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DID HE DESERVE IT?



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# DID HE DESERVE IT?

BY

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TO

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND

ANNETTE HADDOCK

HARLINGTON RECTORY

MIDDLESEX



# DID HE DESERVE IT?

## CHAPTER I.

JOHN MOUCELL, Esq., lived in South Lambeth; no one exactly knew how.

At the end of each year certainly no one could have told less accurately than himself how rent, rates, taxes, had been met and a horde of ravening creditors satisfied.

Of two things, however, he felt quite convinced, viz. that not a man in England worked harder, and that no canal horse was worse treated.

This was his normal state of mind. When worldly affairs ran pretty smoothly, which they did on rare occasions, he said, "The age of miracles is not past."

Nevertheless, he looked well, slept well. People meeting him in society never imagined he found life a hard struggle; and yet in truth such was the case.

When a man, who has no income derivable from the sweet security of Consols or any other security, is the proud father of nine living children, all doing nothing and all costing money, existence must needs

be a struggle, and it spoke well for his courage and industry that the weary story of never-ending, always-beginning difficulties was not graven on his face.

The world, generally given to take good views of things, called him a "literary man." In reality he was a "literary hack."

At five-and-twenty he had, like many another, great expectations; at four-and-forty he thought he understood where, when, and why he "ran off the rails" and spoilt his life.

It was a woman, of course. It always is a man or a woman who changes for good or for evil some person's life—a fact the less extraordinary when we remember there are but men and women in the world, and not about a thousand different sexes, as we might be sometimes tempted to imagine.

At five-and-twenty most men, whether wise or foolish, are imaginative and speculative. At four-and-forty all men not fools are philosophic.

Mr. Moucell was not a fool, and consequently philosophic.

"It might have been worse," he reflected, when considering the wreck he had made of his future. "She was utterly respectable."

Yes, utterly respectable, and fond and foolish into the bargain; and in his heart of hearts—if, indeed, the daily grind of life had left him any heart at all—Mr. Moucell still kept a lingering love memory of the meek, blue-eyed, fair-haired girl he wooed and married when "all the world was young."

According to Mr. Moucell, the founder of his family had come to England with the Conqueror—a statement hard to prove, perhaps, but harder still to



disprove, because, as one non-believer in the literary man's high lineage judicially observed when summing up the pros and cons, "a lot of rank-and-file, besides camp followers and such like, must have landed here with William."

Poor Mr. Moucell never heard this nasty remark, any more than he heard another, even more disparaging, namely—that "it was all tommy-rot about the Normans ; the family name was Mussel, and they came originally from Billingsgate."

There must be some sort of foundation even for a lie, so very likely the Moucell legend had been built upon more than a shadow of truth.

History held no record of the name ; but names in the course of nigh upon a thousand years change.

It was said that just as people lose luggage when travelling, or small household goods during the progress of a "flitting," so the Moucells had by some means, while rushing through many centuries, got rid of a "de," if not a "la," and certainly were robbed of a final "e."

Mr. Moucell often spoke sadly of those "pilferings by the way," but when asked by his children why he did not repair them, replied he had thought of doing so, but it was an awkward course to take "in the event of any property re-verting to the family."

After much research he had discovered that a Moucell Abbey existed in Henry the VIIIth's time, while during the reign of Mary a certain statesman dated letters from Moucel Manor, near York.

What stronger proof of former greatness could reasonable children desire? None : and so the young Moucells felt the blood which had been flowing for

centuries through the Moucell veins tingle when they thought of the broad lands which once, no doubt, were theirs, and which might be theirs again.

“Not a question of his breeding, sir,” declared a very Radical shopkeeper when talking Mr. Moucell’s status over with a somewhat sceptical customer; “he has such an air with him;” and the remark was quite true. Mr. Moucell had an air of being much grander and richer and cleverer than was really the case, for spite of all the mud he had toiled through, he never forgot, he never could forget, the days when, but for his own folly, he might have been *somebody* very well known indeed.

Like the scent of the roses celebrated so long ago, that memory “clung to him still,” and gave a certain air of distinction to his manner, impossible to describe, but which, for all that, impressed everyone who came in contact with him.

The son of a land agent in Lincolnshire who had the great good luck to live in those fine old times when votes were bought and sold as freely as onions, and fetched much better prices, money was found to give him a sound education, and finally send him to college, where those supposed to know said he was sure to make his mark.

The Marquis of Fenland, to whom the elder Moucell had been very useful—“done a lot of dirty work for him” was the discourteous phrase used by political adversaries when speaking of various services rendered—took an interest in the youth which did not cause the Oxford prophets to think less highly of his future prospects.

He was asked to Marsh Hall, where being hand-

some and adaptable, possessed of a good address and a pretty knack of turning out society verses, he won golden opinions and received another invitation and yet another, his good fortune culminating in being selected to accompany Viscount Reedpont on his travels when that delicate heir to the Marshland estates was ordered abroad.

Lord Fenland had his own plans concerning the clever young man when he returned, and Lady Fenland her plans also. She was blessed with a step-daughter, whose fortune would be but small, the noble Marquis having put more money into elections than he was ever likely to get out of them—and the lady consequently had not gone off matrimonially—indeed, it seemed as if for some reason no one cared to ask her to go at all. Now, Lord Fenland could push on young Moucell if he married the Lady Patricia—push him on very fast indeed; therefore it was decided between the august couple that when the foreign tour came to an end the other little matter should be put in train.

“I think the dear girl likes him,” said Lord Fenland.

“I am convinced she does,” was the answer.

“It will be better, perhaps, to throw out no hint on the subject—” This not as a suggestion, but tentatively, in order to ascertain what his more astute wife’s views were.

“Unless we wish nothing to come of it,” replied the Marchioness, and accordingly silence was the order of the day.

But no one can guard against accidents; and the accident which happened in this case chanced to be



that John Moucell wrote a book—but a little one, though big enough to wreck a man's life. He had kept a diary while travelling, which he put into more readable form at the last city where the travellers halted, and sold before they reached England.

The work was dedicated to Viscount Reedpont; and, beautifully got up, gladdened the eyes of Lord and Lady Fenland almost simultaneously with the sight of their son.

Lady Patricia read the book, and, perhaps because she felt much, said little. At all events, her manner struck Mr. Moucell—who, like many other young authors, hungered and thirsted for praise—as cold.

The Lady Patricia had an aunt—her mother's only sister—poor, proud, and even more astute than the Marchioness of Fenland, who, having divined the plan that was on foot, forthwith determined her niece should not wed a "mere writing man," so she mentally styled the distinguished author.

When he came to London, therefore, from Marsh Hall, in order to arrange about another book, she asked him often to her house in Hans Place, flattered him to his heart's content, and gave him plenty of opportunities of seeing her companion, poor little Nanny Grey, whose big, innocent eyes soon grew full of love and inexpressible admiration for Viscount Reedpont's clever friend.

The rising young man fell into the trap, and, believing that he was old enough, great enough, and strong enough to do what he liked, married Miss Grey, and only realized the mistake he had made when his father sarcastically congratulated him

on having contracted an alliance with the daughter of a bankrupt cheesemonger, and forbade him to come home.

That was the beginning ; the parental clarion note heralded a burst of discordant music.

“A man must pay for his whistle ;” and if ever a man had to pay for a whistle cunningly placed in his way, it was John Moucell.

What a war he waged for years ! What a battle he fought, without friends, without money, without connection—ay, and often without hope ! He who had once stood with the ball at his foot, stood then burdened only with a fond, helpless wife, who did nothing but bring children into a world which did not want them. Once he had believed himself almost one of the old nobility—and now he was cast out of that earthly paradise ; an author great as Scott or Dickens or Thackeray, and his publisher declined any further offers of MSS. on the ground that neither the beautifully got-up book nor its successor had paid !

On his marriage the Fenlands sent wedding presents—bitter and useless as Dead Sea fruit—but found him no post. Viscount Reedpont called at his poor lodgings and said, emphatically, “I always thought Mrs. Moucell sweetly pretty and as good as gold, and all that, but I am afraid you have made a mess of it, old fellow.” Lady Patricia married a wealthy commoner, who in the after-days occasionally asked Mr. Moucell to dinner. Mrs. Moucell’s patroness professed to be indignant about the way she had been deceived, and refused at first ever to forgive “poor little Nanny Grey,” for the nonce transformed into “that artful minx ;” and, in short, had it not been for

a widowed aunt of Mrs. Moucell's, the young couple must have starved.

But through it all, through poverty, sickness, misfortune, the meanest and hardest of work, John Moucell never forgot his brief glint of sunshine, his happy time of promise, when he lived with the great of the land, and acquired that air which so impressed one Lambeth shopkeeper.

## CHAPTER II.

NEARLY nineteen years had elapsed since his ill-starred marriage, and John Moucell was living, as has been said, in Lambeth, in one of those excellent though modest-looking houses that still stand just where they did, though The Lawn which they afore-time overlooked has been converted into a public park.

