay at her feet, lulled by the drowsy ripple of the little trout-stream that ran close by. So possessed was he by this vision, so entirely and wholly did it engross him, that it was with difficulty he gave coherent replies to the questions poured in upon him at the breakfast table, as to the sort of service he was about to be engaged in, and whether it was as good or a better thing than he had been expecting.

"I wish you joy, Jack," said Augustus. "You're a lucky dog to get afloat again so soon. You haven't been full six months on half-pay."

"I wish you joy, too," said Temple, "and am thankful to fate it is you, and not I, have to take the command of H. M.'s gunboat *Sneezer*."

"Perhaps, all things considered, it is as well as it is," said Jack, dryly.

"It is a position of some importance. I mean it is not the mere command of a small vessel," said Marion, haughtily; for she was always eager that every incident that befell the family should redound to their distinction, and subserve their onward march to greatness.

"Oh, Jack," whispered Nelly, "let us walk over to the cottage, and tell them the news;" and Jack blushed as he squeezed her hand in gratitude for the speech.

"I almost wonder they gave you this, Jack," said his father, "seeing how active a part I took against them; but I suppose there is some truth in the saying that ministers would rather soothe enemies than succor friends."

"Don't you suspect, papa, that Lord Culduff may have had some share in this event? His influence, I know, is very great with his party," said Marion.

"I hope and trust not," burst out Jack; "rather than owe my promotion to that bewigged old dandy, I'd go and keep a lighthouse."

"A most illiberal speech," said Temple. "I was about to employ a stronger word, but still not stronger than my sense of its necessity."

"Remember, Temple," replied Jack, "I have no possible objection to his being *your* patron. I only protest that he shan't be *mine*. He may make you something ordinary or extraordinary to-morrow, and I'll never quarrel about it."

"I am grateful for the concession," said the other, bowing.

"If it was Lord Culduff that got you this step," said Colonel Bramleigh, "I must say nothing could be more delicate than his conduct; he never so much as hinted to me that he had taken trouble in the matter."

"He is *such* a gentleman!" said Marion, with a very enthusiastic emphasis on the word.

"Well, perhaps, it's a very ignoble confession," said Nelly, "but I frankly own I'd rather Jack owed his good fortune to his good fame than to all the peers in the calendar."

"What pains Ellen takes," said Marion, "to show that her ideas of life and the world are not those of the rest of us!"

"She has me with her whenever she goes into the lobby," said Jack, "or I'll pair with Temple, who is sure to be on the stronger side."

"Your censure I accept as a compliment," said Temple.

"And is this all our good news has done for us—to set us exchanging tart speeches and sharp repartees with each other?" said Colonel Bramleigh. "I declare it is a very ungracious way to treat pleasant tidings. Go out, boys, and see if you couldn't find some one to dine with us, and wet Jack's commission, as they used to call it long ago."

"We can have the L'Estranges and our amiable neighbor, Captain Craufurd," said Marion; "but I believe our resources end with these."

"Why not look up the Frenchman you smashed some weeks ago, Jack?" said Augustus; "he ought to be about by this time, and it would only be common decency to show him some attention."

"With all my heart. I'll do anything you like but talk French with him. But where is he to be found?"

"He stops with Longworth," said Augustus, "which makes the matter awkward. Can we invite one without the other, and can we open our acquaintance with Longworth by an invitation to dinner?"

"Certainly not," chimed in Temple. "First acquaintance admits of no breaches of etiquette. Intimacies may, and rarely, too, forgive such."

"What luck to have such a pilot to



steer us through the narrow channel of proprieties!" cried Jack, laughing.

"I think, too, it would be as well to remember," resumed Temple, "that Lord Cuduff is our guest, and to whatever accidents of acquaintanceship we may be ready to expose ourselves, we have no right to extend these casualties to *him*."

"I suspect we are not likely to see his lordship to-day, at least; he has sent down his man to beg he may be excused from making his appearance at dinner; a slight attack of gout confines him to his room," said Marion.

"That's not the worst bit of news I've heard to-day," broke in Jack. "Dining in that old cove's company is the next thing to being tried by a court-martial. I fervently hope he'll be on the sick list till I take my departure."

"As to getting these people together to-day, it's out of the question," said Augustus. "Let us say Saturday next, and try what we can do."

This was agreed upon, Temple being deputed to ride over to Longworth's, leaving to his diplomacy to make what further advances events seemed to warrant—a trustful confidence in his tact to conduct a nice negotiation being a flattery more than sufficient to recompense his trouble. Jack and Nelly would repair to the cottage to secure the l'Estranges. Craufurd could be apprised by a note.

"Has Outbill got the gout, too?" asked Jack. "I have not seen him this morning."

"No; that very cool gentleman took out my cob pony, Fritz, this morning at day-break," said Augustus, "saying he was off to the mines at Lisconnor, and wouldn't be back till evening."

"And do you mean to let such a liberty pass unnoticed?" asked Temple.

"A good deal will depend upon how Fritz looks after his journey. If I see that the beast has not suffered, it is just possible I may content myself with a mere intimation that I trust the freedom may not be repeated."

"You told me Anderson offered you two hundred for that cob," broke in Temple.

"Yes, and asked how much more would tempt me to sell him."

"If he were a peer of the realm, and took such a liberty with me, I'd not forgive him," said Temple, as he arose and left the room in a burst of indignation.

"I may say we are a very high-spirited family," said Jack, gravely, "and I'll warn the world not to try any familiarities with us."

"Come away, naughty boy," whispered Eleanor; "you are always trailing your coat for some one to stand upon."

"Tell me, Nelly," said he, as they took their way through the pinewood that led to the cottage,— "tell me, Nelly, am I right or wrong in my appreciation—for I really want to be just and fair in the matter—are we Bramleighs confounded snobs?"

The downright honest earnestness with which he put the question made her laugh heartily, and for some seconds left her unable to answer him.

"I half suspect that we may be, Jack," said she, still smiling.

"I'm certain of one thing," continued he in the same earnest tone, "our distinguished guest deems us such. There is a sort of simpering enjoyment of all that goes on around him, and a condescending approval of us that seems to say, 'Go on, you'll catch the tone yet. You're not doing badly by any means.' He pushed me to the very limit of my patience the other day with this, and I had to get up from luncheon and leave the house to avoid being openly rude to him. Do you mind my lighting a cigar, Nelly, for I've got myself so angry that I want a weed to calm me down again?"

"Let us talk of something else; for on this theme I'm not much better-tempered than yourself."

"There's a dear good girl," said he, drawing her towards him, and kissing her cheek. "I'd have sworn you felt as I did about this old fop; and we must be arrant snobs, Nelly, or else his coming down amongst us here would not have broken us all up, setting us exchanging sneers and scoffs and criticising each other's knowledge of life. Confound the old humbug; let us forget him."

They walked along without exchanging a word for full ten minutes or more, till they reached the brow of the cliff, from which the pathway led down to the cottage. "I wonder when I shall stand here again?" said he, pausing. "Not that I'm going on any hazardous service, or to meet a more formidable enemy than a tart flag-captain; but the world has such strange turns and changes that a couple of years may do anything with a man's destiny."

"A couple of years may make you a post-captain, Jack; and that will be quite enough to change your destiny."

He looked affectionately towards her for a moment, and then turned away to hide the emotion he could not master.

"And then, Jack," said she, caressingly,

"it will be a very happy day that shall bring us to this spot again."

"Who knows, Nelly?" said he, with a degree of agitation that surprised her. "I haven't told you that Julia and I had a quarrel the last time we met."

"A quarrel!"

"Well, it was something very like one. I told her there were things about her manner—certain ways she had that I didn't like; and I spoke very seriously to her on the subject. I didn't go beating about, but said she was too much of a coquette."

"Oh, Jack!"

"It's all very well to be shocked, and cry out, 'Oh, Jack!' but isn't it true? haven't you seen it yourself? hasn't Marion said some very strange things about it?"

"My dear Jack, I needn't tell you that we girls are not always fair in our estimates of each other, even when we think we are,—and it is not always that we want to think so. Julia is not a coquette in any sense that the word carries censure, and you were exceedingly wrong to tell her she was."

"That's how it is!" cried he, pitching his cigar away in impatience. "There's a freemasonry amongst you that calls you all to arms the moment one is attacked. Isn't it open to a man to tell the girl he hopes to make his wife that there are things in her manner he doesn't approve of and would like changed?"

"Certainly not; at least it would require some nicer tact than yours to approach such a theme with safety."

"Temple, perhaps, could do it," said he, sneeringly.

"Temple certainly would not attempt it."

Jack made a gesture of impatience, and, as if desirous to change the subject, said, "What's the matter with our distinguished guest? Is he ill, that he won't dine below-stairs to-day?"

"He calls it a slight return of his Greek fever and begs to be excused from presenting himself at dinner."

"He and Temple have been writing little three-cornered notes to each other all the morning. I suppose it is diplomatic usage."

The tone of irritation he spoke in seemed to show that he was actually seeking for something to vent his anger upon, and trying to provoke some word of contradiction or dissent; but she was silent, and for some seconds they walked on without speaking.

"Look!" cried he, suddenly; "there goes Julia. Do you see her yonder on the

path up the cliff; and who is that clambering after her? I'll be shot if it's not Lord Culduff."

"Julia has got her drawing-book, I see. They're on some sketching excursion."

"He wasn't long in throwing off his Greek fever, eh?" cried Jack, indignantly. "It's cool, isn't it, to tell the people in whose house he is stopping that he is too ill to dine with them, and then set out gallivanting in this fashion?"

"Poor old man!" said she, in a tone of half-scornful pity.

"Was I right about Julia now?" cried he, angrily. "I told you for whose captivation all her little gracefulnesses were intended. I saw it the first night he stood beside her at the piano. As Marion said, she is determined to bring him down. She saw it as well as I did."

"What nonsense you are talking, Jack; as if Julia would condescend—"

"There's no condescension, Nelly," he broke in. "The man is a lord, and the woman he marries will be a peeress, and there's not another country in Europe in which that word means as much. I take it, we needn't go on to the cottage now?"

"I suppose we could scarcely overtake them?"

"Overtake them! Why should we try? Even *my* tact, Nelly, that you sneered at so contemptuously a while ago, would save me from such a blunder. Come, let's go home and forget, if we can, all that we came about. I at least will try and do so."

"My dear, dear Jack, this is very foolish jealousy."

"I am not jealous, Nelly. I'm angry; but it is with myself. I ought to have known what humble pretensions mine were, and I ought to have known how certainly a young lady, bred as young ladies are nowadays, would regard them as less than humble; but it all comes of this idle shore-going, good-for-nothing life. They'll not catch me at it again: that's all."

"Just listen to me patiently, Jack. Listen to me for one moment."

"Not for half a moment. I can guess everything you want to say to me, and I tell you frankly, I don't care to hear it. Tell me whatever you like to-morrow—"

He tried to finish his speech, but his voice grew thick and faltering, and he turned away and was silent.

They spoke little to each other as they walked homewards. A chance remark on the weather, or the scenery, was all that passed till they reached the little lawn before the door.

"You'll not forget your pledge, Jack,



for to-morrow?" said Ellen, as he turned towards her before ascending the steps.

"I'll not forget it," said he, coldly, and he moved off as he spoke, and entered an alley of the shrubbery.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### A DULL DINNER.

THE family dinner on that day at Castello was somewhat dull. The various attempts to secure a party for the ensuing Saturday, which had been fixed on to celebrate Jack's promotion, had proved failures. When Temple arrived at Longworth's he learned that the host and his guest were from home and not to return for some days—we have seen how it fared as to the L'Estranges—so that the solitary success was Captain Craufurd, a gentleman who certainly had not won the suffrages of the great house.

There were two vacant places besides at the table; for butlers are fond of recording, by napkins and covers, how certain of our friends assume to treat us, and thus, as it were, contrast their own formal observances of duty with the laxer notions of their betters.

"Lord Culduff is not able to dine with us," said Colonel Bramleigh, making the apology as well to himself as to the company.

"No, papa," said Marion; "he hopes to appear in the drawing-room in the evening."

"If not too much tired by his long walk," broke in Jack.

"What walk are you dreaming of?" asked Marion.

"An excursion he made this morning down the coast, sketching or pretending to sketch. Nelly and I saw him clambering up the side of a cliff——"

"Oh, quite impossible! you must be mistaken."

"No," said Nelly, "there was no mistake. I saw him as plainly as I see you now; besides, it is not in these wild regions so distinguished a figure is like to find its counterpart."

"But why should he not take his walk? why not sketch, or amuse himself in any way he pleased?" asked Temple.

"Of course it was open to him to do so," said the Colonel; "only that to excuse his absence he ought not to have made a pretext of being ill."

"I think men are 'ill' just as they are 'out,'" said Temple. "I am ill if I am

asked to do what is disagreeable to me, as I am out to the visit of a bore."

"So that to dine with us was disagreeable to Lord Culduff?" asked Jack.

"It was evidently either an effort to task his strength, or an occasion which called for more exertion than he felt equal to," said Temple, pompously.

"By Jove!" cried Jack, "I hope I'll never be a great man! I trust sincerely I may never arrive at that eminence in which it will task my energies to eat my dinner and chat with the people on either side of me."

"Lord Culduff converses; he does not chat; please to note the distinction, Jack."

"That's like telling me he doesn't walk but he swaggers."

It was fortunate at this moment, critical enough as regarded the temper of all parties, that Mr. Cutbill entered, full of apologies for being late, and bursting to recount the accidents that befell him, and all the incidents of his day. A quick glance round the table assured him of Lord Culduff's absence, and it was evident from the sparkle in his eye that the event was not disagreeable to him.

"Is our noble friend on the sick list?" asked he, with a smile.

"Indisposed," said Temple, with the air of one who knew the value of a word that was double-shotted.

"I've got news that will soon rally him," continued Cutbill. "They've struck a magnificent vein this morning, and within eighty yards of the surface. Plimmys, the Welsh inspector, pronounced it good Cardiff, and says, from the depth of 'the lode,' that it must go a long way."

"Harding did not give me as encouraging news yesterday," said Colonel Bramleigh, with a dubious smile.

"My tidings date from this morning—yesterday was the day before the battle; besides, what does Harding know about coal?"

"He knows a little about everything," said Augustus.

"That makes all the difference. What people want is not the men who know things currently, but know them well and thoroughly. Eh, Captain," said he to Jack; "what would you say to popular notions about the navy?"

"Cutty's right," said Jack. "Amateurship is all humbug."

"Who is Longworth?" asked Cutbill. "Philip Longworth?"

"A neighbor of ours. We are not acquainted, but we know that there is such a person," said Colonel Bramleigh.

"He opines," continued Cutbill, "that this vein of ours runs direct from his land, and I suspect he's not wrong; and he wants to know what we mean to do—he'll either sell or buy. He came over this morning to Kilmannock with a French friend, and we took our breakfast together. Nice fellows both of them, and wide awake, too, especially the Frenchman. He was with Lesseps in Egypt; in what capacity I couldn't find out, but I see he's a shrewd fellow."

"With Lesseps?" cried Colonel Bramleigh, showing a quicker and more eager interest than before, for his lawyer had told him that the French claimant to his property had been engaged on the works of the Suez Canal.

"Yes; he spoke as if he knew Lesseps well, and talked of the whole undertaking like one who understood it."

"And what is he doing here?"

"Writing a book, I fancy; an Irish tour—one of those mock sentimentalities, with bad politics and false morality, Frenchmen ventilate about England. He goes poking into the cabins and asking the people about their grievances; and now he says he wants to hear the other side, and learn what the gentlemen say."

"We'll have to ask him over here," said Colonel Bramleigh, coolly, as if the thought had occurred to him then for the first time.

"He'll amuse you, I promise you," said Cutbill.

"I'd like to meet him," said Jack. "I had the ill-luck to bowl him over in the hunting-field, and cost him a broken leg. I'd like to make all the excuses in my power to him."

"He bears no malice about it. He said it was all his own fault, and that you did your best to pick him up, but your horse bolted with you."

"Let's have him to dinner, by all means," said Augustus; "and now that Temple has made a formal visit, I take it we might invite him by a polite note."

"You must wait till he returns the call," said Marion, stiffly.

"Not if we want to show a courteous desire to make his acquaintance," said Temple. "Attentions can be measured as nicely and as minutely as medications."

"All I say," said Jack, "is, have him soon, or I may chance to miss him; and I'm rather curious to have a look at him."

Colonel Bramleigh turned a full look at Jack, as though his words had some

hidden meaning in them, but the frank and easy expression of the sailor's face reassured him at once.

"I hope the fellow won't put us in his book," said Temple. "You are never quite safe with these sort of people."

"Are we worth recording?" asked Jack, with a laugh.

Temple was too indignant to make any answer, and Cutbill went on: "The authorship is only a suspicion of mine, remember. It was from seeing him constantly jotting down little odds and ends in his note-book that I came to that conclusion; and Frenchmen are not much given to minute inquiries if they have not some definite object in view."

Again was Bramleigh's attention arrested, but, as before, he saw that the speaker meant no more than the words in their simplest acceptance conveyed.

A violent ringing of the door-bell startled the company, and, after a moment's pause of expectancy, a servant entered, to say that a government messenger had arrived with some important dispatches for Lord Culduff, which required personal delivery and acceptance.

"Will you step up, Mr. Cutbill, and see if his lordship is in his room?"

"I'll answer for it he's not," said Jack, to his father.

Cutbill rose, however, and went on his mission, but instead of returning to the dining-room, it was perceived that he proceeded to find the messenger, and conduct him upstairs.

"Well, Nelly," said Marion, in a whisper, "what do you say now; is it so certain that it was Lord Culduff you saw this morning?"

"I don't know what to make of it. I was fully as sure as Jack was."

"I'll wager he's been offered Paris," said Temple, gravely.

"Offered Paris!" cried Jack. "What do you mean?"

"I mean the embassy, of course," replied he, contemptuously, "without," added he, "they want him in the Cabinet."

"And is it really by men like this the country is governed?" said Nelly, with a boldness that seemed the impulse of indignation.

"I'm afraid so," said Marion, scornfully. "Mr. Canning and Lord Palmerston were men very like this—were they not, Temple?"

"Precisely; Lord Culduff is exactly of the same order, however humble the estimate Ellen may form of such people."

"I'm all impatience for the news," said



Augustus. "I wish Cutbill would come down at once."

"I'll take the odds that he goes to E. O.," said Temple.

"What the deuce could he do in China?" cried Jack, whose ear had led him into a cruel blunder.

Temple scarcely smiled at what savored of actual irreverence, and added, "If so, I'll ask to be made private secretary."

"Mr. Temple, sir, his lordship would be glad to see you upstairs for a moment," said a footman, entering. And Temple arose and left the room, with a pride that might have accompanied him if summoned to a cabinet council.

"More mysteries of State," cried Jack. "I declare, girls, the atmosphere of political greatness is almost suffocating me. I wonder how Cutty stands it!"

A general move into the drawing-room followed his speech, and as Jack sauntered in he slipped his arm within Nelly's and led her towards a window. "I can't bear this any longer, Nelly—I must trip my anchor and move away. I'd as soon be lieutenant to a port admiral as live here. You've all grown too fine for me."

"That's not it at all, Jack," said she, smiling. "I see how you've been trying to bully yourself by bullying us this hour back; but it will be all right to-morrow. We'll go over to the cottage after breakfast."

"You may; I'll not, I promise you," said he, blushing deeply.

"Yes, you will, my dear Jack," said she, coaxingly; "and you'll be the first to laugh at your own foolish jealousy besides—if Julia is not too angry with you to make laughing possible."

"She may be angry or pleased, it's all one to me now," said he, passionately. "When I told her she was a coquette, I didn't believe it; but, by Jove, she has converted me to the opinion pretty quickly."

"You're a naughty boy, and you're in bad humor, and I'll say no more to you now."

"Say it now, I advise you, if you mean to say it," said he, shortly; but she laughed at his serious face, and turned away without speaking.

"Isn't the cabinet council sitting late?" asked Augustus of Marion. "They have been nigh two hours in conference."

"I take it, it must be something of importance," replied she.

"Isn't Cutbill in it?" asked Augustus, mockingly.

"I saw Mr. Cutbill go down the avenue, with his cigar in his mouth, just after we came into the drawing-room."

"I'll go and try to pump him," said Jack. "One might do a grand thing on the Stock Exchange if he could get at State secrets like these." And as Jack went out a silence fell over the party, only broken by the heavy breathing of Colonel Bramleigh as he slept behind his newspaper. At last the door opened gently, and Temple moved quietly across the room, and tapping his father on the shoulder whispered something in his ear. "What—ch?" cried Colonel Bramleigh, waking up. "Did you say 'out'?" Another whisper ensued, and the Colonel arose and left the room, followed by Temple.

"Isn't Temple supremely diplomatic to-night?" said Nelly.

"I'm certain he is behaving with every becoming reserve and decorum," said Marion, in a tone of severe rebuke.

When Colonel Bramleigh entered the library, Temple closed and locked the door, and in a voice of some emotion said, "Poor Lord Cuduff! it's a dreadful blow. I don't know how he'll bear up against it."

"I don't understand it," said Bramleigh, peevishly. "What's this about a change of Ministry and a dissolution? Did you tell me the Parliament was dissolved?"

"No, sir. I said that a dissolution was probable. The Ministry have been sorely pressed in the Lords about Cuduff's appointment, and a motion to address the Crown to cancel it has only been met by a majority of three. So small a victory amounts to a defeat, and the Premier writes to beg Lord Cuduff will at once send in his resignation, as the only means to save the party."

"Well, if it's the only thing to do, why not do it?"

"Cuduff takes a quite different view of it. He says that to retire is to abdicate his position in public life; that it was Lord Rigglesworth's duty to stand by a colleague to the last; that every Minister makes it a point of honor to defend a subordinate; and that——"

"I only half follow you. What was the ground of the attack? Had he fallen into any blunder—made any serious mistake?"

"Nothing of the kind, sir; they actually complimented his abilities, and spoke of his rare capacity. It was one of those bursts of hypocrisy we have every now and then in public life, to show the world how virtuous we are. They raked up an old story of thirty years ago of some elopement or other, and affected to see in this escapade a reason against his being employed to represent the Crown."

"I'm not surprised—not at all surprised. There is a strong moral feeling in

the heart of the nation, that no man, however great his abilities, can outrage with impunity."

"If they dealt with him thus hardly in the Lords, we can fancy how he will be treated in the Lower House, where Rigby Norton has given notice of a motion respecting his appointment. As Lord Rigglesworth writes, 'R. N. has got up your whole biography, and is fully bent on making you the theme of one of his amusing scurrilities. Is it wise, is it safe, to risk this? He'll not persevere—he could not persevere—in his motion, if you send in your resignation. We could not—at least so Gore, our whip, says—he sure of a majority were we to divide; and even a majority of, say thirty, to proclaim you moral, would only draw the whole press to open your entire life, and make the world ring with your, I suppose, very common and everyday iniquities.'"

"I declare I do not see what can be alleged against this advice. It seems to me most forcible and irrefragable."

"Very forcible, as regards the position of the Cabinet; but, as Lord Culduff says, ruin, positive ruin to him."

"Ruin of his own causing."

Temple shrugged his shoulders in a sort of contemptuous impatience; the sentiment was one not worth a reply.

"At all events, has he any other course open to him?"

"He thinks he has; at least he thinks that, with your help and co-operation, there may be another course. The attack is to come from below the gangway on the Opposition side. It was to sit with these men you contested a county, and spent nigh twenty thousand pounds. You have great claims on the party. You know them all personally, and have much influence with them. Why, then, not employ it in his behalf?"

"To suppress the motion, you mean?"

Temple nodded.

"They'd not listen to it, not endure it for a moment. Norton wouldn't give up an attack for which he had prepared himself, if he were to find out in the interval that the object of it was an angel. As I heard him say one day at 'the Reform,' 'Other men have their specialties. One fellow takes sugar, one the malt-duties, one Servia, or maybe, Ireland; my line is a good smashing personality. Show me a fellow—of course I mean a political opponent—who has been giving himself airs as a colonial governor, or swelling it as a special envoy at a foreign court, and if I don't find some something in his dispatches to exhibit him as a false prophet, a dupe,

or a blunderer, and if I can't make the House laugh at him, don't call me Rigby Norton.' He knows he does these things better than any man in England, and he does them in a spirit that never makes him an enemy."

"Culduff says that N. is terribly hard up. He was hit heavily at Goodwood, and asked for time to pay."

"Just what he has been doing for the last twenty years. There are scores of ships that no underwriters would accept making safe voyages half across the globe. No, no, he'll rub on for many a day, in the same fashion. Besides, if he shouldn't, what then?"

Temple made a significant gesture with his thumb in the palm of his hand.

"That's all your noble friend knows about England, then. See what comes of a man passing his life among foreigners. I suppose a Spanish or an Italian deputy mightn't give much trouble, nor oppose any strenuous resistance to such a dealing; but it won't do here—it will not."

"Lord Culduff knows the world as well as most men, sir."

"Yes, one world. I'm sure he does! A world of essenced old dandies and painted dowagers, surrounded by thieving lacquers and cringing followers; where everything can be done by bribery, and nothing without it. But that's not England, I'm proud to say; nor will it be, I hope, for many a day to come."

"I wish, sir, you could be induced to give your aid to Culduff in this matter. I need not say what an influence it would exert over my own fortunes."

"You must win your way, Temple, by your own merits," said he, haughtily. "I'd be ashamed to think that a son of mine owed any share of his success in life to ignoble acts or backstairs influence. Go back and tell Lord Culduff from me, that, so far as I know it, Lord Rigglesworth's advice is my own. No wise man ever courts a public scandal; and he would be less than wise to confront one, with the certainty of being overwhelmed by it."

"Will you see him, sir? Will you speak to him yourself?"

"I'd rather not. It would be a needless pain to each of us."

"I suspect he means to leave this to-night."

"Not the worst thing he could do."

"But you'll see him to say good-bye?"

"Certainly; and all the more easily if we have no conversation in the meanwhile. Who's that knocking? Is the door locked?"



“Temple hastened to open the door, and found Mr. Cutbill begging to have five minutes’ conversation with Colonel Bramleigh.

“Leave us together, Temple, and tell Marion to send me in some tea. You’ll have tea, too, won’t you, Mr. Cutbill?”

“No, thank you; I’ll ask for wine and water later. At present I want a little talk with you. Our noble friend has got it hot and heavy,” said he, as Temple withdrew, leaving Bramleigh and himself together; “but it’s nothing to what will come out when Norton brings it before the House. I suppose there hasn’t been such a scandal for years as he’ll make of it.”

“I declare, Mr. Cutbill, as long as the gentleman continues my guest, I’d rather avoid than invite any discussion of his antecedents,” said Bramleigh, pompously.

“All very fine, if you could stop the world from talking of them.”

“My son has just been with me, and I have said to him, sir, as I have now repeated to you, that it is a theme I will not enter upon.”

“You won’t, won’t you?”

“No, sir, I will not.”

“The more fool you, then, that’s all.”

“What, sir, am I to be told this to my face, under my own roof? Can you presume to address these words to me?”

“I meant nothing offensive. You needn’t look like a turkeycock. All the gobble-gobble in the world wouldn’t frighten me. I came in here in a friendly spirit. I was handsomely treated in this house, and I’d like to make a return for it; that’s why I’m here, Bramleigh.”

“You will pardon me if I do not detect the friendliness you speak of in the words you have just uttered.”

“Perhaps I was a little too blunt—a little too—what shall I call it?—abrupt; but what I wanted to say was this: Here’s the nicest opportunity in the world, not only to help a lame dog over the stile, but to make a good hound of him afterwards.”

“I protest, sir, I cannot follow you. Your bluntness, as you call it, was at least intelligible.”

“Don’t be in a passion. Keep cool, and listen to me. If this motion is made about Cudduff, and comes to a debate, there will be such stories told as would smash forty reputations. I’d like to see which of us would come well out of a biography, treated as a party attack in the House of Commons. At all events *he* couldn’t face it. Stand by him, then, and get him through it. Have patience; just hear what I have to say. The thing can be done; there’s eight days

to come before it can be brought on. I know the money-lender has three of Norton’s acceptances—for heavy sums, two of them. Do you see now what I’m driving at?”

“I may possibly see so much, sir, but I am unable to see why I should move in the matter.”

“I’ll show you, then. The noble Viscount is much smitten by a certain young lady upstairs, and intends to propose for her. Yes, I know it, and I’ll vouch for it. Your eldest daughter may be a peeress, and though the husband isn’t very young, neither is the title. I think he said he was the eighth lord—seventh or eighth, I’m not sure which—and taking the rank and the coal-mine together, don’t you think she might do worse?”

“I will say, sir, that frankness like yours, I’ve never met before.”

“That’s the very thing I’d like to hear you say of me. There’s no quality I pride myself on so much as my candor.”

“You have ample reason, sir.”

“I feel it. I know it. Direct lines and a wide gauge—I mean in the way of liberality—that’s my motto. I go straight to my terminus, wherever it is.”

“It is not every man can make his profession the efficient ally of his morality.”

“An engineer can, and there’s nothing so like life as a new line of railroad. But to come back. You see now how the matter stands. If the arrangement suits you, the thing can be done.”

“You have a very business-like way of treating these themes?”

“If I hadn’t, I couldn’t treat them at all. What I say to myself is, Will it pay? first of all, and secondly, How much will it pay? And that’s the one test for everything. Have the divines a more telling argument against a life of worldliness and self-indulgence than when they ask, Will it pay? We contract for everything, even for going to heaven.”

“If I could hope to rival your eminently practical spirit, Mr. Cutbill, I’d ask how far—to what extent—has Lord Cudduff made you the confidant of his intentions?”

“You mean, has he sent me here this evening to make a proposal to you?”

“No, not exactly that; but has he intimated, has he declared—for intimation wouldn’t suffice—has he declared his wish to be allied to my family?”

“He didn’t say, ‘Cutbill, go down and make a tender in my name for her,’ if you mean that.”

“I opine not, sir,” said Bramleigh, haughtily.

"But when I tell you it's all right," said Cutbill, with one of his most knowing looks, "I think that ought to do."

"I take it, sir, that you mean courteously and fairly by me. I feel certain that you have neither the wish nor the intention to pain me, but I am forced to own that you import into questions of a delicate nature a spirit of commercial profit and loss, which makes all discussion of them harsh and disagreeable. This is not, let me observe to you, a matter of coal or a new cutting on a railroad."

"And are you going to tell Tom Cutbill that out of his own line of business—when he isn't up to his knees in earth-works, and boring a tunnel—that he's a fool and a nincompoop?"

"I should be sorry to express such a sentiment."

"Ay, or feel it; why don't you say that?"

"I will go even so far, sir, and say I should be sorry to feel it."

"That's enough. No offense meant, none is taken. Here's how it is now. Authorize me to see Joel about those bills of Norton's. Give me what the French call a *carte blanche* to negotiate, and I'll promise you I'll not throw your ten-pound notes away. Not that it need ever come to ten-pound notes, for Rigby does these things for the pure fun of them, and if any good fellow drops in on him of a morning, and says, 'Don't raise a hue and cry about that poor beggar,' or 'Don't push that fellow over the cliff,' he's just the man to say, 'Well, I'll not go on. I'll let it stand over,' or he'll even get up and say, 'When I asked leave to put this question to the right honorable gentleman, I fully believed in the authentic character of the information in my possession. I have, however, since then discovered'—this, that, and the other. Don't you know how these things always finish? There's a great row, a great hubbub, and the man that retracts is always cheered by both sides of the House."

"Suppose, then, he withdraws his motion—what then? The discussion in the Lords remains on record, and the mischief, so far as Lord Culduff is concerned, is done."

"I know that. He'll not have his appointment; he'll take his pension and wait. What he says is this, 'There are only three diplomatists in all England, and short of a capital felony, any of the three may do anything. I have only to stand out and sulk,' says he, 'and they'll be on their knees to me yet.'

"He yields, then, to a passing hurricane," said Bramleigh, pompously.

"Just so. He's taking shelter under an archway till he can call a hansom. Now you have the whole case; and as talking is dry work, might I ring for a glass of sherry and seltzer?"

"By all means. I am ashamed not to have thought of it before. This is a matter for much thought and deliberation," said Bramleigh, as the servant withdrew after bringing the wine. "It is too eventful a step to be taken suddenly."

"If not done promptly it can't be done at all. A week isn't a long time to go up to town and get through a very knotty negotiation. Joel isn't a common money-lender, like Drake or Downie. You can't go to his office except on formal business. If you want to do a thing in the way of accommodation with him, you'll have to take him down to the 'Ship,' and give him a nice little fish dinner, with the very best Sauterne you can find; and when you're sitting out on the balcony over the black mud—the favorite spot men smoke their cheroots in—then open your business; and though he knows well it was all 'a plant,' he'll not resent it, but take it kindly and well."

"I am certain that so nice a negotiation could not be in better hands than yours, Mr. Cutbill."

"Well, perhaps I might say without vanity, it might be in worse. So much for that part of the matter; now, as to the noble Viscount himself. I am speaking as a man of the world to another man of the world, and speaking in confidence to you. You don't join in that hypocritical cant against Culduff, because he had once in his life been what they call a man of gallantry? I mean, Bramleigh, that *you* don't go in for that outrageous humbug of spotless virtue, and the rest of it?"

Bramleigh smiled, and as he passed his hand over his mouth to hide a laugh, the twinkle of his eyes betrayed him.

"I believe I am old enough to know that one must take the world as it is pleased to present itself," said he, cautiously.

"And not want to think it better or worse than it really is?"

Bramleigh nodded assent.

"Now we understand each other, as I told you the other evening we were sure to do when we had seen more of each other. Culduff isn't a saint, but he's a Peer of Parliament; he isn't young, but he has an old title, and if I'm not much mistaken, he'll make a pot of money out of this mine. Such a man has only to go down into the Black Country or amongst the mills, to



have his choice of some of the best-looking girls in England, with a quarter of a million of money; isn't that fact?"

"It is pretty like it."

"So that, on the whole, I'll say this is a good thing, Bramleigh—a right good thing. As Wishart said the other night in the House, 'A new country'—speaking of the States—'a new country wants alliances with old States;' so a new family wants connection with the old historic houses."

Colonel Bramleigh's face grew crimson, but he coughed to keep down his rising indignation, and slightly bowed his head.

"You know as well as I do, that the world has only two sorts of people, nobs and snobs; one has no choice—if you're not one, you must be the other."

"And yet, sir, men of mind and intellect have written about the untitled nobility of England."

"Silver without the hall-mark, Bramleigh, won't bring six shillings an ounce, just because nobody can say how far it's adulterated; it's the same with people."

"Your tact, sir, is on a par with your wisdom."

"And perhaps you haven't a high opinion of either," said Cutbill, with a laugh that showed he felt no irritation whatever. "But look here, Bramleigh, this will never do. If there's nothing but blarney or banter between us we'll never come to business. If you agree to what I've been proposing—you have only *me* to deal with, the noble lord isn't in the game at all—he'll leave this to-night—it's right and proper he should; he'll go up to the mines for a few days, and amuse himself with quartz and red sandstone; and when I write or telegraph—most likely telegraph—'The thing is safe,' he'll come back here and make his proposal in all form."

"I am most willing to give my assistance to any project that may rescue Lord Culduff from this unpleasant predicament. Indeed, having myself experienced some of the persecution which political hatred can carry into private life, I feel a sort of common cause with him; but I protest at the same time—distinctly protest—against anything like a pledge as regards his lordship's views towards one of my family. I mean I give no promise."

"I see," said Cutbill, with a look of intense cunning. "You'll do the money part. Providence will take charge of the rest. Isn't that it?"

"Mr. Cutbill, you occasionally push my patience pretty hard. What I said, I said seriously and advisedly."

"Of course. Now then give me a line

to your banker to acknowledge my draft up to a certain limit, say five hundred. I think five ought to do it."

"It's a smart sum, Mr. Cutbill."

"The article's cheap at the money. Well, well, I'll not anger you. Write me the order, and let me be off."

Bramleigh sat down at his table, and wrote off a short note to his junior partner in the bank, which he sealed and addressed, and handing it to Cutbill said, "This will credit you to the amount you spoke of. It will be advanced to you as a loan without interest, to be repaid within two years."

"All right; the thought of repayment will never spoil my night's rest. I only wish all my debts would give me as little trouble."

"You ought to have none, Mr. Cutbill; a man of your abilities, at the top of a great profession, and with a reputation second to none, should, if he were commonly prudent, have ample means at his disposal."

"But that's the thing I am not, Bramleigh. I'm not one of your safe fellows. I drive my engine at speed, even where the line is shaky and the rails ill-laid. Good-bye; my respects to the ladies; tell Jack, if he's in town within a week, to look me up at 'Limmer's.'" He emptied the sherry into a tumbler as he spoke, drank it off, and left the room.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### A DEPARTURE.

SOME days had gone over since the scene just recorded in our last chapter, and the house at Castello presented a very different aspect from its late show of movement and pleasure.

Lord Culduff, on the pretense of his presence being required at the mines, had left on the same night that Cutbill took his departure for England. On the morning after Jack also went away. He had passed the night writing and burning letters to Julia; for no sooner had he finished an epistle, than he found it too cruel, too un-forgiving, too unfeeling, by half; and when he endeavored to moderate his just anger, he discovered signs of tenderness in his reproaches that savored of submission. It would not be quite fair to be severe on Jack's failures, trying as he was to do what has puzzled much wiser and craftier heads than his. To convey all the misery he felt at parting from her with a just measure of

reproach for her levity towards him, to mete out his love and his anger in due doses, to say enough, but never too much, and finally to let her know that, though he went off in a huff, it was to carry her image in his heart through all his wanderings, never forgetting her for a moment, whether he was carrying despatches to Cadiz or coaling at Corfu—to do all these, I say, becomingly and well, was not an easy task, and especially for one who would rather have been sent to cut out a frigate under the guns of a fortress than indite a despatch to “my Lords of the Admiralty.”

From the short sleep which followed all his abortive attempts at a letter he was awakened by his servant telling him it was time to dress and be off. Drearier moments there are not in life than those which herald in a departure of a dark morning in winter, with the rain swooping in vast sheets against the window-panes, and the cold blast whistling through the leafless trees. Never do the candles seem to throw so little light as these do now through the dreary room, all littered and disordered by the preparations for the road. What fears and misgivings beset one at such a moment! What reluctance to go, and what a positive sense of fear one feels, as though the journey were a veritable leap in the dark, and that the whole fortunes of a life were dependent on that instant of resolution!

Poor Jack tried to battle with such thoughts as these by reminding himself of his duty and the calls of the service; he asked himself again and again, if it were out of such vacillating, wavering materials, a sailor's heart should be fashioned? was this the stuff that made Nelsons or Collingwoods? And though there was but little immediate prospect of a career of distinction, his sense of duty taught him to feel that the routine life of peace was a greater trial to a man's patience than all the turmoil and bustle of active service.

“The more I cling to remain here,” muttered he, as he descended the stairs, “the more certain am I that it's pure weakness and folly.”

“What's that you are muttering about weakness and folly, Jack?” said Nelly, who had got up to see him off, and give him the last kiss before he departed.

“How came it you are here, Nelly? Get back to your bed, girl, or you'll catch a terrible cold.”

“No, no, Jack; I'm well shawled and muffled. I wanted to say good-bye once more. Tell me what it was you were saying about weakness and folly.”

“I was assuring myself that my reluct-

ance to go away was nothing less than folly. I was trying to persuade myself that the best thing I could do was to be off; but I won't say I have succeeded.”

“But it is, Jack; rely on it, it is. You are doing the right thing; and if I say so it is with a heavy heart, for I shall be very lonely after you.”

Passing his arm round her waist, he walked with her up and down the great spacious hall, their slow footsteps echoing in the silent house.

“If my last meeting with her had not been such as it was, Nelly,” said he, falteringly; “if we had not parted in anger, I think I could go with a lighter heart.”

“But don't you know Julia well enough to know that these little storms of temper pass away so rapidly that they never leave a trace behind them? She was angry, not because you found fault with her, but because she thought you had suffered yourself to be persuaded she was in the wrong.”

“What do I care for these subtleties? She ought to have known that when a man loves a girl as I love her, he has a right to tell her frankly if there's anything in her manner he is dissatisfied with.”

“He has no such right; and if he had, he ought to be very careful how he exercised it.”

“And why so?”

“Just because fault-finding is not love-making.”

“So that, no matter what he saw, that he disliked or disapproved of, he ought to bear it all rather than risk the chance of his remonstrance being ill taken?”

“Not that, Jack; but he ought to take time and opportunity to make the same remonstrance. You don't go down to the girl you are in love with, and call her to account as you would summon a deck-yardman or a rigger for something that was wrong with your frigate.”

“Take an illustration from something you know better, Nelly, for I'd do nothing of the kind; but if I saw what, in the conduct, or even in the manner of the girl I was in love with, I wouldn't stand if she were my wife, it will be hard to convince me that I oughtn't to tell her of it.”

“As I said before, Jack, the telling is a matter of time and opportunity. Of all the jealousies in the world there is none as inconsiderate as that of lovers towards the outer world. Whatever change either may wish for in the other must never come suggested from without.”

“And didn't I tell her she was wrong in



supposing that it was Marion made me see ner coquetry?"

"That you thought Marion had no influence over your judgment she might believe readily enough, but girls have a keener insight into each other than you are aware of, and she was annoyed—and she was right to be annoyed—that in your estimate of her there should enter anything, the very smallest, that could bespeak the sort of impression a woman might have conveyed."

"Nelly, all this is too deep for me. If Julia cared for me as I believe she had, she'd have taken what I said in good part. Didn't I give up smoking of a morning, except one solitary cheroot after breakfast, when she asked me? Who ever saw me take a nip of brandy of a forenoon since that day she cried out, 'Shame, Jack, don't do that'? And do you think I wasn't as fond of my weed and my glass of schnapps as ever she was of all those little airs and graces she puts on to make fools of men?"

"Carriage waiting, sir," said a servant, entering with a mass of cloaks and rugs on his arm.

"Confound the carriage and the journey, too," muttered he, below his breath. "Look here, Nelly, if you are right, and I hope with all my heart you are, I'll not go."

"That would be ruin, Jack; you must go."

"What do I care for the service? A good seaman—a fellow that knows how to handle a ship—need never want for employment. I'd just as soon be a skipper as wear a pair of swabs on my shoulders and be sworn at by some crusty old rear-admiral for a stain on my quarter-deck. I'll not go, Nelly; tell Ned to take off the trunks; I'll stay where I am."

"Oh, Jack, I implore you not to wreck your whole fortune in life. It is just because Julia loves you that you are bound to show yourself worthy of her. You know how lucky you were to get this chance. You said only yesterday it was the finest station in the whole world. Don't lose it, like a dear fellow—don't do what what will be the embitterment of your entire life, the loss of your rank, and—the——" She stopped as she was about to add something still stronger.

"I'll go then, Nelly; don't cry about it; if you sob that way I'll make a fool of myself. Pretty sight for the flunkies to see a sailor crying, would'nt it? all because he had to join his ship. I'll go, then, at once. I suppose you'll see her to-day, or tomorrow at farthest?"

"I'm not sure, Jack. Marion said something about hunting parsons, I believe, which gave George such deep pain that he wouldn't come here on Wednesday. Julia appears to be more annoyed than George, and in fact, for the moment, we have quarantined each other."

"Isn't this too bad?" cried he, passionately.

"Of course it is too bad; but it's only a passing cloud; and by the time I shall write to you it will have passed away."

Jack clasped her affectionately in his arms, kissed her twice, and sprang into the carriage, and drove away with a full heart indeed; but also with the fast assurance that his dear sister would watch over his interests and not forget him.

That dark drive went over like a hideous dream. He heard the wind and the rain, the tramp of the horses' feet and the splash of the wheels along the miry road, but he never fully realized where he was or how he came there. The first bell was ringing as he drove into the station, and there was little time to get down his luggage and secure his ticket. He asked for a *coupé*, that he might be alone; and being known as one of the great family at Castello, the obsequious station-master hastened to install him at once. On opening the door, however, it was discovered that another traveler had already deposited a greatcoat and a rug in one corner.

"Give yourself no trouble, Captain Bramleigh," said the official, in a low voice. "I'll just say the *coupé* is reserved, and we'll put him into another compartment. Take these traps, Bob," cried he to a porter, "and put them into a first-class."

Scarcely was the order given when two figures, moving out of the dark, approached, and one, with a slightly foreign accent, but in admirable English, said, "What are you doing there? I have taken that place."

"Yes," cried his friend, "this gentleman secured the *coupé* on the moment of his arrival."

"Very sorry, sir—extremely sorry; but the *coupé* was reserved, specially reserved."

"My friend has paid for that place," said the last speaker; "and I can only say, if I were he, I'd not relinquish it."

"Don't bother yourself about it," whispered Jack. "Let him have his place. I'll take the other corner; and there's an end of it."

"If you'll allow me, Captain Bramleigh," said the official, who was now

touched to the quick on that sore point, a question of his department—"if you'll allow me, I think I can soon settle this matter."

"But I will not allow you, sir," said Jack, his sense of fairness already outraged by the whole procedure. "He has as good a right to his place as I have to mine. Many thanks for your trouble. Good-bye." And so saying he stepped in.

The foreigner still lingered in earnest converse with his friend, and only mounted the steps as the train began to move. "A bientôt, cher Philippe," he cried, as the door was slammed, and the next instant they were gone.

The little incident which had preceded their departure had certainly not conducted to any amicable disposition between them, and each, after a sidelong glance at the other, ensconced himself more completely within his wrappings, and gave himself up to either silence or sleep.

Some thirty miles of the journey had rolled over, and it was now day—dark and dreary indeed—when Jack awoke and found the carriage pretty thick with smoke. There is a sort of freemasonry in the men of tobacco which never fails them, and they have a kind of instinctive guess of a stranger from the mere character of his weed. On the present occasion Jack recognized a most exquisite Havana odor, and turned furtively to see the smoker.

"I ought to have asked," said the stranger, "if this was disagreeable to you, but you were asleep, and I did not like to disturb you."

"Not in the least, I am a smoker too," said Jack, as he drew forth his case and proceeded to strike a light.

"Might I offer you one of mine?—they are not bad," said the other, proffering his case.

"Thanks," said Jack; "my tastes are too vulgar for Cubans. Bird's-eye, dashed with strong Cavendish, is what I like."

"I have tried that too, as I have tried everything English, but the same sort of half-success follows me through all."

"If your knowledge of the language be the measure, I'd say you've not much to complain of. I almost doubt whether you are a foreigner."

"I was born in Italy," said the other, cautiously, "and never in England till a few weeks ago."

"I'm afraid," said Jack, with a smile, "I did not impress you very favorably as regards British politeness, when we met this morning; but I was a little out of spirits. I was leaving home, not very like-

ly to see it again for some time, and I wanted to be alone."

"I am greatly grieved not to have known this. I should never have thought of intruding."

"But there was no question of intruding. It was your right that you asserted, and no more."

"Half the harsh things that we see in life are done merely by asserting a right," said the other, in a deep and serious voice.

Jack had little taste for what took the form of a reflection; to his apprehension, it was own brother of a sermon; and warned by this sample of his companion's humor, he muttered a broken sort of assent and was silent. Little passed between them till they met at the dinner-table, and then they only interchanged a few commonplace remarks. On their reaching their destination, they took leave of each other courteously, but half formally, and drove off their several ways.

Almost the first man, however, that Jack met, as he stepped on board the mail-packet for Holyhead, was his fellow-traveler of the rail. This time they met cordially, and after a few words of greeting they proceeded to walk the deck together like old acquaintances.

Though the night was fresh and sharp there was a bright moon, and they both felt reluctant to go below, where a vast crowd of passengers was assembled. The brisk exercise, the invigorating air, and a certain congeniality that each discovered in the other, soon established between them one of those confidences which are only possible in early life. Nor do I know anything better in youth than the frank readiness with which such friendships are made. It is with no spirit of calculation—it is with no counting of the cost, that we sign these contracts. We feel drawn into companionship, half by some void within ourselves, half by some quality that seems to supply that void. The tones of our own voice in our own ears assure us that we have found sympathy; for we feel that we are speaking in a way we could not speak to cold or uncongenial listeners.

When Jack Bramleigh had told that he was going to take command of a small gunboat in the Mediterranean, he could not help going further, and telling with what a heavy heart he was going to assume his command. "We sailors have a hard lot of it," said he; "we come home after a cruise—all is new, brilliant, and attractive to us. Our hearts are not steeled, as are landsmen's, by daily habit. We are intoxicated by what calmer heads scarcely feel



excited. We fall in love, and then, some fine day, comes an admiralty despatch ordering us to hunt slavers off Lagos, or fish for a lost cable in Behring's Straits."

"Never mind," said the other, "so long as there's a goal to reach, so long as there's a prize to win, all can be borne. It's only when life is a shoreless ocean—when, seek where you will, no land will come in sight—when, in fact, existence offers nothing to speculate on—then, indeed, the world is a dreary blank."

"I don't suppose any fellow's lot is as bad as that."

"Not perhaps completely, thoroughly so; but that a man's fate can approach such a condition—that a man can cling to so small a hope that he is obliged to own to himself that it is next to no hope at all—that there could be, and is, such a lot in existence, I who speak to you now am able unfortunately to vouch for."

"I am sorry to hear it," said Jack, feelingly; "and I am sorry, besides, to have obtruded my own small griefs before one who has such a heavy affliction."

"Remember," said the Frenchman, "I never said it was all up with me. I have a plank still to cling to, though it be only a plank. My case is simply this: I have come over to this country to prefer a claim to a large property, and I have nothing to sustain it but my right. I know well you Englishmen have a theory that your laws are so admirably and so purely administered that if a man asks for justice—be he poor, or unknown, or a foreigner, it matters not—he is sure to obtain it. I like the theory, and I respect the man who believes in it, but I don't trust it myself. I remember reading in your debates, how the House of Lords sat for days over a claim of a French nobleman who had been ruined by the great Revolution in France, and for whose aid, with others, a large sum had once been voted, of which, through a series of misadventures, not a shilling had reached him. That man's claim, upheld and maintained by one of the first men in England, and with an eloquence that thrilled through every heart around, was rejected, ay, rejected, and he was sent out of court a beggar. They couldn't call him an impostor, but they left him to starve!" He paused for a second, and in a slower voice continued, "Now, it may be that my case shall one of these days be heard before that tribunal, and I ask you, does it not call for great courage and great trustfulness to have a hope on the issue?"

"I'll stake my head on it, they'll deal fairly by you," said Jack, stoutly.

"The poor baron I spoke of had powerful friends: men who liked him well, and fairly believed in his claim. Now I am utterly unknown, and as devoid of friends as of money. I think nineteen out of twenty Englishmen would call me an adventurer to-morrow; and there are few titles that convey less respect in this grand country of yours."

"There you are right; every one here must have a place in society, and be in it."

"My landlady where I lodged thought me an adventurer; the tailor who measured me whispered adventurer as he went downstairs; and when a cabman, in gratitude for an extra sixpence, called me 'count,' it was to proclaim me an adventurer to all who heard him."

"You are scarcely fair to us," said Jack, laughing. "You have been singularly unlucky in your English acquaintance."

"No. I have met a great deal of kindness, but always after a certain interval of doubt—almost of mistrust. I tell you frankly, you are the very first Englishman with whom I have ventured to talk freely on so slight an acquaintance, and it has been to me an unspeakable relief to do it."

"I am proud to think you had that confidence in me."

"You yourself suggested it. You began to tell me of your plans and hopes, and I could not resist the temptation to follow you. A French hussar is about as outspoken an animal as an English sailor, so that we were well met."

"Are you still in the service?"

"No; I am in what we call *disponibilité*. I am free till called on—and free then if I feel unwilling to go back."

The Frenchman now passed on to speak of his life as a soldier—a career so full of strange adventures and curious incidents that Jack was actually grieved when they glided into the harbor of Holyhead, and the steamer's bell broke up the narrative.

## CHAPTER XX.

### A MORNING OF PERPLEXITIES.

COLONEL BRAMLEIGH turned over and over, without breaking the seal, a letter which, bearing the postmark of Rome and in a well-known hand, he knew came from Lady Augusta.

That second marriage of his had been a

great mistake. None of the social advantages he had calculated on with such certainty had resulted from it. His wife's distinguished relatives had totally estranged themselves from her, as though she had made an unbecoming and unworthy alliance; his own sons and daughters had not concealed their animosity to their new step-mother; and, in fact, the best compromise the blunder admitted of was that they should try to see as little as possible of each other; and as they could not obliterate the compact, they should, as far as in them lay, endeavor to ignore it.

There are no more painful aids to a memory unwilling to be taxed than a banker's half-yearly statement; and in the long record which Christmas had summoned, and which now lay open before Bramleigh's eyes, were frequent and weighty reminders of Lady Augusta's expensive ways.

He had agreed to allow her a thousand napoleons—about eight hundred pounds—quarterly, which was, and which she owned was, a most liberal and sufficient sum to live on alone, and in a city comparatively cheap. He had, however, added, with a courtesy that the moment of parting might have suggested, "Whenever your tastes or your comforts are found to be hampered in any way by the limits I have set down, you will do me the favor to draw directly on 'the house,' and I will take care that your cheques shall be attended to."

The smile with which she thanked him was still in his memory. Since the memorable morning in Berkeley Square when she accepted his offer of marriage, he had seen nothing so fascinating—nor, let us add, so fleeting—as this gleam of enchantment. Very few days had sufficed to show him how much this meteor flash of loveliness had cost him, and now, as he sat conning over a long line of figures, he bethought him that the second moment of witchery was very nearly as expensive as the first. When he made her that courteous offer of extending the limits of her civil list he had never contemplated how far she could have pushed his generosity, and now, to his amazement he discovered that in a few months she had already drawn for seven thousand pounds, and had intimated to the house that the first instalment of the purchase-money of a villa would probably be required some time early in May; the business-like character of this "advice" being, however, sadly disparaged by her having totally forgotten to say anything as to the amount of the impending demand.

It was in a very unlucky moment—was

there ever a lucky one?—when these heavy demands presented themselves. Colonel Bramleigh had latterly taken to what he thought, or at least meant to be, retrenchment. He was determined, as he said himself, to "take the bull by the horns:" but the men who perform this feat usually select a very small bull. He had nibbled, as it were, at the hem of the budget; he had cut down "the boys'" allowances. "What could Temple want with five hundred a year? Her Majesty gave him four, and her Majesty certainly never intended to take his services without fitting remuneration. As to Jack having three hundred, it was downright absurdity: it was extravagances like these destroyed the navy; besides, Jack had got his promotion, and his pay ought to be something handsome." With regard to Augustus, he only went so far as certain remonstrances about horse-keep and some hints about the iniquities of a German valet who, it was rumored, had actually bought a house in Duke Street, St. James's, out of his peculations in the family.

The girls were not extravagantly provided for, but for example's sake he reduced their allowance by one-third. Ireland was not a country for embroidered silks or Genoa velvet. It would be an admirable lesson to others if they were to see the young ladies of the great house dressed simply and unpretentiously. "These things could only be done by people of station. Such examples must proceed from those whose motives could not be questioned." He dismissed the head gardener, and he was actually contemplating the discharge of the French cook, though he well foresaw the storm of opposition so strong a measure was sure to evoke. When he came to sum up his reforms he was shocked to find that the total only reached a little over twelve hundred pounds, and this in a household of many thousands.

Was not Castello, too, a mistake? Was not all this princely style of living, in a county without a neighborhood, totally unvisited by strangers, a capital blunder? He had often heard of the cheapness of life in Ireland; and what a myth it was! He might have lived in Norfolk for what he was spending in Downshire, and though he meant to do great things for the country, a doubt was beginning to steal over him as to how they were to be done. He had often insisted that absenteeism was the bane of Ireland, and yet for the life of him he could not see how his residence there was to prove a blessing.

Lady Augusta, with her separate estab-



ishment, was spending above three thousand a year. Poor man, he was grumbling to himself over this, when that precious document from the bank arrived with the astounding news of her immense extravagance. He laid her letter down again; he had not temper to read it. It was so sure to be one of those frivolous little levities which jar so painfully on serious feelings. He knew so well the half-jestful excuses she would make for her wastefulness, the coquettish prettinesses she would deploy in describing her daily life of mock simplicity, and utter recklessness as to cost, that he muttered "Not now" to himself as he pushed the letter away. And as he did so he discovered a letter in the hand of Mr. Sedley, his law agent. He had himself written a short note to that gentleman, at Jack's request; for Jack—who, like all sailors, believed in a First Lord and implicitly felt that no promotion ever came rightfully—wanted a special introduction to the great men of Somerset House—a service which Sedley, who knew every one, could easily render him. This note of Sedley's then doubtless referred to that matter, and though Bramleigh did not feel any great or warm interest in the question, he broke the envelope to read it, rather as a relief than otherwise. It was at least a new topic, and it could not be a very exciting one. The letter ran thus:—

"Tuesday, January 15.

"MY DEAR SIR:—

"Hicklay will speak to the First Lord at the earliest convenient moment, but as Captain Bramleigh has just got his promotion, he does not see what can be done in addition. I do not suppose your son would like a dockyard appointment, but a tolerably snug berth will soon be vacant at Malta, and as Captain B. will be in town to-morrow, I shall wait upon him early, and learn his wishes in the matter. There is a great talk to-day of changes in the Cabinet, and some rumor of a dissolution. These reports and disquieting news from France have brought the funds down one-sixth. Burrows and Black have failed—the Calcutta house had made some large tea speculation, it is said, without the knowledge of the partners here. At all events, the liabilities will exceed a million; available assets not a hundred thousand. I hope you will not suffer, or if so, to only a trifling extent, as I know you lately declined the advances Black so pressed upon you."

"He's right there," muttered Bramleigh.

"I wouldn't touch those indigo bonds. When old Grant began to back up the natives, I saw what would become of the planters. All meddling with the labor market in India is mere gambling, and whenever a man makes his *coup* he ought to go off with his money. What's all this here," muttered he, "about Talookdars and Ryots? He ought to know this question cannot interest me."

"I met Kelson yesterday; he was very close and guarded, but my impression is that they are doing nothing in the affair of the 'Pretender.' I hinted jocularly something about having a few thousands by me if he should happen to know of a good investment, and, in the same careless way, he replied, 'I'll drop in some morning at the office, and have a talk with you.' There was a significance in his manner that gave me to believe he meant a 'transaction.' We shall see. I shall add a few lines to this after I have seen Captain B. to-morrow. I must now hurry off to Westminster."

Bramleigh turned over, and read the following:—

"Wednesday, 16.

"On going to the 'Drummond' this morning to breakfast, by appointment, with your son, I found him dressing, but talking with the occupant of a room on the opposite side of the sitting-room, where breakfast was laid for three. Captain B., who seemed in excellent health and spirits, entered freely on the subject of the shore appointment, and when I suggested caution in discussing it, told me there was no need of reserve, that he could say what he pleased before his friend—'whom, by the way,' said he, 'I am anxious to make known to you. You are the very man to give him first-rate advice, and, if you cannot take up his case yourself, to recommend him to some one of trust and character.' While we were talking, the stranger entered—a young man, short, good-looking, and of good address. 'I want to present you to Mr. Sedley,' said Captain B., 'and I'll be shot if I don't forget your name.'

"'I half doubt if you ever knew it,' said the other laughing; and, turning to me, added, 'Our friendship is of short date. We met as travelers, but I have seen enough of life to know that the instinct that draws men towards each other is no bad guarantee for mutual liking.' He said this with a slightly foreign accent, but fluently and easily.

"We now sat down to table, and though

not being gifted with that expansiveness that the stranger spoke of, I soon found myself listening with pleasure to the conversation of a very shrewd and witty man, who had seen a good deal of life. Perhaps I may have exhibited some trait of the pleasure he afforded me—perhaps I may have expressed it in words; at all events, your son marked the effect produced upon me, and in a tone of half-jocular triumph, cried out, ‘Eh, Sedley, you’ll stand by him—won’t you? I’ve told him if there was a man in England to carry him through a stiff campaign you were the fellow.’ I replied by some commonplace, and rose soon after to proceed to court. As the foreigner had also some business at the Hall, I offered him a seat in my cab. As we went along, he spoke freely of himself and his former life, and gave me his card, with the name ‘Anatole Pracontal’—one of the aliases of our Pretender. So that here I was for two hours in close confab with the enemy, to whom I was actually presented by your own son! So overwhelming was this announcement that I really felt unable to take any course, and doubted whether I ought not at once to have told him who his fellow-traveler was. I decided at last for the more cautious line, and asked him to come and see me at Fulham. We parted excellent friends. Whether he will keep his appointment or not, I am unable to guess. By a special good fortune—so I certainly must deem it—Captain Bramleigh was telegraphed for to Portsmouth, and had to leave town at once. So that any risks from that quarter are avoided. Whether this strange meeting will turn out well or ill, whether it will be misinterpreted by Kelson when he comes to hear it—for it would be hard to believe it all accident—and induce him to treat us with distrust and suspicion, or whether it may conduce to a speedy settlement of everything, is more than I can yet say.

“I am so far favorably impressed by M. Pracontal’s manner and address that I think he ought not to be one difficult to deal with. What may be his impression, however, when he learns with whom he has been talking so freely, is still doubtful to me. He cannot, it is true, mistrust your son, but he may feel grave doubts about me.

“I own I do not expect to see him to-morrow. Kelson will certainly advise him against such a step, nor do I yet perceive what immediate good would result from our meeting, beyond the assuring him—as I certainly should—that all that had occurred was pure chance, and that, though perfectly familiar with his name and his

pretensions, I had not the vaguest suspicion of his identity till I read his card. It may be that out of this strange blunder may come good. Let us hope it. I will write to-morrow.

“Truly yours,

“M. SEDLEY.”

Colonel Bramleigh re-read every line of the letter carefully; and, as he laid it down with a sigh, he said, “What a complication of troubles on my hands! At the very moment that I am making engagements to relieve others, I may not have the means to meet my own difficulties. Sedley was quite wrong to make any advances to this man; they are sure to be misinterpreted. Kelson will think we are afraid, and raise his terms with us accordingly.” Again his eyes fell upon Lady Augusta’s letter; but he had no temper now to encounter all the light gossip and frivolity it was sure to contain. He placed it in his pocket, and set out to take a walk. He wanted to think, but he also wanted the spring and energy which come of brisk exercise. He felt his mind would work more freely when he was in motion; and in the open air, too, he should escape from the terrible oppression of being continually confronted by himself—which he felt while he was in the solitude of his study.

“If M. Pracontal measure us by the standard of Master Jack,” muttered he, bitterly, “he will opine that the conflict ought not to be a tough one. What fools these sailors are when you take them off their own element; and what a little bit of a world is the quarter-deck of a frigate! Providence has not blessed me with brilliant sons, that is certain. It was through Temple we have come to know Lord Cudduff; and I protest I anticipate little of either profit or pleasure from the acquaintanceship. As for Augustus, he is only so much shrewder than the others, that he is more cautious; his selfishness is immensely preservative.” This was not, it must be owned, a flattering estimate that he made of his sons; but he was a man to tell hard truths to himself, and to tell them roughly and roundly, too, like one who, when he had to meet a difficulty in life, would rather confront it in its boldest shape.

So essentially realistic was the man’s mind, that, till he had actually under his eyes these few lines describing Pracontal’s look and manner, he had never been able to convince himself that this pretender was an actual *bona fide* creature. Up to this, the claim had been a vague menace, and no more—a tradition that ended in a



threat. There was the whole of it. Kelson had written to Sedley, and Sedley to Kelson. There had been a half-amicable contest, a sort of round with the gloves, in which these two crafty men appeared rather like great moralists than cunning lawyers. Had they been peace-makers by Act of Parliament, they could not have urged more strenuously the advantages of amity and kindness. How severely they censured the contentious spirit which drove men into litigation; and how beautifully they showed the Christian benefit of an arbitration "under the court," the costs to be equitably divided!

Throughout the whole drama, however, M. Pracontal had never figured as an active character of the piece; and for all that Bramleigh could see, the machinery might work to the end, and the catastrophe be announced, not only without ever producing him, but actually without his having ever existed. If from time to time he might chance to read in the public papers of a suspicious foreigner, a "Frenchman or Italian of fashionable appearance," having done this, that, or t'other, he would ask himself at once, "I wonder could this be *my* man? Is that the adventurer who wants to replace me here?" As time, however, rolled on, and nothing came out of this claim more palpable than a dropping letter from Sedley, to say he had submitted such a point to counsel, or he thought that the enemy seemed disposed to come to terms, Bramleigh actually began to regard the whole subject as a man might the danger of a storm, which, breaking afar off, might probably waste all its fury before it reached him.

Now, however, these feelings of vague, undefined doubt were to give way to a very palpable terror. His own son had seen Pracontal, and sat at table with him. Pracontal was a good-looking, well-mannered fellow, with, doubtless, all the readiness and the plomb of a clever foreigner; not a creature of mean appearance and poverty-struck aspect, whose very person would disparage his pretensions, but a man with the bearing of the world and the habits of society.

So sudden and so complete was this revulsion, and so positively did it depict before him an actual conflict, that he could only think of how to deal with Pracontal personally, by what steps it might be safest to approach him, and how to treat a man whose changeful fortunes must doubtless have made him expert in difficulties, and at the same time a not unlikely dupe to well-devised and well-applied flatteries.

To have invited him frankly to Castello

—to have assumed that it was a case in which a generous spirit might deal far more successfully than all the cavils and cranks of the law, was Bramleigh's first thought; but to do this with effect, he must confide the whole story of the peril to some at least of the family; and this, for many reasons, he could not stoop to. Bramleigh certainly attached no actual weight to this man's claim—he did not in his heart believe that there was any foundation for his pretension; but Sedley had told him that there was case enough to go to a jury—and a jury meant exposure, publicity, comment, and very unpleasant comment too, when party hatred should contribute its venom to the discussion. If, then, he shrunk from imparting this story to his sons and daughters, how long could he count on secrecy?—only till next assizes perhaps. At the first notice of trial the whole mischief would be out, and the matter be a world-wide scandal. Sedley advised a compromise, but the time was very unpropitious for this. It was downright impossible to get money at the moment. Every one was bent on "realizing," in presence of all the crashes and bankruptcies around. None would lend on the best securities, and men were selling out at ruinous loss to meet pressing engagements. For the very first time in his life, Bramleigh felt what it was to want for ready money. He had every imaginable kind of wealth. Houses and lands, stocks, shares, ships, costly deposits and mortgages—everything in short but gold; and yet it was gold alone could meet the emergency. How foolish it was of him to involve himself in Lord Culduff's difficulties at such a crisis! had he not troubles enough of his own? Would that essenced and enameled old dandy have stained his boots to have served *him*? That was a very unpleasant query, which would cross his mind, and never obtain anything like a satisfactory reply. Would not his calculation probably be that Bramleigh was amply recompensed for all he could do by the honor of being deemed the friend of a noble lord, so highly placed, and so much thought of in the world?

As for Lady Augusta's extravagance, it was simply insufferable. He had been most liberal to her because he would not permit that whatever might be the nature of the differences that separated them, money in any shape should enter. There must be nothing sordid or mean in the tone of any discussion between them. She might prefer Italy to Ireland; sunshine to rain, a society of idle, leisure-loving, indolent,

soft-voiced men, to association with sterner, severer, and more energetic natures. She might affect to think climate all-essential to her; and the society of her sister a positive necessity. All these he might submit to, but he was neither prepared to be ruined by her wastefulness, nor maintain a controversy as to the sum she should spend. "If we come to figures, it must be a fight," muttered he, "and an ignoble fight, too; and it is to that we are now approaching."

"I think I can guess what is before me here," said he, with a grim smile, as he tore open the letter and prepared to read it. Now, though on this occasion his guess was not exactly correct, nor did the epistle contain the graceful little nothings by which her ladyship was wont to chronicle her daily life, we forbear to give it in extenso to our readers; first of all, because it opened with a very long and intricate explanation of motives which was no explanation at all, and then proceeded by an equally prolix narrative to announce a determination which was only to be final on approval. In two words, Lady Augusta was desirous of changing her religion; but before becoming a Catholic, she wished to know if Colonel Bramleigh would make a full and irrevocable settlement on her of her present allowance, giving her entire power over its ultimate disposal, for she hinted that the sum might be capitalized; the recompense for such splendid generosity being the noble consciousness of a very grand action, and his own liberty. To the latter she adverted with becoming delicacy, slyly hinting that in the church to which he belonged there might probably be no very strenuous objections made, should he desire to contract new ties, and once more re-enter the bonds of matrimony.

The expression which burst aloud from Bramleigh as he finished the letter, conveyed all that he felt on the subject.

"What outrageous effrontery! The first part of this precious document is written by a priest, and the second by an attorney. It begins by informing me that I am a heretic, and politely asks me to add to that distinction the honor of being a beggar. What a woman! I have done, I suppose, a great many foolish things in life, but I shall not cap them so far, I promise you, Lady Augusta, by an endowment of the Catholic Church. No, my lady, you shall give the new faith you are about to adopt the most signal proof of your sincerity, by renouncing all worldliness at the threshold; and as the nuns cut off their silken tresses, you shall rid yourself of that wealth which we are told is such a barrier against heaven.

"Far be it from me," said he, with a sardonic bitterness, "who have done so little for your happiness here, to peril your welfare hereafter."

"I will answer this at once," said he. "It shall not remain one post without its reply."

He arose to return to the house; but in his pre-occupation he continued to walk till he reached the brow of the cliff from which the roof of the curate's cottage was seen, about a mile off. The peaceful stillness of the scene, where not a leaf moved, and where the sea washed lazily along the low strand with a sweeping motion that gave no sound, calmed and soothed him. Was it not to taste that sweet sense of repose that he had quitted the busy life of cities and come to this lone, sequestered spot? Was not this very moment, as he now felt it, the realization of a long-cherished desire? Had the world anything better in all its prizes, he asked himself, than the peaceful enjoyment of an unchequered existence? Shall I not try to carry out what once I had planned to myself, and live my life as I intended?"

He sat down on the brow of the crag and looked out over the sea. A gentle, but not unpleasant sadness was creeping over him. It was one of those moments—every man has had them—in which the vanity of life and the frivolity of all its ambitions present themselves to the mind far more forcibly than ever they appear when urged from the pulpit. There is no pathos, no bad taste, no inflated description in the workings of reflectiveness. When we come to compute with ourselves what we have gained by our worldly successes, and to make a total of all our triumphs, we arrive at a truer insight into the nothingness of what we are contending for than we ever attain through the teaching of our professional moralists.

Colonel Bramleigh had made considerable progress along this peaceful track since he sat down there. Could he only be sure to accept the truths he had been repeating to himself without any wavering or uncertainty; could he have resolution enough to conform his life to these convictions—throw over all ambitions, and be satisfied with mere happiness—was this prize not within his reach? Temple and Marion, perhaps, might resist; but he was certain the others would agree with him. While he thus pondered, he heard the low murmur of voices, apparently near him; he listened, and perceived that some persons were talking as they mounted the zigzag path which led up from the bottom of the gorge, and which had to cross and re-cross



continually before it gained the summit. A thick hedge of laurel and arbutus fenced the path on either side so completely as to shut out all view of those who were walking along it, and who had to pass and re-pass quite close to where Bramleigh was sitting.

To his intense astonishment it was in French they spoke : and a certain sense of terror came over him as to what this might portend. Were these spies of the enemy, and was the mine about to be sprung beneath him ? One was a female voice, a clear, distinct voice—which he thought he knew well, and oh, what inexpressible relief to his anxiety was it when he recognized it to be Julia L'Estrange's ! She spoke volubly, almost flippantly, and, as it seemed to Bramleigh, in a tone of half-sarcastic raillery, against which her companion appeared to protest, as he more than once repeated the word "*sérieuse*" in a tone almost reproachful.

"If I am to be serious, my lord," said she, in a more collected tone, "I had better get back to English. Let me tell you then, in a language which admits of little misconception, that I have forborne to treat your lordship's proposal with gravity, partly out of respect for myself, partly out of deference to you."

"Deference to me? What do you mean? what can you mean?"

"I mean, my lord, that all the flattery of being the object of your lordship's choice could not obliterate my sense of a disparity, just as great between us in years as in condition. I was nineteen last birthday, Lord Culduff;" and she said this with a pouting air of offended dignity.

"A peccess of nineteen would be a great success at a drawing-room," said he, with a tone of pompous deliberation.

"Pray, my lord, let us quit a theme we cannot agree upon. With all your lordship's delicacy, you have not been able to conceal the vast sacrifices it has cost you to make me your present proposal. I have no such tact. I have not even the shadow of it; and I could never hope to hide what it would cost me to become *grande dame*."

"A proposal of marriage; an actual proposal," muttered Bramleigh, as he arose to move away. "I heard it with my own ears; and heard her refuse it, besides."

An hour later, when he mounted the steps of the chief entrance, he met Marion, who came towards him with an open letter. "This is from poor Lord Culduff," said she; "he has been stopping these last three days at the L'Estranges', and what between boredom and bad cookery he couldn't hold

out any longer. He begs he may be permitted to come back here; he says, 'Put me below the salt, if you like—anywhere, only let it be beneath your roof, and within the circle of your fascinating society.' Shall I say, Come, papa?"

"I suppose we must," muttered Bramleigh, sulkily, and passed on to his room.

## CHAPTER XXI.

GEORGE AND JULIA.

It was after a hard day with the hounds that George L'Estrange reached the cottage to a late dinner. The hunting had not been good. They had found three times, but each time lost their fox after a short burst, and though the morning broke favorably, with a low cloudy sky and all the signs of a good scenting day, towards the afternoon a brisk north-easter had sprung up, making the air sharp and piercing, and rendering the dogs wild and uncertain. In fact, it was one of those days which occasionally irritate men more than actual "blanks;" there was a constant promise of something, always ending in disappointment. The horses, too, were fretful and impatient, as horses are wont to be with frequent checks, and when excited by a cold and cutting wind.

Even Nora, perfection that she was of temper and training, had not behaved well. She had taken her fences hotly and impatiently, and actually chested a stiff bank, which cost herself and her rider a heavy fall, and a disgrace that the curate felt more acutely than the injury.

"You don't mean to say you fell, George?" said Julia, with a look of positive incredulity.

"Nora did, which comes pretty much to the same thing. We were coming out of Gore's Wood, and I was leading. There's a high bank with a drop into Longworth's lawn. It's a place I've taken scores of times. One can't fly it; you must 'top,' and Nora can do that sort of thing to perfection; and as I came on I had to swerve a little to avoid some of the dogs that were climbing up the bank. Perhaps it was that irritated her, but she rushed madly on, and came full chest against the gripe, and—I don't remember much more till I found myself actually drenched with vinegar that old Catty Lalor was pouring over me, when I got up again, addled and confused enough, but I'm all right now. Do you know, Ju," said he,

after a pause, "I was more annoyed by a chance remark I heard as I was lying on the grass than by the whole misadventure?"

"What was it, George?"

"It was old Curtis was riding by, and he cried out, 'Who's down?' and some one said, 'L'Estrange.' 'By Jove,' said he, 'I don't think that fellow was ever on his knees before;' and this because I was a parson."

"How unfeeling! but how like him!"

"Wasn't it? After all, it comes of doing what is not exactly right. I suppose it's not enough that I see nothing wrong in a day with the hounds. I ought to think how others regard it; whether it shocks them, or exposes my cloth to sarcasm or censure? Is it not dinner-hour?"

"Of course it is, George. It's past eight."

"And where's our illustrious guest; has he not appeared?"

"Lord Culduff has gone. There came a note to him from Castello in the afternoon, and about five o'clock the phaeton appeared at the door—only with the servants—and his lordship took a most affectionate leave of me, charging me with the very sweetest messages for you, and assurances of eternal memory of the blissful hours he had passed here."

"Perhaps it's not the right thing to say, but I own to you I'm glad he's gone."

"But why, George; was he not amusing?"

"Yes; I suppose he was; but he was so supremely arrogant, so impressed with his own grandness and our littleness, so persistently eager to show us that we were enjoying an honor in his presence that nothing in our lives could entitle us to, that I found my patience pushed very hard to endure it."

"I liked him. I liked his vanity and conceit; and I wouldn't for anything he had been less pretentious."

"I have none of your humoristic temperament, Julia, and I never could derive amusement from the eccentricities or peculiarities of others."

"And there's no fun like it, George. Once that you come to look on life as a great drama, and all the men and women as players, it's the best comedy ever one sat at."

"I'm glad he's gone for another reason, too. I suppose it's shabby to say it, but it's true all the same: he was a very costly guest, and I wasn't disposed, like Charles the Bold or that other famous fellow, to sell a province to entertain an emperor."

"Had we a province to sell, George?" said she, laughing.

"No; but I had a horse, and unfortunately Nora must go to the hammer now."

"Surely not for this week's extravagance?" cried she, anxiously.

"Not exactly for this, but for everything. You know old Curtis's saying, 'It's always the last glass of wine makes a man tipsy.' But here comes the dinner, and let us turn to something pleasanter."

It was so jolly to be alone again, all restraint removed, all terror of culinary mishaps withdrawn, and all the consciousness of little domestic shortcomings obliterated, that L'Estrange's spirit rose at every moment, and at last he burst out, "I declare to you, Julia, if that man hadn't gone, I'd have died out of pure inanition. To see him day after day trying to conform to our humble fare, turning over his meat on his plate, and trying to divide with his fork the cutlet that he wouldn't condescend to cut, and barely able to suppress the shudder our little light wine gave him—to witness all this, and to feel that I mustn't seem to know, while I was fully aware of it, was a downright misery. I'd like to know what brought him here."

"I fancy he couldn't tell you himself. He paid an interminable visit, and we asked him to stop and dine with us. A wet night detained him, and when his servant came over with his dressing-bag or portmanteau, you said, or I said—I forget which—that he ought not to leave us without a peep at our coast scenery."

"I remember all that; but what I meant was, that his coming here from Castello was no accident. He never left a French cook and Château Lafitte for cold mutton and sour sherry without some reason for it."

"You forget, George, he was on his way to Lisconnor when he came here. He was going to visit the mines."

"By the by, that reminds me of a letter I got this evening. I put it in my pocket without reading. Isn't that Vickars's hand?"

"Yes; it is his reply, perhaps, to my letter. He is too correct and too prudent to write to myself, and sends the answer to you."

"As our distinguished guest is not here to be shocked, Julia, let us hear what Vickars says."

"My dear Mr. L'Estrange, I have before me a letter from your sister, expressing a wish that I should consent to the withdrawal of the sum of two thousand pounds, now vested in consols



under my trusteeship, and employ these moneys in a certain enterprise which she designates as the coal-mines of Lisconnor. Before acceding to the grave responsibility which this change of investment would impose upon me, even supposing that the Master—who is the Master, George?”

“Go on; read further,” said he, curtly.

“—that the Master would concur with such a procedure, I am desirous of hearing what you yourself know of the speculation in question. Have you seen and conversed with the engineers who have made the surveys? Have you heard from competent and unconcerned parties—?” Oh, George, it's so like the way he talks. I can't read on.”

L'Estrange took the letter from her and glanced rapidly over the lines, and then turning to the last page read aloud: “How will the recommendation of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners affect you touching the union of Portshandon with Kilmullock? Do they simply extinguish you, or have you a claim for compensation?”

“What does he mean, George?” cried she, as she gazed at the pale face and agitated expression of her brother as he laid down the letter before her.

“It is just extinguishment; that's the word for it,” muttered he. “When they unite the parishes, they suppress me.”

“Oh, George, don't say that! it has not surely come to this?”

“There's no help for it,” said he, putting away his glass and leaning his head on his hand. “I was often told they'd do something like this; and when Grimsby was here to examine the books and make notes—you remember it was a wet Sunday, and nobody came but the clerk's mother—he said, as we left the church, ‘The congregation is orderly and attentive, but not numerous.’”

“I told you, George, I detested that man. I said at the time he was no friend to you.”

“If he felt it his duty——”

“Duty indeed! I never heard of a cruelty yet that hadn't the plea of a duty. I'm sure Captain Craufurd comes to church, and Mrs. Bayley comes, and as to the great house, there's a family there of not less than thirty persons.”

“When Grimsby was here Castello was not occupied.”

“Well, it is occupied now; and if Colonel Bramleigh be a person of the influence he assumes to be, and if he cares—as I take it he must care—not to live like a heathen, he'll prevent this cruel wrong.

I'm not sure that Nelly has much weight, but she would do anything in the world for us, and I think Augustus, too, would befriend us.”

“What can they all do? It's a question for the Commissioners.”

“So it may; but I take it the Commissioners are human beings.”

He turned again to the letter which lay open on the table, and read aloud. “They want a chaplain, I see, at Albano near Rome. Do you know any one who could assist you to the appointment?—always providing that you would like it. I should think I would like it.”

“You were thinking of the glorious riding over the Campagna, George, that you told me about long ago?”

“I hope not,” said he, blushing deeply, and looked overwhelmed with confusion.

“Well, I was, George. Albano reminded me at once of those long moonlight canters you told me about, with the grand old city in the distance. I almost fancy I have seen it all. Let us bethink us of the great people we know, and who would aid us in the matter.”

“The list begins and ends with the Lord Cuduff, I suspect.”

“Not at all. It is the Bramleighs can be of use here. Lady Augusta lives at Rome; she must be, I'm sure, a person of influence there, and be well known, too, and know all the English of station. It's a downright piece of good fortune for us she should be there. There now, be of good heart, and don't look wretched. We'll drive over to Castello to-morrow.”

“They've been very cool towards us of late.”

“As much our fault as theirs, George; some, certainly, was my own.”

“Oh, Vickars has heard of her. He says here, ‘Is the Lady Augusta Bramleigh, who has a villa at Albano, any relative of your neighbor, Colonel Bramleigh? She is very eccentric, some say mad; but she does what she likes with every one. Try and procure a letter to her.’”

“It's all as well as settled, George. We'll be cantering over that swelling prairie before the spring ends,” said she. Quietly rising and going over to the piano, she began one of those little popular Italian ballads which they call “Stornelli”—those light effusions of national life which blend up love and flowers and sunshine together so pleasantly, and seem to emblemize the people who sing them.

“Thither! oh, thither! George! as the girl sings in Goethe's ballad. Won't it be delightful?”

"First let us see if it be possible."

And then they began one of those discussions of ways and means which, however, as we grow old in life, are tinged with all the hard and stern characters of sordid self-interest, are in our younger days blended so thoroughly with hope and trustfulness that they are amongst the most attractive of all the themes we can turn to. There were so many things to be done, and so little to do them with, that it was marvelous to hear of the cunning and ingenious devices by which poverty was to be cheated out of its meanness and actually imagine itself picturesque. George was not a very imaginative creature, but it was strange to see to what flights he rose as the sportive fancy of the high-spirited girl carried him away to the region of the speculative and the hopeful.

"It's just as well, after all, perhaps," said he, after some moments of thought, "that we had not invested your money in the mine."

"Of course. George, we shall want it to buy vines and orange-trees. Oh, I shall grow mad with impatience if I talk of this much longer! Do you know," said she, in a more collected and serious tone, "I have just built a little villa on the lake-side of Albano? And I'm doubting whether I'll have my 'pergolato' of vines next to the water or facing the mountain. I incline to the mountain."

"We mustn't dream of building," said he, gravely.

"We must dream of everything, George. It is in dreamland I am going to live. Why is this gift of fancy bestowed upon us if not to conjure up allies that will help us to fight the stern evils of life? Without imagination, hope is a poor, weary, plodding foot-traveler, painfully lagging behind us. Give him but speculation, and he soars aloft on wings and rises towards heaven."

"Do be reasonable, Julia; and let us decide what steps we shall take."

"Let me just finish my boat-house: I'm putting an aviary on the top of it. Well, don't look so pitifully; I am not going mad. Now, then, for the practical. We are to go over to Castello to-morrow early, I suppose?"

"Yes; I should say in the morning, before Colonel Bramleigh goes into his study. After that he dislikes being disturbed. I mean to speak to him myself. You must address yourself to Marion."

"The forlorn hope always falls to my share," said she, poutingly.

"Why, you were the best friends in the world till a few days back!"

"You men can understand nothing of these things. You neither know the nice conditions nor the delicate reserves of young lady friendships; nor have you the slightest conception of how boundless we can be in admiration of each other in the imagined consciousness of something very superior in ourselves, and which makes all our love a very generous impulse. There is so much coarseness in male friendships, that you understand none of these subtle distinctions."

"I was going to say, thank heaven we don't."

"You are very grateful for very little, George. I assure you there is a great charm in these fine affinities, and remember you men are not necessarily always rivals. Your roads in life are so numerous and so varied, that you need not jostle. We women have but one path, and one goal at the end of it; and there is no small generosity in the kindness we extend to each other."

They talked away late into the night of the future. Once or twice the thought flashed across Julia whether she ought not to tell of what had passed between Lord Culduff and herself. She was not quite sure but that George ought to hear it; but then a sense of delicacy restrained her—a delicacy that extended to that old man who had made her the offer of his hand, and who would not for worlds have it known that his offer had been rejected. "No," thought she, "his secret shall be respected. As he deemed me worthy to be his wife, he shall know that so far as regards respect for his feelings he had not over-estimated me."

It was essential, however, that her brother should not think of enlisting Lord Culduff in his cause, or asking his lordship's aid or influence in any way; and when L'Es-trange carelessly said, "Could not our distinguished friend and guest be of use here?" she hastened to reply, "Do not think of that, George. These men are so victimized by appeals of this sort that they either flatly refuse their assistance, or give some flippant promise of an aid they never think of according. It would actually fret me if I thought we were to owe anything to such intervention. In fact," said she, laughingly, "it's quite an honor to be his acquaintance. It would be something very like a humiliation to have him for a friend. And now good-night. You won't believe it, perhaps; but it wants but a few minutes to two o'clock."

"People, I believe, never go to bed in Italy," said he, yawning; "or only in the



day-time. So that we are in training already, Julia."

"How I hope the match may come off!" said she, as she gave him her hand at parting. "I'll go and dream over it."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### IN THE LIBRARY AT CASTELLO.

WHEN L'Estrange and his sister arrived at Castello on the morning after the scene of our last chapter, it was to discover that the family had gone off early to visit the mine of Lisconnor, where they were to dine, and not return till late in the evening.

Colonel Bramleigh alone remained behind: a number of important letters which had come by that morning's post detained him; but he had pledged himself to follow the party and join them at dinner, if he could finish his correspondence in time.

George and Julia turned away from the door, and were slowly retracing their road homeward, when a servant came running after them to say that Colonel Bramleigh begged Mr. L'Estrange would come back for a moment; that he had something of consequence to say to him.

"I'll stroll about the shrubberies, George, till you join me," said Julia. "Who knows it may not be a farewell look I may be taking of these dear old scenes!"

George nodded, half mournfully, and followed the servant towards the library.

In his ordinary and every-day look, no man ever seemed a more perfect representative of worldly success and prosperity than Colonel Bramleigh. He was personally what would be called handsome, had a high bold forehead, and large grey eyes, well set and shaded by strong full eyebrows, so regular in outline and so correctly defined, as to give a half-suspicion that art had been called to the assistance of nature. He was ruddy and fresh-looking, with an erect carriage, and that air of general confidence that seemed to declare he knew himself to be a favorite of fortune and gloried in the distinction.

"I can do scores of things others must not venture upon," was a common saying of his. "I can trust to my luck," was almost a maxim with him. And in reality, if the boast was somewhat vainglorious, it was not without foundation: a marvelous, almost unerring, success attended him through life. Enterprises that were menaced with ruin and bankruptcy would

rally from the hour that he joined them, and schemes of fortune that men deemed half-desperate would, under his guidance, grow into safe and profitable speculations. Others might equal him in intelligence, in skill, in ready resource, and sudden expedient, but he had not one to rival him in luck. It is strange enough that the hard business mind, the men of realism *par excellence*, can recognize such a thing as fortune; but so it is, there are none so prone to believe in this quality as the people of finance. The spirit of the gambler is, in fact, the spirit of commercial enterprise, and the "odds" are as carefully calculated in the counting-house as in the betting-ring. Seen as he came into the breakfast-room of a morning, with the fresh flush of exercise on his cheek, or as he appeared in the drawing-room before dinner, with that air of ease and enjoyment that marked all his courtesies, one would have said, "There is one certainly with whom the world goes well. There were caustic, invidious people, who hinted that Bramleigh deserved but little credit for that happy equanimity and that buoyant spirit which sustained him: they said, "He has never had a reverse, wait till he be tried:" and the world had waited and waited, and to all seeming the eventful hour had not come, for there he was, a little balder perhaps, a stray grey hair in his whiskers, and somewhat portlier in his presence, but, on the whole, pretty much what men had known him to be for fifteen or twenty years back.

Upon none did the well-to-do, blooming, and prosperous rich man produce a more powerful impression than on the young curate, who, young, vigorous, handsome as he was, could yet never sufficiently emerge from the *res angustæ domi* to feel the ease and confidence that come of affluence.

What a shock was it then to L'Estrange, as he entered the library, to see the man whom he had ever beheld as the type of all that was happy and healthful and prosperous, haggard and careworn, his hand tremulous, and his manner abrupt and uncertain, with a certain furtive dread at moments, followed by outbursts of passionate defiance, as though he were addressing himself to others besides him who was then before him.

Though on terms of cordial intimacy with the curate, and always accustomed to call him by his name, he received him as he entered the room with a cold and formal politeness, apologized for having taken the liberty to send after and recall him, and ceremoniously requested him to be seated.

"We were sorry you and Miss L'Estrange could not join the picnic to-day," said Bramleigh; "though to be sure it is scarcely the season yet for such diversions."

L'Estrange felt the awkwardness of saying that they had not been invited, and muttered something not very intelligible about the uncertainty of the weather.

"I meant to have gone over myself," said Bramleigh, hurriedly; "but all these," and he swept his hand as he spoke through a mass of letters on the table, "all these have come since morning, and I am not half through them yet. What's that the moralist says about calling no man happy till he dies? I often think one cannot speculate upon a pleasant day till after the post-hour."

"I know very little of either the pains or pleasures of the letter-bag. I have almost no correspondence."

"How I envy you!" cried he, fervently.

"I don't imagine that mine is a lot many would be found to envy," said L'Estrange, with a gentle smile.

"The old story, of course. 'Qui sit, Mæcenas, ut Nemo'—I forget my Horace—'ut Nemo'—how does it go?"

"Yes, sir. But I never said I was discontented with my lot in my life. I only remarked that I didn't think that others would envy it."

"I have it—I have it," continued Bramleigh, following out his own train of thought; "I have it. 'Ut Nemo, quam sibi sortem sit contentus.' It's a matter of thirty odd years since I saw that passage, L'Estrange, and I can't imagine what could have brought it so forcibly before me to-day."

"Certainly it could not have been any application to yourself," said the curate, politely.

"How do you mean, sir?" cried Bramleigh, almost fiercely. "How do you mean?"

"I mean, sir, that few men have less cause for discontent with fortune."

"How can *you*, how can any man, presume to say that of another?" said Bramleigh, in a loud and defiant tone, as he arose and paced the room. Who can tell what passes in his neighbor's house, still less in his heart or his head? What do I know, as I listen to your discourse on a Sunday, of the terrible conflict of doubts that have beset you during the week—heresies that have swarmed around you like the vipers and hideous reptiles that gathered around St. Anthony, and that, banished in one shape, came back in another? How do I know what compromises you may have made with your conscience before you

come to utter to me your eternal truths; and how you may have said, 'If he can believe all this so much the better for him'—eh?"

He turned fiercely round, as if to demand an answer, and the curate modestly said, "I hope it is not so that men preach the gospel."

"And yet many must preach in that fashion," said Bramleigh, with a deep but subdued earnestness. "I take it that no man's convictions are without a flaw somewhere, and it is not by parading that flaw he will make converts."

L'Estrange did not feel disposed to follow him into this thesis, and sat silent and motionless.

"I suppose," muttered Bramleigh, as he folded his arms and walked the room with slow steps, "it's all expediency—all! We do the best we can and hope it may be enough. You are a good man, L'Estrange——"

"Far from it, sir. I feel, and feel very bitterly too, my own unworthiness," said the curate, with an intense sincerity of voice.

"I think you so far good that you are not worldly. You would not do a mean thing, an ignoble, a dishonest thing; you wouldn't take what was not your own, nor defraud another of what was his—would you?"

"Perhaps not; I hope not."

"And yet that is saying a great deal. I may have my doubts whether that penknife be mine or not. Some one may come to-morrow or next day to claim it as his, and describe it, heaven knows how rightly or wrongly. No matter, he'll say he owns it. Would you, sir—I ask you now simply as a Christian man, I am not speaking to a casuist or a lawyer—would you, sir, at once, just as a measure of peace to your own conscience, say, 'Let him take,' rather than burden your heart with a discussion for which you had no temper nor taste? That's the question I'd like to ask you. Can you answer it? I see you cannot," cried he, rapidly. "I see at once how you want to go off into a thousand subtleties, and instead of resolving my one doubt, surround me with a legion of others."

"If I know anything about myself I'm not much of a casuist; I haven't the brains for it," said L'Estrange, with a sad smile.

"Ay, there it is. That's the humility of Satan's own making. That's the humility that exclaims, 'I'm only honest. I'm no genius. Heaven has not made me great or gifted. I'm simply a poor creature, right-minded and pure-hearted.' As if there was



anything—as if there could be anything, so exalted as this same purity!”

“But I never said that; I never presumed to say so,” said the other, modestly.

“And if you rail against riches, and tell me that wealth is a snare and a pitfall, what do you mean by telling me that my reverse of fortune is a chastisement? Why, sir, by your own theory it ought to be a blessing, a positive blessing; so that if I were turned out of this princely house tomorrow, branded as a pretender and an impostor, I should go forth better—not only better, but happier. Ay, that’s the point; happier than I ever was as the lord of these broad acres!” As he spoke he tore his cravat from his throat, as though it were strangling him by its pressure, and now walked the room, carrying the neckcloth in his hand, while the veins in his throat stood out full and swollen like a tangled cordage.

L’Estrange was so much frightened by the wild voice and wilder gesture of the man, that he could not utter a word in reply.

Bramleigh now came over, and leaning his hand on the other’s shoulder, in a tone of kind and gentle meaning, said:—

“It is not your fault, my dear friend, that you are illogical and unreasonable. You are obliged to defend a thesis you do not understand, by arguments you cannot measure. The armory of the Church has not a weapon that has not figured in the middle ages; and what are you to do with halberds and cross-bows in a time of rifles and revolvers? If a man, like myself, burdened with a heavy weight on his heart, had gone to his confessor in olden times, he would probably have heard, if not words of comfort, something to enlighten, to instruct, and to guide him. Now what can you give me? tell me that! I want to hear by what subtleties the Church can reconcile me not to do what I ought to do, and yet not quarrel with my own conscience. Can you help me to that?”

L’Estrange shook his head in dissent.

“I suppose it is out of some such troubles as mine that men come to change their religion.” He paused; and then bursting into a laugh, said—“You hear that the other bank deals more liberally—asks a smaller commission, and gives you a handsomer interest—and you accordingly transfer your account. I believe that’s the whole of it.”

“I will not say you have stated the case fairly,” said L’Estrange; but so faintly as to show that he was far from eager to continue the discussion, and he arose to take his leave.

“You are going already? and I have not spoken to you one word about—what was it? Can you remember what it was? Something that related personally to yourself.”

“Perhaps I can guess, sir. It was the mine at Lisconnor, probably? You were kind enough the other day to arrange my securing some shares in the undertaking. Since that, however, I have heard a piece of news which may affect my whole future career. There has been some report made by the Commissioner about the parish.”

“That’s it, that’s it. They’re going to send you off, L’Estrange. They’re going to draft you to a cathedral, and make a prebendary of you. You are to be on the staff of an archbishop: a sort of Christian unattached. Do you like the prospect?”

“Not at all, sir. To begin, I am a very poor man, and could ill bear the cost of life this might entail.”

“Your sister would probably be pleased with the change; a gayer place, more life, more movement.”

“I suspect my sister reconciles herself to dullness even better than myself.”

“Girls do that occasionally; patience is a female virtue.”

There was a slight pause; and now L’Estrange, drawing a long breath, as if preparing himself for a great effort, said:—

“It was to speak to you, sir, about that very matter, and to ask your assistance, that I came up here this day.”

“I wish I were a bishop, for your sake, my dear friend.”

“I know well, sir, I can count upon your kind interest in me, and I believe that an opportunity now offers—”

“What is it? where is it?”

“At Rome, sir; or rather near Rome—a place called Albano. They want a chaplain there.”

“But you’re not a Catholic priest, L’Estrange.”

“No, sir. It is an English community that wants a parson.”

“I see; and you think this would suit you?”

“There are some great attractions about it; the country, the climate, and the sort of life, all have a certain fascination for me, and Julia is most eager about it.”

“The young lady has ambition,” muttered Bramleigh to himself. “But what can I do, L’Estrange? I don’t own a rood of land at Albano. I haven’t a villa—not even a fig-tree there. I could subscribe to the church fund, if there be such a thing; I could qualify for the franchise,

and give you a vote, if that would be of service."

"You could do better, sir. You could give me a letter to Lady Augusta, whose influence, I believe, is all-powerful."

For a moment, Bramleigh stared at him fixedly, and then, sinking slowly into a chair, he leaned his head on his hand, and seemed lost in thought. The name of Lady Augusta had brought up before him a long train of events and possible consequences, which soon led him far away from the parson and all his cares. From her debts, her extravagances, her change of religion, and her suggestion of separation, he went back to his marriage with her, and even to his first meeting. Strange chain of disasters from beginning to end! A bad investment in every way! It paid nothing; it led to nothing.

"I hope, sir," said L'Estrange, as he gazed at the strange expression of pre-occupation in the other's face—"I hope, sir, I have not been indiscreet in my request."

"What *was* your request?" asked Colonel Bramleigh, bluntly, and with a look of almost sternness.

"I had asked you, sir, for a letter to Lady Augusta," said the curate, half-offended at the manner of the last question.

"A letter to Lady Augusta?" repeated Bramleigh, dwelling on each word, as though by the effort he could recall to his mind something that had escaped him.

"I mean, sir, with reference to this appointment—the chaplaincy," interposed L'Estrange, for he was offended at the hesitation, which he thought implied reluctance or disinclination on Colonel Bramleigh's part; and he hastened to show that it was not any claim he was preferring to her ladyship's acquaintance, but simply his desire to obtain her interest in his behalf.

"Influence!—influence!" repeated Bramleigh, to himself. "I have no doubt she has influence; such persons generally have. It is one of the baits that catch them! This little glimpse of power has a marvelous attraction—and these churchmen know so well how to display all their seductive arts before the eager eyes of the newly-won convert. Yes, I am sure you are right, sir; Lady Augusta is one most likely to have influence—you shall have the letter you wish for. I do not say I will write it to-day, for I have a heavy press of correspondence before me, but if you will come up to-morrow, by luncheon time, or to dinner—why not dine here?"

"I think I'd rather come up early, sir."

"Well, then, early be it. I'll have the letter for you. I wish I could remember something I know I had to say to you. What was it?—what was it? Nothing of much consequence, perhaps, but still I feel as if—eh—don't you feel so too?"

"I have not the slightest clue, sir, to what you mean."

"It wasn't about the mine—no. I think you see your way *there* clearly enough. It may be a good thing, or it may not. Cutbill is like the rest of them—not a greater rogue, perhaps, nor need he be. They *are* such shrewd fellows; and as the money is your sister's—trust-money, too—I declare I'd be cautious."

L'Estrange mumbled some words of assent; he saw that Bramleigh's manner betokened exhaustion and weariness, and he was eager to be gone. "Till to-morrow, then, sir," said he, moving to the door.

"You'll not dine with us? I think you might, though," muttered Bramleigh, half to himself. "I'm sure Cuduff would make no show of awkwardness, nor would your sister, either—women never do. But do just what you like. My head is aching so; I believe I must lie down for an hour or two. Do you pass Belton's?"

"I could without any inconvenience. Do you want him?"

"I fancy I'd do well to see him. He said something of cupping me the last day he was here. Would you mind telling him to give me a call?"

"May I come up in the evening, sir, and see how you are?"

"In the evening? This evening?" cried Bramleigh, in a harsh, discordant voice. "Why, good heavens, sir! have a little—a very little discretion. You have been here since eleven; I marked the clock. It was not full five minutes after eleven when you came in; it's now past one. Two mortal hours; and you ask me if you may return this evening; and I reply, sir, distinctly—No! Is that intelligible? I say, no!" As he spoke he turned away, and the curate, covered with shame and confusion, hastened out of the room, and down the stairs, and out into the open air, dreading lest he should meet anyone, and actually terrified at the thought of being seen. He plunged into the thickest of the shrubberies, and it was with a sense of relief he heard from a child that his sister had gone home some time before, and left word for him to follow her.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

## THE CURATE CROSS-EXAMINED.

WHEN the party returned from the picnic, it was to find Colonel Bramleigh very ill. Some sort of fit the doctor called it—not apoplexy nor epilepsy, but something that seemed to combine features of both. It had, he thought, been produced by a shock of some sort, and L'Estrange, who had last been with him before his seizure, was summoned to impart the condition in which he had found him, and whatever might serve to throw light on the attack.

If the curate was nervous and excited by the tidings that reached him of the Colonel's state, the examination to which he was submitted served little to restore calm to his system. Question after question poured in. Sometimes two or three would speak together, and all—except Ellen—accosted him in a tone that seemed half to make him chargeable with the whole calamity. When asked to tell of what they had been conversing, and that he mentioned how Colonel Bramleigh had adverted to matters of faith and belief, Marion, in a whisper loud enough to be overheard, exclaimed, "I was sure of it. It was one of those priestly indiscretions; he would come talking to papa about what he calls his soul's health, and in this way brought on the excitement."

"Did you not perceive, sir," asked she fiercely, "that the topic was too much for his nerves? Did it not occur to you that the moment was inopportune for a very exciting subject?"

"Was his manner easy and natural when you saw him first?" asked Augustus.

"Had he been reading that debate on *Servia*?" inquired Temple.

"Matter enough there, by Jove, to send the blood to a man's head," cried Culduff, warmly.

"I'm convinced it was all religious," chimed in Marion, who triumphed mercilessly over the poor parson's confusion. "It is what they call 'in season and out of season;' and they are true to their device, for no men on earth more heartily defy the dictates of tact or delicacy."

"Oh, Marion, what are you saying?" whispered Nelly.

"It's no time for honeyed words, Ellen, in the presence of a heavy calamity, but I'd like to ask Mr. L'Estrange why, when he saw the danger of the theme they were discussing, he did not try to change the topic."

"So I did. I led him to talk of myself and my interests."

"An admirable antidote to excitement, certainly," muttered Culduff to Temple, who seemed to relish the joke intensely.

"You say that my father had been reading his letters—did he appear to have received any tidings to call for unusual anxiety?" asked Augustus.

"I found him—as I thought—looking very ill, careworn almost, when I entered. He had been writing, and seemed fatigued and exhausted. His first remark to me was, I remember, a mistake." L'Estrange here stopped suddenly. He did not desire to repeat the speech about being invited to the picnic. It would have been an awkwardness on all sides.

"What do you call a mistake, sir?" asked Marion, calmly.

"I mean he asked me something which a clearer memory would have reminded him not to have inquired after."

"This grows interesting. Perhaps you will enlighten us a little farther, and say what the blunder was."

"Well he asked me how it happened that Julia and myself were not of the picnic—forgetting of course that we—we had not heard of it." A deep flush was now spread over his face and forehead, and he looked overwhelmed with shame.

"I see it all; I see the whole thing," said Marion, triumphantly. "It was out of the worldliness of the picnic sprung all the saintly conversation that ensued."

"No; the transition was more gradual," said L'Estrange, smiling, for he was at last amused at the asperity of this cross-examination. "Nor was there what you call any saintly conversation at all. A few remarks Colonel Bramleigh indeed made on the insufficiency of, not the Church, but churchmen, to resolve doubts and difficulties."

"I heartily agree with him," broke in Lord Culduff, with a smile of much intended significance.

"And is it possible—are we to believe that all papa's attack was brought on by a talk over a picnic?" asked Marion.

"I think I told you that he received many letters by the post, and to some of them he adverted as being very important and requiring immediate attention. One that came from Rome appeared to cause him much excitement."

Marion turned away her head with an impatient toss, as though she certainly was not going to accept this explanation as sufficient.

"I shall want a few minutes with Mr. L'Estrange alone in the library, if I may be permitted," said the doctor, who had

now entered the room after his visit to the sick man.

"I hope you may be more successful than we have been," whispered Marion, as she sailed out of the room followed by Lord Cudduff; and after a few words with Augustus, the doctor and L'Estrange retired to confer in the library.

"Don't hurry me; take me quietly, doctor," said the curate, with a piteous smile. "They've given me such a burster over the deep ground that I'm completely blown. Do you know," added he, seriously, "they've cross-questioned me in a way that would imply that I am the cause of this sudden seizure?"

"No, no; they couldn't mean that."

"There's no excuse, then, for the things Miss Bramleigh said to me."

"Remember what an anxious moment it is; people don't measure their expressions when they are frightened. When they left him in the morning he was in his usual health and spirits, and they come back to find him very ill—dangerously ill. That alone would serve to palliate any unusual show of eagerness. Tell me now, was he looking perfectly himself, was he in his ordinary spirits, when you met him?"

"No; I thought him depressed, and at times irritable."

"I see; he was hasty and abrupt. He did not brook contradiction, perhaps?"

"I never went that far. If I dissented once or twice, I did so mildly and even doubtfully."

"Which made him more exacting and more intolerant, you would say?"

"Possibly it did. I remember he rated me rather sharply for not being contented with a very humble condition in life, though I assured him I felt no impatience at my lowly state, and was quite satisfied to wait till better should befall me. He called me a casuist for saying this, and hinted that all churchmen had the leaven of the Jesuit in them; but he got out of this after a while, and promised to write a letter in my behalf."

"And which he told me you would find sealed and addressed on this table here. Here it is."

"How kind of him to remember me through all his suffering!"

"He said something about it being the only reparation he could make you, but his voice was not very clear or distinct, and I couldn't be sure I caught his words correctly."

"Reparation! he owed me none."

"Well, well, it is possible I may have mistaken him. One thing is plain enough;

you cannot give me any clue to this seizure beyond the guess that it may have been some tidings he received by post."

L'Estrange shook his head in silence, and after a moment said: "Is the attack serious?"

"Highly so."

"And is his life in danger?"

"A few hours will decide that, but it may be days before we shall know if his mind will recover. Craythorpe has been sent for from Dublin, and we shall have his opinion this evening. I have no hesitation in saying that mine is unfavorable."

"What a dreadful thing, and how fearfully sudden! I cannot conceive how he could have bethought him of the letter for me at such a moment."

"He wrote it, he said, as you left him; you had not quitted the house when he began. He said to me, 'I saw I was growing worse, I felt my confusion was gaining on me, and a strange commixture of people and events was occurring in my head; so I swept all my letters and papers into a drawer and locked it, wrote the few lines I had promised, and with my almost last effort of consciousness rang the bell for my servant.'"

"But he was quite collected when he told you this?"

"Yes; it was in one of those lucid intervals when the mind shines out clear and brilliant; but the effort cost him dearly; he has not rallied from it since."

"Has he over-worked himself; is this the effect of an over-exerted brain?"

"I'd call it rather the result of some wounded sensibility; he appears to have suffered some great reverse in ambition or in fortune. His tone, so far as I can fathom it, implies intense depression. After all, we must say he met much coldness here; the people did not visit him, there was no courtesy, no kindness, shown him; and though he seemed indifferent to it, who knows how he may have felt it?"

"I do not suspect he gave any encouragement to intimacy; he seemed to me as if declining acquaintance with the neighborhood."

"Ay; but it was in resentment, I opine; but *you* ought to know best. You were constantly here?"

"Yes, very frequently; but I am not an observant person; all the little details which convey a whole narrative to others are utterly lost upon *me*."

The doctor smiled. It was an expression that appeared to say he concurred in the curate's version of his own nature.

"It is these small gifts of combining,



arranging, sifting, and testing, that we doctors have to cultivate," said he, as he took his hat. "The patient, the most eager to be exact and truthful, will, in spite of himself, mislead and misguide us. There is a strange bend sinister in human nature, against sincerity, that will indulge itself even at the cost of life itself. You are the physician of the soul, sir; but take my word for it, you might get many a shrewd hint and many a useful suggestion from us, the meaner workmen, who only deal with nerves and arteries."

As he wended his solitary road homewards, L'Estrange pondered thoughtfully over the doctor's words. He had no need, he well knew, to be reminded of his ignorance of mankind; but here was a new view of it, and it seemed immeasurable.

On the whole, he was a sadder man than usual on that day. The world around him—that narrow circle whose diameter was perhaps a dozen miles or so—was very somber in its coloring. He had left sickness and sorrow in a house where he had hitherto only seen festivity and pleasure; and worse again, as regarded himself, he had carried away none of those kindlier sympathies and friendly feelings which were wont to greet him at the great house. Were they really then changed to him? and if so, why so? There is a moral chill in the sense of estrangement from those we have lived with on terms of friendship that, like the shudder that precedes ague, seems to threaten that worse will follow. Julia would see where the mischief lay had she been in his place. Julia would have read the mystery, if there were a mystery, from end to end; but *he*, he felt it, he had no powers of observation, no quickness, no tact; he saw nothing that lay beneath the surface, nor, indeed, much that was on the surface. All that he knew was, that at the moment when his future was more uncertain than ever, he found himself more isolated and friendless than ever he remembered to have been. The only set-off against all this sense of desertion was the letter which Colonel Bramleigh had written in his behalf, and which he had remembered to write as he lay suffering on his sick-bed. He had told the doctor where to find it, and said it lay sealed and directed. The address was there, but no seal. It was placed in an open envelope, on which was written, "Favored by the Rev. G. L'Estrange." Was the omission of the seal accident or intention? Most probably accident, because he spoke of having sealed it. And yet that might have been a mere phrase to imply that the letter was finished.

Such letters were probably in most cases either open, or only closed after being read by him who bore them. Julia would know this. Julia would be able to clear up this point, thought he, as he pondered, and plodded homeward.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

### DOUBTS AND FEARS.

"AND here is the letter, Julia," said L'Estrange, as they sat at tea together that same evening—"here is the letter; and if I were as clever a casuist as Colonel Bramleigh thought me, I should perhaps know whether I have the right to read it or not."

"Once I have begun to discuss such a point, I distrust my judgment; but when I pronounce promptly, suddenly, out of mere woman's instinct, I have great faith in myself."

"And how does your woman's instinct incline here?"

"Not to read it. It may or may not have been the writer's intention to have sealed it; the omission was possibly a mere accident. At all events, to have shown you the contents would have been a courtesy at the writer's option. He was not so inclined——"

"Stop a bit, Julia," cried he, laughing. "Here you are arguing the case, after having given me the instinctive impulse that would not wait for logic. Now, I'll not stand 'floggee and preachee' too."

"Don't you see, sir," said she, with a mock air of being offended, "that the very essence of this female instinct is its being the perception of an inspired process of reasoning, an instinctive sense of right, that did not require a mental effort to arrive at?"

"And this instinctive sense of right says, Don't read?"

"Exactly so."

"Well, I don't agree with you," said he, with a sigh; "I don't know, and I want to know, in what light Colonel Bramleigh puts me forward. Am I a friend? am I a dependent? am I a man worth taking some trouble about? or am I merely, as I overheard him saying to Lord Culduff, 'a young fellow my boys are very fond of?'"

"Oh, George. You never told me this."

"Because it's not safe to tell you everything. You are sure to resent things you ought never to show you have known. I'd

lay my life on it that, had you heard that speech, you'd have contrived to introduce it into some narrative or some description before a week went over."

"Well, it's a rule of war, if the enemy fire unfair ammunition, you may send it back to him."

"And then," said L'Estrange, reverting to his own channel of thought, "and then it's not impossible that it might be such a letter as I would not have stooped to present."

"If I were a man, nothing would induce me to accept a letter of introduction to any one," said she, boldly. "It puts every one concerned in a false position. 'Give the bearer ten pounds' is intelligible; but when the request is, 'Be polite to the gentleman who shall deliver this; invite him to dine; present him to your wife and daughters; give him currency amongst your friends;' all because of certain qualities which have met favor with some one else—why, this subverts every principle of social intercourse; this strikes at the root of all that lends a charm to intimacy. I want to find out the people who suit me in life, just as I want to display the traits that may attract others to me."

"I'd like to know what's inside this," said L'Estrange, who only half followed what she was saying.

"Shall I tell you?" said she, gravely.

"Do, if you can."

"Here it is: 'The bearer of this is a young fellow who has been our parson for some time back, and now wants to be yours at Albano. There's not much harm in him; he is well-born, well-mannered, preaches but twelve minutes, and rides admirably to hounds. Do what you can for him; and believe me yours truly.'"

"If I thought—"

"Of course you'd put it in the fire," said she, finishing his speech; "and I'd have put it there though it should contain something exactly the reverse of all this."

"The doctor told me that Bramleigh said something about a reparation that he owed me; and although the phrase, coming from a man in his state, might mean nothing, or next to nothing, it still keeps recurring to my mind, and suggesting an eager desire to know what he could point to."

"Perhaps his conscience pricked him, George, for not having made more of you while here. I'd almost say it might with some justice."

"I think they have shown us great attention—have been most hospitable and courteous to us."

"I'm not a fair witness, for I have no

sort of gratitude for social civilities. I think it's always the host is the obligee person."

"I know you do," said he, smiling.

"Who knows," said she, warmly, "if he has not found out that the young fellow the boys were so fond of was worthy of favor in higher quarters? Eh, George, might not this give the clue to the reparation he speaks of?"

"I can make nothing of it," said he, as he tossed the letter on the table, with an impatient movement. "I'll tell you what I'll do, Julia," cried he, after a pause. "I'll take the letter over to Castello tomorrow, and ask Augustus if he feels at liberty to read it to me; if he opine not, I'll get him to seal it then and there."

"But suppose he consents to read it, and suppose it should contain something, I'll not say offensive, but something disagreeable, something that you certainly would not wish to have said—will you be satisfied at being the listener while he reads it?"

"I think I'd rather risk that than bear my present uncertainty."

"And if you'll let me, George, I'll go with you. I'll loiter about the grounds, and you can tell Nelly where to find me, if she wishes to see me."

"By the way, she asked me why you had not been to Castello; but my head being very full of other things, I forgot to tell you; and then there was something else I was to say."

"Try and remember it, George," said she, coaxingly.

"What was it? Was it?—no—it couldn't have been about Lord Culduff carrying away the doctor to his own room, and having him there full half an hour in consultation before he saw Colonel Bramleigh."

"Did he do that?"

"Yes. It was some redness, or some heat, or something or other that he remarked about his ears after eating. No, no; it wasn't that. I remember all about it now. It was a row that Jack got into with his Admiral; he didn't report himself, or he reported to the wrong man, or he went on board when he oughtn't; in fact, he did something irregular, and the Admiral used some very hard language, and Jack rejoined, and the upshot is he's to be brought before a court-martial; at least he fears so."

"Poor fellow! what is to become of him?"

"Nelly says that there is yet time to apologize; that the Admiral will permit him to retract or recall what he said, and



that his brother officers say he ought—some of them at least.”

“And it was this you forgot to tell me?” said she, reproachfully.

“No. It was all in my head, but along with so many things; and then I was so badgered and bullied by the cross-examination they submitted me to; and so anxious and uneasy, that it escaped me till now.”

“Oh, George, let us do a good-natured thing; let us go over and see Nelly; she'll have so many troubles on her heart, she'll want a word of advice and kindness. Let us walk over there now.”

“It's past ten o'clock, Julia.”

“Yes; but they're always late at Castello.”

“And raining heavily besides—listen to that!”

“What do we care for rain?—did bad weather ever keep either of us at home when we wished to be abroad?”

“We can go to-morrow. I shall have to go to-morrow about this letter.”

“But if we wait we shall lose a post. Come, George, get your coat and hat, and I'll be ready in an instant.”

“After all, it will seem so strange in us presenting ourselves at such an hour, and in such a trim. I don't know how we shall do it.”

“Easily enough. I'll go to Mrs. Eady the housekeeper's room, and you'll say nothing about me, except to Nelly; and as for yourself, it will be only a very natural anxiety on your part to learn how the Colonel is doing. There, now, don't delay. Let us be off at once.”

“I declare I think it a very mad excursion, and the only thing certain to come of it will be a heavy cold or a fever.”

“And we face the same risks every day for nothing. I'm sure wet weather never kept you from joining the hounds.”

This home-thrust about the very point on which he was then smarting decided the matter, and he arose and left the room without a word.

“Yes,” muttered he, as he mounted the stairs, “there it is! That's the reproach I can never make head against. The moment they say, ‘You were out hunting,’ I stand convicted at once.”

There was little opportunity for talk as they breasted the beating rain on their way to Castello; great sheets of water came down with a sweeping wind, which at times compelled them to halt and seek shelter ere they could recover breath to go on.

“What a night!” muttered he. “I don't think I was ever out in a worse.”

“Isn't it rare fun, George?” said she, laughingly. “It's as good as swimming in a rough sea.”

“Which I always hated.”

“And which I delighted in! Whatever taxes one's strength to its limits, and exacts all one's courage besides, is the most glorious of excitements. There's a splash; that was hail, George.”

He muttered something that was lost in the noise of the storm; and though from time to time she tried to provoke him to speak, now by some lively taunt, now by some jesting remark on his sullen humor, he maintained his silence till he reached the terrace, when he said:

“Here we are, and I declare, Julia, I'd rather go back than go forward.”

“You shan't have the choice,” said she, laughing, as she rang the bell. “How is your master, William?” asked she, as the servant admitted them.

“No better, miss; the Dublin doctor's upstairs now in consultation, and I believe there's another to be sent for.”

“Mind that you don't say I'm here. I'm going to Mrs. Eady's room to dry my cloak, and I don't wish the young ladies to be disturbed,” said she, passing hastily on to the housekeeper's room, while L'Estrange made his way to the drawing-room. The only person here, however, was Mr. Harding, who, with his hands behind his back and his head bowed forward, was slowly pacing the room in melancholy fashion.

“Brain fever, sir,” muttered he, in reply to the curate's inquiry. “Brain fever, and of a severe kind. Too much application to business—did not give up in time, they say.”

“But he looked so well; seemed always so hearty and so cheerful.”

“Very true, sir, very true; but, as you told us on Sunday, in that impressive discourse of yours, we are only whited sepulchers.”

L'Estrange blushed. It was so rare an event for him to be complimented on his talents as a preacher that he half mistrusted the eulogy.

“And what else, indeed, are we?” sighed the little man. “Here's our dear friend, with all that the world calls prosperity; he has fortune, station, and fine family, and——”

The enumeration of the gifts that made up this lucky man's measure of prosperity was here interrupted by the entrance of Ellen Bramleigh, who came in abruptly and eagerly.

“Where's Julia?” cried she; “my maid told me she was here.”

L'Estrange answered in a low tone. Ellen, in a subdued voice, said:—

"I'll take her up to my room. I have much to say to her. Will you let her remain here to-night?—you can't refuse. It is impossible she could go back in such weather." And without waiting for his reply, she hurried away.

"I suppose they sent for you, sir?" resumed Harding. "They wished you to see him?" and he made a slight gesture, to point out that he meant the sick man.

"No; I came up to see if I could say a few words to Augustus—on a matter purely my own."

"Ha! indeed! I'm afraid you are not likely to have the opportunity. This is a trying moment, sir. Dr. B., though only a country practitioner, is a man of much experience, and he opines that the membranes are affected."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; he thinks it's the membranes; and he derives his opinion from the nature of the mental disturbance, for there are distinct intervals of perfect sanity—indeed, of great mental power. The Colonel was a remarkable man, Mr. L'Estrange; a very remarkable man."

"I've always heard so."

"Ah, sir, he had great projects—I might call them grand projects, for Ireland, had he been spared to carry them out."

"Let us still hope that he may."

"No, no, sir, that is not to be; and if Belton be correct, it is as well, perhaps, it should not be." Here he touched his forehead with the top of his finger, and gave a glance of most significant meaning.

"Does he apprehend permanent injury to the brain?"

The other pursed his mouth, and shook his head slowly, but did not speak.

"That's very dreadful," said L'Estrange, sadly.

"Indeed it is, sir; take this from us," and here he touched his head, "and what are we? What are we better than the beasts of the field? But why do I say this to you, sir? Who knows these things better than yourself?"

The curate was half inclined to smile at the ambiguity of the speech, but he kept his gravity, and nodded assent.

"Nobody had the slightest conception of his wealth," said Harding, coming up, and actually whispering the words into the other's ear. "We knew all about the estated property: I did at least, I knew every acre of it, and how it was let; but of his money in shares, in foreign securities, on mortgages, and in various investments;

what he had out at venture in Assam and Japan, and what he drew twenty-five per cent. from in Peru—of these, sir, none of us had any conception; and would you believe it, Mr. L'Estrange, that he can talk of all these things at some moments as collectedly as if he was in perfect health? He was giving directions to Simecox about his will, and he said, 'Half a sheet of note-paper will do it, Simecox. I'll make my intentions very clear, and there will be nobody to dispute them. And as to details of what little'—he called it little!—'I possess in the world, I want no notes to aid my memory.' The doctor, however, positively prevented anything being done to-day, and strictly interdicted him from hearing any matters of business whatsoever. And it is strange enough, that, if not brought up before him, he will not advert to these topics at all, but continue to wander on about his past life, and whether he had done wisely in this, or that, or the other, mixing very worldly thoughts and motives very oddly at times with those that belong to more serious considerations. Poor Mr. Augustus," continued he, after a short breathing moment, "he does not know what to do! He was never permitted to take any part in business, and he knows no more of Bramleigh and Underwood than you do. And now he is obliged to open all letters marked immediate or urgent, and to make the best replies he can, to give directions, and to come to decisions, in fact, on things he never so much as heard of. And all this while he is well aware that, if his father should recover, he'll not forgive him the liberty he has taken to open his correspondence. Can you imagine a more difficult or painful situation?"

"I think much of the embarrassment might be diminished, Mr. Harding, by his taking you into his counsels."

"Ah! and that's the very thing I'll not suffer him to do. No, no, sir, I know the Colonel too well for that. He may, when he is well and about again, he may forgive his son, his son and heir, for having possessed himself with a knowledge of many important details; but he'd not forgive the agent, Mr. Harding. I think I can hear the very words he'd use. He said once on a time to me, 'I want no Grand Vizier, Harding; I'm Sultan and Grand Vizier too.' So I said to Mr. Augustus, 'I've no head for business after dinner, and particularly when I have tasted your father's prime Madeira.' And it is true, sir; true as you stand there.' The doctor and I had finished the second decanter before we took our coffee."



L'Estrange now looked the speaker fully in the face; and to his astonishment saw that signs of his having drunk freely—which, strangely enough, had hitherto escaped his notice—were now plainly to be seen there.

"No, sir, not a bit tipsy," said Harding, interpreting his glance; "not even what Mr. Cutbill calls 'tight!' I won't go so far as to say I'd like to make up a complicated account; but for an off-hand question as to the value of a standing crop, or an allowance for improvements in the case of a tenant at will, I'm as good as ever I felt. What's more, sir, it's seventeen years since I took so much wine before. It was the day I got my appointment to the agency, Mr. L'Estrange. I was weak enough to indulge on that occasion, and the Colonel said to me, 'As much wine as you like, Harding—a pipe of it, if you please; but don't be garrulous.' The word sobered me, sir—sobered me at once. I was offended, I'll not deny it; but I couldn't afford to show that I felt it. I shut up; and from that hour to this I never was 'garrulous' again. Is it boasting to say, sir, that it's not every man who could do as much?"

The curate bowed politely, as if in concurrence.

"You never thought me garrulous, sir?"

"Never, indeed, Mr. Harding."

"No, sir, it was not the judgment the world passed on me. Men have often said Harding is cautious. Harding is reserved, Harding is guarded in what he says; but none have presumed to say I was garrulous."

"I must say I think you dwell too much on a mere passing expression. It was not exactly polite; but I am sure it was not intended to convey either a grave censure or a fixed opinion."

"I hope so; I hope so, with all my heart, sir," said he, pathetically. But his drooping head and depressed look showed how little of encouragement the speech gave him.

"Mr. Augustus begs you'll come to him in the library, sir," said a footman, entering, and to L'Estrange's great relief, coming to his rescue from his tiresome companion.

"I think I'd not mention the matter now," said Harding, with a sigh. "They've trouble and sickness in the house, and the moment would be unfavorable; but you'll not forget it, sir, you'll not forget that I want that expression recalled, or at least the admission that it was used inadvertently."

L'Estrange nodded assent, and hurried away to the library.

"The man of all others I wanted to see," said Augustus, meeting him with an outstretched hand. "What on earth has kept you away from us of late?"

"I fancied you were all a little cold towards me," said the curate, blushing deeply as he spoke; "but if I thought you wanted me, I'd not have suffered my suspicion to interfere. I'd have come up at once."

"You're a good fellow, and I believe you thoroughly. There has been no coldness; at least, I can swear, none on my part, nor any that I know of elsewhere. We are in great trouble. You've heard about my poor father's seizure—indeed you saw him when it was impending, and now here am I in a position of no common difficulty. The doctors have declared that they will not answer for his life, or, if he lives, for his reason, if he be disturbed or agitated by questions relating to business. They have, for greater impressiveness, given this opinion in writing, and signed it. I have telegraphed the decision to the firm, and have received this reply, 'Open all marked urgent, and answer.' Now you don't know my father very long, or very intimately, but I think you know enough of him to be aware what a dangerous step this is they now press me to take. First of all, I know no more of his affairs than you do. It is not only that he never confided anything to me, but he made it a rule, never to advert to a matter of business before any of us. And to such an extent did he carry his jealousy—if it was jealousy—in this respect, that he would immediately interpose if Underwood or the senior clerk said anything about money matters, and remark, 'These young gentlemen take no interest in such subjects; let us talk of something they can take their share in.' Nor was this abstention on his part without a touch of sarcasm, for he would occasionally talk a little to my sister Marion on bank matters, and constantly said, 'Why weren't you a boy, Marion? You could have taken the helm when it was my watch below.' This showed what was the estimate he had formed of myself and my brothers. I mention all these things to you now, that you may see the exact danger of the position I am forced to occupy. If I refuse to act, if I decline to open the letters on pressing topics, and by my refusal lead to all sorts of complications and difficulties, I shall but confirm him, whenever he recovers, in his depreciatory opinion of me; and if, on the other hand, I engage in the correspondence, who

is to say that I may not be possessing myself of knowledge that he never intended I should acquire, and which might produce a fatal estrangement between us in future? And this is the doubt and difficulty in which you now find me. Here I stand surrounded with these letters—look at that pile yonder—and I have not courage to decide what course to take.”

“And he is too ill to consult with?”

“The doctors have distinctly forbidden one syllable on any business matter.”

“It’s strange enough that it was a question which bore upon all this brought me up here to-night. Your father had promised me a letter to Lady Augusta at Rome, with reference to a chaplaincy I was looking for, and he told Belton to inform me that he had written the letter and sealed it, and left it on the table in the library. We found it there, as he said, only not sealed; and though that point was not important, it suggested a discussion between Julia and myself whether I had or had not the right to read it, being a letter of presentation, and regarding myself alone. We could not agree as to what ought to be done, and resolved at last to take the letter over to you, and say, if you feel at liberty to let me hear what is in this, read it for me: if you have any scruples on the score of reading, seal it, and the matter is ended at once. This is the letter.”

Augustus took it, and regarded it leisurely for a moment.

“I think I need have no hesitation here,” said he. “I break no seal, at least.”

He withdrew the letter carefully from the envelope, and opened it.

“Dear Sedley,” read he, and stopped. “Why, this is surely a mistake; this was not intended for Lady Augusta;” and he turned to the address, which ran, “The Lady Augusta Bramleigh, Villa Altieri, Rome.” “What can this mean?”

“He has put it in a wrong envelope.”

“Exactly so, and probably sealed the other, which led to his remark to Belton. I suppose it may be read now. ‘Dear Sedley—Have no fears about the registry. First of all, I do not believe any exists of the date required; and secondly, there will be neither church, nor parson, nor register here in three months hence.’” Augustus stopped and looked at L’Estrange. Each face seemed the reflex of the other, and the look of puzzled horror was the same on both. “I must go on, I can’t help it,” muttered Augustus, and continued: “I have spoken to the dean, who agrees with me that Portshandon need not be retained as a parish. Something, of course, must

be done for the curate here. You will probably be able to obtain one of the smaller livings for him in the Chancellor’s patronage. So much for the registry difficulty, which indeed was never a difficulty at all till it occurred to your legal acuteness to make it such.”

“There is more here, but I am unwilling to read on,” said Augustus, whose face was now crimson. “and yet, L’Estrange,” added he, “it may be that I shall want your counsel in this very matter. I’ll finish it.” And he read, “‘The more I reflect on the plan of a compromise the less I like it, and I cannot for the life of me see how it secures finality. If this charge is to be revived in my son’s time, it will certainly not be met with more vigor or more knowledge than I can myself contribute to it. Every impostor gains by the lapse of years—bear that in mind. The difficulties which environ explanations are invariably in favor of the rogue, just because fiction is more plausible often than truth. It is not pleasant to admit, but I am forced to own that there is not one amongst my sons who has either the stamina or the energy to confront such a peril; so that, if the battle be really to be fought, let it come on while I am yet here, and in health and vigor to engage in it.’”

“There are abundant reasons why I cannot confide the matter to any of my family—one will suffice: there is not one of them except my eldest daughter who would not be crushed by the tidings, and though she has head enough, she has not the temper for a very exciting and critical struggle.”

“What you tell me of Jack and his indiscretion will serve to show you how safe I should be in the hands of my sons, and he is possibly about as wise as his brothers, though less pretentious than the diplomatist; and as for Augustus, I have great misgivings. If the time should ever come when he should have convinced himself that this claim was good—and sentimental reasons would always have more weight with him than either law or logic—I say, if such a time should arrive, he’s just the sort of nature that would prefer the martyrdom of utter beggary to the assertion of his right, and the vanity of being equal to the sacrifice would repay him for the ruin. There *are* fellows of this stamp, and I have terrible fears that I have one of them for a son.”

Augustus laid down the letter and tried to smile, but his lip trembled hysterically, and his voice was broken and uncertain as he said: “This is a hard sentence, George



—I wish I had never read it. What can it all mean?" cried he, after a minute or more of what seemed cruel suffering. "What is this claim? Who is this rogue? and what is this charge that can be revived and pressed in another generation? Have you ever heard of this before? or can you make anything out of it now? Tell me, for mercy's sake, and do not keep me longer in this agony of doubt and uncertainty."

"I have not the faintest clue to the meaning of all this. It reads as if some one was about to prefer a claim to your father's estate, and that your lawyer had been advising a compromise with him."

"But a compromise is a sort of admission that the claimant was not an impostor—that he had his rights!"

"There are rights, and rights! There are demands, too, that it is often better to conciliate than to defy—even though defiance would be successful."

"And how is it that I never heard of this before?" burst he out, indignantly. "Has a man the right to treat his son in this fashion? to bring him up in the unbroken security of succeeding to an inheritance that the law may decide he has no title to?"

"I think that is natural enough. Your father evidently did not recognize this man's right, and felt there was no need to impart the matter to his family."

"But why should my father be the judge in his own cause?"

L'Estrange smiled faintly; the line in the Colonel's letter, in which he spoke of his son's sensitiveness, occurred to him at once.

"I see how you treat my question," said Augustus. "It reminds you of the character my father gave me. What do you say, then, to that passage about the registry? Why, if we be clean-handed in this business, do we want to make short work of all records?"

"I simply say I can make nothing of it."

"Is it possible, think you, that Marion knows this story?"

"I think it by no means unlikely."

"It would account for much that has often puzzled me," said Augustus, musing as he spoke. "A certain self-assertion that she has, and a habit, too, of separating her own interests from those of the rest of us, as though speculating on a time when she should walk alone. Have you remarked that?"

"I! I," said L'Estrange, smiling, "remark nothing! there is not a less observant fellow breathing."

"If it were not for those words about the parish registry, George," said the other, in a grave tone, "I'd carry a light heart about

all this; I'd take my father's version of this fellow, whoever he is, and believe him to be an impostor; but I don't like the notion of foul play, and it does mean foul play."

L'Estrange was silent, and for some minutes neither spoke.

"When my father," said Augustus—and there was a tone of bitterness now in his voice—"when my father drew that comparison between himself and his sons, he may have been flattering his superior intellect at the expense of some other quality."

Another and a longer pause succeeded.

At last L'Estrange spoke:—

"I have been running over in my head all that could bear upon this matter, and now I remember a couple of weeks ago that Longworth, who came with a French friend of his to pass an evening at the cottage, led me to talk of the parish church and its history; he asked me if it had not been burnt by the rebels in '98, and seemed surprised when I said it was only the vestry-room and the books that had been destroyed. 'Was not that strange?' asked he; 'did the insurgents usually interest themselves about parochial records?' I felt a something like a sneer in the question, and made him no reply."

"And who was the Frenchman?"

"A certain Count Pracontal, whom Longworth met in Upper Egypt. By the way, he was the man Jack led over the high bank, where the poor fellow's leg was broken."

"I remember; he, of course has no part in the story we are now discussing. Longworth may possibly know something. Are you intimate with him?"

"No, we are barely acquainted. I believe he was rather flattered by the very slight attention we showed himself and his friend; but his manner was shy, and he is a diffident, bashful sort of man, not easy to understand."

"Look here, L'Estrange," said Augustus, laying his hand on the other's shoulder: "All that has passed between us here to-night is strictly confidential, to be divulged to no one, not even your sister. As for this letter, I'll forward it to Sedley, for whom it was intended. I'll tell him how it chanced that I read it; and then—and then—the rest will take its own course."

"I wonder if Julia intends to come back with me?" said L'Estrange, after a pause.

"No. Nelly has persuaded her to stay here, and I think there is no reason why you should not also."

"No. I'm always uncomfortable away from my own den; but I'll be with you early to-morrow; good-night."

Nelly and Julia did not go to bed till

daybreak. They passed the night writing a long letter to Jack—the greater part being dictated by Julia while Nelly wrote. It was an urgent entreaty to him to yield to the advice of his brother officers, and withdraw the offensive words he had used to the admiral. It was not alone his station, his character, and his future in life were pressed into the service, but the happiness of all who loved him and wished him well, with a touching allusion to his poor father's condition, and the impossibility of asking any aid or counsel from him. Nelly went on: "Remember, dear Jack, how friendless and deserted I shall be if I lose you; and it would be next to losing you to know you had quitted the service, and gone heaven knows where, to do heaven knows what." She then adverted to home, and said, "You know how happy and united we were all here, once on a time. This is all gone; Marion and Temple hold themselves quite apart, and Augustus, evidently endeavoring to be neutral, is isolated. I only say this to show you how, more than ever, I need your friendship and affection; nor is it the least sad of all my tidings, the L'Estranges are going to leave this. There is to be some new arrangement by which Portshandon is to be united to Kilmullock, and one church to serve for the two parishes. George and Julia think of going to Italy. I can scarcely tell you how I feel this desertion of me now, dearest Jack. I'd bear up against all these and worse—if worse there be—were I only to feel that you were following out your road to station and success, and that the day was coming when I should be as proud as I am fond of you. You hate writing, I know, but you will, I'm sure, not fail to send me half a dozen lines to say that I have not pleaded in vain. I fear I shall not soon be able to send you pleasant news from this, the gloom thickens every day around us, but you shall hear constantly." The letter ended with a renewed entreaty to him to place himself in the hands and under the guidance of such of his brother officers as he could rely on for sound judgment and moderation. "Remember, Jack, I ask you to do nothing that shall peril honor; but also nothing in anger, nothing out of wounded self-love."

"Add one line, only one, Julia," said she, handing the pen to her, and pushing the letter before her; and, without a word, Julia wrote: "A certain coquette of your acquaintance—heartless, of course, as all her tribe—is very sorry for your trouble, and would do all in her power to lessen it. To this end she begs you to listen patiently

to the counsels of the present letter, every line of which she has read, and to believe that in yielding something—if it should be so—to the opinion of those who care for you, you acquire a new right to their affection, and a stronger title to their love."

Nelly threw her arm around Julia's neck and kissed her again and again.

"Yes, darling, these dear words will sink into his heart, and he will not refuse our prayer."

## CHAPTER XXV.

### MARION'S AMBITIONS.

COLONEL BRAMLEIGH'S malady took a strange form, and one which much puzzled his physicians: his feverish symptoms gradually disappeared, and to his paroxysms of passion and excitement there now succeeded a sort of dreary apathy, in which he scarcely uttered a word, nor was it easy to say whether he heard or heeded the remarks around him. This state was accompanied by a daily increasing debility, as though the powers of life were being gradually exhausted, and that, having no more to strive for or desire, he cared no more to live.

The whole interest of his existence now seemed to center around the hour when the post arrived. He had ordered that the letter-bag should be opened in his presence, and as the letters were shown him one by one, he locked them, unopened and unread, in a despatch-box, so far strictly obedient to the dictates of the doctor, who had forbidden him all species of excitement. His family had been too long accustomed to the reserve and distance he observed towards them to feel surprised that none were in this critical hour admitted to his confidence, and that it was in presence of his valet, Dorose, the letters were sorted and separated, and such as had no bearing on matters of business sent down to be read by the family.

It was while he continued in this extraordinary state, intermediate as it seemed between sleeping and waking, a telegram came from Sedley to Augustus, saying—"Highly important to see your father. Could he confer with me if I go over? Reply at once." The answer was—"Unlikely that you can see him; but come on the chance."

Before sending off this reply, Augustus had taken the telegram up to Marion's room, to ask her advice in the matter.



"You are quite right, Gusty," said she, "for, if Sedley cannot see papa, he can certainly see Lord Culduff."

"Lord Culduff!" cried he, in amazement, "Why, what could Lord Culduff possibly know about my father's affairs? How could he be qualified to give an opinion upon them?"

"Simply on the grounds of his great discrimination, his great acuteness, joined to a general knowledge of life, in which he has admittedly few rivals."

"Grant all that; but here are special questions, here are matters essentially personal; and with all his lordship's tact and readiness, yet he is not one of us."

"He may be, though, and very soon, too," replied she, promptly.

"What do you mean?" asked he, in a voice of almost dismay.

"Just what I say, Augustus; and I am not aware it is a speech that need excite either the amazement or the terror I see in your face at this moment."

"I am amazed; and if I understand you aright, I have grounds to be shocked besides."

"Upon my word," said she, in a voice that trembled with passion, "I have reason to congratulate myself on the score of brotherly affection. Almost the last words Jack spoke to me at parting were, 'For God's sake, shake off that old scamp;' and now you—that hold a very different position amongst us—you, who will one day be the head of the family, deliberately tell me you are shocked at the prospect of my being allied to one of the first names in the peerage."

"My dear Marion," said he, tenderly, "it is not the name, it is not the rank, I object to."

"It is his fortune, then? I'm sure it can't be his abilities."

"It is neither. It is simply that the man might be your grandfather."

"Well, sir," said she, drawing herself up, and assuming a manner of intense hauteur, "and if I—I conclude I am the person most to be consulted—if I do not regard this disparity of years as an insurmountable obstacle, by what right can one of my family presume to call it such?"

"My dear sister," said he, "can you not imagine the right of a brother to consult for your happiness?"

"Happiness is a very large word. If it were for Nelly that you were interesting yourself, I've no doubt your advice and counsel ought to have great weight; but I am not one of your love-in-a-cottage young ladies, Gusty. I am, I must own it, exces-

sively worldly. Whatever happiness I could propose to myself in life is essentially united to a certain ambition. We have as many of the advantages of mere wealth as most people: as fine equipages, as many footmen, as good a cook, and as costly silver; and what do they do for us? They permit us simply to enter the lists with a set of people who have high-stepping horses and powdered lacqueys like ourselves, but who are no more the world, no more society, than one of papa's Indiamen is a ship of the Royal Navy. Why do I say this to you, who were at Oxford, who saw it all—ay, and felt it all—in those fresh years of youth when these are sharp sufferings? You know well—you told me your griefs at the time—that you were in a set without being 'of it;' that the stamp of inequality was as indelibly fixed upon you as though you were a corporal and wore coarse cloth. Now, these things are hard to bear for a man, for a woman they are intolerable. She has not the hundred-and-one careers in life in which individual distinction can obliterate the claims of station. She has but one stage—the *salon*; but, to her, this narrow world, soft-carpeted and damask-curtained, is a very universe; and without the recognized stamp of a certain rank in it, she is absolutely nothing."

"And may not all these things be bought too dearly, Marion?"

"I don't know the price I'd call too high for them."

"What! Not your daily happiness? not your self-esteem? not the want of the love of one who would have your whole heart in his keeping?"

"So he may, if he can give me the rank I care for."

"Oh, Marion! I cannot think this of you," cried he, bitterly.

"That is to say, that you want me to deceive you with false assurances of unbought affection and the like; and you are angry because I will not play the hypocrite. Lord Culduff has made me an offer of his hand, and I have accepted it. You are aware that I am my own mistress. Whatever I possess, it is absolutely my own; and though I intend to speak with my father, and, if it may be, obtain his sanction, I will not say that his refusal would induce me to break off my engagement."

"At all events, you are not yet this man's wife, Marion," said he, with more determination than he had yet shown; "and I forbid you positively to impart to Lord Culduff anything regarding this telegram."

"I make no promises."

"You may have no regard for the interests of your family, but possibly you will care for some of your own," said he, fiercely. "Now, I tell you distinctly, there are very grave perils hanging over us at this moment—perils of which I cannot measure the amount nor the consequences. I can only dimly perceive the direction from which they come; and I warn you, for your own sake, to make no confidences beyond the bounds of your own family."

"You are superbly mysterious, Gusty; and if I were impressionable on this kind of matter, I half suspect you might terrify me. Papa ought to have committed a forgery, at least, to justify your dark insinuations."

"There is no question of a forgery; but there may be that, which in the end, will lead to a ruin as complete as any forgery."

"I know what you mean," said she, in a careless, easy tone; "the bank has made use of private securities and title-deeds, just as those other people did—I forget their names—a couple of years ago."

"It is not even that; but, I repeat, the consequences may be to the full as disastrous."

"You allude to this unhappy scrape of Jack's."

"I do not. I was not then thinking of it."

"Because as to that Lord Culduff said there never yet grew a tree where there wasn't a branch or two might be lopped off with advantage. If Jack doesn't think his station in life worth preserving, all the teaching in the world won't persuade him to maintain it."

"Poor Jack!" said he, bitterly.

"Yes, I say, poor Jack! too. I think it's exactly the epithet to apply to one whose spirit is so much beneath his condition."

"You are terribly changed, Marion. I do not know if you are aware of it?"

"I hope I am. I trust that I look at the events around me from a higher level than I have been accustomed to hitherto."

"And is my father in a state to be consulted on a matter of this importance?" asked he, half indignantly.

"Papa has already been spoken to about it; and it is by his own desire we are both to see him this evening."

"Am I the only one here who knew nothing of all this?"

"You should have been told formally this morning, Augustus. Lord Culduff only waited for a telegram from Mr. Cutbill to announce to you his intentions and

his—hopes." A slight hesitation delayed the word.

"These things I can't help," said he, bitterly, and as if speaking to himself. "They have been done without my knowledge, and regardless of me in every way; but I do protest—strongly protest—against Lord Culduff being introduced into matters which are purely our own."

"I never knew till now that we had family secrets," said she, with an insolent air.

"You may learn it later on, perhaps, and without pleasure."

"So, then, these are the grave perils you tried to terrify me with a while ago. You forget, Augustus, that I have secured my passage in another ship. Personally, at least, I am in no danger."

"I did forget that. I did, indeed, forget how completely you could disassociate yourself from the troubles of your family."

"But what is going to happen to us? They can't shoot Jack because he called his commanding officer an ugly name. They can't indict papa because he refused to be high-sheriff. And if the world is angry with you, Gusty, it is not certainly because you like the company of men of higher station than your own."

He flushed at the sarcasm that her speech half revealed, and turned away to hide his irritation.

"Shall I tell you frankly, Gusty," continued she, "that I believe nothing—absolutely nothing—of these impending calamities? There is no sword suspended over us; or, if there be, it is by a good strong cord, which will last our time. There are always plenty of dark stories in the City. Shares fall and great houses tumble; but papa told me scores of times that he never put all his eggs into one basket; and Bramleigh and Underwood will be good names for many a day to come. Shall I tell you, my dear Augustus, what I suspect to be the greatest danger that now hangs over us? And I am quite ready to admit it is a heavy one."

"What is it?"

"The peril I mean is—that your sister Nelly will marry the curate. Oh! you may look shocked and incredulous, and cry impossible, if you like; but we girls are very shrewd detectives over each other, and what I tell you is only short of certainty!"

"He has not a shilling in the world; nor has she, independently of my father."

"That's the reason!—that's the reason! These are the truths that are never broken. There is nothing aids fidelity like beggary!"



"He has neither friends nor patrons. He told me himself he has not the vaguest hope of advancement."

"Exactly so; and just for that they will be married. Now, it reminds me," said she, aloud, "of what papa once said to me. The man who wants to build up a name and a family ought to have few children. With a large household, some one or another will make an unhappy alliance, and one deserter disgraces the army."

"A grave consideration for Lord Culduff at this moment," said he, with a humorous twinkle of the eye.

"We have talked it over already," said she.

"Once for all, Marion, no confidences about what I have been talking of." And so saying, he went his way.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### MR. CUTBILL ARRIVES AT CASTELLO.

ON the eve of that day on which the conversation in the last chapter occurred, Mr. Cutbill arrived at Castello. He came full of town news: he brought with him the latest scandals of society, and the last events in politics; he could tell of what was doing in Downing Street, and what was about to be done in the city. In fact, he had the sort of budget that was sure to amuse a country audience, and yet, to his astonishment, he found none to question, none even to listen to him. Colonel Bramleigh's illness had thrown a gloom over all. The girls relieved each other in watches beside their father, and Augustus and Temple dined together alone, as Lord Culduff's gout still detained him in his room. It was as the dinner drew to its close that Mr. Cutbill was announced.

"It ain't serious, I hope? I mean, they don't think the case dangerous?" said he, as he arranged his napkin on his knee.

Augustus only shook his head in silence.

"Why, what age is he? not sixty?"

"Fifty-one—fifty-two in June."

"That's not old; that's the prime of life, especially when a man has taken nothing out of himself."

"He was always temperate; most temperate."

"Just so; even his own choice Mouton didn't tempt him into the second bottle. I remember that well. I said to myself: 'Tom Cutbill, that green seal wouldn't fare so well in your keeping.' I had *such*

a bag of news for him. All the rogueries on 'Change, fresh and fresh. I suppose it is quite hopeless to think of telling him now?"

"Not to be thought of."

"How he'd have liked to have heard about Hewlett and Bell! They're gone for close on two millions; they'll not pay over sixpence in the pound; and Rinker, the Bombay fellow that went in for cotton, has caught it too! Cotton and indigo have ruined more men than famine and pestilence. I'd be shot, if I was a Lord of the Council, if I wouldn't have a special prayer for them in the Litany. Well, Temple, and how are you, all this while?" said he, turning abruptly to the diplomatist, who sat evidently inattentive to the dialogue.

"What, sir, did you address *me*?" cried he, with a look of astonishment and indignation.

"I should think I did; and I never heard you were Premier Earl, or that other thing of England, that you need look so shocked at the liberty! You Foreign Office swells are very grand folk to each other, but take my word for it, the world, the real world, thinks very little of you."

Temple arose slowly from his place, threw his napkin on the table, and turning to Augustus, said: "You'll find me in the library," and withdrew.

"That's dignified; I take it," said Cutbill; "but, to my poor appreciation, it's not the way to treat a guest under his father's roof."

"A guest has duties, Mr. Cutbill, as well as rights; my brother is not accustomed to the sort of language you address to him, nor is he at all to blame if he decline to hear more of it."

"So that I am to gather you think he was right?"

Augustus bowed coldly.

"It just comes to what I said one day to Harding: the sailor is the only fellow in the house a man can get on with. I'm sorry, heartily sorry, for him."

The last words were in a tone of sincere feeling, and Augustus asked: "What do you mean by sorry? what has happened to him?"

"Haven't you seen it in the *Times*—no you couldn't though—it was only in this morning's edition, and I have it somewhere. There's to be a court-martial on him; he's to be tried on board the *Ramsay*, at Portsmouth, for disobedience and indiscipline, and using to his superior officer—old Colthurst—words unbecoming the dignity of the service and the character of an officer, or the dignity of an officer and the char-

acter of the service—it's all the one gauge, but he'll be broke and cashiered all the same."

"I thought that if he were to recall something, if he would make some explanation, which he might without any peril to honor——"

"That's exactly how it was, and when I heard he was in a scrape, I started off to Portsmouth to see him."

"You did?" exclaimed Augustus, looking now with a very different expression at the other.

"To be sure I did; I went down by the mail train, and stayed with him till the one-forty express started next day, and I might have saved myself the trouble."

"You could make no impression upon him?"

"Not a bit—as well talk to that oak sideboard there; he'd sit and smoke and chat very pleasantly too, about anything, I believe; he'd tell about his life up in town, and what he lost at the races, and how near he was to a good thing on the Riddlesworth; but not a word, not so much as a syllable, would he say about his own hobble. It was growing late; we had had a regular bang-up breakfast—turtle steaks and a deviled lobster, and plenty of good champagne—not the sweet stuff your father gives us down here—but dry 'Mum,' that had a flavor of Marcobrunner about it. He's a rare fellow to treat a man, is Jack; and so I said—not going about the bush, but bang into the thicket at once—'What's this stupid row you have got into with your Admiral? what's it all about?'

"'It's about a service regulation, Master Cutbill,' said he, with a stiff look on him. 'A service regulation that you wouldn't understand if you heard it.'

"'You think,' said I, 'that out of culverts and cuttings Tom Cutbill's opinion is not worth much?'

"'No, no, not that, Cutbill; I never said that,' said he, laughing; 'but you see that we sailors not only have all sorts of technicals for the parts of a ship, but we have technical meanings for even the words of common life, so that, though I might call you a consummate humbug, I couldn't say as much to a Vice-Admiral without the risk of being judged by professional etiquette.'

"'But you didn't call him that, did you?' said I.

"'I'll call *you* worse, Cutty,' says he, laughing, 'if you don't take your wine.'

"'And now, Jack,' said I, 'it's on the stroke of one; I must start with the express at one-forty, and as I came down

here for nothing on earth but to see if I could be of any use to you, don't let me go away only as wise as I came; be frank and tell me all about this business, and when I go back to town it will push me hard if I can't do something with the Somerset House fellows to pull you through.'

"'You are a good-hearted dog, Cutty,' says he, 'and I thought so the first day I saw you; but my scrape, as you call it, is just one of those things you'd only blunder in. My fine brother Temple, or that much finer gentleman, Lord Culduff, who can split words into the thinnest of veneers, might possibly make such a confusion that it would be hard to see who was right or who was wrong in the whole affair; but *you*, Cutty, with your honest intentions and your vulgar good sense, would be sure to offend every one. There, don't lose your train; don't forget the cheroots and the punch, and some pleasant books, if they be writing any such just now.'

"'If you want money,' said I—'I mean for the defense.'

"'Not sixpence for the lawyers, Cutty; of that you may take your oath,' said he, as he shook my hand. 'I'd as soon think of sending the wardroom dinner overboard to the sharks.' We parted, and the next thing I saw of him was that paragraph in the *Times*."

"How misfortunes thicken around us! About a month or six weeks ago, when you came down here first, I suppose there wasn't a family in the kingdom could call itself happier."

"You *did* look jolly, that I *will* say; but somehow—you'll not take the remark ill—I saw that, as we rail-folk say, it was a capital line for ordinary regular traffic, but would be sure to break down if you had a press of business."

"I don't understand you."

"I mean that, so long as it was only a life of daily pleasure and enjoyment was before you—that the gravest question of the day was what horse you'd ride, or whom you'd invite to dinner—so long as that lasted the machine would work well—no jar, no friction anywhere; but if once trouble—and I mean real trouble—was to come down upon you, it would find you all at sixes and sevens—no order, no discipline anywhere, and, what's worse, no union. But you know it better than I do. You see yourself that no two of you pull together; ain't that a fact?"

Augustus shook his head mournfully, but was silent.

"I like to see people jolly, because they understand each other, and are fond of each



other, because they take pleasure in the same things, and feel that the success of one is the success of all. There's no merit in being jolly over ten thousand a year and a house like Windsor Castle. Now, just look at what is going on, I may call it, under our noses here; does your sister Marion care a brass farthing for Jack's misfortunes, or does he feel a bit elated about her going to marry a viscount? Are you fretting your heart to ribbons because that fine young gent that left us awhile ago is about to be sent envoy to Bogota? And that's fact, though he don't know it yet," added he, in a chuckling whisper. "It's a regular fair-weather family, and if it comes on to blow, you'll see if there's a storm-sail amongst you."

"Apparently, then, you were aware of what was only divulged to me this evening?" said Augustus. "I mean the intended marriage of Lord Culduff to my sister."

"I should say I was aware of it. I was, so to say, promoter and projector. It was I started the enterprise. It was that took me over to town. I went to square that business of old Culduff. There was a question to be asked in the House about his appointment that would have led to a debate, or what they call a conversation—about the freest kind of after-dinner talk imaginable—and they'd have ripped up the old reprobate's whole life—and I assure *you* there are passages in it wouldn't do for the *Methodists' Magazine*—so I went over to negotiate a little matter with Joel, who had, as I well knew, a small sheaf of Norton's bills. I took Joel down to Greenwich to give him a fish-dinner, and talk the thing over, and we were right comfortable and happy over some red Hermitage—thirty shillings a bottle, mind you—when we heard a yell, just a yell, from the next room, and in walks—who do you think?—Norton himself, with his napkin in his hand—he was dining with a set of fellows from the Garrick, and he swaggered in and sat down at our table. 'What infernal robbery are you two concocting here?' said he. 'When the waiter told me who were the fellows at dinner together, I said, These rascals are like the witches in Macbeth, and they never meet without there's mischief in the wind.'

"The way he put it was so strong, there was something so home in it, that I burst out and told him the whole story, and that it was exactly himself, and no other, was the man we were discussing.

"And you thought," said he, "you thought, that, if you had a hold of my acceptances, you'd put the screw on me and

squeeze me as flat as you pleased. Oh, generation of silkworms, ain't you soft!" cried he, laughing. "Order up another bottle of this, for I want to drink your healths. You've actually made my fortune! The thing will now be first-rate. The Culduff inquiry was a mere matter of public morals, but here, here is a direct attempt to coerce or influence a member of Parliament. I'll have you both at the Bar of the House as sure as my name is Norton."

"He then arose and began to rehearse the speech he'd make when we were arraigned, and a spicier piece of abuse I never listened to. The noise he made brought the other fellows in from the next room, and he ordered them to make a house, and one was named speaker and another black rod, and we were taken into custody and duly purged of our contempt by paying for all the wine drank by the entire company, a trifle of five-and-thirty pounds odd. The only piece of comfort I got at all was getting into the rail to go back to town, when Norton whispered me, 'It's all right about Culduff. Parliament is dissolved; the House rises on Tuesday, and he'll not be mentioned.'

"But does all this bear on the question of marriage?"

"Quite naturally. Your father pulls Culduff out of the mire, and the Viscount proposes for your sister. It's all contract business the whole world over. By the way, where is our noble friend? I suppose, all things considered, I owe him a visit."

"You'll find him in his room. He usually dines alone, and I believe Temple is the only one admitted."

"I'll send up my name," said he, rising to ring the bell for the servant; "and I'll call myself lucky if he'll refuse to see me."

"His lordship will be glad to see Mr. Cutbill as soon as convenient to him," replied the servant on his return.

"All my news for him is not so favorable as this," whispered Cutbill, as he moved away. "They won't touch the mine in the City. That last murder, though it was down in Tipperary, a hundred and fifty miles away from this, has frightened them all; and they say they're quite ready to do something at Lagos, or the Gaboon, but nothing here. 'You see,' say they, 'if they cut one or two of our people's heads off in Africa, we get up a gun-brig, and burn the barracoons and slaughter a whole village for it, and this restores confidence; but in Ireland it always ends with a debate in the House, that shows the people to have great wrongs and great patience, and that

their wild justice, as some one called it, was all right; and that, sir, *that* does not restore confidence.' Good-night."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE VILLA ALTIERI.

THERE is a short season in which a villa within the walls of old Rome realizes all that is positive ecstasy in the life of Italy. This season begins usually towards the end of February and continues through the month of March. This interval—which in less favored lands is dedicated to storms of rain and sleet, east winds and equinoctial gales, tumbling chimney-pots and bronchitis—is here signalized by all that Spring, in its most voluptuous abundance, can pour forth; vegetation comes out, not with the laggard step of northern climes—slow, cautious, and distrustful—but bursting at once from bud to blossom as though impatient for the fresh air of life and the warm rays of the sun. The very atmosphere laughs and trembles with vitality: from the panting lizard on the urn to the myriad of insects on the grass, it is life everywhere; and over all sweeps the delicious odor of the verbena and the violet, almost overpowering with perfume, so that one feels, in such a land, the highest ecstasy of existence is that same dreamy state begotten of impressions derived from blended sense, where tone and tint and odor mingle almost into one.

Perhaps the loveliest spot of Rome in this loveliest of seasons was the Villa Altieri. It stood on a slope of the Pincian, defended from north and east, and looking eastward over the Campagna towards the hills of Albano. A thick ilex grove, too thick and dark for Italian, though perfect to English taste, surrounded the house, offering alleys of shade that even the noonday's sun found impenetrable; while beneath the slope, and under shelter of the hill, lay a delicious garden, memorable by a fountain designed by Thorwaldsen, where four Naiades splash the water at each other under the fall of a cataract; this being the costly caprice of the Cardinal Altieri, to complete which he had to conduct the water from the Lake of Albano. Unlike most Italian gardens, the plants and shrubs were not merely those of the south, but all that the culture of Holland and England could contribute to fragrance and color were also there; and the gorgeous tulips of the Hague,

the golden ranunculus and crimson carnation, which attain their highest beauty in moister climates, here were varied with chrysanthemums and camelias. Gorgeous creepers trailed from tree to tree or gracefully trained themselves around the marble groups; and clusters of orange-trees, glittering with golden fruit, relieved in their darker green the almost too glaring brilliancy of color.

At a window which opened to the ground—and from which a view of the garden, and beyond the garden the rich woods of the Borghese Villa, and beyond these again, the massive dome of St. Peter's, extended—sat two ladies, so wonderfully alike that a mere glance would have proclaimed them to be sisters. It is true the Countess Balderoni was several years older than Lady Augusta Branleigh, but whether from temperament or the easier flow of an Italian life in comparison with the more wearing excitement of an English existence, she certainly looked little, if anything, her senior.

They were both handsome—at least they had that character of good looks which in Italy is deemed beauty—they were singularly fair, with large, deep-set blue-grey eyes, and light brown hair of a marvellous abundance and silkiest fiber. They were alike soft-voiced and gentle-mannered, and alike strong-willed and obstinate, of an intense selfishness, and very capricious.

"His eminence is late this evening," said Lady Augusta, looking at her watch. "It is high eight o'clock."

"I fancy, Gusta, he was not quite pleased with you last night. On going away he said something, I didn't exactly catch it, but it sounded like *leggierezza*," he thought you had not treated his legends of St. Francis with becoming seriousness."

"If he wanted me to be grave he oughtn't to tell me funny stories."

"The lives of the saints. Gusta!"

"Well, dearest, that scene in the forest where St. Francis asked the devil to flog him, and not to desist even though he should be weak enough to implore it—wasn't that dialogue as droll as anything in Boccaccio?"

"It's not decent, it's not decorous, to laugh at any incident in the lives of holy men."

"Holy men then should never be funny, at least when they are presented to me, for it's always the absurd side of everything has the greatest attraction for me."

"This is certainly not the spirit which will lead you to the Church!"

"But I thought I told you already,



dearest, that it's the road I like, not the end of the journey. Courtship is confessedly better than marriage, and the being converted is infinitely nicer than the state of conviction."

"Oh, Gusta, what are you saying?"

"Saying what I most fervently feel to be true. Don't you know, better even than myself, that it is the zeal to rescue me from the fold of the heretics surrounds me every evening with monsignori and vescovi, and attracts to the sofa where I happen to sit, purple stockings and red, a class of adorers, I am free to own, there is nothing in the lay world to compare with; and don't you know, too, that, the work of conversion accomplished, these seductive saints will be on the look-out for a new sinner?"

"And is this the sincerity in which you profess your new faith? is it thus that you mean to endow a new edifice to the honor of the Holy Religion?"

"Cara mia! I want worship, homage, and adoration myself, and it is as absolute a necessity of my being, as if I had been born up there, and knew nothing of this base earth and its belongings. Be just, my dearest sister, and see for once the difference between us. You have a charming husband, who never plagues, never bores you, whom you see when it is pleasant to see, and dismiss when you are weary of him. He never worries you about money, he has no especial extravagance, and does not much trouble himself about anything—I have none of these. I am married to a man almost double my age, taken from another class, and imbued with a whole set of notions different from my own. I can't live with *his* people; my own won't have me. What, then, is left but the refuge of that emotional existence which the Church offers—a sort of pious flirtation with a run-away match in the distance, only it is to be heaven, not Gretna Green."

"So that all this while you have never been serious, Gusta?"

"Most serious! I have actually written to my husband—you read the letter—acquainting him with my intended change of religion, and my desire to mark the sincerity of my profession by that most signal of all proofs—a moneyed one. As I told the Cardinal last night, heaven is never so sure of us as when we draw on our banker to go there!"

"How you must shock his eminence when you speak in this way!"

"So he told me, but I must own he looked very tenderly into my eyes as he said so. Isn't it provoking?" said she, as she arose and moved out into the

garden. "No post yet! It is always so, when one is on thorns for a letter. Now when one thinks that the mail arrives at daybreak, what can they possibly mean by not distributing the letters till evening? Did I tell you what I said to Monsignore Ricci, who has some function at the Post Office?"

"No, but I trust it was not a rude speech; he is always so polite."

"I said that as I was ever very impatient for my letters I had requested all my correspondents to write in a great round legible hand, which would give the authorities no pretext for delay, while deciphering their contents."

"I declare, Gusta, I am amazed at you. I cannot imagine how you can venture to say such things to persons in office."

"My dear sister, it is the only way they could ever hear them. There is no freedom of the press here; in society nobody speaks out. What would become of those people if they only heard the sort of stories they tell each other; besides, I'm going to be one of them. They must bear with a little indiscipline. The sergeant always pardons the recruit for being disorderly on the day of enlistment."

The Countess shook her head disapprovingly and was silent.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" sighed Lady Augusta. "I wonder what tidings the post will bring me. Will my affectionate and afflicted husband comply with my prayer, and be willing to endow the Church, and secure his own freedom; or will he be sordid, and declare that he can't live without me? I know you'd laugh, dear, or I'd tell you that the man is actually violently in love with me. You've no notion of the difficulty I have to prevent him writing tender letters to me."

"You are too, too bad, I declare," said the other, smothering a rising laugh.

"Of course, I'd not permit such a thing. I stand on my dignity, and say, 'Have a care, sir.' Oh, here it comes! here's the post! What! only two letters after all? She's a dun! Madame la Ruelle, Place Vendome—the cruellest creature that ever made a ball-dress. It is to tell me she can't wait; and I'm so sick of saying she must, that I'll not write any more. And who is this? The post-mark is 'Portshandon.' Oh! I see; here's the name in the corner. This is from our eldest son, the future head of the house. Mr. Augustus Bramleigh is a bashful creature of about my own age, who was full of going to New Zealand and turning sheep-farmer. True, I assure you; he is an enthusiast about independence;

which means he has a grand vocation for the workhouse."

"By what strange turn of events has he become your correspondent?"

"I should say, Dora, it looks ill as regards the money. I'm afraid that this bodes a refusal."

"Would not the shorter way be to read it?" said the other, simply.

"Yes, the shorter, but perhaps not the sweeter. There are little events in life which are worse than even uncertainties; but here goes:—

"Castello.

"MY DEAR LADY AUGUSTA:—

("A very pretty beginning from my son—I mean my husband's son; and yet he could not have commenced, 'Dearest Mama.'")

"I write my first letter to you at a very painful moment. My poor father was seized on Tuesday last with a most serious and sudden illness, to which the physician as yet hesitates to give a name. It is, however, on the brain or the membranes, and deprives him of all inclination, though not entirely of all power, to use his faculties. He is, moreover, enjoined to avoid every source of excitement, and even forbidden to converse. Of course, under these afflicting circumstances, everything which relates to business in any way is imperatively excluded from his knowledge; and must continue to be so till some change occurs.

"It is not at such a moment you would expect to hear of a marriage in the family, and yet yesterday my sister Marion was married to Lord Viscount Culduff."

Here she laid down the letter, and stared with an expression of almost overwhelmed amazement at her sister. "Lord Culduff! Where's the *Peerage*, Dora? Surely it must be the same who was at Dresden when we were children; he wasn't married—there can be no son. Oh, here he is: 'Henry Plantagenet de Lacey, fourteenth Viscount Culduff; born 9th February, 17—.' Last century. Why, he's the patriarch of the peers, and she's twenty-four! What can the girl mean?"

"Do read on; I'm impatient for more."

"The imperative necessity for Lord Culduff to hold himself in readiness for whatever post in the diplomatic service the Minister might desire him to occupy, was the chief reason for the marriage taking place at this conjuncture. My father, however, himself, was very anxious on the sub-

ject; and, indeed, insisted strongly on being present. The ceremony was accordingly performed in his own room, and I rejoice to say that, though naturally much excited, he does not appear to have sustained any increase of malady from this trying event. I need not tell you the great disparity of age between my sister and her husband: a disparity which I own enlisted me amongst those who opposed the match. Marion, however, so firmly insisted on her right to choose for herself, and her fortune being completely at her own disposal, that all continued opposition would have been not alone unavailing for the present, but a source of coldness and estrangement for the future.

"The Culduffs"—(how sweetly familiar!)—"the Culduffs left this for Paris this day, where I believe they intend to remain till the question of Lord Culduff's post is determined on. My sister ardently hopes it may be in Italy, as she is most desirous to be near you."

"Can you imagine such a horror as this woman playing daughter to me and yet going in to dinner before me, and making me feel her rank on every possible occasion! All this here I see is business, nothing but business. The Colonel, it would seem, must have been breaking before they suspected, for all his late speculations have turned out ill. Penstyddin Copper Mine is an utter failure; the New Caledonian Packet Line a smash; and there's a whole list of crippled enterprises. It's very nice of Augustus, however, to say that though he mentions these circumstances, which might possibly reach me through other channels, no event that he could contemplate should in any way affect my income, or any increase of it that I deem essential to my comfort or convenience; and although in total ignorance as he is of all transactions of the house, he begs me to write to himself directly when any question of increased expense should arise—which I certainly will. He's a *buon figliuolo*, Dolly—that must be said—and it would be shameful not to develop such generous instincts."

"If my father's illness should be unhappily protracted, means must be taken, I believe, to devolve his share in business matters upon some other. I regret that it cannot possibly be upon myself; but I am totally unequal to the charge, and have not, besides, courage for the heavy responsibility."

"That's the whole of it," said she, with



a sigh; "and all things considered, it might have been worse."

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## CASTELLO.

CASTELLO had now become a very dreary abode. Lord and Lady Cuduff had taken their departure for Paris. Temple had gone up to town to try and manage an exchange, if by good luck any one could be found to believe that Bogota was a desirable residence, and a fine field for budding diplomacies; and none remained but Nelly and Augustus to relieve each other in watches beside their father's sick-bed.

Young and little experienced in life as she was, Nelly proved a great comfort and support to her brother in these trying hours. At first he told her nothing of the doubts and fears that beset him. In fact, they had assumed no shape sufficiently palpable to convey.

It was his daily custom to go over the letters that each morning brought, and in a few words—the very fewest he could employ—acquaint Mr. Underwood, the junior partner, of his father's precarious state, and protest against being able, in the slightest degree, to offer any views or guidance as to the conduct of matters of business. These would now and then bring replies in a tone that showed how little Underwood himself was acquainted with many of the transactions of the house, and how completely he was accustomed to submit himself to Colonel Bramleigh's guidance. Even in his affected retirement from business, Bramleigh had not withdrawn from the direction of the weightiest of the matters which regarded the firm, and jealously refused any—the slightest—attempt of his partner to influence his judgment.

One of Underwood's letters completely puzzled Augustus; not only by the obscurity of its wording, but by the evident trace in it of the writer's own inability to explain his meaning. There was a passage which ran thus: "Mr. Sedley was down again, and this time the amount is two thousand five hundred, and though I begged he would give me time to communicate with you, before honoring so weighty a draft, he replied—I take pains to record his exact words:—There is no time for this; I shall think myself very fortunate, and deem Colonel Bramleigh more fortunate still, if I am not forced to call upon you

for four times as much within a fortnight." After referring to other matters, there was this at the end of the letter—"S — has just repaid the amount he so lately drew from the bank; he appeared chagrined and out of spirits, merely saying, 'Tell the Colonel the negotiation has broken down, and that I will write to-morrow.'"

The promised letter from Sedley had not come, but in its place was a telegram from him saying, "I find I must see and speak with you; I shall go over by Saturday, and be with you on Sunday morning."

"Of course he cannot see papa," said Nelly; "the doctor more strongly than ever insists on perfect repose."

"And it's little worth his while to make the journey to see *me*," said he, dispiritedly.

"Perhaps he only wants your sanction, your concurrence, to something he thinks it wise to do—who knows?"

"Just so, Nelly; who knows? All these weighty speculations entered upon to convert thousands into tens of thousands have no sympathy of mine. I see no object in such wealth. The accumulation of what never spares one a moment for its enjoyment seems to me as foolish as the act of a man who would pass his life scaling a mountain to obtain a view, and drop down of fatigue before he had once enjoyed it. You and I, I take it, would be satisfied with far humbler fortune?"

"You and I, Gusty," said she laughingly, "are the ignoble members of this family."

"Then there comes another difficulty: Sedley will at once see that I have not shared my father's confidence, and he will be very cautious about telling me of matters which have not been entrusted to me already."