South Lambeth Road, free of trams, was a quieter and a nicer thoroughfare then than it is likely ever to be again. It had an air of repose which belied reality ; for what with the railway at the back, and rattling cabs and heavy carts in front, noise ceased not by night or day. Nevertheless, there was a look of country about the locality that seemed pleasant. The long gardens, divided in many cases by privet hedges, gave an aspect of distance and retirement to the houses ; the fine old trees that had been growing in The Lawn probably ever since the Wandsworth Road was quite out of town—even the grounds surrounding Beaufoy's manufactory—irresistibly recalled a time when noted people lived within walking distance of the City, and the Tradescants, Ashmoles, Needhams, Childs, and many another goodly family resided in the once pleasant suburb where when Elizabeth was Queen, game of all sorts abounded, and



rare plants and wild flowers, such as the botanist might now search for in vain, even though he went much further afield, grew like weeds, which in those former days they were accounted.

Mr. Moucell was delighted with the neighbourhood, at all events. Prior to going there it might truly have been said he almost boxed the compass while trying to find a suitable residence in an accessible locality, and it was quite by accident he lit upon that good house at a reasonable rent, in what he considered a desirable position.

“The very place for a man who has to live near the newspaper offices! Why, I consider I am only ten minutes from the Strand and Fleet Street,” a figure of speech which meant he was close to Nine Elms Pier—since abandoned—and still closer to Vauxhall Station. “Most convenient,” he went on, “for Parliament, theatres, churches, schools, everything.”

And the house was convenient also—four rooms on the ground floor, four rooms on the first, with a wilderness of basement and plenty of accommodation next the roof. Garden in rear, where a row of pollard lime trees put out delicate leaves at the first breath of spring, just as if there were no smoke from passing engines and no dust in all the land. The grass grew green there, too, and Virginia creeper climbed over brick walls, and clothed their bareness with vivid emerald tints early in the year, and gorgeous colouring when late autumn heralded the coming of winter.

After the narrow dwellings and the pent-up streets in which he had previously perforce lived, Mr. Moucell no doubt did find that roomy house, with its cheerful



outlook, pleasant ; and though it might be “out of the way” for his friends, it did not prove out of the way for him.

It was on a fine morning in September, 1876, that he stood outside the open door of his library—he had taken the back dining-room for a study—talking to Mr. Thomas A. Gerant, junior partner in the well-known publishing house of Winstone, Wragge and Wire, Old Bond Street, which had in its day brought out for the delectation of society a larger number of foolish and fashionable novels than any other firm in the kingdom.

Some firms have the knack of flourishing and spreading for a time like gourds—making a great show and apparently occupying a large space in the business world—but being destitute of sufficient root, when any blight or frost touches them they fade away and are gone. It would have fared thus years previously with Messrs. Winstone, Wragge and Wire had not Mr. Isaac Gerant, a paper manufacturer, come to the rescue and given them a little longer lease of life than Heaven in its wisdom evidently intended.

Whether the readers who formerly cared for the novels issued by the once “enterprising publishers”—see notices of the day—had passed to a land where fiction is unknown, or ceased to take an interest in the sins and virtues of the Upper Ten, must always remain a matter of uncertainty ; only one thing was beyond question, viz. that Messrs. Winstone’s business drifted from month to month, and year to year slowly to the bad. The firm had lived long enough. “Unless fresh blood could be put in, the case was hopeless,” said the lawyers. Fresh blood meant money,

and Mr. Gerant did not feel disposed to let the once popular publishers handle any more of his cash. Further, he was reluctant to lose what he had advanced ; so after a little finessing on both sides, he agreed to arrange with the few creditors who retained some confidence in a sinking concern, and took over the business, worthless old debts, equally worthless stock, and put in " my son Tom " as junior partner.

He had placed out other sons in a somewhat similar way—one in a printing business, another as a wholesale stationer, a third at a big bookbinding establishment, which was at the time dropping to pieces. " Now I have provided for Tom," he observed, " and with my two eldest in the ' mills,' the deuce is in it if we can't make money somehow."

If " the end crowns the work," Mr. Gerant had good reason to be satisfied, for every one of the gentlemen above referred to is now managing director, at a salary, of his own original business, for the goodwill of which each received a large amount. The Gerants' experiences were unlike some in which sons bemoan their fate for not having been born before their fathers !

It is impossible for any man to foresee everything ; but Mr. Gerant looked a long way ahead, and matters turned out even better than he hoped.

" Tom has a taste for reading," he said, " and I think ought to make a good publisher."

Accordingly, when the young man was eight-and-twenty he set about trying to put fresh life into the dead bones of Messrs. Winstone and Co.'s late business.

He had been toiling at this work for two years when

Mr. Gerant, senior, chanced to come across Mr. Moucell, who had just written an anonymous pamphlet, entitled "Ready Money : a Fallacy," in which he sought to prove, and did prove, that credit was the life of trade, that credit sent vessels across the ocean, shipped freights, was the cause of England's greatness, the source of her wealth, her safety as a nation, and that all the humbug talked by tradespeople concerning "payment across the counter" would, if carried into practice, really mean the first nail driven into the coffin enclosing the corpse of commercial success.

No one respected cash on delivery of copy more than Mr. Moucell—a fact Mr. Gerant was destined to learn ; indeed, he wrote some telling articles about that very time in which he stated a publisher had actually spoken of his authors as though they were on the same footing with workmen ; an indignity which served as a good text whereon to found a sermon concerning the wrongs suffered by literary bees, which sermon wound up by asking why they should be kept waiting for their lawful honey.

The pamphlet Mr. Gerant admired, however, was really directed against the Stores, started, as Mr. Moucell pointed out, by, and for the express benefit of, a class of people who drew their incomes from already overburdened taxpayers. It was a theme just to the paper-maker's mind, and he never rested till he found out who the author was, and cemented a friendship with him, the outcome of which resulted in Mr. Moucell being appointed "literary counsel" to the new firm of Winstone, Wragge and Wire.

He was not salaried—but that might come. Mean-



time he got cheques at irregular intervals, and read and advised, gave the benefit of his long experience, and hoped something permanent would result ; but that could scarcely be expected till trade improved, which publishers said was as bad in the seventies as it had been good in the sixties.

Old authors were dying, and the new, who have since astonished mankind, were at that remote period spinning their tops or dressing their dolls, unconscious of the greatness to come.

It was a time when a WRITER, spelt with big capitals, would have been received with open arms. Readers were getting tired of former things, and wanted some fresh sensation.

“The century is growing old,” said Mr. Moucell, “and needs to be amused as well as interested ;” but neither he nor the century expected what has since come.

How thankful Mr. Gerant would have felt had one of the young lions, running tame about London now, rushed into his office, it is impossible to tell. He was weary of mediocrity—of imitators—of men who wrote a long way after Thackeray and Dickens, and affected George Eliot, and tried to copy Lytton.

“Oh, for another ‘Woman in White’ or an ‘Altar and the Hearth’ !” he exclaimed. “Even a second Lever would be welcome ; and how we should rejoice if anything like—”

He was but continuing on the library threshold the conversation that had been going on inside, yet when he pronounced the last word he paused, as though some State secret were in progress, for the sound of a latch-key turning in the lock caught his ear, and next

moment the front door flew wide, and there stepped into the hall a girl in the full bloom of youth and health, dressed in blue serge trimmed with white, and wearing a sailor hat, who came straight on to where the two men stood, and said, without the slightest embarrassment or self-consciousness,—

“How-d’ye-do, Mr. Gerant. Good morning, father,” at the same time first giving the publisher her hand, and then holding up her face for Mr. Moucell to kiss.

It was all so pretty, so natural and so homelike, that Mr. Gerant found himself wishing—no, he did not wish he were Mr. Moucell, though he considered that gentleman an extremely fortunate individual.

“Have you been out for a morning stroll, Miss Moucell?” he asked.

“Yes—into the City,” she answered.

“Surely you did not walk all that distance?”

“Indeed, I was only too glad to have the chance I went along the Embankment, and the river looked beautiful.”

“Country people would not believe we could grow such roses in London, Mr. Moucell,” remarked Mr. Gerant enigmatically—“true damask.”

The girl understood, and made a little impatient gesture. “I walked fast back,” she explained—“ran part of the way, indeed—it is such a delightful morning,” after which she went into a room opposite, leaving her father and friend to finish their interrupted talk.

It is not very easy to join the thread of a conversation abruptly snapped, but Mr. Gerant proved equal even to that feat.

“I am tired of waiting for good manuscripts,” he

said. "By-the-bye, I sent you a lot on the other day, have you been able to look at them?"

"Not yet," was the reply. "I hope to do so shortly."

"I rather liked a letter that came with one of them—but a letter is not much to go by."

"Not much," agreed Mr. Moucell, who knew the difference that often exists between a letter and its writer; "but do not be discouraged: another genius is about due now. For my part, every night I expect to be astonished next morning by the news that some young man from Shropshire has arrived in London to put all our noses out of joint."

"I wish he would make haste, then."

"All in good time. There have always been these periods of depression. Literature has its winters, like everything else."

"I think it is high time spring appeared," persisted Mr. Gerant; "but then I suppose a lot of geniuses will be budding up all at once."

"We cannot have too many; but alas! the supply is limited."

"Very limited indeed, so far as I can judge," after which there was a movement as if Mr. Gerant were intending to take his departure.

"I will walk to the gate with you," said Mr. Moucell, who liked to pay this small attention to his more especial friends; besides, that short stroll in the open air seemed a change after so much study.

In the course of such strolls, moreover, agreeable things had often happened, kindly words been spoken, pleasant promises made. Perhaps he hoped for a recurrence of such words or promises on the occasion

in question ; but if he did, he was disappointed, for when he reached the road Mr. Gerant merely said "Good-day," and bent his steps in the direction of Vauxhall. Mr. Moucell, with a cloud on his brow, sauntered slowly back, and re-entered the house, when he was instantly joined by his daughter, Joscelyne, who greeted him with, "The young man has come, father."