"Perhaps we are only worrying ourselves for nothing, Gusty. Perhaps there are no secrets after all; or at worst, only those trade secrets which are great mysteries in the counting-house, but have no interest for any not deep in speculation."

"If I only thought so!"

"Have you sufficient confidence in Mr. Cutbill to take him into your counsel? he will be back here to-morrow."

"Scarcely, Nelly. I do not exactly distrust, but I can't say that I like him."

"I hated him at first, but either I have got used to his vulgarity, or I fancy that he is really good-natured, or, from whatever the cause, I incline to like him better than when he came, and certainly he behaved well to poor Jack."

"Ah, there's another trouble that I have not thought of. Jack, who does not ap-

pear to know how ill my poor father is, asks if he could not be induced to write to—somebody—I forget whom, in his behalf. In fact, Nelly, there is not a corner without its special difficulty, and I verily believe there never was a man less made to meet them than myself.”

“I’ll take as much of the load as I have strength for,” said she, quietly.

“I know that; I know it well, Nelly. I can scarcely say what I’d do without you now. Here comes the doctor. I’m very anxious to hear what he’ll say this evening.”

Belton had made a long visit to the sick-room, and his look was graver than usual as he came down the stairs. “His head is full of business; he will give his brain no respite,” said he; “but for that, I’d not call his case hopeless. Would it not be possible to let him suppose that all the important matters which weigh upon him were in safe hands and in good guidance?”

Augustus shook his head doubtfully.

“At least could he not be persuaded to suffer some one—yourself, for example—to take the control of such affairs as require prompt action till such time as he may be able to resume their management himself?”

“I doubt it, doctor; I doubt it much. Men, who, like my father, have had to deal with vast and weighty interests, grow to feel that inexperienced people—of my own stamp for instance—are but sorry substitutes in time of difficulty; and I have more than once heard him say, ‘I’d rather lash the tiller and go below than give over the helm to a bad steersman.’”

“I would begin,” continued the doctor, “by forbidding him all access to his letters. You must have seen how nervous and excited he becomes as the hour of the post draws nigh. I think I shall take this responsibility on myself.”

“I wish you would.”

“He has given me in some degree the opportunity, for he has already asked when he might have strength enough to dictate a letter, and I have replied that I would be guided by the state in which I may find him to-morrow for the answer. My impression is that what he calls a letter is in reality a will. Are you aware whether he has yet made one?”

“I know nothing, absolutely nothing, of my father’s affairs.”

“The next twelve hours will decide much,” said the doctor, as he moved away, and Augustus sat pondering alone over what he had said, and trying to work out in his mind whether his father’s secrets in-

volved anything deeper and more serious than the complications of business and the knotty combinations of weighty affairs.

Wearied out—for he had been up the greater part of the night—and fatigued, he fell off at last into a heavy sleep, from which he was awoke by Nelly, who, gently leaning on his shoulder, whispered: “Mr. Sedley has come, Gusty; he is at supper in the oak parlor. I told him I thought you had gone to lie down for an hour, for I knew you were tired.”

“No, not tired, Nelly,” said he, arousing himself, half-ashamed of being caught asleep. “I came in here to think, and I believe I dropped into a doze. What is he like, this Mr. Sedley? What manner of man is he?”

“He is small and grey, with a slight stoop, and a formal sort of manner. I don’t like him. I mean his manner checked and repelled me, and I was glad to get away from him.”

“My father thinks highly of his integrity, I know.”

“Yes, I am aware of that. He is an excellent person, I believe; rather non-attractive.”

“Well,” said he, with a half-sigh, “I’ll go and see whether my impression of him be the same as yours. Will you come in, Nelly?”

“Not unless you particularly wish it,” said she, gravely.

“No; I make no point of it, Nelly. I’ll see you again by and by.”

Augustus found Mr. Sedley over his wine. He had dispatched a hasty meal, and was engaged looking over a mass of papers and letters with which a black leather bag at his side seemed to be filled. After a few words of greeting, received by the visitor with a formal politeness, Augustus proceeded to explain how his father’s state precluded all questions of business, and that the injunctions of the doctor were positive on this head.

“His mind is clear, however, isn’t it?” asked Sedley.

“Perfectly. He has never wandered, except in the few moments after sleep.”

“I take it, I shall be permitted to see him?”

“Certainly, if the doctor makes no objection, you shall.”

“And possibly, too, I may be allowed to ask him a question or two?—matters which I know he will be well prepared to answer me.”

“I am not so confident about that. Within the last hour, Doctor Belton has declared perfect quiet, perfect repose, to



be of the utmost importance to my father."

"Is it not possible, Mr. Bramleigh, that I may be able to contribute to this state by setting your father's mind at rest, with reference to what may press very heavily on him?"

"That is more than I can answer," said Augustus, cautiously.

"Well," said Sedley, pushing back his chair from the table, "if I am not permitted to see Colonel Bramleigh, I shall have made this journey for nothing—without, sir, that you will consent to occupy your father's position, and give your sanction to a line of action?"

"You know my father, Mr. Sedley, and I need not tell you how so presumptuous a step on my part might be resented by him."

"Under ordinary circumstances I am sure he would resent such interference; but here, in the present critical emergency, he might feel—and not without reason, perhaps—more displeased at your want of decision."

"But when I tell you, Mr. Sedley, that I know nothing of business, that I know no more of the share list than I do of Sanscrit, that I never followed the rise and fall of the funds, and am as ignorant of what influences the exchanges as I am of what affects the tides—when I have told you all this, you will, I am sure, see that any opinion of mine must be utterly valueless."

"I don't exactly know, Mr. Bramleigh, that I'd have selected you if I wanted a guide to a great speculation or a large investment; but the business which has brought me down here is not of this nature. It is, besides, a question as to which, in the common course of events, you might be obliged to determine what line you would adopt. After your father, you are the head of this family, and I think it is time you should learn that you may be called upon to-morrow, or next day, to defend your right, not only to your property, but to your name."

"For heaven's sake, what do you mean?"

"Be calm, sir, and grant me a patient hearing, and you shall hear the subject on which I have come to obtain your father's opinion, and, failing that, yours—for, as I have said, Mr. Bramleigh, a day or two more may make the case one for your own decision. And now, without entering into the history of the affair, I will simply say that an old claim against your father's entailed estates has been recently revived,

and under circumstances of increased importance; that I have been for some time back in negotiation to arrange this matter by a compromise, and with every hope of success; but that the negotiations have been unexpectedly broken off by the demands of the claimant—demands so far above all calculation, and, indeed, I may say above all fairness—that I have come over to ask whether your father will accede to them or accept the issue of the law as to his right."

Augustus sat like one stunned by a heavy blow, not utterly unconscious, but so much overcome and so confused that he could not venture to utter a word.

"I see I have shocked you by my news, Mr. Bramleigh, but these are things not to be told by halves."

"I know nothing of all this; I never so much as heard of it," gasped out Augustus. "Tell me all that you know about it."

"That would be a somewhat long story," said the other, smiling, "but I can, in a short space, tell you enough to put the main facts before you and enable you to see that the case is, with all its difficulties of proof, a very weighty and serious one, and not to be dismissed, as your father once opined, as the mere menace of a needy adventurer."

With as much brevity as the narrative permitted, Sedley told the story of Praconal's claim. It was, he said, an old demand revived; but under circumstances that showed that the claimant had won over adherents to his cause, and that some men with means to bring the case to trial had espoused his side. Praconal's father, added he, was easily dealt with; he was a vulgar fellow, of dissipated habits, and wasteful ways; but his taste for plot and intrigue—very serious conspiracies, too, at times—had so much involved him that he was seldom able to show himself, and could only resort to letter-writing to press his demands. In fact, it was always his lot to be in hiding on this charge or that, and the police of half Europe were eager in pursuit of him. With a man so deeply compromised, almost outlawed over the whole Continent, it was not difficult to treat, and it happened more than once that he was for years without anything being heard of him; and, in fact, it was clear that he only preferred his claim as a means of raising a little money, when all other means of obtaining supplies had failed him. At last, news of his death arrived—he died at Monte Video—and it was at first believed that he had never married, and consequently that his claim, if it deserved such a name, died with him. It was only three years ago that the demand was revived, and this man,

M. Anatole Pracontal as he called himself, using his maternal name, appeared in the field as the rightful owner of the Bramleigh estates.

"Now this man is a very different sort of person from his father. He has been well educated, mixed much with the world, and has the manners and bearing of a gentleman. I have not been able to learn much of his career; but I know that he served as a lieutenant in a French hussar regiment, and subsequently held some sort of employment in Egypt. He has never stooped to employ threat or menace, but frankly appealed to the law to establish his claim, and his solicitor, Kelson, of Furnival's Inn, is one of the most respectable men in the profession."

"You have seen this Monsieur Pracontal yourself?"

"Yes. By a strange accident, I met him at your brother's, Captain Bramleigh's, breakfast table. They had been fellow-travelers, without the slightest suspicion on either side how eventful such a meeting might be. Your brother, of course, could know nothing of Pracontal's pretensions; but Pracontal, when he came to know with whom he had been traveling, must have questioned himself closely as to what might have dropped from him inadvertently."

Augustus leaned his head on his hand in deep thought, and for several minutes was silent. At last he said—"Give me your own opinion, Mr. Sedley—I don't mean your opinion as a lawyer, relying on nice technical questions or minute points of law, but simply your judgment as a man of sound sense, and, above all, of such integrity as I know you to possess—and tell me what do you think of this claim? Is it—in one word, is it founded on right?"

"You are asking too much of me, Mr. Bramleigh. First of all, you ask me to disassociate myself from all the habits and instincts of my daily life, and give you an opinion on a matter of law, based on other rules of evidence than those which alone I suffer myself to be guided by. I only recognize one kind of right—that which the law declares and decrees."

"Is there not such a thing as a moral right?"

"There may be; but we are disputations enough in this world, with all our artificial aids to some fixity of judgment, and for heaven's sake let us not soar up to the realms of morality for our decisions, or we shall bid adieu to guidance forever."

"I'm not of your mind there, sir. I think it is quite possible to conceive a case in which there could be no doubt on which side lay the right, and not difficult to be-

lieve that there are men who would act, on conviction, to their own certain detriment."

"It's a very hopeful view of humanity, Mr. Bramleigh," said the lawyer, and he took a pinch of snuff.

"I am certain it is a just one. At least, I will go this far to sustain my opinion. I will declare to you here, that if the time should ever come that it may depend upon me to decide this matter, if I satisfy my mind that M. Pracontal's claim be just and equitable—that, in fact, he is simply asking for his own—I'll not screen myself behind the law's delays or its niceties; I'll not make it a question of the longest parse or the ablest advocate, but frankly admit that the property is his, and cede it to him."

"I have only one remark to make, Mr. Bramleigh, which is, keep this determination strictly to yourself, and, above all things, do not acquaint Col. Bramleigh with these opinions."

"I suspect that my father is not a stranger to them," said Augustus, reddening with shame and irritation together.

"It is therefore as well, sir, that there is no question of a compromise to lay before you. You are for strict justice and no favor."

"I repeat, Mr. Sedley, I am for him who has the right."

"So am I," quickly responded Sedley; "and we alone differ about the meaning of that word; but let me ask another question. Are you aware that this claim extends to nearly everything you have in the world; that the interest alone on the debt would certainly swallow up all your funded property, and make a great inroad besides on your securities and foreign bonds?"

"I can well believe it, sir," said the other, mournfully.

"I must say, sir," said Sedley, as he arose and proceeded to thrust the papers hurriedly into his bag, "that though I am highly impressed—very highly impressed, indeed, with the noble sentiments you have delivered on this occasion—sentiments, I am bound to admit, that a long professional career has never made me acquainted with till this day—yet, on the whole, Mr. Bramleigh, looking at the question with a view to its remote consequences, and speculation on what would result if such opinions as yours were to meet a general acceptance, I am bound to say I prefer the verdict of twelve men in a jury-box to the most impartial judgment of any individual breathing; and I wish you a very good-night."

What Mr. Sedley muttered to himself as



he ascended the stairs, in what spirit he canvassed the character of Mr. Augustus Bramleigh, the reader need not know; and it is fully as well that our story does not require it should be recorded. One only remark, however, may be preserved; it was said as he reached the door of his room, and apparently in a sort of summing up of all that had occurred to him—“These creatures, with their cant about conscience, don't seem to know that this mischievous folly would unsettle half the estates in the kingdom; and there's not a man in England would know what he was born to, till he had got his father in a mad-house.”

## CHAPTER XXIX.

## THE HOTEL BRISTOL.

IN a handsome apartment of the Hôtel Bristol at Paris sat Lord and Lady Culduff at tea. They were in deep mourning; and though they were perfectly alone, the room was splendidly lighted—branches of candles figuring on every console, and the glass luster that hung from the ceiling a blaze of waxlights.

If Lord Culduff looked older and more careworn than we have lately seen him, Marion seemed in higher bloom and beauty, and the haughty, self-defiant air which had, in a measure, spoiled the charm of her girlhood, sat with a sort of dignity on her features as a woman.

Not a word was spoken on either side; and from her look of intense preoccupation, as she sat gazing on the broad hem of her handkerchief, it was evident that her thoughts were wandering far away from the place she was in. As they sat thus, the door was noiselessly opened by a servant in deep black, who, in a very subdued voice, said, “The Duke de Castro, your Excellency.”

“I don't receive,” was the cold reply, and the man withdrew. In about a quarter of an hour after he reappeared, and, in the same stealthy tone, said, “Madame la Comtesse de Renneville begs she may have the honor—”

“Lady Culduff does not receive,” said his lordship, sternly.

“The Countess has been very kind; she has been here to inquire after me several times.”

“She is a woman of intense curiosity,” said he, slowly.

“I'd have said, of great good nature.”

“And you'd have said perfectly wrong,

madam. The woman is a political *intriguante* who only lives to unravel mysteries; and the one that is now puzzling her is too much for her good manners.”

“I declare, my lord, that I do not follow you.”

“I'm quite sure of that, madam. The sort of address Madame de Renneville boasts was not a quality that your life in Ireland was likely to make you familiar with.”

“I beg you to remember, my lord,” said she, angrily, “that all my experiences of the world have not been derived from that side of the Channel.”

“I'm cruel enough to say, madam, that I wish they had! There is nothing so difficult as unlearning.”

“I wish, my lord—I heartily wish—that you had made this discovery earlier.”

“Madam,” said he, slowly, and with much solemnity of manner, “I owe it to each of us to own that I had made what you are pleased to call this ‘discovery,’ while there was yet time to obviate its consequences. My very great admiration had not blinded me as to certain peculiarities, let me call them, of manner; and if my vanity induced me to believe that I should be able to correct them, it is my only error.”

“I protest, my lord, if my temper sustain me under such insult as this, I think I might be acquitted of ill-breeding.”

“I live in the hope, madam, that such a charge would be impossible.”

“I suppose you mean,” said she, with a sneering smile, “when I have taken more lessons—when I have completed the course of instruction you so courteously began with me yesterday?”

“Precisely, madam, precisely. There are no heaven-born courtiers. The graces of manner are as much matter of acquirement as are the notes of music. A delicate organization has the same disadvantage in the one case that a fine ear has in the other. It substitutes an aptitude for what ought to be pure acquirement. The people who are naturally well mannered are like the people who sing by ear; and I need not say what inflictions are both.”

“And you really think, my lord, that I may yet be able to enter a room and leave it with becoming grace and dignity?”

“You enter a room well, madam,” said he, with a judicial slowness. “Now that you have subdued the triumphant air I objected to, and assumed more quietness—the blended softness with reserve, your approach is good—I should say, extremely good. To withdraw is, however, far more difficult. To throw into the deference of

leave-taking—for it is always a permission you seem to ask—the tempered sorrow of departure with the sense of tasted enjoyment—to do this with ease and elegance, and not a touch of the dramatic about it, is a very high success; and I grieve to say, madam," added he, seriously, "it is a success not yet accorded you. Would you do me the great favor to repeat our lesson of this morning—I mean the curtsy with the two steps retiring, and then the slide?"

"If you do not think me well-mannered, my lord, you must at least believe me very good-tempered," said she, flushing.

"Let me assure you, my lady, that to the latter quality I attach no importance whatever. Persons who respect themselves never visit peculiarities of temperament on others. We have our infirmities of nature, as we have our maladies; but we keep them for ourselves, or for our doctor. It is the triumph of the well-bred world to need nothing but good manners."

"What charming people! I take it that heaven must be peopled with lords-in-waiting."

"Let me observe to your ladyship that there is no greater enormity in manners than an epigram. Keep this smartness for correspondence exclusively, abstain from it strictly in conversation."

"I protest, my lord, your lessons come so thick that I despair of being able to profit by half of them. Meanwhile, if I am not committing another solecism against good manners, I should like to say good-night."

Lord Culduff arose and walked to the door, to be ready to open it as she approached. Meanwhile, she busied herself collecting her fan and her scent-bottle and her handkerchief, and a book she had been reading.

"Hadn't Virginia better come for these things?" said he, quietly.

"Oh, certainly," replied she, dropping them hurriedly on the table; "I'm always transgressing; but I do hope, my lord, with time, and with that sincere desire to learn that animates me, I may yet attain to at least so many of the habits of your lordship's order as may enable me to escape censure."

He smiled and bowed a courteous concurrence with the wish, but did not speak. Though her lip now trembled with indignation, and her cheek was flushed, she controlled her temper, and as she drew nigh the door dropped a low and most respectful curtsy.

"Very nice, very nice, indeed; a thought

perhaps, too formal—I mean for the occasion—but in admirable taste. Your ladyship is grace itself."

"My lord, you are a model of courtesy."

"I cannot even attempt to convey what pleasure your words give me," said he, pressing her hand to his heart and bowing low. Meanwhile, with a darkening brow and a look of haughty defiance, she swept past him and left the room.

"Isn't Marion well?" said Temple Bramleigh, as he entered a few minutes later; "her maid told me she had gone to her room."

"Quite well; a little fagged, perhaps, by a day of visiting; nothing beyond that. You have been dining at the embassy? whom had you there?"

"A family party and a few of the smaller diplomacies."

"To be sure. It was Friday. Any news stirring?"

"Nothing whatever."

"Does Bartleton talk of retiring still?"

"Yes. He says he is sick of sending in his demand for retirement. That they always say, 'We can't spare you; you must hold on a little longer. If you go out now, there's Bailey and Hammersmith, and half a dozen others will come insisting on advancement.'"

"Didn't he say Culduff, too? eh, didn't he?" said the old lord, with a wicked twinkle of the eye.

"I am not sure he didn't," said Temple, blushing.

"He did, sir, and he said more—he said, 'Rather than see Culduff here, I'd stay on and serve these twenty years.'"

"I didn't hear him say that, certainly."

"No, sir, perhaps not, but he said it to himself, as sure as I stand here. There isn't a country in Europe—I say it advisedly—where intellect—I mean superior intellect—is so persistently persecuted as in England. I don't want my enemy to have any heavier misfortune than to be born a man of brains and a Briton! Once that it's known that you stand above your fellow-men, the whole world is arrayed against you. Who knows that better than he who now speaks to you? Have I ever been forgiven the Erzeroum convention? Even George Canning—from whom one might have expected better—even he used to say, 'How well Culduff managed that commercial treaty with the Hanse Towns!' he never got over it, sir, never! You are a young fellow entering upon life—let me give you a word of counsel. Always be inferior to the man you are, for the time being, in contact with. Outbid him, out-



jockey him, overreach him, but never forget to make him believe he knows more of the game than you do. If you have any success over him, ascribe it to 'luck,' mere 'luck.' The most envious of men will forgive 'luck,' all the more if they despise the fellow who has profited by it. Therefore, I say, if the intellectual standard of your rival is only four feet, take care that, with your tallest heels on, you don't stand above three feet eleven! No harm if only three ten and a half."

The little applauding ha! ha! ha! with which his lordship ended, was faintly chorussed by the secretary.

"And what is your news from home? you've had letters, haven't you?"

"Yes. Augustus writes me in great confusion. They have not found the will, and they begin to fear that the very informal scrap of paper I already mentioned is all that represents one."

"What! do you mean that memorandum stating that your father bequeathed all he had to Augustus, and trusted he would make a suitable provision for his brothers and sisters?"

"Yes; that is all that has been found. Augustus says in his last letter, my poor father would seem to have been most painfully affected for some time back by a claim put forward to the title of all his landed property, by a person assuming to be the heir of my grandfather, and this claim is actually about to be asserted at law. The weight of this charge and all its consequent publicity and exposure appear to have crushed him for some months before his death, and he had made great efforts to effect a compromise."

A long, low, plaintive whistle from Lord Cudduff arrested Temple's speech, and for a few seconds there was a dead silence in the room.

"This, then, would have left you all ruined—eh?" asked Cudduff, after a pause.

"I don't exactly see to what extent we should have been liable—whether only the estate property, or also all funded moneys."

"Everything; every stick or stone; every scrip and debenture, you may swear. The rental of the estates for years back would have to be accounted for—with interest."

"Sedley does not say so," said Temple, in a tone of considerable irritation.

"These fellows never do; they always imply there is a game to be played, an issue to be waited for, else their occupation were gone. How much of all this story was known to your sister Marion?"

"Nothing. Neither she nor any of us ever suspected it."

"It's always the same thing," said the Viscount, as he arose and settled his wig before the glass. "The same episode goes on repeating itself forever. These trade fortunes are just card-houses; they are raised in a night, and blown away in the morning."

"You forget, my lord, that my father inherited an entailed estate."

"Which turns out not to have been his," replied he, with a grin.

"You are going too fast, my lord, faster than judge and jury. Sedley never took a very serious view of this claim, and he only concurred in the attempt to compromise it out of deference to my father's dislike to public scandal."

"And a very wise antipathy it was, I must say. No gentleman ever consulted his self-respect by inviting the world to criticise his private affairs. And how does this pleasing incident stand now? In which act of the drama are we at this moment? Is there an action at law, or are we in the stage of compromise?"

"This is what Augustus says," said Temple, taking the letter from his pocket and reading: "'Sedley thinks that a handsome offer of a sum down—say twenty thousand pounds—might possibly be accepted; but to meet this would require a united effort by all of us. Would Lord Cudduff be disposed to accept his share in this liability? Would he, I mean, be willing to devote a portion of Marion's fortune to this object, seeing that he is now one of us? I have engaged Cutbill to go over to Paris and confer with him, and he will probably arrive there by Tuesday. Nelly has placed at my disposal the only sum over which she has exclusive control—it is but two thousand pounds. As for Jack, matters have gone very ill with him, and rather than accept a court-martial, he has thrown up his commission and left the service. We are expecting him here to-night, but only to say good-bye, as he sails for China on Thursday.'"

Lord Cudduff walked quietly towards the chimney-piece as Temple concluded, and took up a small tobacco-Box of chased silver, from which he proceeded to manufacture a cigarette—a process on which he displayed considerable skill and patience; having lighted which, and taken a couple of puffs, he said, "You'll have to go to Bogotà, Temple, that's clear."

"Go to Bogotà! I declare I don't see why."

"Yes, you'll have to go; every man has to take his turn of some objectionable post, his Gaboon and yellow-fever days. I my-

self passed a year at Stuttgart. The Bramleights are now events of the past. There's no use in fighting against these things. They were, and they are not: that's the whole story. It's very hard on every one, especially hard upon *me*. Reverses in life sit easily enough on the class that furnishes adventurers, but in *my* condition there are no adventurers. You and others like you descend to the ranks, and nobody thinks the worse of you. *We*—we cannot! that's the pull you have. We are born with our epaulettes, and we must wear them till we die."

"It does not seem a very logical consequence, notwithstanding, to me, that, because my brother may have to defend his title to his estate, I must accept a post that is highly distasteful to me."

"And yet it is the direct consequence. Will you do me the favor to touch that bell. I should like some claret-cup. The fact is, we all of us take too little out of our prosperity! Where we err is, we experiment on good fortune: now we shouldn't do that, we should realize. You, for instance, ought to have made your 'running' while your father was entertaining all the world in Belgravia. The people couldn't have ignored *you*, and dined with *him*; at least, you need not have let them."

"So that your lordship already looks upon us as by-gones, as things of the past?"

"I am forced to take this very disagreeable view. Will you try that cup? it is scarcely iced enough for my liking. Have you remarked that they never make cup properly in a hotel? The clubs alone have the secret."

"I suppose you will confer with Cutbill before you return an answer to Augustus?" said Temple, stiffly.

"I may—that is, I may listen to what that very plausible but not very polished individual has to say, before I frame the exact terms of my reply. We are all of us, so to say, *dans des mauvais draps*. You are going where you hate to go, and I, who really should have had no share in this general disaster, have taken my ticket in the lottery when the last prize has just been paid over the counter."

"It is very hard on you, indeed," said the other, scornfully.

"Nothing less than your sympathy would make it endurable;" and as he spoke he lighted a bedroom candle and moved towards the door. "Don't tell them at F. O. that you are going out unwillingly, or they'll keep you there. Trust to some irregularity when you are there, to

get recalled and be injured. If a man can only be injured and brought before the House, it's worth ten years' active service to him. The first time I was injured I was made secretary of embassy. The second gave me my K.C.B., and I look to my next misfortune for the Grand Cross. Good-bye. Don't take the yellow fever, don't marry a squaw."

And with a graceful move of the hand he motioned an adieu, and disappeared.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### ON THE ROAD.

L'ESTRANGE and his sister were on their way to Italy. The curate had been appointed to the church at Albano, and he was proceeding to his destination with as much happiness as is permitted to a man who, with a very humble opinion of himself, feels called on to assume a position of some importance.

Wishing, partly from motives of enjoyment, partly from economy, to avoid the route most frequented by travelers, they had taken the road through Zurich and the valley of the Upper Rhine, and had now reached the little village of Dornbirn in the Vorarlberg—a spot of singular beauty, in the midst of a completely pastoral country. High mountains, snow-capped above, pine-clad lower down, descended by grassy slopes into rich pasture-lands, traversed by innumerable streams, and dotted over with those cottages of framed wood, which, with their ornamented gables and quaint galleries, are the most picturesque peasant-houses in existence. Beautiful cattle covered the hills, their tinkling bells ringing out in the clear air, and blending their tones with the ceaseless flow of falling water, imparting just that amount of sound that relieved the solemn character of the scene, and gave it vitality.

Day after day found our two travelers still lingering here. There was a charm in the spot, which each felt, without confessing it to the other, and it was already the fourth evening of their sojourn as they were sitting by the side of a little rivulet, watching the dipping flies along the stream, that Julia said, suddenly:—

"You'd like to live your life here, George; isn't that so?"

"What makes you think so, Julia?" said he, coloring slightly as he spoke.

"First tell me if I have not read you aright? You like this quiet dreamy land-



scape. You want no other changes than in the varying effects of cloud, and shadow, and mist; and you'd like to think this a little haven against the storms and shipwrecks of life?"

"And if I really did think all this, would my choice of an existence be a very bad one, Julia?"

"No. Not if one could ensure the same frame of mind in which first he tasted the enjoyment. I, for instance, like what is called the world very much. I like society, life, and gaiety. I like the attentions, I like the flatteries one meets with, but if I could be always as happy, always as tranquil as we have felt since we came here, I'd be quite willing to sign a bond to live and die here."

"So that you mean our present enjoyment of the place could not last?"

"I am sure it could not. I am sure a great deal of the pleasure we now feel is in the relief of escaping from the turmoil and bustle of a world that we don't belong to. The first sense of this relief is repose, the next would be ennui."

"I don't agree with you, Julia. There is a calm acceptance of a humble lot in life, quite apart from ennui."

"Don't believe it. There is no such philosophy. A great part of your happiness here is in fact that you can afford to live here. Oh, hold up your hands and be horrified. It is very shocking to have a sister who will say such vulgar things, but I watched you, George, after you paid the bill this morning, and I marked the delighted smile in which you pointed out some effect of light on the 'Sentis,' and I said to myself, 'It is the landlord has touched up the landscape.'"

"I declare, Julia, you make me angry. Why will you say such things?"

"Why are we so poor, George? Tell me that, brother mine. Why are we so poor?"

"There are hundreds as poor; thousands poorer."

"Perhaps they don't care, don't fret about it, don't dwell on all the things they are debarred from, don't want this or that appliance to make life easier. Now look there: what a difference in one's existence to travel that way!"

As she spoke, she pointed to a traveling-carriage which swept over the bridge, with all the speed of four post-chaises, and, with all the clatter of cracking whips and sounding horns, made for the inn of the village.

"How few travel with post now, in these days of railroads!" said he, not sorry to turn the conversation into another channel.

"I hope they are going on. I trust they'll not stop here. We have been the great folk of the place up to this, but you'll see how completely the courier or the *femme-de-chambre* will eclipse us now," said she, rising. "Let us go back, or perhaps they'll give our very rooms away."

"How can you be so silly, Julia?"

"All because we are poor, George. Let me be rich and you'll be surprised, not only how generous I shall be, but how disposed to think well of every one. Poverty is the very mother of distrust."

"I never heard you rail at our narrow fortune like this before."

"Don't be angry with me, dear George, and I'll make a confession to you. I was not thinking of ourselves, nor of our humble lot all this while; it was a letter I got this morning from Nelly Bramleigh was running in my mind. It has never been out of my thoughts since I received it."

"You never told me of this."

"No. She begged me not to speak of it; and I meant to have obeyed her, but my temper has betrayed me. What Nelly said was, 'Don't tell your brother about these things till he can hear the whole story, which Augustus will write to him as soon as he is able.'"

"What does she allude to?"

"They are ruined—actually ruined."

"The Bramleighs—the rich Bramleighs?"

"Just so. They were worth millions—at least they thought so—a few weeks back, and now they have next to nothing."

"This has come of over-speculation."

"No. Nothing of the kind. It is a claimant to the estate has arisen, an heir whose rights take precedence of their father's; in fact, the grandfather had been privately married early in life, and had a son of whom nothing was heard for years, but who married and left a boy, who, on attaining manhood, preferred his claim to the property. All this mysterious claim was well known to Colonel Bramleigh; indeed, it would appear that for years he was engaged in negotiations with this man's lawyers; sometimes defiantly challenging an appeal to the law, and sometimes entertaining projects of compromise. The correspondence was very lengthy, and, from its nature, must have weighed heavily on the Colonel's mind and spirits, and ended, as Nelly suspects, by breaking up his health."

"It was almost the very first news that met Augustus on his accession to his fortune, and so stunned was he that he wrote to Mr. Sedley to say, 'I have such perfect reliance on both your integrity and ability,

that if you assure me this claim is well founded and this demand a just one, I will not contest it.' He added—'I am not afraid of poverty, but a public shame and a scandal would be my death.'"

"Just what I should expect from him. What did Sedley say?"

"He didn't say he was exactly a fool, but something very like it; and he told him, too, that, though he might make very light of his own rights, he could not presume to barter away those of others; and, last of all, he added, what he knew would have its weight with Augustus, that, had his father lived, he meant to have compromised this claim. Not that he regarded it either as well founded or formidable, but simply as a means of avoiding a very unpleasant publicity. This last intimation had its effect, and Augustus permitted Sedley to treat. Sedley at once addressed himself to Temple—Jack was not to be found—and to Lord Cuduff, to learn what share they were disposed to take in such an arrangement. As Augustus offered to bind himself never to marry, and to make a will dividing the estate equally amongst his brothers and sisters, Lord Cuduff and Temple quite approved of this determination, but held that they were not called upon to take any portion of the burden of the compromise.

"Augustus would seem to have been so indignant at this conduct, that he wrote to Sedley to put him at once in direct communication with the claimant. Sedley saw by the terms of the letter how much of it was dictated by passion and offended pride, evaded the demand, and pretended that an arrangement was actually pending, and, if uninterfered with, sure to be completed. To this Augustus replied—for Nelly has sent me a copy of his very words—'Be it so. Make such a settlement, as you, in your capacity of my lawyer, deem best for my interests. For my own part, I will not live in a house, nor receive the rents of an estate, my rights to which the law may possibly decide against me. Till, then, the matter be determined either way, I and my sister Eleanor, who is like-minded with me in this affair, will go where we can live at least cost, decided, as soon as may be, to have this issue determined, and Castello become the possession of him who rightfully owns it.'

"On the evening of the day he wrote this they left Castello. They only stopped a night in Dublin, and left next morning for the Continent. Nelly's letter is dated from Ostend. She says she does not know where they are going, and is averse to anything like importuning her brother by even a ques-

tion. She promises to write soon again, however, and tell me all about their plans. They are traveling without a servant, and, so far as she knows, with very little money. Poor Nelly! she bears up nobly, but the terrible reverse of condition, and the privations she is hourly confronted with, are clearly preying upon her."

"What a change! Just to think of them a few months back! It was a princely household."

"Just what Nelly says. 'It is complete overthrow; and if I am not stunned by the reverse, it is because all my sympathies are engaged for poor Gusty, who is doing his best to bear up well. As for myself, I never knew how helpless I was till I tried to pack my trunk. I suppose time will soften down many things that are now somewhat hard to bear; but for the moment I am impatient and irritable; and it is only the sight of my dear brother—so calm, so manly, and so dignified in his sorrow—that obliges me to forget my selfish grief and compose myself as I ought.'"

As they thus talked, they arrived at the door of the inn, where the landlord met them, with the request that the two gentlemen, who had arrived by extra-post, and who could not find horses to proceed on their journey, might be permitted to share the one sitting-room the house contained, and which was at present occupied by the L'Estranges.

"Let us sup in your room, George," whispered Julia, and passed on into the house. L'Estrange gave orders to send the supper to his room, and told the landlord that the salon was at his guests' disposal.

About two hours later, as the curate and his sister sat at the open window, silently enjoying the delicious softness of a starry night, they were startled by the loud talking of persons so near as to seem almost in the room with them.

"English—I'll be sworn they are!" said one. "That instinctive dread of a stranger pertains only to our people. How could it have interfered with their comfort, that we ate and ate our meal in this corner?"

"The landlord says they are young, and the woman pretty. That may explain something. Your countrymen, Philip, are the most jealous race in Europe."

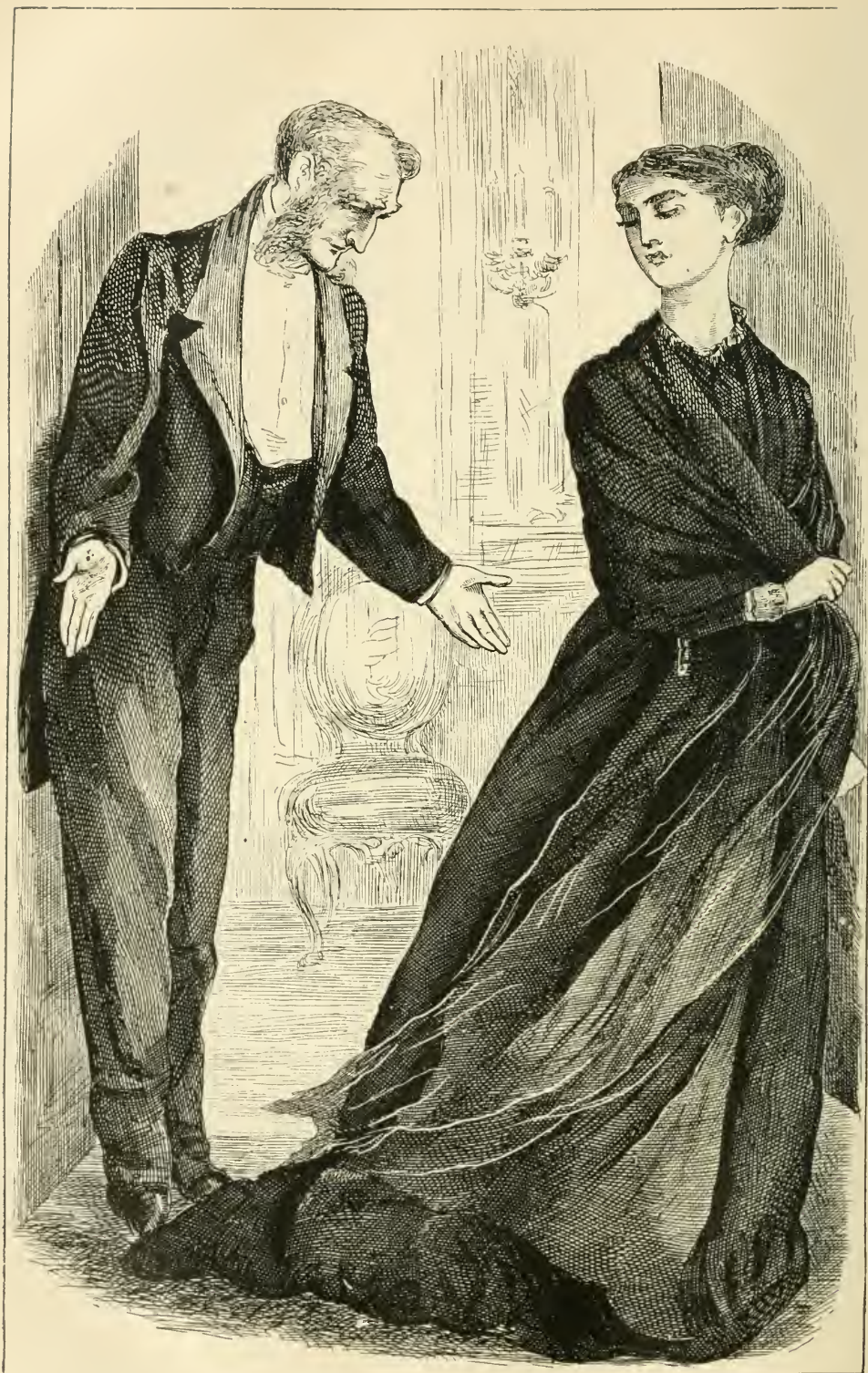
L'Estrange coughed here three or four times, to apprise his neighbors that they were within earshot of others.

"Listen to that cough," cried the first speaker. "That was palpably feigned. It was meant to say, 'Don't talk so loud.'"

"I always grow more indiscreet under such provocation," said the other, whose







“My Lord, you are a model of courtesy.”

[THE BRAMLEIGHS. p. 364.]



words were slightly tinged with a foreign accent.

A merry laugh burst from Julia at this speech, which the others joined in by very impulse.

"I suspect," said the first speaker, "we might as well have occupied the same room, seeing in what close proximity we stand to each other."

"I think it would be as well to go to your room, Julia," said George, in a low voice. "It is getting late, besides."

"I believe you are right, George. I will say good night."

The last words appeared to have caught the ears of the strangers, who exclaimed together, "Good night, good night;" and he with the foreign accent began to hum, in a very sweet tenor voice, "Buona sera, buona notte, buona sera;" which Julia would fain have listened to, but George hurried her away, and closed the door.

"There is the end of that episode," said the foreign voice. "Le mari jaloux has had enough of us. Your women in England are taught never to play with fire."

"I might reply that yours are all pyrotechnists," said the other, with a laugh.

The clatter of plates and the jingle of glasses, as the waiter laid the table for supper, drowned their voices, and L'Estrange dropp'd off asleep soon after. A hearty burst of laughter at last aroused him. It came from the adjoining room, where the strangers were still at table, though it was now nigh daybreak.

"Yes," said he of the foreign accent, "I must confess it. I never made a lucky hit in my life without the ungrateful thought of how much luckier it might have been."

"It is your Italian blood has given you that temperament."

"I knew you'd say so, Philip; before my speech was well out, I felt the reply you'd make me. But let me tell you that you English are not a whit more thankful to fortune than we are; but in your matter-of-fact way you accept a benefit as your just due, while we, more conscious of our deservings, always feel that no recompense fully equaled what we merited. And so it is that ever since that morning at Furnival's Inn, I keep on asking myself, Why twenty thousand? Why not forty—why not twice forty?"

"I was quite prepared for all this. I think I saw the reaction beginning as you signed the paper."

"No, there you wrong me, Philip. I wrote boldly, like a man who felt that he was making a great resolve, and could

stand by it. You'd never guess when what you have called 'the reaction' set in."

"I am curious to know when that was."

"I'll tell you. You remember our visit to Castello. You thought it a strange caprice of mine to ask the lawyer whether, now that all was finally settled between us, I might be permitted to see the house—which, as the family had left, could be done without any unpleasantness. I believe my request amused *him* as much as it did *you*; he thought it a strange caprice, but he saw no reason to refuse it, and I saw he smiled as he sat down to write the note to the housekeeper. I have no doubt that he thought, 'It is a gambler's whim; he wants to see the stake he played for, and what he might perhaps have won had he had courage to play out the game.' *You* certainly took that view of it."

The other muttered something like a half assent, and the former speaker continued: "And you were both of you wrong. I wanted to see the finished picture of which I possessed the sketch—the beautiful Flora—whose original was my grandmother. I cannot tell you the intense longing I had to see the features that pertained to one who belonged to me: a man must be as utterly desolate as I am, to comprehend the craving I felt to have something—anything that might stand to me in place of family. It was this led me to Castello, and it was this that made me, when I crossed the threshold, indifferent to all the splendors of the place, and only occupied with one thought, one wish—to see the fresco in the Octagon Tower—poor old Giacomo's great work—the picture of his beautiful daughter. And was she not beautiful? I ask you, Philip, had Raphael himself ever such a model for sweetness of expression? Come, come. You were just as wild as myself in your enthusiasm as you stood before her; and it was only by a silly jest that you could repress the agitation you were so ashamed of."

"I remember I told you that the family had terribly degenerated since her day."

"And yet you tried to trace a likeness between us."

"You won't say that I succeeded," said he, with a laugh.

"It was then as I stood there gazing on her, thinking of her sad story, that I bethought me what an ignoble part it was I played to compromise the rights that she had won, and how unworthy I was to be the descendant of the beautiful Enrichetta."

"You are about the only man I ever met who was in love with his grandmother."

"Call it how you like, her lovely face has never left me since I saw it there."

"And yet your regret implies that you are only sorry not to have made a better bargain."

"No, Philip; my regret is not to have stood out for terms that must have been refused to me; I wish I had asked for the 'impossible.' I tried to make a laughing matter of it when I began, but I cannot—I cannot. I have got the feeling that I have been selling my birthright."

"And you regret that the mess of pottage has not been bigger."

"There's the impossibility in making a friend of an Englishman! It is the sordid side of everything he will insist on turning uppermost. Had I told a Frenchman what I have told you, he would have lent me his whole heart in sympathy."

"To be sure he would. He would have accepted all that stupid sentimentality about your grandmother as refined feeling, and you'd have been blubbing over each other this half-hour."

"If you only knew the sublime project I had! I dare not tell you of it in your miserable spirit of depreciating all that is high in feeling and noble in aspiration. You would ridicule it. Yes, *mon cher*, you would have seen nothing in my plan, save what you could turn into absurdity."

"Let me hear it. I promise you to receive the information with the most distinguished consideration."

"You could not. You could not elevate your mind even to comprehend my motives. What would you have said, if I had gone to this Mr. Bramleigh, and said, Cousin——"

"He is not your cousin to begin with."

"No matter; one calls every undefined relation cousin. Cousin, I would have said, this house that you live in, these horses that you drive, this plate that you dine off, these spreading lawns and shady woods that lie around, are mine; I am their lawful owner; I am the true heir to them; and you are nothing—nobody—the son of an illegitimate——"

"I'd say he'd have pitched you out of the window."

"Wait a while; not so fast. Nevertheless, I would have said, Yours is the prescription and the habit. These things have pertained to you since your birth: they are part of you, and you of them. You cannot live without them, because you know no other life than where they enter and mingle; while I, poor and an adventurer, have never tasted luxury, nor had

any experiences but of trouble and difficulty. Let us each keep the station to which habit and time have accustomed him. Do you live, as you have ever lived, grand seigneur as you are—rich, honored, and regarded. I will never dispute your possession nor assail your right. I only ask that you accept me as your relation—a cousin, who has been long absent in remote lands; a traveler, an 'eccentric,' who likes a life of savagery and adventure, and who has come back, after years of exile, to see his family and be with his own. Imagine yourself for an instant to be Bramleigh, and what you would have said to this? Had I simply asked to be one of them, to call them by their Christian names, to be presented to their friends as Cousin Anatole—I ask you now, seriously, what you would have replied to such a noble appeal?"

"I don't know exactly what I should have said, but I think I can tell you what I would have done."

"Well, out with it."

"I'd have sent for the police, and handed you over to the authorities for either a rogue or a madman."

"*Bon soir*. I wish you a good-night—pleasant dreams, too, if that be possible."

"Don't go. Sit down. The dawn is just breaking, and you know I ordered the horses for the first light."

"I must go into the air, then. I must go where I can breathe."

"Take a cigar, and let us talk of something else."

"That is easy enough for you—you who treat everything as a mere passing incident, and would make life a series of unconnected episodes. You turn from this to that, just as you taste of this dish and that at dinner; but I, who want to live a life—*entends-tu?*—to live a life—to be to-morrow the successor of myself to-day, to carry with me an identity—how am I to practice your philosophy?"

"Here come the horses; and I must say, I am for once grateful to their jingling bells, helping as they do to drown more nonsense than even you usually give way to."

"How did we ever become friends? Can you explain that to me?"

"I suppose it must have been in one of your lucid moments, Anatole—for you have them at times."

"Ah, I have! But if you're getting complimentary, I'd better be off. Will you look to the bill, and I'll take charge of the baggage?"



## CHAPTER XXXI.

## ON THE ROAD TO ITALY.

"You'd not guess who our neighbors of last night were, Julia," said L'Estrange, as they sat at breakfast the next morning.

"I need not guess, for I know," said she, laughing. "The fact is, George, my curiosity was so excited to see them that I got up as they were about to start, and though the grey morning was only breaking at the time, there was light enough for me to recognize Mr. Longworth and his French friend, Count Pracontal."

"I know that; but I know more than that, Julia. What do you think of my discovery, when I tell you that this same Count Pracontal is the claimant of the Bramleigh estate?"

"Is it possible?"

"It is beyond a question or a doubt. I was awakened from my sleep last night by their loud talking, and unwittingly made a listener to all they said. I heard the Frenchman deplore how he had ever consented to a compromise of his claim, and then Longworth quizzed him a good deal, and attributed the regret to his not having made a harder bargain. My own conviction is that the man really felt it as a point of honor, and was ashamed at having stooped to accept less than his right."

"So, then, they have made a compromise, and the Bramleighs are safe?" cried she, eagerly.

"That much seems certain. The Count even spoke of the sum he had received. I did not pay much attention to the amount, but I remember it struck me as being considerable; and he also referred to his having signed some document debarring him, as it seemed, from all renewal of his demand. In a word, as you said just now, the Bramleighs are safe, and the storm that threatened their fate has passed off harmlessly."

"Oh, you have made me so happy, George. I cannot tell you what joy this news is to me. Poor Nelly, in all her sorrow and privation, has never been out of my thoughts since I read her letter."

"I have not told you the strangest part of all—at least, so it certainly seemed to me. This Count Pracontal actually regretted the compromise, as depriving him of a noble opportunity of self-sacrifice. He wished, he said, he could have gone to Augustus Bramleigh, and declared, 'I want none of this wealth. These luxuries and this station are all essential to you, who have been born to them, and regard them

as part of your very existence. To me they are no wants—I never knew them. Keep them, therefore, as your own. All I ask is, that you regard me as one of your kindred and your family. Call me cousin—let me be one of you—to come here, under your roof, when fortune goes ill with me.' When he was saying this, Longworth burst out into a coarse laugh, and told him, that if he talked such rotten sentimentality to any sane Englishman, the only impression it would have left would be that he was a consummate knave or an idiot."

"Well, George," asked she, seriously, "that was not the conviction it conveyed to your mind?"

"No, Julia; certainly not; but somehow—perhaps it is my colder northern blood, perhaps it is the cautious reserve of one who has not had enough experience of life—but I own to you I distrust very high-flown declarations, and as a rule I like the men who do generous things, and don't think themselves heroes for doing them."

"Remember, George, it was a Frenchman who spoke thus; and from what I have seen of his nation, I would say that he meant all that he said. These people do the very finest things out of an exalted self-esteem. They carry the point of honor so high that there is no sacrifice they are not capable of making, if it only serve to elevate their opinion of themselves. Their theory is, they belong to the 'great nation,' and the motives that would do well enough for you or me would be very ignoble springs of action to him whom Providence has blessed with the higher destiny of being born a Frenchman."

"You disparage while you praise them, Julia."

"I do not mean it, then. I would simply say, I believe in all Count Pracontal said, and I give you my reason for the belief."

"How happy it would have made poor Augustus to have been met in this spirit! Why don't these two men know each other?"

"My dear George, the story of life could no more go on than the story of a novel if there was no imbroglio. Take away from the daily course of events all misunderstandings, all sorrows, and all misconceptions, and there would be no call on humanity for acts of energy, or trustfulness, or devotion. We want all these things just that we may surmount them."

Whether he did not fully concur with the theory, or that it puzzled him, L'Estrange made no reply, and soon after left

the room to prepare for their departure. And now they went the road up the valley of the Upper Rhine—that wild and beautiful tract, so grand in outline and so rich in color, that other landscapes seem cold after it. They wound along the Via Mala, and crossed over the Splügen, most picturesque of Alpine passes, and at last reached Chiavenna.

“All this is very enjoyable, George,” said Julia, as they strolled carelessly in a trellised vine-walk; but as I am the courier, and carry the money-sack, it is my painful duty to say, we can’t do it much longer. Do you know how much remains in that little bag?”

“A couple of hundred francs, perhaps,” said he, listlessly.

“Not half that—how could there, you careless creature? You forget all the extravagances we have been committing, and this entire week of unheard-of indulgence.”

“I was always ‘had up’ for my arithmetic at school. Old Hoskins used to say my figures would be the ruin of me.”

The tone of honest sorrow in which he said this threw Julia into a fit of laughing.

“Here is the total of our worldly wealth,” said she, emptying on a rustic table the leather bag, and running her fingers through a mass of silver in which a few gold coins glittered.

“It seems very little, Julia,” said he, despondingly.

“Worse than that. It is less than it looks, George; these tarnished pieces, with a mock air of silver, are of most ignoble origin; they were born copper, and are only silver by courtesy. Let me see what it all makes.”

While she was arranging the money in little piles on the table L’Estrange lighted a cigarette, and puffed it in leisurely fashion.

“Julia,” said he, at last, “I hope I haven’t committed a dreadful folly in that investment of your two thousand. You know I took the shares I told you of?”

“I remember, George, you said so; but has anything occurred to make you augur ill of the enterprise?”

“No; I know no more of it now than on the first day I heard of it. I was dazzled by the splendid promise of twenty per cent. instead of three that you had received heretofore. It seemed to me to be such a paltry fear to hesitate about doing what scores of others were venturing. I felt as if I were turning away from a big fence while half the field were ready to ride at it. In fact, I made it a question of courage, Julia, which was all the more inexcusable

as the money I was risking was not my own.”

“Oh, George, you must not say that to me.”

“Well well, I know what I think of myself, and I promise you it is not the more favorable because of your generosity.”

“My dear George, that is a word that ought never to occur between us. Our interests are inseparable. When you have done what you believed was the best for me, there is no question of anything more. There now, don’t worry yourself further about it. Attend to what I have to say to you here. We have just one hundred and twelve francs to carry us to Milan, where our letter of credit will meet us; so that there must be no more boat-excursions; no little picnics, with a dainty basket sent up the mountain at sunrise; none of that charming liberality which lights up the road with pleasant faces, and sets one a-thinking how happy Dives might have been if he had given something better than crumbs to Lazarus. No, this must be what you used to call a week of cold-mutton days, mind that, and resist all temptation to money-spending.”

L’Estrange bowed his head in quiet acquiescence; his was the sad thought that so many of us have felt: how much of enjoyment life shows us, just one hair’s breadth beyond our power to grasp; vistas of lovely scenery that we are never to visit; glimpses of bliss closed to us even as we catch them; strains of delicious music of which all our efforts can but retain the dying cadences. Not that he felt all these in any bitterness of spirit; even in narrowed fortune life was very pleasant to him, and he was thoroughly, heartily grateful for the path fate had assigned him to walk in.

How they would have liked to have lingered in the Brianza, that one lovely bit of thoroughly rural Italy, with the green of the west blending through all the gorgeous glow of tropical vegetation; how gladly they would have loitered on the lake at Como—the brightest spot of landscape in Europe; with what enjoyment had they halted at Milan, and still more in Florence! Stern necessity, however, whispered ever onwards; and all the seductions of Raphaels and Titians yielded before the hard demands of that fate that draws the purse-strings. Even at Rome they did not venture to delay, consoling themselves with the thought that they were to dwell so near, they could visit it at will. At last they reached Albano, and as they drove into the village caught sight of a most



picturesque little cottage, enshrined in a copse of vines. It was apparently untenanted, and they eagerly asked if it were to be let. The answer was, No, it was waiting for the "Prete Inglese," who was daily expected to arrive.

"Oh, George, it is ours," cried Julia, in ecstasy, and hid her head on his shoulder, and actually cried with excess of delight.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### THE CHURCH PATRONS AT ALBANO.

THE patrons of the English chapel at Albano were the three great leaders of society in Rome in winter, and at Albano during the summer. Of these the first was Lady Augusta Bramleigh; next came Sir Marcus Cluff; and last—not, indeed, either in activity or zeal—was Mrs. Trumpler, a widow-lady of considerable fortune, and no small share of energy in her nature.

To these George L'Estrange had brought formal letters of introduction, which he was cautiously enjoined should be presented in the order of their respective ranks—making his first approaches to the Lady Augusta. To his request to know at what hour he might have the honor to wait on her ladyship, came a few lines on the back of his own card, saying: "Two o'clock, and be punctual." There did not seem to be any unnecessary courtesy in this curt intimation; but he dressed himself carefully for the interview, and with his cravat properly arranged by Julia, who passed his whole appearance in review, he set out for the pretty Villa of the Chestnuts, where her ladyship lived.

"I don't suppose that I'm about to do anything very unworthy, Julia," said he, as he bade her good-bye; "but I assure you I feel lower in my own esteem this morning than I have known myself since—since——"

"Since you tumbled over the sunk fence, perhaps," said she, laughing, and turned back into the house.

L'Estrange soon found himself at the gate of the villa, and was conducted by a servant in deep mourning through a very beautiful garden to a small kiosk, or summerhouse, where a breakfast-table was spread. He was punctual to the moment; but as her ladyship had not yet appeared he had ample time to admire the beauty of the Sévres cups of a pale blue, and the rich carving of the silver service—evidently of antique mould, and by a master hand. The

rare exotics which were disposed on every side, amongst which some birds of bright plumage were engaged, seemed to fill up the measure of this luxurious spot, and impressed him with—he knew not what exalted idea of her who should be its mistress.

He waited, at first patiently enough—there was much to interest and amuse him; but at last, as nigh an hour had elapsed, and she had not appeared, a feeling, half of irritation at the thought of neglect, and half of doubt lest he should have mistaken what the servant said, began to worry and distress him. A little pendule on a bracket played a few bars of a waltz, and struck three. Should he wait any longer? was the question he put to himself. His sense of shame on leaving home at the thought of presenting himself before a patron came back upon him now with redoubled force. He had often felt that the ministers who preached for a call were submitting themselves to a very unworthy ordeal. The being judged by those they were appointed to teach seemed in itself little short of an outrage; but the part he was now playing was infinitely worse; he had actually come to show himself, to see if, when looked at and talked to, her ladyship would condescend to be his patron, and as it were to impress the indignity more strongly upon him, he was kept waiting like a lackey!

"I don't think I ought to stoop to this," muttered he bitterly to himself; and taking a card and a pencil from his pocket, he wrote: "The Rev. George L'Estrange has waited from two to three o'clock in the hope of seeing Lady Augusta Bramleigh; he regrets the disappointment, as well as his inability to prolong his attendance." "There," cried he aloud, "I hope that will do!" and he placed the card conspicuously on the table.

"Do what, pray?" said a very soft voice, as a slight figure in deep mourning swept noiselessly into the kiosk, and taking the card up sat down without reading it.

One glance showed that the handsome woman before him was Lady Augusta, and the bashful curate blushed deeply at the awkwardness of his position.

"Mr. L'Estrange, I presume?" said she, waving her hand to him to be seated. "And what is your card to do—not represent you, I hope, for I'd rather see you in person?"

"In my despair of seeing your ladyship I wrote a line to say—to say"—and he blundered and stopped short.

"To say you'd wait no longer," said she,

smiling; "but how touchy you must be! Don't you know that women have the privilege of unpunctuality? don't you know it is one of the few prerogatives you men have spared them? Have you breakfasted?"

"Yes; some hours ago."

"I forget whether I have not also. I rather think I did take some coffee. I have been very impatient for your coming. Sit here, please," said she, pointing to an arm-chair beside her own sofa. "I have been very impatient, indeed, to see you. I want to hear all about these poor Bramleighs. You lived beside them, didn't you, and knew them all intimately? What is this terrible story of their ruin—this claim to their property? What does it mean? Is there really anything in it?"

"It is somewhat of a long story," began L'Estrange.

"Then don't tell it, I entreat you. Are you married, Mr. L'Estrange?"

"No, madam, I have not that happiness," said he, smiling at the strange abruptness of her manner.

"Oh, I'm so glad!" she cried; "so glad! I'm not afraid of a parson, but I positively dread a parson's wife. The parson has occasionally a little tolerance for a number of things he doesn't exactly like; his wife never forgives them; and then a woman takes such exact measure of another woman's meanings, and a man knows nothing about them at all—that on the whole I'm delighted you are single, and I fervently trust you will remain so. Will you promise me as much? Will you give me your word not to marry till I leave this?"

"I need scarcely pledge myself, madam, to that. My narrow fortune binds me whether I would or not."

"And you have your mother with you, haven't you?"

"No, madam; my sister has accompanied me."

"I wish it had been your mother. I do so like the maternal pride of a dear old lady in her fine, handsome son. Isn't she vain of you? By the way, how did your choice fall upon the Church? You look more like a cavalry officer. I'm certain you ride well."

"It is, perhaps, the only accomplishment I possess in the world," said he, with some warmth of manner.

"I'm delighted to hear that you're a horseman. There's a mare of mine become perfectly impossible. A stupid creature I took as groom hurt her mouth with a severe bit, and she rears now at the slightest touch. Couldn't you do something

with her? Pray do; and in return I'll take you some charming rides over the Campagna. There's a little valley—almost a glen—near this, which I may say I discovered myself. You mustn't be afraid of bad tongues because you ride out with me. Mrs. Trampler will, of course, take it up. She's odious—perfectly odious. You haven't seen her yet; but you'll have to call on her. She contributes a thousand francs a year to the church, and must not be neglected. And then there's old Sir Marcus Cluff—don't forget him; and take care to remember that his mother was Lady Marion Otley, and don't remember that his father was Cluff and Gosler, the famous fishmonger. I protest I'm becoming as scandalous as Mrs. Trampler herself. And mind that you come back and tell when you've seen these people what they said to you, and what you said to them, and whether they abused me. Come to tea, or, if you like better, come and dine to-morrow at six, and I'll call on your mother in the meanwhile and ask her—though I'd rather you'd come alone."

"It is my sister, madam, that is with me," said he, with great difficulty refraining from a burst of laughter.

"Well, and I've said I'd visit her, though I'm not fond of women, and I believe they never like me."

L'Estrange blundered out some stupid compliment about her having in recompense abundant admiration from the other sex, and she laughed, and said, "Perhaps so. Indeed, I believe I am rather a favorite; but with clever men—not with the fools. You'll see that *they* avoid me. And so," said she, drawing a deep sigh, "you really can tell me nothing about these Bramleighs? And all this time I have been reckoning on your coming to hear everything, and to know about the will. Up to this hour I am totally ignorant as to how I am left. Isn't that very dreadful?"

"It is very distressing indeed, madam."

"The Colonel always said he'd insert a clause or a something or other against my marrying again. Can you imagine anything so ungenerous? It's unchristian, actually unchristian—isn't it?"

A slight gesture seemed to say that he agreed with her; but she was for once determined to be answered more definitely, and she said, "I'm sure, as a clergyman, you can say if there's anything in the Bible against my having another husband?"

"I'm certain there is not, madam."

"How nice it is in the Church of Rome, that when there's anything you want to do,



and it's not quite right to do it, you can have a dispensation—that is, the Pope can make it perfectly moral and proper, and legal besides. Protestantism is so narrow—terribly narrow. As the dear Monsignore Balbi said to me the other night, it is a long 'Act of Parliament against sin.' Wasn't that neat? They are so clever!"

"I am so new to Italy, madam, that I have no acquaintance with these gentlemen."

"I know you'll like them when you do know them; they are so gentle and so persuasive—I might say so fascinating. I assure you, Mr. L'Estrange, I ran a very great risk of going over, as it is called. Indeed, the *Osservatore Romano* said I had gone over; but that is at least premature. These are things one cannot do without long and deep reflection, and intense self-examination—don't you think so? And the dear old Cardinal Bottesini, who used to come to us every Friday evening, warned me himself against my impulsiveness; and then poor Colonel Bramleigh"—here she raised her handkerchief to her eyes—"he wouldn't hear of it at all; he was so devotedly attached to me—it was positive love in a man of his mould—that the thought of my being lost to him, as he called it, was maddening; and in fact he—he made it downright impossible—impossible!" And at last she paused, and a very painful expression in her face showed that her thoughts at the moment were far from pleasurable. "Where was I? what was it I was going to say?" resumed she, hurriedly. "Oh, I remember, I was going to tell you that you must on no account 'go over,' and therefore, avoid of all things what they call the 'controversy' here; don't read their little books, and never make close friendships with the Monsignori. You're a young man, and naturally enough would feel flattered at their attentions, and all the social attractions they'd surround you with. Of course you know nothing of life, and that is the very thing they do understand; and perhaps it is not right of me to say it—it's like a treason—but the women, the great leaders of society, aid them powerfully. They'd like to bring you over," said she, raising her glass and looking at him. "You'd really look remarkably well in a chasuble and a cope. They'd positively fight for you as a domestic chaplain"—and the thought so amused her that she laughed outright, and L'Estrange himself joined her. "I hope I have not wearied you with my cautions and my warnings; but really, when I thought how utterly alone and friendless you must be here,

nobody to consult with, none to advise you—for, after all, your mother could scarcely be an efficient guide in such difficulties—I felt it would be cruel not to come to your aid. Have you got a watch? I don't trust that little pendule, though it plays a delicious 'Ave Maria' of Rossini's. What hour is it?"

"Half-past four, madam. I am really shocked at the length of my visit."

"Well, I must go away. Perhaps you'll come and see my sister—she's charming, I assure you, and she'd like to know you?"

"If you'll vouchsafe to present me on any other day, I shall be but too grateful; but Sir Marcus Cluff gave me a rendezvous for four o'clock."

"And you'll be with him at five," cried she, laughing. "Don't say it was I that made you break your appointment, for he hates me, and would never forgive you. Bye-bye. Tell your mother I'll call on her to-morrow, and hope you'll both dine with me." And without waiting for a word in reply, she tripped out of the summer-house, and hastened away to the villa.

L'Estrange had little time to think over this somewhat strange interview when he reached the entrance-gate to the grounds of Sir Marcus Cluff, and was scarcely admitted within the precincts, when a phaeton and a pair of very diminutive ponies drove up, and a thin, emaciated man, carefully swathed in shawls and wrappers, who held the reins, called out, "Is that Mr. L'Estrange?"

The young parson came forward with his excuses for being late, and begged that he might not interrupt Sir Marcus in his intended drive.

"Will you take a turn with me?" said Sir Marcus, in a whining voice, that sounded like habitual complaint. "I'm obliged to do this every day; it's the doctor's order. He says, 'Take the air and distract yourself;' and I do so." L'Estrange had now seated himself and they drove away.

"I'm glad you've come," said Sir Marcus. "It will stop all this plotting and intriguing. If you had delayed much longer, I think they'd have had a dozen here—one of them a converted Jew, a very dirty fellow. Oh, dear, how fatiguing it is! that little crop-eared pony pulls so he can't be held, and we call him John Bright; but don't mention it. I hope you have no family, sir?"

"I have my sister only."

"A sister isn't so bad. A sister may marry, or she may—" What was the other alternative did not appear, for John Bright bolted at this moment, and it was full

five minutes ere he could be pulled up again. "This is the distraction I'm promised," said the sick man. "If it wasn't for Mr. Needham—I call the near-sider Mr. Needham, as I bought him of that gentleman—I'd have too much distraction; but Needham never runs away—he falls; he comes down as if he was shot!" cried he, with a jovous twinkle of the eye, "and I bought him for that. There's no drag ever was invented like a horse on his belly—the most inveterate runaway can't escape against that." If the little cackle that followed this speech did not sound exactly like a laugh, it was all of that emotion that Sir Marcus ever permitted himself.

"I can't ask you if you like this place. You're too newly come to answer that question," resumed he; "but I may ask what is the sort of society you prefer?"

"I've seen next to nothing of the world since I left the University. I have been living these last four or five years in one of the least visited spots in Great Britain, and only since the arrival of the Bramleigh family had a neighbor to speak to."

"Ah, then, you know these Bramleighs?" said the other, with more animation than he had yet displayed. "Overbearing people, I've heard they were—very rich, and insolent to a degree."

"I must say I have found them everything that was kind and considerate, hospitable neighbors and very warm-hearted friends."

"That's not the world's judgment on them, my dear sir—far from it. They are a proverb for pretension and impertinence. As for Lady Augusta here—to be sure she's only one of them by marriage—but there's not a soul in the place she has not outraged. She goes nowhere—of course, *that* she has a right to do—but she never returns a call, never even sends a card. She went so far as to tell Mr. Pemberton, your predecessor here, that she liked Albano for its savagery; that there was no one to know was its chief charm for her."

"I saw her for the first time this morning," said L'Estrange, not liking to involve himself in this censure.

"And she fascinated you, of course? I'm told she does that with every good-looking young fellow that comes in her way. She's a finished coquette, they say. I don't know what that means, nor do I believe it would have much success with me, if I did know. All the coquetry she bestows upon me is to set my ponies off in full gallop whenever she overtakes me driving. She starts away in a sharp canter

just behind me, and John Bright fancies it a race, and away he goes, too, and if Mr. Needham was of the same mettle, I don't know what would become of us. I'm afraid, besides, she's a connection of mine. My mother, Lady Marion, was cousin to one of the DeLahunts of Kings Cromer. Would your mind taking the reins for awhile, John is fearfully rash to-day? Just sit where you are, the near-side gives you the whip-hand for Needham. Ah! that's a relief! Turn down the next road on your left. And so she never asked you about your tenets—never inquired whether you were High Church or Low Church, or no church at all?"

"Pardon me, Sir Marcus; she was particularly anxious that I should guard myself against Romish fascinations and advances."

"Ah, she knows them all! They thought they had secured her—indeed they were full sure of it; but as she said to poor Mr. Pemberton, they found they had hatched a duck. She was only flirting with Rome. The woman would flirt with the Holy Father, sir, if she had a chance. There's nothing serious, nothing real, nothing honest about her; but she charmed *you*, for all that—I see it. I see it all; and you're to take moonlight rides with her over the Campagna. Ha, ha, ha! Haven't I hit it? Poor old Pemberton—fifty-eight if he was an hour—got a bad bronchitis with these same night excursions. Worse than that, he made the place too hot for him. Mrs. Trumpler—an active woman Mrs. T., and the eye of a hawk—wouldn't stand the 'few sweet moments,' as poor Pemberton in his simplicity called them. She threatened him with a general meeting, and a vote of censure, and a letter to the Bishop of Gibraltar; and she frightened him so that he resigned. I was away at the time at the baths at Ischia, or I'd have tried to patch up matters. Indeed, as I told Mrs. T., I'd have tried to get rid of my lady, instead of banishing poor Pemberton, as kind-hearted a creature as ever I met, and a capital whist-player. Not one of your new-fangled fellows, with the 'call for trumps' and all the last devices of the Portland, but a steady player, who never varied—didn't go chopping about, changing his suits, and making false leads, but went manfully through his hearts before he opened his spades. We were at Christ Church together. I knew him for a matter of six-and-thirty years, Mr. L'Estrange, and I pledge you my word of honor"—here his voice grew tremulous with agitation—"and in all the time I never knew him



revoke!" He drew his hat over his eyes as he spoke, and leaning back in his seat seemed almost overcome by his emotions.

"Will you turn in there at the small gate? It is a private entrance to my grounds. I'll not ask you to come in to-day, sir. I'm a little flurried and nervous; but if you'll join a sick man's dinner at two o'clock to-morrow—some rice and a chicken and a bit of fish—nothing more, I promise you. Well, well, I see it does not tempt you. My best thanks for your pleasant company. Let me see you soon. Take care of yourself, beware of my lady, and avoid the moonlight!"

Apparently this little sally seemed to revive the invalid, for he stepped up the approach to his house with a lively air and waved his hand pleasantly as he said adieu.

"There's another still!" muttered L'Estrange as he inquired the way to Mrs. Trumpler's; "and I wish with all my heart it was over."

L'Estrange found Mrs. Trumpler at tea. She was an early diner, and took tea about six o'clock, after which she went out for an evening drive over the Campagna. In aspect, the lady was not prepossessing. She was very red-faced, with large grizzly curls arranged in a straight line across her forehead, and she wore spectacles of such a size as to give her somewhat the look of an owl. In figure she was portly and stout, and had a stand-up sort of air, that, to a timid or bashful man, like the curate, was the reverse of reassuring.

"I perceive, sir, I am the last on your list," said she, looking at her watch as he entered. "It is past six."

"I regret, madam, if I have come at an inconvenient hour. Will you allow me to wait on you to-morrow?"

"No, sir, we will, with your permission, avail ourselves of the present to make acquaintance with each other." She rang the bell after this speech, and ordered that the carriage should be sent away. "I shall not drive, Giacomo," said she; "and I do not receive if any one calls."

"You brought me a letter, sir, from the Reverend Silas Smallwood," said she, very much in the tone of a barrister cross-examining a troublesome witness.

"Yes, madam; that gentleman kindly offered a friend of mine to be the means of presenting me to you."

"So that you are not personally acquainted, sir?"

"We have never, so far as I know, even seen each other."

"It is as well, sir, fully as well. Mr. Smallwood is a person for whose judgment

or discrimination I would have the very humblest opinion, and I have therefore, from what you tell me, the hope that you are not of his party in the church."

"I am unable to answer you, madam, knowing nothing whatever of Mr. Smallwood's peculiar views."

"This is fencing, sir; and I don't admire fencing. Let us understand each other. What have you come here to preach? I hope my question is a direct one?"

"I am an ordained minister of the Church of England, madam; and when I have said so, I have answered you."

"What, sir? do you imagine your reply is sufficient in an age when not alone every doctrine is embraced within the Church, but that there is a very large and increasing party who are prepared to have no doctrine at all? I perceive, sir, I must make my approaches to you in a different fashion. Are you a man of vestments, gesticulations, and glass windows? Do you dramatize your Christianity?"

"I believe I can say no, madam, to all these."

"Are you a literalist, then? What about Noah, sir? Let me hear what you have to say about the Flood. Have you ever calculated what forty days' rainfall would amount to? Do you know that in Assam, where the rains are the heaviest in that part of the world, and in Colon, in Central America, no twelve hours' rain ever passed five inches and three quarters? You are. I am sure, acquainted with Eschschormes' book on the Nile deposits? If not, sir, it is yonder—at your service. Now, sir, we shall devote this evening to the Deluge, and, so far as time permits, the age of the earth. To-morrow evening we'll take Moses, on Staub's suggestion that many persons were included under that name. We'll keep the Pentateuch for Friday, for I expect the Rabbi Bensi will be here by that time."

"Will you pardon me, madam," said L'Estrange, rising, "if I decline entering upon all discussion of these momentous questions with you? I have no such scholarship as would enable me to prove instructive, and I have conviction sufficiently strong, in my faith in other men's learning, to enable me to reject quibbles and be unmoved by subtleties. Besides," added he, in a sharper tone, "I have come here to have the honor of making your acquaintance and not to submit myself to an examination. May I wish you a good evening?"

How he took his leave, how he descended the stairs, and rushed into the street, and found his way to the little inn where his

sister wearily was waiting dinner for him, the poor curate never knew to the last day of his life.

### CHAPTER XXXIII.

#### A SMALL LODGING AT LOUVAIN.

IN a very humble quarter of the old town of Louvain, at the corner of La Rue des Moines, Augustus Bramleigh and his sister had taken up their lodgings. Madame Jervasse, the proprietress of the house, had in her youth been the *femme-de-chambre* of some high-born dame of Brussels, and offered her services in the same capacity to Ellen, while, with the aid of her own servant, she prepared their meals, thus at once supplying the modest requirements they needed. Augustus Bramleigh was not a very resolute or determined man, but his was one of those natures that acquire solidity from pressure. When once he found himself on the road of sacrifices, his self-esteem imparted vigor and energy to his character. In the ordinary course of events he was accustomed to hold himself—his abilities and his temperament—cheaply enough. No man was ever less self-opinionated or self-confident. If referred to for advice, or even for opinion, he would modestly decline the last, and say, “Marion or Temple perhaps could help you here.” He shrank from all self-assertion whatever, and it was ever a most painful moment to him when he was presented to any one as the future head of the house and the heir to the Bramleigh estates. To Ellen, from whom he had no secrets, he had often confessed how he wished he had been a younger son. All his tastes and all his likings were those to be enjoyed by a man of moderate fortune, and an ambition even smaller than that fortune. He would say, too, half-jestingly, “With such aspiring spirits amongst us as Marion and Temple, I can afford myself the luxury of obscurity. *They* are sure to carry our banner loftily, and *I* may with safety go on my humble path unnoticed.”

Jack had always been his favorite brother: his joyous nature, his sailor-like frankness, his spirit, and his willingness to oblige, contrasted very favorably with Temple's sedate, cautious manner, and the traces of a selfishness that never forgot itself. Had Jack been the second son instead of the youngest, Augustus would have abdicated in his favor at once, but he could not make such a sacrifice for Temple. All the less that the very astute diplomatist

continually harped on the sort of qualities which were required to dispense an ample fortune, and more than insinuated how much such a position would become himself, while another might only regard it as a burden and a worry. It was certainly a great shock to him to learn that there was a claimant to his family fortune and estate: the terrible feeling that they were to appear before the world as impostors—holding a station and dispensing a wealth to which they had no right—almost overcame him. The disgrace of a public exposure, the notoriety it would evoke, were about the most poignant sufferings such a man could be brought to endure. He to whom a newspaper comment, a mere passing notice of his name, was a source of pain and annoyance; that he should figure in a great trial, and his downfall be made the theme of moral reflections in a leading article! How was this to be borne? What could break the fall from a position of affluence and power to a condition of penury and insignificance? Nothing—if not the spirit which, by meeting disaster half-way, seemed at least to accept the inevitable with courage, and so carry a high heart in the last moments of defeat.

Augustus well knew what a mistaken estimate the world had ever formed of his timid, bashful nature, and this had given his manner a semblance of pride and hauteur which made the keynote of his character. It was all in vain that he tried to persuade people that he had not an immeasurable self-conceit. They saw it in his every word and gesture, in his coolness when they approached him, in his almost ungraciousness when they were courteous to him. “Many will doubtless declare,” said he, “that this reverse of fortune is but a natural justice on one who plumed himself too much on his prosperity, and who arrogated too far on the accident of his wealth. If so, I can but say they will not judge me fairly. They will know nothing of where my real suffering lies. It is less the loss of fortune I deplore, than the world's judgment on having so long usurped that we had no right to.”

From the day he read Sedley's letter and held that conversation with the lawyer, in which he heard that the claimant's case seemed a very strong one, and that perhaps the Bramleighs had nothing to oppose to it of so much weight as the great fact of possession—from that hour he took a despairing view of the case. There are men who at the first reverse of fortune throw down their cards and confess themselves beaten. There are men who can accept



defeat itself better than meet the vacillating events of a changeful destiny; who have no persistence in their courage, nor any resources to meet the coming incidents of life. Augustus Bramleigh possessed a great share of this temperament. It is true that Sedley, after much persuasion, induced him to entertain the idea of a compromise, carefully avoiding the use of that unhappy word, and substituting for it the less obnoxious expression, "arrangement." Now this same arrangement, as Mr. Sedley put it, was a matter which concerned the Bramleighs collectively—seeing that if the family estates were to be taken away, nothing would remain to furnish a provision for younger children. "You must ascertain what your brothers will do," wrote Sedley; "you must inquire how far Lord Culduff—who through his marriage has a rent-charge on the estate—will be willing to contribute to an 'arrangement.'"

Nothing could be less encouraging than the answer this appeal called forth. Lord Culduff wrote back in the tone of an injured man, all but declaring that he had been regularly taken in; indeed he did not scruple to aver that it had never been his intention to embark in a ship that was sure to founder, and he threw out something like a rebuke on the indelicacy of asking him to add to the sacrifice he had already made for the honor of being allied to them.

Temple's note ran thus:—

"DEAR GUSTY:—If your annoyances have not affected your brain, I am at a loss for an explanation of your last letter. How, I would ask you, is a poor secretary of legation to subsist on the beggarly pittance F. O. affords him? Four hundred and fifty per annum is to supply rent, clothes, club expenses, a stall at the opera, and one's little charities in perhaps one of the dearest capitals in Europe. So far from expecting the demands you have made upon me, I actually, at the moment of receiving yours, had a half-finished note on my writing-table asking you to increase my poor allowance. When I left Castello, I think you had sixteen horses. Can you possibly want more than two for the carriage and one for your own riding? As to your garden and greenhouse expenses, I'll lay ten to one your first peas cost you a guinea a quart, and you never saw a pine at your table under five-and-twenty pounds; and now that I am on the theme of reduction, I would ask what do you want with a *chef* at two hundred and fifty a year? Do you, or does Ellen, ever eat of anything but the simplest diet at table? Don't you send

away the entrées every day, wait for the roast gigot, or the turkey, or the woodcocks, and in consequence, does not M. Grégoire leave the cookery to be done by one of his 'aides,' and betake himself to the healthful pursuit of snipe-shooting, and the evening delight of Mrs. Somebody's tea at Portshannon? Why not add this useless extravagance to the condemned list of the vimeries, the stables, and the score of other extraordinaries, which an energetic hand would reduce in half an hour?

"I'm sure you'll not take it in ill part that I bring these things under your notice. Whether out of the balance in hand you will give me five hundred a year, or only three, I shall ever remain

"Your affectionate brother,

"TEMPLE EDGERTON BRAMLEIGH."

"Read that, Nelly," said Augustus, as he threw it across the table. "I'm almost afraid to say what I think of it."

This was said as they sat in their little lodgings in the Rue des Moines; for the letter had been sent through the embassy bag, and consequently had been weeks on the road, besides lying a month on a tray in the Foreign Office till some idle loungeur had taken the caprice to forward it.

"Her Majesty's Legation at Naples. Lord Culduff is there special, and Temple is acting as secretary to him."

"And does Marion send no message?"

"Oh, yes. She wants all the trunks and carriage boxes which she left at Castello to be forwarded to town for transmission abroad. I don't think she remembers us much further. She hopes I will not have her old mare sold, but make arrangements for her having a free paddock for the rest of her life, and she adds that you ought to take the pattern of the slipper on her side-saddle, for, if it should happen that you ever ride again, you'll find it better than any they make now."

"Considerate, at all events. They tell us that love alone remembers trifles. Isn't this a proof of it, Gusty?"

"Read Temple now, and try to put me in better temper with him than I feel at this moment."

"I couldn't feel angry with Temple," said she, quietly. "All he does and all he says so palpably springs from consideration of self, that it would be unjust to resent in him what one would not endure from another. In fact, he means no harm to any one, and a great deal of good to Temple Bramleigh."

"And you think that commendable?"

"I have not said so; but it certainly would not irritate me."

She opened the letter after this and read it over leisurely.

"Well, and what do you say now, Nelly?" asked he.

"That it's Temple all over; he does not know why in this shipwreck every one is not helping to make a lifeboat for him. It seems such an obvious and natural thing to do that he regards the omission as scarcely credible."

"Does he not see—does he not care for the ruin that has overtaken us?"

"Yes, he sees it, and is very sorry for it, but he opines, at the same time, that the smallest amount of the disaster should fall to his share. Here's something very different," said she, taking a letter from her pocket. "This is from Julia. She writes from her little villa at Albano, and asks us to come and stay with them."

"How thoroughly kind and good-natured!"

"Was it not, Gusty? She goes over how we are to be lodged, and is full of little plans of pleasure and enjoyment; she adds, too, what a benefit you would be to poor Gorge, who is driven half wild with the meddlesome interference of the Church magnates. They dictate to him in everything, and a Mrs. Trumpler actually sends him the texts on which she desires him to hold forth—while Lady Augusta persecutes him with projects in which theological discussion, as she understands it, is to be carried on in rides over the Campagna, and picnics to the hills behind Albano. Julia says that he will not be able to bear it without the comfort and companionship of some kind friend, to whom he can have recourse in his moments of difficulty."

"It would be delightful to go there, Nelly, but it is impossible."

"I know it is," said she, gravely.

"We could not remove so far from England while this affair is yet undetermined. We must remain where we can communicate easily with Sedley."

"There are scores of reasons against the project," said she, in the same grave tone. "Let us not speak of it more."

Augustus looked at her, but she turned away her face, and he could only mark that her cheeks and throat were covered with a deep blush.

"This part of Julia's letter is very curious," said she, turning to the last page. "They were stopping at a little inn one night where Pracontal and Longworth arrived, and George by a mere accident heard Pracontal declare that he would have

given anything to have known you personally, that he desired above everything to be received by you on terms of friendship, and even of kindred; that the whole of this unhappy business could have been settled amicably, and, in fact, he never ceased to blame himself for the line into which his lawyer's advice had led him, while all his wishes tended to an opposite direction."

"But Sedley says he has accepted the arrangement, and abandoned all claim in future."

"So he has, and it is for that he blames himself. He says it debars him from the noble part he desired to take."

"I was no party to this compromise, Nelly, remember that. I yielded to reiterated entreaty a most unwilling assent, declaring always that the law must decide the case between us, and the rightful owner have his own. Let not Mr. Pracontal imagine that all the high-principled action is on his side; from the very first I declared that I would not enjoy for an hour what I did not regard indisputably as my own. You can bear witness to this, Nelly. I simply assented to the arrangement, as they called it, to avoid unnecessary scandal. What the law shall decide between us, need call forth no evil passions or ill-will. If the fortune we had believed our own belongs to another, let him have it."

The tone of high excitement in which he spoke plainly revealed how far a nervous temperament and a susceptible nature had to do with his present resolve. Nelly had seen this before, but never so fully revealed as now. She knew well the springs which could move him to acts of self-sacrifice and devotion, but she had not thoroughly realized to herself that it was in a paroxysm of honorable emotion he had determined to accept the reverse of fortune, which would leave him penniless in the world.

"No, Nelly!" said he, as he arose and walked the room, with head erect, and a firm step. "We shall not suffer these people who talk slightly of the newly risen gentry to have their scoff unchallenged! It is the cant of the day to talk of mercantile honor and city notions of what is high-minded and right, and I shall show them that *we*—'Lombard Street people,' as some newspaper scribe called us the other day—that we can do things the proudest earl in the peerage would shrink back from as from a sacrifice he could not dare to face. There can be no sneer at a class that can produce men who accept beggary rather than dishonor. As that



Frenchman said, these habits of luxury and splendor were things he had never known—the want of them would leave no blank in *his* existence. Whereas to us they were the daily accidents of life—they entered into our ways and habits, and made part of our very natures; giving them up was like giving up ourselves, surrendering an actual identity! You saw our distinguished connection, Lord Culduff, how he replied to my letter—a letter, by the way, I should never have stooped to write—but Sedley had my ear at the time and influenced me against my own convictions. The noble Viscount, however, was free from all extraneous pressure, and he told us, as plainly as words could tell it, that he had paid heavily enough already for the honor of being connected with us, and had no intention to contribute another sacrifice. As for Temple—I won't speak of him; poor Jack, how differently he would have behaved in such a crisis!"

Happy at the opportunity to draw her brother away, even passingly, from a theme that seemed to press upon him unceasingly, she drew from the drawer of a little work-table a small photograph, and handed it to him, saying, "Is it not like?"

"Jack!" cried he. "In a sailor's jacket, too! what is this?"

"He goes out as a mate to China," said she, calmly. "He wrote me but half a dozen lines, but they were full of hope and cheerfulness; he said that he had every prospect of getting a ship, when he was once out; that an old messmate had written to his father—a great merchant at Shanghai—about him, and that he had not the slightest fears for his future."

"Would any one believe in a reverse so complete as this?" cried Augustus, as he clasped his hands before him. "Who ever heard of such ruin in so short a time?"

"Jack certainly takes no despairing view of life," said she, quietly.

"What! does he pretend to say it is nothing to descend from his rank as an officer of the navy, with a brilliant prospect before him, and an affluent connection at his back, to be a common sailor, or at best one grade removed from a common sailor, and his whole family beggared? Is this the picture he can afford to look on with pleasure or with hope? The man who sees in his downfall no sacrifice, or no degradation, has no sympathy of mine. To tell me that he is stout-hearted is absurd; he is simply unfeeling."

Nelly's face and even her neck became crimson, and her eyes flashed indignantly; but she repressed the passionate words that

were almost on her lips, and taking the photograph from him replaced it in the drawer and turned the key.

"Has Marion written to you?" asked he, after a pause.

"Only a few lines. I'm afraid she's not very happy in her exalted condition after all, for she concluded with these words: 'It is a cruel blow that has befallen you, but don't fancy that there are not miseries as hard to bear in life as those which display themselves in public and flaunt their sufferings before the world.'"

"That old fop's temper perhaps is hard to bear with," said he, carelessly.

"You must write to George L'Estrange, Gusty," said she, coaxingly. "There are no letters he likes so much as yours. He says you are the only one who ever knew how to advise without taking that tone of superiority that is so offensive, and he needs advice just now—he is driven half wild with dictation and interference."

She talked on in this strain for some time, till he grew gradually calmer, and his features, losing their look of intensity and eagerness, regained their ordinary expression of gentleness and quiet.

"Do you know what was passing through my mind just now?" said he, smiling half sadly. "I was wishing it was George had been Marion's husband instead of Lord Culduff. We'd have been so united, the very narrowness of our fortunes would have banded us more closely together, and I believe, firmly believe, we might have been happier in these days of humble condition, than ever we were in our palmy ones: do you agree with me, Nelly?"

Her face was now crimson, and if Augustus had not been the least observant of men, he must have seen how his words had agitated her. She merely said, with affected indifference, "Who can tell how these things would turn out? There's a nice gleam of sunlight, Gusty. Let us have a walk. I'll go for my hat."

She fled from the room before he had time to reply, and the heavy clap of a door soon told that she had reached her chamber.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

AT LOUVAIN.

THERE are few delusions more common with well-to-do people than the belief that if "put to it" they could earn their own livelihood in a variety of ways. Almost every man has some two or three or more

accomplishments which he fancies would be quite adequate to his support; and remembering with what success the exercise of these gifts has ever been hailed in the society of his friends, he has a sort of generous dislike to be obliged to eclipse some poor drudge of a professional, who, of course, will be consigned to utter oblivion after his own performance.

Augustus Bramleigh was certainly not a conceited or a vain man, and yet he had often in his palmy days imagined how easy it would be for him to provide for his own support; he was something of a musician, he sang pleasingly, he drew a little, he knew something of three or four modern languages, he had that sort of smattering acquaintance with questions of religion, politics, and literature, which the world calls being "well-informed;" and yet nothing short of grave necessity revealed to him that, towards the objects of securing a livelihood, a cobbler in his bulk was out and out his master.

The world has no need of the man of small acquirements, and would rather have its shoes mended by the veriest botch of a professional, than by the cleverest amateur that ever studied a Greek sandal.

"Is it not strange, Nelly, that Brydges and Bowes won't take those songs of mine?" said he one morning as the post brought him several letters. "They say they are very pretty, and the accompaniments full of taste, but so evidently wanting in originality—such palpable imitations of Gordigliani and Mariani—they would meet no success. I ask you, Nelly, am I the man to pilfer from any one? Is it likely I would trade on another man's intellect?"

"That you certainly are not, Gusty! but remember who it is that utters this criticism. The man who has no other test of goodness but a ready sale, and he sees in this ease little hope of such."

"Rankin, too, refuses my 'Ghost Story,' he calls it too German, whatever that may mean."

"It means simply that he wants to say something and is not very clear what it ought to be. And your water-color sketch—the Street in Bruges?"

"Worst of all," cried he, interrupting. "Dinetti, with whom I have squandered hundreds for prints and drawings, sends it back with these words in red chalk on the back: 'No distance; no transparency; general muddiness—a bad imitation of Prout's worst manner.'"

"How unmannerly! how coarse!"

"Yes; these purveyors to the world's taste don't mince matters with their jour-

neymen. They remind them pretty plainly of their shortcomings; but considering how much of pure opinion must enter into these things, they might have uttered their judgments with more diffidence."

"They may not always know what is best, Gusty; but I take it, they can guess very correctly as to what the public will think best."

"How humiliating it makes labor when one has to work to please a popular taste! I always had fancied that the author, or the painter, or the musician, stood on a sort of pedestal, to the foot of which came the publisher, entreating that he might be permitted to catch the utterings of genius, and become the channel through which they should flow into an expectant world; and now I see it is the music-seller or the print-seller is on the pedestal, and the man of genius kneels at his feet and prays to be patronized."

"I am sure, Gusty," said she, drawing her arm within his, as he stood at the window, "I am sure we must have friends who would find you some employment in the public service that you would not dislike, and you would even take interest in. Let us see first what we could ask for."

"No; first let us think of whom we could ask for it."

"Well, be it so. There is Sir Francis Deighton; isn't he a Cabinet Minister?"

"Yes. My father gave him his first rise in life; but I'm not sure they kept up much intimacy later on."

"I'll write to him, Gusty; he has all the Colonial patronage, and could easily make you governor of something to-morrow. Say 'yes;' tell me I may write to him."

"It's not a pleasant task to assign you, dear Nelly," said he, with a sad smile; "and yet I feel you will do it better than I should."

"I shall write," said she, boldly, "with the full assurance that Sir Francis will be well pleased to have an opportunity to serve the son of an old friend and benefactor."

"Perhaps it is that my late defeats have made me cowardly—but I own, Nelly, I am less than hopeful of success."

"And I am full of confidence. Shall I show you my letter when I have written it?"

"Better not, Nelly. I might begin to question the prudence of this, or the taste of that, and end by asking you to suppress it all. Do what you like, then, and in your own way."

Nelly was not sorry to obtain permission



to act free of all trammels, and went off to her room to write her letter. It was not till after many attempts that she succeeded in framing an epistle to her satisfaction. She did not wish—while reminding Sir Francis of whom it was she was speaking—to recall to him any unpleasant sentiment of an old obligation; she simply adverted to her father's long friendship for him, but dropped no hint of his once patronage. She spoke of their reverse in fortune with dignity, and in the spirit of one who could declare proudly that their decline in station involved no loss of honor, and she asked that some employment might be bestowed on her brother, as upon one well deserving of such a charge.

"I hope there is nothing of the suppliant in all this? I hope it is such a note as Gusty would have approved of, and that my eagerness to succeed has involved me in no undue humility." Again and again she read it over; revising this, and changing that, till at length, grown impatient, she folded it up and addressed it, saying aloud: "There! it is in the chance humor of him who reads, not in the skill of the writer, lies the luck of such epistles."

"You forgot to call him Right Honorable, Nelly," said Augustus, as he looked at the superscription.

"I'm afraid I've forgotten more than that, Gusty; but let us hope for the best."

"What did you ask for?"

"Anything—whatever he can give you, and is disposed to give, I've said. We are in that category where the proverb says—There is no choice."

"I'd not have said that, Nelly."

"I know that, and it is precisely on that account that I said it for you. Remember, Gusty, you changed our last fifty pounds in the world yesterday."

"That's true," said he, sitting down near the table, and covering his face with both hands.

"There's a gentleman below stairs, madam, wishes to know if he could see Mr. Bramleigh," said the landlady, entering the room.

"Do you know his name?" said Nelly, seeing that as her brother paid no attention to the announcement, it might be as well not to admit a visitor.

"This is his card, madam."

"Mr. Cutbill!" said Nelly, reading aloud. "Gusty," added she, bending over him, and whispering in his ear, "would you see Mr. Cutbill?"

"I don't care to see him," muttered he, and then rising he added, "Well, let him come up; but mind, Nelly, we must on

no account ask him to stay and dine with us."

She nodded assent, and the landlady retired to introduce the stranger.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

## MR. CUTBILL'S VISIT.

"If you knew the work I had to find you," said Mr. Cutbill, entering the room and throwing his hat carelessly on a table. "I had the whole police at work to look you up, and only succeeded at last by the half-hint that you were a great political offender, and Lord Palmerston would never forgive the authorities if they concealed you."

"I declare," said Augustus, gravely, "I am much flattered by all the trouble you have taken to blacken my character."

"Character! Bless your heart, so long as you ain't a Frenchman, these people don't care about your character. An English conspirator is the most harmless of all creatures. Had you been a Pole or an Italian, the préfet told me, he'd have known every act of your daily life."

"And so we shall have to leave this, now?" said Ellen, with some vexation in her tone.

"Not a bit of it, if you don't dislike the surveillance they'll bestow on you; and it'll be the very best protection against rogues and pickpockets; and I'll go and say that you're not the man I suspected at all."

"Pray take no further trouble on our behalf, sir," said Bramleigh, stiffly and haughtily.

"Which, being interpreted, means—make your visit as short as may be, and go your way, Tom Cutbill, don't it?"

"I am not prepared to say, sir, that I have yet guessed the object of your coming."

"If you go to that, I suspect I'll be as much puzzled as yourself. I came to see you because I heard you were in my neighborhood. I don't think I had any other very pressing reason. I had to decamp from England somewhat hurriedly, and I came over here to be, as they call it, 'out of the way,' till this storm blows over."

"What storm? I've heard nothing of a storm."

"You've not heard that the Lisconnor scheme has blown up—the great Culduff Mining Company has exploded—and blown all the shareholders sky-high?"

"Not a word of it."

"Why, there's more writs after the promoters this morning than ever there was scrip for paid-up capital. We're all in for it—every man of us."

"Was it a mere bubble then—a fraud?"

"I don't know what you call a bubble, or what you mean by a fraud. We had all that constitutes a company: we had a scheme, and we had a lord. If an over-greedy public wants grandeur and gain besides, it must be disappointed. As I told the general meeting, 'You don't expect profit as well as the peerage, do you?'"

"You yourself told me there was coal."

"So there was. I am ready to maintain it still. Isn't that money, Bramleigh?" said he, taking a handful of silver from his pocket. "good coin of the realm, with her Majesty's image? But if you ask me if there was much more where it came from—why, the witness might, as the newspapers say, hesitate, and show confusion."

"You mean, then, in short, there was only coal enough to form a pretext for a company?"

"I tell you what I mean," said Cutbill, sturdily. "I bolted from London rather than be stuck in a witness-box, and badgered by a cross-examining barrister; and I'm not going to expose myself to the same sort of diversion here from you."

"I assure you, sir, the matter had no interest for me, beyond the opportunity it afforded you of exculpation."

"For the exculpatory part, I can take it easy," said Cutbill, with a dry laugh. "I wish I had nothing heavier on my heart than the load of my conscience. But I've been signing my name to deeds, and writing Tom Cutbill across acceptances, in a sort of indiscriminate way, that in the calmer hours before a Commissioner in Bankruptcy ain't so pleasant. I must say, Bramleigh, your distinguished relative, Cudduff, doesn't cut up well."

"I think, Mr. Cutbill, if you have any complaint to make of Lord Cudduff, you might have chosen a more fitting auditor than his brother-in-law."

"I thought the world had outgrown the cant of connection. I thought that we had got to be so widely-minded that you might talk to a man about his sister as freely as if she were the Queen of Sheba."

"Pray do me the favor to believe me still a bigot, sir."

"How far is Lord Cudduff involved in the mishap you speak of, Mr. Cutbill?" said Nelly, with a courteousness of tone she hoped might restore their guest to a better humor.

"I think he'll net some five-and-twenty thousand out of the transaction; and from what I know of the distinguished Viscount, he'll not lie awake at night fretting over the misfortunes of Tom Cutbill and fellows."

"Will this—this misadventure," stammered out Augustus, "prevent your return to England?"

"Only for a season. A man lies by for these things, just as he does for a thunder-storm; a little patience and the sun shines out, and he walks about freely as ever. If it were not, besides, for this sort of thing, we City men would never have a day's recreation in life; nothing but work, work, from morning till night. How many of us would see Switzerland, I ask you, if we didn't smash? The Insolvent Court is the way to the Rhine, Bramleigh, take my word for it, though it ain't set down in John Murray."

"If a light heart could help to a light conscience, I must say, Mr. Cutbill, you would appear to possess that enviable lot."

"There's such a thing as a very small conscience," said Cutbill, closing one eye, and looking intensely roguish. "A conscience so unobtrusive that one can treat it like a poor relation, and put it anywhere."

"Oh, Mr. Cutbill, you shock me," said Ellen, trying to look reproachful and grave.

"I'm sorry for it, Miss Bramleigh," said he, with mock sorrow in his manner.

"Had not our friend L'Estrange an interest in this unfortunate speculation?" asked Bramleigh.

"A trifle; a mere trifle. Two thousand I think it was. Two, or two-five-hundred. I forget exactly which."

"And is this entirely lost?"

"Well, pretty much the same: they talk of sevenpence dividend, but I suspect they're over-sanguine. I'd say five was nearer the mark."

"Do they know the extent of their misfortune?" asked Ellen, eagerly.

"If they read the *Times* they're sure to see it. The money article is awfully candid, and never attempts any delicate concealment like the reports in a police-court. The fact is, Miss Bramleigh, the financial people always end like Cremorne, with a 'grand transparency' that displays the whole company!"

"I'm so sorry for the L'Estranges," said Ellen, feelingly.

"And why not sorry for Tom Cutbill, miss? Why have no compassion for that gifted creature and generous mortal, whose worst fault was that he believed in a lord?"

"Mr. Cutbill is so sure to sympathize with himself and his own griefs that he has



no need of me; and then he looks so like one that would have recuperative powers."

"There you've hit it," cried he, enthusiastically. "That's it! that's what makes Tom Cutbill the man he is—*flectes non franges*. I hope I have it right; but I mean you may smooth him down, but you can't smash him; and it's to tell the noble Viscount as much I'm now on my way to Italy. I'll say to the distinguished peer, 'I'm only a pawn on the chess-board; but look to it, my lord, or I'll give check to the king!' Won't he understand me? ay, in a second too!"

"I trust something can be done for poor L'Estrange," said Augustus. "It was his sister's fortune; and the whole of it, too."

"Leave that to me, then. I'll make better terms for him than he'll get by the assignee under the court. Bless your heart, Bramleigh, if it wasn't for a little 'extramural equity,' as one might call it, it would go very hard with the widow and the orphan in this world; but we, coarse-minded fellows, as I've no doubt you'd call us, we do kinder things in our own way than commissioners under the act."

"Can you recover the money for them?" asked Augustus, earnestly; "can you do that?"

"Not legally—not a chance of it; but I think I'll make a noble lord of our acquaintance disgorge something handsome. I don't mean to press any claim of my own. If he behaves politely, and asks me to dine, and treats me like a gentleman, I'll not be over-hard with him. I like the—not the conveniences—that's not the word, but the—"

"'Conveniences,' perhaps," interposed Ellen.

"That's it—the conveniences. I like the attentions that seem to say, 'T. C. isn't to be kept in a tunnel or a cutting; but is good company at table, with long-necked bottles beside him. T. C. can be talked to about the world; about pale sherry, and pretty women, and the delights of Homburg, and the odds on the Derby; he's as much at home at Belgravia as on an embankment.'"

"I suspect there will be few to dispute that," said Augustus, solemnly.

"Not when they knows it, Bramleigh; 'not when they knows it,' as the cabbies say. The thing is to make them know it, to make them feel it. There's a rough-and-ready way of putting all men like myself, who take liberties with the letter H, down as snobs; but you see there's snobs and snobs. There's snobs that are only snobs; there's snobs that have nothing distinctive about them but their snobbery, and there's

snobs so well up in life, so shrewd, such downright keen men of the world, that their snobbery is only an accident, like a splash from a passing 'bus, and, in fact, their snobbery puts a sort of accent on their acuteness, just like a trademark, and tells you it was town-made—no bad thing, Bramleigh, when that town calls itself London!"

If Augustus vouchsafed little approval of this speech, Ellen smiled an apparent concurrence, while in reality it was the man's politeness and assurance that amused her.

"You ain't as jolly as you used to be; how is that?" said Cutbill, shaking Bramleigh jocosely by the arm. "I suspect you are disposed, like Jeremiah, to a melancholy line of life?"

"I was not aware, sir, that my spirits could be matter of remark," said Augustus, haughtily.

"And why not? You're no highness, royal or serene, that one is obliged to accept any humor you may be in, as the right thing. You are one of us, I take it."

"A very proud distinction," said he gravely.

"Well, if it's nothing to crow, it's nothing to cry for! If the world had nothing but top-sawyers, Bramleigh, there would be precious little work done. Is that clock of yours, yonder, right—is it so late as that?"

"I believe so," said Augustus, looking at his watch. "I want exactly ten minutes to four."

"And the train starts at four precisely. That's so like me. I've lost my train, all for the sake of paying a visit to people who wished me at the North Pole for my politeness."

"Oh, Mr. Cutbill," said Ellen, deprecatingly.

"I hope, Mr. Cutbill, we are fully sensible of the courtesy that suggested your call."

"And I'm fully sensible that you and Miss Ellen have been on thorns for the last half-hour, each muttering to himself, 'What will he say next?' or worse than that, 'When will he go?'"

"I protest, sir, you are alike unjust to yourself and to us. We are so thoroughly satisfied that you never intended to hurt us, that, if incidentally touched, we take it as a mere accident."

"That is quite the case, Mr. Cutbill," broke in Nelly; "and we know, besides, that, if you had anything harsh or severe to say to us, it is not likely you'd take such a time as this to say it."

"You do me proud, ma'am," said Cut-

bill, who was not quite sure whether he was complimented or reprimanded.

"Do, please, Augustus; I beg of you do," whispered Nelly in her brother's ear.

"You've already missed your train for us, Mr. Cutbill," said Augustus; "will you add another sacrifice and come and eat a very humble dinner with us at six o'clock?"

"Will I? I rayther think I will," cried he, joyfully. "Now that the crisis is over, I may as well tell you I've been angling for that invitation for the last half-hour, saying every minute to myself, 'Now it's coming, or, 'No, it ain't.' Twice you were on the brink of it, Bramleigh, and you drifted away again, and at last I began to think I'd be driven to my lonely cutlet at the 'Leopold's Arms.' You said six; so I'll just finish a couple of letters for the post, and be here sharp. Good-bye. Many thanks for the invite, though it was pretty long a-coming." And with this he waved an adieu and departed.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### AN EVENING WITH CUTBILL.

WHEN Nelly retired after dinner on that day, leaving Mr. Cutbill to the enjoyment of his wine—an indulgence she well knew he would not willingly forego—that worthy individual drew one chair to his side to support his arm, and resting his legs on another, exclaimed, "Now, this is what I call cosy. There's a pleasant light, a nice bit of view out of that window, and as good a bottle of St. Julien as a man may desire."

"I wish I could offer you something better," began Augustus, but Cutbill stopped him at once, saying:—

"Taking the time of the year into account, there's nothing better! It's not the season for a Burgundy or even a full-bodied claret. Shall I tell you, Bramleigh, that you gave me a better dinner to-day than I got at your great house, the Bishop's Folly?"

"We were very vain of our cook, notwithstanding, in those days," said Augustus, smiling.

"So you might. I suppose he was as good as money could buy—and you had plenty of money. But your dinners were grand, cumbrous, never-ending feeds, that with all the care a man might bestow on the bill o' fare, he was sure to eat too much of venison curry after he had taken mutton twice, and pheasant following after fat

chickens. I always thought your big dinners were upside down; if one could have had the tail-end first they'd have been excellent. Somehow, I fancy it was only your brother Temple took an interest in these things at your house. Where is he now?"

"He is at Rome with my brother-in-law."

"That's exactly the company he ought to keep. A lord purifies the air for him, and I don't think his constitution could stand without one."

"My brother has seen a good deal of the world, and, I think, understands it tolerably well," said Bramleigh, meaning so much of rebuke to the other's impertinence as he could force himself to bestow on a guest.

"He knows as much about life as a dog knows about decimals. He knows the ead's life of fetch and carry; how to bow himself into a room and out again; when to smile, and when to snigger; how to look profound when a great man talks, and a mild despair when he is silent; but that ain't life, Bramleigh, any more than these strawberries are grapes from Fontainebleau!"

"You occasionally forget, Mr. Cutbill, that a man's brother is not exactly the public."

"Perhaps I do. I only had one brother, and a greater blackguard never existed; and the *Times* took care to remind me of the fact every year till he was transported; but no one ever saw me lese temper about it."

"I can admire, if I cannot envy, your philosophy."

"It's not philosophy at all; it's just common sense, learned in the only school for that commodity in Europe—the City of London. We don't make Latin verses as well as you at Eton or Rugby, but we begin life somewhat 'cuter than you, notwithstanding. If we speculate on events, it is not like theoretical politicians, but like practical people, who know that Cabinet Councils decide the funds, and the funds make fortunes. You and the men like you advocated a free Greece and a united Italy for sake of fine traditions. We don't care a rush about Homer or Dante, but we want to sell pig-iron and printed calicoes. Do you see the difference now?"

"If I do, it's with no shame for the part you assign us."

"That's as it may be. There may be up there amongst the stars a planet where your ideas would be the right thing. Maybe Doctor Cumming knows of such a place.



I can only say Tom Cutbill doesn't, nor don't want to."

For a while neither spoke a word; the conversation had taken a half irritable tone, and it was not easy to say how it was to be turned into a pleasanter channel.

"Any news of Jack?" asked Cutbill, suddenly.

"Nothing since he sailed."

Another and a longer pause ensued, and it was evident neither knew how to break the silence.

"These ain't bad cigars," said Cutbill, knocking the ash off his cheroot with his finger. "You get them here?"

"Yes; they are very cheap."

"Thirty or thirty-five centimes?"

"Ten!"

"Well, it isn't dear! Ten centimes is a penny—a trifle less than a penny. And now, Bramleigh, will you think it a great liberty of me, if I ask you a question—a sort of personal question?"

"That will pretty much depend upon the question, Mr. Cutbill. There are matters, I must confess, I would rather not be questioned on."

"Well, I suppose I must take my chance for that! If you are disposed to bristle up, and play porcupine because I want to approach you, it can't be helped—better men than Tom Cutbill have paid for looking into a wasp's nest. It's no idle curiosity prompts my inquiry, though I won't deny there is a spice of curiosity urging me on at this moment. Am I free to go on, eh?"

"I must leave you to your own discretion, sir."

"The devil a worse guide ever you'd leave me to. It is about as humble a member of the Cutbill family as I'm acquainted with. So that, without reference to my discretion at all, here's what I want. I want to know how it is that you've left a princely house, with plenty of servants and all the luxuries of life, to come and live in a shabby corner of an obscure town and smoke penny cigars? There's the riddle I want you to solve for me."

For some seconds Bramleigh's confusion and displeasure seemed to master him completely, making all reply impossible; but at last he regained a degree of calm, and, with a voice slightly agitated, said: "I am sorry to baulk your very natural curiosity, Mr. Cutbill, but the matter on which you seek to be informed is one strictly personal and private."

"That's exactly why I'm pushing for the explanation," resumed the other, with the coolest imaginable manner. "If it was

a public event I'd have no need to ask to be enlightened."

Bramleigh winced under this rejoinder, and a slight contortion of the face showed what his self-control was costing him.

Cutbill, however, went on: "When they told me, at the Gresham, that there was a man setting up a claim to your property, and that you declared you'd not live in the house, nor draw a shilling from the estate, till you were well assured it was your own beyond dispute, my answer was: 'No son of old Montagu Bramleigh ever said that. Whatever you may say of that family, they're no fools.'"

"And is it with fools you would class the man who reasoned in this fashion?" said Augustus, who tried to smile and seem indifferent as he spoke.

"First of all, it's not reasoning at all; the man who began to doubt whether he had a valid right to what he possessed might doubt whether he had a right to his own name—whether his wife was his own, and what not. Don't you see where all this would lead to? If I have to report whether a new line is safe and fit to be opened for public traffic, I don't sink shafts down to see if some hundred fathoms below there might be an extinct volcano, or a stratum of unsound pudding-stone. I only want to know that the rails will carry so many tons of merchandise. Do you see my point?—do you take me, Bramleigh?"

"Mr. Cutbill," said Augustus, slowly, "on matters such as these you have just alluded to there is no man's opinion I should prefer to yours, but there are other questions on which I would rather rely upon my own judgment. May I beg, therefore, that we should turn to some other topic."

"It's true, then—the report was well founded?" cried Cutbill, staring in wild astonishment at the other's face.

"And if it were, sir," said Bramleigh, haughtily, "what then?"

"What then? Simply that you'd be the—no matter what. Your father was very angry with me one night, because I said something of the same kind to him."

And as he spoke he pushed his glass impatiently from him, and looked ineffably annoyed and disgusted.

"Will you not take more wine, Mr. Cutbill?" said Augustus, blandly, and without the faintest sign of irritation.

"No; not a drop. I'm sorry I've taken so much. I began by filling my glass whenever I saw the decanter near me—thinking, like a confounded fool as I was, we were in for a quiet, confidential talk,

and knowing that I was just the sort of fellow a man of your own stamp needs and requires ; a fellow who does nothing from the claims of a class—do you understand ?—nothing because he mixes with a certain set and dines at a certain club ; but acts independent of all extraneous pressure—a bit of masonry, Bramleigh, that wants no buttress. Can you follow me, eh ?”

“ I believe I can appreciate the strength of such a character as you describe.”

“ No, you can't, not a bit of it. Some flighty fool that would tell you what a fine creature you were, how great-hearted—that's the cant, great-hearted!—would have far more of your esteem and admiration than Tom Cutbill, with his keen knowledge of life and his thorough insight into men and manners.”

“ You are unjust to each of us,” said Bramleigh, quietly.

“ Well, let us have done with it. I'll go and ask Miss Ellen for a cup of tea, and then I'll take my leave. I'm sure I wish I'd never have come here. It's enough to provoke a better temper than mine. And now let me just ask you, out of mere curiosity—for of course I musn't presume to feel more—but just out of curiosity let me ask you, do you know an art or an industry, a trade or a calling, that would bring you in fifty pounds a year ? Do you see your way to earning the rent of a lodging even as modest as this ?”

“ That is exactly one of the points on which your advice would be very valuable to me, Mr. Cutbill.”

“ Nothing of the kind. I could no more tell a man of your stamp how to gain his livelihood than I could make a tunnel with a corkscrew. I know your theory well enough. I've heard it announced a thousand times and more. Every fellow with a silk lining to his coat, and a taste for fancy jewelry, imagines he has only to go to Australia to make a fortune ; that when he has done with Bond Street he can take to the bush. Isn't that it, Bramleigh, eh ? You fancy you're up to roughing it and hard work because you have walked four hours through the stubble after the partridges, or sat a 'sharp thing' across country in a red coat ! Heaven help you ! It isn't with five courses and finger-glasses a man finishes his day at Warra-Warra.”

“ I assure you, Mr. Cutbill, as regards my own case, I neither take a high estimate of my own capacity nor a low one of the difficulty of earning a living.”

“ Humility never paid a butcher's bill, any more than conceit !” retorted the inexorable Cutbill, who seemed bent on op-

posing everything. Have you thought of nothing you could do ? for, if you're utterly incapable, there's nothing for you but the public service.”

“ Perhaps that is the career would best suit me,” said Bramleigh, smiling ; “ and I have already written to bespeak the kind influence of an old friend of my father's on my behalf.”

“ Who is he ?”

“ Sir Francis Deighton.”

“ The greatest humbug in the Government ! He trades on being the most popular man of his day, because he never refused anything to anybody—so far as a promise went ; but it's well known that he never gave anything out of his own connections. Don't depend on Sir Francis, Bramleigh, whatever you do.”

“ That is sorry comfort you give me.”

“ Don't you know any women ?”

“ Women—women ? I know several.”

“ I mean women of fashion. Those meddling women that are always dabbling in politics and the Stock Exchange—very deep where you think they know nothing, and perfectly ignorant about what they pretend to know best. They've two-thirds of the patronage of every government in England : you may laugh, but it's true.”

“ Come, Mr. Cutbill, if you'll not take more wine we'll join my sister,” said Bramleigh, with a faint smile.

“ Get them to make you a Commissioner—it doesn't matter of what—Woods and Forests—Bankruptcy—Lunacy—anything ; it's always two thousand a year, and little to do for it. And if you can't be a Commissioner be an Inspector, and then you have your traveling expenses ;” and Cutbill winked knowingly as he spoke, and sauntered away to the drawing-room.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### THE APPOINTMENT.

“ WHAT will Mr. Cutbill say now ?” cried Ellen, as she stood leaning on her brother's shoulder while he read a letter marked “ On Her Majesty's Service,” and sealed with a prodigious extravagance of wax. It ran thus :—

“ Downing Street, Sept. 10th.

“ Sir :

“ I have received instructions from Sir Francis Deighton, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, to acknowledge your letter of the 9th instant ;



and while expressing his regret that he has not at this moment any post in his department which he could offer for your acceptance, to state that Her Majesty's Secretary for Foreign Affairs will consent to appoint you consul at Cattaro, full details of which post, duties, salary, etc., will be communicated to you in the official despatch from the Foreign Office.

"Sir Francis Deighton is most happy to have been the means through which the son of an old friend has been introduced into the service of the Crown.

"I have the honor to be, sir,

"Your obedient Servant,

"GREY EGERTON D'EYNCOURT,  
"Private Secretary."

"What will he say now, Gusty?" said she, triumphantly.

"He will probably say, 'What's it worth?' Nelly. 'How much is the income?'"

"I suppose he will. I take it he will measure a friend's good feeling towards us by the scale of an official salary, as if two or three hundred a year more or less could affect the gratitude we must feel towards a real patron."

A slight twinge of pain seemed to move Bramleigh's mouth; but he grew calm in a moment, and merely said, "We must wait till we hear more."

"But your mind is at ease, Gusty? Tell me that your anxieties are all allayed?" cried she, eagerly.

"Yes; in so far that I have got something—that I have not met a cold refusal."

"Oh, don't take it that way," broke she in, looking at him with a half-reproachful expression. "Do not, I beseech you, let Mr. Cutbill's spirit influence you. Be hopeful and trustful, as you always were."

"I'll try," said he, passing his arm round her, and smiling affectionately at her.

"I hope he has gone, Gusty. I do hope we shall not see him again. He is so terribly hard in his judgments, so merciless in the way he sentences people who merely think differently from himself. After hearing him talk for an hour or so, I always go away with the thought that, if the world be only half as bad as he says it is, it's little worth living in."

"Well, he will go to-morrow, or Thursday at farthest; and I won't pretend I shall regret him. He is occasionally too candid."

"His candor is simply rudeness; frankness is very well for a friend, but he was never in the position to use this freedom. Only think of what he said to me yesterday: he said that as it was not unlikely I should

have to turn governess or companion, the first thing I should do would be to change my name. 'They,' he remarked—but I don't well know whom he exactly meant—'they don't like broken-down gentlefolk. They suspect them of this, that, and the other;' and he suggested that I should call myself Miss Cutbill. Did you ever hear impertinence equal to that?"

"But it may have been kindly intentioned, Nelly. I have no doubt he meant to do a good-natured thing."

"Save me from good-nature that is not allied with good manners, then," said she, growing crimson as she spoke.

"I have not escaped scot-free, I assure you," said he, smiling; "but it seems to me a man really never knows what the world thinks of him till he has gone through the ordeal of broken fortune. By the way, where is Cattaro? the name sounds Italian."

"I assumed it to be in Italy somewhere, but I can't tell you why."

Bramleigh took down his atlas, and pored patiently over Italy and her outlying islands for a long time, but in vain. Nelly, too, aided him in his search, but to no purpose. While they were still bending over the map, Cutbill entered with a large despatch-shaped letter in his hand.

"The Queen's messenger has just handed me that for you, Bramleigh. I hope it's good news."

Bramleigh opened and read:

"Foreign Office.

"SIR:

"I have had much pleasure in submitting your name to Her Majesty for the appointment of consul at Cattaro, where your salary will be two hundred pounds a year, and twenty pounds for office expenses. You will repair to your post without unnecessary delay, and report your arrival to this department.

"I am, etc., etc."

"BIDDLESWORTH."

"Two hundred a year! Fifty less than we gave our cook!" said Bramleigh, with a faint smile.

"It is an insult, an outrage," said Nelly, whose face and neck glowed till they appeared crimson. "I hope, Gusty, you'll have the firmness to reject such an offer."

"What does Mr Cutbill say?" asked he, turning towards him.

"Mr. Cutbill says that if you're bent on playing Don Quixote, and won't go back and enjoy what's your own, like a sensible man, this pittance—it ain't more—is better

than trying to eke out life by your little talents."

Nelly turned her large eyes, open to the widest, upon him, as he spoke, with an expression so palpably that of rebuke for his freedom, that he replied to her stare by saying:—

"Of course I am very free and easy. More than that, I'm downright rude. That's what you mean—a vulgar dog! but don't you see that's what diminished fortune must bring you to? You'll have to live with vulgar dogs. It's not only coarse cookery, but coarse company a man comes to. Ay, and there are people will tell you that both are useful—as alteratives, as the doctors call them."

It was a happy accident that made him lengthen out the third syllable of the word, which amused Nelly so much that she laughed outright.

"Can you tell us where is Cattaro, Mr. Cutbill?" asked Bramleigh, eager that the other should not notice his sister's laughter.

"I haven't the faintest notion; but Bollard, the messenger, is eating his luncheon at the station; I'll run down and ask him." And without waiting for a reply, he seized his hat and hurried away.

"One must own he is good-natured," said Nelly, "but he does make us pay somewhat smartly for it. His wholesome truths are occasionally hard to swallow."

"As he told us, Nelly, we must accept these things as part of our changed condition. Poverty wouldn't be such a hard thing to bear if it only meant common food and coarse clothing; but it implies scores of things that are far less endurable."

While they thus talked, Cutbill had hurried down to the station, and just caught the messenger as he was taking his seat in the train. Two others—one bound for Russia and one for Greece—were already seated in the compartment, smoking their cigars with an air of quiet indolence, like men making a trip by a river steamer.

"I say, Bollard," cried Cutbill, "where is Cattaro?"

"Don't know; is he a tenor?"

"It's a place; a consulate somewhere or other."

"Never heard of it. Have you, Digby?"

"It sounds like Calabria, or farther south."

"I know it," said the third man. "It's a vile hole; it's on the eastern shore of the Adriatic. I was wrecked there once in an Austrian Lloyd's steamer, and caught a tertian fever before I could get away. There was a fellow there, a vice-consul they

called him: he was dressed in sheepskins, and, I believe, lived by wrecking. He stole my watch, and would have carried away my portmanteau, but I was waiting for him with my revolver, and winged him."

"Did nothing come of it?" asked another.

"They pensioned him, I think. I'm not sure; but I think they gave him twenty pounds a year. I know old Kepsley stopped eight pounds out of my salary for a wooden leg for the rascal. There's the whistle; take care, sir, you'll come to grief if you hang on."

Cutbill attended to the admonition, and bidding the travelers good-bye, returned slowly to the Bramleighs' lodgings, pondering over all he had heard, and canvassing with himself how much of his unpleasant tidings he would venture to relate.

"Where's your map?" said he, entering. "I suspect I can make out the place now. Show me the Adriatic. Zara—Lissa—what a number of islands! Here you are, here's Bocca di Cattaro—next door to the Turks, by Jove."

"My dear Gusty, don't think of this, I beseech you," said Nelly, whispering. "It is enough to see where it is, to know it must be utter barbarism."

"I won't say it looks inviting," said Cutbill, as he bent over the map; "and the messenger hadn't much to say in its praise, either."

"Probably not; but remember what you told me a while ago, Mr. Cutbill, that even this was better than depending on my little talents."

"He holds little talents in light esteem, then," said Ellen, tartly.

"That's exactly what I do," rejoined Cutbill, quickly. "As long as you are rich enough to be courted for your wealth, your little talents will find plenty of admirers; but as to earning your bread by them, you might as well try to go round the Cape in an ontrigger. Take it by all means—take it, if it is only to teach you what it is to earn your own dinner."

"And is my sister to face such a life as this?"

"Your sister has courage for everything—but leaving you," said she, throwing her arm on his shoulder.

"I must be off. I have only half an hour left to pack my portmanteau and be at the station. One word with you alone, Bramleigh," said he, in a low tone; and Augustus walked at once into the adjoining room.

"You want some of these, I'm certain,"



said Cutbill, as he drew forth a roll of crushed and crumpled bank-notes, and pressed them into Bramleigh's hand. "You'll pay them back at your own time. Don't look so stiff, man. It's only a loan."

"I assure you, if I look stiff, it's not what I feel. I'm overwhelmed by your good-nature; but, believe me, I'm in no want of money."

"Nobody ever is; but it's useful all the same. Take them to oblige me; take them just to show you're not such a swell as won't accept even the smallest service from a fellow like me—do, now, do!" And he looked so pleadingly that it was not easy to refuse him.

"I'm very proud to think I have won such friendship; but I give you my word I have ample means for all that I shall need to do; and if I should not, I'll ask you to help me."

"Good-bye, then. Good-bye, Miss Ellen," cried he, aloud. "It's not *my* fault that I'm not a favorite with you." And, thus saying, he snatched his hat, and was down the stairs and out of the house before Bramleigh could utter a word.

"What a kind-hearted fellow it is!" said he, as he joined his sister. "I must tell you what he called me aside for."

She listened quietly while he recounted what had just occurred, and then said:—

"The Gospel tells us it's hard for rich men to get to heaven; but it's scarcely less hard for them to see what there is good here below! So long as we were well off I could see nothing to like in that man."

"That was my own thought a few minutes back. So you see, Nelly, we are not only traveling the same road, but gaining the same experiences."

"Sedley says in this letter here," said Augustus the next morning, as he entered the breakfast-room, "that Pracontal's lawyer is perfectly satisfied with the honesty of our intentions, and we shall go to trial in the November term on the ejectment case. It will raise the whole question, and the law shall decide between us."

"And what becomes of that—that arrangement?" said she, hesitatingly, "by which M. Pracontal consented to withdraw his claim?"

"It was made against my consent, and I have refused to adhere to it. I have told Sedley so, and told him that I shall hold him responsible to the amount disbursed."

"But, dear Gusty, remember how much to your advantage that settlement would have been."

"I only remember the shame I felt on

hearing of it, and my sorrow that Sedley should have thought my acceptance of it possible."

"But how has M. Pracontal taken this money and gone on with his suit? Surely, both courses are not open to him?"

"I can tell you nothing about M. Pracontal. I only know that he, as well as myself, would seem to be strangely served by our respective lawyers, who assume to deal for us, whether we will or not."

"I still cling to the wish that the matter had been left to Mr. Sedley."

"You must not say so, Nelly. You must never tell me you would wish I had been a party to my own dishonor. Either Pracontal or I own this estate. No compromise could be possible without a stain to each of us, and, for my own part, I will neither resist a just claim nor give way to an unfair demand. Let us talk of this no more."

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

WITH LORD CULDUFF.

IN a room of a Roman palace large enough to be a church, but furnished with all the luxury of an English drawing-room, stood Lord Culduff, with his back to an ample fire, smoking a cigarette; a small table beside him supported a very diminutive coffee-service of chased silver, and in a deep-cushioned chair at the opposite side of the fireplace lay a toy terrier, asleep.

There were two fireplaces in the spacious chamber, and at a writing-table drawn close to the second of these sat Temple Bramleigh writing. His pen as it ran rapidly along was the only sound in the perfect stillness, till Lord Culduff, throwing the end of his cigarette away, said, "It is not easy to imagine so great an idiot as your worthy brother Augustus."

"A little selfishness would certainly not disimprove him," said Temple, coldly.

"Say sense, common-sense, sir; a very little of that humble ingredient that keeps a man from walking into a well."

"I think you judge him hardly."

"Judge him hardly! Why, sir, what judgment can equal the man's own condemnation of himself? He has some doubts—some very grave doubts—about his right to his estate, and straightway he goes and throws it into a law-court. He prefers, in fact, that his inheritance should be eaten up by lawyers than quietly enjoyed by his own family. Such men are usually provided with lodgings at Hanwell; their

friends hide their razors, and don't trust them with toothpicks."

"Oh, this is too much: he may take an extreme view of what his duty is in this matter, but he's certainly no more mad than I am."

"I repeat, sir, that the man who takes conscience for his guide in the very complicated concerns of life is unfit to manage his affairs. Conscience is a constitutional peculiarity—nothing more. To attempt to subject the business of life to conscience would be about as absurd as to regulate the funds by the state of the barometer."

"I'll not defend what he is doing—I'm as sorry for it as any one; I only protest against his being thought a fool."

"What do you say, then, to this last step of his, if it be indeed true that he has accepted this post?"

"I'm afraid it is; my sister Ellen says they are on their way to Cattaro."

"I declare that I regard it as an outrage. I can give it no other name. It is an outrage. What, sir, am I, who have reached the highest rank of my career, or something very close to it; who have obtained my Grand Cross; who stand, as I feel I do, second to none in the public service—am I to have my brother-in-law, my wife's brother, gazetted to a post I might have flung to my valet!"

"There I admit he was wrong."

"That is to say, sir, that you feel the personal injury his indiscreet conduct has inflicted. You see your own ruin in his rashness."

"I can't suppose it will go that far."

"And why not, pray? When a Minister or Secretary of State dares to offend me—for it is leveled at *me*—by appointing my brother to such an office, he says as plainly as words can speak, 'Your sun is set; your influence is gone. We place you below the salt to-day, that to-morrow we may put you outside the door.' *You* cannot be supposed to know these things, but *I* know them. Shall I give you a counsel, sir?"

"Any advice from you, my lord, is always acceptable."

"Give up the line. Retire; be a game-keeper, a billiard-marker; turn steward of a steamer, or correspond for one of the penny papers, but don't attempt to serve a country that pays its gentlemen like toll-keepers."

Temple seemed to regard this little outburst as such an ordinary event that he dipped his pen into the ink-bottle, and was about to resume writing, when Lord Culduff said, in a sharp, peevish tone:—

"I trust your brother and sister do not mean to come to Rome?"

"I believe they do, my lord. I think they have promised to pay the L'Estranges a visit at Albano."

"My lady must write at once and prevent it. This cannot possibly be permitted. Where are they now?"

"At Como. This last letter was dated from the inn at that place."

Lord Culduff rang the bell, and directed the servant to ask if her ladyship had gone out.

The servant returned to say that her ladyship was going to dress, but would see his lordship on her way downstairs.

"Whose card is this? Where did this come from?" asked Lord Culduff, as he petulantly turned it round and round, trying to read the name.

"Oh, that's Mr. Cutbill. He called twice yesterday. I can't imagine what has brought him to Rome."

"Perhaps I might hazard a guess," said Lord Culduff, with a grim smile. "But I'll not see him. You'll say, Bramleigh, that I am very much engaged; that I have a press of most important business; that the Cardinal Secretary is always here. Say anything, in short, that will mean, No, Cutbill!"

"He's below at this moment."

"Then get rid of him! My dear fellow, the A B C of your craft is to dismiss the importunate. Go, and send him off!"

Lord Culduff turned to caress his whiskers as the other left the room; and having gracefully disposed a very youthful curl of his wig upon his forehead, was smiling a pleasant recognition of himself in the glass, when voices in a louder tone than were wont to be heard in such sacred precincts startled him. He listened, and suddenly the door was opened rudely, and Mr. Cutbill entered, Temple Bramleigh falling back as the other came forward, and closing the door behind.

"So, my lord, I was to be told you'd not see me, eh?" said Cutbill, his face slightly flushed by a late altercation.

"I trusted, sir, when my private secretary had told you I was engaged, that I might have counted upon not being broken in upon."

"There you were wrong, then," said Cutbill, who divested himself of an overcoat, threw it on the back of a chair, and came forward towards the fire. "Quite wrong. A man doesn't come a thousand and odd miles to be 'not-at-homed' at the end of it."

"Which means, sir, that I am positively



reduced to the necessity of receiving you, whether I will or not?"

"Something near that, but not exactly. You see, my lord, that when to my application to your lawyer in town I received for answer the invariable rejoinder, 'It is only my lord himself can reply to this; his lordship alone knows what this, that, or t'other refers to,' I knew pretty well the intention was to choke me off. It was saying to me, Is it worth a journey to Rome to ask this question? and my reply to myself was, 'Yes, Tom Cutbill, go to Rome by all means.' And here I am."

"So I perceive, sir," said the other dryly and gravely.

"Now, my lord, there are two ways of transacting business. One may do the thing pleasantly, with a disposition to make matters easy and comfortable; or one may approach everything with a determination to screw one's last farthing out of it; to squeeze the lemon to the last drop. Which of these is it your pleasure we should choose?"

"I must endeavor to imitate, though I cannot rival, your frankness, sir; and therefore I would say, let us have that mode in which we shall see least of each other."

"All right. I am completely in your lordship's hands. You had your choice, and I don't dispute it. There, then, is my account. It's a trifle under fourteen hundred pounds. Your lordship's generosity will make it the fourteen, I've no doubt. All the secret-service part—that trip to town and the dinner at Greenwich—I've left blank. Fill it up as your conscience suggests. The Irish expenses are also low, as I lived a good deal at Bishop's Folly. I also make no charge for keeping you out of *Punch*. It wasn't easy, all the same, for the fellows had you, wig, waistcoat and all. In fact, my lord, it's a friendly document, though your present disposition doesn't exactly seem to respond to that line of action; but Tom Cutbill is a forgiving soul. Your lordship will look over this paper, then; and in a couple of days—no hurry, you know, for I have lots to see here—in a couple of days I'll drop in, and talk the thing over with you; for you see there are two or three points—about the way you behaved to your brother-in-law, and such like—that I'd like to chat a little with you about."

As Lord Culduff listened his face grew redder and redder, and his fingers played with the back of the chair on which he leaned with a quick, convulsive motion; and as the other went on he drew from time to time long, deep inspirations, as if invoking

patience to carry him through the infliction. At last he said, in a half-faint voice, "Have you done, sir—is it over?"

"Well, pretty nigh. I'd like to have asked you about my lady. I know she had a temper of her own before you married her, and I'm rather curious to hear how you hit it off together. Does she give in—eh? Has the high and mighty dodge subdued her? I thought it would."

"Do me the great favor, sir, to ring that bell and to leave me. I am not very well," said Culduff, gasping for breath.

"I see that. I see you've got the blood to your head. When a man comes to your time of life, he must mind what he eats, and stick to pint bottles, too. That's true as the Bible—pint bottles and plenty of seltzer when you're amongst the seventies."

And with this aphorism he drew on his coat, buttoned it leisurely to the collar, and, with a familiar nod, left the room.

"Giacomo," said Lord Culduff, "that man is not to be admitted again on any pretext. Tell the porter his place shall pay for it, if he passes the grille."

Giacomo bowed silent acquiescence, and Lord Culduff lay back on a sofa and said, "Tell Dr. Pritchard to come here; tell my lady, tell Mr. Temple, I feel very ill," and so saying he closed his eyes and seemed overcome.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

AT ALBANO.

"WHO do you think asks himself to dine with us to-day, Julia?" said L'Estrange to his sister on the day of the scene recorded in our last chapter.

"I cannot guess; but I am prepared to say I'll be glad to see any one."

"It is very dull for you, indeed," said he, compassionately.

"No, George, not that. Not half so bad for *me* as for *you*; but somehow I felt it would be a relief to have a guest, who would oblige us to drop our grumblings and exert ourselves to talk of something besides our personal worries. Now, who is it?"

"What would you say to Mr. Cutbill?"

"Do you mean the engineering man we saw at Castello?"

"The same."

"Oh, dear! I retract. I recall my last speech, and avow, in all humility, I was wrong. All I remember of that man—not much, certainly—but all I do remember of him was that he was odious."

"He was amusing, in his way."

"Probably—but I detested his 'way.'"

"The Bramleighs said he was good-natured."

"With all my heart. Give him all the excellent qualities you like; but he will still remain insufferably ill-bred and coarse-minded. Why did you ask him, George?"

"I didn't; he asked himself. Here's his note: 'Dear L'Estrange'—familiar enough—'Dear L'Estrange—I have just arrived here, and want to have some talk with you. I mean, therefore, to ask you to let me take a bit of dinner with you to-day. I shall be out by five or half-past. Don't make a stranger of me, but give me the cold mutton or whatever it is.—Yours, TOM CUTBILL.'"

"What a type of the writer!"

"Well; but what can we get for dinner, Ju?"

"The cold mutton, I think. I'm sure the gentleman's estimate of his value as a guest cannot be too low."

"No, Julia, let us treat him to our best. He means kindly by coming out here to see us."

"I'd have taken the will for the deed with more of gratitude. Oh, George," cried she, with fervor, "why will you be always so much obliged to the man who condescends to eat your salt? This Mr. Cutbill will be your patron for the next twenty-four hours."

"Certainly the man who dines with us cannot come for the excellence of our fare."

"That is a very ingenious bit of self-flattery; but don't trust it, George. Men eat bad dinners continually; and there is a sort of condescension in eating them at a friend's house, which is often mistaken for good-nature; and the fun of it is that the men who do these things are very vain of the act."

L'Estrange gave a little shrug of his shoulders. It was his usual reply to those subtleties which his sister was so fond of, and that he was never very sure whether they were meant to puzzle or to persuade him.

"So, then, he is to be an honored guest, George, eh?"

He smiled a general assent, and she went on: "And we are to treat him to that wonderful Rhine wine Sir Marcus sent you to cure your ague. And the very thought of drinking anything so costly actually brought on a shivering attack."

"Have we any of it left?"

"Two bottles, if those uncouth little flattened flasks can be called bottles. And

since you are resolved he is to be entertained like a 'Prince Russe,' I'll actually treat him to a dish of macaroni of my own invention. You remember, George, Mrs. Monkton was going to withdraw her subscription from the church when she ate of it, and remained a firm Protestant."

"Julia, Julia!" said he, in a half-reproving tone.

"I am simply citing an historical fact, but you'll provoke me to say much worse if you stand there with that censorial face. As if I didn't know how wrong it was to speak lightly of a lady who subscribes two hundred francs a year!"

"There are very few who do so," said he, with a sigh.

"My poor brother," said she, caressingly, "it is a very hard case to be so poor, and we with such refined tastes and such really nice instincts; we, who would like a pretty house, and a pretty garden, and a pretty little equipage, and who would give pretty little dinners, with the very neatest cut glass and china, and be, all the time, so cultivated and so simple, so elevated in tone and so humble in spirit! There, go away, and look after some fruit—do something, and don't stand there provoking me to talk nonsense. That solemn look made me ten times more silly than I ever intended to be."

"I'm sure," said L'Estrange, thoughtfully, "he has something to tell me of the coal-mine."

"Ah, if I thought that, George—if I thought he brought us tidings of a great 'dividend'—isn't that the name for the thing the people always share amongst themselves out of somebody else's money? So I have shocked you, at last, into running away; and now for the cares of the household."

Now, though she liked to quiz her brother about his love of hospitality and the almost reckless way in which he would spend money to entertain a guest, it was one of her especial delights to play hostess, and receive guests with whatever display their narrow fortune permitted. Nor did she spare any pains she could bestow in preparing to welcome Mr. Cutbill, and her day was busily passed between the kitchen, the garden, and the drawing-room, ordering, aiding, and devising with a zeal and activity that one might have supposed could only have been evoked in the service of a much-honored guest.

"Look at my table, George," said she, "before you go to dress for dinner, and say if you ever saw anything more tasteful. There's a bouquet for you; and see how



gracefully I have twined the grape-leaves round these flasks. You'll fancy yourself Horace entertaining Mæcenas. Mr. Cutbill is certainly not very like him—but no matter. Nor is our little Monte Oliveto exactly Falernian."

"It is quite beautiful, Ju, all of it," said he, drawing her towards him and kissing her; but there was a touch of sadness in his voice, as in his look, to which she replied with a merry laugh, and said:—

"Say it out boldly, George, do; say frankly what a sin and a shame it is that such a dear good girl should have to strain her wits in this hand-to-hand fight with poverty, and not be embellishing some splendid station with her charming talents, and such like."

"I was thinking something not very far from it," said he, smiling.

"Of course you were; but you never thought, perhaps, how soon ennui and lassitude might have taken the place of all my present energy. I want to please you now, George, since without me you would be desolate; but if we were rich, you'd not depend on me, and I'd have been very dispirited and very sad. There now, that's quite enough of sentimentalizing for once. I'm off to dress. Do you know," said she, as she mounted the stairs, "I have serious thoughts of captivating Mr. Cutbill?"

"Oh, Julia, I entreat—" but she was gone ere he could finish, and her merry laughter was heard till her door closed.

Poor girl, her light-heartedness died out as she felt herself alone, and turning towards a little photograph of a man in a naval uniform, that hung over the chimney, her eyes grew dim with tears as she gazed on it.

"Ay," said she bitterly, "and this same humor it was that lost me the truest heart that ever beat! What would I not give now to know that he still remembered me—remembered me with kindness?"

She sat down, with her face buried in her hands, nor stirred till the sound of voices beneath apprised her that their guest had arrived.

While she was yet standing before her glass, and trying to efface the traces of sorrow on her features, George tapped softly at her door. "May I come in?" cried he. "Oh, Julia," said he, as he drew nigh, "it is worse than I had even suspected. Cutbill tells me that—"

He could not go on, but bending his head on her shoulder, sobbed hysterically.

"George, George, do not give way thus," said she calmly. "What is it has happened? What has he told you?"

"The mine—the Lisconnor scheme—is bankrupt."

"Is that all?"

"Ah! Why it is ruin—utter ruin! Every shilling that you had in the world is gone, and I have done it all." And once more his feelings overcame him, and he sobbed convulsively.

"But, my dear, dear brother," said she fondly, "if it's lost it's lost, and there's no help for it; and let us never fret over what binds us only the closer together. You can't get rid of me, now, for I declare, George, no earthly consideration will make me accept Mr. Cutbill."

"Oh, how can you jest this way, Julia, at such a moment?"

"I assure you I am most serious. I know that man intends to propose to me, and you are just in the humor to mix up our present misfortunes and his pretensions, and actually espouse his cause; but it's no use, George, no use whatever. I'll not consent. Go downstairs, now. Stay, let me wipe those red eyes. Don't let that man see any trace of this sorrow about you; bear up quietly and well. You shall see that I do not give counsel without being able to show example. Go down now, and I'll follow you."

As he left the room she sat down, and accidentally so as to see her face in the glass. The forced smile which she had put on was only slowly vanishing from her features, and she was shocked at the pallor that now succeeded.

"I *am* looking very ill," muttered she. "There's no denying it. That man will certainly see how this news has struck me down, and I would not that he should witness my want of courage. I wish I had—no, I don't. I'd not put on rouge if I had it; but I wish we were alone to-day, and could talk over our fortune together. Perhaps it's as well as it is." And now she arose and descended the stairs hastily, as though not to give herself time for further thought.

Cutbill was in the act of cautioning L'Estrange against speaking of the Lisconnor misfortune to his sister when she entered the room. "Do you forget me, Miss L'Estrange," said he, coming forward, "or am I to remind you that we met in Ireland?"

"Forget you, Mr. Cutbill!" replied she, laughingly; "how can I forget the charming tenor who sang second to me, or the gallant cavalier who rode out with me?"

"Ay, but I got a roll in a duck-pond that day," said he, grimly. "You persuaded me to let the beast drink, and he lay

down in the water and nearly squashed me."

"Oh, you almost killed me with laughter. I had to hold on by the crutch of my saddle to save myself from falling into the pond."

"And I hear you made a sketch of me."

"Have you not seen it? I declare I thought I had shown it to you; but I will after dinner, if I can find it."

The dinner was announced at this moment, and they proceeded to the dining-room.

"Taste is everything," said Cutbill, as he unfolded his napkin, and surveyed the table, decked out with fruit and flowers with a degree of artistic elegance that appealed even to *him*. "Taste is everything. I declare to you that Howell and James would pay fifty pounds down just for that urn as it stands there. How you twined those lilies around it in that way is quite beyond me."

As the dinner went on he was in ecstasy with everything.

"Don't part with your cook, even after they make a bishop of you," said he. "I don't know the French name of that dish, but I believe it's a stewed hare. Might I send my plate twice?"

"Mr. Cutbill saw the Bramleighs at Como, Julia," said L'Estrange, to take him, if possible, off the subject of the entertainment.

"I did, indeed. I met them at that very hotel that was once Queen Caroline's house. There they were diverting themselves—boating and going about just as if the world had gone all right with them; and Bramleigh told me one morning that he had cashed the last cheque for fifty pounds."

"And is he really determined to touch nothing of his property till the law assures him that his right is undeniable?"

"Worse than that, far worse; he has quarreled with old Sedley, his father's law-agent for forty years, and threatened him with an action for having entered into a compromise without instructions or permission; and he is wrong, clearly wrong, for I saw the correspondence, and if it goes before a jury, they'll say at once that there was consent."

"Had he, then, forgotten it?" asked Julia.

"No, he neither forgets nor remembers; but he has a sort of flighty way of getting himself into a white heat of enthusiasm; and though he cools down occasionally into a little common sense, it doesn't last; he rushes back into his heroics, and raves about saving him from himself, reseuing

him from the ignoble temptation of self-interest, and such like balderdash."

"There must be a great deal of true nobility in such a nature," said Julia.

"I'll tell you what there is: and it runs through them all except the eldest daughter, and that puppy the diplomatist: there's madness!"

"Madness?"

"Well, I call it madness. Suppose now I was to decline taking another glass of that wine—Steinheimer, I think it's called—till I saw your brother's receipt for the payment of it, wouldn't you say I was either mad or something very near it?"

"I don't see the parity between the two cases," said Julia.

"Ah, you're too sharp for me, Miss Julia, too sharp; but I'm right all the same. Isn't Jack Bramleigh mad? Is it anything but madness for a man to throw up his commission and go and serve as a sailor—before the mast or behind it, I don't care which; but isn't that madness?"

Julia felt a sense of sickness almost to fainting, but she never spoke nor stirred, while George, quickly noticing her state, turned towards Cutbill and said:—

"What news have you of him? he was a great favorite of mine."

"Of yours and of everybody's," said Cutbill. And now the color rushed back to Julia's cheek, and had Cutbill but looked towards her, it is very probable he would greatly have misconstrued the smile she gave him. "I wish I had news of him: but for these last few months I have none. When he got out to China he found that great house, Alcock and Baines, smashed—all the tea-merchants were smashed—and they tell me that he shipped with a Yankee for Constantinople."

"You heard from him, then?"

"No; he never writes to any one. He may send you a newspaper, or a piece of one, to show where he is; but he says he never was able to say what was in his head, and he always found he was writing things out of the 'Complete Correspondent.'"

"Poor Jack!"

"Shall I go and look after your coffee, George? You say you like me to make it myself," said Julia; and she arose and left the room almost before he could reply.

"You'll never marry while she's your housekeeper, I see that," said Cutbill, as the door closed after her.

"She is my greatest comfort in life," said the other, warmly.

"I see it all; and the whole time of dinner I was thinking what a pity it was—No matter, I'll not say what I was



going to say. I'm glad you haven't told her of the smash till I see what I can do with the old Viscount."

"But I have told her; she knows it all."

"And do you tell me she had that heavy load on her heart all the time she was talking and laughing there?"

L'Estrange nodded.

"It's only women bear up that way. Take my word for it, if it had been one of us, he'd not have come down to dinner, he'd not have had pluck to show himself. There's where they beat us, sir—that's real courage."

"You are not taking your wine," said L'Estrange, seeing him pass the bottle.

"No; I want my head clear this evening, I want to be cool and collected. I'll not drink any more. Tell me about yourself a little; how do you get on here? do you like the place? do you like the people?"

"The place is charming; we like it better every day we live in it."

"And the people—the English, I mean; what of them?"

"They mean kindly enough, indeed they are often very kind; but they do not live in much harmony, and they only agree in one thing—"

"I know what that is. They all join to worry the parson—of course they do. Did you ever live in a lodging-house, L'Estrange? If you did, you must have seen how the whole population coalesced to torment the maid-of-all-work. She belonged to them all, collectively and individually. And so it is with you. You are the maid-of-all-work. You have to make Brown's bed, and black Robinson's boots—spiritually I mean—and none recognizes the claim of his neighbor—each believes you belong to himself. That's the voluntary system, as they call it; and a quicker way to drive a man mad was never invented."

"Perhaps you take an extreme view of it—" began L'Estrange.

"No, I don't," interrupted the other. "I've only to look at your face, and instead of the fresh cheeks and the clear bright eyes I remember when I saw you first, I see you now anxious and pale and nervous. Where's the pluck that enabled you to ride at a five-foot wall? Do you think you could do it now?"

"Very likely not. Very likely it is all the better I should not."

"You'll not get me to believe that. No man's nature was ever bettered for being bullied."

L'Estrange laughed heartily, not in the

least degree angered by the other's somewhat coarse candor.

"It's a queer world altogether; but maybe if each of us was doing the exact thing he was fit for, life wouldn't be half as good a thing as it is. The whole thing would be like a piece of machinery, and instead of the hitches and make-shifts that we see now, and that bring out men's qualities and test their natures, we'd have nothing but a big workshop, where each did his own share of the work, and neither asked aid nor gave it. Do you permit a cigar?"

"Of course; but I've nothing worth offering you."

"I have, though," said he, producing his case and drawing forth a cheroot, and examining it with that keen scrutiny and that seeming foretaste of enjoyment peculiar to smokers. "Try that and tell me when you tasted the equal of it. Ah, L'Estrange, we must see and get you out of this. It's not a place for you. A nice little vicarage, in Hants or Herts; a sunny glebe, with a comfortable house and a wife; later on, a wife of course, for your sister won't stay with you always."

"You've drawn a pleasant picture—only to rub it out again."

"Miss Julia has got a bad headache, sir," said the maid, entering at this moment, "and begs you will excuse her. Will you please to have coffee here or in the drawing-room?"

"Ay, here," said Cutbill, answering the look with which the other seemed to interrogate him. "She couldn't stand it any longer, no wonder; but I'll not keep you away from her now. Go up and say, I'll see Lord Culduff in the morning, and if I have any news worth reporting, I'll come out here in the afternoon."

## CHAPTER XL.

### "A RECEPTION" AT ROME.

It was the night of the Countess Balderoni's weekly reception, and the servants had just lighted up the handsome suite of rooms and disposed the furniture in fitting order, when the Countess and Lady Augusta Bramleigh entered to take a passing look at the apartment before the arrival of the guests.

"It is so nice," said Lady Augusta, in her peculiar languid way, "to live in a country where the people are civilized enough to meet for intercourse without be-

ing fed, or danced, or fiddled for. Now, I tried this in London; but it was a complete failure. If you tell English people you are 'at home' every Tuesday or every Thursday evening, they will make a party some particular night and storm your salons in hundreds, and you'll be left with three or four visitors for the remainder of the season. Isn't that so?"

"I suspect it is. But you see how they fall into our ways here; and if they do not adopt them at home, there may be something in the climate or the hours which forbids it."

"No, *cara*; it is simply their dogged material spirit, which says, 'We go out for a *déjeûné*, or a dinner, or a ball.' There must be a substantial programme of a something to be eaten or to be done. I declare I believe I detest our people."

"How are you, then, to live amongst them?"

"I don't mean it. I shall not go back. If I grow weary of Europe, I'll try Egypt, or I'll go live at Lebanon. Do you know, since I saw Lear's picture of the cedars, I have been dying to live there. It would be so delightful to lie under the great shade of those glorious trees, with one's 'barb' standing saddled near, and groups of Arabs in their white burnouses scattered about. What's this? Here's a note for you."

The Countess took the note from the servant, and ran her eyes hurriedly over it.

"This is impossible," murmured she, "quite impossible. Only think, Gusta, here is the French Secretary of Legation, Baron de Limayrac, asking my permission to present to me no less a person than Monsieur de Pracontal."

"Do you mean the Pracontal—the pretender himself?"

"Of course. It can be no other. Can you imagine anything so outrageously in bad taste? Limayrac must know who this man is, what claims he is putting forward, whom he assumes to be; and yet he proposes to present him here. Of course, I shall refuse him."

"No, *cara*, nothing of the kind. Receive him by all means. You or I have nothing to do with law or lawyers—he does not come here to prosecute his suit. On the contrary, I accept his wish to make our acquaintance as an evidence of a true gentlemanlike instinct; and, besides, I am most eager to see him."

"Remember, Gusta, the Cuduffs are coming here, and they will regard this as a studied insult. I think I should feel it such myself in their place."

"I don't think they could. I am certain they ought not. Does any one believe that every person in a room with four or five hundred is his dear friend, devoted to him, and dying to serve him? If you do not actually throw these people together, how are they more in contact in your salon than in the Piazza del Popolo?"

"This note is in pencil, too," went she on. "I suppose it was written here. Where is the Baron de Limayrac?"

"In his carriage, my lady, at the door."

"You see, dearest, you cannot help admitting him."

The Countess had but time to say a few hurried words to the servant, when the doors were thrown open, and the company began to pour in. Arrivals followed each other in rapid succession, and names of every country in Europe were announced, as their titled owners—soldiers, statesmen, cardinals, or ministers—passed on, and *grandes dames*, in all the plenitude of splendid toilet, sailed proudly by, glittering with jewels and filmy in costly lace.

While the Countess Balderoni was exchanging salutations with a distinguished guest, the Baron de Limayrac stood respectfully waiting his time to be recognized.

"My friend, Count Pracontal, madame," said he, presenting the stranger, and, though a most frigid bow from the hostess acknowledged the presentation, Pracontal's easy assurance remained unabashed, and, with the coolest imaginable air, he begged he might have the great honor of being presented to Lady Augusta Bramleigh.

Lady Augusta, not waiting for her sister's intervention, at once accepted the speech as addressed to herself, and spoke to him with much courtesy.

"You are new to Rome, I believe?" said she.

"Years ago I was here; but not in the society. I knew only the artists, and that Bohemian class who live with artists," said he, quite easily. "Perhaps I might have the same difficulty still, but Baron de Limayrac and I served together in Africa, and he has been kind enough to present me to some of his friends."

The unaffected tone and the air of good-breeding with which these few words were uttered, went far to conciliate Lady Augusta in his favor; and after some further talk together she left him, promising, at some later period of the evening, to rejoin him and tell him something of the people who were there.

"Do you know, *cara*, that he is downright charming?" whispered she to her sister, as they walked together through the



rooms. "Of course I mean Pracontal; he is very witty, and not in the least ill-natured. I'm so sorry the Culduffs have not come. I'd have given anything to present Pracontal to his cousin—if she be his cousin. Oh, here they are: and isn't she splendid in pearls?"

Lord and Lady Culduff moved up the salon as might a prince and princess royal, acknowledging blandly, but condescendingly, the salutations that met them. Knowing and known to every one, they distributed the little graceful greetings with that graduated benignity great people, or would-be great people—for they are more alike than is generally believed—so well understand.

Although Lady Augusta and Lady Culduff had exchanged cards, they had not yet met at Rome, and now, as the proud peer moved along triumphant in the homage rendered to his own claims and to his wife's beauty, Lady Augusta stepped quietly forward, and in a tone familiarly easy said, "Oh, we've met at last, Marion. Pray make me known to Lord Culduff." In the little act of recognition which now passed between these two people, an acute observer might have detected something almost bordering on freemasonry. They were of the same "order," and, though the circumstances under which they met left much to explain, there was that between them which plainly said, "*We* at least play on 'the square' with each other. *We* are within the pale, and scores of little misunderstandings that might serve to separate or estrange meaner folk, with *us* can wait for their explanations." They chatted away pleasantly for some minutes over the Lord Georges and Lady Georginas of their acquaintance, and reminded each other of little traits of this one's health or that one's temper, as though of these was that world they belonged to made up and fashioned. And all this while Marion stood by mute and pale with anger, for she knew well how Lady Augusta was intentionally dwelling on a theme she could have no part in. It was with a marked change of manner, so marked as to imply a sudden rush of consciousness, that Lady Augusta, turning to her, said:—

"And how do you like Rome?"

A faint motion of the eyelids, and a half-gesture with the shoulders, seeming to express something like indifference, was the reply.

"I believe all English begin in that way. It is a place to grow into—its ways, its hours, its topics, are all its own."

"I call it charming," said Lord Culduff, who felt appealed to.

"If you stand long on the brink here,"

resumed she, "like a timid bather, you'll not have courage to plunge in. You must go at it at once, for there are scores of things will scare you, if you only let them."

Marion stood impassive and fixed, as though she heard but did not heed what was said, while Lord Culduff smiled his approval and nodded his assent in most urbane fashion.

"What if you came and dined here to-morrow, Marion? My sister is wonderfully 'well up' in the place. I warn you as to her execrable dinner; for her cook is Italian, *pur sang*, and will poison you with his national dishes; but we'll be *en petit comité*."

"I think we have something for to-morrow," said Marion, coldly, and looking to Lord Culduff.

"To-morrow—Thursday, Thursday?" said he, hesitating. "I can't remember any engagement for Thursday."

"There is something, I'm sure," said Marion, in the same cold tone.

"Then let it be for Friday, and you'll meet my brother-in-law; it's the only day he ever dines at home in the week."

Lord Culduff bowed an assent, and Marion muttered something that possibly meant acquiescence.

"I've made a little dinner for you for Friday," said Lady Augusta to her sister. "The Culduffs and Monsignore Ratti—that, with Tonino and ourselves, will be six; and I'll think of another: we can't be an even number. Marion is heart-broken about coming; indeed, I'm not sure we shall see her, after all."

"Are we so very terrible, then?" asked the Countess.

"Not *you*, dearest; it is *I* am the dreadful one. I took that old fop a canter into the peerage, and he was so delighted to escape from Bramleighia, that he looked softly into my eyes, and held my hand so unnecessarily long, that she became actually sick with anger. Now I'm resolved that the old lord shall be one of my adorers."

"Oh, Gusta!"

"Yes. I say it calmly and advisedly; that young woman must be taught better manners than to pat the ground impatiently with her foot and to toss her head away when one is talking to her husband. Oh, there's that poor Count Pracontal waiting for me, and looking so piteously at me; I forgot I promised to take him a tour through the rooms and tell him who everybody is."

The company began to thin off soon after midnight, and by one o'clock the Countess and her sister found themselves

standing by a fireplace in a deserted salon, while the servants passed to and fro extinguishing the lights.

"Who was that you took leave of with such emphatic courtesy a few minutes ago?" asked Lady Augusta, as she leaned on the chimney-piece.

"Don't you know? don't you remember him?"

"Not in the least."

"It was Mr. Temple Bramleigh."

"What, *mon fils* Temple? Why didn't he come and speak to me?"

"He said he had been in search of you all the evening, and even asked me to find you out."

"These Sevigné curls do that; no one knows me. Mousignore said he thought I was a younger sister just come out, and was going to warn me of the dangerous rivalry. And that was Temple? His little bit of moustache improves him. I suppose they call him good-looking?"

"Very handsome—actually handsome."

"Oh, dear!" sighed the other, wearily; "one likes these gatherings, but it's always pleasant when they're over; don't you find that?" And not meeting a reply, she went on: "That tiresome man, Sir Marcus Cluff, made a descent upon me, to talk of—what do you think?—the church at Albano. It seems our parson there has nothing to live on during the winter months, and he is expected to be alive and cheery when spring comes round; and Sir Marcus says that, though seals do this, it's not so easy for a curate; and so I said, 'Why doesn't he join the other army? There's a cardinal yonder will take him into his regiment;' and Sir Marcus couldn't stand this and left me." She paused, and seemed lost in a deep reverie, and then half murmured rather than said, "What a nice touch he has on the piano; so light and so liquid withal!"

"Sir Marcus, do you mean?"

"Of course I don't," said she, pettishly. "I'm talking of Pracontal. I'm sure he sings—he says not, or only for himself; and so I told him he must sing for *me*, and he replied, 'Willingly, for I shall then be beside myself with happiness. Just fancy a Frenchman trying to say a smart thing in English. I wonder what the Culduffs will think of him?'"

"Are they likely to have an opportunity for an opinion?"

"Most certainly they are. I have asked him for Friday. He will be the seventh at our little dinner."

"Not possible, Gusta! You couldn't have done this!"

"I have, I give you my word. Is there any reason why I shouldn't?"

"All the reason in the world. You ask your relatives to a little dinner, which implies extreme intimacy and familiarity; and you invite to meet them a man whom, by every sentiment of self-interest, they must abhor."

"*Cara mia*, I can't listen to such a vulgar argument. M. de Pracontal has charming personal qualities. I chatted about an hour with him, and he is delightfully amusing; he'll no more obtrude his claims or his pretensions than Lord Culduff will speak of his fifty years of diplomatic service. There is no more perfect triumph of good-breeding than when it enables us to enjoy each other's society irrespective of scores of little personal accidents, political estrangements, and the like; and to show you that I have not been the inconsiderate creature you think me, I actually did ask Pracontal if he thought that meeting the Culduffs would be awkward or unpleasant for him, and he said he was overjoyed at the thought; that I could not have done him a favor he would prize more highly."

"*He*, of course, is very vain of the distinction. It is an honor he never could have so much as dreamed of."

"I don't know that. I half suspect he is a gentleman who does not take a depreciatory estimate of either himself or his prospects."

"At all events, Gusta, there shall be no ambushade in the matter, that I'm determined on. The Culduffs shall know whom they are to meet. I'll write a note to them before I sleep."

"How angry you are for a mere nothing! Do you imagine that the people who sit round a dinner-table have sworn vows of eternal friendship before the soup?"

"You are too provoking—too thoughtless," said the other, with much asperity of voice; and, taking up her gloves and her fan from the chimney-piece, she moved rapidly away and left the room.

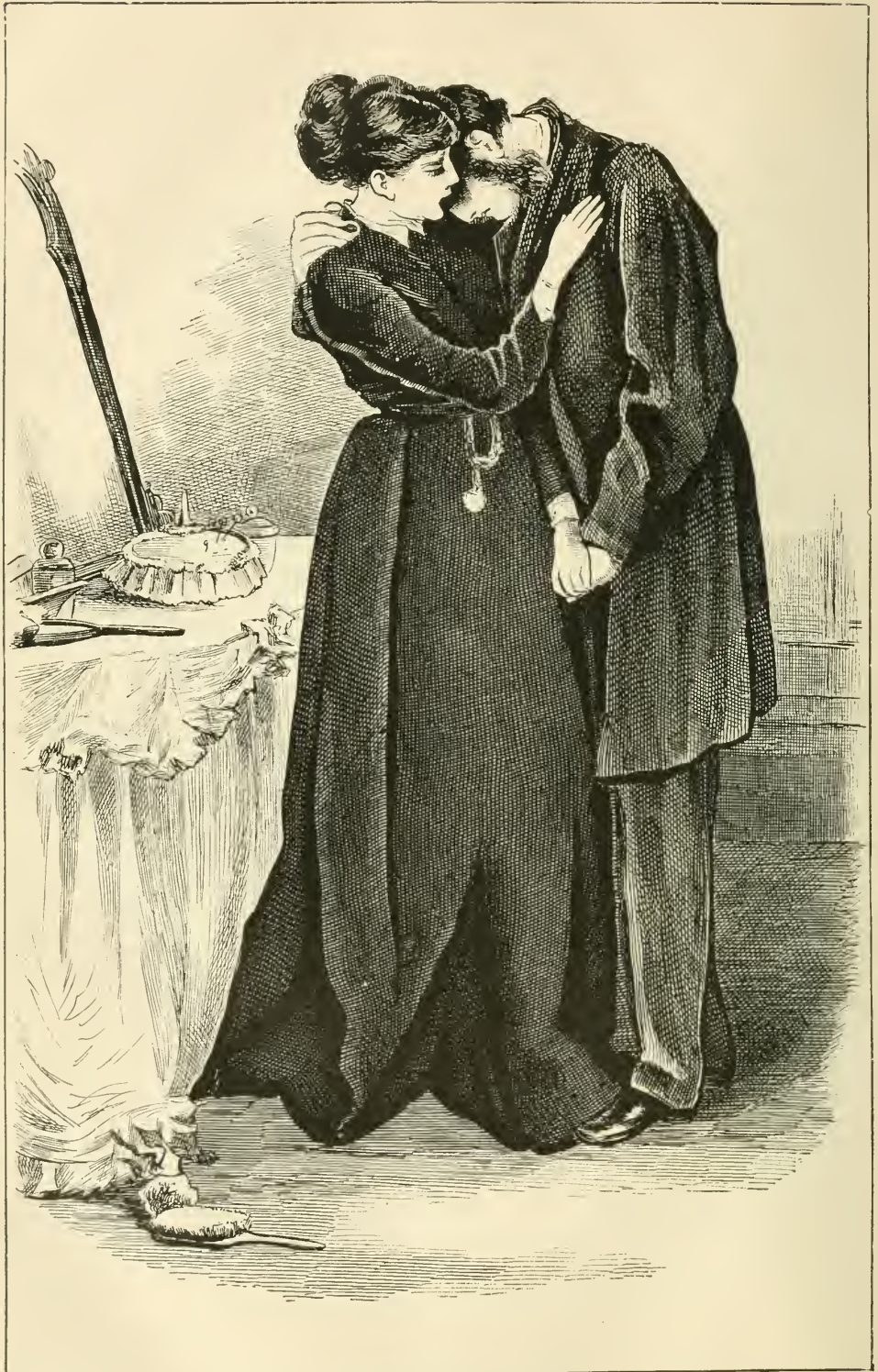
## CHAPTER XLI.

### SOME "SALON DIPLOMACIES."

LORD CULDUFF, attired in a very gorgeous dressing-gown, and a cap whose gold tassel hung down below his ear, was seated at a writing-table, every detail of whose appliances was an object of art. From a little golden censer at his side a light-blue







“ ‘ George, George, do not give way thus.’ ”

[THE BRAMLEIGH<sup>s</sup>. p. 395.]



smoke curled, that diffused a delicious perfume through the room, for the noble lord held it that these adventitious aids invariably penetrated through the sterner material of thought, and relieved by their graceful influence the more labored efforts of the intellect.

He had that morning been preparing a very careful confidential dispatch. He meant it to be a state paper. It was a favorite theory of his, that the Pope might be *exploité*—and his own phrase must be employed to express his meaning—that is, that for certain advantages, not very easily defined, nor intelligible at first blush, the Holy Father might be most profitably employed in governing Ireland. The Pope, in fact, in return for certain things which he did not want, and which we could not give him if he did, was to do for us a number of things perfectly impossible, and just as valueless had they been possible. The whole was a grand dissolving view of millennial Ireland, with all the inhabitants dressed in green broadcloth, singing “God save the Queen;” while the Pope and the Sacred College were to be in ecstasy over some imaginary concessions of the British Government, and as happy over these supposed benefits as an Indian tribe over a present of glass beads from Birmingham.

The noble diplomatist had just turned a very pretty phrase on the peculiar nature of the priest—his one-sided view of life; his natural credulity, nurtured by church observances; his easily-satisfied greed, arising from the limited nature of his ambitions; and, lastly, the simplicity of character engendered by the want of those relations of the family which suggest acute study of moral traits, strongly tinged with worldliness. Rising above the dialectics of the “Office,” he had soared into the style of the essayist. It was to be one of those dispatches which F. O. prints in blue-books, and proudly points to, to show that her sons are as distinguished in letters as they are dexterous in the conduct of negotiations. He had just read aloud a very high-sounding sentence, when Mr. Temple Bramleigh entered, and, in that nicely subdued voice which private secretaryship teaches, said: “Mr. Cutbill is below, my lord. Will you see him?”

“On no account! The porter has been warned not to admit him, on pain of dismissal. See to it, that I am not intruded on by this man!”

“He has managed to get in somehow. He is in my room at this moment.”

“Get rid of him, then, as best you can.

I can only repeat that here he shall not come.”

“I think, on the whole, it might be as well to see him. A few minutes would suffice,” said Temple, timidly.

“And, why, sir, may I ask, am I to be outraged by this man’s vulgar presence, even for a few minutes? A few minutes of unmitigated rudeness is an eternity of endurance!”

“He threatens a statement in print. He has a letter ready for the *Times*,” muttered Temple.

“This is what we have come to in England. In our stupid worship of what we call public opinion, we have raised up the most despotic tribunal that ever decided a human destiny. I declare solemnly, I’d almost as soon be an American. I vow to heaven that, with the threat of Printing-House Square over me, I don’t see how much worse I had been if born in Kansas or Ohio!”

“It is a regular statement of the Liscannon Mine, drawn up for the money article, and if only a tithe of it be true—”

“Why should it be true, sir?” cried the noble lord, in a tone that was almost a scream. “The public does not want truth—what they want is a scandal—a libelous slander on men of rank—men of note like myself. The vulgar world is never so happy as when it assumes to cancel great public services by some contemptible private scandal. Lord Cuduff has checkmated the Russian Ambassador. I know that, but Moses has three acceptances of his protested for non-payment. Lord Cuduff has outwitted the Tuileries. Why doesn’t he pay his bootmaker? That’s their chanson, sir—that’s the burden of their low, vulgar song. As if I, and men of *my* stamp, were amenable to every petty rule and miserable criticism that applies to a clerk in Somerset House. They exact from us the services of a giant, and then would reduce us to their own dwarfish standard whenever there is question of a moral estimate.”

He walked to and fro as he spoke, his excitement increasing at every word, the veins in his forehead swelling and the angles of his mouth twitching with a spasmodic motion. “There, sir,” cried he, with a wave of his hand, “let there be no more mention of this man. I shall want to see a draft of the educational project, as soon as it is completed. That will do,” and with this he dismissed him.

No sooner was the door closed on his departure, than Lord Cuduff poured some scented water into a small silver ewer, and proceeded to bathe his eyes and temples.

and then sitting down before a little mirror, he smoothed his eyebrows, and patiently disposed the straggling hairs into line. "Who's there? come in," cried he impatiently, as a tap was heard at the door, and Mr. Cutbill entered, with the bold and assured look of a man determined on an insolence.

"So, my lord, your servants have got orders not to admit me—the door is to be shut against me?" said he, walking boldly forward and staring fiercely at the other's face.

"Quite true, however you came to know it," said Culduff, with a smile of the easiest, pleasantest expression imaginable. "I told Temple Bramleigh this morning to give the orders you speak of. I said it in these words: Mr. Cutbill got in here a couple of days ago, when I was in the middle of a despatch, and we got talking of this, that, and t'other, and the end was, I never could take up the clue of what I had been writing. A bore interrupts, but does not distract you: a clever man is sure, by his suggestiveness, to lead you away to other realms of thought: and so I said, a strict quarantine against two people—I'll neither see Antonelli nor Cutbill."

It was a bold shot, and few men would have had courage for such effrontery; but Lord Culduff could do these things with an air of such seeming candor and naturalness, nothing less than a police-agent could have questioned its sincerity. Had a man of his own rank in life "tried it on" in this fashion, Cutbill would have detected the impudent fraud at once. It was the superb dignity, the consummate courtesy of this noble Viscount, aided by every appliance of taste and luxury around him, that assured success here.

"Take that chair, Cutbill, and try a cheroot—I know you like a cheroot. And now for a pleasant gossip; for I *will* give myself a holiday this morning."

"I am really afraid I interrupt you," began Cutbill.

"You do; I won't affect to deny it. You squash that despatch yonder, as effectually as if you threw the ink-bottle over it. When once I get to talk with a man like you, I can't go back to the desk again. Don't you know it yourself? Haven't you felt it scores of times? The stupid man is got rid of just as readily as you throw a pebble out of your shoe: it is your clever fellow that pricks you like a nail."

"I'm sorry, my lord, you should feel me so painfully," said Cutbill, laughing, but with an expression that showed how the flattery had touched him.

"You don't know what a scrape I've got into about *you*."

"About *me*?"

"Yes. My lady heard you were here the other morning, and gave me a regular scolding for not having sent to tell her. You know you were old friends in Ireland."

"I scarcely ventured to hope her ladyship would remember me."

"What! Not remember your admirable imitation of the speakers in the House?—your charming songs that you struck off with such facility—the very best impromptus I ever heard. And, mark you, Cutbill, I knew Theodore Hook intimately—I mean, difference of age and such like considered, for I was a boy at the time—and I say it advisedly, you are better than Hook."

"Oh, my lord, this is great flattery!"

"Hook was uncertain, too. He was what the French call *journalier*. Now, that you are not."

Cutbill smiled, for, though he did not in the least know the quality ascribed to him, he was sure it was complimentary, and was satisfied.

"Then there was another point of difference between you. Hook was a snob. He had the uneasy consciousness of social inferiority, which continually drove him to undue familiarities. Now, I will say, I never met a man so free from this as yourself. I have made a positive study of you, Cutbill, and I protest I think, as regards tact, you are unrivalled."

"I can only say, my lord, that I never knew it."

"After all," said Lord Culduff, rising and standing with his back to the fire, while, dropping his eyelids, he seemed to fall into a reflective vein—"After all, this, as regards worldly success, is the master quality. You may have every gift, and every talent, and every grace, and, wanting 'tact,' they are all but valueless."

Cutbill was silent. He was too much afraid to risk his newly acquired reputation by the utterance of even a word.

"How do you like Rome?" asked his lordship, abruptly.

"I can scarcely say; I've seen very little of it. I know nobody: and, on the whole, I find time hang heavily enough on me."

"But you must know people, Cutbill; you must go out. The place has its amusing side; it's not like what we have at home. There's another tone, another style; there is less concentration, so to say, but there's more '*finesse*.'"

Cutbill nodded, as though he followed and assented to this.

"Where the priest enters, as such a



considerable element of society, there is always a keener study of character than elsewhere. In other places you ask, What a man does? here you inquire, Why he does it?"

Cutbill nodded again.

"The women, too, catch up the light, delicate touch which the churchmen are such adepts in; and conversation is generally neater than elsewhere. In a fortnight or ten days hence, you'll see this all yourself. How are you for Italian? Do you speak it well?"

"Not a word, my lord."