"What young man?" asked Mr. Moucell, bewildered.

"The young man from Shropshire you were speaking of just now—but he is Irish—"

"I do not understand, dear—"

"I sat up last night reading one of the manuscripts you gave me, and had another couple of hours this morning. I could not quite finish, but oh—it is splendid!"

Mr. Moucell smiled, the sad, incredulous smile of one who, though he fain would hope, has been taught by bitter experience that hope is delusive.

"Splendid," repeated his daughter, with a triumphant little nod.

"I must look at this great work," he said indulgently.

"Yes, do ; to-day—now!" exclaimed the girl ; and disappearing for a minute, she returned with a brown-paper parcel, which she placed on her father's writing-table.



### CHAPTER III.

WHEN children have been nourished on "copy" and weaned on "proof," when their baby ears drink in the strange language which abounds with such mystic sounds as "trans," "caps," "pars," "delete," "itals," and so forth, instead of the inspiring music of "Hey-diddle-diddle" and other kindred melodies; when they find early that a "printer's devil" has not hoofs or horns, but is an imp like unto themselves; when they understand young the meaning of "manuscript" and "revise," they learn more readily than their differently-reared fellows, who stumble across the alphabet as if it were a very rough bit of country, find traps set in words even of one syllable, and water their pot-hooks with tears.

From their earliest youth the children of authors take "headers" into the depths of literature with as little fear as a boy born by river or sea will plunge into the current and fight the waves. In the same way other children of a tender age, accustomed from infancy to horses and crawling amongst stamping feet and stamping legs given to lash out, will mount bare-backed a steed men great on 'Change might look on askance.

Habit is second nature. It accustoms people to most things, except want of money; and thus it was



that the young Moucells, who had been brought up among books and book-producers, insensibly acquired the same sort of knowledge of their surroundings as a rat-catcher's son does of the habits of ferrets.

Not that any one of them showed a leaning towards authorship. So far as Mr. Moucell could judge, their talents—if they indeed possessed talents—tended in quite an opposite direction. Nevertheless, almost ever since they could speak plainly, they had criticized authors and their works with an artless frankness which some of the persons so distinguished might scarcely have thought pleasant, for where one story was occasionally pronounced “stunning,” twenty were characterized as “bosh,” “foolery,” “jolly rot,” and “stuff;” indeed, most of the novels and boys' books written about that period of the world's history were pooh-poohed by Mr. Moucell's censorious young folks, who would have thought but little of a new Shakspeare, had one arisen, and less of the old one, if he could have come to life again.

As they “grew into years,” however—and it is amazing how quickly children age after they enter their teens—a change began to take place in their opinions, and this change was publicly inaugurated by the eldest son, who said one day,—

“I am beginning to comprehend how it was that his contemporaries could see anything in ‘Paradise Lost.’”

The observation fell among the family like a bomb, and produced a profound sensation.

None, however, ventured on dissent, or asked for information, because it was well known Philip

Moucell would have argued till he turned black in the face over any position he pleased to take up.

As for Joscelyne, who for some time had been secretly drifting away from old landmarks, she heard her brother's admission without surprise. She was ever considered the most omnivorous reader in the house. To say she devoured books could only be deemed a most inadequate way of describing her mode of proceeding, for she gulped down whole volumes at a time, and then opened her mouth for more.

The "boa-constrictor," Philip called her ; but this was a libel on the boa, which gives its food time to digest, whereas the girl had no sooner swallowed one literary meal than she was ready for another.

"She would read sermons rather than not read anything," said her brothers with disgust, religious or instructive books being the point where they drew the line. "It is all the same to her, providing it's print."

Well, not exactly ; for naturally she preferred lighter literature ; but there was some truth in the statement, nevertheless.

Still, even this voracious appetite at last grew dainty, about the time when, though still young, she began to put aside childish things.

It all came about at a little evening party, when she chanced to hear one lady say to another, "Poor Mr. Moucell, what a hard life his is !"

"A hard life !" Joscelyne took the remark home with her, brooded over it, and then bethought her of what she might do.

From that time Mr. Moucell's study was as though

kept by a fairy—his papers were in perfect order, his books always just where he had left them ; periodical clearings-up, which authors regard—and rightly—with horror, came to be evils unknown. Everything was always neat and in place, yet he never saw anyone at work, or found even a scrap of paper had been meddled with—a state of affairs as new as delightful.

And so with other matters : she thought of and for her father, waited on him, anticipated his wishes, looked up passages, copied paragraphs, was permitted eventually to read first proofs over and correct any mistake which caught her eye, and at last—oh, crowning happiness!—when manuscripts began to pour in, Mr. Moucell, one joyful morning, selecting two which looked particularly unpromising, handed them to the girl, saying laughingly,—

“You might glance over these and tell me what you think of them.”

From small causes great results often spring, and those words, so thoughtlessly spoken, produced far-reaching effects.

At the end of a couple of years Mr. Moucell's daughter was as much reader as that gentleman himself. True, he did not delegate his authority, or play again at pitch-and-toss with his fortunes, or betray the trust Messrs. Gerant reposed in him, but at the same time Joscelyne was a good working partner, who made the labour of wading through side after side of often very bad writing much easier than it would have been but for the simple analysis of plot which she provided with each book. She had grown expert, reliable ; her previous reading, desultory



though it had been, furnished a solid foundation on which to build a taste for better things, and Joscelyne's taste by the time she was seventeen could but be considered as critical and reliable as her father's.

Further, she was never tired, never cross; she could sit up late and rise early; she could return from a long walk, and start out again, brisk and willing, within five minutes.

"She is my very right hand," said Mr. Moucell one day in a burst of enthusiasm.

Mr. Gerant, to whom the remark was made, answered aloud, "he felt sure of it," and secretly wished she were his right hand also.

He was in love with the girl; but his suit did not progress rapidly, for Joscelyne slurred over or turned aside every hesitating compliment—a line of conduct which won his entire approval, because, as he was wont to tell anyone who cared to know, "I don't approve of flirty girls."

Certainly Joscelyne did not come under this category; girls brought up with girls grow oftentimes foolish, but boys soon take all that nonsense out of their sisters.

Any young lady who had tried to indulge in a flirtation in Mr. Moucell's house would, indeed, have been more courageous than wise.

Joscelyne was not thinking of such matters when, after closing the library door, she crossed the hall and walked into one of the smaller rooms, which was her boudoir, study, bedchamber, and hermit's cave. She and her father slept on the ground floor—he in an apartment overlooking The Lawn, she in one that

had a grand view of the water-cistern, with a perspective of railway arch.

That, however, did not matter to the girl ; one may have as great thoughts and high aspirations with a blackened brick wall bounding the material sight as from St. Helena or Mont Blanc ; and doubtless Joscelyne had dreamt dreams and seen visions in her tiny oratory.

But at that especial moment her mind was full of the book she had read in the solitude of night, at the dawn of morning, she was impregnated with it, just as many a reader in the former days was carried away for the time being, and became part of "The Bride of Lammermoor," "The Scottish Chiefs," and "Otterbourne."

Fashions change, but human hearts remain the same ; and though the musician whose hand alone is capable of evoking melody from them may not twice be the same person, the melody runs on through the ages, now sad, now joyful, now plaintively pathetic, and anon wildly jubilant, oftentimes sounding a mournful minor chord, and then pealing out such a burst of triumphant gladness as might lead any superficial listener to imagine life was all success and happiness.

Joscelyne held a volume of Longfellow in her hand—Longfellow is *par excellence* the poet beloved by youth—but she was not reading a line it contained.

Everything seemed changing, everything passing away, save that book full of lofty thought and high endeavour she had not been able "quite to finish." It had come as a revelation to her, and she sat

wondering whether both could be real, her own life and the lives depicted. Or was it—the thought entered her heart tremblingly, and the girl almost thrust it away with a shudder—that she but stood on the threshold of existence, and might as she walked forward have to meet the experiences described, or experiences as terrible, in her own proper person?

This is a sort of dread by no means uncommon amongst those who from the haven of a happy home for the first time catch a glimpse of what life has been for others, and, as if reflected in a mirror, of what life may be for them. It is a horrible experience, and one concerning which they seldom take their elders into confidence. That they who in their bright spring-time feel themselves as gods should ever grow old, ever be left lonely and desolate, compelled to suffer, struggle, get worsted in the fight and thankful to crawl out of it away to any solitude where they may hide their wounds, comes as a bad nightmare to joyous creatures who have never known a real sorrow.

Charles Lamb says, "Not childhood alone, but the young man till thirty never feels practically that he is mortal"—and thus it happens that boys and girls walk in a vain shadow till some inexplicable presentiment opens their eyes to the plainest truths in life.

The girl with whom this story has to do sat for some time dreaming, not happy dreams. Had she been mending her gloves, or wrestling with a stiff seam, as was the commendable practice of heroines in those goody books her brothers and, indeed, she



despised, such unrest would probably never have arisen. As matters were, she passed through a very bad time till suddenly "Joscelyne, are you there?" cut her reverie in twain.

"Yes, father," she answered, springing to her feet like one aroused from sleep.

But the black cloud Care, which had been brooding over her, was gone; and before she reached the study door the girl was her own bright self again.