"Never mind. French will do perfectly. I declare I think we all owe a debt of gratitude to the First Empire for having given us a language common to all Europe. Neither cooking nor good manners could go on without it, and, apropos of cooking, when will you dine? They are good enough to say here that my cook is the best in Rome. When will you let me have your verdict on him?"

Cutbill felt all the awkwardness that is commonly experienced when a man is asked to be his own inviter.

"To-day," continued Lord Culduff, "we dine at the Duc de Rignano's; we have promised Lady Augusta for Friday; but Saturday, I believe Saturday is free. Shall we say Saturday, Cutbill—for half-past eight? Now, don't fail us. We shall have a few people in the evening, so make no other engagement. Bye-bye."

Cutbill muttered out his acceptance, and retired, half delighted with his success, and half-distrustful as to whether he had done what he had come to do, or whether, in not approaching the subject, he had not earned a stronger claim to the possession of that "tact" which his lordship had so much admired in him.

"I'm sure he's an old fox; but he's wonderfully agreeable," muttered he, as he descended the stairs. It was only as he turned into the Piazza di Spagna, and saw L'Estrange standing looking in at a print-shop, that he remembered how he had left the curate to wait for him, while he made his visit.

"I'm afraid, from your look," said L'Estrange, "that you have no very good news for me. Am I right?"

"Well," said the other, in some confusion, "I won't say that I have anything one could call exactly reassuring to tell."

"Did he suffer you to go into the question fully? Did he show a disposition to treat the matter with any consideration?"

Cutbill shook his head. The consciousness that he had done nothing, had not

even broached the subject for which his visit was ostensibly made, overwhelmed him with shame; and he had not the courage to avow how he had neglected the trust committed to him.

"Don't mince matters with me, for the sake of sparing me," continued L'Estrange. "I never closed my eyes last night, thinking over it all; and you can't lower me in my own esteem below what I now feel. Out with it, then, and let me hear the worst, if I must hear it."

"You must have a little patience. Things are not always so bad as they look. I'm to have another interview; and though I won't go so far as to bid you hope, I'd be sorry to say, despair. I'm to see him again on Saturday."

"Two more days and nights of anxiety and waiting! But I suppose I deserve it all, and worse. It was in a spirit of greed—ay, of gambling—that I made this venture; and if the punishment could fall on myself alone, I deserve it all."

"Come, come, don't take on in that fashion; never say die. When do the Bramleighs arrive?—don't you expect them this week?"

"They promised to eat their Christmas dinner with us; but shall we have one to give them? You know, I suppose, how matters have gone at Albano? The church patrons have quarreled, and each has withdrawn his name. No: Mrs. Trumpler remains, and she has drawn out a new code of her own—a thirty-nine articles of her own devising, which I must subscribe, or forfeit her support. The great feature of it all is that the Bible is never to be quoted except to disprove it; so that what a man lacks in scholarship he may make up in skepticism."

"And you take to that?"

"Not exactly; and in consequence I have resigned my chaplaincy, and this morning I received a notice to vacate my house by the last day of the year, and go—I don't think it was suggested where to in particular—but here comes my sister—let us talk of something else."

"Oh, George," cried she, "I have got you such a nice warm coat for your visiting in the cold weather. Will you promise me to wear it, though you will look like a bear? How d'ye do, Mr. Cutbill?"

"I'm bobbish, miss, thank you. And you?"

"I don't exactly know if I'm bobbish, but I'm certainly in good spirits, for I have heard from some very dear friends, who are on their way to see, and spend the Christmas with us."

L'Estrange turned a sudden glance on Cutbill. It was a mere glance, but it said more than words, and was so inexpressibly sad besides, that the other muttered a hurried good-bye and left them.

## CHAPTER XLII.

### A LONG TÊTE-À-TÊTE.

PRACONTAL and Longworth sat at breakfast at Freytag's Hotel at Rome. They were splendidly lodged, and the table was spread with all the luxury and abundance which are usually displayed where well-paying guests are treated by wise innkeepers. Fruit and flowers decorated the board, arranged as a painter's eye might have suggested, and nothing was wanting that could gratify the sense of sight or tempt the palate.

"After all," said Longworth, "your song-writer blundered when he wrote 'Lamour.' It is 'l'argent' that 'makes the world go round.' Look at that table, and say what sunshine the morning breaks with, when one doesn't fret about the bill."

"You are right, O Philip!" said the other. "Let people say what they may, men love those who spend money. See what a popularity follows the Empire in France: and what is its chief claim? Just what you said a moment back. It never frets about the bill. Contrast the splendor of such a Government with the mean mercantile spirit of your British Parliament, higgling over contracts and cutting down clerks' salaries, as though the nation were glorified when its servants wore broken boots and patched pantaloons."

"The world needs spendthrifts as it needs tornadoes. The whirlwind purifies even as it devastates."

"How grand you are at an aphorism, Philip! You have all the pomp of the pulpit when you deliver a mere platitude."

"To a Frenchman, everything is a platitude that is not a paradox."

"Go on, your vein is wonderful this morning."

"A Frenchman is the travesty of human nature; every sentiment of his is the parody of what it ought to be. He is grave over trifles and evokes mirth out of the deepest melancholy; he takes sweet wine with his oysters, and when the post has brought him letters that may actually decide his destiny, he throws them aside to read a critique on the last ballet, or revive his recollections of

its delight by gazing on a colored print of the ballerina."

"I'm getting tired of the Guiana," said Pracontal, throwing the picture from him; "hand me the chocolate. As to the letters, I have kept them for you to read, for, although I know your spluttering, splashing, hissing language for all purposes of talk, its law jargon is quite beyond me."

"Your lawyer—so far as I have seen—is most careful in his avoidance of technicals with you; he writes clearly and succinctly."

"Break open that great packet, and tell me about its clear and distinct contents."

"I said succinct, not distinct, O man of many mistakes! This is from Kelson himself, and contains an enclosure." He broke the seal as he spoke, and read:—

"DEAR SIR:—I am exceedingly distressed to be obliged to inform you that the arrangement which, in my last letter, I had understood to be finally and satisfactorily concluded between myself on your part, and Mr. Sedley of Furnival's Inn, on the part of Mr. Bramleigh, is now rescinded and broken, Mr. Bramleigh having entered a formal protest, denying all concurrence or approval, and in evidence of his dissent has actually given notice of action against his solicitor for unauthorized procedure. The bills, therefore, drawn by you I herewith return as no longer negotiable. I am forced to express not only my surprise, but my indignation, at the mode in which we have been treated in this transaction. Awaiting your instructions as to what step you will deem it advisable to take next—

"I am, dear sir, your obedient servant,  
"J. KELSON."

"This is a bad affair," said Longworth. "That twenty thousand that you thought to have lived on for two years, astonishing the vulgar world, like some Count of Monte Christo, has proved a dissolving view, and there you sit a candidate for one of the Pope's prisons, which, if accounts speak truly, are about the vilest dens of squalor and misery in Europe."

"Put a lump of ice in my glass, and fill it up with champagne. It was only yesterday I was thinking whether I'd not have myself christened Esau, and it is such a relief to me now to feel that I need not. Monsieur Le Comte Pracontal de Bramleigh, I have the honor to drink your health." As he spoke he drained his glass, and held it out to be refilled.

"No; I'll give you no more wine.



You'll need all the calm and consideration you can command to answer this letter, which requires prompt reply. And as to Esau, my friend, the parallel scarcely holds, for, when he negotiated the sale of his reversion, he was next of kin beyond dispute."

"I wonder what would become of you if you could not cavil. I never knew any man so fond of a contradiction."

"Be just, and admit that you give me some splendid opportunities. No, I'll not let you have more wine. Kelson's letter must be answered, and we must think seriously over what is to be done."

"*Ma foi!* there is nothing to be done. Mr. Bramleigh challenges me to a duel, because he knows I have no arms. He appeals to the law, which is the very costliest of all the costly things in your dear country. If you could persuade him to believe that this is not fair—not even generous—perhaps he would have the good manners to quit the premises and send me the key. Short of that, I see nothing to be done."

"I have told you already, and I tell you once more, if Kelson is of opinion that your case is good enough to go to trial, you shall not want funds to meet law expenses."

"He has told me so, over and over. He has said he shall try the case by—what is it you call it?"

"I know what you mean; he will proceed by ejectment to try title."

"This need not cost very heavily, and will serve to open the campaign. He will put me on 'the table,' as he calls it, and I shall be interrogated, and worried, and tormented—perhaps, too, insulted, at times; and I am to keep my temper, resent nothing—not even when they impugn my honor or my truthfulness—for that there are two grand principles of British law: one is, no man need say any ill of himself, nor is he ever to mind what ill another may say of him."

"Did he tell you that?" said Longworth, laughing.

"Not exactly in these words, but it amounted to the same. Do give me a little wine; I am hoarse with talking."

"Not a drop. Tell me now, where are these letters, and that journal of your grandfather's that you showed me?"

"Kelson has them all. Kelson has everything. When I believed the affair to be ended, I told him he might do what he pleased with them, if he only restored to me that colored sketch of my beautiful grandmother."

"There, there! don't get emotional, or

I have done with you. I will write to Kelson to-day. Leave all to us and don't meddle in any way."

"That you may rely upon with confidence. No one ever yet accused me of occupying myself with anything I could possibly avoid. Do you want me any more?"

"I don't think so; but why do you ask?"

"Where are you going?"

"I have a rendezvous this morning. I am to be three miles from this at one o'clock. I am to be at the tomb of Cecilia Metella, to meet the Lady Augusta Bramleigh, with a large party, on horseback, and we are to go somewhere and see something, and to dine, *ma foi*—I forget where."

"I think, all things considered," said Longworth gravely, "I would advise some reserve as to intimacy with that family."

"You distrust my discretion. You imagine that in my unguarded freedom of talking I shall say many things which had been better unsaid; isn't that so?"

"Perhaps I do; at all events, I know the situation is one that would be intolerable to myself."

"Not to *me* though, not to *me*. It is the very difficulty, the tension, so to say, that makes it enticing. I have I cannot tell you what enjoyment in a position where, by the slightest movement from this side to that, you lose your balance and fall. I like, I delight in, the narrow path with the precipice at each hand, where a false step is destruction. The wish to live is never so strong as when life is in danger."

"You are a heart and soul gambler."

"Confess, however, I am *beau joueur*. I know how to lose." And muttering something over the lateness of the hour, he snatched up his hat and hurried away.

As Pracontal was hurrying to the place of meeting with all the speed of his horse, a servant met him with a note from Lady Augusta. "She did not feel well enough," she said, "for a ride; she had a headache, and begged he would come and pay her a visit, and dine too, if he was not afraid of a dinner *en tête-à-tête*."

Overjoyed with the familiar tone of this note, he hurried back to Rome, and soon found himself in the little drawing-room which looked out upon the Borghese garden, and where a servant told him her ladyship would soon appear.

"This is very kind of you and very nice," said she, entering and giving him her hand in a languid sort of manner, "to come here and give up the delights of the picnic, with its pretty women and champagne, and *patès-aux-truffes*. No; you are to sit yonder. I don't know you long enough to

advance you to the privilege of that low chair next my sofa."

"I am your slave, even to martyrdom," said he, bowing, and sitting down where she had bid him.

"You are aware, I hope," said she, in the same wearied tone, "that it is very wrong of us to become acquainted. That, connected as I am with the Bramleighs, I ought not to have permitted you to be presented to me. My sister is shocked at the impropriety, and as for Lord and Lady Cuduff, rather than meet you at dinner on Friday, they have left Rome."

"Left Rome?"

"Yes, gone to Naples. To be sure, he ought to have been there a month ago; he was accredited to that Court, and he had nothing to do here, which was, however, to *him* an excellent reason for being here. Why do you make me talk so much? It sets my head splitting and I sent for you to listen to you, and not to have any worry of talking myself—there, begin."

"What shall I talk about?"

"Anything you like, only not politics, or religion, or literature, or fine arts—people are so unnatural when they discuss these; nor—not society and gossip, for then they grow spiteful and ill-natured; nor about myself, for then you'd fancy you were in love with me, and I'd have to shut the door against you. Oh, how my head aches! Give me that flacon, pray; thanks, now go back to your place."

"Shall I read to you?"

"No; there's nothing I detest so much as being read to. One never follows the book; it is the tone and accent of the reader, something in his voice, something one fancies an affectation attracts attention, and you remark how his hair is parted, or how his boots are made. Oh, why *will* you torment me this way?—I don't want to talk and you persist in asking me questions."

"If you had not a headache I'd sing for you."

"No, I'll not let you sing to me alone; that would be quite wrong. Remember, monsieur, and when I say remember, I mean never forget, I am excessively prudish; not of that school of prudery that repels, but of that higher tone which declares a freedom impossible. Do you comprehend?"

"Perfectly, madame," said he, bowing with an air of an ideal reverence.

"Now, then, that we have settled the preliminaries of our—oh, dear!" burst she out, "see what it is to be speaking French! I had almost said of 'our friendship.'"

"And why not, madame? Can you possibly entertain a doubt of that sentiment,

at once devoted and respectful, which has brought me to your feet?"

"I never do doubt about anything that I want to believe; at least till I change my mind on it, for I am—yes, I am very capricious. I am charmed with you to-day; but do not be surprised if my servant shuts the door against you to-morrow."

"Madame, you drive me to the brink of despair."

"I'm sure of that," said she, laughing. "I have driven several that far; but, strange to say, I never knew one who went over."

"Do not push torture to insufferance, madame," cried he, theatrically; but, instead of laughing at him, she looked really alarmed at his words.

"Oh, Monsieur Pracontal," cried she, suddenly, "was that little song you sung last night your own? I mean words and music both?"

He bowed with an air of modesty.

"What a nice talent, to be able to compose and write verses, too! But they tell me you are horribly satirical; that you make rhymes on people impromptu, and sing them in the very room with them."

"Only, madame, when they are, what you call in English, bores."

"But I like bores, they are so nice and dull. Do you know, Monsieur Pracontal, if it were not for bores, we English would have no distinctive nationality? Our bores are essentially our own, and unlike all the other species of the creature elsewhere."

"I respect them, and I bow to their superiority."

"It was very kind, very nice of you, to give up your ride over the Campagna, and come here to sit with me in one of my dull moods, for to-day I am very dull and dispirited. I have an odious headache, and my sister has been scolding me, and I have had such unpleasant letters. Altogether, it is a dark day with me."

"I am inexpressibly grieved."

"Of course you are; and so I told my sister you would be, when she said it was a great imprudence on my part to admit you. Not that I don't agree with her in great part, but I do detest being dictated to; isn't it insupportable?"

"Quite so; the very worst form of slavery."

"It's true you want to take away the Bramleigh estates; but, as I said to my sister, does not every one wish to win when he plays a game, and do you detest your adversary for so natural a desire? I suppose if you have a trump more than the Bramleighs you'll carry off the stakes."



"Ah, madame, how glad would I be to lay my cards on the table, if I could be sure of such an opponent as yourself!"

"Yes, I *am* generous. It's the one thing I can say for myself. I'm all for fighting the battle of life honorably and courteously, though I must say one is sure to lose where the others are not equally high-minded. Now I put it to yourself, M. Pracontal, and I ask, was it fair, was it honest, was it decent of Colonel Bramleigh, knowing the insecure title by which he held his estate, to make me his wife? You know, of course, the difference of rank that separated us; you know who I was—I can't say am, because my family have never forgiven me the *mésalliance*—therefore, I say, was it not atrocious in him to make a settlement which he felt must be a mockery?"

"Perhaps, madame, he may have regarded our pretensions as of little moment; indeed, I believe, he treated my father's demands with much hateur."

"Still, he knew there was a claim, and a claimant, when he married *me*, and this can neither be denied nor defended."

"Ah, madame!" sighed he, "who would be stopped by scruples in such a cause?"

"No, there was nothing of love in it; he wanted rank, he wanted high connections. He was fond of me, after his fashion, I've no doubt, but he was far more proud than fond. I often fancied he must have had something on his mind, he would be so abstracted at times, and so depressed, and then he would seem as if he wanted to tell me a secret, but had not the courage for it, and I set it down to something quite different. I thought—no matter what I thought—but it gave me no uneasiness, for, of course, I never dreamed of being jealous; but that it should be so bad as this never occurred to me—never!"

"I am only surprised that Colonel Bramleigh never thought it worth his while to treat with my father, who, all things considered, would have been easily dealt with; he was always a *pauvre diable*, out of one scrape to fall into another; so reckless that the very smallest help ever seemed to him quite sufficient to brave life with."

"I know nothing of the story—tell it to me."

"It is very long, very tiresome, and encumbered with details of dates and eras. I doubt you'd have patience for it, but, if you think you would, I'm ready."

"Begin, then, only don't make it more confused or more tangled than you can

help; and give me no dates—I hate dates."

Pracontal was silent for a moment or two as if reflecting, and then, drawing his chair a little nearer to her sofa, he leaned his forehead on his hand, and in a low, but distinct voice, began:—

"When Colonel Bramleigh's father was yet a young man, a matter of business required his presence in Ireland; he came to see a very splendid mansion then being built by a rich nobleman, on which his house had advanced a large sum by way of mortgage."

"Mon cher M. Pracontal, must we begin so far back? It is like the *Plaideur* in Moliere who commences, '*Quand je vois le soleil, quand je vois la lune*—'"

"Very true, but I must begin at the beginning of all things, and, with a little patience, I'll soon get further. Mr. Montagu Bramleigh made acquaintance in Ireland with a certain Italian painter called Giacomo Lami, who had been brought over from Rome to paint the frescoes of this great house. This Lami—very poor and very humble, ignoble, if you like to say so—had a daughter of surpassing beauty. She was so very lovely that Giacomo was accustomed to introduce her into almost all his frescoes, for she had such variety of expression, so many *reflets*, as one may say, of character in her look, that she was a Madonna here, a Flora there, now a Magdalene, now a Dido; but you need not take my word for it, here she is as a Danie." And he opened his watch-case as he spoke, and displayed a small miniature in enamel of marvelous beauty and captivation.

"Oh, was she really like this?"

"That was copied from a picture of her at St. Servain, when she was eighteen, immediately before she accompanied her father to Ireland; and in Giacomo's sketch-book, which I hope one of these days to have the honor of showing to you, there is a memorandum saying that this portrait of Enrichetta was the best likeness of her he had ever made. He had a younger daughter called Carlotta, also handsome, but vastly inferior in beauty to my grandmother."

"Your grandmother?"

"Forgive me, madame, if I have anticipated; but Enrichetta Lami became the wife of Montagu Bramleigh. The young man, captivated by her marvelous beauty, and enchanted by a winning grace of manner, it which it appears she excelled, made his court to her and married her. The ceremony of marriage presented no

difficulty, as Lami was a member of some sect of Waldensian Protestants, who claim a sort of affinity with the Anglican Church, and they were married in the parish church by the minister, and duly registered in the registry-book of the parish. All these matters are detailed in this book of Giacomo Lami's, which was at once account-book and sketch-book and journal, and, indeed, family history. It is a volume will, I am sure, amuse you, for, amongst sketches and studies for pictures, there are the drollest little details of domestic events, with passing notices of the political circumstances of the time—for old Giacomo was a conspirator and a Carbonaro, and heaven knows what else. He even involved himself in the Irish troubles, and was so far compromised that he was obliged to fly the country and get over to Holland, which he did, taking his two daughters with him. It has never been clearly ascertained whether Montagu Bramleigh had quarreled with his wife or consented to her accompanying her father, for, while there were letters from him to her full of affection and regard, there are some strange passages in Giacomo's diary that seem to hint at estrangement and coldness. When her child, my father, was born, she pressed Bramleigh strongly to come over to the christening; but, though he promised at first, and appeared overjoyed at the birth of his heir, he made repeated pretenses of this or that engagement, and ended by not coming. Old Lami must have given way to some outburst of anger at this neglect and desertion, for he sent back Bramleigh's letters unopened; and the poor Enrichetta, after struggling bravely for several months under this heartless and cruel treatment, sunk and died. The old man wandered away towards the south of Europe after this, taking with him his grandchild and his remaining daughter; and the first entry we find in his diary is about three years later, where we read: 'Chambery—Must leave this, where I thought I had at last found a home. Niccolo Baldassare is bent on gaining Carlotta's affections. Were they to marry, it would be the ruin of both. Each has the same faults as the other.'

“And later on:—

“‘Had an explanation with N. B., who declares that, with or without my consent, he will make C. his wife. I have threatened to bring him before the Council; but he defies me, and says he is ready to abandon the society rather than give her up. I must quit this secretly and promptly.’

“We next find him at Treviso, where he

was painting the Basilica of St. Guodolfo, and here he speaks of himself as a lonely old man, deserted and forsaken, showing that his daughter had left him some time before. He alludes to offers that had been made him to go to England; but declares that nothing would induce him to set foot in that country more. One passage would imply that Carlotta, on leaving home, took her sister's boy with her, for, in the old man's writing, there are these words:—

“‘I do not want to hear more of them; but I would wish tidings of the boy. I have dreamed of him twice.’

“From that time forth the journal merely records the places he stopped at, the works he was engaged in, and the sums he received in payment. For the most part, his last labors were in out-of-the-way, obscure spots, where he worked for mere subsistence; and of how long he lived there, and where he died, there is no trace.

“Do I weary you, my dear lady, with these small details of very humble people, or do you really bestow any interest on my story?”

“I like it of all things. I only want to follow Carlotta's history now, and learn what became of her.”

“Of her fate and fortune I know nothing. Indeed, all that I have been telling you heretofore I have gleaned from that book and some old letters of my great-grandfather's. My own history I will not inflict upon you—at least not now. I was a student of the Naval College of Genoa till I was fourteen, and called Anatole Pracontal, ‘dit’ Lami; but who had entered me on the books of the college, who paid for me or interested himself about me, I never knew.

“A boyish scrape I fell into induced me to run away from the college. I took refuge in a small felucca, which landed me at Algiers, where I entered the French service, and made two campaigns with Pelissier; and only quitted the army on learning that my father had been lost at sea, and had bequeathed me some small property, then in the hands of a banker at Naples.

“The property was next to nothing, but by the papers and letters that I found, I learned who I was, and to what station and fortune I had legitimate claim. It seems a small foundation, perhaps, to build upon; but remember how few the steps are in reality, and how direct besides. My grandmother, Enrichetta, was the married wife of Montagu Bramleigh; her son—Godfrey Lami at his birth, but afterwards known by many aliases—married my mother, Marie de Pracontal, a native of Savoy, where I was born,



the name Pracontal being given me. My father's correspondence with the Bramleighs was kept up at intervals during his life, and frequent mention is made in diaries, as well as the banker's books, of sums of money received by him from them. In Bolton's hands, also, was deposited my father's will, where he speaks of me and the claim which I should inherit on the Bramleigh estates; and he earnestly entreats Bolton, who had so often befriended him, to succor his poor boy, and not leave him without help and counsel in the difficulties that were before him.

"Have you followed, or can you follow, the tangled scheme?" cried he, after a pause; "for you are either very patient or completely exhausted—which is it?"

"But why have you taken the name of Pracontal, and not your real name, Bramleigh?" asked she, eagerly.

"By Bolton's advice, in the first instance, he wisely taking into account how rich the family were whose right I was about to question, and how poor I was. Bolton inclined to a compromise, and, indeed, he never ceased to press upon me that it would be the fairest and most generous of all arrangements; but that, to effect this, I must not shock the sensibilities of the Bramleighs by assuming their name—that to do so was to declare war at once."

"And yet, had you called yourself Bramleigh, you would have warned others that the right of the Bramleighs to this estate was at least disputed."

Pracontal could scarcely repress a smile at a declaration so manifestly prompted by selfish considerations; but he made no reply.

"Well, and this compromise, do they agree to it?" asked she, hastily.

"Some weeks ago, I believed it was all concluded; but this very morning my lawyer's letter tells me that Augustus Bramleigh will not hear of it, that he is indignant at the very idea, and that the law alone must decide between us."

"What a scandal!"

"So I thought. Worse, of course, for them, who are in the world and well known. I am a nobody."

"A nobody, who might be somebody tomorrow," said she, slowly and deliberately.

"After all, the stage of pretension is anything but pleasant, and I cannot but regret that we have not come to some arrangement."

"Can I be of use? Could *my* services be employed to any advantage?"

"At a moment, I cannot answer; but I am very grateful for even the thought."

"I cannot pretend to any influence with the family. Indeed, none of them ever liked me; but they might listen to me, and they might also believe that *my* interest went with their own. Would you like to meet Augustus Bramleigh?"

"There is nothing I desire so much."

"I'll not promise he'll come; but if he should consent, will you come here on Tuesday morning—say, at eleven o'clock—and meet him? I know he's expected at Albano by Sunday, and I'll have a letter to propose the meeting in his hands, on his arrival."

"I have no words to speak my gratitude to you."

## CHAPTER XLIII.

### A SPECIAL MISSION.

WHEN a very polite note from Lord Calduff to Mr. Cutbill expressed the deep regret he felt at not being able to receive that gentleman at dinner, as an affair of much moment required his immediate presence at Naples, the noble lord was more correct than it was his usual fate to be in matters of apology. The fact was, that his lordship had left England several weeks before, charged with a most knotty and difficult mission to the Neapolitan court; and though the question involved the misery of imprisonment to some of the persons concerned, and had called forth more than one indignant appeal for information in the House, the great diplomatist sauntered leisurely over the Continent, stopping to chat with a Minister here, or dine with a reigning Prince there, not suffering himself to be hurried by the business before him, or in any way influenced by the petulant despatches and telegrams which F. O. persistently sent after him.

One of his theories was, that in diplomacy everything should be done in a sort of dignified languor that excluded all thought of haste or of emergency. "Haste implies pressure," he would say, "and pressure means weakness: therefore, always seem slow—occasionally, even to indolence."

There was no denying it, he was a great master in that school of his art which professed to baffle every effort at inquiry. No man ever wormed a secret from him that he desired to retain, or succeeded in entrapping him into any accidental admission. He could talk for hours with a frankness that was positively charming. He could display a candor that seemed only short of indiscretion; and yet, when you left him,

you found you had carried away nothing beyond some neatly turned aphorisms, and a few very harmless imitations of Machiavelian subtlety. Like certain men who are fond of showing how they can snuff a candle with a bullet, he was continually exhibiting his skill at fence, with the added assurance that nothing would grieve him so ineffably as any display of his ability at your expense.

He knew well that these subtleties were no longer the mode; that men no longer tried to outwit each other in official intercourse; that the time for such feats of smartness had as much gone by as the age of high neckcloth and tight coats; but yet, as he adhered to the old dandyism of the Regency in his dress, he maintained the old traditions of finesse in his diplomacy, and could no more have been betrayed into a truth than he could have worn a Jim Crow. For that mere plodding, commonplace race of men that now filled "the line" he had the most supreme contempt—men who had never uttered a smart thing, or written a clever one. Diplomacy without epigram was like a dinner without truffles. It was really pleasant to hear him speak of the great days of Metternich and Nesselrode and Talleyrand, when a frontier was settled by a *bon mot*, and a dynasty decided by a doggerel. The hoarse roar of the multitude had not in those times disturbed the polished solemnity of the council-chamber, and the high priests of statecraft celebrated their mysteries unmolested.

"The ninth telegram, my lord," said Temple, as he stood with a cipher dispatch in his hand, just as Lord Culduff had reached his hotel at Naples.

"Transcribe it, my dear boy, and let us hear it."

"I have, my lord. It runs, 'Where is the special envoy? Let him report himself by telegraph.'"

"Reply, 'At dinner, at the Hôtel Victoria; in passably good health, and indifferent spirits.'"

"But, my lord——"

"There, you'd better dress. You are always late. And tell the people here to serve oysters every day till I countermand them; and taste the Capri, please; I prefer it to Sauterne, if it be good. The telegram can wait."

"I was going to mention, my lord, that Prince Castelmuro has called twice to-day, and begged he might be informed of your arrival. Shall I write him a line?"

"No. The request must be replied to by him to whom it was addressed—the landlord, perhaps, or the *laquais-de-place*."

"The king is most anxious to learn if you have come."

"His majesty shall be rewarded for his courteous impatience. I shall ask an audience to-morrow."

"They told me dinner was served," said Lady Culduff, angrily, as she entered the room, dressed as if for a court entertainment; "and I hurried down without putting on my gloves."

"Let me kiss your ladyship's hand so temptingly displayed," said he, stooping and pressing it to his lips.

An impatient gesture of the shoulder, and a saucy curl of the lip, were the only response to this gallantry.

A full half-hour before Lord Culduff appeared Temple Bramleigh re-entered, dressed for dinner.

"Giacomo is at his old tricks, Temple," said she, as she walked the room impatiently. "His theory is that every one is to be in waiting on my lord; and I have been here now close on three-quarters of an hour, expecting dinner to be announced. Will you please to take some trouble about the household, or let us have an attaché who will?"

"Giacomo is impossible—that's the fact; but it's no use saying so."

"I know that," said she, with a malicious twinkle of the eye. "The man who is so dexterous with rouge and pomatum cannot be spared. But can you tell me, Temple, why we came here? There was no earthly reason to quit a place that suited us perfectly because Lady Augusta Bramleigh wished to do us an impertinence."

"Oh, but we ought to have been here six weeks ago. They are frantic at 'the Office' at our delay, and there will be a precious to-do about it in the House."

"Culduff likes that. If he has moments that resemble happiness, they are those when he is so palpably in the wrong that they would ruin any other man than himself."

"Well, he has got one of them now, I can tell you."

"Oh, I am aware of what you diplomatic people call great emergencies, critical conjunctures, and the like; but as Lord Watermore said the other evening, 'All your falls are like those in the circus—you always come down upon sawdust.'"

"There's precious little sawdust here. It's a case will make a tremendous noise in England. When a British subject has been ironed and——"

"Am I late? I shall be in despair, my lady, if I have kept you in waiting," said Lord Culduff, entering in all the glory of



red ribbon and Guelph, and with an unusually brilliant glow of youth and health in his features.

It was with a finished gallantry that he offered his arm; and his smile, as he led her to the dinner-room, was triumph itself. What a contrast to the moody discontent on *her* face; for she did not even affect to listen to his excuses, or bestow the slightest attention on his little flatteries and compliments. During the dinner Lord Culduff alone spoke. He was agreeable after his manner, which was certainly a very finished manner; and he gave little reminiscences of the last time he had been at Naples, and the people he had met, sketching their eccentricities and oddities most amusingly, for he was a master in those light touches of satire which deal with the ways of society, and, perhaps, to any one but his wife he would have been most entertaining and pleasant. She never deigned the very faintest recognition of what he said. She neither smiled when he was witty, nor looked shocked at his levities. Only once, when, by a direct appeal to her, silence was impossible, she said, with a marked spitefulness, "You are talking of something very long ago. I think I heard of that when I was a child." There was a glow under his lordship's rouge as he raised his glass to his lips, and an almost tremor in his voice when he spoke again.

"I'm afraid you don't like Naples, my lady?"

"I detest it."

"The word is strong. Let it be my care to try and induce you to recall it."

"It will be lost time, my lord. I always hated the place and the people, too."

"You were pleased with Rome, I think?"

"And that possibly was the reason we left it. I mean," said she, blushing with shame at the rudeness that had escaped her, "I mean that one is always torn away from the place they are content to live in. It is the inevitable destiny."

"Very pleasant claret that, for hotel wine," said Lord Culduff, passing the bottle to Temple. "The small race of travelers who frequent the Continent now rarely call for the better wines, and the consequence is that Margaux and Marcobrunner get that time to mature in the cellars which was denied to them in former times."

A complete silence now ensued. At last Lord Culduff said, "Shall we have coffee?" and, offering his arm with the same courteous gallantry as before, he led Lady Culduff into the drawing-room, bowing as he

relinquished her hand, as though he stood in the presence of a queen. "I know you are very tolerant," said he, with a bewitching smile, "and as we shall have no visitors this evening, may I ask the favor of being permitted a cigarette—only one?"

"As many as you like. I am going to my room, my lord." And ere he could hasten to open the door, she swept haughtily out of the room, and disappeared.

"We must try and make Naples pleasant for my lady," said Lord Culduff, as he drew his chair to the fire; but there was, somehow, a malicious twinkle in his eye and a peculiar curl of the lip as he spoke, that scarcely vouched for the loyalty of his words; and that Temple heard him with distrust seemed evident by his silence. "You'd better go over to the Legation and say we have arrived. If Blagden asks when he may call, tell him at two to-morrow. Let them send over all the correspondence, and I think we shall want some one out of the chancellerie. Whom have they got? Throw your eye over the list."

Opening a small volume bound in red morocco, Temple read out: "Minister and envoy, Sir Geoffrey Blagden, K.C.B.; first secretary, Mr. Tottenham; second secretaries, Ralph Howard, the Hon. Edward Eccles, and W. Thornton; third secretary, George Hilliard; attaché, Christopher Stepney."

"I only know one of these men. Indeed, I can scarcely say I know him. I knew his father—or his grandfather, perhaps. At all events, take some one who writes a full hand, with the letters very upright, and who seldom speaks, and never has a cold in his head."

"You don't care for any one in particular?" asked Temple, meekly.

"Of course not; no more than for the color of the horse in a hansom. If Blagden hints anything about dining with him, say I don't dine out. Though I serve her Majesty, I do not mean to destroy my constitution; and I know what a Legation dinner means, with a Scotchman for the chief of the mission. I'm so thankful he's not married, or we should have his wife calling on my lady. You can dine there, if you like—indeed, perhaps you ought. If Blagden has an opera-box, say my lady likes the theatre. I think that's all. Stay, don't let him pump you about my going to Vienna; and drop in on me when you come back."

Lord Culduff was fast asleep in a deep arm-chair, before his dressing-room fire, when Temple returned. The young man looked wearied and worn out, as well he

might, for the Minister had insisted on going over the whole "question" to him, far less, indeed, for his information or instruction, than to justify every step the Legation had taken, and to show the utter unfairness and ungenerosity of the Foreign Office in sending out a special mission to treat a matter which the accredited envoy was already bringing to a satisfactory conclusion.

"No, no, my dear boy, no blue-books, no correspondence. I shook my religious principles in early life by reading Gibbon, and I never was quite sure of my grammar since I studied diplomatic despatches. Just tell me the matter as you'd tell a scandal or a railway accident."

"Where shall I begin then?"

"Begin where *we* come in."

"Ah, but I can't tell where that is. You know, of course, that there was a filibustering expedition which landed on the coast, and encountered the revenue guard, and overpowered them, and were in turn attacked, routed, and captured by the Royal troops."

"Ta, ta, ta! I don't want all that. Come down to the events of June—June 27, they call it."

"Well, it was on that day when the *Ercole* was about to get under weigh, with two hundred of these fellows sentenced to the galleys for life, that a tremendous storm broke over the Bay of Naples. Since the memorable hurricane of '92 there had been nothing like it. The sea-wall of the Chiaja was washed away, and a frigate was cast on shore at Caserta with her bowsprit in the palace windows; all the lower town was under water, and many lives lost. But the damage at sea was greatest of all: eight fine ships were lost, the crews having, with some few exceptions, perished with them."

"Can't we imagine a great disaster—a very great disaster? I'll paint my own storm, so pray go on."

"Amongst the merchant shipping was a large American barque which rode out the gale, at anchor, for several hours; but, as the storm increased, her captain, who was on shore, made signal to the mate to slip his cable and run for safety to Castellamare. The mate, a young Englishman, named Rogers—"

"Samuel Rogers?"

"The same, my lord, though it is said not to be his real name. He, either misunderstanding the signal—or, as some say, wilfully mistaking its meaning—took to his launch, with the eight men he had with him, and rowed over to a small

despatch-boat of the Royal Navy, which was to have acted as convoy to the *Ercole*, but whose officers were unable to get on board of her, so that she was actually under the command of a petty officer. Rogers boarded her, and proposed to the man in command to get up the steam and try to save the lives of the people who were perishing on every hand. He refused; an altercation ensued, and the English—for they were all English—overpowered them and sent them below—"

"Don't say under hatches, my dear boy, or I shall expect to see you hitching your trousers next."

Temple reddened, but went on: "They got up steam in all haste, and raised their anchor, but only at the instant that the *Ercole* foundered, quite close to them, and the whole sea was covered with the soldiers and the galley-slaves, who had jumped overboard, and the ship went down. Rogers made for them at once and rescued above a hundred—chiefly of the prisoners—but he saved also many of the crew, and the soldiers. From four o'clock till nine seven, he continued to cruise back and forward through the bay assisting every one who needed help, and saving life on every side. As the gale abated, yielding to the piteous entreaties of the prisoners, who he well knew were political offenders, he landed them all near Baia, and was quietly returning to the mooring-ground whence he had taken the despatch-boat, when he was boarded by two armed boats' crews of the Royal Navy, ironed and carried off to prison."

"That will do, I know the rest. Blagden asked to have them tried in open court, and was told that the trial was over, and that they had been condemned to death, but the sentence was commuted by royal mercy to hard labor at the galleys. I knew your long story before you told it, but listened to hear what new element you might have interpolated since you saw the people at the Legation. I find you, on the whole, very correct. How the Neapolitan Government and H. M.'s Ministers have mistaken, mystified and slanged each other; how they have misinterpreted law and confounded national right; how they have danced a reel through all justice, and changed places with each other some half-dozen times, so that an arbiter—if there were one—would put them both out of court—I have read already in the private correspondence. Even the people in Parliament, patent bunglers as they are in foreign customs, began to ask themselves, Is Filangieri in the pay of Her Majesty?"



and how comes it that Blagden is in the service of Naples?"

"Oh, it's not so bad as that!"

"Yes, it's fully as bad as that. Such a muddled correspondence was probably never committed to print. They thought it a controversy, but the combatants never confronted each other. One appealed to humanity, the other referred to the law; one went off in heroics about gallantry, and the other answered by the galleys. People ought to be taught that diplomatists do not argue, or, if they do, they are mere tyros at their trade. Diplomatists insinuate, suppose, suggest, hope, fear, and occasionally threaten; and with these they take in a tolerably wide sweep of human motives. There, go to bed now, my dear boy; you have had enough of precepts for one evening; tell Giacomo not to disturb me before noon—I shall probably write late into the night."

Temple bowed and took his leave, but scarcely had he reached the stairs than Lord Culduff laid himself in his bed and went off into a sound sleep. Whether his rest was disturbed by dreams; whether his mind went over the crushing things he had in store for the Neapolitan Minister, or the artful excuses he intended to write home; whether he composed sonorous sentences for a blue-book, or invented witty epigrams for a "private and confidential;" or whether he only dreamed of a new preparation of glycerine and otto of roses, which he had seen advertised as an "invaluable accessory to the toilet," this history does not, perhaps need not, record.

As, however, we are not about to follow the course of his diplomatic efforts in our next chapter, it is pleasant to take leave of him in his repose.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

### THE CHURCH PATRONS.

As the season drew to its close at Albano, and the period of returning to Rome approached, the church committee, following the precedent of all previous years, fell out, and held a succession of vestry-meetings for mutual abuse and recrimination. Partisanship is the badge of church patrons, and while the parson had his adherents, and the organist his supporters, there were half a dozen very warm friends who advocated the cause of the bell-ringer—a drunken little heathen, who, because he had never crossed the threshold of a Catho-

lic church for years, was given brevet rank as a member of the Reformed religion.

The time of auditing the church accounts is usually a sort of day of judgment on the clergyman. All the complaints that can be preferred against him are kept for that occasion. A laudable sentiment possibly prompts men to ascertain what they have got for their money; at all events, people in nowise remarkable for personal thrift show at such times a most searching spirit of inquiry, and eagerly investigate the cost of sweeping out the vestry and clear-starching the chaplain's bands.

As to the doctrine of the parson and the value of his ministration, there were a variety of opinions. He was too high for this one, too dry for that; he was not impressive, not solemn nor dignified with some, while others deemed him deficient in that winning familiarity which is so soothing to certain sinners. Some thought his sermons too high-flown and too learned, others asked why he only preached to the children in the gallery. On one only point was there anything like unanimity: each man who withdrew his subscription did so on principle. None, not one, referred his determination to contribute no longer to any motive of economy. All declared that it was something in the celebration of the service—a doctrine inculcated in the pulpit—something the parson had said or something he had worn—obliged them, "with infinite regret," to withdraw what they invariably called "their mite." In fact, one thing was clear: a more high-minded, right-judging, scrupulous body of people could not be found than the congregation, whatever might be said or thought of him whose duty it was to guide them.

Lady Augusta Bramleigh had gone off to Rome, and a small three-cornered note, highly perfumed, and most nervously written, informed the committee that she was quite ready to continue her former subscription, or more, if required; that she was charmed with the chaplain, pleased with the choir, and generally delighted with every one—a testimony more delicately valuable from the fact that she had been but once to the church during the entire season.

Sir Marcus Cluff, after reading out the letter, took occasion to observe on the ventilation of the church, which was defective in many respects. There was a man in King Street—he thought his name was Harmond, or something like Harmond, but it might be Fox—who had invented a self-revolving pane for church windows; it was perfectly noiseless, and the cost a

mere trifle, though it required to be adjusted by one of the patentee's own people; some mistakes having occurred by blundering adaptation, by which two persons had been asphyxiated at Redhill.

The orator was here interrupted by Mrs. Trumpler, who stoutly affirmed that she had come there that day at great inconvenience, and was in nowise prepared to listen to a discourse upon draughts, or the rival merits of certain plumbers. There were higher considerations than these that might occupy them, and she wished to know if Mr. L'Estrange was prepared to maintain the harsh, and she must say the ungenerous and unscholarlike view he had taken of the character of Judas. If so, she withdrew her subscription, but added that she would also in a pamphlet explain to the world the reasons of her retirement, as well as the other grounds of complaint she had against the chaplain.

One humble contributor of fifteen francs alleged that, though nutcrackers were a useful domestic implement, they formed an unpleasant accompaniment to the hymns, and occasionally startled devotionally minded persons during the service; and he added his profound regret at the seeming apathy of the clergyman to the indecent interruption; indeed, he had seen the parson sitting in the reading-desk, while these disturbances continued, to all appearance unmoved and indifferent.

A retired victualler, Mr. Mowser, protested that to see the walk of the clergyman, as he came up the aisle, "was enough for *him*;" and he had only come to the meeting to declare that he himself had gone over to the sect of the Nuremberg Christians, who, at least, were humble-minded and lowly, and who thought their pastor handsomely provided for with a thousand francs a year and a suit of black clothes at Christmas.

In a word, there was much discontent abroad, and a very general opinion seemed to prevail that, what with the increasing dearness of butcher's meat, and an extra penny lately added to the income-tax, it behoved every one to see what wise and safe economy could be introduced into their affairs. It is needless to say how naturally it suggested itself to each that the church subscription was a retrenchment at once practicable and endurable.

Any one who wishes to convince himself how dear to the Protestant heart is the right of private judgment, has only to attend a vestry meeting of a church supported on the voluntary system. It is the very grandest assertion of that great prin-

iple. There is not a man there represented by ten francs annual subscription who has not very decided opinions of the doctrine he requires for his money; and thus, while no one agreed with his neighbor, all concurred in voting that they deemed the chaplain had not fulfilled their expectations, and that they reserved their right to contribute or not for the ensuing year, as future thought and consideration should determine.

L'Estrange had gone into Rome to meet Augustus Bramleigh and Ellen, who were coming to pass the Christmas with him, when Sir Marcus Cluff called to announce this unpleasant resolution of the Church patrons.

"Perhaps I could see Miss L'Estrange?" said he to the servant, who had said her master was from home.

Julia was seated working at the window as Sir Marcus entered the room.

"I hope I do not come at an unseemly hour; I scarcely know the time one ought to visit here;" he began, as he fumbled to untie the strings of his respirator. "How nice and warm your room is! and a south aspect, too. Ah! that's what my house fails in."

"I'm so sorry my brother is not at home, Sir Marcus. He will regret not meeting you."

"And I'm sorry, too. I could have have broken the bad news to him, perhaps, better than—I mean—oh, dear! if I begin coughing, I shall never cease. Would you mind my taking my drops? They are only aconite and lettuce; and if I might ask for a little fresh water. I'm so sorry to be troublesome."

Though all anxiety to know to what bad news he referred, she hastened to order the glass of water he desired, and calmly resumed her seat.

"It's spasmodic, this cough. I don't know if that be any advantage, or the reverse; but the doctor says 'only spasmodic,' which would lead one to suppose it might be worse. Would you do me the great favor to drop thirty-five—be sure only thirty-five—of these? I hope your hand does not shake?"

"No, Sir Marcus. It is very steady."

"What a pretty hand it is! How taper your fingers are; but you have these dimples at the knuckles they say are such signs of cruelty."

"Oh, Sir Marcus!"

"Yes, they say so. Nana Sahib had them, and that woman—there, there, you have given me thirty-seven."

"No, I assure you, Sir Marcus; only



thirty-five. I'm a practiced hand at dropping medicine. My brother used to have violent headaches."

"And you always measured his drops, did you?"

"Always. I'm quite a clever nurse, I assure you."

"Oh, dear! do you say so?" And as he laid down his glass he looked at her with an expression of interest and admiration, which pushed her gravity to its last limit.

"I don't believe a word about the cruelty they ascribe to those dimples. I pledge you my word of honor I do not," said he, seriously.

"I'm sincerely glad to hear you say so," said she, trying to seem grave.

"And is your brother much of an invalid?"

"Not now. The damp climate of Ireland gave him headaches, but he rarely has them here."

"Ah, and you have such a quiet way of moving about; that gentle gliding step, so soothing to the sick. Oh you don't know what a boon it is; and the common people never have it, nor can they acquire it. When you went to ring the bell, I said to myself, 'That's it; that's what all the teaching in the world cannot impart.'"

"You will make me very vain, Sir Marcus. All the more that you give me credit for merits I never suspected."

"Have you a cold hand?" asked he, with a look of eagerness.

"I really don't know. Perhaps I have."

"If I might dare. Ah," said he, with much feeling, as he touched her hand in the most gentle manner—"ah! that is the greatest gift of nature. A small hand, perfect in form, beautiful in color, and cold as marble."

Julia could resist no longer, but laughed out one of those pleasant, merry laughs whose music makes an echo in the heart.

"I know well enough what you are saying to yourself. I think I hear you muttering, 'What an original, what a strange creature it is!' and so I am, I won't deny it. One who has been an invalid for eighteen years; eighteen years passed in the hard struggle with an indolent alimentary system, for they say it's no more. There's nothing organic; nothing whatever. Structurally, said Dr. Boreas of Leamington, structurally you are as sound as a roach. I don't fully appreciate the comparison, but I take it the roach must be a very healthy fish. Oh, here's your brother coming across the garden. I wish he had not come just yet; I had a—no matter,

perhaps you'd permit me to have a few words with you to-morrow?"

"To-morrow, or whenever you like, Sir Marcus, but pray forgive me if I run away now to ask my brother if our visitors have come."

"They'll be here to-morrow evening, Ju," said George, as she rushed to meet him. "Is that Cluff's phaeton I see at the gate?"

"Yes; the tiresome creature has been here the last hour. I'll not go back to him. You must take your share now."

By the time L'Estrange entered the room, Sir Marcus had replaced his respirator, and enveloped himself in two of his overcoats and a fur boa. "Oh, here you are," said he, speaking with much difficulty. "I can't talk now; it brings on the cough. Come over in the evening, and I'll tell you about it."

"About what pray?" asked the other, curtly.

"There's no use being angry. It only hurries the respiration, and chokes the pulmonary vessels. They won't give a sixpence—not one of them. They say that you don't preach St. Paul—that you think too much about works. I don't know what they don't say; but come over about seven."

"Do you mean that the subscribers have withdrawn from the church?"

Sir Marcus had not breath for further discussion, but made a gesture of assent with his head.

L'Estrange sank down on a chair overpowered, nor did he speak to, or notice, the other as he withdrew.

"Are you ill, dearest George?" said Julia, as she saw her brother pale and motionless on the chair. "Are you ill?"

"They've all withdrawn from the church, Julia. Cluff says they are dissatisfied with me, and will contribute no longer."

"I don't believe it's so bad as he says. I'm sure it's not. They cannot be displeased with you, George. It's some passing misconception. You know how they're given to these little bickerings and squabbles; but they have ever been kind and friendly to you."

"You always give me courage, Ju; and even when I have little heart for it, I like it."

"Come into dinner now, George; and if I don't make you laugh, it's a wonder to me. I have had such a scene with Sir Marcus as might have graced a comedy."

It was not an easy task to rally her brother back to good spirits, but she did succeed at last. "And now," said she, as she saw him looking once more at ease and

cheerful, "what news of the Bramleighs—are they ever to come?"

"They'll be here to-morrow evening. Ju. Unless they were quite sure the Cudduffs had left for Naples, they would not venture here; and perhaps they were so far in the right."

"I don't think so; at least, if I had been Nelly, I'd have given any thing for such an opportunity of presenting myself to my distinguished relations and terrifying them by the thought of those attentions that they can neither give me nor deny me."

"No, no, Julia, nothing of the kind; there would be malice in that."

"Do I deny it? A great deal of malice in it, and there's no good comedy in life without a slight flavor of spitefulness. Oh, my poor dear George, what a deep sigh that was! How sad it is to think that all your example and all your precept do so little, and that your sister acquires nothing by your companionship except the skill to torment you!"

"But why will you say those things that you don't mean—that you couldn't feel?"

"I believe I do it, George, just the way a horse bounds and rears and buck-leaps. It does not help him on his road, but it lightens the journey; and then it offers such happy occasion for the exercise of that nice light hand of my brother to check these aberrations. You ought to be eternally grateful for the way I develop your talents as a moralist—I was going to say a horse-breaker."

"I suppose," said he, after a moment's silence, "I ought to go over to Sir Marcus and learn from him exactly how matters stand here."

"No, no; never mind him—at least, not this evening. Bores are bad enough in the morning, but after dinner, when one really wants to think well of their species, they are just intolerable; besides, I composed a little song while you were away, and I want you to hear it, and then you know we must have some serious conversation about Sir Marcus; he is to be here to-morrow."

"I declare, Ju——"

"There, don't declare, but open the pianoforte, and light the candles; and as I mean to sing for an hour at least, you may have that cigar that you looked so lovingly at, and put back into the case. Ain't I good for you, as the French say?"

"Very good, too good for me," said he, kissing her, and now every trace of his sorrow was gone, and he looked as happy as might be.

## CHAPTER XLV.

### A PLEASANT DINNER.

PRUDENT people will knit their brows, and wise people shake their heads, at the bare mention of it; but I cannot help saying that there is a wonderful fascination in those little gatherings which bring a few old friends around the same board, who, forgetting all the little pinchings and straits of narrow fortune, give themselves up for once to enjoyment without a thought for the cost or a care for the morrow. I do not want this to pass for sound morality, nor for a discreet line of conduct. I only say that in the spirit that can subdue every sentiment that would jar on the happiness of the hour, there is a strength and vitality that shows this feeling is not born of mere conviviality, but of something deeper, and truer, and heartier.

"If we only had poor Jack here," whispered Augustus Bramleigh to L'Estrange, as they drew around the Christmas fire. "I'd say this was the happiest hearth I know of."

"And have you no tidings of him?" said L'Estrange, in the same low tone; for, although the girls were in eager talk together, he was afraid Julia might overhear what was said.

"None, except that he sailed from China on board an American clipper for Smyrna, and I am now waiting for news from the consul there, to whom I have written, enclosing a letter for him."

"And he is serving as a sailor?"

Bramleigh nodded.

"What is the mysterious conversation going on there?" said Julia. "How grave George looks; and Mr. Bramleigh seems overwhelmed with a secret of importance!"

"I guess it," said Nelly, laughing. "Your brother is relating your interview with Sir Marcus Cluff, and they are speculating on what is to come of it."

"Oh, that reminds me!" cried L'Estrange, suddenly, "Sir Marcus's servant brought me a letter just as I was dressing for dinner. Here it is. What a splendid seal—supporters, too! Have I permission to read it?"

"Read? Read by all means!" cried Julia.

"DEAR SIR:—If I could have sufficiently conquered my bronchitis as to have ventured out this morning, I would have made you my personal apologies for not having received you last night when you did me the honor to call, as well as opened



to you by word of mouth what I am now reduced to convey by pen."

"He is just as prolix as when he talks," said Julia.

"It's a large hand, however, and easy to read. My old enemy the larynx—more in fault than even the bronchial tubes—is again in arms—"

"Oh! do spare us his anatomical disquisition, George. Skip him down to where he proposes for me."

"But it is what he does not. You are not mentioned in the whole of it. It is all about church matters. It is an explanation of why every one has withdrawn his subscription and left the establishment, and why he alone is faithful and willing to contribute, even to the extent of five pounds additional—"

"This is too heartless by half. The man has treated me shamefully."

"I protest I think so, too," said Nelly, with a mock seriousness. "He relies upon your brother's gown for his protection."

"Shall I have him out? But, by the way, why do you call me Mr. Bramleigh? Wasn't I Augustus—or, rather, Gusty—when we met last?"

"I don't think so. So well as I remember, I treated you with great respect, dashed with a little bit of awe. You and your elder sister were always 'personages' to me."

"I cannot understand that. I can easily imagine Temple inspiring that deference you speak of."

"You were the true prince, however, and I had all Falstaff's reverence for the true prince."

"And yet you see after all I am like to turn out only a pretender."

"By the way, the pretender is here. I mean—if it be not a bull to say it—the real pretender, Count Pracontal."

"Count Pracontal de Bramleigh, George," said Julia, correcting him. "It is the drollest mode of assuming a family name I ever heard of."

"What is he like?" asked Ellen.

"Like a very well-bred Frenchman of the worst school of French manners. He has none of that graceful ease and that placid courtesy of the past period, but he has abundance of the volatile readiness and showy smartness of the present day. They are a wonderful race, however, and their smattering is better than other men's learning."

"I want to see him," said Augustus.

"Well," broke in L'Estrange, "Lady

Augusta writes to me to say he wants to see you."

"What does Lady Augusta know of him?"

"Heaven knows," cried Julia; "but they are always together; their rides over the Campagna furnish just now the chief scandal of Rome. George, you may see, looks very serious and rebukeful about it; but, if the truth were told, there's a little jealousy at the root of his morality."

"I declare, Julia, this is too bad."

"Too true, also, my dear George. Will you deny that you used to ride out with her nearly every evening in the summer, rides that began at sunset and ended—I was always asleep when you came home, and so I never knew when they ended?"

"Was she very agreeable?" asked Nelly, with the faintest tinge of sharpness in her manner.

"The most—what shall I call it?—inconsequent woman I ever met, mixing up things the most dissimilar together, and never dwelling for an instant on anything."

"How base men are!" said Julia, with mock reproach in her voice. "This is the way he talks of a woman he absolutely persecuted with attentions the whole season. Would you believe it, Nelly, we cut up our nice little garden to make a school to train her horse in?"

Whether it was that some secret intelligence was rapidly conveyed from Julia as she spoke to Nelly, or that the latter of herself caught up the quizzing spirit of her attack, but the two girls burst out laughing, and George blushed deeply, in shame and irritation.

"First of all," said he, stammering with confusion, "she had a little Arab, the wickedest animal I ever saw. It wasn't safe to approach him; he struck out with his forelegs—"

"Come, Nelly," said Julia, rising, "we'll go into the drawing-room, and leave George to explain how he tamed the Arab and captivated the Arab's mistress, for your brother might like to learn the secret. You'll join us, gentlemen, when you wish for coffee."

"That was scarcely fair, Julia dear," said Nelly when they were alone. "Your banter is sometimes too sharp for him."

"I can't help it, dearest—it is a part of my nature. When I was a child, they could not take me to a wild-beast show, for I would insist on poking straws at the tiger—not that poor dear George has much 'tiger' in him. But do you know, Nelly," said she, in a graver tone, "that

when people are very poor, when their daily lives are beset by the small accidents of narrow fortune, there is a great philosophy in a little banter? You brush away many an annoyance by seeming to feel it matter for drollery, which, if taken seriously, might have made you fretful and peevish."

"I never suspected there was method in your madness, Ju," said Nelly, smiling.

"Nor was there, dearest; the explanation was almost an afterthought. But come now and tell me about yourselves."

"There is really little to tell. Augustus never speaks to me now of business matters. I think I can see that he is not fully satisfied with himself; but, rather than show weakness or hesitation, he is determined to go on as he began."

"And you are really going to this dreary place?"

"He says so."

"Would any good come, I wonder, of bringing your brother and Pracontal together? They are both men of high and generous feelings. Each seems to think that there ought to be some other settlement than a recourse to lawyers. Do you think he would refuse to meet Pracontal?"

"That is a mere chance. There are days he would not listen to such a proposal, and there are times he would accept it heartily; but the suggestion must not come from me. With all his love for me, he rather thinks that I secretly disapprove of what he has done, and would reverse it if I knew how."

"What if I were to hint at it? He already said he wished to see him. This might be mere curiosity, however. What if I were to say, 'Why not meet Pracontal? Why not see what manner of man he is? There is nothing more true than the saying that half the dislikes people conceive against each other would give way if they would condescend to become acquainted.'"

"As I have just said, it is a mere chance whether he would consent, and then——"

"Oh, I know! It would be also a chance what might come of it."

Just as she said this the young men entered the room, with smiling faces, and apparently in high good humor.

"Do you know the plan we've just struck out?" cried Bramleigh. "George is to come and live at Cattaro. I'm to make him consular chaplain."

"But is there such an appointment?" asked Julia, eagerly.

"Heaven knows; but if there is not, there ought to be."

"And the salary, Mr. Bramleigh? Who pays it? What is it?"

"There again I am at fault; but Her Majesty could never intend we should live like heathens," said Augustus, "and we shall arrange it somehow."

"Oh, if it were not for 'somehow,'" said Julia, "we poor people would be worse off in life than we are; but there are so many what the watchmakers call escapements in existence, the machinery manages to survive scores of accidents."

"At all events, we shall be all together," said Augustus, "and we shall show a stouter front to fortune than if we were to confront her singly."

"I think it a delightful plan," said Julia.

"What says Nelly?"

"I think," said Nelly, gravely, "that it is more than kind in you to follow us into our banishment."

"Then let us set off at once," said Augustus, "for I own to you I wish to be out of men's sight, out of earshot of their comments, while this suit is going on. It is the publicity that I dread far more than even the issue. Once that we reach this wild barbarism we are going to, you will see I will bear myself with better spirits and better temper."

"And will you not see M. Pracontal before you go?" asked Julia.

"Not if I can avoid it; unless, indeed, you all think I ought."

Julia looked at Nelly, and then at her brother. She looked as if she wanted them to say something—anything; but neither spoke, and then, with a courage that never failed her, she said:

"Of course we think that a meeting between two people who have no personal reasons for dislike, but have a great question to be decided in favor of one of them, cannot but be useful. If it will not lead to a friendship, it may at least disarm a prejudice."

"I wish I had you for my counsel, Julia," said Bramleigh, smiling. "Is it yet too late to send you a brief?"

"Perhaps I am engaged for the other side."

"At all events," said he, more seriously, "if it be a blunder to meet the man, it cannot much matter. The question between us must be decided elsewhere, and we need not add the prejudices of ignorance to the rancor of self-interest. I'll see him."

"That's right; I'm sure that's right," said L'Estrange. "I'll despatch a note to Lady Augusta, who is eager for your answer."



## CHAPTER XLVI.

## A STROLL AND A GOSSIP.

As well to have a long talk together as to enjoy the glorious beauty and freshness of the Campagna, the two young men set out the next morning for a walk to Rome. It was one of those still cold days of winter, with a deep-blue sky above, and an atmosphere clear as crystal as they started.

There was not in the fortunes of either of them much to cheer the spirits or encourage hope, and yet they felt—they knew not why—a sense of buoyancy and light-heartedness they had not known for many a day back.

“How is it, George,” asked Augustus, “can you explain it that when the world went well with me, when I could stroll out into my own woods, and walk for hours over my own broad acres, I never felt so cheery as I do to-day?”

“It was the same spirit made you yesterday declare you enjoyed our humble dinner with a heartier zest than those grand banquets that were daily served up at Castello.”

“Just so. But that does not solve the riddle for me. I want to know the why of all this. It is no high sustaining consciousness of doing the right thing; no grand sense of self-approval: for, in the first place, I never had a doubt that we were not the rightful owners of the estate, nor am I now supported by the idea that I am certainly and indubitably on the right road, because nearly all my friends think the very reverse.” L'Estrange made no answer. Bramleigh went on: “You yourself are so minded, George. Out with it, man; say at once you think me wrong.”

“I have too little faith in my own judgment to go that far.”

“Well, will you say that you would have acted differently yourself? Come, I think you can answer that question.”

“No, I cannot.”

“You can't say whether you would have done as I have, or something quite different?”

“No; there is only one thing I know I should have done—I'd have consulted Julia.”

If Bramleigh laughed at this avowal the other joined him, and for awhile nothing was said on either side. At last, Bramleigh said, “I, too, have a confession to make. I thought that if I were to resist this man's claim by the power of superior wealth I should be acting as dishonorably as though I had fought an unarmed man

with a revolver. I told Sedley my scruples, but though he treated them with little deference, there they were, and I could not dismiss them. It was this weakness—Sedley would give it no other name than weakness—of mine that made him incline to settle the matter by a compromise. For a while I yielded to the notion; I'm afraid that I yielded even too far—at least Cutbill opines that one of my letters actually gives a distinct consent, but I don't think so. I know that my meaning was to say to my lawyer, ‘This man's claim may push me to publicity and much unpleasantness, without any benefit to him. He may make me a nine-days' wonder in the newspapers and a town talk, and never reap the least advantage from it. To avoid such exposure I would pay, and pay handsomely; but if you really opined that I was merely stifling a just demand, such a compromise would only bring me lasting misery.’ Perhaps I could not exactly define what I meant; perhaps I expressed myself imperfectly and ill; but Sedley always replied to me by something that seemed to refute my reasonings. At the same time Lord Culduff and Temple treated my scruples with an open contempt. I grew irritable, and possibly less reasonable, and I wrote long letters to Sedley to justify myself and sustain the position I had taken. Of these, indeed of none of my letters, have I copies; and I am told now that they contain admissions which will show that I yielded to the plan of a compromise. Knowing, however, what I felt—what I still feel on the matter, I will not believe this. At all events the world shall see now that I leave the law to take its course. If Pracontal can establish his right, let him take what he owns. I only bargain for one thing, which is, not to be expelled ignominiously from the house in which I was never the rightful owner. It is the act of abdication, George—the moment of dethronement, that I could not face. It is an avowal of great weakness, I know; but I struggle against it in vain. Every morning when I awoke the same thought met me, am I a mere pretender here? and by some horrible perversity, which I cannot explain, the place, the house, the grounds, the gardens, the shrubberies, the deer-park, grew inexpressibly more dear to me than ever I had felt them. There was not an old ash on the lawn that I did not love; the shady walks through which I had often passed without a thought upon them grow now to have a hold upon and attraction for me that I cannot describe. What shall I be without these dear familiar spots; what will become

of me when I shall no longer have these deep glades, these silent woods, to wander in? This became at last so strong upon me that I felt there was but one course to take—I must leave the place at once, and never return to it till I knew that it was my own beyond dispute. I could do that now, while the issue was still undetermined, which would have broken my heart if driven to do on compulsion. Of course, this was a matter between me and my own conscience; I had not courage to speak of it to a lawyer, nor did I. Sedley, however, was vexed that I should take any steps without consulting him. He wrote me a letter—almost an angry letter—and he threatened—for it really amounted to a threat, to say that, to a client so decidedly bent on guiding his own case, he certainly felt his services could scarcely be advantageously contributed. I rejoined, perhaps not without irritation; and I am now expecting by each post either his submission to my views, or to hear that he has thrown up the direction of my cause.”

“And he was your father’s adviser for years!” said L’Estrange, with a tone almost despondent.

“But for which he never would have assumed the tone of dictation he has used towards me. Lord Culduff, I remember, said, ‘The first duty of a man on coming to his property is to change his agent, and his next to get rid of the old servants.’ I do not like the theory, George; but from a certain point of view it is not without reason.”

“I suspect that neither you nor I want to look at life from that point of view,” said L’Estrange, with some emotion.

“Not till we can’t help, I’m sure; but these crafty men of the world say that we all arrive at their *modus operandi* in the end; that however generously, however trustfully and romantically we start on the morning of life, before evening we come to see that, in this game we call the world, it is only the clever player that escapes ruin.”

“I don’t—that is, I won’t believe that.”

“Quite right, George. The theory would tell terribly against fellows like us; for, let us do our very best, we must be bunglers at the game. What a clever pair of backs are those yonder! That grey the lady is on has very showy action.”

“Look at the liver chestnut the groom is riding. There’s the horse for my money—so long and so low—a regular turnspit, and equal to any weight. I declare that’s Lady Augusta, and that’s Pracontal with her. See how the Frenchman charges the

ox-fences; he’ll come to grief if he rides at speed against timber.”

The party on horseback passed in a little dip of the ground near them at a smart canter, and soon were out of sight again.

“What a strange intimacy for her, is it not?”

“Julia says the dash of indiscretion in it was the temptation she couldn’t resist, and I suspect she’s right. She said to me herself, one day, ‘I love skating, but I never care for it except the ice is so thin that I hear it giving way on every side as I go.’”

“She gave you her whole character in that one trait. The pleasure that wasn’t linked to a peril had no charm for her. She ought, however, to see that the world will regard this intimacy as a breach of decency.”

“So she does. She’s dying to be attacked about it; at least, so Julia says.”

“The man, too, if he be an artful fellow, will learn many family details about us, that may disserve us. If it went no further than to know in what spirit we treat his claim—whether we attach importance to his pretensions or not—these are all things he need not, should not, be informed upon.”

“Cutbill—who, somehow, hears everything—told us t’other morning that Pracontal is ‘posted’ up—that was his phrase—as to the temper and nature of every member of your family, and knows to a nicety how to deal with each.”

“Then I don’t see why we should meet.”

“Julia says it is precisely for that very reason. People are always disparaged by these biographical notices; their caprices are assumed to be tastes, and their mere humors are taken for traits of character; and she declares that it will be a good service to the truth, that bringing you together. Don’t take my version, however, of her reasons, but ask her to give them to you herself.”

“Isn’t that the wall of the city? I declare we are quite close to Rome already. Now, then, first to leave my name for Lady Augusta—not sorry to know I shall not find her at home, for I never understood her, George. I never do understand certain people, whether their levity means that it is the real nature, or simply a humor put on to get rid of you, as though to say, rather than let you impose any solemnity upon me, or talk seriously, I’ll have a game at shuttlecock!”

“She always puzzled me,” said L’Estrange, “but that wasn’t hard to do.”



"I suspect, George, that neither you nor I know much about women."

"For *my* part, I know nothing at all about them."

"And I not much."

After this frank confession on either side, they walked along, each seemingly deep in his own thought, and said little till they reached the city. Leaving them, then, on their way to Lady Augusta's house, where Bramleigh desired to drop his card, we turned for a moment to the little villa at Albano, in front of which a smart groom was leading a lady's horse, while in the distance a solitary rider was slowly walking his horse, and frequently turning his looks towards the gate of the villa.

The explanation of all this was, that Lady Augusta had taken the opportunity, of being near the L'Estranges, to pay a visit to the Bramleights, leaving Pracontal to wait for her till she came out.

"This visit is for you, Nelly," said Julia, as she read the card; "and I'll make my escape."

She had but time to get out of the room when Lady Augusta entered.

"My dear child," said she, rushing into Nelly's arms, and kissing her with rapturous affection—"my dear child, what a happiness to see you again, and how well you are looking! You're handsomer, I declare, than Marion. Yes, darling. Don't blush; it's perfectly true. Where's Augustus? Has he come with you?"

"He has gone in to Rome to see you," said Nelly, whose face was still crimson, and who felt flurried and agitated by the flighty impetuosity of the other.

"I hope it was to say that you are both coming to me? Yes, dearest, I'll take no excuse. It would be a town-talk if you stopped anywhere else: and I have such a nice little villa—a mere baby-house, but quite large enough to hold you; and my brother-in-law will take Augustus about, and show him Rome, and I shall have you all to myself. We have much to talk of, haven't we?"

Nelly murmured an assent, and the other continued:—

"It's all so sudden, and so dreadful—one doesn't realize it; at least, I don't. And it usually takes me an hour or two of a morning to convince me that we are all ruined; and then I set to work thinking how I am to live on—I forget exactly what—how much is it, darling? Shall I be able to keep my dear horses? I'd rather die than part with Ben Azir; one of the Sultan's own breeding; an Arab of blue blood, Nelly, think of that! I've refused

fabulous sums for him; but he is such a love, and follows me everywhere, and rears up when I scold him—and all to be swept away as if it was a dream. What do you mean to do, dearest? Marry, of course. I know that—but in the meanwhile?"

"We are going to Cattaro. Augustus has been named consul there."

"Darling child, you don't know what you are saying. Isn't a consul a horrid creature that lives in a sea-port, and worries merchant seamen, and imprisons people who have no passports?"

"I declare I haven't a notion of his duties," said Nelly, laughing.

"Oh, I know them perfectly. Papa always wrote to the consul about getting heavy baggage through the custom-house; and when our servants quarreled with the porters, or the hotel people, it was the consul sent some of them to jail; but you are aware, darling, he isn't a creature one knows. They are simply impossible, dear, impossible." And as she spoke she lay back in her chair, and fanned herself as though actually overcome by the violence of her emotion.

"I must hope Augustus will not be impossible;" and Nelly said this with a dry mixture of humor and vexation.

"He can't help it, dearest. It will be from no fault of his own. Let a man be what he may, once he derogates there's an end of him. It sounds beautifully, I know, to say that he will remain gentleman and man of station, through all the accidents of life; so he might, darling, so long as he did nothing—absolutely nothing. The moment, however, he touches an *emploi* it's all over; from that hour he becomes the Customs creature, or the consul, or the factor, or whatever it be, irrevocably. Do you know that is the only way to keep men of family out of small official life? We should see them keeping lighthouses if it were not for the obloquy."

"And it would be still better than dependence."

"Yes, dearest, in a novel—in a three-volume thing from Mudie—so it would; but real life is not half so accommodating. I'll talk to Gusty about this myself. And now, do tell me about yourself. Is there no engagement, no fatal attachment, that all this change of fortune has blighted? Who is he, dearest? Tell me all. You don't know what a wonderful creature I am for expedients. There never was the like of me for resources. I could always pull any one through a difficulty but myself."

"I am sorry I have no web to offer you for disentanglement."

"So, then, he has behaved well; he has not deserted you in your change of fortune?"

"There is really no one in the case," said Nelly, laughing. "No one to be either faithful or unworthy."

"Worse again, dearest. There is nothing so good at your age as an unhappy attachment. A girl without a grievance always mopes; and," added she, with a marked acuteness of look, "moping ages one quicker than downright grief. The eyes get a heavy expression, and the mouth drags at the corners, and the chin—isn't it funny, now, such a stolid feature as the chin should take on to worry us?—but the chin widens and becomes square, like those Egyptian horrors in the museum."

"I must look to that," said Nelly, gravely. "I'd be shocked to find my chin betraying me."

"And men are such wretches. There is no amount of fretting they don't exact from us; but if we show any signs of it afterwards—any hard lines about the eyes, or any patchiness of color in the cheek—they cry out, 'Isn't she gone off?' That's their phrase. 'Isn't she gone off?'"

"How well you understand, how well you read them!"

"I should think I do; but after all, dearest, they have very few devices: if it wasn't that they can get away, run off to the clubs and their other haunts, they would have no chance with us. See how they fare in country houses, for instance. How many escape there! What a nice stuff your dress is made of!"

"It was very cheap."

"No matter, it's English. That's the great thing here. Any one can buy a 'gros.' What one really wants is a nameless texture and a neutral tint. You must positively walk with me on the Pincian in that dress. Roman men remark everything. You'll not be ten minutes on the promenade till every one will know whether you wear two buttons on your gloves or three."

"How odious!"

"How delightful! Why, my dear child, for whom do we dress? Not for each other: no more than the artists of a theatre act or sing for the rest of the company. Our audience is before us; not always a very enlightened or cultivated one, but always critical. There, do look at that stupid groom; see how he suffers my horse to lag behind: the certain way to have him kicked by the other; and I should die, I mean really die, if anything happened to Ben Azir. By the way, how well our parson

rides. I declare I like him better in the saddle than in the pulpit. They rave here about the way he jumps the ox-fences. You must say *tant des choses* for me, to him and his sister, whom I fear I have treated shamefully. I was to have had her to dinner one day, and I forgot all about it; but she didn't mind, and wrote me the prettiest note in the world. But I always say, it is so easy for people of small means to be good-tempered. They have no jealousies about going here or there; no heart-burnings that such a one's lace is Brussels point, and much finer than their own. Don't you agree with me? There, I knew it would come to that. He's got the snaffle out of Ben Azir's mouth, and he's sure to break away."

"That gentleman apparently has come to the rescue. See, he has dismounted to set all to rights."

"How polite of him! Do you know him, dear?"

"No. I may have seen him before. I'm so terribly short-sighted, and this glass does not suit me; but I must be going. I suppose I had better thank that strange man, hadn't I? Oh, of course, dearest, you would be too bashful; but I'm not. My old governess, Madame de Forgeon, used to say that English people never knew how to be bashful; they only looked culpable. And I protest she was right."

"The gentleman is evidently waiting for your gratitude; he is standing there still."

"What an observant puss it is!" said Lady Augusta, kissing her. "Tell Gusty to come and see me. Settle some day to come in and dine, and bring the parson: he's a great favorite of mine. Where have I dropped my gauntlet? Oh, here it is. Pretty whip, isn't it? A present, a sort of love-gift, from an old Russian prince, who wanted me to marry him: and I said I was afraid; that I heard Russians knouted their wives. And so he assured me I should have the only whip he ever used, and sent me this. It was neat, or rather, as Dumas says, 'La plaisanterie n'était pas mal pour un Cosaque.' Good-bye, dearest, good-bye."

So actually exhausted was poor Nelly by the rattling impetuosity of Lady Augusta's manner, her sudden transitions, and abrupt questionings, that, when Julia entered the room, and saw her lying back in a chair, wearied-looking and pale, she asked:—

"Are you ill, dear?"

"No, but I am actually tired. Lady Augusta has been an hour here, and she has talked till my head turned."

"I feel for you sincerely. She gave me one of the worst headaches I ever had, and



then made my illness a reason for staying all the evening here to bathe my temples."

"That was good-natured, however."

"So I'd have thought, too, but that she made George attend her with the ice and the eau-de-cologne, and thus maintained a little ambulant flirtation with him, that, sick as I was, almost drove me mad."

"She means nothing, I am certain, by all these levities, or, rather, she does not care what they mean; but here come our brothers, and I am eager for news, if they have any."

"Where's George?" asked Julia, as Augustus entered alone.

"Sir Marcus something caught him at the gate, and asked to have five minutes with him."

"That means putting off dinner for an hour at least," said she, half pettishly. "I must go and warn the cook."

## CHAPTER XLVII.

### A PROPOSAL IN FORM.

WHEN Sir Marcus Cluff was introduced into L'Estrange's study, his first care was to divest himself of his various "wraps," a process not very unlike that of the *Hamlet* grave-digger. At length, he arrived at a suit of entire chamois-leather, in which he stood forth like an enormous frog, and sorely pushed the parson's gravity in consequence.

"This is what Hazeldean calls the 'chest-sufferer's true cuticle.' Nothing like leather, my dear sir, in pulmonic affections. If I'd have known it earlier in life, I'd have saved half of my left lung, which is now hopelessly hepatized."

L'Estrange looked compassionate, though not very well knowing what it was he had pity for.

"Not," added the invalid, hastily, "that even this constitutes a grave constitutional defect. Davies says, in his second volume, that among the robust men of England you would not find one in twenty without some lungular derangement. He percussed me all over, and was some time before he found out the blot." The air of triumph in which this was said showed L'Estrange that he, too, might afford to look joyful.

"So that, with this reservation, sir, I do consider I have a right to regard myself, as Bercas pronounced me, sound as a roach."

"I sincerely hope so."

"You see, sir, I mean to be frank with you. I descend to no concealments."

It was not very easy for L'Estrange to understand this speech, or divine what especial necessity there was for his own satisfaction as to the condition of Sir Marcus Cluff's viscera; he, however, assented in general terms to the high esteem he felt for candor and openness.

"No, my dear Mr. L'Estrange," resumed he, "without this firm conviction—a sentiment based on faith and the stethoscope together—you had not seen me here this day."

"The weather is certainly trying," said L'Estrange.

"I do not allude to the weather, sir; the weather is, for the season, remarkably fine weather; there was a mean temperature of 68° Fahrenheit during the last twenty-four hours. I spoke of my pulmonary condition, because I am aware people are in the habit of calling me consumptive. It is the indiscriminating way ignorance treats a very complex question; and when I assured you that without an honest conviction that organic mischief had not proceeded far, I really meant what I said when I told you you would not have seen me here this day."

Again was the parson mystified, but he only bowed.

"Ah, sir," sighed the other, "why will not people be always candid and sincere? And when shall we arrive at the practice of what will compel, actually compel, sincerity? I tell you, for instance, I have an estate worth so much—house property here, and shares in this or that company—but there are mortgages, I don't say how much against me; I have no need to say it. You drive down to the Registration Office and you learn to a shilling to what extent I am liable. Why not have the same system for physical condition, sir? Why can't you call on the College of Physicians, or whatever the body be, and say, 'How is Sir Marcus Cluff? I'd like to know about that right auricle of his heart. What about his pancreas?' Don't you perceive the inestimable advantage of what I advise?"

"I protest, sir, I scarcely follow you. I do not exactly see how I have the right, or to what extent I am interested, to make this inquiry."

"You amaze—you actually amaze me!" and Sir Marcus sat for some seconds contemplating the object of his astonishment. "I come here, sir, to make an offer for your sister's hand——"

"Pardon my interrupting, but I learn this intention only now."

"Then you didn't read my note. You didn't read the 'turn over.'"

"I am afraid not. I only saw what referred to the church."

"Then, sir, you missed the most important; had you taken the trouble to turn the page, you would have seen that I ask your permission to pay my formal attentions to Miss L'Estrange. It was with intention I first discussed and dismissed a matter of business; I then proceeded to a question of sentiment, premising that I held myself bound to satisfy you regarding my property and my pulmonary condition. Mind, body, and estate, sir, are not coupled together ignorantly, nor inharmoniously; as you know far better than I—mind, body, and estate," repeated he slowly. "I am here to satisfy you on each of them."

"Don't you think, Sir Marcus, that there are questions which should possibly precede these?"

"Do you mean Miss L'Estrange's sentiments, sir?" George bowed, and Sir Marcus continued: "I am vain enough to suppose I can make out a good case for myself. I look more, but I'm only forty-eight, forty-eight on the twelfth September. I have twenty-seven thousand pounds in bank stock—stock, mind you—and three thousand four hundred a year in land, Norfolk property. I have a share—we'll not speak of it now—in a city house; and what's better than all, sir, not sixpence of debt in the world. I am aware your sister can have no fortune, but I can afford myself, what the French call a caprice, though this ain't a caprice, for I have thought well over the matter, and I see she would suit me perfectly. She has nice gentle ways, she can be soothing without depression, and calm without discouragement. Ah, that is the secret of secrets! She gave me my drops last evening with a tenderness, a graceful sympathy, that went to my heart. I want that, sir—I need it, I yearn for it. Simpson said to me years ago, 'Marry, Sir Marcus, marry! yours is a temperament that requires study and intelligent care. A really clever woman gets to know a pulse to perfection; they have a finer sensibility, a higher organization, too, in the touch.' Simpson laid great stress on that; but I have looked out in vain, sir. I employed agents; I sent people abroad; I advertised in the *Times*—M.C. was in the second column—for about two years; and with a correspondence that took two clerks to read through and minute. All to no end! All in vain! They tell me that the really competent people never do reply to an advertisement; that one must look out for them one's self, make private personal inquiry. Well, sir, I did that, and I got into

some unpleasant scrapes with it, and two actions for breach of promise; two thousand pounds the last cost me, though I got my verdict, sir; the Chief Baron very needlessly recommending me, for the future, to be cautious in forming the acquaintance of ladies, and to avoid widows as a general rule. These are the pleasantries of the Bench, and doubtless they amuse the junior bar. I declare to you, sir, in all seriousness, I'd rather that a man should give me a fillip on the nose than take the liberty of a joke with me. It is the one insufferable thing in life." This sally had so far excited him that it was some minutes ere he recovered his self-possession. "Now, Mr. L'Estrange," said he, at last, "I bind you in no degree—I pledge you to nothing; I simply ask leave to address myself to your sister. It is what lawyers call a 'motion to show cause why.'"

"I perceive that," broke in L'Estrange; "but even that much I ought not to concede without consulting my sister and obtaining her consent. You will allow me therefore time."

"Time, sir! My nerves must not be agitated. There can be no delays. It was not without a great demand on my courage, and a strong dose of chlorodine—Japps's preparation—that I made this effort now. Don't imagine I can sustain it much longer. No, sir, I cannot give time."

"After all, Sir Marcus, you can scarcely suppose that my sister is prepared for such a proposition."

"Sir, they are always prepared for it. It never takes them unawares. I have made them my study for years, and I do think I have some knowledge of their way of thinking and acting. I'll lay my life on it, if you will go and say, 'Maria'—"

"My sister's name is Julia," said the other, dryly.

"It may be, sir—I said 'Maria' generically, and I repeat it—'Maria, there is in my study at this moment a gentleman, of irreproachable morals and unblemished constitution, whose fortune is sufficiently ample to secure many comforts and all absolute necessities, who desires to make you his wife;' her first exclamation will be, 'It is Sir Marcus Cluff.'"

"It is not impossible," said L'Estrange, gravely.

"The rest, sir, is not with you, nor even with me. Do me, then, the great favor to bear my message."

Although seeing the absurdity of the situation, and vaguely forecasting the way Julia might possibly hear the proposition, L'Estrange was always so much disposed to



yield to the earnestness of any one who persisted in a demand, that he bowed and left the room.

"Well, George, he has proposed?" cried Julia, as her brother entered the room, where she sat with Nelly Bramleigh.

He nodded only, and the two girls burst out into a merry laugh.

"Come, come, Julia," said he, reprovingly. "Absurd as it may seem, the man is in earnest, and must be treated with consideration."

"But tell us the whole scene. Let us have it all as it occurred."

"I'll do nothing of the kind. It's quite enough to say that he declares he has a good fortune, and wishes to share it with you, and I think the expression of that wish should secure him a certain deference and respect."

"But who refuses, who thinks of refusing, him all the deference and respect he could ask for? Not I, certainly. Come now, like a dear good boy, let us hear all he said, and what you replied. I suspect there never was a better bit of real-life comedy. I only wish I could have had a part in it."

"Not too late yet, perhaps," said Nelly, with a dry humor. "The fifth act is only beginning."

"That is precisely what I am meditating. George will not tell me accurately what took place in his interview, and I think I could not do better than go and learn Sir Marcus's sentiments for myself."

She arose and appeared about to leave the room when L'Estrange sprang towards the door, and stood with his back against it.

"You're not serious, Ju?" cried he, in amazement.

"I should say, very serious. If Sir Marcus only makes out his case, as favorably as you, with all your bungling, can't help representing it, why—all things considered, eh, Nelly? *you*, I know, agree with me—I rather suspect the proposition might be entertained."

"Oh, this is too monstrous. It is beyond all belief," cried L'Estrange.

And he rushed from the room in a torrent of passion, while Julia sank back in a chair, and laughed till her eyes ran over with tears of merriment.

"How could you, Julia! Oh, how could you!" said Nelly, as she leaned over her and tried to look reproachful.

"If you mean, how could I help quizzing him, I can understand you; but I could not—no, Nelly, I could not help it! It is my habit to seize on the absurd side of

any embarrassment; and you may be sure there is always one if you only look for it; and you've no idea how much pleasanter—ay, and easier too—it is to laugh one's self out of difficulties than to grieve over them. You'll see George, now, will be spirited up, out of pure fright, to do what he ought: to tell this man that his proposal is an absurdity, and that young women, even as destitute of fortune as myself, do not marry as nursetenders. There! I declare that is Sir Marcus driving away already. Only think with what equanimity I can see wealth and title taking leave of me. Never say after that that I have not courage."

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### "A TELEGRAM."

"THIS is a very eventful day for me, George," said Augustus, as they strolled through the garden after breakfast. "The trial was fixed for the 13th, and to-day is the 14th; I suppose the verdict will be given to-day."

"But you have really no doubt of the result? I mean, no more than anxiety on so momentous a matter must suggest?"

"Pardon me. I have grave doubts. There was such a marriage, as is alleged, formed by my grandfather; a marriage in every respect legal. They may not have the same means of proving that which we have; but we know it. There was a son born to that marriage. We have the letter of old Lami, asking my grandfather to come over to Bruges for the christening, and we have the receipt of Hodges and Smart, the jewelers, for a silver gilt ewer and cup which were engraved with the Bramleigh crest and cypher, and despatched to Belgium as a present; for my grandfather did not go himself, pretexting something or other, which evidently gave offense; for Lami's next letter declares that the present has been returned, and expresses a haughty indignation at my grandfather's conduct. I can vouch for all this. It was a sad morning when I first saw those papers; but I did see them, George, and they exist still. That son of my grandfather's they declare to have married, and his son is this Pracontal. There is the whole story, and if the latter part of the narrative be only as truthful as I believe the first to be, he, and not I, is the rightful owner of Castello."

L'Estrange made no reply; he was slowly going over in his mind the chain of

connection, and examining, link by link, how it held together.

"But why," asked he at length, "was not this claim preferred before? Why did a whole generation suffer it to lie dormant?"

"That is easily, too easily, explained. Lami was compromised in almost every country in Europe; and his son succeeded him in his love of plot and conspiracy. Letters occasionally reached my father from this latter; some of them demanding money in a tone of actual menace. A confidential clerk, who knew all my father's secrets, and whom he trusted most implicitly, became one day a defaulter and absconded, carrying with him a quantity of private papers, some of which were letters written by my father, and containing remittances which Montagu Lami—or Louis Langrange, or whatever other name he bore—of course, never received, and indignantly declared he believed had never been despatched. This clerk, whose name was Hesketh, made Lami's acquaintance in South America, and evidently encouraged him to prefer his claim with greater assurance, and led him to suppose that any terms he preferred must certainly be complied with! But I cannot go on, George: the thought of my poor father struggling through life in this dark conflict rises up before me, and now I estimate the terrible alternation of hope and fear in which he must have lived, and how despairingly he must have thought of a future when this deep game should be left to such weak hands as mine. I thought they were cruel words once in which he spoke of my unfitness to meet a great emergency—but now I read them very differently."

"Then do you really think he regarded this claim as rightful and just?"

"I cannot tell that; at moments I have leaned to this impression; but many things dispose me to believe that he saw or suspected some flaw that invalidated the claim, but still induced him to silence the pretension by hush-money."

"And you yourself——"

"Don't ask me, my dear friend; do not ask me the question I see is on your lips. I have no courage to confess, even to you, through how many moods I pass every day I live. At moments I hope and firmly believe I rise above every low and interested sentiment, and determine I will do as I would be done by; I will go through this trial as though it were a matter apart from me, and in which truth and justice were my only objects. There are hours in which I feel equal to any sacrifice, and could say to this man: 'There! take it;

take all we have in the world. We have no right to be here; we are beggars and outcasts.' And then—I can't tell how or why—it actually seems as if there was a real tempter in one's nature, lying in wait for the moment of doubt and hesitation; but suddenly, quick as a flash of lightning, a thought would dart across my mind, and I would begin to canvass this and question that; not fairly, not honestly, mark you, but casuistically and cunningly; and worse, far worse than all this—actually hoping, no matter on which side lay the right, that *we* should come out victorious."

"But have you not prejudiced your case by precipitancy? They tell me that you have given the others immense advantage by your openly declared doubts as to your title."

"That is possible. I will not deny that I may have acted imprudently. The compromise to which I at first agreed struck me, on reflection, as so ignoble and dishonorable, that I rushed just as rashly into the opposite extreme. I felt, in fact, George, as though I owed this man a reparation for having ever thought of stifling his claim; and I carried this sentiment so far that Sedley asked me one day, in a scornful tone, what ill my family had done me I was so bent on ruining them? Oh, my dear friend, if it be a great relief to me to open my heart to you, it is with shame I confess that I cannot tell you truthfully how weak and unable I often feel to keep straight in the path I have assigned myself. How, when some doubt of this man's right shoots across me, I hail the hesitation like a blessing from heaven. What I would do, what I would endure, that he could not show his claim to be true, I dare not own. I have tried to reverse our positions in my own mind, and imagine I was he; but I cannot pursue the thought, for whenever the dread final rises before me, and I picture to myself our ruin and destitution, I can but think of him as a deadly implacable enemy. This sacrifice, then, that I purpose to make with a pure spirit and a high honor, is too much for me. I have not courage for that I am doing; but I'll do it still!"

L'Estrange did his utmost to rally him out of his depression, assuring him that, as the world went, few men would have attempted to do what he had determined on, and frankly owning that, in talking over the matter with Julia, they were both disposed to regard his conduct as verging on Quixotism.

"And that is exactly the best thing people will say of it. I am lucky if they will even speak so favorably."



"What's this—a telegram?" cried L'Estrange, as the servant handed him one of those square-shaped missives, so charged with destiny that one really does not know whether to bless or curse the invention, which, annihilating space, brings us so quickly face to face with fortune.

"Read it, George; I cannot," muttered Bramleigh, as he stood against a tree for support.

"Ten o'clock. Court-house, Navan. Jury just come out—cannot agree to verdict—discharged. New trial. I write post.

"SEDLEY."

"Thank heaven! there is at least a respite," said Bramleigh; and he fell on the other's shoulder and hid his face.

"Bear up, my poor fellow. You see that, at all events, nothing has happened up to this. Here are the girls coming. Let them not see you in such emotion."

"Come away, then; come away. I can't meet them now; or do you go and tell Nelly what this news is—she has seen the messenger, I'm sure."

L'Estrange met Nelly and Julia in the walk, while Augustus hastened away in another direction. "There has been no verdict. Sedley sends his message from the court-house this morning, and says the jury cannot agree, and there will be another trial."

"Is that bad or good news?" asked Nelly, eagerly.

"I'd say good," replied he; "at least, when I compare it with your brother's desponding tone this morning. I never saw him so low."

"Oh, he is almost always so of late. The coming here and the pleasure of meeting you rallied him for a moment, but I foresaw his depression would return. I believe it is the uncertainty, the never-ceasing terror of what next, is breaking him down; and if the blow fell at once, you would see him behave courageously and nobly."

"He ought to get away from this as soon as possible," said L'Estrange. "He met several acquaintances yesterday in Rome, and they teased him to come to them, and worried him to tell where he was stopping. In his present humor he could not go into society, but he is ashamed to his own heart to admit it."

"Then why don't we go at once?" cried Julia.

"There's nothing to detain us here," said L'Estrange, sorrowfully.

"Unless you mean to wait for my marriage," said Julia, laughing, "though, possibly, Sir Marcus may not give me another chance."

"Oh, Julia!"

"Oh, Julia! Well, dearest, I do say shocking things, there's no doubt of it; but when I've said them, I feel the subject off my conscience, and revert to it no more."

"At all events," said L'Estrange, after a moment of thought, "let us behave when we meet him as though this news was not bad. I know he will try to read in our faces what we think of it, and on every account it is better not to let him sink into depression."

The day passed over in that discomfort which a false position so inevitably imposes. The apparent calm was a torture, and the efforts at gaiety were but moments of actual pain. The sense of something impending was so poignant that at every stir—the opening of a door or the sound of a bell—there came over each a look of anxiety the most intense and eager. All their attempts at conversation were attended with a fear lest some unhappy expression, some ill-timed allusion, might suggest the very thought they were struggling to suppress; and it was with a feeling of relief they parted and said good-night, where, at other times, there had been only regret at separating.

Day after day passed in the same forced and false tranquility, the preparations for the approaching journey being the only relief to the intense anxiety that weighed like a load on each. At length, on the fifth morning, there came a letter to Augustus in the well-known hand of Sedley, and he hastened to his room to read it. Some sharp passages there had been between them of late on the subject of the compromise, and Bramleigh, in a moment of forgetfulness and anger, even went so far as to threaten that he would have recourse to the law to determine whether his agent had or had not overstepped the bounds of his authority, and engaged in arrangements at total variance to all his wishes and instructions. A calm but somewhat indignant reply from Sedley, however, recalled Bramleigh to reconsider his words, and even ask pardon for them, and since that day their intercourse had been more cordial and frank than ever. The present letter was very long, and quite plainly written, with a strong sense of the nature of him it was addressed to. For Sedley well knew the temper of the man—his moods of high resolve and his moments

of discouragement—his desire to be equal to a great effort, and his terrible consciousness that his courage could not be relied on. The letter began thus:—

“MY DEAR SIR:—

“If I cannot, as I hoped, announce a victory, I am able at least to say that we have not been defeated. The case was fairly and dispassionately stated, and probably an issue of like importance was never discussed with less of acrimony, or less of that captious and overreaching spirit which is too common in legal contests. This was so remarkable as to induce the judge to comment on it in his charge, and declare that, in all his experience on the bench, he had never before witnessed anything so gratifying or so creditable alike to plaintiff and defendant.

“Lawson led for the other side, and, I will own, made one of the best openings I ever listened to, disclaiming at once any wish to appeal to sympathies or excite feeling of pity for misfortunes carried on through three generations of blameless sufferers; he simply directed the jury to follow him in the details of a brief and not very complicated story, every step of which he would confirm and establish by evidence.

“The studious simplicity of his narrative was immense art, and though he carefully avoided even a word that could be called high-flown, he made the story of Montagu Bramleigh's courtship of the beautiful Italian girl one of the most touching episodes I ever listened to.

“The marriage was, of course, the foundation of the whole claim, and he arrayed all his proofs of it with great skill. The recognition in your grandfather's letters, and the tone of affection in which they were written, his continual reference to her in his life, left little if any doubt on the minds of the jury, even though there was nothing formal or official to show that the ceremony of marriage had passed; he reminded the jury that the defense would rely greatly on this fact, but the fact of a missing registry-book was neither so new nor so rare in this country as to create any astonishment, and when he offered proof that the church and the vestry-room had been sacked by the rebels in '98, the evidence seemed almost superfluous. The birth and baptism of the child he established thoroughly; and here he stood on strong grounds, for the infant was christened at Brussels by the Protestant chaplain of the Legation at the Ilague, and he produced a copy of the act of registry, stating

the child to be son of Montagu Bramleigh, of Cossenden Manor, and Grosvenor Square, London, and of Enrichetta his wife. Indeed, as Lawson declared, if these unhappy foreigners had ever even a glimmering suspicion that the just rights of this poor child were to be assailed and his inheritance denied him, they could not have taken more careful and cautious steps to secure his succession than the simple but excellent precautions they had adopted.

“The indignation of Lami at what he deemed the unfeeling and heartless conduct of Montagu Bramleigh—his cold reception of the news of his son's birth, and the careless tone in which he excused himself from going over to the christening—rose to such a pitch that he swore the boy should never bear his father's name, nor ever in any way be beholden to him, and ‘this rash oath it was that has carried misery down to another generation, and involved in misfortune others not more blameless nor more truly to be pitied than he who now seeks redress at your hands.’ This was the last sentence he uttered after speaking three hours, and obtaining a slight pause to recruit his strength.

“Issue of Montagu Bramleigh being proved, issue of that issue was also established, and your father's letters were given in evidence to show how he had treated with these claimants and given largely in money to suppress or silence their demands. Thos. Bolton, of the house of Parker and Bolton, bankers, Naples, proved the receipt of various sums from Montagu Bramleigh in favor of A. B. C., for so the claimant was designated, private confidential letters to Bolton showing that these initials were used to indicate one who went under many aliases, and needed every precaution to escape the police. Bolton proved the journal of Giacomo Lami, which he had often had in his own possession. In fact this witness damaged us more than all the rest; his station and position in life, and the mode in which he behaved under examination, having great effect on the jury, and affording Lawson a favorable opportunity of showing what confidence was felt in the claimant's pretensions by a man of wealth and character, even when the complications of political conspiracy had served to exhibit him as a dangerous adventurer.

“Waller's reply was able, but not equal to his best efforts. It is but fair to him, however, to state that he complained of our instructions, and declared that your determination not to urge anything on a point of law, nor tender opposition on grounds merely technical, left him almost powerless



in the case. He devoted his attention almost entirely to disprove the first marriage, that of Mr. B. with Enrichetta Lami; he declared that, the relative rank of the parties considered, the situation in which they were placed towards each other, and all the probabilities of the case duly weighed, there was every reason to believe the connection was illicit. This view was greatly strengthened by Mr. B.'s subsequent conduct; his refusal to go over to the christening, and the utter indifference he displayed to the almost menacing tone of old Lami's letters; and when he indignantly asked the jury 'if a man were likely to treat in this manner his wife and the mother of his first-born, the heir to his vast fortune and estates,' there was a subdued murmur in the court that showed how strongly this point had told.

"He argued that when a case broke down at its very outset, it would be a mere trifling with the time of the court to go further to disprove circumstances based on a fallacy. As to the christening and the registration of baptism, what easier than for a woman to declare whatever she pleased as to the paternity of her child? It was true he was written son of Montagu Bramleigh; but when we once agree that there was no marriage, this declaration has no value. He barely touched on the correspondence and the transmission of money abroad, which he explained as the natural effort of a man of high station and character to suppress the notoriety of a youthful indiscretion. Political animosity had, at that period, taken a most injurious turn, and scandal was ransacked to afford means of attack on the reputations of public men.

"I barely give you the outline of his argument, but I will send you the printed account of the trial as soon as the shorthand writer shall have completed it for press. Baron Jocelyn's charge was, I must say, less in our favor than I had expected; and when he told the jury that the expressions of attachment and affection in Mr. B.'s letters, and the reiterated use of the phrase, 'my dear, dear wife,' demanded their serious consideration as to whether such words would have fallen from a man hampered by an illicit connection, and already speculating how to be free of it—all this, put with great force and clearness, and a certain appeal to their sense of humanity, did us much disservice. The length of time he dwelt on this part of the case was so remarkable, that I overheard a Q.C. say he had not known till then that his lordship was retained for the plaintiff.

"When he came to that part where allu-

sion was made to the fact of the claimant being a foreigner, he made an eloquent and effective appeal to the character of English justice, which elicited a burst of applause in the court that took some seconds to repress; but this, I am told, was more owing to the popular sympathy with the politics of old Lami, and his connection with the rebellion of '98, than with any enthusiasm for his lordship's oratory.

"The jury were three hours in deliberation. I am confidentially informed that we had but five with, and seven against us; the verdict, as you know, was not agreed on. We shall go to trial in spring, I hope with Holmes to lead for us, for I am fully persuaded the flaw lies in the history subsequent to the marriage of Mr. B., and that it was a mistake to let the issue turn on the event which had already enlisted the sympathies of the jury in its favor.

"In conclusion, I ought to say that the plaintiff's friends regard the result as a victory, and the national press is strong in asserting that, if the Orange element had been eliminated from the jury-box, there is little doubt that Count Bramleigh—as they call him—would at that hour be dispensing the splendid hospitalities of a princely house to his county neighbors, and the still more gratifying benefits of a wide charity to the poor around him. Writing rapidly, as I do, I make no pretension to anything like an accurate history of the case. There are a vast variety of things to which I mean to direct your attention when a more favorable moment will permit. I will only now add, that your presence in England is urgently required, and that your return to Castello, to resume there the style of living that alike becomes the proprietor and the place, is, in the opinion of all your friends, much to be desired.

"Mr. Waller does not hesitate to say that your absence decided the case against you, and was heard to declare openly that 'he for one had no fancy to defend a cause for a man who voluntarily gave himself up as beaten.'

"May I entreat, then, you will make it your convenience to return here? I cannot exaggerate the ill effects of your absence, nor to what extent your enemies are enabled to use the circumstance to your discredit. Jurors are, after all, but men, taken from the common mass of those who read and talk over the public scandals of the hour, and all the cautions of the Bench never yet succeeded in making men forget, within the court-house, what they had for weeks before been discussing outside of it.

"At all events, do not dismiss my sug-

gestion without some thought over it, or, better still, without consulting some friends in whose sense and intelligence you have confidence. I am, with many apologies for the liberty I have thus taken,

“Most faithfully, your servant,  
“T. SEDLEY.”

When Bramleigh had read this letter carefully over, he proceeded to Nelly's room, to let her hear its contents.

“It's not very cheerful news,” said he, “but it might be worse. Shall I read it for you, or will you read it yourself?”

“Read it, Gustv. I would rather hear it from you,” said she, as she sat down, with her face to the window, and partially averted from him as he sat.

Not a word dropped from her while he read; and, though once or twice he paused as if to invite a remark or a question, she never spoke, nor by a look or a gesture denoted how the tidings affected her.

“Well,” asked he at last, “what do you say to it all?”

“It's worse—I mean worse for us—than I had ever suspected! Surely, Gustv, *you* had no conception that their case had such apparent strength and solidity?”

“I have thought so for many a day,” said he, gloomily.

“Thought that they, and not we——” She could not go on.

“Just so, dearest,” said he, drawing his chair to her side, and laying his hand affectionately on her shoulder.

“And do you believe that poor papa thought so?” said she. And her eyes now swam in tears.

A scarcely perceptible nod was all his answer.

“Oh, Gustv! this is more misery than I was prepared for,” cried she, throwing herself on his shoulder. “To think that all the time we were—what many called—outraging the world with display—exhibiting our wealth in every ostentatious way; to think that it was not ours—that we were mere pretenders, with a mock rank, a mock station!”

“My father did not go thus far, Nelly,” said he, gravely. “That he did not despise these pretensions, I firmly believe; but that they ever gave him serious reason to suppose his right could be successfully disputed, this I do not believe. His fear was, that, when the claim came to be resisted by one like myself, the battle would be ill fought. It was in this spirit he said, ‘Would that Marion had been a boy!’”

“And what will you do, Gustv?”

“I'll tell you what I will not do, Nelly,” said he, firmly. “I will not, as this letter counsels me, go back to live where it is possible I have no right to live, nor spend money to which the law may to-morrow declare I have no claim. I will abide by what that law shall declare, without one effort to bias it in my favor. I have a higher pride in submitting myself to this trial than ever I had in being the owner of Castello. It may be that I shall not prove equal to what I propose to myself. I have no over-confidence in my own strength, but I like to think that if I come well through the ordeal, I shall have done what will dignify a life, humble even as mine, and give me a self-respect, without which existence is valueless to me. Will you stand by me, Nelly, in this struggle? I shall need you much!”

“To the last,” said she, giving him both her hands, which he grasped within his, and pressed affectionately.

“Write, then, one line from me to Sedley, to say that I entrust the case entirely to his guidance; that I will not mix myself with it in any way, nor will I return to England till it be decided. And say, if you can, that you agree with me in this determination. And then, if the L'Es-tranges are ready, let us start at once.”

“They only wait for us. Julia said so this morning.”

“Then we shall set out to-morrow.”

## CHAPTER XLIX.

### A LONG TÊTE-À-TÊTE.

“SCANT courtesy, I must say,” exclaimed Lady Augusta, as, after rapidly running her eyes over a note, she flung it across the table towards Pracontal.

They were seated tête-à-tête in that small drawing-room which looked out upon the garden and the grounds of the Borghese Palace.

“Am I to read it?” asked he.

“Yes, if you like. It is from Augustus Bramleigh, a person you feel some interest in.”

Pracontal took up the note, and seemed to go very carefully over its contents.

“So then,” said he, as he finished, “he thinks it better not to meet—not to know me.”

“Which is no reason on earth for being wanting in a proper attention to *me*,” said she, angrily. “To leave Rome without calling here, without consulting my wishes,



and learning my intentions for the future, is a gross forgetfulness of proper respect."

"I take it, the news of the trial was too much for him. Longworth said it would, and that the comments of the press would be insupportable besides."

"But what have *I* to do with that, sir? Mr. Bramleigh's first duty was to come here. *I* should have been thought of. *I* was the first person this family should have remembered in their hour of difficulty."

"There was no intentional want of respect in it, I'll be bound, cried Pracontal. "It was just a bashful man's dread of an awkward moment—that English terror of what you call a 'scene'—that sent him off."

"It is generous of you, sir, to become his apologist. I only wonder—" here she stopped and seemed confused.

"Go on, my lady. Pray finish what you began."

"No, sir. It is as well unsaid."

"But it was understood, my lady, just as well as if it had been uttered. Your ladyship wondered who was to apologize for *me*."

She grew crimson as he spoke; but a faint smile seemed to say how thoroughly she relished that Southern keenness that could divine a half-uttered thought.

"How quick you are!" said she, without a trace of irritation.

"Say, rather, how quick he ought to be who attempts to parry *you* at fence. And, after all," said he, in a lighter tone, "is it not as well that he has spared us all an embarrassment? *I* could not surely have been able to condole with *him*, and how could he have congratulated *me*?"

"Pardon me, Count, but the matter, so far as I learn, is precisely as it was before. There is neither subject for condolence nor gratulation."

"So far as the verdict of the jury went, my lady, you are quite right; but what do you say to that larger, wider verdict pronounced by the press, and repeated in a thousand forms by the public? May I read you one passage, only one, from my lawyer, Mr. Kelson's letter?"

"Is it short?"

"Very short."

"And intelligible?"

"Most intelligible."

"Read it, then."

"Here it is," said he, opening a letter, and turning to the last page. "Were I to sum up what is the popular opinion of the result, I could not do it better than repeat what a City capitalist said to me this morning, 'I'd rather lend Count Pra-

contal twenty thousand pounds to-day than take Mr. Bramleigh's mortgage for ten.'"

"Let me read that. I shall comprehend his meaning better than by hearing it. This means evidently," said she, after reading the passage, "that your chances are better than his."

"Kelson tells me success is certain."

"And your cautious friend, Mr. — ; I always forget that man's name?"

"Longworth?"

"Yes, Longworth. What does he say?"

"He is already in treaty with me to let him have a small farm which adjoins his grounds, and which he would like to throw into his lawn."

"Seriously?"

"No, not a bit seriously; but we pass the whole morning building these sort of castles in Spain, and the grave way that he entertains such projects ends by making me believe I am actually the owner of Castello and all its belongings."

"Tell me some of your plans," said she, with a livelier interest than she had yet shown.

"First of all, reconciliation, if that be its proper name, with all that calls itself Bramleigh. I don't want to be deemed a usurper but a legitimate monarch. It is to be a restoration."

"Then you ought to marry Nelly. I declare that never struck me before."

"Nor has it yet occurred to me, my lady," said he, with a faint show of irritation.

"And why not, sir? Is it that you look higher?"

"I look higher," said he; and there was a solemn intensity in his air and manner as he spoke.

"I declare, Monsieur de Pracontal, it is scarcely delicate to say this to *me*."

"Your ladyship insists on my being candid, even at the hazard of my courtesy."

"I do not complain of your candor, sir. It is your—your—"

"My pretension?"

"Well, yes, pretension will do."

"Well, my lady, I will not quarrel with the phrase. I do 'pretend,' as we say in French. In fact, I have been little other than a pretender these last few years."

"And what is it you pretend to? May I ask the question?"

"I do not know if I may dare to answer it," said he slowly. . . . "I will explain what I mean," added he, after a brief silence, and drawing his chair somewhat nearer to where she sat. "I will explain. If, in one of my imaginative gossipries with a friend, I were to put forward some claim

—some ambition—which would sound absurd coming from me *now*, but which, were I the owner of a great estate, would neither be extravagant nor ridiculous, the memory of that unlucky pretension would live against me ever after, and the laugh that my vanity excited, would ring in my ears long after I had ceased to regard the sentiment as vanity at all. Do you follow me?"

"Yes, I believe I do. I would only have you remember that I am not Mr. Longworth."

"A reason the more for my caution."

"Couldn't we converse without riddles, Count Pracontal?"

"I protest I should like to do so."

"And as I make no objection——"

"Then to begin. You asked me what I should do if I were to gain my suit; and my answer is, if I were not morally certain to gain it, I'd never exhibit myself in the absurd position of planning a life I was never to arrive at."

"You are too much a Frenchman for that."

"Precisely, madame. I am too much a Frenchman for that. The exquisite sensibility to ridicule puts a very fine edge on national character, though your countrymen will not admit it."

"It makes very tetchy acquaintances," said she, with a malicious laugh.

"And develops charming generosity in those who forgive us!"

"I cry off. I can't keep up this game of give and take flatteries. Let us come back to what we were talking of, that is, if either of us can remember it. O yes, I know it now. You were going to tell me the splendid establishment you'd keep at Castello. I'm sure the cook will leave nothing to desire — but how about the stable? That 'steppere' will not exactly be in his place in an Irish county."

"Madame, you forget I was a lieutenant of hussars."

"My dear Count, that does not mean riding."

"Madame!"

"I should now rise and say 'Monsieur!' and it would be very good comedy after the French pattern; but I prefer the sofa and my ease, and will simply beg you to remember the contract we made the other day—that each was to be at liberty to say any impertinence to the other, without offense being taken."

Pracontal laid his hand on his heart, and bowed low and deep.

"There are some half a dozen people in that garden yonder, who have passed and

repassed—I can't tell how many times—just to observe us. You'll see them again in a few minutes, and we shall be town-talk to-morrow, I'm certain. There are no tête-à-têtes ever permitted in Rome if a cardinal or a monsignore be not one of the performers."

"Are those they?" cried he, suddenly.

"Yes, and there's not the least occasion for that flash of the eye and that hot glow of indignation on the cheek. I assure you, monsieur, there is nobody there to *couper la gorge* with you, or share in any of those social pleasantries which make the 'Bois' famous. The curiously-mind individual is a lady—a Mrs. Trumpler—and her attendants are a few freshly arrived curates. There, now, sit down again and look less like a wounded tiger, for all this sort of thing fuses and fevers me. Yes, you may fan me, though, if the detectives return, it will make the report more highly colored."

Pracontal was now seated on a low stool beside her sofa and fanning her assiduously.

"Not but these people are all right," continued she. "It is quite wrong in me to admit you to my intimacy—wrong to admit you at all. My sister is so angry about it, she won't come here—fact, I assure you. Now don't look so delighted and so triumphant, and the rest of it. As your nice little phrase has it, you 'are for nothing' in the matter at all. It is all myself, my own whim, my fancy, my caprice. I saw that the step was just as unadvisable as they said it was. I saw that any commonly discreet person would not have even made your acquaintance, standing as I did; but unfortunately for me, like poor Eve, the only tree whose fruit I covet is the one I'm told isn't good for me. There go our friends once more. I wish I could tell her who you are, and not keep her in this state of torturing anxiety."

"Might I ask, my lady," said he, gravely, "if you have heard anything to my discredit or disparagement as a reason for the severe sentence you have just spoken?"

"No, unfortunately not, for in that case my relatives would have forgiven me. They know the wonderful infatuation that attracts me to damaged reputations, and as they have not yet found out any considerable flaw in yours, they are puzzled, out of all measure, to know what it is I see in you."

"I am 'overwhelmed by your flattery, madame," said he, trying to seem amused, but, in spite of himself, showing some irritation.

"Not that," resumed she, in that quiet manner which showed that her mind had



gone off suddenly in another direction, "not that I owe much deference to the Bramleighs, who, one and all, have treated me with little courtesy. Marion behaved shamefully—that, of course, was to be expected. To marry that odious old creature for a position, implied how she would abuse the position when she got it. As I said to Gusty, when a young Oxford man gives five guineas for a mount, he doesn't think he has the worth of his money if he doesn't smash his collar-bone. There, put down that fan, you are making me feverish. Then the absurdity of playing *peeress* to me! How ashamed the poor old man was! he reddened through all his rouge. Do you know," added she, in an excited manner, "that she had the impertinence to compare her marriage with mine, and say, that at least rank and title were somewhat nobler ambitions than a mere subsistence and a settlement? But I answered her. I told her, 'You have forgotten one material circumstance. I did not live with your father! O yes! we exchanged a number of little courtesies of this kind, and I was so sorry when I heard she had gone to Naples. I was only getting into stride when the race was over. As to my settlement, I have not the very vaguest notion who'll pay it; perhaps it may be *you*. Oh, of course I know the unutterable bliss, but you must really ask your lawyer how is my lien to be disposed of. Some one said to me the other day that, besides the estate, you would have a claim for about eighty thousand pounds.'

"It was Longworth said so."

"I don't like your friend Longworth. Is he a gentleman?"

"Most unquestionably."

"Well, but I mean a born gentleman? I detest and I distrust your nature-made gentlemen, who, having money enough to 'get up' the part, deem that quite sufficient. I want the people whose families have given guarantees for character during some generations. Six o'clock! only think, you are here three mortal hours! I declare, sir, this must not occur again; and I have to dress now. I dine at the Prince Cornarini's. Do you go there?"

"I go nowhere, my lady. I know no one."

"Well, I can't present you. It would be too compromising. And yet they want men like you very much here. The Romans are so dull and stately, and the English who frequent the best houses are so dreary. There, go away now. You want leave to come to-morrow, but I'll not grant it. I must hear what Mrs. Trumpler says before I admit you again."

"When then may I——"

"I don't know; I have not thought of it. Let it be—let it be when you have gained your lawsuit," cried she, in a burst of laughter, and hurried out of the room.

## CHAPTER L.

CATTARO.

IF Cattaro was more picturesque and strange-looking than the Bramleighs had expected, it was also far more poverty-stricken and desolate. The little town, escarped out of a lofty mountain, with the sea in front, consisted of little more than one straggling street, which followed every bend and indentation of the shore. It is true, wherever a little plateau offered on the mountain, a house was built; and to these, small winding paths led up, through rocks bristling with the cactus, or shaded by oleanders large as olive-trees. Beautiful little bits of old Venetian architecture, in balconies or porticoes, peeped out here and there through the dark foliage of oranges and figs; and richly ornamented gates, whose arabesques yet glistened with tarnished gilding, were festooned with many a flowery creeper, and that small banksia-rose, so tasteful in its luxuriance. From the sea it would be impossible to imagine anything more beautiful or more romantic. As you landed, however, the illusion faded, and dirt, misery and want stared at you at every step. Decay and ruin were on all sides. Palaces, whose marble mouldings and architraves were in the richest style of Byzantine art, were propped up by rude beams of timber that obstructed the footway, while from their windows and balconies hung rags and tattered draperies, the signs of a poverty within great as the ruin without. The streets were lined with a famished, half-clothed population, sitting idly or sleeping. A few here and there affected to be venders of fruit and vegetables, but the mass were simply loungers reduced to the miserable condition of an apathy which saw nothing better to be done with life than dream it away. While Bramleigh and L'Estrange were full of horror at the wretchedness of the place, their sisters were almost wild with delight at its barbaric beauty, its grand savagery, and its brilliantly picturesque character. The little inn, which probably for years had dispensed no other hospitalities than those of the café, that extended from the darkly columned portico to half across the piazza, certainly contributed slightly to allay the grum-

blings of the travelers. The poorly furnished rooms were ill kept and dirty, the servants lazy, and the fare itself the very humblest imaginable.

Nothing short of the unfailing good temper and good spirits of Julia and Nelly could have rallied the men out of their sulky discontent; that spirit to make the best of everything, to catch at every passing gleam of sunlight on the landscape, and even in moments of discouragement to rally at the first chance of what may cheer and gladden—this is womanly, essentially womanly. It belongs not to the man's nature; and even if he should have it, he has it in a less discriminative shape and in a coarser fashion.

While Augustus and L'Estrange then sat sulkily smoking their cigars on the sea-wall, contemptuously turning their backs on the mountain variegated with every hue of foliage, and broken in every picturesque form, the girls had found out a beautiful old villa, almost buried in orange-trees in a small cleft of the mountain, through which a small cascade descended and fed a fountain that played in the hall; the perfect stillness, only broken by the splash of the falling water, and the sense of delicious freshness imparted by the crystal circles eddying across the marble fount, so delighted them that they were in ecstasies when they found that the place was to be let, and might be their own for a sum less than a very modest "entresol" would cost in a cognate city.

"Just imagine, Gusty, he will let it to us for three hundred florins a year; and for eighteen hundred we may buy it out and out, forever." This was Nelly's salutation as she came back full of all she had seen, and glowing with enthusiasm over the splendid luxuriance of the vegetation and the beauty of the view.

"It is really princely inside, although in terrible dilapidation and ruin. There are over two of the fireplaces the Doge's arms, which shows that a Venetian magnate once lived there."

"What do you say, George?" cried Bramleigh. "Don't you think you'd rather invest some hundred florins in a boat to escape from this dreary hole than purchase a prison to live in?"

"You must come and see the 'Fontanella'—so they call it—before you decide," said Julia. "Meanwhile here is a rough sketch I made from the garden side."

"Come, that looks very pretty, indeed," cried George. "Do you mean to say it is like that?"

"That's downright beautiful!" said

Bramleigh. "Surely these are not marble—these columns!"

"It is all marble—the terrace, the balconies, the stairs, the door-frames; and as to the floors, they are laid down in variegated slabs, with a marvelous instinct as to color and effect. I declare I think it handsomer than Castello," cried Nelly.

"Haven't I often said," exclaimed Bramleigh, "there was nothing like being ruined to impart a fresh zest to existence? You seem to start anew in the race and unweighted, too."

"As George and I have always been in the condition you speak of," said Julia, "this charm of novelty is lost to us."

"Let us put it to the vote," said Nelly, eagerly. "Shall we buy it?"

"First of all let us see it," interposed Bramleigh. "To-day I have to make my visit to the authorities. I have to present myself before the great officials, and announce that I have come to be the representative of the last joint of the British lion's tail; but that, he being a great beast of wonderful strength and terrific courage, to touch a hair of him is temerity itself."

"And they will believe you?" asked Julia.

"Of course they will. It would be very hard that we should not survive in the memories of people who live in lonely spots and read no newspapers."

"Such a place for vegetation I never saw," cried Nelly. "There are no glass windows in the hall, but through the ornamental iron work the oranges and limes pierce through and hang in great clusters; the whole covered with the crimson acanthus and the blue japonica, till the very brilliancy of color actually dazzles you."

"We'll write a great book up there, George—'Cattaro Under the Doges;' or shall it be a romance?" said Bramleigh.

"I'm for a diary," said Julia, "where each of us shall contribute his share of life among the wild-olives."

"Ju's right," cried Nelly; "and as I have no gift of authorship, I'll be the public."

"No, you shall be the editor, dearest," said Julia; "he is always like the Speaker in the House—the person who does the least and endures the most."

"All this does not lead us to any decision," said L'Estrange. "Shall I go up there all alone, and report to you this evening what I see and what I think of the place?"

This proposal was at once acceded to; and now they went their several ways, not to meet again till a late dinner.



"How nobly and manfully your brother bears up!" said Julia, as she walked back to the inn with Nelly.

"And there is no display in it," said Nelly, warmly. "Now that he is beyond the reach of condolence and compassion, he fears nothing. And you will see that when the blow falls, as he says it must, he will not wince nor shrink."

"If I had been a man I should like to have been of that mould."

"And it is exactly what you would have been, dear Julia. Gusty said, only yesterday, that you had more courage than we all."

When L'Estrange returned, he came accompanied by an old man in very tattered clothes, and the worst possible hat, whose linen was far from spotless, as were his hands innocent of soap. He was, however, the owner of the villa, and a Count of the great family of Kreptowicz. If his appearance was not much in his favor, his manners were those of a well-bred person, and his language that of education. He was eager to part with this villa, as he desired to go and live with a married daughter at Ragusa; and he protested that, at the price he asked, it was not a sale, but a present; that to any other than Englishmen he never would part with a property that had been six hundred years in the family, and which contained the bones of his distinguished ancestors, of which, incidentally, he threw in small historic details; and, last of all, he avowed that he desired to confide the small chapel where these precious remains were deposited to the care of men of station and character. This chapel was only used once a year, when a mass for the dead was celebrated, so that the Count insisted no inconvenience could be incurred by the tenant. Indeed, he half hinted that, if that one annual celebration were objected to, his ancestors might be prayed for elsewhere, or even rest satisfied with the long course of devotion to their interests which had been maintained up to the present time. As for the chapel itself, he described it as a gem that even Venice could not rival. There were frescoes of marvelous beauty, and some carvings in wood and ivory that were priceless. Some years back he had employed a great artist to restore some of the paintings, and supply the place of others that were beyond restoration, and now it was in a state of perfect condition, as he would be proud to show them.

"You are aware that we are heretics, monsieur?" said Julia.

"We are all sons of Adam, mademoi-

selle," said he, with a polite bow; and it was clear that he could postpone spiritual questions to such time as temporal matters might be fully completed.

As the chapel was fully twenty minutes' walk from the villa, and much higher on the mountain side, had it even been frequented by the country people, it could not have been any cause of inconvenience to the occupants of the villa; and this matter being settled, and some small conditions as to surrender being agreed to, Bramleigh engaged to take it for three years, with a power to purchase if he desired it.

Long after the contract was signed and completed, the old Count continued, in a half-complaining tone, to dwell on the great sacrifice he had made, what sums of money were to be made of the lemons and oranges, how the figs were celebrated even at Ragusa, and Fontanella melons had actually brought ten krentzers—three-half-pence—apiece in the market at Zara.

"Who is it," cried Julia, as the old man took his leave, "who said that the old mercantile spirit never died out in the great Venetian families, and that the descendants of the Doges, with all their pride of blood and race, were dealers and traders whenever an occasion of gain presented itself?"

"Our old friend there has not belied the theory," said Bramleigh: "but I am right glad that we have secured La Fontanella."

## CHAPTER LI.

### SOME NEWS FROM WITHOUT.

THERE is a sad significance in the fact that the happiest days of our lives are those most difficult to chronicle; it is as though the very essence of enjoyment was its uneventful nature. Thus was it that the little household at the Fontanella felt their present existence. Its simple pleasures, its peacefulness, never pulled upon them. There was that amount of general similarity in tastes amongst them that secures concord, and that variety of disposition and temperament which promotes and sustains interest.

Julia was the life of all; for, though seeming to devote herself to the cares of housewifery and management, and in reality carrying on all the details of management, it was she who gave to their daily life its color and flavor; she who suggested occupations and interest to each; and while Augustus was charged to devote his gun

and his rod to the replenishment of the larder, George was converted into a gardener; all the decorative department of the household being confided to Nelly, who made the bouquets for the breakfast and dinner tables, arranged the fruit in artistic fashion, and was supreme in exacting dinner dress and the due observance of all proper etiquette. Julia was inflexible on this point; for, as she said, "though people laugh at deposed princes for their persistence in maintaining a certain state and a certain pageantry in their exile, without these what becomes of their prestige, and what becomes of themselves? They merge into a new existence, and lose their very identity. We, too, may be 'restored' one of these days, and let it be our care not to have forgotten the habits of our station." There was in this, as in most she said, a semi-seriousness that made one doubt when she was in earnest; and this half-quizzing manner enabled her to carry out her will and bear down opposition in many cases where a sterner logic would have failed her.

Her greatest art of all, however, was to induce the others to believe that the chief charm of their present existence was its isolation. She well knew that while she herself and Nelly would never complain of the loneliness of their lives, their estrangement from the world and all its pursuits, its pleasures and its interests, the young men would soon discover what monotony marked their days, how uneventful they were, and how uniform. To convert all these into merits, to make them believe that this immunity from the passing accidents of life was the greatest of blessings, to induce them to regard the peace in which they lived as the highest charm that could adorn existence, and at the same time not suffer them to lapse into dreamy inactivity or lethargic indifference, was a great trial of skill, and it was hers to achieve it. As she said, not without a touch of vainglory, one day to Nellie, "How intensely eager I have made them about small things! Your brother was up at daylight to finish his roek-work for the creepers, and George felled that tree for the keel of his new boat before breakfast. Think of that, Nelly; and neither of them as much as asked if the post had brought them letters and newspapers. Don't laugh, dearest. When men forget the post-hour, there is something wonderfully good or bad has befallen them."

"But it is strange, after all, Ju, how little we have come to care for the outer world. I protest I am glad to think that there are

only two mails a week—a thing that, when we came here, I would have pronounced unendurable."

"To George and myself it matters little," said Julia, and her tone had a touch of sadness in it, in spite of her attempt to smile. "It would not be easy to find two people whom the world can live without at so little cost. There is something in that, Nelly; though I'm not sure that it is all gain."

"Well, you have your recompense, Julia," said the other, affectionately, "for there is a little 'world' here could not exist without you."

"Two hares, and something like a black cock—they call it a caper here," cried Augustus, from beneath the window. "Come down and let us have breakfast on the terrace. By the way, I have just got a letter in Cutbill's hand. It has been a fortnight in coming, but I only glanced at the date of it."

As they gathered around the breakfast-table they were far more eager to learn what had been done in the garden, and what progress was being made with the fish-pond, than to hear Mr. Cutbill's news, and his letter lay open, till nigh the end of the meal, on the table before any one thought of it.

"Who wants to read Cutbill?" said Augustus, indolently.

"Not I, Gusty, if he writes as he talks."

"Do you know, I thought him very pleasant?" said L'Estrange. "He told me so much that I had never heard of, and made such acute remarks on life and people."

"Poor dear George was so flattered by Mr. Cutbill's praise of his boiled mutton, that he took quite a liking to the man; and when he declared that some poor little wine we gave him had a flavor of 'muscate' about it, like old Moselle, I really believe he might have borrowed money of us if he had wanted, and if we had had any."

"I wish you would read him aloud, Julia," said Augustus.

"With all my heart," said she, turning over the letter to see its length. "It does seem a long document, but it is a marvel of clear writing. Now for it: 'Naples, Hotel Victoria. My dear Bramleigh.' Of course you are his dear Bramleigh! Lucky, after all, that it's not dear Gusty."

"That's exactly what makes everything about that man intolerable to me," said Nelly. "The degree of intimacy between people is not to be measured by the inferior."

"I will have no discussions, no interruptions," said Julia. "If there are to be comments, they must be made by me."



"That's tyranny, I think," cried Nelly.

"I call it more than arrogance," said Augustus.

"My dear Bramleigh," continued Julia, reading aloud—"I followed the old Viscount down here, not in the best of tempers, I assure you; and though not easily outwitted or baffled in such matters, it was not till after a week that I succeeded in getting an audience. There's no denying it, he's the best actor on or off the boards in Europe. He met me coldly, haughtily. I had treated him badly, forsooth, shamefully; I had not deigned a reply to any of his letters. He had written me three—he wasn't sure there were not four letters—to Rome. He had sent me cards for the Pope's chapel—cards for Cardinal Somebody's receptions—cards for a concert at St. Paul's outside the walls. I don't know what attentions he had not showered on me, nor how many of his high and titled friends had not called at a hotel where I never stopped, or left their names with a porter I never saw. I had to wait till he poured forth all this with a grand eloquence, at once disdainful and damaging; the peroration being in this wise—that such lapses as mine were things unknown in the latitudes inhabited by well-bred people. 'These things are not done, Mr. Cutbill,' said he, arrogantly; 'these things are not done! You may call them trivial omissions, mere trifles, casual forgetfulness, and such like; but even men who have achieved distinction, who have won fame and honors and reputation, as I am well aware is your case, would do well to observe the small obligations which the discipline of society enforces, and condescend to exchange that small coin of civilities which form the circulating medium of good manners.' When he had delivered himself of this he sat down overpowered, and though I, in very plain language, told him that I did not believe a syllable about the letters, nor accept one word of the lesson, he only fanned himself and bathed his temples with rose-water, no more heeding me or my indignation than if I had been one of the figures on his Japanese screen.

"'You certainly said you were stopping at the "Minerva,"' said he.

"'I certainly told your lordship I was at Spilman's.'"

"He wanted to show me why this could not possibly be the case—how men like himself never made mistakes, and men like me continually did so—that the very essence of great men's lives was to attach importance to those smaller circumstances that inferior people disregarded, and so on; but I simply said, 'Let us leave that question where it

is, and go on to a more important one. Have you had time to look over my account?'

"'If you had received the second of those letters you have with such unfeigned candor assured me were never written, you'd have seen that I only desired to know the name of your banker in town, that I may order my agent to remit the money.'"

"'Let us make no more mistakes about an address, my lord,' said I. 'I'll take a cheque for the amount now,' and he gave it. He sat down and wrote me an order on Hedges and Holt, Pall Mall, for fifteen hundred pounds.

"'I was so overcome by the promptitude and by the grand manner he handed it to me, that I am free to confess I was heartily ashamed of my previous rudeness, and would have given a handsome discount off my cheque to have been able to obliterate all memory of my insolence.

"'Is there anything more between us, Mr. Cutbill?' said he, politely, 'for I think it would be a mutual benefit if we could settle all our outlying transactions at the present interview.'

"'Well,' said I, 'there's that two thousand of the parson's, paid in, if you remember, after Portlaw's report to your lordship that the whole scheme must founder.'

"'He tried to browbeat at this. It was a matter in which I had no concern; it was a question which Mr. L'Estrange was at full liberty to bring before the courts of law; my statement about Portlaw was incorrect; dates were against me, law was against me, custom was against me, and at last it was high dinner-hour, and time was against me; 'unless,' said he, with a change of voice I never heard equaled off the stage, 'you will stay and eat a very humble dinner with Temple and myself, for my lady is indisposed.'

"'To be almost on fighting terms with a man ten minutes ago, and to accept his invitation to dinner now, seemed to me one of those things perfectly beyond human accomplishment; but the way in which he tendered the invitation, and the altered tone he imparted to his manner, made me feel that not to imitate him was to stamp myself forever as one of those vulgar dogs whom he had just been ridiculing, and I assented.

"'I have a perfect recollection of a superb dinner, but beyond that, and that the champagne was decanted, and that there was a large cheese stuffed with truffles, and that

there were ortolans in ice, I know nothing. It was one of the pleasantest evenings I ever passed in my life. I sang several songs, and might have sung more if a message had not come from my lady to beg that the piano might be stopped, an intimation which closed the *séance*, and I said good-night. The next morning Temple called to say my lord was too much engaged to be able to receive me again, and as to that little matter I had mentioned, he had an arrangement to propose which might be satisfactory; and whether it was that my faculties were not the clearer for my previous night's convivialities, or that Temple's explanations were of the most muddled description, or that the noble lord had purposely given him a tangled skein to unravel, I don't know, but all I could make out of the proposed arrangement was that he wouldn't give any money back—no, not on any terms: to do so would be something so derogatory to himself, to his rank, to his position in diplomacy, it would amount to a self-accusation of fraud; what would be thought of him by his brother peers, by society, by the world, and by THE OFFICE?

“He had, however, the alternate presentation to the living of Oxington in Herts. It was two hundred and forty pounds per annum and a house—in fact ‘a provision more than ample,’ he said, ‘for any man not utterly a worldling.’ He was not sure whether the next appointment lay with himself or a certain Sir Marcus Cluff—a retired fishmonger, he thought—then living at Rome; but as well as I could make out, if it was Lord Cuduff's turn he would appoint L'Estrange, and if it was Cluff's we were to cajole, or to bully, or to persuade him out of it; and L'Estrange was to be inducted as soon as the present incumbent, who only wanted a few months of ninety, was promoted to a better place. This may all seem very confused, dim, and unintelligible, but it is a plain, ungarbled statement in comparison with what I received from Temple—who, to do him justice, felt all the awkwardness of being sent out to do something he didn't understand by means that he never possessed. He handed me, however, a letter for Cluff from the noble Viscount, which I was to deliver at once; and, in fact, this much was intelligible, that the sooner I took myself away from Naples, in any direction I liked best, the better. There are times when it is as well not to show that you see the enemy is cheating you, when the shrewdest policy is to let him deem you a dupe and wait patiently till he has compromised himself

beyond recall. In this sense I agreed to be the bearer of the letter, and started the same night for Rome.

“Cluff was installed at the same hotel where I was stopping, and I saw him the next morning. He was a poor, broken-down creature, sitting in a room saturated with some peculiar vapor which seemed to agree with him, but half suffocated me. The Viscount's letter, however, very nearly put us on a level, for it took his breath away, and all but finished him.

“‘Do you know, sir,’ said he, ‘that Lord Cuduff talks here of a title to a presentation that I bought with the estate thirty years ago, and that he has no more right in the matter than he has to the manor-house? The vicarage is my sole gift, and, though the present incumbent is but two-and-thirty, he means to resign and go out to New Zealand.’ He maundered on about Lord Cuduff's inexplicable blunder—what course he ought to adopt towards him—if it were actionable, or if a simple apology would be the best solution; and, at last, said: ‘There was no one for whom he had a higher esteem than Mr. L'Estrange, and that, if I would give him his address, he would like to communicate with him personally in the matter.’ This looked at least favorable, and I gave it with great willingness; but I am free to own I have become now so accustomed to be jockeyed at every step I go, that I wouldn't trust the Pope himself, if he promised me anything beyond his blessing.

“I saw Cluff again to-day, and he said he had half-written his letter to L'Estrange; but, being his postfumigation day, when his doctor enjoined complete repose, he could not complete or post the document till Saturday. I have thought it best, however, to apprise you, and L'Estrange through you, that such a letter is on its way to Cattaro, and I trust with satisfactory intelligence. And now that I must bring this long narrative to an end, I scarcely know whether I shall repeat a scandal you may have heard already, or, more probably still, not like to hear now, but it is the town-talk here: that Pracontal, or Count Bramleigh—I don't know which name he is best known by—is to marry Lady Augusta. Some say that the marriage will depend on the verdict of the trial being in his favor; others declare that she has accepted him unconditionally. I was not disposed to believe the story, but Cluff assures me that it is unquestionable, and that he knows a lady to whom Lady Augusta confided this determination. And, as Cluff says, such an opportunity of shock-



ing the world will not occur every day, and it cannot be expected she could resist the temptation.

"I am going back to England at once, and I enclose you my town address in case you want me—'Joy Court, Cannon Street.' The Calduff mining scheme is now wound up, and the shareholders have signed a consent. Their first dividend of fourpence will be paid in January; future payment will be announced by notice. Tell L'Estrange, however, not to 'come in,' but to wait."

"If I can be of service in any way, make use of me, and, if I cannot, don't forget me, but think of me as, what I once overheard L'Estrange's sister call me—a well-meaning snob, and very faithfully yours,

"T. CUTBILL."

## CHAPTER LII.

### ISCHIA.

THE sun had just sunk below the horizon, and a blaze of blended crimson and gold spread over the Bay of Naples, coloring the rocky island of Ischia till it glowed like a carbuncle. Gradually, however, the rich warm tints began to fade away from the base of the mountains, and a cold blue color stole slowly up their sides, peak after peak surrendering their gorgeous panoply, till at length the whole island assumed a tinge blue as the sea it stood in.

But for the memory of the former glory it would have been difficult to imagine a more beautiful picture. Every cliff and jutting promontory tufted with wild olives and myrtle was reflected in the waveless sea below; and feathery palm-trees and broad-leaved figs trembled in the water, as that gentle wash eddied softly round the rocks, or played on the golden shore.

It was essentially the hour of peace and repose. Along the shores of the bay, in every little village, the *angelus* was ringing, and kneeling groups were bowed in prayer; and even here, on this rocky islet, where crime and wretchedness were sent to expiate by years of misery their sins against their fellow-men, the poor galley-slaves caught one instant of kindred with the world, and were suffered to taste in peace the beauty of the hour. There they were in little knots and groups—some lying listlessly in the deep grass; some gathered on a little rocky point, watching the fish as they darted to and fro in the limpid water, and doubtless envying their glorious freedom; and others,

again, seated under some spreading tree, and seeming, at least, to feel the calm influence of the hour.

The soldiers who formed their guard had piled their arms, leaving here and there merely a sentinel, and had gone down amongst the rocks, to search for limpets, or those rugged "*ricci di mare*" which humble palates accept as delicacies. A few, too, dashed in for a swim, and their joyous voices and merry laughter were heard amid the splash of the water they disported in.

In a small cleft of a rock overshadowed by an old ilex-tree two men sat moodily gazing on the sea. In dress they were indeed alike, for both wore that terrible red and yellow livery that marks a life-long condemnation, and each carried the heavy chain of the same terrible sentence. They were linked together at the ankle, and thus, for convenience' sake, they sat shoulder to shoulder. One was a thin, spare, but still wiry-looking man, evidently far advanced in life, but with a vigor in his look and a quick intelligence in his eye that showed what energy he must have possessed in youth. He had spent years at the galleys, but neither time nor the degradation of his associations had completely eradicated the traces of something above the common in his appearance; for No. 97—he had no other name as a prisoner—had been condemned for his share in a plot against the life of the king; three of his associates having been beheaded, for their greater criminality. What station he might originally have belonged to was no longer easy to determine; but there were yet some signs that indicated that he had been at least in the middle rank of life. His companion was unlike him in every way. He was a young man with fresh complexion and large blue eyes, the very type of frankness and good-nature. Not even prison diet and discipline had yet hollowed his cheek, though it was easy to see that unaccustomed labor and distasteful food were beginning to tell upon his strength, and the bitter smile with which he was gazing on his lank figure and wasted hands showed the weary misery that was consuming him.

"Well, old Nick," said the young man at length, "this is to be our last evening together; and if ever I should touch land again, is there any way I could help you—is there anything I could do for you?"

"So then you're determined to try it?" said the other, in a low growling tone.

"That I am. I have not spent weeks filing through that confounded chain for nothing: one wrench now and it's smashed."

"And then?" asked the old man with a grin.

"And then I'll have a swim for it. I know all that—I know it all," said he, answering a gesture of the other's hand; "but do you think I care to drag out such a life as this?"

"I do," was the quiet reply.

"Then why you do is clear and clean beyond me. To me it is worse than fifty deaths."

"Look here, lad," said the old man, with a degree of animation he had not shown before. "There are four hundred and eighty of us here: some for ten, some for twenty years, some for life; except yourself alone there is not one has the faintest chance of a pardon. You are English, and your nation takes trouble about its people, and, right or wrong, in the end gets them favorable treatment, and yet you are the only man here would put his life in jeopardy on so poor a chance."

"I'll try it for all that."

"Did you ever hear of a man that escaped by swimming?"

"If they didn't it was their own fault—at least they gave themselves no fair chance: they always made for the shore, and generally the nearest shore, and of course they were followed and taken. I'll strike out for the open sea, and when I have cut the cork floats off a fishing-net, I'll be able to float for hours, if I should tire swimming. Once in the open, it will be hard luck if some coasting vessel, some steamer to Palermo or Messina, should not pick me up. Besides, there are numbers of fishing-boats—"

"Any one of which would be right glad to make five ducats by bringing you safe back to the police."

"I don't believe it—I don't believe there is that much baseness in a human heart."

"Take my word for it, there are depths a good deal below even that," said the old man, with a harsh grating laugh.

"No matter, come what will of it. I'll make the adventure; and now, as our time is growing short, tell me if there is anything I can do for you, if I live to get free again. Have you any friends who could help you? or is there any one to whom you would wish me to go on your behalf?"

"None—none," said he, slowly but calmly.

"As yours was a political crime—"

"I have done all of them, and if my life were to be drawn out for eighty years longer it would not suffice for all the sentences against me."

"Still I'd not despair of doing something—"

"Look here, lad," said the other, sharply; "it is my will that all who belong to me should believe me dead. I was shipwrecked twelve years ago, and reported to have gone down with all the crew. My son—"

"Have you a son, then?"

"My son inherits rights that, stained as I am by crime and condemnation, I never could have maintained. Whether he shall make them good or not will depend on whether he has more or less of *my* blood in his veins. It may be, however, he will want money to prosecute his claim. I have none to send him, but I could tell him where he is almost certain to find not only money, but what will serve him more than money, if you could make him out. I have written some of the names he is known by on this paper, and he can be traced through Bolton, the banker at Naples. Tell him to seek out all the places old Giacomo Lami worked at. He never painted his daughter Enrichetta in a fresco that he didn't hide gold, or jewels, or papers of value somewhere near. Tell him, above all, to find out where Giacomo's last work was executed. You can say that you got this commission from me years ago in Monte Video; and when you tell him it was Niccolo Baldassare gave it, he'll believe you. There. I have written Giacomo Lami on that paper, so that you need not trust to your memory. But why do I waste time with these things? You'll never set foot on shore, lad—never."

"I am just as certain that I shall. If that son of yours was only as certain of winning his estate, I'd call him a lucky fellow. But see, they are almost dressed. They'll be soon ready to march us home. Rest your foot next this rock till I smash the link, and when you see them coming roll this heavy stone down into the sea. I'll make for the south side of the island, and, once night falls, take to the water. Good-bye, old fellow. I'll not forget you—never, never," and he wrung the old man's hand in a strong grasp. The chain gave way at the second blow, and he was gone.

Just as the last flickering light was fading from the sky, three cannon shots, in quick succession, announced that a prisoner had made his escape, and patrols issued forth in every direction to scour the island, while boats were manned to search the caves and crevasses along the shore.

The morning's telegram to the Minister of Police ran thus: "No 11 made his es-



cape last evening, filing his ankle-iron. The prisoner 97, to whom he was linked, declares that he saw him leap into the sea and sink. This statement is not believed; but up to this, no trace of the missing man has been discovered."

In the afternoon of the same day, Temple Bramleigh learned the news, and hastened home to the hotel to inform his chief. Lord Culduff was not in the best of tempers. Some independent member below the gangway had given notice of a question he intended to ask the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and a leader of a Radical morning paper had thus paraphrased the inquiry: "What Mr. Bechell wishes to ascertain, in fact, amounts to this:—'Could not the case of Samuel Rogers have been treated by our resident envoy at Naples, or was it necessary that the dignity and honor of England should be maintained by an essenced old fop, whose social successes—and we never heard that he had any other—date from the early days of the Regency?'"

Lord Culduff was pacing his room angrily when Temple entered, and, although nothing would have induced him to show the insolent paragraph of the paper, he burst out into a violent abuse of those meddling Radicals, whose whole mission in life was to assail men of family and station.

"In the famous revolution of France, sir," cried he, "they did their work with the guillotine; but our cowardly canaille never rise above defamation. You must write to the papers about this, Temple. You must expose this system of social assassination, or the day will come, if it has not already come, when gentlemen of birth and blood will refuse to serve the Crown."

"I came back to tell you that our man has made his escape," said Temple, half trembling at daring to interrupt this flow of indignation.

"And whom do you call our man, sir?"

"I mean Rogers—the fellow we have been writing about."

"How and when has this happened?"

Temple proceeded to repeat what he had learned at the prefecture of the police and read out the words of the telegram.

"Let us see," said Lord Culduff, seating himself in a well-cushioned chair, "let us see what new turn this will give the affair. He may be recaptured, or he may be, most probably is, drowned. We then come in for compensation. They must indemnify. There are few claims so thoroughly chronic in their character as

those for an indemnity. You first discuss the right, and you then higgler over the arithmetic. I don't want to go back to town this season. See to it then, Temple, that we reserve this question entirely to ourselves. Let Blagden refer everything to us."

"They have sent the news home already."

"Oh! they have. Very sharp practice. Not peculiar for any extreme delicacy either. But I cannot dine with Blagden, for all that. This escape gives a curious turn to the whole affair. Let us look into it a little. I take it the fellow must have gone down—eh?"

"Most probably."

"Or he might have been picked up by some passing steamer or by a fishing-boat. Suppose him to have got free, he'll get back to England, and make capital out of the adventure. These fellows understand all that nowadays."

Temple, seeing a reply was expected, assented.

"So that we must not be precipitate, Temple," said Lord Culduff, slowly. "It's a case for caution."

These words, and the keen look that accompanied them, were perfect puzzles to Temple, and he did not dare to speak.

"The thing must be done in this wise," said Lord Culduff. "It must be a 'private and confidential' to the office, and a 'sly and ambiguous' to the public prints. I'll charge myself with the former; the latter shall be your care, Temple. You are intimate with Flosser, the correspondent of the *Bell-Weather*. Have him to dinner, and be indiscreet. This old Madeira here will explain any amount of expansiveness. Get him to talk of this escape, and let out the secret that it was we who managed it all. Mind, however, that you swear him not to reveal anything. It would be your ruin, you must say, if the affair got wind; but the fact was Lord Culduff saw the Neapolitans were determined not to surrender him, and, knowing what an insult it would be to the public feeling of England that an Englishman was held as a prisoner at the galleys for an act of heroism and gallantry, the only course was to liberate him at any cost, and in any way. Flosser will swear secrecy, but hints at this solution as the *on dit* in certain keen coteries. Such a mode of treating the matter carries more real weight than a sworn affidavit. Men like the problem that they fancy they have unraveled by their own acuteness. And then it muzzles discussion in the House, since even the most blatant Radical sees that it cannot be debated openly; for all

Englishmen, as a rule, love compensation, and we can only claim indemnification here on the assumption that we were no parties to the escape. Do you follow me, Temple?"

"I believe I do. I see the drift of it at last."

"There's no drift, sir. It is a full, palpable, well-delivered blow. We saved Rogers; but we refuse to explain how."

"And if he turns up one of these days, and refuses to confirm us?"

"Then we denounce him as an impostor; but always, mark you, in the same shadowy way that we allude to our share in his evasion. It must be a sketch in water-colors throughout, Temple—very faint and very transparent. When I have rough-drafted my despatch you shall see it. Once the original melody is before you, you will see there is nothing to do but invent the variations."

"My lady wishes to know, my lord, if your lordship will step upstairs to speak to her?" said a servant at this conjuncture.

"Go up, Temple, and see what it is," whispered Lord Culduff. "If it be about that box at the St. Carlos, you can say our stay here is now most uncertain. If it be a budget question, she must wait till quarter-day." He smiled maliciously as he spoke, and waved his hand to dismiss him. Within a minute—it seemed scarcely half that time—Lady Culduff entered the room, with an open letter in her hand; her color was high, and her eyes flashing, as she said:—

"Make your mind at ease, my lord. It is no question of an opera-box or a milliner's bill, but it is a matter of much importance that I desire to speak about. Will you do me the favor to read that, and say what answer I shall return to it?"

Lord Culduff took the letter and read it over leisurely, and then, laying it down, said: "Lady Augusta is not a very conspicuous letter-writer, or else she feels her present task too much for her tact, but what she means here is that you should give M. Pracontal permission to ransack your brother's house for documents, which, if discovered, might deprive him of the title to his estate. The request, at least, has modesty to recommend it."

"The absurdity is, to my thinking, greater than even the impertinence," cried Lady Culduff. "She says, that on separating two pages, which, by some accident, had adhered, of Giacomo Lami's journal—whoever Giacomo Lami may be—we—we being Pracontal and herself—have discovered that it was Giacomo's habit to conceal important papers in the walls where

he painted, and in all cases where he introduced his daughter's portrait; and that as in the octagon room at Castello there is a picture of her as Flora, it is believed—confidently believed—such documents will be found there as will throw great light on the present claim——"

"First of all," said he, interrupting, "is there such a portrait?"

"There is a Flora; I never heard it was a portrait. Who could tell after what the artist copied it?"

"Lady Augusta assumes to believe this story."

"Lady Augusta is only too glad to believe what everybody else would pronounce incredible; but this is not all, she has the inconceivable impertinence to prefer this request to us, to make us a party to our own detriment—as if it were matter of perfect indifference who possessed these estates, and who owned Castello."

"I declare I have heard sentiments from your brother Augustus that would fully warrant this impression. I have a letter of his in my desk, wherein he distinctly says that once satisfied in his own mind—not to the conviction of his lawyer, mark you, nor to the conviction of men well versed in evidence, and accustomed to sift testimony, but simply in his own not very capacious intellect—that the estate belongs to Pracontal, he'll yield him up the possession without dispute or delay."

"He's a fool! there is no other name for him," said she, passionately.

"Yes, and his folly is very mischievous folly, for he is abrogating rights he has no pretension to deal with. It is as well, at all events, that this demand was addressed to us and not to your brother, for I'm certain he'd not have refused his permission."

"I know it," said she, fiercely; "and if Lady Augusta only knew his address and how a letter might reach him, she would never have written to us. Time pressed, however; see what she says here. 'The case will come on for trial in November, and if the papers have the value and significance Count Pracontal's lawyers suspect, there will yet be time to make some arrangement—the Count will be disposed for a generous one—which might lessen the blow, and diminish the evil consequences of a verdict certain to be adverse to the present possessor.'"

"She dissevers her interests from those of her late husband's family with great magnanimity, I must say."

"The horrid woman is going to marry Pracontal."



"They say so, but I doubt it—at least, till he comes out a victor."

"How she could have dared to write this, how she could have had the shamelessness to ask *me—me* whom she certainly ought to know—to aid and abet a plot directed against the estates—the very legitimacy of my family—is more than I can conceive."

"She's an implicit believer, one must admit, for she says: 'If on examining the part of the wall behind the pedestal of the figure nothing shall be found, she desires no further search.' The spot is indicated with such exactness in the journal, that she limits her request distinctly to this."

"Probably she thought the destruction of a costly fresco might well have been demurred to," said Lady Culduff, angrily. "Not but, for my part, I'd equally refuse her leave to touch the moulding in the surbase. I am glad, however, she has addressed this demand to us, for I know well Augustus is weak enough to comply with it, and fancy himself a hero in consequence. There is something piquant in the way she hints that she is asking as a favor what, for all she knows, might be claimed as a right. Imagine a woman saying this!"

"It is like asking me for the key of my writing-desk to see if I have not some paper or letter there, that might, if published, give me grave inconvenience."

"I have often heard of her eccentricities and absurdities, but on this occasion I believe she has actually outdone herself. I suppose, though this appeal is made to us conjointly, as it is addressed to me, I am the proper person to reply to it."

"Certainly, my lady."

"And I may say—Lord Culduff feels shocked equally with myself at the indelicacy of the step you have just taken; failing to respect the tie which connects you with our family, you might, he opines, have had some regard for the decencies which regulate social intercourse, and while bearing our name, not have ranked yourself with those who declare themselves our enemies. I may say this, I may tell that her conduct is shameless, an outrage on all feeling, and not only derogatory to her station, but unwomanly?"

"I don't think I'd say that," said he, with a faint simper, while he patted his hand with a gold paper-knife. "I opine the better way would be to accept her ladyship's letter as the most natural thing in life *from her*; that she had preferred a request, which, coming from *her*, was all that was right and reasonable. That there was

something very noble and very elevated in the way she could rise superior to personal interests, and the ties of kindred, and actually assert the claims of mere justice; but I'd add that the decision could not lie with us—that your brother, being the head of the family, was the person to whom the request must be addressed, and that we would, with her permission, charge ourselves with the task. Pray hear me out—first of all, we have a delay while she replies to this, with or without the permission we ask for; in that interval you can inform your brother that a very serious plot is being concerted against him; that your next letter will fully inform him as to the details of the conspiracy—your present advice being simply for warning, and then, when, if she still persist, the matter must be heard, it will be strange if Augustus shall not have come to the conclusion that the part intended for him is a very contemptible one—that of a dupe."

"Your lordship's mode may be more diplomatic; mine would be more direct."

"Which is exactly its demerit, my lady," said he, with one of his blindest smiles.

"In *my* craft the great secret is never to give a flat refusal to anything. If the French were to ask us for the Isle of Wight, the proper reply would be a polite demand for the reasons that prompted the request—whether 'Osborne' might be reserved—and a courteous assurance that the claim should meet with every consideration and a cordial disposition to make every possible concession that might lead to a closer union with a nation it was our pride and happiness to reckon on as an ally."

"These fallacies never deceive any one."

"Nor are they meant to do so, any more than the words, 'your most obedient and humble servant,' at the foot of a letter; but they serve to keep correspondence within polite limits."

"And they consume time," broke she in, impatiently.

"And, as you observe so aptly, they consume time."

"Let us have done with trifling, my lord. I mean to answer this letter in my own way."

"I can have no other objection to make to that, save the unnecessary loss of time I have incurred in listening to the matter."

"That time so precious to the nation you serve!" said she, sneeringly.

"Your ladyship admirably expresses my meaning."

"Then, my lord, I make you the only amends in my power: I take my leave of you."

"Your ladyship's politeness is never at fault," said he, rising to open the door for her.

"Has Temple told you that the box on the lower tier is now free—the box I spoke of?"

"He has; but our stay here is now uncertain. It may be days; it may be hours——"

"And why was not I told? I have been giving orders to tradespeople, accepting invitations, making engagements, and what not. Am I to be treated like the wife of a subaltern in a marching regiment—to hold myself ready to start when the route comes?"

"How I could envy that subaltern," said he, with an inimitable mixture of raillery and deference.

She darted on him a look of indignant anger, and swept out of the room.

Lord Culduff rang his bell, and told the servant to beg Mr. Temple Bramleigh would have the kindness to step down to him.

"Write to Filangieri, Temple," said he, "and say that I desire to have access to the prisoner Rogers. We know nothing of his escape, and the demand will embarrass. There, don't start objections, my dear boy. I never play a card without thinking what the enemy will do after he scores the trick."

And with this profound encomium on himself, he dismissed the secretary, and proceeded to read the morning papers.

## CHAPTER LIII.

### A RAINY NIGHT AT SEA.

THE absurd demand preferred by Lady Augusta in her letter to Marion was a step taken without any authority from Pracontal, and actually without his knowledge. On the discovery of the adhering pages of the journal, and their long consideration of the singular memorandum that they found within, Pracontal carried away the book to Longworth, to show him the passage, and ask what importance he might attach to its contents.

Longworth was certainly struck by the minute particularity with which an exact place was indicated. There was a rough pen sketch of the Flora, and a spot marked by a cross at the base of the pedestal, with the words: "Here will be found the books." Lower down, on the same page, was written: "These volumes, which I did not obtain

without difficulty, and which were too cumbersome to carry away, I have deposited in this safe place, and the time may come when they will be of value.—G. L."

"Now," said Longworth, after some minutes of deep thought, "Lami was a man engaged in every imaginable conspiracy. There was not a state in Europe, apparently, where he was not, to some extent, compromised. These books he refers to may be the records of some secret society, and he may have stored them there as a security against the lukewarmness or the treachery of men whose fate might be imperiled by certain documents. Looking to the character of Lami, his intense devotion to these schemes, and his crafty nature and the Italian forethought which seems always to have marked whatever he did, I half incline to this impression. Then, on the other hand, you remember, Pracontal, when we went over to Portshandon to inquire about the registry books, we heard that they had all been stolen or destroyed by the rebels in '98?"

"Yes; I remember that well. I had not attached any importance to the fact, but I remember how much Kelson was disconcerted and put out by the intelligence, and how he continually repeated: 'This is no accident; this is no accident.'"

"It would be a rare piece of fortune if they were the church books, and that they contained a formal registry of the marriage."

"But who doubts it?"

"Say rather, my dear friend, why should any one believe it? Just think for one moment who Montagu Bramleigh was, what was his station and his fortune, and then remember the interval that separated him from the Italian painter—a man of a certain ability, doubtless. Is it the most likely thing in the world, if the young Englishman fell in love with the beautiful Italian, that he would have sacrificed his whole ambition in life to his passion? Is it not far more probable, in fact, that no marriage whatever united them? Come, come, Pracontal, this is not, now at least, a matter to grow sulky over; you cannot be angry or indignant at my frankness, and you'll not shoot me for this slur on your grandmother's fair reputation."

"I certainly think that, with nothing better than a theory to support it, you might have spared her memory this aspersion."

"If I had imagined you could not talk of it as unconcernedly as myself, I assure you I would never have spoken about it."

"You see now, however, that you have mistaken me—that you have read me rather



as one of your own people than as a Frenchman," said the other, warmly.

"I certainly see that I must not speak to you with frankness, and I shall use caution not to offend you by candor."

"This is not enough, sir," said the Frenchman, rising and staring angrily at him.

"What is not enough?" said Longworth, with a perfect composure.

"Not enough for apology, sir; not enough as *amende* for an unwarrantable and insolent calumny."

"You are getting angry at the sound of your own voice, Pracontal. I now tell you that I never meant—never could have meant—to offend you. You came to me for a counsel which I could only give by speaking freely what was in my mind. This is surely enough for explanation."

"Then let it all be forgotten at once," cried the other, warmly.

"I'll not go that far," said Longworth, in the same calm tone as before. "You have accepted my explanation; you have recognized what one moment of justice must have convinced you of—that I had no intention to wound your feelings. There is certainly, however, no reason in the world why I should expose my own to any unnecessary injury. I have escaped a peril; I have no wish to incur another of the same sort."

"I don't think I understand you," said Pracontal, quickly. "Do you mean we should quarrel?"

"By no means."

"That we should separate, then?"

"Certainly."

The Frenchman became pale, and suddenly his face flushed till it was deep crimson, and his eyes flashed with fire. The effort to be calm was almost a strain beyond his strength; but he succeeded, and, in a voice scarcely above a whisper, he said, "I am deeply in your debt. I cannot say how deeply. My lawyer, however, does know, and I will confer with him."

"This is a matter of small consequence, and does not press; besides, I beg you will not let it trouble you."

The measured coldness with which these words were spoken seemed to jar painfully on Pracontal's temper, for he snatched his hat from the table, and, with a hurried "Adieu—adieu, then," left the room. The carriages of the hotel were waiting in the courtyard to convey the travelers to the station.

"Where is the train starting for?" asked he of a waiter.

"For Civita, sir."

"Step up to my room, then, and throw my clothes into a portmanteau—enough for a few days. I shall have time to write a note, I suppose?"

"Ample, sir. You have forty minutes yet."

Pracontal opened his writing-desk and wrote a few lines to Lady Augusta, to tell how a telegram had just called him away—it might be to Paris, perhaps London. He would be back within ten days, and explain all. He wished he might have her leave to write, but he had not a moment left him to ask the permission. Should he risk the liberty? What if it might displease her? He was every way unfortunate; nor, in all the days of a life of changes and vicissitudes, did he remember a sadder moment than this in which he wrote himself her devoted servant, A. Pracontal de Bramleigh. This done, he jumped into a carriage, and just reached the train in time to start for Civita.

There was little of exaggeration when he said he had never known greater misery and depression than he now felt. The thought of that last meeting with Longworth overwhelmed him with sorrow. When we bear in mind how slowly and gradually the edifice of friendship is built up; how many of our prejudices have often to be overcome; how much of self-education is effected in the process—the thought that all this labor of time and feeling should be cast to the winds at once for a word of passion or a hasty expression, is humiliating to a degree. Pracontal had set great store by Longworth's friendship for him. He had accepted great favors at his hand; but so kindly and so gracefully conferred as to double the obligations by the delicacy with which they were bestowed. And this was the man whose good feeling for him he had outraged and insulted beyond recall. "If it had been an open quarrel between us, I could have stood his fire and shown him how thoroughly I knew myself in the wrong; but his cold disdain is more than I can bear. And what was it all about? How my old comrades would laugh if they heard that I had quarreled with my best friend! Ah, my grandmother's reputation! *Ma foi*, how much more importance one often attaches to a word than to what it represents!" Thus angry with himself, mocking the very pretensions on which he had assumed to reprehend his friend, and actually ridiculing his own conduct, he embarked from Marseilles to hasten over to England and entreat Kelson to discharge the money obligation which yet bound him to Longworth.

It was a rough night at sea, and the packet so crowded by passengers that Pracontal was driven to pass the night on deck. In the haste of departure he had not provided himself with overcoats or rugs, and was but ill suited to stand the severity of a night of cold, cutting wind and occasional drifts of hail. To keep himself warm he walked the deck for hours, pacing rapidly to and fro; perhaps not sorry at heart that physical discomfort compelled him to dwell less on the internal griefs that preyed upon him. One solitary passenger besides himself had sought the deck, and he had rolled himself in a multiplicity of warm wrappers, and lay snugly under the shelter of the binnacle—a capacious tarpaulin cloak surmounting all his other integuments.

Pracontal's campaigning experiences had taught him that the next best thing to being well cloaked one's self is to lie near the man that is so; and thus, seeing that the traveler was fast asleep, he stretched himself under his lee, and even made free to draw a corner of the heavy tarpaulin over him.

"I say," cried the stranger, on discovering a neighbor—"I say, old fellow, you are coming it a bit too free and easy. You've stripped the covering off my legs."

"A thousand pardons," rejoined Pracontal. "I forgot to take my rugs and wraps with me; and I am shivering with cold. I have not even an overcoat."

The tone—so evidently that of a gentleman, and the slight touch of a foreign accent—apparently at once conciliated the stranger, for he said, "I have enough and to spare; spread this blanket over you; and here's a cushion for a pillow."

These courtesies, accepted frankly as offered, soon led them to talk together; and the two men speedily found themselves chatting away like old acquaintances.

"I am puzzling myself," said the stranger at last, "to find out are you an Englishman who has lived long abroad, or are you a foreigner?"

"Is my English so good as that?" asked Pracontal, laughing.

"The very best I ever heard from any not a born Briton."

"Well, I'm a Frenchman—or a half Frenchman—with some Italian and some English blood, too, in me."

"Ah! I knew you must have had a dash of John Bull in you. No man ever spoke such English as yours without it."

"Well, but my English temperament goes two generations back. I don't believe my father was ever in England."

With this opening they talked away about national traits and peculiarities: the Frenchman with all the tact and acuteness travel and much intercourse with life conferred; and the other with the especial shrewdness that marks a Londoner. "How did you guess I was a Cockney?" asked he, laughingly. "I don't take liberties with my H's."

"If you had, it's not likely I'd have known it," said Pracontal. "But your reference to town, the fidelity with which you clung to what London would think of this, or say to that, made me suspect you to be a Londoner; and I see I was right."

"After all, you Frenchmen are just as full of Paris."

"Because Paris epitomizes France, and France is the greatest of all countries."

"I'll not stand that. I deny it *in toto*."

"Well, I'll not open the question now, or maybe you'd make me give up this blanket."

"No. I'll have the matter out on fair grounds. Keep the blanket, but just let me hear on what grounds you claim precedence for France before England."

"I'm too unlucky in matters of dispute to-day," said Pracontal, sadly, "to open a new discussion. I quarreled with, perhaps, the best friend I had in the world this morning for a mere nothing; and though there is little fear that anything we could say to each other now would provoke ill feeling between us, I'll run no risks."

"By Jove! it must be Scotch blood is in you. I never heard of such caution!"

"No, I believe my English connection is regular Saxon. When a man has been in the newspapers in England, he need not affect secrecy or caution in talking of himself. I figured in a trial lately; I don't know if you read the cause. It was tried in Ireland—Count Bramleigh de Pracontal against Bramleigh."

"What, are you Pracontal?" cried the stranger, starting to a sitting posture.

"Yes. Why are you so much interested?"

"Because I have seen the place. I have been over the property in dispute, and the question naturally interests me."

"Ha! you know Castello, then?"

"Castello, or Bishop's Folly. I know it best by the latter name."

"And whom am I speaking to?" said Pracontal; "for, as you know me perhaps, I have some right to ask this."

"My name is Cutbill; and now that you've heard it, you're nothing the wiser."

"You probably know the Bramleighs?"



"Every one of them; Augustus, the eldest, I am intimate with."

"It's not my fault that I have no acquaintance with him. I desired it much; and Lady Augusta conveyed my wish to Mr. Bramleigh, but he declined. I don't know on what grounds; but he refused to meet me, and we have never seen each other."

"If I don't greatly mistake, you ought to have met. I hope it may not be yet too late."

"Ah, but it is! We are *en pleine guerre* now, and the battle must be fought out. It is he, and not I, would leave the matter to this issue. I was for a compromise; I would have accepted an arrangement; I was unwilling to overthrow a whole family and consign them to ruin. They might have made their own terms with me; but no, they preferred to defy me. They determined I should be a mere pretender, They gave me no alternative; and I fight because there is no retreat open to me."

"And yet if you knew Bramleigh——"

"Mon cher, he would not give me the chance; he repulsed the offer I made; he would not touch the hand I held out to him."

"I am told that the judge declared that he never tried a cause where the defendant displayed a more honorable line of conduct."

"That is all true. Kelson, my lawyer, said that everything they did was straightforward and creditable; but he said, too, don't go near them, don't encourage any acquaintance with them, or some sort of arrangement will be patched up which will leave everything unsettled to another generation—when all may become once more litigated with less light to guide a decision and far less chance of obtaining evidence."

"Never mind the lawyers, Count, never mind the lawyers. Use your own good sense, and your own generous instincts; place yourself—in idea—in Bramleigh's position, and ask yourself could you act more handsomely than he has done? and then bethink you, what is the proper way to meet such conduct."

"It's all too late for this now; don't ask me why, but take my word for it, it is too late."

"It's never too late to do the right thing, though it may cost a man some pain to own he is changing his mind."

"It's not that; it's not that," said the other, peevishly, "though I cannot explain to you why or how."

"I don't want to hear secrets," said Cutbill, bluntly; "all the more that you and

I are strangers to each other. I don't think either of us has had a good look at the other's face yet."

"I've seen yours, and I don't distrust it," said the Frenchman.

"Good night, then, there's a civil speech to go to sleep over," and so saying, he rolled over to the other side, and drew his blanket over his head.

Pracontal lay a long time awake, thinking of the strange companion he had chanced upon, and that still stranger amount of intimacy that had grown up between them. "I suppose," muttered he to himself, "I must be the most indiscreet fellow in the world; but after all, what have I said that he has not read in the newspapers, or may not read next week or the week after? I know how Kelson would condemn me for this careless habit of talking of myself and my affairs to the first man I meet on a railroad or a steamer; but I must be what nature made me, and after all, if I show too much of my hand, I gain something by learning what the bystanders say of it."

It was not till nigh daybreak that he dropped off to sleep; and when he awoke it was to see Mr. Cutbill with a large bowl of hot coffee in one hand, and a roll in the other, making an early breakfast; a very rueful figure, too, was he—as, black with smoke and coal-dust, he propped himself against the binnacle, and gazed out over the waste of waters.

"You are a good sailer, I see, and don't fear sea-sickness," said Pracontal.

"Don't I? that's all you know of it; but I take everything they bring me. There's a rasher on its way to me now, if I survive this."

"I'm for a basin of cold water and coarse towels," said the other, rising.

"That's two points in your favor towards having English blood in you," said Cutbill, gravely, for already his qualms were returning: "when a fellow tells you he cares for soap, he can't be out and out a Frenchman." This speech was delivered with great difficulty, and when it was done he rolled over and covered himself up, over face and head, and spoke no more.

## CHAPTER LIV.

### THE LETTER BAG.

"WHAT a mail-bag!" cried Nelly, as she threw several letters on the breakfast-table; the same breakfast-table being laid under

a spreading vine, all draped and festooned with a gorgeous clematis.

"I declare," said Augustus, "I'd rather look out yonder, over the blue gulf of Cattaro, than see all the post could bring me."

"This is for you," said Nelly, handing a letter to L'Estrange.

He reddened as he took it; not that he knew either the writing or the seal, but that terrible consciousness which besets the poor man in life leads him always to regard the unknown as pregnant with misfortune: and so he pocketed his letter, to read it when alone and unobserved.

"Here's Cutbill again. I don't think I care for more Cutbill," said Bramleigh; "and here's Sedley; Sedley will keep. This is from Marion."

"Oh, let us hear Marion by all means," said Nelly. "May I read her, Gusty?" He nodded, and she broke the envelope. "Ten lines and a postscript. She's positively expansive this time:—

"Victoria, Naples.

"MY DEAR GUSTY:—Our discreet and delicate stepmother has written to ask me to intercede with you to permit M. Pracontal to pull down part of the house at Castello to search for some family papers. I have replied that her demand is both impracticable and indecent. Be sure that you make a like answer if she addresses you personally. We mean to leave this soon, but are not yet certain in what direction. We have been shamefully treated, after having brought this troublesome and difficult negotiation to a successful end. We shall withdraw our proxy.

"Yours ever in much affection,

"MARION CULDUFF.

"P.S.—You have heard, I suppose, that Culduff has presented L'Estrange to a living. It's not in a hunting county, so that he will not be exposed to temptation; nor are there any idle young men, and Julia may also enjoy security. Do you know where they are?"

They laughed long and heartily over this postscript. Indeed, it amused them to such a degree that they forgot all the preceding part of the letter. As to the fact of the presentation, none believed it. Read by the light of Cutbill's former letter, it was plain enough that it was only one of those pious frauds which diplomacy deals in as largely as Popery. Marion, they were sure, supposed she was recording a fact; but her comments on the fact were what amused them most.

"I wonder am I a flirt?" said Julia, gravely.

"I wonder am I a vicar?" said George; and once more the laughter broke out fresh and hearty.

"Let us have Cutbill now, Nelly. It will be in a different strain. He's lengthy, too. He not only writes on four, but six sides of note paper this time."

"DEAR BRAMLEIGH:—You will be astonished to hear that I traveled back to England with Count Pracontal or Pracontal de Bramleigh, or whatever his name be—a right good fellow, frank, straightforward, and, so far as I see, honest. We hit it off wonderfully together, and became such good friends that I took him down to my little crib at Bayswater—an attention, I suspect, not ill timed, as he does not seem flush of money. He told me the whole story of his claim, and the way he came first to know that he had a claim. It was all discovered by a book, a sort of manuscript journal of his great-grandfather's, every entry of which he, Pracontal, believes to be true as the Bible. He does not remember ever to have seen his father, though he may have done so before he was put to the Naval School at Genoa. Of his mother, he knows nothing. From all I have seen of him, I'd say that you and he have only to meet to become warm and attached friends; and it's a thousand pities you should leave to law and lawyers what a little forbearance, and a little patience, and a disposition to behave generously on each side, might have settled at once and forever.

"In this journal that I mentioned there were two pages gummed together, by accident or design, and on one of these was a sketch of a female figure in a great wreath of flowers, standing on a sort of pedestal, on which was written—"Behind this stone I have deposited books or documents." I'm not sure of the exact words, for they were in Italian, and it was all I could do to master the meaning of the inscription. Now, Pracontal was so convinced that these papers have some great bearing on his claim, that he asked me to write to you to beg permission to make a search for them under the painting at Castello, of which this rough sketch is evidently a study. I own to you I feel little of that confidence that he reposes in this matter. I do not believe in the existence of the papers, nor see how, if there were any, that they could be of consequence. But his mind was so full of it, and he was so persistent in saying, "If I thought this



old journal could mislead me, I'd cease to believe my right to be as good as I now regard it," that I thought I could not do better, in your interest, than to take him with me to Sedley's, to see what that shrewd old fox would say to him. P. agreed at once to go; and, what pleased me much, never thought of communicating with his lawyer nor asking his advice on the step.