"Get me a cup of coffee, dear, and some biscuits."

Without a word of remonstrance, though she knew his luncheon was in progress, she went down stairs, made the coffee, cut a few sandwiches, got some biscuits, and carried all on a tray into what one servant irreverently styled the "work-room," where Mr. Moucell sat with elbows resting on the table and his forehead supported on both hands, which formed a sort of arch, through which he read a manuscript bulky and illegible enough to have daunted one less accustomed to fight single-handed with caligraphy.

"Thank you," he said, without looking up; "don't let me be disturbed."

"Oh, no; what time should you like to have dinner?"

"You forget I am going out to dinner."

"Then the bird will do cold for supper," thought Joscelyne, who had, indeed, forgotten the fact mentioned.

"You were right," Mr. Moucell added, as she was moving towards to the door. "This is a very strong book."

“I am so glad you like it. How far have you got?”

“Not very far ; but I have been dipping. Now run away, child.”

And the “child” obediently went.



## CHAPTER IV.

IT was late—or rather early—when Mr. Moucell, after his evening out, returned to South Lambeth. He had made the tenth at a pleasant little informal dinner party, looked in on a genial bachelor friend, called at a newspaper office, where he corrected some proof, and finally walked from Charing Cross home, which he reached in good order and condition, not in the least tired.

The stillness of a great city, which is so much more impressive than that of the loneliest country, seemed soothing to him. As he crossed Vauxhall Bridge he paused and looked at the lights reflected in the water, at the river flowing darkly away to the sea, bearing strange secrets with it. He had chosen the Middlesex side because he thought it would be quieter, but it was quiet enough everywhere just then.

In London there comes a lull between the night rush of swift traffic and the slow, heavy roll of the market carts at early morn, and Mr. Moucell found himself wrapped in it.

All was silent at Vauxhall Cross, the station closed, even the goods trains for a brief space quiet ; scarcely a cab could have been found on the rank ; not a public-house open ; and when the solitary pedestrian passed under the railway arch which obliquely spans

South Lambeth Road he was met with the mingled perfume of so many fragrant scents that he might have been wandering through some fair Eden fifty miles in the country, rather than pursuing his way to that home which was within fifteen minutes' walk of Westminster Clock Tower.

Each garden gave forth to the crisp night air its own special odour—late heliotrope, balm, thyme, mignonette, lemon verbena, pungent marigold—while from The Lawn came the first faint subtle reminder falling leaves were sweet in death, and that autumn was nigh at hand.

Often in the pleasant summer time, Mr. Moucell remembered, the whole neighbourhood seemed bathed in an atmosphere of newly-made hay, for the river winding through far-off green fields where the scythe was swinging with a rhythmical swish through the long grass, brought with it half-forgotten recollections of boyhood's days to many a jaded Londoner.

Yes, Mr. Moucell remembered how frequently Lincolnshire and his early youth came back unbidden, and how he had put such wistful thoughts aside by quoting, "Distance lends enchantment to the view." "I was not so particularly happy there," he was in the habit of adding. "After all, London is the best place in the world to live in, and South Lambeth the most convenient part of London where a struggling man can pitch his tent."

This feeling was strong upon him while he passed through the gate and walked towards his house. Compared with other residences he had inhabited, his present tenement was really one to be desired, and an agreeable sense of well-being—a serene con-

sciousness of possessing a comfortable home—so long as he could pay the rent—came over him.

He put his key in the door and opened it softly.

Years during the course of which he feared to “wake the baby” had taught him this habit, one he was never likely to forget—though, happily, there were no babies in his present residence.

The youngest child, nearly seven years of age, came into this world only about three months before his mother left it, therefore Mr. Moucell had been long a widower, and, that old love dream notwithstanding, by no means an unhappy one. It was an open secret there were several houses in which he might have hung up his hat for life had he chosen to do so; but he did not choose.

Entering the dining-room, he found a fire burning low and supper laid, but it was not till he turned up the gas that he saw Joscelyne sitting in an arm-chair beside the hearth, fast holden in the land of Nod; she was not in the habit of thus deferring her beauty sleep, and Mr. Moucell was so much astonished he stood staring at the unwonted spectacle for a few seconds in surprise. When his daughter kept vigil, as he was aware she sometimes did, it was in the solitude of her own chamber, and he could not imagine why she had selected on this occasion to do him so much honour as to await his return even in dreamland.

Then something in her attitude struck him disagreeably. She lay back in the chair like one worn out, and her right hand, which was thrown over the arm, hung limp and listless.

He moved nearer and kissed her; then gently

pushed back what the boys called her "mane ;" but his caresses failed to awaken the sleeper.

She only gave a little gasping sigh, and sank into a deeper slumber than before.

Evidently the girl had cried herself into forgetfulness. Traces of tears could be seen on her cheeks, and her long lashes were still moist with the drops which had fallen from her eyes.

This was indeed something new, and Mr. Moucell did not at all like it. What had happened? What could the girl have heard? All at once an idea struck him. "We can soon put that to rights," he thought, relieved. "I will just let the poor child sleep on for the present ;" and, having so determined, he began to carve that bird which had been meant for his luncheon. It was a good partridge, and Mr. Moucell, spite of having dined, hungry ; therefore some little time elapsed before he attacked the second and lighter course. He had barely, however, helped himself to a tartlet, when he heard a voice exclaiming, "Where am I? Where can I be?" and turning, he beheld Joscelyne, still half asleep, sitting bolt upright, and looking about her like one dazed.

"Certainly not where you ought to be—in bed," answered Mr. Moucell promptly.

At sound of the familiar tones, slumber dropped off the girl like a heavy mantle, and she remembered.

"O father, I am so sorry!" and there was a little pitiful ring in her words—a sort of echo of past trouble. "I meant to have such a bright fire for you and everything comfortable, but I must have dropped off, and—"

"Everything is most comfortable, child—only you



should not have sat up. Have you any idea of the hour ? ”

“ Not the slightest ; and I only waited for you because—because—”

“ Well, because—”

“ I felt I must speak to you.”

“ It is as I thought,” considered Mr. Moucell, even while he said aloud, banteringly, “ Matter so important couldn’t be put off even till after breakfast, eh ? ”

“ No.”

“ You are right, little woman ; time present is the best of all times for asking what we desire to ask and doing what we want to do, so let me hear all about this great trouble.”

“ I could not talk it over with anyone but you—”

“ Yes, I understand ; now, what is on your mind ? ”

He had left the table and was standing quite close to Joscelyne, his hand laid on her shoulder as he put this question.

Yet the girl still hesitated.

“ Shall I help you ? ” he asked.

“ I do not think you can,” she replied, though with the manner of one who felt there could be little her father was unable to do.

“ Let me try. You were vexed because I went out to dinner ? ”

“ Vexed, father ! no.”

“ Not to Mrs. Alston’s ? ”

“ Indeed—indeed I was not ! I am glad when you go to any place where you are certain to spend a pleasant evening ; besides Mrs. Alston has always been so kind to us—so very kind—”



“She is kind; but that is scarcely the question. You must have heard some idle talk relating to her and myself—and—”

“That you were going to be married,” interrupted Joscelyne with a frank little laugh. “That is quite an old story, and it did not trouble me at all, for I knew you would never leave us, never—that wherever you were we should be.”

“God bless you, dear,” he said, touched to the soul; “but now just listen to me. I have never thought of marrying again—never once—”

“I had enough and too much of it,” trembled on the tip of his tongue, but a vision of that blue-eyed, fond, incompetent, young, foolish little creature he wooed and wedded when life was all before him to—spoil, rose before his mind’s eye, and he remembered in time she had been Joscelyne’s mother.

“Wherever there are men free to marry and women who can be married, people will couple their names together,” he went on, “but I have no intention of marrying anybody. Remember that; and for the future never attach the smallest importance to such idle talk.”

“I never did—really,” she said; “only, if it would be happier for you to have a nice lady at the head of your household—”

“It would not,” he interrupted. “Your aunt is quite nice enough for me—nice enough for anybody, I should say; she is a splendid manager, and no woman could have devoted herself more zealously to a set of unruly youngsters than she has done; she has been good to you all.”

“Indeed—yes,” agreed Joscelyne, with a sigh wrung

from her by the consciousness she did not love the lady thus eulogized as much as she ought, or rebuke the boys for ridiculing Mrs. Howley's peculiarities so often as she should.

"And you will not allow yourself to be vexed again when you hear any absurd chatter about my bringing home a step-mother to reign over you? Should I ever feel tempted to do such a mad thing, I promise at once to ask you to help me to conquer the inclination. Is that sufficient? Are you content now?"

"Father dear, I always was content about you," stroking his cheek lovingly.

"Then with what are you not content, child?"

"I do not know—everything, I think," and her voice broke and she burst into tears.

Mr. Moucell felt inexpressibly shocked. He drew a chair beside hers, and took the slight, lithe figure in his arms.

"My dear daughter!" he exclaimed, filled with apprehensions he dared not put into shape. "How is this? Cry on if it will ease your heart—but remember I want to know why you are crying."

"Because I feel so miserable," she sobbed. "Oh, father—"

"Yes, dear—tell your father."

"But you will think me dreadfully silly—"

"I only hope I shall."

"After you went this evening—" Another pause.

"Last evening—but that is a detail. Did you commit some dreadful sin?" He spoke lightly, but his heart was heavy, for he could not imagine whither all Joscelyne's talk might be tending. "My darling, whatever your trouble is, tell me. Let us get it over."