"Though I took the precaution to call on Sedley, and tell him what sort of man P. was, and how prudent it would be to hear him with a show of frankness and cordiality, that hard old dog was as stern and as unbending as if he was dealing with a housebreaker. He said he had no instructions from you to make this concession; that, though he himself attached not the slightest importance to any paper that might be found, were he to be consulted, he would unquestionably refuse this permission; that Mr. Bramleigh knew his rights too well to be disposed to encourage persons in frivolous litigation; and that the coming trial would scatter these absurd pretensions to the winds, and convince M. Pracontal and his friends that it would be better to address himself seriously to the business of life than pass his existence in prosecuting a hopeless and impossible claim.

"I was much provoked at the sort of lecturing tone the old man assumed, and struck with astonishment at the good temper and good breeding with which the other took it. Only once he showed a slight touch of resentment, when he said, 'Have a care, sir, that, while disparaging my pretensions, you suffer nothing to escape you that shall reflect on the honor of those who belong to me. I will overlook everything that relates to *me*. I will pardon nothing that insults *their* memory.'" This finished the interview, and we took our leave. "We have not gained much by this step," said Pracontal, laughing, as we left the house. "Will you now consent to write to Mr. Bramleigh, for I don't believe he would refuse my request?" I told him I would take a night to think over it, and on the same evening came a telegram from Ireland to say that some strange discoveries were just being made in the Lisconnor mine; that a most valuable "lode" had been artificially closed up, and that a great fraud had been practiced to depreciate the value of the mine, and throw it into the market as a damaged concern, while its real worth was considerable. They desired me to go over at once and report, and Pracontal, knowing that I should be only a few miles from Bishop's Folly, to which he clings with an attach-

ment almost incredible, determined to accompany me.

"I have no means of even guessing how long I may be detained in Ireland—possibly some weeks; at all events, let me have a line to say you will give me this permission. I say, "give *me*" because I shall strictly confine the investigation to the limits I myself think requisite, and in reality use the search as one means of testing what importance may attach to this journal, on which Pracontal relies so implicitly; and in the event of the failure—that I foresee and would risk a bet upon—I would employ the disappointment as a useful agent in dissuading Pracontal from further pursuit.

"I strongly urge you, therefore, not to withhold this permission. It seems rash to say that a man ought to furnish his antagonist with a weapon to fight him; but you have always declared you want nothing but an honest, fair contest, wherein the best man should win. You have also said to me that you often doubted your own actual sincerity. You can test it now, and by a touchstone that cannot deceive. If you say to Pracontal, "There's the key, go in freely; there is nothing to hide—nothing to fear," you will do more to strengthen the ground you stand on than by all the eloquence of your lawyer; and if I know anything of this Frenchman, he is not the man to make an ill requital to such a generous confidence. Whatever you decide on, reply at once. I have no time for more, but will take my letter with me and add a line when I reach Ireland.

"Lisconnor, Friday Night.

"They were quite right; there was a most audacious fraud concocted, and a few days will enable me to expose it thoroughly. I'm glad Lord Culduff had nothing to say to it, but more for your sake than his. The L'Estranges are safe; they'll have every shilling of their money, and with a premium, too."

Nelly laid down the letter, and looked over to where George and his sister sat, still and motionless. It was a moment of deep feeling and intense relief, but none could utter a word. At last Julia said:—

"What a deal of kindness there is in that man, and how hard we felt it to believe it, just because he was vulgar! I declare I believe we must be more vulgar still to attach so much to form and so little to fact."

"There is but one line more," said Nelly, turning over the page:—

“ ‘Pracontal has lost all his spirits. He has been over to see a place belonging to a Mr. Longworth here, and has come back so sad and depressed as though the visit had renewed some great sorrow. We have not gone to Bishop’s Folly yet, but mean to drive over there to-morrow. Once more, write to me.

“ ‘Yours ever,  
“ ‘T. CUTBILL.’ ”

“ I shall not give this permission,” said Bramleigh, thoughtfully. “ Sedley’s opinion is decidedly adverse, and I shall abide by it.”

Now, though he said these words with an air of apparent determination, he spoke in reality to provoke discussion and hear what others might say. None, however, spoke, and he waited some minutes.

“ I wish you would say if you agree with me,” cried he, at last.

“ I suspect very few would give the permission,” said Julia, “ but that you are one of that few, I believe also.”

“ Yes, Gusty,” said Nelly. “ Refuse it, and what becomes of that fair spirit in which you have so often said you desired to meet this issue ?”

“ What does George say ?” asked Bramleigh. “ Let’s hear the Church.”

“ Well,” said L’Estrange, in that hesitating, uncertain way he usually spoke in, “ if a man were to say to me, ‘ I think I gave you a sovereign too much in change just now. Will you search your purse, and see if I’m not right ?’ I suppose I’d do so.”

“ And, of course, you mean that if the restitution rose to giving back some thousands a year, it would be all the same ?” said Julia.

“ It would be harder to do, perhaps—of course, I mean—but I hope I could do it.”

“ And I,” said Bramleigh, in a tone that vibrated with feeling. “ I hoped a few days back that no test to my honesty or my sincerity would have been too much for me—that all I asked or cared for was that the truth should prevail. I find myself now prevaricating with myself, hair-splitting, and asking have I a right to do this, that, or t’other ? I declare to heaven, when a man takes refuge in that self-put question, ‘ Have I the right to do something that inclination tells me not to do ?’ he is nearer a contemptible action than he knows of. And is there not one here will say that I ought, or ought not, to refuse this request ?”

“ I do not suppose such a request was

ever made before,” said L’Estrange. “ There lies the great difficulty of deciding what one should do.”

“ Here’s a note from Mr. Sedley,” cried Nelly. “ Is it not possible that it may contain something that will guide us ?”

“ By all means read Sedley,” said Bramleigh. And she opened and read:—

“ ‘DEAR SIR:—A Mr. Cutbill presented himself to me here last week, alleging he was an old and intimate friend of yours, and showing unquestionable signs of being well acquainted with your affairs. He was accompanied by M. Pracontal, and came to request permission to make searches at Castello for certain documents which he declared to be of great importance to the establishment of his claim. I will not stop to say what I thought, or, indeed, said, of such a proposal, exceeding in effrontery anything I had ever listened to.

“ ‘Of course, I not only refused this permission, but declared I would immediately write to you, imploring you, on no account or through any persuasion, to yield to it.

“ ‘They left me, and apparently so disconcerted and dissuaded by my reception, that I did not believe it necessary to address you on the subject. To my amazement, however, I learn from Kelson this morning that they actually did gain entrance to the house, and, by means which I have not yet ascertained, prosecuted the search they desired, and actually discovered the church registers of Portshannon, in one page of which is the entry of the marriage of Montagu Bramleigh and Enrichetta Lami, with the name of the officiating clergyman and the attendant witnesses. Kelson forwards me a copy of this, while inviting me to inspect the original. My first step, however, has been to take measures to proceed against these persons for robbery; and I have sent over one of my clerks to Ireland to obtain due information as to the events that occurred, and to institute proceedings immediately. I do not believe that they committed a burglary, but it was a felonious entry all the same.

“ ‘The important fact, however, lies in this act of registration, which, however fraudently obtained, will be formidable evidence on a trial. You are certainly not happy in your choice of friends, if this Mr. Cutbill be one of them; but I hope no false sentiment will induce you to step between this man and his just punishment. He has done you an irreparable mischief, and by means the most shameful and inexcusable. I call the mischief irreparable, since, looking to the line of argument



adopted by our leading counsel on the last trial, the case chiefly turned on the discredit that attached to this act of marriage. I cannot, therefore, exaggerate the mischief this discovery has brought us. You must come over at once. The delay incurred by letter-writing, and the impossibility of profiting by any new turn events may take, renders your presence here essential, and without it I declare I cannot accept any further responsibility in this case.

"A very flippant note from Mr. Cutbill has just reached me. He narrates the fact of the discovered books, and says, 'It is not too late for B. to make terms. Send for him at once, and say that Count P. has no desire to push him to the wall.' It is very hard to stomach this man's impertinence, but I hesitate now as to what course to take regarding him. Let me hear by telegraph that you are coming over, for I repeat that I will not engage myself to assume the full responsibility of the case, or take any decisive step without your sanction."

"What could Cutbill mean by such conduct?" cried Nelly. "Do you understand it at all, Gusty?"

Bramleigh merely shook his head in token of negative.

"It all came of the man's meddling disposition," said Julia. "The mischievous people of the world are not the malevolent—they only do harm with an object; but the meddling creatures are at it day and night, scattering seeds of trouble out of very idleness."

"Ju's right," said George; but in such a tone of habitual approval that set all the rest laughing.

"I need not discuss the question of permitting the search," said Bramleigh; "these gentlemen have saved me *that*. The only point now open is, shall I go over to England or not?"

"Go by all means," said Julia, eagerly. "Mr. Sedley's advice cannot be gainsaid."

"But it seems to me our case is lost," said he, as his eyes turned to Nelly, whose face expressed deep sorrow.

"I fear so," said she, in a faint whisper. "Then why ask me to leave this, and throw myself into a hopeless contest? Why am I to quit this spot, where I have found peace and contentment, to encounter the struggle that, even with all my conviction of failure, will still move me to hope and expectancy?"

"Just because a brave soldier fights even after defeat seems certain," said Julia. "More than one battle has been won from

those who had already despatched news of their victory."

"You may laugh at me, if you like," said L'Estrange, "but Julia is right there." And they did laugh, and the laughter was so far good that it relieved the terrible tension of their nerves, and rallied them back to ease and quietude.

"I see," said Bramleigh, "that you all think I ought to go over to England; and though none of you can know what it will cost me in feeling, I will go."

"There's a messenger from the Podestà of Cattaro waiting all this time, Gusty, to know about this English sailor they have arrested. The authorities desire to learn if you will take him off their hands."

"George is my vice-consul. He shall deal with him," said Bramleigh, laughing, "for, as the steamer touches at two o'clock, I shall be run sharp to catch her. If any one will help me to pack, I'll be more than grateful."

"We'll do it in a committee of the whole house," said Julia; "for, when a man's trunk is once corded, he never goes back of his journey."

## CHAPTER LV.

### THE PRISONER AT CATTARO.

So much occupied and interested were the little household of the villa in Bramleigh's departure—there were so many things to be done, so many things to be remembered—that L'Estrange never once thought of the messenger from the Podestà, who still waited patiently for his answer.

"I declare," said Julia, "that poor man is still standing in the hall. For pity's sake, George, give him some answer, and send him away."

"But what is the answer to be, Ju? I have not the faintest notion of how these cases are dealt with."

"Let us look over what that great book of instructions says. I used to read a little of it every day when we came first, and I worried Mr. Bramleigh so completely with my superior knowledge that he carried it off and hid it."

"Oh, I remember now. He told me he had left it at the consulate, for that you were positively driving him distracted with official details."

"How ungrateful men are! They never know what good 'nagging' does them. It is the stimulant that converts half the sluggish people in the world into reasonably active individuals."

"Perhaps we are occasionally over-stimulated," said George, dryly.

"If so, it is by your own vanity. Men are spoiled by their fellow-men, and not by women. There, now, you look very much puzzled at that paradox—as you'd like to call it—but go away and think over it, and say this evening if I'm not right."

"Very likely you are," said he, in his indolent way; "but whether or not, you always beat me in a discussion."

"And this letter from the Podestà—who is to reply, or what is the reply to be?"

"Well," said he, after a pause, "I think of the two I'd rather speak bad Italian than write it. I'll go down and see the Podestà."

"There's zeal and activity," said Julia, laughing. "Never disparage the system of nagging after that. Poor George," said she as she looked after him while he set out for Cattaro, "he'd have a stouter heart to ride at a six-foot wall than for the interview that is now before him."

"And yet," said Nelly, "it was only a moment ago you were talking to him about his vanity."

"And I might as well have talked about his wealth. But you'd spoil him, Nelly, if I wasn't here to prevent it. These indolent men get into the way of believing that languor and laziness are good temper; and as George is really a fine-hearted fellow, I'm angry when he falls back upon his lethargy for his character, instead of trusting, as he could and as he ought, to his good qualities."

Nelly blushed, but it was with pleasure. This praise of one she liked—liked even better than she herself knew—was intense enjoyment to her.

Let us now turn to L'Estrange, who strolled along towards Cattaro—now stopping to gather the wild anemones which, in every splendid variety of color, decked the sward—now loitering to gaze at the blue sea, which lay still and motionless at his feet. There was that voluptuous sense of languor in the silence—the loaded perfume of the air—the drowsy hum of insect life—the faint plash with which the sea, unstirred by wind, washed the shore—that harmonized to perfection with his own nature; and could he but have had Nelly at his side to taste the happiness with him, he would have deemed it exquisite, for, poor fellow, he was in love after his fashion. It was not an ardent, impulsive passion, but it consumed him slowly and certainly, all the same. He knew well that his present life of indolence and inactivity could not, ought not to, continue—that without some

prompt effort on his part his means of subsistence would be soon exhausted; but as the sleeper begs that he may be left to slumber on, and catch up, if he may, the dream that has just been broken, he seemed to entreat of fate a little longer of the delicious trance in which he now was living. His failures in life had deepened in him that sense of humility which in coarse natures turns to misanthropy, but in men of finer mould makes them gentle, and submissive, and impressionable. His own humble opinion of himself deprived him of all hope of winning Nelly's affection, but he saw—or he thought he saw—in her that love of simple pleasures, and of a life removed from all ambitions, that led him to believe she would not regard his pretensions with disdain. And then he felt that, thrown together into that closer intimacy their poverty had brought about, he had maintained towards her a studious deference and respect which had amounted almost to coldness, for he dreaded that she should think he would have adventured, in their fallen fortunes, on what he would never have dared in their high and palmy days.

"Well," said he, aloud, as he looked at the small fragment of an almost finished cigar, "I suppose it is nigh over now! I shall have to go and seek my fortune in Queensland, or New Zealand, or some far-away country, and all I shall carry with me will be the memory of this dream—for it is a dream—of our life here. I wonder shall I ever, as I have seen other men, throw myself into my work, and efface the thought of myself, and of my own poor weak nature, in the higher interests that will press on me for action."

What should he do if men came to him for guidance, or counsel, or consolation? Could he play the hypocrite, and pretend to give what he had not got? or tell them to trust to what he bitterly knew was not the sustaining principle of his own life? "This shall be so longer," cried he; "if I cannot go heart and soul into my work, I'll turn farmer or fisherman. I'll be what I can be without shame and self-reproach. One week more of this happiness—one week—and I vow to tear myself from it forever."

As he thus muttered, he found himself in the narrow street that led into the center of the little town, which, blocked up by fruit-stalls and fish-baskets, required all his address to navigate. The whole population, too, were screaming out their wares in the shrill cries of the South, and invitations to buy were blended with droll sarcasms on



rival productions and jeerings comments on the neighbors. Though full of deference for the unmistakable signs of gentleman in his appearance, they did not the less direct their appeals to him as he passed, and the flatteries on his handsome face and graceful figure mingled with the praises of whatever they had to sell.

Half amused, but not a little flurried by all the noise and tumult around him, L'Estrange made his way through the crowd till he reached the dingy entrance which led to the still dingier stair of the Podestà's residence.

L'Estrange had scarcely prepared the speech in which he should announce himself as charged with consular functions, when he found himself in presence of a very dirty little man, with spectacles and a skull-cap, whose profuse civilities and ceremonious courtesies actually overwhelmed him. He assured L'Estrange that there were no words in Italian—nor even in German, for he spoke in both—which could express a fractional part of the affliction he experienced in enforcing measures that savored of severity on a subject of that great nation which had so long been the faithful friend and ally of the imperial house. On this happy political union it was clear he had prepared himself historically, for he gave a rapid sketch of the first empire, and briefly threw off a spirited description of the disastrous consequences of the connection with France, and the passing estrangement from Great Britain. By this time, what between the difficulties of a foreign tongue, and a period with which the poor parson was not, historically, over-conversant, he was completely mystified and bewildered. At last the great functionary condescended to become practical. He proceeded to narrate that an English sailor, who had been landed at Ragusa by some Greek coasting-vessel, had come over on foot to Cattaro to find his consul as a means of obtaining assistance to reach England. There were, however, suspicious circumstances about the man that warranted the police in arresting him and carrying him off to prison. First of all, he was very poor, almost in rags, and emaciated to a degree little short of starvation. These were signs that vouched little for a man's character; indeed the Podestà thought them damaging in the last degree; but there were others still worse. There were marks on his wrists and ankles which showed he had lately worn manacles and fetters—unmistakable marks: marks which the practiced eye of gendarmes had declared must have been produced by the heavy

chains worn by galley-slaves, so that the man was, without doubt, an escaped convict, and might be, in consequence, a very dangerous individual.

As the prisoner spoke neither Italian nor German, there was no means of interrogating him. They had therefore limited themselves to taking him into custody, and now held him at the disposal of the consular authority, to deal with him as it might please.

"May I see him?" asked L'Estrange.

"By all means; he is here. We have had him brought from the prison awaiting your Excellency's arrival. Perhaps you would like to have him handcuffed before he is introduced. The brigadier recommends it."

"No, no. If the poor creature be in the condition you tell me, he cannot be dangerous." And the stalwart curate threw a downward look at his own brawny proportions with a satisfied smile that did not show much fear.

The brigadier whispered something in the Podestà's ear in a low tone, and the great man then said aloud—"He tells me that he could slip the handcuffs on him now quite easily, for the prisoner is sound asleep, and so overcome by fatigue that he hears nothing."

"No, no," reiterated L'Estrange. "Let us have no handcuffs; and, with your good permission too, I would ask another favor: let the poor fellow take his sleep out. It will be quite time enough for me to see him when he awakes."

The Podestà turned a look of mingled wonder and pity on the man who could show such palpable weakness in official life; but he evidently felt he could not risk his dignity by concurrence in such a line of conduct.

"If your Excellency," said he, "tells me it is in this wise prisoners are treated in your country I have no more to say."

"Well, well; let him be brought up," said L'Estrange, hastily, and more than ever anxious to get free of this Austrian Dogberry.

Nothing more was said on either side while the brigadier went down to bring up the prisoner. The half-darkened room, the stillness, the mournful ticking of a clock that made the silence more significant, all impressed L'Estrange with a mingled feeling of weariness and depression; and that strange melancholy that steals over men at times, when all the events of human life seem sad-colored and dreary, now crept over him, when the shuffling sounds of feet, and the clanging of a heavy saber,

apprised him that the escort was approaching.

"We have no treaty with any of the Italian Governments," said the Podestà, "for extradition; and if the man be a galley-slave, as we suspect, we throw all the responsibility of his case on you." As he spoke, the door opened, and a young man with a blue flannel shirt and linen trowsers entered, freeing himself from the hands of the gendarmes with a loose shake, as though to say, "In presence of my countrymen in authority, I owe no submission to these." He leaned on the massive rail that formed a sort of barrier in the room, and with one hand, pushed back the long hair that fell heavily over his face.

"What account do you give of yourself, my man?" said L'Estrange in a tone half-commanding, half-encouraging.

"I have come here to ask my consul to send me on to England, or to some seaport where I may find a British vessel," said the man, and his voice was husky and weak, like that of one just out of illness.

"How did you come to these parts?" asked L'Estrange.

"I was picked up at sea by a Greek trabaccolo, and landed at Antivari; the rest of the way I came on foot."

"Were you cast away? or how came it that you were picked up?"

"I made my escape from the Bagni at Ischia. I had been a galley-slave there." The bold effrontery of the declaration was made still more startling by a sort of low laugh which followed his words.

"You seem to think it a light matter to have been at the galleys, my friend," said L'Estrange, half reprovingly. "How did it happen that an Englishman should be in such a discreditable position?"

"It's a long story—too long for a hungry man to tell," said the sailor; "perhaps too long for your own patience to listen to. At all events, it has no bearing on my present condition."

"I'm not so sure of that, my good fellow. Men are seldom sentenced to the galleys for light offenses; and I'd like to know something of the man I'm called on to befriend."

"I make you the same answer I gave before—the story would take more time than I have well strength for. Do you know," said he, earnestly, and in a voice of touching significance, "it is twenty-eight hours since I have tasted food?"

L'Estrange leaned forward in his chair, like one expecting to hear more, and eager to catch the words aright; and then rising, walked over to the rail where the prisoner

stood. "You have not told me your name," said he, in a voice of kindly meaning.

"I have been called Sam Rogers for some time back; and I mean to be Sam Rogers a little longer."

"But it is not your real name?" asked L'Estrange, eagerly.

The other made no reply for some seconds; and then, moving his hand carelessly through his hair, said, in a half-reckless way, "I declare, sir, I can't see what you have to do with my name, whether I be Sam Rogers, or—or—anything else I choose to call myself. To you—I believe, at least—to you I am simply a distressed British sailor."

"And you are Jack Bramleigh?" said L'Estrange in a low tone, scarcely above a whisper, while he grasped the sailor's hands, and shook them warmly.

"And who are you?" said Jack, in a voice shaken and faltering.

"Don't you know me, my poor dear fellow? Don't you remember George L'Estrange?"

What between emotion and debility, this speech unmanned him so that he staggered back a couple of paces, and sank down heavily, not fainting, but too weak to stand, too much overcome to utter.

## CHAPTER LVI.

AT LADY AUGUSTA'S.

"THE Count Pracontal, my lady," said a very grave-looking groom of the chambers, as Lady Augusta sat watching a small golden squirrel swirring by his tail from the branch of a camellia tree.

"Say I am engaged, Hislop—particularly engaged. I do not receive—or, wait; tell him I am much occupied, but if he is quite sure his visit shall not exceed five minutes, he may come in."

Count Pracontal seemed as though the permission had reached his own ears, for he entered almost immediately, and, bowing deeply and deferentially, appeared to wait leave to advance farther into the room.

"Let me have my chocolate, Hislop;" and, as the man withdrew, she pointed to a chair, and said, "There. When did you come back?"

Pracontal, however, had dropped on his knee before her, and pressed her hand to his lips with a fervid devotion, saying, "How I have longed and waited for this moment!"

"I shall ring the bell, sir, if you do not



be seated immediately. I asked when you returned?"

"An hour ago, my lady—less than an hour ago. I did not dare to write; and then I wished to be myself the bearer of my own good news."

"What good news are these?"

"That I have, if not won my suit, secured the victory. The registries have been discovered—found in the very spot indicated in the journal. The entries are complete; and nothing is wanting to establish the legality of the marriage. Oh, I entreat you, do not listen to me so coldly. You know well for what reason I prize this success. You know well what gives its brightest luster in my eyes."

"Pray be narrative now—the emotional can be kept for some other time. Who says that this means success?"

"My lawyer, Mr. Kelson. He calls the suit won. He proves his belief, for he has advanced me money to pay off my debt to Longworth, and to place me in a position of ease and comfort."

"And what is Kelson; is he one of the judges?"

"Of course not. He is one of the leading solicitors of London; a very grave, thoughtful, cautious man. I have shown you many of his letters. You must remember him."

"No; I never remember people; that is, if they have not personally interested me. I think you have grown thin. You look as if you had been ill."

"I have fretted a good deal—worried myself; and my anxiety about you has made me sleepless and feverish."

"About *me*! Why, I was never better in my life."

"Your looks say as much: but I meant my anxiety to lay my tidings at your feet, and with them myself and my whole future."

"You may leave the chocolate there, Hislop," as the man entered with the tray, "unless Count Pracontal would like some."

"Thanks, my lady," said he, bowing his refusal.

"You are wrong, then," said she, as the servant withdrew, "Hislop makes it with the slightest imaginable flavor of the cherry laurel; and it is most soothing. Isn't he a love?"

"Hislop?"

"No, my darling squirrel yonder. The poor dear has been ill these two days. He bit Sir Marcus Cluff, and that horrid creature seems to have disagreed with the darling, for he has pined ever since. Don't caress him—he hates men, except Monsig-

nore Alberti, whom, probably, he mistakes for an old lady. And what becomes of all the Bramleighs—are they left penniless?"

"By no means. I do not intend to press my claim further than the right to the estates. I am not going to proceed for—I forget the legal word—the accumulated profits. Indeed, if Mr. Bramleigh be only animated by the spirit I have heard attributed to him, there is no concession that I am not disposed to make him."

"What droll people Frenchmen are! They dash their morality, like their cookery, with something discrepant. They fancy it means 'piquancy.' What, in the name of all romance, have you to do with the Bramleighs? Why all this magnanimity for people who certainly have been keeping you out of what was your own, and treating your claim to it as a knavery?"

"You might please to remember that we are related."

"Of course you are nothing of the kind. If *you* be the true prince, the others must be all illegitimate a couple of generations back. Perhaps I am embittered against them by that cruel fraud practiced on myself. I cannot bring myself to forgive it. Now, if you really were that fine generous creature you want me to believe, it is of *me*, of *me*, Lady Augusta Bramleigh, you would be thinking all this while: how to secure *me* that miserable pittance they called my settlement; how to recompense *me* for the fatal mistake I made in my marriage; how to distinguish between the persons who fraudulently took possession of your property, and the poor harmless victim of their false pretensions."

"And is not this what I am here for? Is it not to lay my whole fortune at your feet?"

"A very pretty phrase, that doesn't mean anything like what it pretends—a phrase borrowed from a vaudeville, and that ought to be restored to where it came from."

"Lord and Lady Culduff, my lady, wish to pay their respects."

"They are passing through," said Lady Augusta, reading the words written in pencil on the card presented by the servant. "Of course I must see them. You needn't go away, Count; but I shall not present you. Yes, Hislop, tell her ladyship I am at home. I declare you are always compromising me. Sit over yonder, and read your newspaper, or play with Felice."

She had barely finished these instructions when the double door was flung wide, and Marion swept proudly in. Her air and toilet were both queenlike, and, indeed, her beauty was not less striking than either.

Lord Culduff followed, a soft, pleasant smile on his face. It might do service in many ways, for it was equally ready to mean sweetness or sarcasm, as occasion called for.

When the ladies had kissed twice, and his lordship had saluted Lady Augusta with a profound respect, dashed with a sort of devotion, Marion's eyes glanced at the stranger, who, though he arose, and only reseated himself as they sat down, neither lifted his glance nor seemed to notice them further.

"We are only going through; we start at two o'clock," said she, hurriedly.

"At one-forty, my lady," said Lord Culduff, with a faint smile, as though shocked at being obliged to correct her.

"It was so kind of you to come," said Lady Augusta; "and you only arrived this morning?"

"We only arrived half an hour ago."

"I must order you some lunch; I'm sure you can eat something."

"My lady is hungry; she said so as we came along," said Lord Culduff; "allow me to ring for you. As for myself, I take Liebig's lozenges and a spoonful of Curaçoa—nothing else—before dinner."

"It's so pleasant to live with people who are 'dieted,'" said Marion, with a sneering emphasis on the word.

"So, I hear from Bramleigh," interposed Lord Culduff, "that this man—I forget his name—actually broke into the house at Castello, and carried away a quantity of papers."

"My lord, as your lordship is so palpably referring to me, and as I am quite sure you are not aware of my identity, may I hasten to say I am Count Pracontal de Bramleigh?"

"Oh, dear! have I forgotten to present you?" said Lady Augusta, with a perfect simplicity of manner.

Marion acknowledged the introduction by the slightest imaginable bow and a look of cold defiance; while Lord Culduff smiled blandly, and professed his regret if he had uttered a word that could occasion pain.

"Love and war are chartered libertines, and why not law?" said the Viscount. "I take it that all stratagems are available: the great thing is, they should be successful."

"Count Pracontal declares that he can pledge himself to the result," said Lady Augusta. "The case in fact, as he represents it, is as good as determined."

"Has a jury decided, then?" asked Culduff.

"No, my lord; the trial comes on next term. I only repeat the assurance given me by my lawyer; and so far confirmed by him that he has made me large advances,

which he well knows I could not repay if I should not gain my cause."

"These are usually cautious people," said the Viscount, gravely.

"It strikes me," said Marion, rising, "that this sort of desultory conversation on a matter of such importance is, to say the least, inconvenient. Even the presence of this gentleman is not sufficient to make me forget that my family have always regarded his pretension as something not very far from a fraud."

"I regret infinitely, madame," said Pracontal, bowing low, "that it is not a man has uttered the words just spoken."

"Lady Culduff's words, sir, are all mine," said Lord Culduff.

"I thank your lordship from my heart for the relief you have afforded me."

"There must be nothing of this kind," said Lady Augusta, warmly. "If I have been remiss in not making Count Pracontal known to you before, let me repair my error by presenting him now as a gentleman who makes me the offer of his hand."

"I wish you good morning," said Marion. "No, thank you; no luncheon. Your ladyship has given me fully as much for digestion as I care for. Good-bye."

"If my congratulations could only shadow forth a vision of all the happiness I wish your ladyship," began Lord Culduff.

"I think I know, my lord, what you would say," broke she in, laughingly. "You would like to have uttered something very neat on well-assorted unions. There could be no better authority on such a subject; but Count Pracontal is toleration itself: he lets me tell my friends that I am about to marry him for money, just as I married poor Colonel Bramleigh for love."

"I am waiting for you, my lord. We have already trespassed too far on her ladyship's time and occupations." The sneering emphasis on the last word was most distinct. Lord Culduff kissed Lady Augusta's hand with a most devoted show of respect, and slowly retired.

As the door closed after them, Pracontal fell at her feet, and covered her hand with kisses.

"There, there, Count; I have paid a high price for that piece of impertinence I have just uttered; but when I said it, I thought it would have given her an apoplexy."

"But you are mine—you are my own!"

"*Nous en parlerons.* The papers are full of breaches of promise; and if you want me to keep mine, you'll not make it odious to me by tormenting me about it."



"But, my lady, I have a heart—a heart that would be broken by a betrayal."

"What a strange heart for a Frenchman! About as suitable to the Boulevards Italiens as snow shoes to the tropics. Monsieur de Pracontal," said she, in a much graver tone, "please to bear in mind that I am a very considerable item in such an arrangement as we spoke of. The whole question is not what would make you happy."

Pracontal bowed low in silence; his gesture seemed to accept her words as a command to be obeyed, and he did not utter a syllable.

"Isn't she handsome?" cried she, at length. "I declare, Count, if one of your countrywomen had a single one of the charms of that beautiful face she'd be turning half the heads in Europe; and Marion can do nothing with them all, except drive other women wild with envy."

## CHAPTER LVII.

### AT THE INN AT CATTARO.

WHEN L'Estrange had carried off Jack Bramleigh to the inn, and had seen him engaged with an excellent breakfast, he despatched a messenger to the villa to say that he was not to be expected home by dinner time, but would be back to tea "with a friend," for whom he begged Gusty Bramleigh's room might be prepared.

I shall not delay to chronicle all the doubt, the discussion, and the guessing that the note occasioned; the mere fact that George had ventured to issue an order of this kind without first consulting Julia investing the step with a degree of mysteriousness perfectly inscrutable. I turn, however, to Cattaro, where L'Estrange and Jack sat together, each so eager to hear the other's tidings as to be almost too impatient to dwell upon himself.

To account for their presence in this remote spot, George, as briefly as he could, sketched the course of events at Castello, not failing to lay due stress on the noble and courageous spirit with which Augustus and Nelly had met misfortune. "All is not lost yet," said L'Estrange; "far from it; but even if the worst should come, I do not know of two people in the world who will show a stouter front to adversity."

"And your sister, where is she?" said Jack, in a voice scarce above a whisper.

"Here—at the villa."

"Not married?"

"No. I believe she has changed less than any of us. She is just what you remember her."

It was not often that L'Estrange attempted anything like adroitness in expression, but he did so here, and saw, in the heightened color and sparkling eye of the other, how thoroughly his speech had succeeded.

"I wonder will she know me," said Jack, after a pause. "You certainly did not at first."

"Nor, for that matter, did you recognize me."

"Ah, but I did, though," said Jack, passing his hand over his brow, "but I had gone through so much, and my head was so knocked about, I couldn't trust that my senses were not deceiving me, and I thought if I make any egregious blunder now, these people will set me down for mad. That was the state I was in the whole time you were questioning me. I promise you it was no small suffering while it lasted."

"My poor fellow, what trials you must have gone through to come to this! Tell me by what mischance you were at Isehia?"

With all a sailor's frankness, and with a modesty in speaking of his own achievements just as sailor-like, Jack told the story of the storm at Naples.

"I had no thought of breaking the laws," said he, bluntly. "I saw ships foundering, and small craft turning keel uppermost on every side of me; there was disaster and confusion everywhere. I had no time to inquire about the morals of the men I saw clinging to hencoops or holding on by stretchers. I saved as many as I could, and sorry enough I was to have seen many go down before I could get near them; and I was fairly beat when it was all over, or perhaps they'd not have captured me so easily. At all events," said he, after a minute's silence, "they might have let me off with a lighter sentence, but my temper got the better of me in court, and when they asked me if it was not true that I had made greater efforts to save the galley-slaves than the soldiery, I told them it might have been so, for the prisoners, chained and handcuffed as they were, went down like brave men, while the royal troops yelled and screamed like a set of arrant cowards; and that whenever I pulled one of the wretches out of the water I was half ashamed of my own humanity. That speech settled me, at least the lawyer said so, and declared he was afraid to say a word more in defense of a man that insulted the tribunal and the nation together."

"And what was your sentence?"

"Death, commuted to the galleys for life; worse than any death! It's not the hardship of the labor, I mean. A sailor goes through more downright hard work on a blowy night than these fellows do in a year. It is the way a man brutalizes when vice and crime make up the whole atmosphere of his life. The devil has a man's heart all his own, whenever hope deserts it, and you want to do wickedness just because it is wickedness. For three weeks before I made my escape, it was all I could do not to dash the turnkey's brains out when he made his night round. I told my comrade—the man I was chained to—what I felt, and he said, 'We all go through that at first, but when you're some years here you'll not care for that or anything.' I believe it was the terror of coming to that condition made me try to escape. I don't know that I ever felt the same ecstacy of delight that I felt as I found myself swimming in that fresh cold sea in the silence of a calm starry night. I'm sure it will be a memory that will last my lifetime. I thought of you all—I thought of long ago, of our happy evenings, and I pictured to my mind the way we used to sit around the fire, and I wondered what had become of my place: was I ever remembered? was I spoken of? could it be that at that very moment some one was asking, Where was poor Jack? And how I wished you might all know that my last thoughts were upon you, that it was the dear old long ago was before me to the last! I was seventeen hours in the water. When they picked me up I was senseless from a sunstroke, for the corks floated me long after I gave up swimming. I was so ill when I landed that I went to hospital; but there was little care given to the sick, and I left it when I was able to walk, and came on here. Talk of luck, but I ask you was there ever such a piece of fortune befell a man?"

L'Estrange could not speak as he gazed on the poor fellow, over whose worn and wasted features joy had lighted up a look of delight that imparted an almost angelic elevation to his face.

"But can I go back like this?" asked he, sorrowfully, as he looked down at his ragged clothes and broken shoes.

"I have thought of all that. There is nothing to be had here ready but Montenegrin costume, so the landlord tells me, and you will have to figure in something very picturesque."

"Cannot I get a sailor's jacket and trousers?"

"Ay, of Dalmatian cut and color, but they'll not become you as well as that green velvet attila and the loose hose of the mountaineer. Try if you can't take a sleep now, and when you awake you'll find your new rig in that room yonder, where there's a bath ready for you. I'll go down the town meanwhile, and do a few commissions, and we will set out homewards when you're rested."

"I wish it was over," said Jack, with a sigh.

"Wish what was over?"

"I mean I wish the shock was over. The shock of seeing me such an object as I am! Sickness changes a man quite enough, but there's worse than that, George. I know what this rough life of mine must have made of me. You won't say it, old fellow, but I see it in your sad face all the same. I am—say it out, man—I am a most disreputable-looking black-guard!"

"I declare, on my honor, that, except the ravages of illness, I see no change in you whatever."

"Look here," said Jack, as his voice trembled with a peculiar agitation, "I'll see Nelly first. A man's sister can never be ashamed of him, come what will. If Nelly shows—and she's not one to hide it—that—no matter, I'll not say more about it. I see you're not pleased with me laying stress on such a matter."

"No, no, you wrong me, Jack; you wrong me altogether. My poor fellow, we never were—we never had such good reason to be proud of you as now. You are a hero, Jack. You've done what all Europe will ring with."

"Don't talk balderdash; my head is weak enough already. If you're not ashamed of the tatterdemalion that comes back to you, it's more than I deserve. There now, go off, and do your business, and don't be long, for I'm growing very impatient to see them. Give me something to smoke till you come back, and I'll try and be calm and reasonable by that time."

If L'Estrange had really anything to do in the town he forgot all about it, and trotted about from street to street, so full of Jack and his adventures that he walked into apple-stalls and kicked over egg-baskets amid the laughter and amusement of the people.

If he had told no more than the truth in saying that Jack was still like what he had been, there were about him signs of suffering and hardship that gave a most painful significance to his look, and more painful than even these was the poor fellow's con-



sciousness of his fallen condition. The sudden pauses in speaking, the deep sigh that would escape him, the almost bitter raillery he used when speaking of himself, all showed how acutely he felt his altered state.

L'Estrange was in no wise prepared for the change half an hour had made in Jack's humor. The handsome dress of Montenegro became him admirably, and the sailor-like freedom of his movements went well with the easy costume. "Isn't this a most appropriate transformation, George?" he cried out. "I came in here looking like a pickpocket, and I go out like a stage bandit!"

"I declare it becomes you wonderfully. I'll wager the girls will not let you wear any other dress."

"Ay, but my toilet is not yet completed, See what a gorgeous scarf I have got here—green and gold, and with a gold fringe that will reach to my boots, and the landlord insists on lending me his own silver-mounted saber. I say, old fellow, have you courage to go through the town with me?"

"You forget you are in the last fashion of the place; if they stare at you now, it will be approvingly."

"What's the distance? Are we to walk?"

"Walk or drive, as you like best. On foot we can do it in an hour."

"On foot be it then; for, though I am very impatient to see them, I have much to ask you about."

As they issued from the inn, it was, as L'Estrange surmised, to meet a most respectful reception from the townsfolk, who regarded Jack as a mountaineer chief of rank and station. They uncovered and made way for him as he passed, and from the women especially came words of flattering admiration at his handsome looks and gallant bearing.

"Are they commenting on the ass in the lion's skin?" said Jack, in a sly whisper; "is that what they are muttering to each other?"

"Quite the reverse. It is all in extravagant praise of you. The police are on the alert, too: they think there must be mischief brewing in the mountains, that has brought a great chief down to Cattaro."

Thus chatting and laughing, they gained the outskirts of the town, and soon found themselves on one of the rural paths which led up the mountain.

"Don't think me very stupid, George, or very tiresome," said Jack, "if I ask you to go over again what you told me this morning. Such strange things have be-

fallen me of late that I can scarcely distinguish between fact and fancy. Now, first of all, have we lost Castello—and who owns it?"

"No. The question is yet to be decided; the trial will take place in about two months."

"And if we are beaten, does it mean that we are ruined? Does it sweep away Marion and Nelly's fortunes too?"

"I fear so. I know little accurately, but I believe the whole estate is involved in the claim."

"Gusty bears it well, you say?"

"Admirably. I never saw a man behave with such splendid courage."

"I'll not ask about Nelly, for I could swear for *her* pluck. She was always the best of us."

If L'Estrange drank in this praise with ecstasy, he had to turn away his head, lest the sudden flush that covered his face should be observed.

"I have no wish to hear the story of this claim now; you shall tell it to me some other time. But just tell me—was it ever heard of in my father's time?"

"I believe so. Your father knew of it, but did not deem it serious."

"Marion, of course, despises it still. And what does Temple say?"

"One scarcely knows. I don't think they have had a letter from him since they left Ireland."

"See what a wise fellow I was," cried he, laughing. "I sank so low in life, that any change must be elevation. You are all great folks to *me*!"

There was a long and painful pause after this—each deep in his own thoughts. At last Jack asked, suddenly, "How is Marion? Is she happy in her marriage?"

"We hear next to nothing of her. The newspapers tell us of her being at great houses and in fine company, but we know no more."

"Of course, she's happy then. When she was a child, she would only play with us if we made her a queen; and, though we often tried to rebel—we were great levelers in our way—she always kept us down, and, whether we liked it or not, we had to admit the sovereignty."

"Your younger sister"—he did not call her Nelly—"was not of this mould?"

"Not a bit of it. She was the peacemaker—always on the side of the weak; and, though she was a delicate child, she'd fight against oppression with the passion of a tigress. Wasn't it strange?" said he, after a pause. "There we were, five of us, treated and reared exactly alike. In

early life, certainly there were no distinctions made, nor any favoritism practiced. We were of the same race and blood, and yet no two of us were alike. Temple had, perhaps, some sort of resemblance to Marion, but he had not her bold, daring spirit. Where *she* was courageous, *he'd* have been crafty. Whatever good there was amongst us, Nelly had it."

Another and longer pause now succeeded. "I say, George," cried Jack, at last, "how do you mean to break it to the girls that I'm here? I take it, poor Nelly's nerves must have suffered sorely of late. Is she likely to stand a shock without injury?"

"It is exactly what I'm trying to resolve this moment. Flushed with the walk, and cheered by the fresh air, you don't look sickly now."

"Ah, my dear fellow, that's not the worst of it. It is the sight of me, as recalling my fallen fortune—that's what I fear for her. Her last good-bye to me was blended with joy at my promotion. I was going to take up my command. She has never seen me since my disgrace."

"Don't call it that, Jack. We all know there is no other blame attaches to you than rashness."

"When rashness can make a man forget his condition, it's bad enough; but I'll not go back to these things. Tell me how I am to meet her."

"Perhaps it would be best I should first see Julia, and tell her you are here. I always like to ask her advice."

"I know that of old," said Jack, with a faint smile.

"I'll leave you in the summer-house, at the end of the garden there, till I speak with Julia."

"Not very long, I hope."

"Not an instant. She never requires a minute to decide on what to do. Follow me now along this path, and I'll place you in your ambush. You'll not leave it till I come."

"What a lovely spot this seems! It beats Castello hollow!"

"So we say every day. We all declare we'd like to pass our lives here."

"Let me be one of the party, and I'll say nothing against the project," said Jack, as he brushed through a hedge of sweet-briar, and descended a little slope, at the foot of which a shady summer-house stood guardian over a well. "Remember now," cried he, "not to tax my patience too far. I'll give you ten minutes, but I won't wait twenty."

L'Étrange lost no time in hastening back to the house. Julia, he heard, was

giving orders about the room for the stranger, and he found her actively engaged in the preparation. "For whom am I taking all this trouble, George?" said she, as he entered.

"Guess, Julia, guess! Who would you say was best worth it?"

"Not Mr. Cutbill—whom Nelly fixed on—not Sir Marcus Cluff, whose name occurred to myself, nor even the Pretender, Count Pracontal; and now I believe I have exhausted the category of possible guests."

"Not any of these," said he, drawing her to his side. "Where is Nelly?"

"She went down to gather some roses."

"Not in the lower garden, I hope," cried he, eagerly.

"Wherever she could find the best—but why not there? and what do you mean by all this mystery?"

Go and fetch her here at once," cried he. "If she should see him suddenly, the shock might do her great harm."

"See whom? see whom?" cried she, wildly. "Don't torture me this way!"

"Jack, her brother, Jack Bramleigh," and he proceeded to tell how he had found him, and in what condition: but she heard nothing of it at all, for she had sunk down on a seat and sat sobbing with her hands over her face, then suddenly wiping the tears away, she rose up, and, while her voice trembled with each word, she said: "Is he changed, George? is he greatly changed?"

"Changed! yes, for he has been ill, and gone through all manner of hardships, and now he is dressed like a Montenegro chief, for we could get no other clothes, so that you'll scarcely know him."

"Let us find Nelly at once," said she, moving towards the door. "Come, George,—come," and she was down the stairs, and across the hall, and out at the door, before he could follow her. In her agitated manner and rapid expression, it was evident she was endeavoring to subdue the deep emotion of her heart, and, by seeming to be occupied, to suppress the signs of that blended joy and sorrow which rack the nature more fatally than downright misery.

"See, George, look there!" cried she, wildly, as she pointed down a straight alley, at the top of which they were standing. "There they are. Nelly has her arm round him. They have met, and it is all over;" and so saying, she hid her face on her brother's shoulder, and sobbed heavily; meanwhile the two came slowly forward, too much engaged with each other to notice those in front of them.



## CHAPTER LVIII.

## THE VILLA LIFE.

IT is not at this, the eleventh hour of my story, I can stop to dwell on the life of the villa at Cattaro, though I am free to own it was about the sunniest bit of landscape our long journey has offered us.

Seated or lying on the grass, under the shade of a broad-leaved fig-tree, they listened to Jack's adventures, told with a quaint humor, of which they who knew him well could appreciate every shade and tint. In his days of prosperous fortune it was rare to hear him speak of himself: the routine life he led seemed to develop little or nothing of his real nature, but now, dependent as he was altogether on intrinsic qualities for whatever estimation he might obtain, owing nothing to station, it was remarkable how his character had widened and expanded, how his sympathies with his fellow-men had increased. Though nothing could be further from his nature than any mawkish sentimentality, there was that show of trustfulness, that decree of hopeful belief in the world at large, which occasionally led Julia to banter him on his optimism, and this, be it said passively, was the only show of freedom between them; their manner to each other from the moment they met being marked by a studied reserve on each side.

"And surely, Prince," said she, calling him by the title which, in honor of his dress, they had given him, "surely you must have met some charming creatures at the galleys. All the good qualities of human nature were not reserved for the cockpit or the steerage, or whatever it is."

"Ay, even at the galleys they weren't all bad, though it's not exactly the sort of place men grow better in. I had a capital old fellow as comrade, and, I take shame to say, I ought to have thought of him before this. I say, George, have you any friends of influence at Naples? I wish I could get my old companion his liberty."

"George has gone in to write to Augustus," said Nelly, "but if Lord Culduff could answer your purpose, I'd ask Marion to interest him in the matter."

"There's a dear good girl, do write a line to Marion; tell her it's the greatest favor she could bestow on me. The poor fellow is a political criminal; he only shot at the king, I believe, and where they do that every week or so, it's hard to make it a capital offense. I'll give you his name and his number when I go into the house."

"The post leaves early," said she, rising. "I must do this at once."

"Wait till I have finished this corner of my netting and I'll go with you," said Julia.

"I say No to that!" cried Jack. "I'm not going to be left alone here. If that's the way you treat a distinguished guest, the sooner he takes his leave the better. Stay where you are, Miss Julia."

"But I shall have no work, Master Jack. My net will be finished in a few minutes."

"Make cigarettes for me then. There's the bag," said he, lazily.

"I declare our Bohemianism progresses famously," said she, half tartly. "What do you think of this proposal, Nelly?" The question came late, however, for Nelly was already on her way to the house.

"Don't go, that's a good girl; don't leave me here to my own thoughts—they're not over-jolly, I promise you, when I'm all alone."

"Why, it's your good spirits that amaze me," replied she. "I don't remember seeing you so cheerful or so merry long ago, as you are now."

"You mean that I wasn't so happy when I had more reason to be so? but what if I were to tell you out of what a sad heart this joy comes; how every day I say to myself, 'This is to be the last of it.' Not," said he, in a bolder voice, "that I want to think about myself; this terrible disaster that has befallen my family is infinitely worse than anything that can attach to me. Even yet I cannot bring myself to believe this great smash." She made no answer; and he went on: "I can't make out if Nelly herself believes it. You all wear such cheerful faces, it's not easy to understand in what spirit you take this reverse."

"I think that your return has recompensed Nelly for everything."

"She was always the best of us; it's no great praise that same; but I mean—but it's no matter what I mean, for you are laughing at me already."

"No, indeed, I was not. If I smiled it was in thinking how little all your casualties have changed you."

"For that matter I suspect we may compliment or condemn each other, whichever it be, on equal terms."

"So at last I have got you to say a civil thing to me; you tell me I am the same delightful, fascinating creature you knew me long ago?"

"I said nothing about fascination," said he, sternly.

"Not directly, of course. Your tact

and delicacy were proof against such indiscretion, but you know you meant it."

"I'll tell you what I know: I know that I never saw a girl except yourself who liked to pain—ay, to torture—those who cared for her; who would infinitely rather indulge her mood of mockery than—than——"

"Pray finish. It's not every day I have the fortune to hear such candor. Tell me what it is that I postpone to my love of sarcasm?"

"I've done. I've been very rude to you, and I ask your pardon. I was not very polished in my best of days, and I take it my late schooling has not done much to improve me. When I was coming here I swore an oath to myself that, no matter what you'd say to me, I'd not lose temper, nor make a resentful answer to anything; and now I see I've forgotten all my good intentions, and the best thing I can do is to ask you to forgive me, and go my ways."

"I'm not offended," said she, calmly, without raising her eyes. "I suppose if the balance were struck between us, I did more to provoke *you* than you did to wound *me*."

"What is this I hear about being provoked and wounded?" cried Nelly, coming up to where they sat.

"Your brother and I have been quarrelling, that's all. We thought it the pleasantest way to pass the time till you came back; and we have succeeded to perfection."

"I declare, Julia, this is too bad," cried Nelly.

"But why, Julia? Why am I singled out as the culprit? Is he so above reproach that he could not be in the wrong?"

"I know I was in the wrong, and I've said so, but now let Nelly be judge between us. Here is the way it began——"

"The way what began, pray?" asked Julia.

"There now, that's the way she pushes me to lose my temper, and when she sees I'm angry she grows all the calmer."

"She's downright disagreeable," said Julia; "and I don't know why a frank, outspoken sailor condescends to speak to her."

"Well, he's pretty sure to get the worst of it," muttered he.

"Poor Jack," said Nelly, caressingly. "And for all that he likes the ill-treatment better than all the flatteries he meets elsewhere."

"That shrug of the shoulders does not say so," said Julia, laughing. "Come," cried she, with a merry voice, "let us do something more worthy of this delicious morning; let us have a walk up the mountain; we can have shade all the way."

"What's that little dome there above the trees?" asked Jack.

"That's the campanile of our little chapel. I'll fetch the key and we'll go and visit it. We've not been to see it yet."

"But George would like to come with us;" and so saying, Julia hastened away to find him.

"Oh, Nelly, I love her better than ever, and she scorns me even more," said he, as he hid his head on his sister's shoulder.

"My poor dear Jack, how little you know her! You never sorrowed over your last parting as she did. We have had all of us great reverses—they, as well as ourselves; and that spirit of Julia's—there is another name for it than mockery—has carried her through her troubles better than a more pretentious philosophy."

"But she is not even friendly with me, Nelly. None of you make me feel what I have sunk to as she does."

"There again you are unjust——"

"Right or wrong I'll bear it no longer. I only wait now till Gusty comes back. I want to shake his hand once more, and then, girl, you have seen the last of me."

Before Nelly could reply, Julia and her brother had joined them.

"Here's news," said George, showing a letter, "Augustus will be with us to-morrow; he only writes a few lines to say—I have nothing particularly cheering to report, and it will all bear keeping. I mean to be at home on Wednesday next. I am all impatience to see Jack; the thought of meeting him more than repays me my reverses here. Give him my love.—A. BRAMLEIGH."

"We shall have plenty to do to prepare for his arrival," said Julia; "we must postpone our visit to the chapel. Would this illustrious prince condescend to help us to move tables and chests of drawers?"

Jack threw a very significant glance towards Nelly, as though to say, "She is at the old game."

"Well, sir? I wait your answer," said Julia.

"For twenty-four hours I am at your orders," said Jack.

"And then under what command do you serve?"

"Captain Fortune, I suspect," said he, gravely. "A gentleman, or lady, perhaps, that has shown me no especial fondness up to this."

"Jack says he is going to leave us," said Nelly, as her eyes filled up.

"But why?" cried George.

"But why?" echoed Julia.

"Haven't I given proof enough," said Jack, with a faint laugh, "that I'm not



what Miss Julia there calls a very logical animal; that when I get a wayward fancy in my head I follow it faithfully as if it was a strong conviction? Well, no, one of these moments has come to me; and thinking, besides, that this pleasant sort of life here is not exactly the best preparation for a rougher kind of existence, I have made up my mind to slip my cable after I've seen Gusty."

"Well, then, let us profit by the short time left us," said Julia, quietly. "Come and help me in the house. I shall want you, too, George."

"You must do without me, Julia; I have only just discovered a letter in my pocket, with the seal unbroken, that I ought to have answered at least a fortnight ago. It is from Sir Marcus Cluff," said he, in a whisper, "making me an offer of the vicarage at Hoxton."

"What a kind fellow!"

"Who's a kind fellow?" asked Jack.

"A certain gentleman, who made me the flattering proposal to become his wife and nurse, and who now offers to make George his chaplain."

"It rains good luck here," said Jack, with a half-bitter smile; "why won't it drift a little in *my* direction? By the way, Nelly, what about the letter I asked you to write to Marion?"

"It is written. I only want to fill in the name of the person; you told me to keep a blank for it."

"I'll go and fetch my pocket-book," said he, and broke away at once, and hastened towards the house.

"I'm delighted at your good news, Julia," said Nelly; "though it almost breaks my heart to think how desolate we shall soon be here."

"Never anticipate evil fortune. We are still together, and let us not mar the present by glancing at a possible future."

"And poor Jack," began Nelly; but unable to finish, she turned away her head to hide the emotion she felt.

"He shall—he must stay," cried Julia.

"You know the price, dearest," said Nelly, throwing herself into her arms.

"Well, who says I am not ready to pay it? There, that's enough of folly. Let us now think of something useful."

## CHAPTER LIX.

### A VERY BRIEF DREAM.

JULIA was seldom happier than when engaged in preparing for a coming guest.

There was a blended romance and fuss about it all that she liked. She liked to employ her fancy in devising innumerable little details, she liked the active occupation itself, and she liked best of all that storied web of thought in which she connected the expected one with all that was to greet him. How he would be pleased with this, what he would think of that? Would he leave that chair or that table where she had placed it? Would he like that seat in the window, and the view down the glen, as she hoped he might? Would the new-comer, in fact, fall into the same train of thought and mind as she had who herself planned and executed all around him?

Thus thinking was it that, with the aid of a stout Dalmatian peasant-girl, she busied herself with preparations for Augustus Bramleigh's arrival. She knew all his caprices about the room he liked to occupy. How he hated much furniture, and loved space and freedom; how he liked a soft and tempered light, and that the view from his window should range over some quiet, secluded bit of landscape, rather than take in what recalled life and movement and the haunts of men.

She was almost proud of the way she saw into people's natures by the small dropping preferences they evinced for this or that, and had an intense pleasure in meeting the coming fancy. At the present moment, too, she was glad to busy herself in any mode rather than dwell on the thoughts that the first interval of rest would be sure to bring before her. She saw that Jack Bramleigh was displeased with her, and, though not without some misgivings, she was vexed that he alone of all should resent the capricious moods of a temper resolutely determined to take the sunniest path in existence, and make the smaller worries of life but matter for banter.

"He mistakes me altogether," said she aloud, but speaking to herself, "if he imagines that I'm in love with poverty and all its straits; but I'm not going to cry over them for all that. They may change me in many ways. I can't help that. Want is an ugly old hag, and one cannot sit opposite her without catching a look of her features; but she'll not subdue my courage, nor make me afraid to meet her eye. Here, Gretchen, help me with this great chest of drawers. We must get rid of it out of this, wherever it goes." It was a long and weary task, and tried their strength to the last limit; and Julia threw herself into a deep-cushioned chair when it was over and sighed heavily. "Have you

a sweetheart, Gretchen?" she asked, just to lead the girl to talk, and relieve the oppression that she felt would steal over her. Yes, Gretchen had a sweetheart, and he was a fisherman, and he had a fourth share in a "bragotza;" and when he had saved enough to buy out two of his comrades he was to marry her; and Gretchen was very fond, and very hopeful, and very proud of her lover, and altogether took a very pleasant view of life, though it was all of it in expectancy. Then Gretchen asked if the signorina had not a sweetheart, and Julia, after a pause, and it was a pause in which her color came and went, said, "No!" And Gretchen drew nigh, and stared at her with her great hazel eyes, and read in her now pale face that the "No" she had uttered had its own deep meaning; for Gretchen, though a mere peasant, humble and illiterate, was a woman, and had a woman's sensibility under all that outward ruggedness.

"Why do you look at me so, Gretchen?" asked Julia.

"Ah, signorina," sighed she, "I am sorry—I am very sorry! It is a sad thing not to be loved."

"So it is, Gretty; but every day is not as nice and balmy and fresh as this, and yet we live on, and, taking one with the other, find life pretty enjoyable, after all!" The casuistry of her speech made no convert. How could it?—it had not any weight with herself.

The girl shook her head mournfully, and gazed at her with sad eyes, but not speaking a word. "I thought, signorina," said she, at last, "that the handsome prince——"

"Go to your dinner, Gretchen. You are late already," said Julia, sharply, and the girl withdrew, abashed and downcast. When thus alone, Julia sat still, wearied by her late exertions. She leaned her head on the arm of the chair, and fell fast asleep. The soft summer wind that came tempered through the window-blinds played with her hair and fanned her to heavy slumber—at first, dreamless slumber, the price of actual fatigue.

Jack Bramleigh, who had been wandering about alone, doing his best to think over himself and his future, but not making any remarkable progress in the act, had at length turned into the house, strolling from room to room, half unconsciously, half struck by the vastness and extent of the building. Chance at last led him along the corridor which ended in this chamber, and he entered, gazing carelessly around him, till suddenly he thought he heard the deep-drawn breathing of one in heavy sleep.

He drew nigh, and saw it was Julia. The arm on which her head lay hung listlessly down, and her hand was half hid in the mass of her luxuriant hair. Noiselessly, stealthily, Jack crept to her feet, and crouched down upon the floor, seeming to drink in her long breathings with an ecstasy of delight. Oh, what a moment was that! Through how many years of life was it to pass—the one bright thread of gold in the dark tissue of existence? As such he knew it; so he felt it; and to this end he treasured up every trait and every feature of the scene. "It is all that I shall soon have to look back upon," thought he; and yet to be thus near her seemed a bliss of perfect ecstasy.

More than an hour passed over, and he was still there, not daring to move lest he should awake her. At last he thought her lips seemed to murmur something. He bent down, close—so close that he felt her breath on his face. Yes, she was dreaming—dreaming, too, of long ago: for he heard her mutter the names of places near where they had lived in Ireland. It was of some party of pleasure she was dreaming—her dropping words indicated so much; and at last she said, "No, no; not Lisconnor. Jack doesn't like Lisconnor." Oh, how he blessed her for the words! and bending over, he touched the heavy curl of her hair with his lips. Some passing shock startled her, and she awoke with a start and a faint cry. "Where am I?" she cried; "what is this?" and she stared at him with her wide full glance, while her features expressed terror and bewilderment.

"Don't be frightened, dearest. You are safe, and at home with those who love you."

"And how are you here? how came you here?" asked she, still terrified.

"I was strolling listlessly about, and chance led me here. I saw you asleep in that chair, and I lay down at your feet till you should awake."

"I knew nothing of it at all," muttered she. "I suppose I was dreaming. I fancied I was in Ireland, and we were about to go on some excursion, and I thought Marion was not pleased with me—how stupid it is to try and disentangle a dream! You shouldn't have been here, Master Jack. Except in fairy tales, young princes never take such liberties as this, and even then the princesses are under enchantment."

"It is *I* that am under the spell, not *you*, Julia," said he, fondly.

"Then you are come to ask pardon for all your crossness, your sayagery of this morning?"







“Have you a sweetheart, Gretchen?”



"Yes, if you desire it."

"No, sir; I desire nothing of the kind; it must be spontaneous humility. You must feel you have behaved very ill, and be very, very sorry for it."

"I have behaved very ill, and am very, very sorry for it," repeated he, softly, after her.

"And this is said seriously?"

"Seriously."

"And on honor?"

"On honor!"

"And why is it said—is it because I have asked you to say it?"

"Partly; that is, you have in asking given me courage to say it."

"Courage to ask pardon! what do you mean by that?"

"No; but courage to make me hope you care to hear it. Oh, Julia, for once listen to me seriously and let me tell you how I love you; how I have always loved you; how you are to me all that is worth living for."

"It would be very nice to be told such pretty things, all the more being bound to believe them."

"And do you doubt?"

"I'll tell you what there is not, nor can be any doubt about, Jack: that we are both very poor, and though I, woman-like, may feel it a very comforting and sustaining thought, through my poverty, that one honest heart beats affectionately for me, yet I'm far from sure that it would be the same good influence over *your* life; in fact, our bargain would be unequal, and I should have all the best of it."

"Oh, Julia, could you love me——"

"I think I've done things fully as hard," said she, with affected thoughtfulness.

"Do you think me, then, so hopeless of advancement in life that I shall live and die the humble creature you now see me?"

"No, I don't think that. I think if fate is not very dead against you, you are likely, whatever you turn to, or wherever you go, to make your way, but to do this, you must be heart-whole; the selfishness that men call ambition cannot afford to be weighted with thought of another, and another's welfare. Have a little patience with me—hear me out, for I am saying what I have thought over many and many an hour—what I have already told Nelly. There's an old Persian fable that says, the people who love on through life are like two lovers who walk on opposite banks of a river and never meet till the river mingles with the ocean, which is eternity, and then they are parted no more. Are you satisfied with

this? I thought not. Well, what are your plans for the future?"

"I have scores of them. If I would take service with any of those South American republics, there is not one would not give me rank and station to-morrow. Brazil would take me. If I offered myself to the Sultan's Government, where I am known, I could have a command at once."

"I don't know that I like Turkish ideas on the married state," said she, gravely.

"Julia, Julia! do not torture me," cried he anxiously. "It is my very life is at stake—be serious for once;" he took her hand tenderly as he spoke, and was bending down to kiss it, when a heavy foot was heard approaching, and suddenly L'Estrange burst into the room with an open newspaper in his hand.

"I have got something here will surprise you, Jack," he cried. "You will be astonished to learn that you owe your escape from Ischia to no intrepidity of your own; that you had neither act nor part in the matter, but that it was all due to the consummate skill of a great diplomatist, who represented England at Naples. Listen to this—it is 'our own special correspondent' who writes:—'I have naturally been curious to ascertain the exact history of Rogers' escape, the journals of this country having invested that event with most melodramatic, I might go further, and say incredible, details. My own knowledge of the precautions adopted against evasion, and the jealous care bestowed by the Neapolitan Government towards political prisoners, rendered me slow to believe that an unaided convict would have the slightest chance of effecting his liberation, and as far as I can learn, late events have not diminished in any degree my faith in this opinion.

"If the stories which circulate in diplomatic circles are to be credited, it was H. B. M.'s special envoy at this Court who planned the whole achievement. He seeing the fatal obduracy of the King's Ministers, and the utter impracticability of all proceedings to instil into them notions of right or honor, determined, while prosecuting the cause with unusual ardor, to remove the basis of the litigation. By what bribery he effected his object, or of whom, I do not profess to know, though very high names are mentioned with unsparing freedom here; but the fact remains, that when the last despatch of the Foreign Secretary was on its way to our envoy, Rogers was carcering over the glad waters in one of H. M.'s steam-launches—thus relieving the controversy of a very material and interesting item in the negotiation. Of course, this has

## CHAPTER LX.

## A RETURN HOME.

no other foundation than mere rumor, but it is a rumor that no one assumes to discredit, nor, indeed, any to deny, except the very discreet officials of our mission here, who naturally protest that it is a fabrication of the French press. The envoy is still here, and actively proceeding against the Government for an indemnity for unjust imprisonment.' And now, Jack, here is the best of all. Listen to this: 'So sensible are our Ministers at home of the great service rendered by this adroit measure, the relief experienced by the removal of what at any moment might have become the very gravest of all questions—that of peace or war—that no reward is deemed too high for its distinguished author, and his Excellency Lord Viscount Culduff—Culduff——'

"Lord Culduff!" cried Jack and Julia, in amazement.

"Viscount Culduff has been offered the post of ambassador at Constantinople!"

Jack snatched the paper from his hands, and stared in mute amazement at the lines.

"And is this the way fortunes are made in the world?" cried he at last.

"Only in the great walks of life, Jack," said Julia. "Small people talk and labor, take service in Argentine republics, or fight for Mussulmans; distinguished people fire but one shot, but it always explodes in the enemy's magazine."

"I wonder what he would have thought if he had known for whom he was negotiating," said Jack, dryly. "I half suspect my distinguished brother-in-law would have left me in chains far rather than drive down the Corso with me."

"I declare—no, I won't say the spiteful thing that crossed my mind—but I *will* say, I'd like to have seen a meeting between you and your brother Temple."

"You think he'd have been so ashamed of me," said Jack with a laugh.

"Not a bit of it. *You* might possibly have been ashamed of the situation—shocked with being such an unworthy member of a great house—but *he*, Temple, would have accepted you like a fever or an ague—a great calamity sent from above—but he would not have felt shame, any more than if you had been the scarlatina. Look at poor George," cried she, with a merry laugh. "He thinks I've said something very wicked, and he feels he ought to deplore it, and possibly rebuke me."

Jack could not help laughing at the rueful expression of L'Estrange's face, and his emotion was catching, for the others joined in the laugh, and in this merry mood returned to the garden.

THE morning that followed this scene broke very happily on the villa, for Augustus was to arrive by the afternoon packet, and all were eager to meet him. His telegram said, "Cutbill is with me; but I do not know if he will stop." And this announcement, indeed, more than tempered the pleasure they felt at the thought of meeting Augustus.

Jack, whose sailor's eye had detected a thin streak of smoke in the sky long ere the others had seen it, and knew by what time the steamer might arrive, hastened down to the shore to meet his brother alone, not wishing that the first meeting should be observed by others. And he was so far right. Men as they were—tried and hardened by the world's conflict—they could not speak as they clasped each other in their arms; and when they separated to gaze at each other's faces, their eyes swam in heavy tears. "My poor fellow!" was all that Augustus could say for several minutes, till, struck by the manly vigor and dignified bearing of the other, he cried out, "What a great, powerful fellow you have grown, Jack! You are twice as strong as you used to be."

"Strong enough, Gusty; but I suppose I shall need it all. But how comes it that you have grey hair here?"

"You find me terribly changed, Jack. I have aged greatly since we met."

"You are tired now, old fellow. A little rest and the pleasant care of the villa will soon set you up again."

"Perhaps so. At all events I have strength enough for what I am called on to bear. How are they all?"

"Well and hearty. I'd say jollier than I ever saw them before."

"What a noble girl is Nelly!"

"Ay, and her companion, too. I tell you, Gusty, there's the same comrade spirit amongst girls that there is in a ship's company; and where good ones come together, they make each other better. But tell me now of yourself. What's your news?"

"Not good; far from it. I believe, indeed, our cause is 'up.' He—Pracontal I mean—intends to behave handsomely by us. There will be no severity used. Indeed, he means to go further; but I'll have time enough for all this later on. I'm so glad to see you again, my poor dear fellow, that I have no mind to think of anything else."

"How did you get rid of Cutbill?"



"I haven't got rid of him; he is on board there. I don't think he means to land. I suspect he'll go on with the steamer to-night; and he is so ashamed to show that he is snug in his berth all this time."

"But what does he mean by that?"

"He's in a scrape, Jack, and had to get away from England to save himself from a gaol; but I'll tell you the story this evening—or better still, I'll make him tell you, if you can manage to persuade him to come on shore."

"That he shall do," said Jack. "He behaved like a trump to me once when I was in trouble; and I don't forget it." And so saying, he hastened on board the packet, and hurried below, to re-appear in a few minutes, holding Cutbill by the collar, as though he were his prisoner.

"Here's the culprit," cried Jack; "and if he won't land his luggage, he must take to a Montenegro rig like mine; and he'll become it well."

"There don't collar me that fashion. See how the fellows are all staring at us! Have you no decency?"

"Will you come quietly, then?"

"Yes; let them hand up my two trunks and my violin case. What a droll place this is!"

"There's many a worse, I can tell you, than our villa yonder. If it were my own, I'd never ask to leave it."

"Nor need you, Jack," whispered Augustus. "I've brought back money to buy it; and I hope it will be our home this many a day."

"What's this scrape of yours, Cutty?" said Jack, as they made their way homewards. "Whom have you been robbing this time, or was it forgery?"

"Let him tell you," said Cutbill doggedly, as he motioned with his hand towards Gusty.

"It's a mixed case of robbery with house-breaking," said Augustus. "Pracontal had taken it into his head that certain papers of great value to himself were concealed in some secret press in our house at Castello; and Cutbill was just as convinced that there were no papers and no press, and that the whole was a dream or a delusion. They argued the case so often that they got to quarrel about it."

"No, we didn't quarrel," broke in Cutbill, sulkily; "we betted."

"Yes, that is more correct. Pracontal was so firmly persuaded that the papers existed that he offered three to one on it, and Cutbill, who likes a good thing, took it in hundreds."

"No. I wish I had. It was in fifties."

"As they had no permission to make the search, which required to break down the wall, and damage a valuable fresco——"

"No. It was under the fresco, in a pedestal. I'd engage to make it good for thirty shillings," broke in Cutbill.

"Well, we'll not dispute that. The essential point is, that Pracontal's scruples would not permit him to proceed to an act of deprecation, but that Cutbill had more resolution. He wanted to determine the fact."

"Say that he wanted to win his money, and you'll be nearer the mark," interposed Cutbill.

"Whichever way we take it, it amounts to this: Pracontal would not be a house-breaker, and Cutbill had no objection to become one. I cannot give you the details of the infraction—perhaps *he* will."

Cutbill only grunted, and the other went on—"However he obtained entrance, he made his way to the place indicated, smashed the wall, and dragged forth a box with four or five thick volumes, which turned out to be the parish registries of Portshannon for a very eventful period, at least a very critical one for us, for, if the discovery loses Mr. Cutbill his fifty pounds, it places the whole estate in jeopardy."

"That's the worst of it," cried Cutbill. "My confounded meddling has done it all."

"When my lawyer came to hear what had occurred, and how, he lost no time in taking measures to proceed against Cutbill for a felony; but Master C. had got away, and was already hiding in Germany, and our meeting on the steamboat here was a mere hazard. He was bound for—where was it, Cutbill?"

"Albania. I want to see the salt mines. There's something to be done there, now that the Turks are not sure they'll own the country this time twelvemonth."

"At all events, it's better air than Newgate," said Jack.

"As you politely observe, sir, it's better air than Newgate. By the way, you've been doing a little stroke of work as a gaolbird latterly—is it jolly?"

"No; it ain't exactly jolly; it's too monotonous for that. And then the diet."

"Ah, there's the rub! It's the skilly, it's the four-ounce system, I'm afraid of. Make it a good daily regimen, and I'll not quarrel with the mere confinement, nor ask for any extension of the time allotted to exercise."

"I must say," said Jack, "that, for a very acute and ingenious gentleman, this

same piece of burglary was about one of the stupidest performances I ever heard of."

"Not so fast, admiral, not so fast. I stood on a double event. I had lent Pracontal a few hundreds, to be repaid by as many thousands if he established his claim. I began to repent of my investment, and my bet was a hedge. Do you see, old fellow, if there were no books, I pocketed a hundred and fifty. If the books turned up, I stood to win on the trial. You may perceive that Tom Cutbill sleeps like a weasel, and has always one eye open."

"Was it a very friendly part, then, to lend a man money to prosecute a claim against your own friend?" asked Jack.

"Lord love ye, I'd do that against my brother. The man of business and the desk is one thing, the man of human feelings and affections is another. If a man follows any pursuit worth the name, of a pursuit, the ardor to succeed in it will soon swamp his scruples; ay, and not leave him one jot the worse for it. Listen to me a minute. Did you ever practice fly-fishing? Well, can you deny it is in principle as ignoble a thing as ever was called sport? It begins in a fraud, and it finishes with a cruelty; and will you tell me that your moral nature, or any grand thing that you fancy dignifies you, was impaired or stained when you landed that eight-pound trout on the grass?"

"You forget that men are not trout, Master Cutbill."

"There are a good number of them gudgeons, I am happy to say," cried he. "Give me a light for my cigar, for I am sick of discussion. Strange old tumble-down place this—might all be got for a song, I'd swear. What a grand spec it would be to start a company to make a watering place of it: 'The Baths of Cat-taro, celebrated in the time of Dioclesian'—eh? Jack, doesn't your mouth water at the thought of 'preliminary expenses?'"

"I can't say it does. I've been living among robbers lately, and I found them very dull company."

"The sailor is rude; his manners smack of the cockpit," said Cutbill, nudging Augustus in the side. "Oh dear, how I'd like a commission to knock this old town into a bathing machine."

"You'll have ample time to mature your project up at the villa. There, you see it yonder."

"And is that the British flag I see waving there? Wait a moment till I master my emotion, and subdue the swelling feelings of my breast."

"I'll tell you what, Master Cutbill," said

Jack, sternly, "if you utter any stupid rubbish against the Union Jack, I'll be shot if I don't drop you over the sea-wall for a ducking; and, what's more, I'll not apologize to you when you come out."

"Outrage the second. The naval service is not what I remember it."

"Here come the girls," said Augustus. "I hear Julia's merry laugh in the wood."

"The L'Estrange girl isn't it?" asked Cutbill; and though Jack started and turned almost as if to seize him, he never noticed the movement.

"Miss L'Estrange," said Augustus Bramleigh.

"Why didn't you say she was here, and I'd not have made any 'bones' about stopping? I don't know I was ever as spooney as I was about that girl up at Albano. And didn't I work like a negro to get back her two thousand pounds out of that precious coal mine? Ay, and succeeded too. I hope she knows it was Tom Cutbill saved the ship. Maybe she'll think I've come to claim salvage."

"She has heard of all your good nature, and is very grateful to you," said Gusty.

"That's right; that's as it ought to be. Doing good by stealth always strikes me as savoring of a secret society. It's Thuggee, or Fenian, or any other dark association you like."

"I'll go forward and meet them, if you'll permit me," said Augustus, and, not waiting a reply, hurried on towards the wood.

"Look here, Master Jack," said Cutbill, stopping short and facing round in front of him—"if you mean as a practice to sit upon me on every occasion that arises, just please to say so."

"Nothing of the kind, man; if I did, I promise you once would be quite enough."

"Oh, that's it, is it?"

"Yes, that's it."

"Shake hands, then, and let us have no more squabbling. If you ever find me getting into shoal-water, and likely to touch a sandbank, just call out 'stop her!' and you'll see how I'll reverse my engine at once. It's not in my line, the locomotives, but I *could* drive if I was put to it, and I know well every good lesson a man acquires from the practice."

"What do you think of this cause of ours, Cutty; how does it look to your eyes?"

"Just as dark as thunder! Why you go to trial at all next term I can't make out. Pracontal's case is clear as noon-day. There's the proof of the marriage—as legal a marriage as if an archbishop celebrated it, and there's the registry of birth,



and there are, to confirm all, old Bramleigh's letters. If you push on after such a show of danger signals as these, it is because you must like a smash."

"You'd strike, then, without firing a shot?"

"To be sure I would, if it was only to save the expense of the powder; besides, Pracontal has already declared that, if met by an amicable spirit on your brother's part, there are no terms he would not accede to, to secure recognition by your family, and acceptance as one of you."

"I'm sure I don't see why he should care for it."

"Nor I, for the matter of that. If there's a lot in life I'd call enviable, it would be to be born in a foundling hospital, and inherit ten thousand a year. A landed estate, and no relations, comes nearer to my ideas of Paradise than anything in Milton's poems."

"Here they come," cried Jack, as a merry group issued from the road, and came joyously forward to meet them.

"Here's this good fellow, Tom Cutbill, come to spend some days with us," said Jack, as the girls advanced to greet him.

"Isn't it kind of him?" said Cutbill; "isn't it like that disinterested good nature that always marks him? Of course I'm heartily welcome! how could it be otherwise? Miss Bramleigh, you do me proud. Miss Julia, your slave. Ah, your reverence! let's have a shake of your devout paw. Now, I call this as pleasant a place for a man to go through his sentence of transportation as need be. Do the ladies know what I'm charged with?"

"They know nothing; they desire to know nothing," said Augustus. "When we have dined and had our coffee, you shall make your own confession; and that only if you like it, and wish to disburden your conscience."

"My conscience is pretty much like my balance at my banker's—it's a mighty small matter, but somehow it never troubles me; and you'll see by and by that it doesn't interfere with my appetite."

"You saw my sister at Naples, Mr. Cutbill," said Nelly, "how was she looking?"

"Decidedly handsome; and as haughty as handsome; as an Irish friend who was walking with me one day her carriage passed, observed, 'A bow from her was the next thing to a black eye.'"

"Marion's pride always became her," said Nelly, coldly.

"It must be a comfort to her to feel she has a great stock of what suits her constitution."

"And the noble Viscount," asked Jack, "how was he looking?"

"As fresh as paint. The waxworks in the museum seemed faded and worn after him. He was in an acute attack of youth the day I dined with him last, and I hope his system has not suffered for it."

"Stop her," muttered Jack, with a sly look at Cutbill; and to the surprise of the others, that astute individual rejoined, "Stop her, it is."

"We dine at four, I think?" said Bramleigh, "and there's just time to dress. Jack, take charge of Cutbill, and show him where he is to lodge."

"And is it white choker and a fiddle coat? Do you tell me you dress for dinner?" asked Cutbill.

"Mr. Cutbill shall do exactly as he pleases," said Julia; "we only claim a like privilege for ourselves."

"You've got it now, Tom Cutbill," said he, sorrowfully, "and I hope you like it."

And with this they went their several ways; Jack alone lingering in the garden in the hope to have one word with Julia, but she did not return, and his "watch on deck," as he called it, was not relieved.

## CHAPTER LXI.

### LADY CULDUFF'S LETTER.

A LONG letter, a letter of several pages, from Marion, reached the villa; and though it is not my intention to ask the reader to listen to it textually or throughout, I crave permission to give certain parts of its contents.

As Lady Culduff prospered in the world, she became what she thought "devout," and perpetually reminded all around her that she was well aware she was living in a very sinful world, and keeping daily company with transgressors; and she actually brought herself to believe that by a repeated reference to the wickedness of this life she was entering a formal protest against sin, and qualifying herself, at this very cheap price, for something much better, hereafter.

She was—and it was a pet phrase with her—"resigned" to everything; resigned to Lord Culduff's being made a grand cross and an ambassador, with the reasonable prospect of an earldom; resigned to her own great part—and was it not a great part?—in this advancement; resigned to be an ambadress! That she was resigned to the ruin and downfall of her family, especially if they should have the delicacy and

good taste to hide themselves somewhere, and not obtrude that ruin and downfall on the world, was plainly manifest; and when she averred that, come what might, we ought to be ever assured that all things were for the best, she meant in reality to say, it was a wise dispensation that sent herself to live in a palace at Pera, and left her brothers and sisters to shiver out existence in barbarism.

There was not a shadow of hypocrisy in all this. She believed every word she said upon it. She accepted the downfall of her family as her share of those ills which are the common lot of humanity; and she was very proud of the fortitude that sustained her under this heavy trial, and of that resignation that enabled her not to grieve over these things in an unseemly fashion, or in any way that might tell on her complexion.

"After that splendid success of Culduff's at Naples," wrote she, "of which the newspapers are full, I need not remind you that we ought to have had Paris, and, indeed, must have had it, but the Ministry made it a direct and personal favor of Culduff that he would go and set that troublesome Eastern question to rights. As you know nothing of politics, dear Nelly, and, indeed, are far happier in that ignorance, I shall not enter upon what, even with the fullest explanation, would only bewilder you. Enough if you know that we have to outmanœuvre the Russians, baffle the French, and bully the Greeks; and that there is not for the task Culduff's equal in England. I think I see your astonishment that I should talk of such themes; they were not certainly the sort of subjects which once occupied our thoughts; but, my dear Nelly, in linking your fate to that of a man of high ambition, you accept the companionship of his intellect, instead of a share of his heart. And, as you well know I always repudiated the curate and cottage theory, I accept the alternative without repining. Can I teach you any of this philosophy, Nelly, and will it lighten the load of your own sorrows to learn how I have come to bear mine? It is in the worldliness of people generally lies their chief unhappiness. They will not, as Culduff says, 'accept the situation.' Now we have accepted it, we submit to it, and, in consequence, suffer fewer heart-burnings and repinings than our neighbors. Dear Augustus never had any costly tastes; and as for yourself, simplicity was your badge in everything. Temple is indeed to be pitied, for Temple, with money to back him, might have made a respectable figure in the world and mar-

ried well; but Temple, a poor man, must fall down to a second-class legation, and look over the Minister's larder. Culduff tried, but failed to make something of him. As C. told him one day, you have only to see Charles Mathews act, to be convinced that to be a coxcomb a man must be consummately clever; and yet it is exactly the 'rôle' every empty fellow fancies would suit him. T. resented this, well meant as it was, and resigned his secretaryship. He has gone over to England, but I do not imagine with much prospect of re-employment.

"Do not think, my dear Nelly, of quitting your present refuge. You are safe now, and in harbor, and be slow to adventure on that wide ocean of life where shipwrecks are occurring on every hand. So long as one is obscure, poverty has no terrors. As Culduff says, you may always wear a ragged coat in the dark. It is we, who unfortunately must walk in the noonday, cannot be seen unless in fine raiment. Do not mistake me, however. I say this without complaint: I repine at nothing.

"I had written so much of my letter, dear Nelly, intending to finish it at Rome; but Culduff is obliged to hurry on to Ischl, where some great diplomatic gathering is now assembled, and I must omit a number of things I desire to say to you.

"Culduff thinks we must call on Lady Augusta as we go through. I own I have done my best to avoid this, and if I must go, it will not be in the best of tempers. The oddest thing of all is, C. dislikes her fully as much as I do; but there is some wonderful freemasonry among these people that obliges them, like the members of a secret society, to certain *egards* towards each other; and I am satisfied he would rather do a positive wrong to some one in middle-class life than be wanting in some punctilio or attention to a person of her condition. I have often been much provoked by displays of this sentiment, needlessly paraded to offend my own sense of propriety. I shall add a line after my visit.

"Rome.

"I have news for you. M. Pracontal—if this be his name—not only takes your estates, but your stepmother. The odious woman had the effrontery to tell us so to our faces. How I bore it, what I said, or felt or suffered, I know not. Some sort of fit, I believe, seized me, for Culduff sent for a physician when I got back to the hotel, and our departure was deferred.

"The outrage of this conduct has so shaken my nerves that I can scarcely write,



nor is my sense of indignation lessened by the levity with which it pleases Culduff to treat the whole matter. 'It is a bold coup—a less courageous woman would have recoiled from it—she is very daring.' This is what he says of her. She has the courage that says to the world, 'I am ready to meet all your censures and your reproaches;' but I never heard this called heroism before. Must I own to you, Nelly, that what overwhelms me most in this disgraceful event is the confidence it evinces in this man's cause? 'You may swear,' said Culduff, 'that she is backing the winner. Women are timid gamblers, and never risk their money without almost every chance in their favor.' I know that my lord plumes himself on knowing a great deal about us, prompting him at times to utter much that is less than complimentary; but I give you this opinion of his here for what it is worth, frankly owning that my dislike to the woman is such I can be no fair judge of any case into which she enters.

"Pracontal—I only saw him for an instant—struck me as a third-class Frenchman, something between a *sous-officier* of cavalry and a *commis-voyageur*; not ill-looking, and set up with that air of a soldier that in France does duty for dignity. He had a few hasty words with Culduff, but did not persist nor show any desire to make a row in presence of ladies. So far, his instincts as a corporal guided him safely. Had he been led by the *commis-voyageur* side of his character, we should have had a most disgraceful scene, ending by a hostile meeting between a British peer and a bagman.

"My nerves have been so shaken by this incident, and my recollection is still so charged with this odious woman's look, voice, and manner, that I cannot trust myself to say more. Be assured, dear Nelly, that in all the miserable details of this great calamity to our family, no one event has occurred equal in poignant suffering to the insult I have thus been subjected to.

"Culduff will not agree to it, but I declare to you she was positively vulgar in the smirking complacency in which she presented the man as her future husband. She was already *passée* when she married my father, and the exuberant joy at this proposal revealed the old maid's nature. C., of course, calls her charming, a woman of very attractive qualities, and such like; but men of a certain age have ideas of their own on these subjects, and, like their notions on cookery, make no converts among people under forty. I believe I told him so, and, in consequence, the whole

theme has been strictly avoided by each of us ever since."

The remainder of the letter was devoted to details as to her future life at Constantinople, and the onerous duties that would devolve on her as ambassadress. She hinted also to a time when she would ask dear Nelly to come and visit her; but, of course, until matters were fully settled and concluded, she could not expect her to leave dear Gusty.

The postscript ran thus: "Culduff meant to have given some small Church promotion to young L'Estrange, and, indeed, believed he had done so; but some difficulty has arisen. It is either not his turn, or the Bishop is troublesome, or the Ecclesiastical Commissioners—if there be such people—are making objections. If he—I mean L'Estrange—be still disengaged, would it be wise to offer him the chaplaincy to the embassy? I mean wise as regards ourselves; but I take it the sister may be still unmarried, and if she be like what I remember her, a person not easily suppressed, nor at all indisposed to assume airs of perfect equality, even with those separated from her by a whole hemisphere of station. Give me your candid advice on this point, not thinking of *them*, but of *me*, for though I feel Julia—is not that her name?—would be insupportable, the parson himself would be very useful, and I think a comfort to me.

"Of course you will not consult any one upon this matter. It is your own personal opinion I want, and you will give it to me, knowing me and my prejudices—I suppose I had better call them—and not thinking of your own leanings and likings for the girl. She may, for aught I know, have changed. Culduff has some wise saw about acid wines growing dry by age; I don't know whether young ladies mellow in this fashion, but Julia was certainly tart enough once to have tested the theory, and might be the 'Amontillado' of old maids by this time."

It may be imagined that after a sally of this kind it was not easy for the writer to recover that semi-moralizing vein in which the letter opened. Nor did she. The conclusion was abrupt, and merely directed Nelly to address her next to the Summer Palace at Therapia: "For those horrid people, our predecessors, have left the embassy house in such a condition it will take weeks and several thousand pounds to make it habitable. There must be a vote taken 'in supply' on this. I am writing Greek to you, poor child; but I mean they must give us money, and, of course, the discuss-

sion will expose us to many impertinences. One writer declared that he never knew of a debate on the estimates without an allusion to Lord Cudduff's wig. We shall endure this—if not with patience, without resentment. Love to dear Gusty, and believe me your affectionate sister,

“MARION CULDUFF.”

Such were the most striking passages of a long letter which, fortunately for Nelly, Mr. Cutbill's presence at the breakfast-table rescued her from the indiscretion of reading aloud. One or two extracts she did give, but soon saw that the document was one which could not be laid on the table, nor given without prejudice to the public service. Her confusion, as she crumpled up the paper, and thrust it back into its envelope, was quickly remarked, and Mr. Cutbill, with his accustomed tact, observed, “I'd lay a ‘fiver’ we've all of us been led out for a canter in that epistle. It's enough to see Miss Ellen's face to know that she wouldn't read it out for fifty pounds. Eh, what!” cried he, stooping and rubbing his leg; “I told you to say, ‘Stop her,’ Master Jack, when you wanted to take way off, but I never said, ‘Kick my shins.’”

This absurd exclamation, and the laugh it provoked, was a lucky diversion, and they arose from table without another thought on Marion's epistle.

“Has Nelly shown you Marion's note?” asked Jack, as he strolled with Julia through the garden.

“No, and it is perhaps the only letter I ever knew her to get without handing me to read.”

“I suspect, with Cutbill, that we all of us catch it in that pleasant document.”

“*You* perhaps are the only one who has escaped.”

“As for *me*, I am not even remembered. Well, I'll bear even that, if I can be sure of a little sympathy in another quarter.”

“Master Jack, you ask for too many professions. I have told you already to-day, and I don't mean to repeat it for a week, that you are not odious to me.”

“But will you not remember, Julia, the long months of banishment I have suffered? Will you not bear in mind that if I have lived longingly for this moment, it is cruel now to dash it with a doubt.”

“But it is exactly what I am not doing! I have given you fully as much encouragement as is good for you. I have owned—and it is a rash confession for a girl to make at any time—that I care for you more than any part of our prospects for the future

could warrant, and if I go one step further there will be nothing for it but for you to buy a bragotza and turn fisherman, and for me to get a basket and sell pilchards in the piazza.”

“You needn't taunt me with my poverty, I feel it bitterly enough already. Nor have you any right to think me unable to win a living.”

“There, again, you wrong me. I only said, Do not, in your impatience to reach your goal, make it not worth the winning. Don't forget what I told you about long engagements. A man's share of them is the worst.”

“But you love me, Julia?” said he, drawing her close to him.

“How tiresome you are!” said she, trying to free herself from his arm.

“Let me once—only once—hear you say this, and I swear to you, Julia, I'll never tease you more.”

“Well, then, if I must—”

More was not spoken, for the lips were pressed by a rapturous kiss, as he clasped her to his heart, muttering, “My own, my own!”

“I declare there is Nelly,” cried Julia, wresting herself from his embrace, and starting off; not, however, towards Ellen, but in the direction of the house.

“Oh, Nelly!” said Jack, rushing towards his sister, “she loves me—she has said so—she is all my own.”

“Of course she is, Jack. I never doubted it, though I own I scarcely thought she'd have told it.”

And the brother and sister walked along hand in hand without speaking, a closer pressure of the fingers at intervals alone revealing how they followed the same thoughts and lived in the same joys.

## CHAPTER LXII.

### DEALING WITH CUTBILL.

“WHAT'S to be done with Cutbill?—will any one tell me this?” was the anxious question Augustus asked as he stood in a group composed of Jack, Nelly, and the L'Estranges. “As to Sedley meeting him at all, I know that is out of the question; but the mere fact of finding the man here will so discredit us in Sedley's eyes that it is more than likely he will pitch up the whole case and say good-bye to us forever.”

“But, can he do that?” asked Julia. “Can he, I mean, permit a matter of tem



per or personal feeling to interfere in a dry affair of duty?"

"Of course he can; where his counsels are disregarded and even counteracted, he need not continue his guidance. He is a hot-tempered man, besides, and has more than once shown me that he will not bear provocation beyond certain limits."

"I think," began L'Estrange, "if I were in *your* place, I'd tell Cutbill. I'd explain to him how matters stood; and——"

"No, no," broke in Jack; "that won't do at all. The poor dog is too hard up for that."

"Jack is right," said Nelly, warmly.

"Of course he is, so far as Mr. Cutbill goes," broke in Julia; "but we want to do right to every one. Now, how about your brother and his suit?"

"What if I were to show him this letter," said Augustus, "to let him see that Sedley means to be here to-morrow, to remain at farthest three days; is it not likely Cutbill would himself desire to avoid meeting him?"

"Not a bit of it," cried Jack. "It's the thing of all others he'd glory in; he'd be full of all the lively impertinences that he could play off on the lawyer; and he'd write a comic song on him—ay, and sing it in his own presence."

"Nothing more likely," said Julia, gravely.

"Then what is to be done? Is there no escape out of the difficulty?" asked Augustus.

"Yes," said Nelly, "I think there is. The way I should advise would be this: I'd show Mr. Cutbill Sedley's letter, and, taking him into counsel, as it were, on the embarrassment of his own position, I'd say, 'We must hide you somewhere for these three days.'"

"But he wouldn't see it, Nelly. He'd laugh at your delicate scruples. He'd say, 'That's the one man in all Europe I'm dying to meet.'"

"Nelly is quite right, notwithstanding," said Julia. "There is more than one side to Mr. Cutbill's nature. He'd like to be thought a very punctilious gentleman fully as much as a very jocose companion. Make him believe that, in keeping out of sight here at this moment, he will be exercising a most refined delicacy—doing what nothing short of a high-bred sensibility would ever have dreamed of; and you'll see he'll be as delighted with his part as ever he was with his coarse drollery. And here he comes to test my theory about him."

As she spoke, Cutbill came lounging up the garden-walk, too busily engaged in making a paper cigarette, to see those in front of him.

"I'm sure, Mr. Cutbill, that cigarette must be intended for me," cried Julia, "seeing all the pains you are bestowing on its manufacture."

"Ah, Miss Julia, if I could only believe that you'd let me corrupt your morals to the extent of a pinch of Latakia——"

"Give me Sedley's letter, Gusty," said Nelly, "and leave the whole arrangement to me. Mr. Cutbill, will you kindly let me have three minutes of your company? I want a bit of advice from you." And she took his arm as she spoke, and led him down the garden. She wasted no time in preliminaries, but at once came to the point, saying, "We're in what you would call 'a fix' this morning, Mr. Cutbill. My brother's lawyer, Mr. Sedley, is coming here most unexpectedly. We know that some unpleasant passages have occurred between you and that gentleman, making a meeting between you quite impossible; and, in the great difficulty of the moment, I have charged myself with the solution of the embarrassment, and now begin to see that without your aid I am powerless. Will you help me—that is, will you advise with or for me?"

"Of course I will. But, first of all, where's the difficulty you speak of? I'd no more mind meeting this man—sitting next him at dinner, if you like—than I would an old creditor—and I have a good many of them—that I never mean to pay."

"We never doubted *your* tact, Mr. Cutbill," said she, with a strong emphasis on the pronoun.

"If so, then the matter is easy enough. Tact always serves for two. If *I* be the man you take me for, that crabbed old fellow will love me like a brother before the first day is over."

"That's not the question, Mr. Cutbill. Your personal powers of captivation no one disputes, if only they get a fair field for their exercise. But what we fear is that Mr. Sedley, being the hot-tempered, hasty man he is, will not give you this chance. My brother has twice already been on the verge of a rupture with him for having acted on his own independent judgment. I believe nothing but his regard for poor dear papa would have made him forgive Augustus; and when I tell you that in the present critical state of our cause his desertion of us would be fatal, I am sure you will do anything to avert such a calamity."

"Let us meet, Miss Ellen. Let us dine together once—I only ask once—and if I don't borrow money from him before he takes his bedroom candle, you may scratch Tom Cutbill, and put him off 'the course' forever. What does that impatient shrug of the shoulders mean? Is it as much as to say, 'What a conceited snob it is!'—ch?"

"Oh, Mr. Cutbill; you couldn't possibly——"

"Couldn't I, though? And don't I know well that I am just as vain of my little talents—as your friend, Miss Julia, called them—as you and others are ready to ridicule them. But the real difference between us after all is this—*You* think the world at large is a monstrous clever creature, with great acuteness, great discrimination, and great delicacy; and I *know* it to be a great overgrown bully, mistaking half it hears, and blundering all it says, so that any one, I don't care who he is, that will stand out from the crowd in life, think his own thoughts and guide his own actions, may just do what he pleases with that unwieldy old monster, making it believe it's the master, all the while it is a mere slave and a drudge. There's another shrug of the shoulders. Why not say it out—You're a puppy, Tom Cutbill?"

"First of all, it wouldn't be polite, and secondly——"

"Never mind the secondly. It's quite enough for me to see that I have not convinced you, nor am I half as clever a fellow as I think myself. And, do you know, you're the first I ever knew dispute the position?"

"But I do not. I subscribe to it implicitly; my presence here, at this moment, attests how I believe it. It is exactly because I regard Mr. Cutbill as the cleverest person I know—the very ablest to extricate one from a difficulty—that I have come to him this morning."

"My honor is satisfied!" said he, laying his hand on his heart, and bowing with a grand seriousness.

"And now," said Nelly, hurriedly, for her patience had well-nigh given in, "what's to be done? I have a project of my own, but I don't know whether you would agree to it."

"Not agree to a project of yours! What do you take me for, Miss Ellen?"

"My dear Mr. Cutbill, I have exhausted all my compliments. I can only say I endorse all the preceding with compound interest."

Slightly piqued by the half-sarcasm of her manner, he simply said—"And your project; what is it?"

"That you should be a close prisoner for the short time Mr. Sedley stays here; sufficiently near to be able to communicate and advise with you—for we count much on your counsel—and yet totally safe from even the chance of meeting him. There is a small chapel about a mile off, where the family confessor used to live, in two neat little rooms adjoining the building. These shall be made comfortable for you. We will take care—I will—that you are not starved; and some of us will be sure to go and see you every day, and report all that goes on. I foresee a number of details, but I have no time now to discuss them; the great point is, do you agree?"

"This is Miss Julia's scheme, is it not?"

"No, I assure you; on my word, it is mine."

"But you have concerted it with her?"

"Not even that; she knows nothing of it."

"With whom, then, have you talked it over?"

"With none, save Mr. Cutbill."

"In that case, Mr. Cutbill complies," said he, with a theatrical air of condescension.

"You will go there?"

"Yes, I promise it."

"And remain close prisoner till I liberate you?"

"Everything you command."

"I thank you much, and I am very proud of my success," said she offering her hand. "Shall I own to you," said she, after a pause, "that my brother's nerves have been so shaken by the agitation he has passed through, and by the continual pressure of thinking that it is his own personal fault that this battle has been so ill contested, that the faintest show of censure on him now would be more than he could bear? I have little doubt that the cause is lost, and I am only eager that poor Augustus should not feel it was lost through him."

She was greatly agitated as she spoke, and, with a hurried farewell, she turned and left him.

## CHAPTER LXIII.

### THE CLIENT AND HIS LAWYER.

WHEN the rest of the party had left the dinner-room, and Augustus Bramleigh and Mr. Sedley found themselves alone, a silence of several minutes ensued; a very solemn pause each felt it, well knowing that at such a moment the slightest word



may be the signal for disclosures which involve a destiny. Up to this, nothing had been said on either side of "the cause;" and though Sedley had traveled across Europe to speak of it, he waited with decorous reserve till his host should invite him to the topic.

Bramleigh, an awkward and timid man at the best of times, was still more so when he found himself in a situation in which he should give the initiative. As the entertainer of a guest, too, he fancied that to introduce his personal interests as matter of conversation would be in bad taste, and so he fidgeted, and passed the decanters across the table with a nervous impatience, trying to seem at his ease, and stammering out at last some unmeaning question about the other's journey.

Sedley replied to the inquiry with a cold and measured politeness, as a man might to a matter purely irrelevant.

"The Continent is comparatively new ground to you, Mr. Sedley?"

"Entirely so. I have never been beyond Brussels before this."

"Late years have nearly effaced national peculiarities. One crosses frontiers now, and never remembers a change of country."

"Quite so."

"The money, the coinage, perhaps, is the great reminder after all."

"Money is the great reminder of almost everything, everywhere, sir," said Sedley, with a stern and decisive tone.

"I'm afraid you are right," said Bramleigh, with a faint sigh; and now they seemed to stand on the brink of a precipice, and look over.

"What news have you for me?" said he at last, gulping as he spoke.

"None to cheer, nothing to give encouragement. The discovery at Castello will insure them a verdict. We cannot dispute the marriage, it was solemnized in all form and duly witnessed. The birth of the child was also carefully authenticated — there isn't a flaw in the registry, and they'll take care to remind us on the second trial of how freely we scattered our contemptuous sarcasms on the illegitimacy of this connection on the first record."

"Is the case hopeless, then?"

"Nothing is hopeless where a jury enters, but it is only short of hopeless. Kelson of course says he is sure, and perhaps so should I, in his place. Still they might disagree again: there's a strong repugnance felt by juries against dispossessing an old occupant. All can feel the hardship of his case, and the sympathy for him goes a great way."

"Still this would only serve to protract matters—they'd bring another action."

"Of course they would, and Kelson has money!"

"I declare I see no benefit in continuing a hopeless contest."

"Don't be hopeless then, that's the remedy."

Bramleigh made a slight gesture of impatience, and, slight as it was, Sedley observed it.

"You have never treated this case as your father would have done, Mr. Bramleigh. He had a rare spirit to face a contest. I remember one day hinting to him that if this claim could be backed by money it would be a very formidable suit, and his answer was: 'When I strike my flag, Sedley, the enemy will find the prize was scarcely worth fighting for.' I knew what he meant was, he'd have mortgaged the estate to every shilling of its value, before there arose a question of his title."

"I don't believe it, sir; I tell you to your face I don't believe it," cried Bramleigh, passionately. "My father was a man of honor, and never would have descended to such duplicity."

"My dear sir, I have not come twelve hundred miles to discuss a question in ethics, nor will I risk myself in a discussion with you. I repeat, sir, that, had your father lived to meet this contention, we should not have found ourselves where we are to-day. Your father was a man of considerable capacity, Mr. Bramleigh. He conducted a large and important house with consummate skill; brought up his family handsomely; and, had he been spared, would have seen every one of them in positions of honor and consequence."

"To every word in his praise I subscribe heartily and gratefully;" and there was a tremor in his voice as Bramleigh spoke.

"He has been spared a sad spectacle. I must say," continued Sedley. "With the exception of your sister who married that Viscount, ruin—there's only one word for it—ruin has fallen upon you all."

"Will you forgive me if I remind you that you are my lawyer, Mr. Sedley, not my chaplain nor my confessor?"

"Lawyer without a suit! Why, my dear sir, there will be soon nothing to litigate. You and all belonging to you were an imposition and a fraud. There, there! It's nothing to grow angry over; how could you or any of you suspect your father's legitimacy? You accepted the situation as you found it, as all of us do. That you regarded Pracontal as a cheat was no fault of yours—he says so himself. I have seen

him and talked with him; he was at Kelson's when I called last week, and old Kelson said,—"My client is in the next room: he says you treated him rudely one day he went to your office. I wish you'd step in and say a civil word or two. It would do good. Sedley. I tell you it would do good!" and he laid such a significant stress on the word, that I walked straight in and said how very sorry I felt for having expressed myself in a way that could offend him. "At all events, sir," said I, "if you will not accept my apology for myself, let me beseech you to separate the interest of my client from my rudeness, and let not Mr. Bramleigh be prejudiced because his lawyer was ill-mannered." "It's all forgotten, never to be recalled," said he, shaking my hand. "Has Kelson told you my intentions towards Bramleigh?"

"He has told me nothing," said I.

"Tell him, Kelson. I can't make the matter plain as you can. Tell Mr. Sedley what we were thinking of."

"In one word, sir, his plan was a partition of the property. He would neither disturb your title nor dispute your name. You should be the Bramleighs of Castello, merely paying him a rent-charge of four thousand a year. Kelson suggested more, but he said a hundred thousand francs was ample, and he made no scruple of adding that he never was master of as many sous in his life.

"And what does Kelson say to this?" asked I.

"Kelson says what Sedley would say—that it is a piece of Quixotism worthy of Hanwell."

"Ma foi," said Pracontal, "it is not the first time I have fired in the air."

"We talked for two hours over the matter. Part of what Pracontal said was good sound sense, well reasoned and acutely expressed; part was sentimental rubbish, not fit to listen to. At last I obtained leave to submit the whole affair to you, not by letter—that they wouldn't have—but personally, and there, in one word, is the reason of my journey.

"Before I left town, however, I saw the Attorney-General, whose opinion I had already taken on certain points of the case. He was a personal friend of your father, and willingly entered upon it. When I told him Pracontal's proposal, he smiled dubiously, and said, 'Why, it's a confession of defeat; the man must know his case will break down, or he never would offer such conditions.'

"I tried to persuade him that without knowing, seeing, hearing this Frenchman,

it would not be easy to imagine such an action proceeding from a sane man, but that his exalted style of talk and his inflated sentimentality made the thing credible. He wants to belong to a family, to be owned and accepted as some one's relative. The man is dying of the shame of his isolation.

"Let him marry."

"So he means, and I hear to Bramleigh's widow, Lady Augusta."

"He laughed heartily at this and said, 'It's the only encumbrance on the property.' And now, Mr. Bramleigh, you are to judge, if you can, is this the offer of generosity, or is it the crafty proposal of a beaten adversary? I don't mean to say it is an easy point to decide on, or that a man can hit it off at once. Consult those about you; take into consideration the situation you stand in, and all its dangers; bethink you what an adverse verdict may bring if we push them to a trial; and even if the proposal be, as Mr. Attorney thinks, the cry of weakness, is it wise to disregard it?"

"Would you have laid such a proposal before my father, Sedley?" said Bramleigh, with a scarcely perceptible smile.

"Not for five hundred pounds, sir."

"I thought not."

"Ay, but remember your father would never have landed us where we stand now, Mr. Bramleigh."

Augustus winced under this remark, but said nothing.

"If the case be what you think it, Sedley," said he, at last, "this is a noble offer."

"So say I."

"There is much to think over in it. If I stood alone here, and if my own were the only interests involved, I think—that is, I hope—I know what answer I should give; but there are others. You have seen my sister: you thought she looked thin and delicate—and she may well do so, her cares overtax her strength; and my poor brother, too, that fine-hearted fellow, what is to become of *him*? And yet, Sedley," cried he, suddenly, "if either of them were to suspect that this—this—what shall I call it?—this arrangement—stood on no basis of right, but was simply an act of generous forbearance, I'd stake my life on it, they'd refuse it."

"You must not consult *them*, then, that's clear."

"But I will not decide till I do so."

"Oh, for five minutes—only five minutes—of your poor father's strong sense and sound intellect, and I might send off my telegram to-night!" And with this speech,



delivered slowly and determinately, the old man arose, took his bed-room candle, and walked away.

## CHAPTER LXIV.

## A FIRST GLEAM OF LIGHT.

AFTER a sleepless, anxious night, in which he canvassed all that Sedley had told him, Bramleigh presented himself at Jack's bedside as the day was breaking. Though the sailor was not worldly wise, nor endowed with much knowledge of life, he had, as Augustus knew, a rough-and-ready judgment which, allied to a spirit of high honor, rarely failed in detecting that course which in the long run proved best. Jack, too, was no casuist, no hair-splitter; he took wide, commonplace views, and in this way was sure to do what nine out of ten ordinary men would approve of, and this was the sort of counsel that Bramleigh now desired to set side by side with his own deeply considered opinion.

Jack listened attentively to his brother's explanation, not once interrupting him by a word or a question till he had finished, and then, laying his hand gently on the other's, said, "You know well, Gusty, that you couldn't do this."

"I thought you would say so, Jack."

"You'd be a fool to part with what you owned, or a knave to sell what did not belong to you."

"My own judgment precisely."

"I'd not bother myself then with Sedley's pros and cons, nor entertain the question about saving what one could out of the wreck. If you haven't a right to a plank in the ship, you have no right to her because she is on the rocks. Say 'No,' Gusty, say 'No,' at once."

"It would be at best a compromise on the life of one man, for Pracontal's son, if he should leave one, could revive the claim."

"Don't let us go so far, Gusty. Let us deal with the case as it stands before us. Say 'No,' and have done with the matter at once."

Augustus leaned his head between his hands, and fell into a deep vein of thought.

"You've had your trial of humble fortune now, Gusty," continued Jack, "and I don't see that it has soured you; I see no signs of fretting or irritability about you, old fellow; I'll even say that I never remember you jollier or heartier. Isn't it true, this sort of life has no terror for you?"

"Think of Nelly, Jack."

"Nelly is better able to brave hard fortune than either of us. She never was spoiled when we were rich, and she had no pretensions to lay down when we became poor."

"And yourself, my poor fellow? I've had many a plan of what I meant by you."

"Never waste a thought about me. I'll buy a trabaccolo. They're the handiest coasting craft that ever sailed; and I'll see if the fruit-trade in the Levant won't feed me, and we'll live here, Gusty, all together. Come, now, tell me frankly, would you exchange that for Castello, if you had to go back there and live alone—eh?"

"I'll not say I would; but——"

"There's no 'but;' the thing is clear and plain enough. This place wouldn't suit Marion or Temple; but they'll not try it. Take my word for it, of all our fine acquaintances, not one will ever come down here to see how we bear our reduced lot in life. We'll start fresh in the race, and we'll talk of long ago and our grand times without a touch of repining."

"I'm quite ready to try it, Jack."

"That's well said," said he, grasping his hand, and pressing it affectionately. "And you'll say 'No' to this offer? I knew you would. Not but the Frenchman is a fine fellow, Gusty. I didn't believe it was in his nation to behave as nobly; for, mark you, I have no doubts, no misgivings, about his motives. I'd say all was honest and above-board in his offer."

"I join you in that opinion, Jack; and one of these days I hope to tell him so."

"That's the way to fight the battle of life," cried the sailor, enthusiastically. "Stand by your guns manfully, and, if you're beaten, haul down your flag in all honor to the fellow who has been able to thrash you. The more you respect *him*, the higher you esteem yourself. Get rid of that old lawyer as soon as you can, Gusty; he's not a pleasant fellow, and we all want Cutty back again."

"Sedley will only be too glad to escape: he's not in love with our barbarism."

"I'm to breakfast with Cutty this morning. I was nigh forgetting it. I hope I may tell him that his term of banishment is nearly over."

"I imagine Sedley will not remain beyond to-morrow."

"That will be grand news for Cutty, for he can't bear solitude. He says himself he'd rather be in the Marshalsea with plenty of companions, than be a king and have no associates. By the way, am I at liberty to tell him about this offer of Pra-

contal's? He knows the whole history, and the man too."

"Tell him if you like. The Frenchman is a favorite with him, and this will be another reason for thinking well of him."

"That's the way to live, Gusty. Keep the ship's company in good humor, and the voyage will be all the happier."

After a few words they parted, Augustus to prepare a formal reply to his lawyer, and Jack to keep his engagement with Cutbill. Though it was something of a long walk, Jack never felt it so; his mind was full of pleasant thoughts of the future. To feel that Julia loved him, and to know that a life of personal effort and enterprise was before him, were thoughts of overwhelming delight. He was now to show himself worthy of her love, and he would do this. With what resolution he would address himself to the stern work of life! It was not enough to say affluence had not spoiled him, he ought to be able to prove that the gentleman element was a source of energy and perseverance which no reverses could discourage. Julia was a girl to value this. She herself had learned how to meet a fallen condition, and had sacrificed nothing that graced or adorned her nature in the struggle. Nay, she was more lovable now than he had ever known her. Was it not downright luck that had taught them both to bear an altered lot before the trial of their married life began? It was thus he reasoned as he went, canvassing his condition in every way, and contented with it in all.

"What good news have you got this morning?" cried Cutbill, as he entered. "I never saw you look so jolly in my life."

"Well, I did find half-a-crown in the pocket of an old letter-case this morning; but it's the only piece of unexpected luck that has befallen me."

"Is the lawyer gone?"

"No."

"Nor thinking of going?"

"I won't say that. I suspect he'll not make a long halt after he has a talk with Gusty to-day."

And now Jack told in a few words the object of Sedley's coming, what Pracontal had offered, and what Augustus had resolved to send for answer.

"I'd have said the Frenchman was the biggest fool in Europe if I hadn't heard of your brother," said Cutbill puffing out a long column of smoke, and giving a deep sigh.

"That's not exactly how I read each of them," said Jack, sternly.

"Possibly; but it's the true rendering after all. Consider for one moment—"

"Not for half a moment, Master Cutbill. That my brother might make a very good bargain, by simply bartering such an insignificant thing as his honor as a gentleman, is easy to see; and that scores of people wouldn't understand that such a compromise was in question, or was of much consequence if it were, is also easy to see; and we need waste no time in discussing this. I say Gusty's right, and I maintain it; and if you like to hold a different opinion, do so in heaven's name, but don't disparage motives simply because you can't feel them."

"Are you better after all that?" said Cutbill, dryly, as he filled Jack's glass with water, and pushed it towards him. "Do you feel refreshed?"

"Much better—considerably relieved."

"Could I offer you anything cooling or calming?"

"Nothing half as cool as yourself, Cutty. And now let's change the subject, for it's one I'll not stand any chaff about."

"Am I safe in recommending you that grilled chicken, or is it indiscreet in me to say you'll find those sardines good?"

Jack helped himself, and ate on without a word. At last he lifted his head, and, looking around him, said, "You've very nice quarters here, Cutbill."

"As neat as paint. I was thinking this morning whether I'd not ask your brother to rent me this little place. I feel quite romantic since I've come up here, with the nightingales, and the cicadas, and the rest of them."

"If there were only a few more rooms like this, I'd dispute the tenancy with you."

"There's a sea-view for you!" said he, throwing wide the jalousies. "The whole Bocca di Cattaro and the islands in the distance. Naples is nothing to it! And when you have feasted your eye with worldly beauty, and want a touch of celestial beatitude, you've only to do this." And he arose, and walking over to one side of the room, drew back a small curtain of green silk, disclosing behind it an ornamental screen or "grille" of iron-work.

"What does that mean?" asked Jack.

"That means that the occupant of this room, when devoutly disposed, could be able to hear mass without the trouble of going for it. This little grating here looks into the chapel: and there are evidences about that members of the family who lived at the villa were accustomed to come up here at times to pass days of solitude, and perhaps penance, which, after all, judging



from the indulgent character of this little provision here, were probably not over-severe."

"Nelly has told me of this chapel. Can we see it?"

"No; it's locked and barred like a gaol. I've tried to peep in through this grating; but it's too dark to see anything."

"But this grating is on a hinge," said Jack. "Don't you see, it was meant to open, though it appears not to have done so for some years back? Here's the secret of it." And pressing a small knob in the wall, the framework became at once movable, and opened like a window.

"I hope it's not sacrilege, but I mean to go in," said Jack, who, mounting on a chair, with a sailor's agility insinuated himself through the aperture, and invited Cutbill to follow.

"No, no; I wasn't brought up a rope-dancer," said he, gruffly. "If you can't manage to open the door for me——"

"But it's what I can. I can push back every bolt. Come round now, and I'll admit you."

By the time Cutbill had reached the entrance, Jack had succeeded in opening the massive doors; and as he flung them wide, a flood of light poured into the little crypt, with its splendid altar and its silver lamps; its floor of tessellated marble, and its ceiling a mass of gilded tracery almost too bright to look on; but it was not at the glittering splendor of gold or gems that they now stood enraptured. It was in speechless wonderment of the picture that formed the altar-piece, which was a Madonna—a perfect copy, in every lineament and line, of the Flora at Castello. Save that an expression of ecstatic rapture had replaced the look of joyous delight, they were the same, and unquestionably were derived from the same original.

"Do you know that?" cried Cutbill.

"Know it! Why, it's our own fresco at Castello."

"And by the same hand too," cried Cutbill. "Here are the initials in the corner—G. L. ! Of all the strange things that I have ever met in life, this is the strangest!" And he leaned on the railing of the altar, and gazed on the picture with intense interest.

"I can make nothing of it," muttered Jack.

"And yet there's a great story in it," said Cutbill, in a low, serious tone. "That picture was a portrait—a portrait of the painter's daughter; and that painter's daughter was the wife of your grandfather, Montagu Bramleigh; and it is her grand-

child now, the man called Pracontal, who claims your estates."

"How do you pretend to know all this?"

"I know it chapter and verse. I have gone over the whole history with that old painter's journal before me. I have seen several studies of that girl's face—'Enrichetta Lami,' she was called—and I have read the entry of her marriage with your grandfather in the parish register. A terrible fact for your poor brother, for it clinches his ruin. Was there ever as singular a chance in life as the re-appearance of this face here?"

"Coming as though to taunt us with our downfall; though certainly that lovely brow and those tearful eyes have no scorn in them. She must have been a great beauty."

"Pracontal raves of her beauty, and says that none of these pictures do her justice, except one at Urbino. At least he gathers this from the journal, which he swears by as if it were gospel."

"I'd call her handsomer in that picture than in our fresco. I wonder if this were painted earlier or later?"

"I can answer that question, for the old sacristan who came up here yesterday, and fell to talking about the chapel, mentioned how the painter—a gran' maestro he called him—bargained to be buried at the foot of the altar, and the Marchese had not kept his word, not liking to break up the marble pavement, and had him interred outside the walls, with the prior's grave and a monk at either side of him. His brushes and colors, and his tools for fresco-work, were all buried in the chapel, for they had been blessed by the Pope's Nuncio, after the completion of the basilica at Udine. Haven't I remembered my story well, and the old fellow didn't tell it above nine times over? This was old Lami's last work, and here his last resting-place."

"What is it seems so familiar to me in that name? Every time you have uttered it I am ready to say I have heard it before."

"What so likely, from Augustus or your sister?"

"No. I can answer for it that neither of them ever spoke of him to me. I know it was not from *them* I heard it."

"But how tell the story of this suit without naming him?"

"They never did tell me the story of the suit, beyond the fact that my grandfather had been married privately in early life, and left a son whom he had not seen nor recognized, but took every means to disavow and disown. Wait now a moment; my mind is coming to it. I think I have

the clue to this old fellow's name. I must go back to the villa, however, to be certain."

"Not a word of our discovery here to any one," cried Cutbill. "We must arrange to bring them all here, and let them be surprised as we were."

"I'll be back with you within an hour," said Jack. "My head is full of this, and I'll tell you why when I return."

And they parted.

Before Cutbill could believe it possible, Jack, flushed and heated, re-entered the room. He had run at top-speed, found what he sought for, and came back in intense eagerness to declare the result.

"You've lost no time, Jack; nor have I either. I took up the flags under the altar-steps, and came upon this oak box. I suppose it was sacrilege, but I carried it off here to examine at our leisure."

"Look here," cried Jack, "look at this scrap of paper. It was given to me at the galleys at Ischia by the fellow I was chained to. Read these names, Giacomo Lami—whose daughter was Enrichetta—I was to trace him out, and communicate, if I could, with this other man, Tonino Baldassare or Pracontal—he was called by both names. Bolton of Naples could trace him."

A long, low whistle was Cutbill's only reply as he took the paper and studied it long and attentively.

"Why, this is the whole story," cried he at last. "This old galley-slave is the real claimant, and Pracontal has no right, while Niccolo, or whatever his name be, lives. This may turn out glorious news for your brother, but I'm not lawyer enough to say whether it may not be the Crown that will benefit, if his estates be confiscated for felony."

"I don't think that this was the sort of service Old Nick asked me to render him when we parted," said Jack, dryly.

"Probably not. He only asked you to help his son to take away your brother's estate."

"Old Nick knew nothing about whose brother I was. He trusted me to do him a service, and I told him I would."

Though Cutbill paid but little attention to him, Jack talked on for some time of his old comrade, recounting the strange traits of his nature, and remembering with gratitude such little kindness as it was in his power to show.

"I'd have gone clean out of my mind but for him," said he at last.

"And we have all believed that this fellow was lost at sea," muttered Cutbill. "Bolton gave up all his papers and the

remnant of his property to his son in that belief."

"Nor does he wish to be thought living now. He charged me to give no clue to him. He even said I was to speak of him as one I had met at Monte Video years ago."

"These are things for a 'cuter head than yours or mine, Jack," said Cutbill, with a cunning look. "We're not the men to see our way through this tangle. Go and show that scrap of paper to Sedley, and take this box with you. Tell him how you came by each. That old fox will soon see whether they confirm the case against your brother or disclose a flaw in it."

"And is that the way I'm to keep my word to Old Nick?" said Jack, doggedly.

"I don't suppose you ever bound yourself to injure your own flesh and blood by a blank promise. I don't believe there's a family in Europe with as many scruples, and as little sense how to deal with them."

"Civil that, certainly."

"Not a bit civil, only true; but let us not squabble. Go and tell Sedley what we have chanced upon. These men have a way of looking at the commonest events—and this is no common event—that you or I have never dreamed of. If Pracontal's father be alive, Pracontal cannot be the claimant to your estates; that much, I take it, is certain. At all events, Sedley's the man to answer this."

Half pushing Jack out of the room while he deposited the box in his hands, Cutbill at last sent him off, not very willingly, indeed, or concurringly, but like one who, in spite of himself, saw he was obliged to take a particular course, and travel a road without the slightest suspicion of where it led to.

## CHAPTER LXV.

### THE LIGHT STRONGER.

"SEDLEY asks for the best Italian scholar amongst us," said Augustus, the next morning at breakfast, "and the voice of public opinion calls upon you, Julia."

"You know what Figaro said of 'common report.' I'll not repeat it," said she, laughing, "and I'll even behave as if I didn't believe it. And now what is wanted of me or my Italian scholarship?"

"The matter is thus: Sedley has received some papers"—here a look of intelligence passed between Augustus and Jack—"which he imagines may be of consequence, but being in Italian, he can't read them. He needs a translator——"



"I am equal to that," broke she in, "but why don't we do it in committee, as you political people call it? Five heads are better than one."

"Mr. Sedley is absolute, and will have but one."

"And am I to be closeted for a whole morning with Mr. Sedley? I declare it seems compromising. Jack frowns at me. There is nothing so prudish as a sailor. I wish any one would tell me why it is so."

"Well, the matter is as you have stated it," said Augustus. "Mr. Sedley says, 'Let me have the aid of some one who will not grudge me two hours, mayhap three.'"

"What if the documents should turn out love-letters?"

"Julia! Julia!" cried Jack, reprovingly; for in reality her sallies kept him in constant anxiety.

"I can't help it, Jack; I must be prudent, even if I shock you by my precautions. I repeat, if these be love-letters?"

"Well, I can answer so far," said Augustus. "They are not—at least I can almost assert they are not."

"I wish Nelly would go," said Julia, with mock seriousness. "I see Jack is wretched about it, and, after all, Mr. Sedley, though not exactly a young man—"

"I declare this is too bad," said Jack, rising angrily from the table, and then throwing himself back in his chair, as in conflict with his own temper.

"She is provoking, there is no doubt of it, and on board-ship we'd not stand that sort of thing five minutes," said Julia, with a demure air; "but on land, and amongst terrestrial creatures, Master Jack, I know nothing for it but patience."

"Patience!" muttered he, with an expression that made them all burst out laughing.

"So I may tell Sedley you will aid him?" asked Bramleigh.

"I'm ready now. Indeed, the sooner begun the better, for we have a long-walk project—haven't we, Jack?—for this afternoon."

"Yes, if we have patience for it," said he. And once more the laugh broke forth as they rose from the table and separated into little knots and groups through the room.

"I may tell you, Julia," said Augustus, in a half-whisper, "that though I have given up hoping this many a day, it is just possible there may be something in these papers of moment to me, and I know I have only to say as much to secure your interest in them."

"I believe you can rely upon that," said she; and within less than five minutes afterwards she was seated at the table with Mr. Sedley in the study, an oblong box of oak clasped with brass in front of them, and a variety of papers lying scattered about.

"Have you got good eyes, Miss L'Es-trange?" said Sedley, as he raised his spectacles, and turned a peering glance towards her.

"Good eyes?" repeated she, in some astonishment.

"Yes; I don't mean pretty eyes, or expressive eyes. I mean, have you keen sight?"

"I think I have."

"That's what I need from you at this moment; here are some papers with erasures and re-writings, and corrections in many places, and it will take all your acuteness to distinguish between the several contexts. Aided by a little knowledge of Latin, I have myself discovered some passages of considerable interest. I was half the night over them; but, with your help, I count on accomplishing more in half an hour."

While he spoke, he continued to arrange papers in little packets before him, and, last of all, took from the box a painter's pallet and several brushes, along with two or three of those quaintly shaped knives men use in fresco-painting.

"Have you ever heard of the painter, Giacomo Lami?" asked he.

"Of course I have. I know the whole story in which he figures. Mr. Bramleigh has told it to me."

"These are his tools. With these he accomplished those great works which have made him famous among modern artists, and by his will—at least I have spelled out so much—they were buried along with him."

"And where was he buried?"

"Here! here in Cattaro; his last work was the altar-piece of the little chapel of the villa."

"Was there ever such a strange coincidence!"

"The world is full of them, for it is a very small world after all. This old man, driven from place to place by police persecutions—for he had been a great conspirator in early life, and never got rid of the taste for it—came here as a sort of refuge, and painted the frescoes of the chapel at the price of being buried at the foot of the altar, which was denied him afterwards; for they only buried there this box, with his painting utensils and a few papers. It

is to these papers I wish now to direct your attention, if good luck will have it that some of them may be of use. As for me, I can do little more than guess at the contents of most of them.

"Now these," continued he, "seem to me to be bills and accounts: are they such?"

"Yes, these are notes of expenses incurred in traveling; and he would seem to have been always on the road. Here is a curious note: 'Nuremberg—I like this old town much; its staid propriety and quietness suit me. I feel that I could work here—work at something greater and better than these daily efforts for mere bread; but why after all should I do more? I have none now to live for—none to work for! Enrichetta and her boy gone! and Carlotta——'"

"Wait a moment," said the lawyer, laying his hand on hers. "Enrichetta was the wife of Montagu Bramleigh, and this boy their son."

"Yes, and subsequently the father of Praental."

"And how so, if he died in boyhood?" muttered he; "read on."

"Now, Carlotta has deserted me! and for whom? For the man who betrayed me! for that Niccolo Baldassare, who denounced five of us at Verona, and whose fault it is not that I have not died by the hangman."

"This is very important; a light is breaking on me through this cloud, too, that gives me hope."

"I see what you mean. You think that probably——"

"No matter what I think, search on through the papers; what is this? here is a drawing. Is it a mausoleum?"

"Yes; and the memorandum says: 'If I ever be rich enough, I shall place this over Enrichetta's remains at Louvain, and have her boy's body laid beside her. Poor child, that, if spared, might have inherited a princely state and fortune, he lies now in the pauper burial-ground at St. Michel! They let me, in consideration of what I had done in repairing their frescoes, place a wooden cross over him. I cut the inscription with my own hands—G. L. B., aged four years; the last hope of a shattered heart.'"

"Does not this strengthen your impression?" asked Julia, turning and confronting him.

"Aged four years; he was born, I think, in '99—the year after the rebellion in Ireland; this brings us nigh the date of his death. One moment. Let me note this."

He hurriedly scratched off a few lines. "St. Michel; where is St. Michel? It may be a church in some town."

"Or it may be that village in Savoy, at the foot of the Alps."

"True! we shall try there."

"These are without interest; they are notes of sums paid on the road, or received for his labor. All were evidently leaves of a book and torn out."

"What is this about Carlotta here?"

"Ah, yes. 'With this I send her all I had saved and put by. I knew he would ill-treat her, but to take her boy from her—her one joy and comfort in life—and to send him away she knows not whither, his very name changed, is more than I believed possible. She says that Niccolo has been to England, and found means to obtain money from M. B.'"

"Montagu Bramleigh," muttered Sedley.

But she read on—"This is too base; but it explains why he stole all the letters in poor Enrichetta's box, and the papers that told of her marriage."

"Are we on the track now?" cried the old lawyer triumphantly. "This Baldassare was the father of the claimant clearly enough. Enrichetta's child died, and the sister's husband substituted himself in his place."

"But this Niccolo who married Carlotta," said Julia, "must have been many years older than Enrichetta's son would have been had he lived."

"Who was to detect that? Don't you see that he never made personal application to the Bramleighs? He only addressed them by letter, which, knowing all Enrichetta's story, he could do without risk or danger. Kelson couldn't have been aware of this," muttered he, "but he had some misgivings. What were they?"

While the lawyer sat in deep thought, his face buried in his hands, Julia hurriedly turned over the papers. There were constant references to Carlotta's boy, whom the old man seemed to have loved tenderly; and different jottings showed how he had kept his birthday, which fell on the fourth of August. He was born at Zurich, where Baldassare worked as a watchmaker, his trade being, however, a mere mask to conceal his real occupation—that of conspirator.

"No," said Sedley, raising his head at last, "Kelson knew nothing of it. I'm certain he did not. It was a cleverly planned scheme throughout; and all the more so by suffering a whole generation to lapse before litigating the claim."



"But what is this here?" cried Julia, eagerly. "It is only a fragment, but listen to it. 'There is no longer a doubt about it. Baldassare's first wife—a certain Marie de Pracontal—is alive, and living with her parents at Aix, in Savoy. Four of the committee have denounced him, and his fate is certain. I had begun a letter to Bramleigh to expose the fraud this scoundrel would pass upon him; but why should I spare him who killed my child?'"

"First of all," said Sedley, reading from his notes, "we have the place and date of Enrichetta's death. Secondly, the burial-place of Godfrey Lami Bramleigh, set down as St. Michel, perhaps in Savoy. We have then the fact of the stolen papers, the copies of registries, and other documents. The marriage of Carlotta is not specified, but it is clearly evident, and we can even fix the time. And, last of all, we have the second wife, whose name, Pracontal, was always borne by the present claimant."

"And are you of opinion that this same Pracontal was a party to the fraud?" asked Julia.

"I am not certain," muttered he. "It is not too clear. The point is doubtful."

"But what have we here? It is a letter, with a post-mark on it." She read: "Leghorn, February 8, 1812." It was addressed to the Illustrissimo Maestro Lami, Porta Rossa, Florence, and signed N. Baldassare. It was but a few lines, and ran thus:—

"Seeing that Carlotta and her child now sleep at Pisa, why deny me your interest for my boy Anatole? You know well to what he might succeed, and how. Be unforgiving to me if you will. I have borne as hard things even as your hatred, but the child that has never wronged you deserves no part of this hate. I want but little from you. Some dates, a few names—that I know you remember—and, last of all, my mind refreshed on a few events which I have heard you talk of again and again. Nor is it for *me* that you will do this, for I leave Europe within a week. I shall return to it no more. Answer this—Yes or No, at once—as I am about to quit this place. You know me well enough to know that I never threaten, though I sometimes counsel; and my counsel now is, consent to the demand of

"N. BALDASSARE."

Underneath was written, in Lami's hand: "I will carry this to my grave, that I may curse him who wrote it here and hereafter."

"Now the story stands out complete,"

said Julia, "and this Pracontal belonged to neither Bramleigh nor Lami."

"Make me a literal translation of that letter," said Sedley. "It is of more moment than almost all we have yet read. I do not mean now, Miss Julia," said he, seeing she had already commenced to write, "for we have these fragments still to look over."

While the lawyer occupied himself with drawing up a memorandum for his own guidance, Julia, by his directions, went carefully over the remaining papers. Few were of any interest, but these she docketed accurately, and with such brevity and clearness combined, that Sedley, little given to compliments, could not but praise her skill. It was not till the day began to decline that their labors drew to a close. It was a day of intense attention and great work; but only when it was over did she feel the exhaustion of overwrought powers.

"You are very, very tired," said Sedley. "It was too thoughtful of me. I ought to have remembered how unused you must be to fatigue like this."

"But I couldn't have left it; the interest was intense; and nothing would have persuaded me to leave the case without seeing how it ended."

"It will be necessary to authenticate these," said he, laying his hand on the papers; "and then we must show how we came by them."

"Jack can tell you this," said she; and now her strength failed her outright, and she lay back, overcome, and almost fainting. Sedley hurriedly rang for help, but before any one arrived Julia rallied, and with a faint smile, said: "Don't make a fuss about *me*. You have what is really important to occupy you. I will go and lie down till evening;" and so she left him.

## CHAPTER LXVI.

### SEDLEY'S NOTES.

JULIA found herself unable to come down to dinner, and Mr. Sedley had to confess that he had overtaxed her strength and imposed too far upon her zeal. "To tell truth," added he, "I forgot she was not a colleague. So shrewd and purposelike were all her remarks, such aptitude she displayed in rejecting what was valueless, and such acuteness in retaining all that was really important, it went clean out of my head that I was not dealing with a

brother of the craft, instead of a very charming and beautiful young lady."

"And you really have fallen upon papers of importance?" asked Nelly, eagerly; for Julia had already, in answer to the same question, said: "Mr. Sedley has pledged me to silence."

"Of the last importance, Miss Bramleigh." He paused for an instant, and then added, "I am well aware that I see nothing but friends, almost members of one family, around this table, but the habits of my calling impose reserve; and, besides, I am unwilling to make revelations until, by certain inquiries, I can affirm that they may be relied on."

"Oh, Mr. Sedley, if you have a gleam, even a gleam, of hope, do give it us. Don't you think our long-suffering and patience have made us worthy of it?"

"Stop, Nelly," cried Augustus, "I will have no appeals of this kind. Mr. Sedley knows our anxieties, and if he does not yield to them he has his own good reasons."

"I don't see that," broke in Jack. "We are not asking to hear our neighbor's secrets, and I take it we are of an age to be entrusted with our own."

"You speak sharply, sir," said Sedley, "but you speak well. I would only observe that the most careful and cautious people have been known to write letters, very confidential letters, which somehow get bruited about, so that clues are discovered and inferences traced which not unfrequently have given the most serious difficulties to those engaged in inquiry."

"Have no fears on that score, Mr. Sedley," said Jack: "there are no four people in Europe at this moment with fewer correspondents. I believe I might say that the roof of this house covers our whole world."

"Jack is right there," added Augustus. "If we don't write to the *Times* or the *Post*, I don't see to whom we are to tell our news."

"George hasn't even a pulpit here to expound us from," said Jack, laughingly.

"You have an undoubted right to know what is strictly your own concern. The only question is, shall I be best consulting your interests by telling it?"

"Out with it, by all means," said Jack. "The servants have left the room now, and here we are in close committee."

Sedley looked towards Augustus, who replied by a gesture of assent; and the lawyer, taking his spectacles from his pockets, said: "I shall simply read you the entry of my note-book. Much of it will surprise and much more gratify you; but let me entreat that if you have any doubts to re-

solve, or questions to put, you will reserve them till I have finished. I will only say that for everything I shall state as fact there appear to me to be abundant proofs, and where I mention what is simply conjecture I will say so. You remember my condition, then? I am not to be interrupted."

"Agreed," cried Jack, as though replying for the most probable defaulter. "I'll not utter a word, and the others are all discretion."

"The case is this," said Sedley: "Montagu Bramleigh, of Cossenden Manor, married Enrichetta, daughter of Giacomo Lami, the painter. The marriage was celebrated at the village church of Portshannon, and duly registered. They separated soon after—she retiring to Holland with her father, who had compromised himself in the Irish rebellion of '98. A son was born to this marriage, christened and registered in the Protestant church at Louvain as Godfrey Lami Bramleigh. To his christening Bramleigh was entreated to come, but under various pretexts he excused himself, and sent a costly present for the occasion; his letters, however, breathed nothing but affection, and fully recognized the boy as his son and his heir. Captain Bramleigh is, I know, impatient at the length of these details, but I can't help it. Indignant at the treatment of his daughter, Lami sent back the gift with a letter of insulting meaning. Several letters were interchanged of anger and recrimination; and Enrichetta, whose health had long been failing, sunk under the suffering of her desertion and died. Lami left Holland and repaired to Germany, carrying the child with him. He was also accompanied by a younger daughter, Carlotta, who, at the time I refer to, might have been sixteen or seventeen years of age. Lami held no intercourse with Bramleigh from this date, nor, so far as we know, did Bramleigh take measures to learn about the child—how he grew up, or where he was. Amongst the intimates of Lami's family was a man whose name is not unfamiliar to newspaper readers of some thirty or forty years back—a man who had figured in various conspiracies, and contrived to escape scathless, where his associates had paid the last penalty of their crimes. This man became the suitor of Carlotta, and won her affections, although Giacomo neither liked nor trusted Niccolo Baldasare—"

"Stop there," cried Jack, rising, and leaning eagerly across the table; "say that name again."



"Niccolo Baldassare."

"My old companion—my comrade at the galleys," exclaimed Jack; "we were locked to each other, wrist and ankle, for eight months."

"He lives, then?"

"I should think he does; the old beggar is as stout and hale as any one here. I can't guess his age, but I'll answer for his vigor."

"This will be all-important hereafter," said Sedley, making a note. "Now to my narrative: From Lami, Baldassare learned the story of Enrichetta's unhappy marriage and death, and heard how the child, then a playful little boy of three years or so, was the rightful heir of a vast fortune—a claim the grandfather firmly resolved to prosecute at some future day. The hope was, however, not destined to sustain him, for the boy caught a fever and died. His burial-place is mentioned, and his age, four years."

"So that," cried Augustus, "the claim became extinct with him?"

"Of course; for, though Montagu Bramleigh re-married, it was not till six years after his first wife's death."

"And our rights are unassailable?" cried Nelly, wildly.

"Your estates are safe; at least they will be safe."

"And who is Pracontal de Bramleigh?" asked Jack.

"I will tell you. Baldassare succeeded in winning Carlotta's heart, and persuaded her to elope with him. She did so, carrying with her all the presents Bramleigh had formerly given to her sister—some rings of great price, and an old watch with the Bramleigh arms in brilliants, among the number. But these were not all; she also took the letters and documents that established her marriage, and a copy of the registration. I must hasten on, for I see impatience on every side. He broke the heart of this poor girl, who died, and was buried with her little boy in the same grave, leaving old Lami desolate and childless. By another marriage, and by a wife still living, Marie Pracontal, Baldassare had a son; and he bethought him, armed as he was with papers and documents, to prefer the claim to the Bramleigh estates for this youth; and had even the audacity to ask Lami's assistance to the fraud, and to threaten him with his vengeance if he betrayed him.

"So perfectly propped was the pretension by circumstances of actual events—Niccolo knew everything—that Bramleigh not only sent several sums of money to

stifle the demand, but actually despatched a confidential person abroad to see the claimant, and make some compromise with him; for it is abundantly evident that Montagu Bramleigh only dreaded the scandal and the *éclat* such a story would create, and had no fears for the title to his estates, he all along believing that there were circumstances in the marriage with Enrichetta which would show it to be illegal, and the issue consequently illegitimate."

"I must say, I think our respected grandfather," said Augustus gravely, "does not figure handsomely in this story."

"With the single exception of old Lami," cried Jack, "they were a set of rascals—every man of them."

"And is this the way you speak of your dear friend, Niccolo Baldassare?" asked Nelly.

"He was a capital fellow at the galleys; but I suspect he'd prove a very shady acquaintance in more correct company."

"And, Mr. Sedley, do you really say that all this can be proven?" cried Nelly. "Do you believe it all yourself?"

"Every word of it. I shall test most of it within a few days. I have already telegraphed to London for one of the clever investigators of registries and records. I have ample means of tracing most of the events I need. These papers of old Lami's are full of small details; they form a closer biography than most men leave behind them."

"There was, however, a marriage of my grandfather with Enrichetta Lami?" asked Augustus.

"We give them that," cried the lawyer, who fancied himself already instructing counsel. "We contest nothing—notice, registry, witnesses, all are as legal as they could wish. The girl was Miss Bramleigh, and her son, Montagu Bramleigh's heir; death, however, carried away both, and the claim fell with them. That these people will risk a trial now is more than I can believe; but, if they should, we will be prepared for them. They shall be indicted before they leave the court, and Count Pracontal de Bramleigh be put in the dock for forgery."

"No such thing, Sedley," broke in Bramleigh, with an energy very rare with him. "I am well inclined to believe that this young man was no party to the fraud—he has been duped throughout; nor can I forget the handsome terms he extended to us when our fortune looked darkest."

"A generosity on which late events have thrown a very ugly light," muttered Sedley.

"My brother is right. I'll be sworn he is," cried Jack. "We should be utterly unworthy of the good luck that has befallen us, if the first use we made of it was to crush another."

"If *your* doctrines were to prevail, sir, it would be a very puzzling word to live in," said Sedley, sharply.

"We'd manage to get on with fewer lawyers, any way."

"Mr. Sedley," said Nelly, mildly, "we are all too happy and too gratified for this unlocked-for deliverance to have a thought for what is to cause suffering anywhere. Let us, I entreat you, have the full enjoyment of this great happiness."

"Then we are probably to include the notable Mr. Cutbill in this act of indemnity?" said Sedley, sneeringly.

"I should think we would, sir," replied Jack. "Without the notable Mr. Cutbill's aid we should never have chanced on those papers you have just quoted to us."

"Has he been housebreaking again?" asked Sedley, with a grin.

"I protest," interposed Bramleigh, "if the good fairy who has been so beneficent to us were only to see us sparring and wrangling in this fashion, she might well think fit to withdraw her gift."

"Oh, here's Julia," cried Nelly; "and all will go right now."

"Well," said Julia, "has any one moved the thanks of the house to Mr. Sedley, for, if not, I'm quite ready to do it? I have my speech prepared."

"Move! move!" cried several together.

"I first intend to have a little dinner," said she; "but I have ordered it in the small dining-room; and you are perfectly welcome, any or all of you, to keep me company, if you like."

To follow the conversation that ensued would be little more than again to go over a story, which we feel has been already impressed with tiresome reiteration on the reader. Whatever had failed in Sedley's narrative, Julia's ready wit and quick intelligence had supplied by conjecture, and they talked on till late into the night, bright gleams of future projects shooting like meteors across the placid heaven of their enjoyment, and making all bright around them.

Before they parted it was arranged that each should take his separate share of the inquiry, for there were registries to be searched, dates confirmed in several places; and while L'Estrange was to set out for Louvain, and Jack for Savoy, Sedley himself took charge of the weightier question to discover St. Michel, and prove the burial of Godfrey Bramleigh.

## CHAPTER LXVII.

### A WAYFARER.

WHEN the time came for the several members of the family at the villa to set out on the search after evidence, Jack, whose reluctance to leave home—he called it "home"—increased with every day, induced Cutbill to go in his stead—a change which even Mr. Sedley himself was forced to admit was not detrimental to the public service.

Cutbill's mission was to Aix, in Savoy, to see and confer with Marie Pracontal, the first wife of Baldassare. He arrived in the nick of time, for only on that same morning had Baldassare himself entered the town, in his galley-slave uniform, to claim his wife and ask recognition amongst his fellow-townsmen. The house where she lived was besieged by a crowd, all more or less eager in asserting the woman's cause, and denouncing the pretensions of a fellow covered with crimes, and pronounced dead to all civil rights. Amid execrations and insults, with threats of even worse, Baldassare stood on a chair in the street, in the act of addressing the multitude, as Cutbill drew nigh. The imperturbable self-possession, the cool courage of the man—who dared to brave public opinion in this fashion, and demand a hearing for what in reality was nothing but a deliberate insult to the people around him whose lives he knew, and whose various social derelictions he was all familiar with—was positively astounding. "I have often thought of you, good people," said he, "while at the galleys; and I made a vow to myself that the first act of my escape, if ever I should escape, should be to visit this place and thank you for every great lesson I have learned in life. It was here, in this place, I committed my first theft; it was yonder in that church I first essayed sacrilege. It was you, amiable and gentle people, who gave me four associates who betrayed each other, and who died on the drop or by the guillotine, with the courage worthy of Aix; and it was from you I received that pearl of wives who is now married to a third husband, and denies the decent rights of hospitality to her first."

This outrage was now unbearable; a rush was made at him, and he fell amongst the crowd, who had torn him limb from limb but for the intervention of the police, who were driven to defend him with fixed bayonets. "A warm reception, I must say," cried the fellow, as they led him away, bleeding and bruised, to the gaol.



It was not a difficult task for Cutbill to obtain from Marie Pracontal the details he sought for. Smarting under the insults and scandal she had been exposed to on the day before, she revealed everything, and signed in due form a *procès verbal* drawn up by a notary of the place, of her marriage with Baldassare, the birth of her son Anatole, with the dates of his birth and baptism, and gave up besides some letters which he had written while at the naval school of Genoa. What became of him afterwards she knew not, nor indeed seemed to care. The cruelties of the father had poisoned her mind against the son, and she showed no interest in his fate, and wished not to hear of him.

Cutbill left Aix on the third day, and was slowly strolling up the Mont Cenis pass in front of his horses, when he overtook the very galley-slave he had seen addressing the crowd at Aix. "I thought they had sent you over the frontier into France, my friend," said Cutbill, accosting him like an old acquaintance.

"So they did, but I gave them the slip at Culoz, and doubled back. I have business at Rome, and couldn't endure that roundabout way by Marseilles."

"Will you smoke? may I offer you a cigar?"

"My best thanks," said he, touching his cap politely. "They smashed my pipe, those good people down there; like all villagers they resent free speech, but they'd have learned something had they listened to me."

"Perhaps your frankness was excessive?"

"Ha! you were there, then? Well, it was what Diderot calls self-sacrificing sincerity; but all men who travel much and mix with varied classes of mankind, fall into this habit. In becoming cosmopolitan you lose in politeness."

"Signor Baldassare, your conversation interests me much. Will you accept a seat in my carriage over the mountain, and give me the benefit of your society?"

"It is I that am honored, sir," said he, removing his cap, and bowing low. "There is nothing so distinctively well bred as the courtesy of a man in *your* condition to one in *mine*."

"But you are no stranger to me."

"Indeed! I remarked you called me by my name; but I'm not aware that you know more of me."

"I can afford to rival your own candor, and confess I know a great deal about you."

"Then you have read a very chequered

page, sir. What an admirable cigar! You import these, I wager?"

"No; but it comes to the same. I buy them in bond, and pay the duty."

"Yours is the only country to live in, sir. It has been the dream of my life to pass my last days in England."

"Why not do so? I can't imagine that Aix will prefer any strong claims in preference."

"No, I don't care for Aix, though it is pretty, and I have passed some days of happy tranquility on that little Lac de Bourges; but to return: To what fortunate circumstance am I indebted for the knowledge you possess of my biography?"

"You have been a very interesting subject to me for some time back. First of all, I ought to say that I enjoy the pleasure of your son's acquaintance."

"A charming young man, I am told," said he, puffing out a long column of smoke.

"And without flattery, I repeat it—a charming young man, good-looking, accomplished, high-spirited and brave."

"You delight me, sir. What a misfortune for the poor fellow that his antecedents have not been more favorable; but you see, Mr.——"

"Cutbill is my name."

"Mr. Cutbill, you see that I have not only had a great many irons in the fire through life, but occasionally it has happened to me that I took hold of them by the hot ends."

"And burned your fingers?"

"And burned my fingers."

They walked on some steps in silence, when Baldassare said:—

"Where, may I ask, did you last see my son?"

"I saw him last in Ireland, about four months ago. We traveled over together from England, and I visited a place called Castello in his company, the seat of the Bramleigh family."

"Then you know his object in having gone there? You know who he is, what he represents, what he claims?"

"I know the whole story by heart."

"Will you favor me with your version of it?"

"With pleasure; but here is the carriage. Let us get in, for the narrative is somewhat long and complicated."

"Before you begin, sir, one question: Where is my son now? is he at Rome?"

"He is; he arrived there on Tuesday last."

"That is enough—excuse my interrupting—I am now at your orders."

The reader will readily excuse me if I do not follow Mr. Cutbill in his story, which he told at full length, and with what showed a perfect knowledge of all the circumstances. It is true he was so far disingenuous that he did not confess the claim had ever created alarm to the minds of the Bramleighs. There were certain difficulties, he admitted, and no small expense incurred in obtaining information abroad, and proving, as it was distinctly proved, that no issue of Montagu Bramleigh had survived, and that the pretensions of Pracental were totally groundless.

"And your visit to Savoy was on this very business?" asked Baldassare.

"You are right; a small detail was wanting which I was able to supply."

"And how does Anatole bear the discovery?"

"He has not heard of it; he is at Rome, paying court to an English lady of rank to whom he hopes to be married."

"And how will he bear it? in what spirit will he meet the blow?"

"From what I have seen of him, I'd say he'd stand up nobly under misfortune, and not less so here, that I know he firmly believed in his right; he was no party to the fraud."

"These frauds, as you call them, succeed every day, and when they occur in high places we have more courteous names to call them by. What say you to the Empire in France?"

"I'll not discuss that question with you; it takes too wide a range."

"Anatole must bethink him of some other livelihood now, that's clear. I mean to tell him so."

"You intend to see him—to speak with him?"

"What, sir, do you doubt it? Is it because my wife rejects me that I am to be lost to the ties of parental affection?" He said this with a coarse and undisguised mockery, and then, suddenly changing to a tones of earnestness, added, "We shall have to link our fortunes now, and there are not many men who can give an adventurer such counsels as I can."

"From what I know of the Bramleighs, they would willingly befriend him if they knew how, or in what way to do it."

"Nothing easier. All men's professions can be brought to an easy test—so long as money exists."

"Let me know where to write to you, and I will see what can be done."

"Or, rather, let me have your address, for my whereabouts is somewhat uncertain."

Cutbill wrote his name and Cattaro on a slip of paper, and the old fellow smiled grimly, and said—"Ah! that was your clue, then, to this discovery? I knew Giacomo died there, but it was a most unlikely spot to track him to. Nothing but chance, the merest chance, could have led to it?"

This he said interrogatively, but Cutbill made no reply.

"You don't care to imitate my frankness, sir; and I am not surprised at it. It is only a fellow who has worn rags for years that doesn't fear nakedness. Is my son traveling alone, or has he a companion?"

"He had a companion some short time back; but I do not know if they are together now."

"I shall learn all that at Rome."

"And have you no fears to be seen there? Will the authorities not meddle with you?"

"Far from it. It is the one state in Europe where men like myself enjoy liberty. They often need us—they fear us always."

Cutbill was silent for some time. He seemed like one revolving some project in his mind, but unable to decide on what he should do. At last he said:—

"You remember a young Englishman who made his escape from Ischia last June?"

"To be sure I do—my comrade."

"You will be astonished to know he was a Bramleigh, a brother of the owner of the estate."

"It was so like my luck to have trusted him," said the other, bitterly.

"You are wrong there. He was always your friend—he is so at this moment. I have heard him talk of you with great kindness."

A careless shrug of the shoulders was the reply.

"Tell him from me," said he, with a savage grin, "that Onofrio—don't forget the name—Onofrio is dead. We threw him over the cliff the night we broke the gaol. There, let me write it for you," said he, taking the pencil from Cutbill's hand, and writing the word Onofrio in a large bold character.

"Keep that pencil-case, will you, as a souvenir?" said Cutbill.

"Give me ten francs instead, and I'll remember you when I pay for my dinner," said he, with a grating laugh; and he took the handful of loose silver Cutbill offered him, and thrust it into his pocket. "Isn't that Souza we see in the valley there? Yes; I remember it well. I'll go no farther with you—there's a police-station where I had trouble once. I'll take the cross-path here that leads down to the



Pinarola Road. I thank you heartily. I wanted a little good-nature much when you overtook me. Good-bye."

He leaped from the carriage as he spoke, and crossing the little embankment of the road, descended a steep slope, and was out of sight almost in an instant.

## CHAPTER LXVIII.

### A MEETING AND A PARTING.

IN the same room where Pracontal and Longworth had parted in anger, the two men, reconciled and once more friends, sat over their dessert and a cigar. The handsome reparation Pracontal had offered in a letter had been frankly and generously met, and it is probable that their friendship was only the more strongly ratified by the incident.

They were both dressed with unusual care, for Lady Augusta "received" a few intimate friends on that evening, and Pracontal was to be presented to them in his quality of accepted suitor.

"I think," said Longworth, laughingly, "it is the sort of ordeal most Englishmen would feel very awkward in. You are trotted out for the inspection of a critical public, who are to declare what they think of your eyes and your whiskers, if they augur well of your temper, and whether, on the whole, you are the sort of person to whom a woman might confide her fate and future."

"You talk as if I were to be sent before a jury and risk a sentence," said Pracontal, with a slight irritation in his tone.

"It is something very like it."

"And I say there is no resemblance whatever."

"Don't you remember what Lord Byron in one of his letters says of a memorable drive through Ravenna one evening, where he was presented as the accepted? There's that hang-dog rascal that followed us through the gardens of the Vatican this morning, there he is again, sitting directly in front of our window, and staring at us."

"Well, I take it those benches were placed there for fellows to rest on who had few arm-chairs at home."

"I don't think, in all my experience of humanity, I ever saw a face that revolted me more. He isn't ugly, but there is something in the expression so intensely wicked, that mockery of all goodness, that Retsch puts into Mephistopheles; it actually thrills me."

"I don't see that—there is even drollery in the mouth."

"Yes, diabolic humor, certainly. Did you see that?"

"See what?"

"Didn't you see that when I lifted my glass to my lips, he made a pantomime of drinking too, and bowed to me, as though in salutation?"

"I knew there was fun in the fellow. Let us call him over and speak to him."

"No, no, Pracontal; do not, I beseech you. I feel an aversion towards him that I cannot explain. The rascal poisons the very claret I'm drinking just by glancing at me."

"You are seldom so whimsical."

"Wouldn't you say the fellow knew we were talking of him? See, he is smiling now; if that infernal grin can be called a smile."

"I declare I will have him over here; now don't go, sit down like a good fellow; there's no man understands character better than yourself, and I am positively curious to see how you will read this man on a closer inspection."

"He does not interest, he merely disgusts me."

Pracontal arose, drew nigh the window, and waved his napkin in sign to the man, who at once got up from his seat, and slowly, and half indolently, came over to the window. He was dressed in a sort of grey uniform of jacket and trousers, and wore a kerchief on his head for a cap, a cosume which certainly in no degree contributed to lessen the unfavorable impression his face imparted, for there was in his look a mixture of furtiveness and ferocity positively appalling.

"Do you like him better now?" asked Longworth, in English.

And the fellow grinned at the words.

"You understand English, eh?" asked Pracontal.

"Ay, I know most modern languages."

"What nation are you?"

"A Savoyard."

"Whence do you come now?"

"From the galleys at Ischia."

"Frank that, anyhow," cried Longworth. "Were you under sentence there?"

"Yes, for life."

"For what offense?"

"For a score that I committed, and twice as many that I failed in."

"Murder, assassination?"

He nodded.

"Let us hear about some of them," said Pracontal, with interest.

"I don't talk of these things, they are by-gones, and I'd as soon forget them."

"And do you fancy they'll be forgotten up there?" said Pracontal, pointing upwards as he spoke.

"What do you know about 'up there,'" said he, sternly, "more than myself? Are not your vague words, 'up there,' the proof that it's as much a mystery to *you* as to *me*?"

"Don't get into theology with him, or you'll have to listen to more blasphemy than you bargain for," whispered Longworth; and whether the fellow overheard or merely guessed the meaning of the words, he grinned diabolically, and said:—

"Yes, leave that question there."

"Are you not afraid of the police, my friend?" asked Longworth. "Is it not in their power to send you back to those you have escaped from?"

"They might with another, but the Cardinal Secretary knows *me*. I have told him I have some business to do at Rome, and want only a day or two to do it, and he knows I will keep my word."

"My faith, you are a very conscientious galley-slave!" cried Pracontal. "Are you hungry?" and he took a large piece of bread from the sideboard and handed it to him. The man bowed, took the bread, and laid it beside him on the window-board.

"And so you and Antonelli are good friends?" said Longworth, sneeringly.

"I did not say so. I only said he knew me, and knew me to be a man of my word."

"And how could a Cardinal know——?" when he got thus far he felt the unfairness of saying what he was about to utter, and stopped, but the man took up the words with perfect calmness and said:—

"The best and the purest people in this world will now and then have to deal with the lowest and the worst, just as men will drink dirty water when they are parched with thirst."

"Is it some outlying debt of vengeance, an old vendetta, detains you here?" asked Longworth.

"I wouldn't call it that," replied he slowly, "but I'd not be surprised if it took something of that shape, after all."

"And do you know any other great folk?" asked Pracontal, with a laugh. "Are you acquainted with the Pope?"

"No, I have never spoken to him. I know the French envoy here, the Marquis de Caderousse. I know Field-Marshal Kleinkoff. I know Brassieri—the Italian spy—they call him the Duke of Brassieri."

"That is to say, you have seen them as they drove by on the Corso, or walked on the Pincian?" said Longworth.

"No, that would not be acquaintance. When I said 'know' I meant it."

"Just as you know my friend here, and know *me* perhaps?" said Pracontal.

"Not only him, but *you*," said the fellow with a fierce determination.

"*Me*, know me? what do you know about *me*?"

"Everything," and now he drew himself up, and stared at him defiantly.

"I declare I wonder at you, Anatole," whispered Longworth. "Don't you know the game of menace and insolence these rascals play at?" And again the fellow seemed to divine what passed, for he said:—

"Your friend is wrong this time. I am not the cheat he thinks me."

"Tell me something you know about me," said Pracontal, smiling; and he filled a goblet with wine and handed it to him.

The other, however, made a gesture of refusal, and coldly said: "What shall it be about? I'll answer any question you put to me."

"What is he about to do?" cried Longworth. "What great step in life is he on the eve of taking?"

"Oh, I'm not a fortune-teller," said the man, roughly; "though I could tell you that he's not to be married to this rich Englishwoman. That fine bubble is burst already."

Pracontal tried to laugh, but he could not; and it was with difficulty he could thunder out: "Servants' stories and lackeys' talk!"

"No such thing, sir. I deal as little with these people as yourself. You seem to think me an impostor; but I tell you I am less of a cheat than either of you. Ay, sir, than you, who play fine gentlemen, *mi lordo*, here in Italy, but whose father was a land-steward; or than you——"

"What of me—what of *me*?" cried Pracontal, whose intense eagerness now mastered every other emotion.

"You! who cannot tell who or what you are, who have a dozen names, and no right to any of them; and who, though you have your initials burned in gunpowder in the bend of your arm, have no other baptismal registry. Ah! do I know you now?" cried he, as Pracontal sank upon a seat, covered with a cold sweat and fainting.

"This is some rascally trick. It is some private act of hate. Keep him in talk till I fetch a gendarme." Longworth whispered this, and left the room.

"Bad counsel that he has given you," said the man. "*My* advice is better. Get away from this at once—get away before he



returns. There's only shame and disgrace before you now."

He moved over to where Pracontal was seated, and placing his mouth close to his ear, whispered some words slowly and deliberately.

"And are you Niccolo Baldassare?" muttered Pracontal.

"Come with me, and learn all," said the man, moving to the door; "for I will not wait to be arrested and made a town-talk."

Pracontal arose and followed him.

The old man walked with a firm and rapid step. He descended the stairs that led to the Piazza del Popolo, crossed the wide piazza, and issued from the gate out upon the Campagna, and skirting the ancient wall, was soon lost to view among the straggling hovels which cluster at intervals beneath the ramparts. Pracontal continued to walk behind him, his head sunk on his bosom, and his steps listless and uncertain, like one walking in sleep. Neither was seen more after that night.

## CHAPTER LXIX.

### THE LAST OF ALL.

ALL the emissaries had returned to the villa except Sedley, who found himself obliged to revisit England suddenly, but from whom came a few lines of telegram, stating that the "case of Pracontal de Bramleigh v. Bramleigh had been struck out of the cause list; Kelson a heavy loser, having made large advances to plaintiff."

"Wasn't it like the old fox to add this about his colleague? As if any of us cared about Kelson, or thought of him!"

"Good fortune is very selfish, I really believe," said Nelly. "We have done nothing but talk of ourselves, our interests, and our intentions for the last four days, and the worst of it is we don't seem tired of doing so yet."

"It would be a niggardly thing to deny us that pleasure, seeing what we have passed through to reach it," cried Jack.

"Who'll write to Marion with the news?" said Augustus.

"Not I," said Jack; "or if I do it will be to sign myself 'late Sam Rogers.'"

"If George accepts the embassy chaplaincy," said Julia, "he can convey the tidings by word of mouth."

"To guess by his dreary face," said Jack, "one would say he had really closed with that proposal. What's the matter, old fel-

low; has the general joy here not warmed your heart?"

L'Estrange, pale and red alternately, blundered out a few scarcely coherent words; and Julia, who well knew what feelings were agitating him, and how the hopes that adversity had favored might be dashed, now that a brighter fortune had dawned, came quickly to his rescue, and said, "I see what George is thinking of. George is wondering when we shall all be as happy and as united again as we have been here, under this dear old roof."

"But why should we not?" broke in Augustus. "I mean to keep the anniversary of our meeting here, and assemble you all every year at this place. Perhaps I have forgotten to tell you that I am the owner of the villa. I have signed the contract this morning."

A cry of joy—almost a cheer—greeted this announcement, and Augustus went on:—

"My ferns, and my green beetles, and my sea anemones, as Nelly enumerates them, can all be prosecuted here, and I purpose to remain and live here."

"And Castello?"

"Jack will go and live at Castello," continued he; "I have interceded with a lady of my acquaintance"—he did not glance at Julia, but she blushed as he spoke—"to keep a certain green room, with a little stair out of it down to the garden, for me when I go there. Beyond that I reserve nothing."

"We'll only half value the gift without you, old fellow," said Jack, as he passed his arm around her, and drew her fondly towards him.

"As one of the uninstructed public," interposed Cutbill, "I desire to ask, who are meant by 'We'?"

A half-insolent toss of the head from Julia, meant specially for the speaker, was, however, seen by the others, who could not help laughing at it heartily.

"I think the uninstructed public should have a little deference for those who know more," broke in Jack, tartly, for he resented hotly whatever seemed to annoy Julia.

"Tom Cutbill is shunted off the line, I see," said Cutbill, mournfully.

"If he were," cried Augustus, "we should be about the most worthless set of people living. We owe him much, and like him even more."

"Now, that's what I call handsome," resumed Cutbill, "and if it wasn't a moment when you are all thinking of things a precious sight more interesting than T. C.,

I'd ask permission to return my acknowledgments in a speech."

"Oh, don't make a speech, Mr. Cutbill," said Julia.

"No, ma'am. I'll reserve myself till I return thanks for the bridesmaids."

"Will no one suppress him?" said Julia, in a whisper.

"Oh, I am so glad you are to live at Castello, dearest," said Nelly, as she drew Julia to her, and kissed her. "You are just the *châtelaine* to become it."

"There is such a thing as losing one's head, Nelly, out of sheer delight, and when I think I shall soon be one of you I run this risk; but tell me, dearest"—and here she whispered her lowest—"why is not our joy perfect? Why is poor George to be left out of all this happiness?"

"You must ask *him* that," muttered, she, hiding her head on the other's shoulder.

"And may I, dearest?" cried Julia, rapturously. "Oh, Nelly, if there be one joy in the world I would prize above all it would be to know you were doubly my sister—doubly bound to me in affection. See, darling, see—even as we are speaking—George and your brother have walked away together. Oh, can it be—can it be? Yes, dearest," cried she, throwing her arms around her, "your brother is holding him by the hand, and the tears are falling along George's cheek; his happiness is assured, and you are his own."

Nelly's chest heaved violently, and two low deep sobs burst from her, but her face was buried in Julia's bosom, and she never uttered a word. And thus Julia led her gently away down one of the lonely alleys of the garden, till they were lost to sight.

Lovers are proverbially the very worst of company for the outer world, nor is it easy to say which is more intolerable—their rapture or their reserve. The overweening selfishness of the tender passion conciliates no sympathy; very fortunately, it is quite indifferent to it. If it were not all-sufficing, it would not be that glorious delirium that believes the present to be eternal, and sees a world peopled only by two.

What should we gain, therefore, if we loitered in such company? They would not tell us *their* secrets—they would not care to hear ours. Let it be enough to say that, after some dark and anxious days in life, fortune once more shone out on those whom we saw so prosperous when first we met them. If they were not very brilliant, nor very good, they were probably—with defects of temper and shortcomings in high

resolve—pretty much like the best of those we know in life. Augustus, with a certain small vanity that tormented him into thinking that he had a lesson to read to the world, and that he was a much finer creature than he seemed or looked, was really a generously-minded and warm-hearted fellow, who loved his neighbor—meaning his brother or his sister—a great deal better than himself.

Nelly was about as good as—I don't think better than—nineteen out of every twenty honestly brought-up girls, who, not seduced by the luxuries of a very prosperous condition, come early to feel and to know what money can and what it cannot do.

Jack had many defects of hot temper and hastiness, but on the whole was a fine sailor-like fellow, carrying with him through life the dashing hardihood that he would have displayed in a breach or on a boarding, and thus occasionally exuberant, where smaller and weaker traits would have sufficed. Such men, from time to time, make troublesome first lieutenants, but women do not dislike them, and there is an impression abroad that they make good husbands, and that all the bluster they employ towards the world subsides into the mildest possible murmur beside the domestic hearth-rug.

Marion was not much more or much less than we have seen her; and though she became, by the great and distinguished services of her husband, a countess, she was not without a strange sentiment of envy for a certain small vicarage in Herts, where rosy children romped before the latticed porch, beneath which sat a very blooming and beautiful mother, and worked as her husband read for her. A very simple little home sketch; but it was the page of a life where all harmonized and all went smoothly on: one of those lives of small ambitions and humble pleasures which are nearer Paradise than anything this world gives us.

Temple Bramleigh was a secretary of legation, and lived to see himself—in the uniformity of his manuscript, the precision of his docketing, and the exactness of his sealing-wax,—the pet of "the Office." Acolytes, who swung incense before permanent secretaries, or held up the vestments of chief clerks, and who heard the words which drop from the high priests of foolcap, declared Temple was a rising man; and with a brother-in-law in the Lords, and a brother rich enough to contest a seat in the Lower House, one whose future pointed to a high post and no small distinction; for, happily for us, we live in an age where self-assertion is as insufficient in public life as



self-righteousness in religion, and our merits are always best cared for by imputed holiness.

The story of this volume is of the Bramleighs, and I must not presume to suppose that my reader interests himself in the fate of those secondary personages who figure in the picture. Lady Augusta, however, deserves a passing mention, but perhaps her own words will be more descriptive than any of mine : and I cannot better conclude than with the letter she wrote to Nelly, and which ran thus :—

“ Villa Altieri, Rome.

“ DEAREST CHILD :—

“ How shall I ever convey to you one-half the transport, the joy, the ecstacy I am filled with by this glorious news ! There is no longer a question of law or scandal or exposure. Your estates are your own, and your dear name stands forth untarnished and splendid as it has ever done. It is only as I bethink me of what you and dearest Augustus and darling Jack must have gone through that I spare you the narrative of my own sufferings, my days of sorrow, my nights of crying. It was indeed a terrific trial to us all, and those horrid stories of hair turning white from grief made me rush to the glass every morning at daybreak with a degree of terror that I know well I shall never be able to throw off for many a year ; for I can assure you, dearest, that the washes are a mistake, and most pernicious ! They are made of what chemists call Ethiops mineral, which is as explosive as nitro-glycerine ; and once penetrating the pores, the head becomes, as Doctor Robertson says, a ‘ charged shell.’ Can you fancy anything as horrible ? Incipient greyness is best treated with silver powder, which, when the eyelashes are properly darkened *at the base*, gives a very charming lustre to the expression. On no account use gold powder.

“ It was a Mr. Longworth, a neighbor of yours, whom you don’t know, brought me the first news ; but it was soon all over Rome, for his father—I mean Pracontal’s—was formerly much employed by Antonelli, and came here with the tidings that the mine had exploded and blown up only themselves. A very dreadful man his father, with a saber-scar down the cheek, and deep marks of manacles on his wrists and ankles ; but wouldn’t take money from the Cardinal, nor anything but a passport. And they went away, so the police say, on foot, P. dressed in some horrid coarse clothes like his father ; and, oh, darling, how handsome he was, and how distinguished-looking ! It was young France, if you like ;

but, after all, don’t we all like the Boulevard de Ghent better than the Faubourg St. Germain ? He was very witty, too ; that is, he was a master of a language where wit comes easy, and could season talk with those nice little flatteries which, like *fioriture* in singing, heighten the charm, but never impair the force of the melody. And then, how he sang ! Imagine Mario in a boudoir with a cottage piano accompaniment, and then you have it. It is very hard to know anything about men, but, so far as I can see, he was not a cheat ; he believed the whole stupid story and fancied that there had been a painter called Lami, and a beautiful creature who married somebody and was the mother of somebody else. He almost made me believe it, too ; that is, it bored me ineffably, and I used to doze over it, and when I awoke I wasn’t quite sure whether I dreamed he was a man of fortune or that such was a fact. Do you think he’ll shoot himself ? I hope he’ll not shoot himself. It would throw such a lasting gloom over the whole incident that one could never fall back upon it in memory without deep sorrow ; but men are so essentially selfish I don’t think that this consideration would weigh with him.

“ Some malicious people here circulated a story that he had made me an offer of marriage, and that I had accepted it. Just as they said some months ago that I had gone over to Rome, and here I am still, as the police-sheet calls me, a ‘ Widow and a Protestant.’ My character for eccentricity exposes me naturally to these kinds of scandal ; but, on the other hand, it saves me from the trouble of refuting or denying them. So that I shall take no notice whatever either of my conversion or my marriage, and the dear world—never ill-natured when it is useless—will at last accept the fact, small and insignificant though it be, just as creditors take half a crown in the pound after a bankruptcy.

“ And now, dearest, is it too soon, is it too importunate, or is it too indelicate to tell your brother that, though I’m the most ethereal of creatures, I require to eat occasionally, and that, though I am continually reproved for the lowness of my dresses, I still do wear some clothes. In a word, dearest, I am in dire poverty, and to give me simply a thousand a year is to say, Be a casual pauper. No one—my worst enemy—and I suppose I have a few who hate and would spitefully use me—can say I am extravagant. The necessaries of life, as they are called, are the costly things, and these are what I can perfectly well dispense with. I

want its elegancies, its refinements, and these one has so cheaply. What, for instance, is the cost of the bouquet on your dinner-table? Certainly not more than one of your entrées; and it is infinitely more charming and more pleasure-giving. My coffee costs me no more out of Sévres than out of a white mug with a lip like a milk-pail; and will you tell me that the Mocha is the same in the one as the other? What I want is that life should be picturesque, that its elegancies should so surround one, that its coarser, grosser elements be kept out of sight; and this is a cheap philosophy. My little villa here—and nothing can be smaller—affords it; but come and see, dearest—that is the true way—come and see how I live. If ever there was an existence of simple pleasures it is mine. I never receive in the morning—I study. I either read improving books—I'll show you some of them—or I converse with Monsignore Galloni. We talk theology and mundane things at times, and we play besique, and we flirt a little; but not as you would understand flirtation. It is as though a light zephyr stirred the leaves of the affections and shook out the perfume, but never detached a blossom nor injured a bud. Monsignore is an adept at this game; so serious, and yet so tender, so spiritual, and, at the same time, so compassionate to poor weak human nature—which, by the way, he understands in its conflicts with itself, its motives, and its struggles as none of your laymen do. Not but poor Pracontal had a very ingenious turn, and could reconcile

much that coarser minds would have called discrepant and contradictory.

“So that, dearest, with less than three thousand, or two five hundred, I must positively go to goal. It has occurred to me that, if none care to go over to that house in Ireland, I might as well live there, at least for the two or three months in the year that the odious climate permits. As to the people, I know they would doat on me. I feel for them very much, and I have learned out here the true chords their natures respond to. What do you say to this plan? Would it not be ecstasy if you agreed to share it? The cheapness of Ireland is a proverb. I had a grand-uncle who once was Viceroy there, and his letters show that he only spent a third of his official income.

“I'd like to do this, too, if I only knew what my official income was. Ask Gusty this question, and kiss every one that ought to be kissed, and give them loves innumerable, and believe me ever your

“Doating mamma (or mamina, that's prettier),      “AUGUSTA BRAMLEIGH.

“I shall write to Marion to-morrow. It will not be as easy a task as this letter; but I have done even more difficult ones. So they are saying now that Culduff's promotion was a mere mistake; that there never was such a man as Sam Rogers at all—no case—no indemnity—no escape—no anything. O dear me, as Monsignore says, what rest have our feet once we leave total incredulity?”











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