She lifted her face and looked at him pleadingly, with eyes that did not, like her mother's, mirror heaven's own sky, but were deeply, darkly, divinely blue, and under the influence of any strong feeling looked almost black.

Scarcely more than thirteen hours had passed since Mr. Gerant praised the roses in her cheeks, which were now white as death. Was it any marvel Mr. Moucell felt alarm, any wonder a man who understood the world's wickedness, and knew the many pitfalls in a great city, should suffer tortures of apprehension while waiting for his daughter's tardy speech?

"Come, dear, make haste," he urged, finding she still kept silence. "After I went out—that is where you left off."

"After you went out," she repeated slowly, "I read to the end of that manuscript, and have been wretched ever since."

"And is that all?" The words escaped him involuntarily, as something within his breast seemed to give a great bound of relief, like the recoil of a bow loosed from its string. "I mean—have you no other trouble on your mind?"

"None—but that is quite enough."

"Do you mean to tell me," asked Mr. Moucell, greatly aggrieved, "you have been making yourself miserable about a lot of men and women who are no more than the shadows of a dream? I thought you had more sense, Joscelyne!"

"They all seem real to me," urged the girl.

"That is the author's trick of trade—to represent things as true that are false—to make people who

never existed speak, move, act, as though living, breathing, suffering human beings."

"Ah, and how they suffered!"

"Yet I dare say the person who wrote about them is as happy as a grig. I have always noticed that authors who produce the saddest books are the cheeriest fellows going."

"I never read anything so sad as that story. The end is awful. It will haunt me for ever."

"I hope not; 'for ever' means a long time."

"Father, do not talk in that way. I want you to comfort me."

"How, my darling?"

"I do not know."

"I do. If you are going to take all the sorrow in fiction home to nurse, you had better try another kind of reading. Sherlock's sermons or Smith's 'Wealth of Nations' would prove a beneficial alterative diet. Seriously, dear, there must be no more of this. I can't have my cheerful, happy girl changed into a sad-eyed, hysterical, sentimental miss at the touch of any author's wand, were he a thousand times cleverer than our Irish friend."

"No one could be that."

"H'm—he is clever, certainly; but he has much both to learn and unlearn before he can hope to achieve a great success. The book is a strong book, but a mistake from the title to the end. As for what I suppose he considers his great scene, the public simply would not tolerate it. Such a thing could not have occurred even in Ireland during this century; besides, it strikes a shockingly discordant note. The whole account of the hero's death and



burial is as untrue to nature as it is false to art. But now, child, you ought to be in bed, so we will not talk any more at present about Mr. Mallow and 'The Offences of His Forefathers.' Shall I tell you why the book is so depressing?" he added, as a fresh idea struck him. "Because it is Calvinistic from the first page to the last. No wonder it made you miserable. A scapegoat bearing others' sins across the wilderness of life—predestined, predoomed—oh! he will have to alter all that. Do you feel better? Nothing like threshing out such a foolish trouble; a good wind of common sense carries the chaff away—"

"And leaves—?" suggested Joscelyne.

"In the case of this book much that is excellent, and which, judiciously used, may make its author's reputation."

As a rule Mr. Moucell's words seemed to his daughter as those of an oracle; but when at last she laid her tired head on the pillow she did not feel certain whether he were right or wrong about that novel. She thought, indeed, he was wrong.



## CHAPTER V.

THOUGH Messrs. Gerant, senior and junior, were impatiently awaiting Mr. Moucell's report on the last parcel of novels consigned to him by that firm, their literary adviser did not hurry to send in his opinion.

If ever anyone understood the worst side of editorial, publishing and literary human nature, that "one" was Mr. Moucell. Consciously and unconsciously, he had been studying the subject for over eighteen years, and therefore could scarcely avoid knowing more about it than was good for him.

Right, perhaps, so far as he went, his conclusions were wrong in several essential respects, simply because he did not go further. He gave himself a vast amount of trouble in order to arrive at erroneous results. He expended, for example, much thought in devising how to outwit people who had not the faintest intention of trying to cheat him, and an unhappy outcome of this mental peculiarity was that Messrs. Gerant had to wait often longer than they liked, to learn what his opinions were concerning authors and the wares they sent to Old Bond Street.

It was entirely his own fault that matters had not from the first been put on a business footing.

The Gerants, new to such matters, felt delicate about thrusting any proposition upon him, and he, hoping to secure something very handsome indeed, affected not to understand their hints, and name an amount likely to content them who paid and him who received ; for which reason a feeling of irritation was always rankling in his breast, because the cheques sent were irregular in their coming and apt to vary in amount. Messrs. Gerant thought their cheques were rather liberal ; Mr. Moucell, on the contrary, considered the honorarium absurd ; and consequently did a little rule of three sum, which proved conclusively to his mind that if in their ignorance the publishers displayed so niggardly a spirit, if they only knew how short a time he required to skim the cream off any book, and how speedily he could, and he would, form a decided opinion concerning its merits and demerits, particularly the latter, they would expect him to work for next to nothing.

Now, in all this he was quite mistaken. The Gerants, father and son, were not merely honest, but honourable men, who had no drop of "sweater's" blood in them, and would have been more than willing to pay for speed, if combined with reliability, and often marvelled at the slowness of their adviser's mental movements.

"I suspect he tries to do too much, poor fellow," said Mr. Thomas Gerant apologetically.

"Then why does he not do less? In such case we could no doubt make matters better for him," answered the more practical elder, who knew nothing of a pair of eyes, darkly, divinely, beautifully blue. "If a thing be done well it were well it were

done quickly.' Am I right in my quotation, Tom? A tortoise is an express train compared with Moucell. He really ought to remember we are living in time, and not eternity." Which hint the junior partner transmitted to South Lambeth, not as originally uttered, but—nicely.

In reply, Mr. Moucell promised to "hurry up," and almost immediately returned several manuscripts destitute of promise, together with a few lines of sarcastic criticism, adding the pleasant tidings that he hoped to report ere long on three still in his hands.

From his point of view the pear was about ripe, and might be soon eaten. For which reason he speedily followed up this communication with another, stating,—

"I should like to see you concerning the trio forwarded herewith, and shall call for that purpose on Tuesday next."

Now, Mr. Mallow's novel was one of the three referred to, only it stood head and shoulders over its companions.

The latter Mr. Moucell disposed of first.

"Quite safe. As you are aware, the authors have achieved a certain, though very modest, reputation. I can unhesitatingly recommend them to your favourable consideration. Perfectly harmless; sure to sell a certain number; sort of books that 'work in' well, and with which no publishing-house can wholly dispense, any more than a hostess can banish bread from a dinner-party."

"But there is a difference even in bread," remarked Mr. Gerant. "Known authors occasionally turn out bad batches."



“The interesting works to which I allude,” returned Mr. Moucell, “are ‘good household,’ consequently you need have no apprehension that they will be left on your shelves till stale. The question resolves itself into one of price, about which you know more than I.”

“Yes; that is a matter we do understand pretty well. I wish you had been able to give a more flattering opinion, however. I saw the author of one of the books yesterday, and he seemed to think his story quite the best thing he had yet written.”

“It may be,” in a “Poor devil!” sort of tone.

“But you do not know to which author my father refers,” put in Mr. Thomas Gerant.

“It does not make the slightest difference, I assure you,” and there ensued a pause.

“I confess I feel more than a little disheartened,” said the elder partner, at last breaking silence. “We hoped to get hold of something new—striking—something out of the common, but we seem to have no manuscripts sent in save those which are either valueless or run on the old lines.”

“Geniuses are not so plentiful as blackberries,” returned Mr. Moucell, “and the old lines have at least the merit of being safe.”

“We have not yet heard what you think of that Irish clergyman’s book,” observed Mr. Gerant, junior. “His letter impressed me favourably, as I mentioned at the time; and this morning I glanced over the opening chapters. There seems to be something in them.”

“There is something new and clever in every chapter,” was Mr. Moucell’s unexpected reply. “I do

not know when so able and original a book passed through my hands."

"Come! this is capital!" exclaimed Mr. Gerant.

"I am not so sure of that. I cannot formulate my ideas concerning the book. All I am sure of is I feel quite unable to advise in the matter. Still, I think—"

"Where does the difficulty come in? Is there impropriety?" Those were the days when publishers thought it necessary to be on their guard lest any poison of asps should lurk within the printed leaves they sent forth broadcast.

Mr. Moucell laughed. "No; proper to an extent. The book is a moral essay, a sermon, a story of character, and a well-written tract all in one—anything, in fact, except a novel."

"I scarcely understand. Do you mean it is devoid of incident, or lacks plot, or that the author has overweighted it with reflection, or—"

"There is plenty of incident and sufficient plot, and the author does not obtrude himself; the descriptions of scenery and sport are about as good as such things can be; but the whole thing is a mistake, as great a mistake as the title."

"Yes—what does the title mean?" asked Mr. Gerant, thankful to have something tangible to grasp at.

"Oh, only that the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children, worded differently. Just fancy any collector starting from the Row with such a name on his list! He would ask for 'His Father's Fences' by the time he got here."

"I really think, even if they had not always a list,



collectors have more intelligence," said the younger partner.

"Glad to hear it. At all events, it is a bad title, and the idea of his forefathers' offences tracking a man, and rendering all his good works abortive, dominates the book. The man can't get rid of the relentless fate which thwarts his best purposes, from the time we first see him, sleeping among the little band of missionaries away in the Far East—"

"Yes; I read that part where he is told in a dream to return to Ireland," interposed Mr. Thomas Gerant; "striking scene that."

"Wonderful! You can look on the man; feel the hot, moist night air; hear the wild animals crying for their prey! It is the same all through the book, which, spite of some faults, is splendidly written and appallingly depressing. The man goes back, and Fate goes with him; and soon Fate, which keeps even step along every road he treads, defeats his designs, causes him to fail signally in all his efforts to repair evil wrought before he was born, and eventually compels him to kill himself. The story winds up with a sort of infernal midnight carnival, illuminated by torchlight, when the man, with a stake through his brave heart, is buried where four cross roads meet. A gruesome finish—one the public would not stand at any price. There is nothing people hate so much nowadays as a sad ending."

"Are you quite sure of that?"

"Quite. For the last ten years or more the popular taste has been setting steadily in favour of the marriage bells and 'happy ever after' business, and now that the century is growing old—got into

its last quarter, remember—intolerance of anything melancholy will increase day by day.”

“I wonder why?”

“For the same reason which makes old people, as a rule, dislike a sad face and a house of mourning. They prefer naturally not to discount that evil time when ‘the grasshopper shall be a burden.’ Young folks, on the contrary, love to be miserable.” The words were prompted by an irritable recollection of Joscelyne, who had, he felt certain, thoroughly enjoyed her wretchedness. “And in like manner, when eighteen hundred was in its teens and twenties and thirties, graves and deaths and partings were all the fashion. Only consider Mrs. Hemans’ poetry, think of Lytton’s earlier novels; remember the songs girls warbled. There was not a note of cheerfulness then to be heard in all the land. But now that the century is getting into years it wants something widely different. Before it dies the old creature will probably take to buffoonery! I should not be in the least surprised.”

“Why are you so bitter against this century, Mr. Moucell?” asked Mr. Thomas Gerant.

“I am not bitter against it, but simply stating facts. The century is very likely no better and no worse than others that have gone before; but now it is so far on to an end, there is small use in trying to make it take again to the doleful stories that found favour when the world was all a sheen of green.”

“Meanwhile,” suggested Mr. Gerant, senior, “we have wandered far from our original subject.”

“On the contrary, ‘The Offences of His Fore-

fathers' started the whole conversation," said Mr. Moucell. "I said, and say still, such an ending as that mentioned would swamp any book nowadays."

"Let us go into the whole matter a little more thoroughly, however. You sent a sketch of the plot, I believe."

"Yes, and I read it," interrupted Mr. Thomas Gerant. "The plot is substantially what Mr. Moucell indicates. The man tries to accomplish good, and fails ; but, of course, a mere skeleton tells one nothing as to how the thing is worked out."

"It is worked out very powerfully ; from the first page to the last the book holds the reader ; the writing in the main is extremely good, and there is an air of likelihood about the whole narrative which prevents one realizing how old-fashioned and melodramatic all the chief incidents are till the last page is reached."

"But surely that is very high praise ?"

"It is. I should not like, however, to lead you astray, for, as I told you, I am in this difficulty myself, that I can't see my way to recommend you to take the work or to leave it alone. There are so many objections."

"Suppose you tell us what they are ; then perhaps we shall find ourselves in a better position to form an opinion."

"Very well. First, the whole story, after that dream episode, is laid in Ireland, and people will not read Irish novels now—no, not if you stand over them with a club !"

"I think we might risk that. I believe a good novel, like a handsome woman, is of no country ;



I mean, it does not matter of what country the novel treats, or where the handsome woman was born."

"I do not agree with you; but we will put Ireland on one side for the present, and come to the title."

"Which could be altered."

"Perhaps. The title, however, dominates the book. You are never permitted to lose sight of the forefathers' misdeeds; which would not signify so much if Mr. Gorman Woyle, of Fincarrow Castle, were only permitted to set right, by his own virtuous conduct, the offences that had been committed long before his birth. The reverse is the case, unfortunately; his good intentions seem really to change the peasantry into demons. No single one of the sinful Woyles was as much hated as he, and the final saturnalia, when the men and women he had vainly striven to benefit shout and yell and dance over his grave, is the very most horrible description of wild lawlessness and savage ignorance it was ever my misfortune to come across. Nevertheless, it is an extraordinary book: full of grit, bright with humour. If the author would only alter the title, and rewrite the last chapter, and delete a lot about the natives' pretty ways, I should feel almost inclined to say—"

"Yes?"

"Well, I should certainly say 'Risk it.' Do you know what the author's age may be?" And Mr. Moucell turned to the managing partner.

"Have no idea."

"I thought he might have made some reference to it. If he be young, he has a great future before him, but everything in the book points to maturity."

“Very likely ; he dates from Kilbrannon Rectory, Athlone. But to return to the book. Supposing he refuse to alter the title and rewrite that pleasant scene, and make the other changes you indicate, what then ? ”

“Ah ! that is for you to decide. All I can say is, I fear in such case failure is a foregone conclusion.”



## CHAPTER VI.

MR. THOMAS GERANT did not let much grass grow ere posting that letter which the wisdom of his firm and literary adviser thought might well be despatched to Kilbrannon Rectory.

Almost before he imagined a reply could come Mr. Mallow's answer arrived—very grateful, very courteous, but very decided. What the reverend gentleman said was in substance this : He had written his book up to the title, and did not see his way to changing the name. He regretted the final scene seemed “improbable, or at all events mediæval.” It had, however, actually occurred less than fifty years ago, and was still in remote parts of Ireland not impossible.

To write the chapter on different lines would, in his opinion, ruin the story. He confessed the book was not a cheerful one ; still, he had striven to lighten it as far as he could by the introduction of such humorous chapters as he found himself able to work in naturally.

He did not attempt to disguise his sorrow that non-compliance with the requests contained in Messrs. Gerant's communication might mean rejection, but “The Offences of His Forefathers ” was a book into

which he had put the best work of which he felt at present capable. It was his first-born, and very dear to him; and though grieved that he could not meet the views of publishers so experienced and of such high standing, he failed to see any way in which it would be possible for him to follow their advice without utterly spoiling a work he believed ought, in its present form, to attract some attention. In conclusion, he begged for a decision as soon as possible, and remained, very faithfully, D. G. Mallow.

Looking in at the publishers' office on the chance of a cheque—indeed, determined to ask for one—Mr. Moucell was handed this epistle, which he read twice ere returning to Mr. Isaac Gerant, with the remark,—

“What a pity!”

“It is very annoying,” said the senior partner. Mr. Thomas Gerant, who was sitting with his head resting on his left hand, said nothing. He seemed, however, to be thinking a great deal. The two older men looked at him in silence, and then at each other.

“Perhaps you are just as well without the book,” observed Mr. Moucell by way of consolation.

“That is what I have been telling Thomas, but he seems determined to take it.”

“In its present form?” with a fine incredulity.

“Yes.”

“He will think better of that.”

“I shall not think better of it—at least, I shall not think differently. The book is a good one, and I agree with Mr. Mallow a publisher has no right to ask an author to chop and change his work to suit anybody's particular fancy.”

“But a publisher has a right to refuse a book he does not suppose can pay,” remarked the elder partner.

“Yes, but I believe this book ought to pay.”

“Very well, then, have your own way; but, as I said before, if you like to take the risk of publishing it, I think you should do so at your own expense.”

“I do not mind that at all.” Mr. Thomas Gerant was the happy possessor of a small fortune bequeathed to him by *his* forefathers. “What really does trouble me is running contrary to your opinion and setting up my own judgment against that of men so much more competent to form one than myself as you and Mr. Moucell; that vexes me—it does, indeed, father.”

“My dear boy, don’t say another word; I only spoke in jest when I said you ought to bear the loss.”

“I trust there will not be any loss; but should we prove unfortunate, I will not let you suffer for my obstinacy. The fact is, I have a strong feeling about this book; the purpose is good, the tone is high; I cannot bear the notion of any other house bringing it out.”

“If you decide to publish”—it was Mr. Moucell who spoke—“I earnestly hope Mr. Mallow will translate his novel into English before it goes to the printers; surely on that point you can induce him to listen to reason, for there is no special beauty in beginning a sentence at the wrong end.”

“Yes, I know what you mean; but there are not so many of those inverted expressions.”

“Perverted, I should call them! There are quite

enough to arrest a reviewer's attention, and draw down his righteous wrath. Mr. Mallow's style is so good as a rule, such errors are the more noticeable. If you condone the title, and the pessimism, and the fiendish revel, surely you may insist that the Queen's English is not outraged ? ”

“ I feel inclined to say nothing on the subject. ”

“ And let the book appear as it is ? ”

“ No ; if the author spelt incorrectly I should not think it necessary to consult him before putting his orthography right, and those ridiculous inversions come under the same category. ”

“ Then it is quite settled Messrs. Gerant produce ‘ The Offences of His Forefathers ’ ? ”

“ What do you say, father ? ”

“ I leave the whole matter to you. ”

“ May it have a prosperous voyage, ” exclaimed Mr. Moucell, “ and bring a golden freight to the house of Gerant ! ”

“ Thank you, ” said Mr. Thomas Gerant gratefully.

“ And talking of money, Mr. Moucell, ” observed the other partner, “ reminds me that there is a cheque signed, ready to be posted to you. Perhaps you will take it ? ”

If there were one thing more certain than another it was that Moucell would take a cheque when he could get it ; and therefore the letter waiting to be posted was speedily transferred to his pocket-book.

In course of transit, however, he opened it, under pretext of asking, “ Shall I give you a receipt now ? ” and managed to ascertain the amount—“ which was not so bad for the Gerants. ”

“ Oh, no ; any time, ” said Mr. Gerant, who in his



innocence believed the whole money question was absolutely distasteful to a man so well connected—nothing grows and spreads like a lie—and with such a grasp of mind as Mr. Moucell.

Mr. Mallow's sentences might occasionally have a twist—unmistakably Irish—but they were as nothing when compared with the transformation wrought in Mr. Moucell by the receipt of money.

Under that genial sunshine he became for the time being a different man : a man who viewed life and the people in it hopefully ; a man who sometimes felt that in the next world there might be a chance even for editors, publishers and proprietors ; a man who, for the moment, stood above South Lambeth and its pressing necessities—the twelve mouths he had to fill, the tradespeople that, naturally needing money occasionally, he was forced to satisfy.

His fight could but be considered fearful ; he did not leave his troubles outside his room when he went to bed ; they were up earlier than he in the morning.

The only wonder seemed that he was able to turn so calm a face on the foe ; but then, as he himself said, " If you lie down, men trample on you." No man had trampled upon him yet, simply because he had never been forced to lie down.

There were times though when the dreadful question occurred, " Are the evil days coming when I shall not be able to stand erect ? "

Whatever might be in store, they had not come when he put up Messrs. Gerant's cheque and said,—

" I only wish I had sufficient money to start publishing. I am vain enough to think I could make some of your brethren open their eyes ! "

“Why, what would you do, Mr. Moucell? How should you proceed?”

Mr. Moucell laughed. “As I am never likely to be rich enough to carry out my ideas, I may as well be generous and tell you. When I had got a good author, I should take him to my heart, I should praise him, I should pet him; when he came to me my talk should be all of his greatness, not of the great doings of Mr. Somebody Else; I should try to make him feel he was the person of most importance in creation, instead of a useless devil who might just as well, and better, never have been created at all.”

“Really, Mr. Moucell!”

“Wait a while. I have not half finished. Consider how authors, as a rule, are treated by publishers! I do not say by you, because I know nothing of your mode of doing business. I am talking of the representative publisher and the author who has done work good enough to last his time. The latter does not hear much that is pleasant from the former; there is either a dead silence concerning his books, or he is entertained with general statements that there has been no demand for another edition; that the publishers trusted his last story would have been in more demand; that if he could but write another book like his first (his last being much better)—‘ah, then indeed!’; that ‘Mr. or Mrs. or Miss——’s novel had been all the rage’; that, in fact, the representative publisher can only offer him so much for the work he has in hand; of course, if he thinks he can do better elsewhere, the R.P. would be very sorry to stand in his way; and—pardon me for a moment—all

the time, remember, that unhappy author hears his children crying aloud for bread ! ”

“ My dear sir ! I hope you do not think we are so unsympathetic ? ”

“ As I said, I know nothing about *your* way of doing business. I can only state how it is carried on by Tom, Dick and Harry. They get hold of a good author, and then they at once begin to depress him. They are so much afraid prosperity may make the man vainglorious that they think it right to keep him low like a weaned child. I was greatly struck a little while ago by an anecdote told me by a great lady, who no doubt thought it only showed the ‘ funny notions ’ entertained by artists and such like.

“ She had asked a pianist and his son to luncheon, and the trio made so pleasant a party that the pianist felt at last moved to observe : ‘ I daresay you wonder why I do not offer to play something, which I would with the greatest pleasure, only *I cannot without the gas and the clapping !* ’

“ Now, the gas and the clapping are precisely what authors want, and just what publishers won’t give. They are more to the authors than money—a tonic of greater efficacy than money.”

“ I am listening—I am thinking,” said Mr. Isaac Gerant. “ I am trying to follow you.”

“ Has any publisher ever thought, I wonder—I can say this dispassionately even to you, Mr. Gerant—what writing a book means to an author ? The silence and the mystery of at least a year (I am talking now of a fairly prosperous man ; of the awful tug when a man is not prosperous who could speak ? ). From experience my supposititious author has learnt



to feel the praise of friends is valueless, so he writes on, solitary, though surrounded by his fellows, day after day, week after week, hearing no cheering word. Such a silence seems to me enough to drive an author mad. Authors are but human beings, Mr. Gerant, though occasionally some among us have divine thoughts."

The pause which ensued was not created for effect. Mr. Moucell simply held his peace because he had done his talking. Mr. Gerant kept silence because he did not well know what to answer.

It was Mr. Thomas Gerant who broke the spell, with this remark,—

"Granting that all you say is true—which I deny, because there is only a certain amount of truth in it—at the end of that 'silent and mysterious' twelve-month the author gets in addition to hard cash more praise in a day than is meted out to the publisher during the course of his whole life. Let us have justice, Mr. Moucell. Is it fair that we who find the halfpence should get only kicks for thanks? And as for petting and praising an author and taking him to our bosom, shall I tell you what would happen, when we had made such idiots of ourselves?"

"If you please."

"He would go to the first man who bid twenty pounds more than we knew him to be worth."

"I cannot believe it. Do you think there is no such thing as gratitude in the world?"

"Not in business, where gratitude is as much out of place as sentiment."



## CHAPTER VII.

“YET there have been some pleasing instances of sentiment in the commercial world. I could give you a few examples off-hand,” said Mr. Moucell, who was the least sentimental and probably the most ungrateful man living.

“I am sure you could,” interposed Mr. Isaac Gerant, “for it seems to me you have every subject at your finger-ends; but never mind my son, he is a little troubled just now about Mr. Mallow’s book, which he feels he ought not to take, yet still is determined to try. Cheer up, Tom; should the ‘Offences of His Forefathers’ prove a dead failure, it won’t break us.”

“It shan’t be a dead failure!” said Mr. Moucell. “Only let me know when the whole affair is concluded, and I will work the puff preliminary to such good purpose that you may consider the success of a modest first edition secure. Beyond that point I can promise nothing.”

“Really you are most kind.” Again it was Mr. Isaac Gerant who spoke.

“Not half so kind as you were concerning the poor little article that procured me the happiness of your acquaintance,” answered Mr. Moucell, with his

pleasant grace of manner which often made matters easy for him with tradesfolk and others. "May I add to my previous statement, however? Do you suppose," he went on, turning to Mr. Thomas Gerant, "that when talking just now about the relations of authors and publishers I was speaking on a subject of which I knew nothing? Believe me, there is not one of the whole company of authors, from the veriest hack like myself to the favourite of fortune earning his thousands a year, who would not tell you my idea is right. Who has not undergone his bad quarter of an hour in the publisher's 'sweating room'? who has not suffered agonies when waiting for the 'deferred payment'? whose heart has not sunk while hearing the value of his wares depreciated, and felt life a very poor thing, and himself a still poorer, during the time his work was being appraised and his capabilities dissected? No; believe me, publishers' tactics are wrong. Authors are, after all, but children well-grown, and want to be praised and patted on the back and told how splendidly they are doing by the man who holds the purse. The old track has been travelled long enough; I believe any publisher bold enough to try mine could make a brilliant success. I am, as I said, only a poor hack who sends out his articles anonymously, like illegitimate children lacking a father's name, yet do you suppose it would be possible for me to write on, if editors did not sometimes praise my work and tell me in plain words it is very good? Editors in their generation are wiser than the wisest publisher. It is not always a foggy day with them. Sometimes, even, they have said to me: 'How does it happen,

Moucell, you never show the world what you really could give it? Why do you persistently hide your light under a bushel?'"

"The same thought has often occurred to my mind," exclaimed Mr. Gerant eagerly. "Why do you not write something important—of permanent value? Surely—"

"I could show you nine excellent reasons, not to speak of the less important fact that I must live myself," interrupted the overweighted author. "No; fate killed my literary ambitions long ago. When a man finds he must write for his bread he is wise to thank God he can earn it, and keep from longing for the luxuries others are able to command."

"Still, I wish—"

"There was a time when I wished too; that was in the days of my folly. Now I am content, which is sufficient for me. All the same, however, I do wish, in the best interests of literature, I could see the system changed of pushing an author down, and then keeping him down for ever. And now about 'The Offences of His Forefathers'?" he added quite briskly. "We must make them a success. If there is nothing more you want to say to me, I think I will go home, and, while my ideas about the book are hot, get them on the anvil."

The Messrs. Gerant had nothing they wished to say, so Mr. Moucell, after a cordial handshake, departed in very good spirits, and bent his steps Lambeth-ward, to take another turn on the treadmill, satisfied to have had his say, which he felt assured sooner or later would bear fruit. He had not

intended to speak then, but the chance offered, and he took advantage of it—as, indeed, he tried to do whenever the shadow of a chance came in his way.

No man can tell what circumstances may make him, but if Mr. Moucell had ever really considered the promise of his youth, and the fulfilment of his maturity, he might well have wept to think the net outcome of all his cleverness had been to leave him one of the most calculating of living beings.

“What a good fellow that is!” was Mr. Gerant’s comment. “How anxious to be of use!”

“Yes,” answered the son; “but I think he talked a great deal of nonsense. Publishing is a business, like everything else.”

“Of course; still—” which only proved Mr. Moucell’s words had touched the gentleman’s kind heart rather than convinced his head.

A letter such as was to be despatched to Mr. Mallow is not an easy one to write, but at last the younger Gerant finished an epistle which he decided “would do.”

“And if this literary man is not satisfied with the terms, all I can say is he ought to be”—from which comment it may be concluded the offer was liberal.

The publisher, therefore, experienced some surprise when he only received a card in answer, acknowledging receipt of his communication, to which Mr. Mallow added he would reply fully in the course of a few days. As a matter of fact, a whole week elapsed before the promised letter made its appearance—when the contents amazed Mr. Gerant.



The writer expressed his gratification, but said, since there seemed considerable doubt as to whether the book would prove commercially successful, he should prefer to wait results before taking the cheque Messrs. Gerant proposed sending. If the firm forwarded an agreement, he would sign and return immediately. Owing to the illness of his rector he had not been able to take any holiday during the summer or autumn, but he now proposed to go for a fortnight to London early in November, when probably some of the proof would be ready for him to correct.

He ventured to encroach on Messrs. Gerant's good-nature by asking if they would have the kindness to give him the name of any centrally-situated hotel where the charges would be moderate. "I have never been to London," he explained, "and do not know anyone who could give the information I require"—a statement which made father and son look at each other.

The whole letter was so simple, innocent and straightforward that both men forthwith conceived a liking for its writer, who, while refusing money, thought of economy and stood in need of friendly help.

"I do not know what hotel to recommend," said Mr. Thomas Gerant. "As he is not a rector, probably his means are limited, and I should be very sorry to let him in for what he might consider undue expense. Can you think of any quiet place, father, likely to serve his turn?"

"I cannot, indeed. Better refer the matter to Moucell; he is up to everything, and no doubt can

put all right at once. If your mother were only stronger, I would ask Mr. Mallow to stay with us. It is an attention I should like to show him."

Since it was an attention, however, that the speaker could not show, Mr. Moucell had to be consulted, as it chanced, during Mr. Thomas Gerant's temporary absence.

"There are plenty of hotels," said the oracle. "I will consider which would be the best for a man to put up at who, of course, wants to see all there is to be seen."

"I only wish I could have asked him to our house. But Mrs. Gerant is so delicate I dare not venture to invite even a quiet country clergyman."

"I will ask him with pleasure," exclaimed Mr. Moucell with hearty eagerness. "South Lambeth would be just the place for him—close to the Archbishop's Palace, Westminster, Houses of Parliament—convenient for everything. My young folks know their London thoroughly, and can pilot him wherever he wants to go; no plan could be better. I am so glad I thought of it."

"But would not it be a terrible inconvenience? You have such a large family, and—"

"Inconvenience? Not a bit of it! We have plenty of room and to spare, and Mrs. Howley knows how to make people comfortable. Supposing even that it were inconvenient—do you not think I should be only too much delighted to serve you and your son who have been such kind friends to me? I will write without delay. You may be certain I shall word the invitation properly, and make him understand what your own wishes were on the subject."

“Really, I am at a loss how to thank you sufficiently ; of course, any expense which you may have to incur—”

Mr. Moucell laughed as he answered, “When a man has to cater for twelve every day, the cost of a thirteenth is not worth mentioning. I am not afraid but that we shall manage all right. A person who has never been to London and who does not know anybody else who has, is not likely to be wildly extravagant in his ideas, so we will not order turtle soup or ortolans, or champagne either. Very likely he is a total abstainer, but I will chance a bottle of the best Irish, and so be prepared for any emergency.”

All of which, with more to the same effect, Mr. Gerant repeated to his son, who did not seem as much delighted as might have been expected.

“I do not think a man accustomed to a quiet life will care for a houseful of boys.”

“We do not know what he has been accustomed to, and one thing is certain—if Mr. Mallow wants to get through a lot of sight-seeing in a fortnight, Moucell can put him in the way of gratifying his desire.”

“How does he intend to explain his appearance on the scene?”

“I did not ask. He has so much tact, he will manage admirably, I feel confident.”

That was just where the shoe pinched, but Mr. Thomas Gerant, for reasons of his own, refrained from saying it pinched at all ; instead he remarked,—

“I wonder whether Mr. Mallow is young or old?”

“Moucell thinks middle-aged at the least ; believes he has been gathering experience for years, and that

his book is the outcome. Says he will probably never write another worth a rush."

"Put all his plums into one pudding, eh? It is not improbable. Well, we shall be better able to judge after we have seen him."



## CHAPTER VIII.

MR. MOUCELL did not, as a rule, affect early rising ; but on the morning when Mr. Mallow expected to arrive in London he stood at Euston Station waiting for the Irish Mail.

His invitation had been frankly accepted by the man who would have sent just such an invitation himself. The idea that it was unusual never crossed his mind. All his life he had mixed among people who regarded hospitality as the commonest of common virtues, and rejoiced to receive guests as much, as in a more artificial state of society hosts and hostesses rejoice to get rid of them.

Kilbrannon Rectory had ever been a house of call for pilgrims through the moist valleys of Central Ireland, and Disestablishment made no difference in the warmth of its welcome. At sight of a stranger the doors flew wide almost of their own accord. A hen strolling leisurely about unconscious of impending evil, could always be caught and killed to grace the clerical board. No great changes can be wrought instantly, and though doubtless a change has since come, in the days when Mr. Mallow was curate of Kilbrannon, Erin's wild harp was still giving forth that gay, careless music which Erin's children will probably never, save in imagination, hear more.

Mr. Mallow had been asked to make his home at the Rectory till he could find lodgings, and as there were no lodgings to find, he remained there, sometimes in company with the Rector and his wife, more frequently alone. It was as desolate and dreary a parish as the heart of man could conceive ; but he had been happy in it, and he felt happy as the train, with much grinding of brakes, and, judging from the amount of noise, an apparently tremendous sense of its own importance, rushed into the London terminus.

Mr. Moucell was looking out for a man of middle age, his frame bowed under its weight of knowledge, his hair sprinkled with grey, preoccupied, grave, probably shy ; but no one answering this ideal, whether clerical or lay, descended from the train, and he was thinking he might as well have had his sleep out, when he heard a cheery-faced young fellow, clad in a heavy overcoat, who was carrying a hat-box and rug, say to a porter, "Only one portmanteau in van, thank you—'Mallow.'"

"Are you Mr. Mallow, then?" asked Mr. Moucell, walking up to the speaker with extended hand.

"I am," answered the young man with a smile. "And you?"

"My name is Moucell."

"Ah, I thought so. Well, this is good of you. What a morning for anyone to turn out!"

The accent, though unmistakably Irish, was refined and cultivated, the manner easy and unembarrassed. All Mr. Moucell's preconceived notions of a depressed and down-trodden curate vanished into thin air. He was simply astounded. Could this boy—he really

seemed nothing more—be the author of a book which sounded the very depths of sorrow and took firm grip of the heart as if with hooks of iron? It seemed incredible! All very well to talk as he had to Joscelyne of authors being the antitheses of their books, but there was something almost uncanny about such an antithesis as he saw in the flesh before him.

When had the man begun to write? Where had he got his experience? Where the original thoughts that leaped out of the darkness of his book as lightning from the midst of gloomy clouds?

What would Messrs. Gerant say? They could not believe him to be the real Simon Pure. They would think, as Mr. Moucell almost thought, that there was some deception—someone masquerading for a frolic, only intent on playing off a very bad joke.

“Is this a London fog?” asked Mr. Mallow, as they drove through streets still dark, where gaslights made a bad fight against wet and damp.

“No. A genuine London fog rises before a man like a wall; he cannot see the lamp-post he is clutching, or the house he leans against.”

“How I hope there will be one while I am here!” It was amazing. This man had produced a story which might have been written about the lost in their place of punishment, and yet he appeared as eager to be in the thick of a yellow fog as a schoolboy.

Mr. Moucell, spite of his cleverness, knew little concerning the full compass of the human heart, and marvelled that an instrument that could peal out notes of mortal agony should be capable also of echoing the light impressions of a mind at peace.

Mr. Mallow had by this time unfastened his muffler,



and the orthodox white tie consequently appeared in evidence, to Mr. Moucell's relief, for he felt glad to perceive even so slight a sign that his new friend was *bonâ fide*.

As they talked, however, the first impression made by the young man's appearance began to wear off, and Mr. Moucell became gradually conscious it was chiefly his companion's contented manner and general look of well-being that had led him astray. One who had lived for the best part of his existence amid country scenes, in country air, keeping regular hours, and leading an existence free from all harassing and unhealthy excitement, naturally failed to exhibit the traces of age that as a rule mark the town-bred countenance.

When at rest, also, Mr. Mallow's mouth wore an expression almost of sternness, while into the eyes there came at times a look of deep thought strangely at variance with the laughing light which had danced across them at Euston Station.

Yes; it was conceivable that this other man—the man within the man, so to speak—had written even "The Offences of His Forefathers." The experience he might have got from anyone. The genius most probably was his own; and, better satisfied, Mr. Moucell devoted himself to amusing his companion.

He was not difficult to amuse. Everything interested him; everything seemed strange.

"I always wished to see London," he observed, "but I never thought I should see it under such pleasant circumstances. You were indeed kind to ask me to your house," whereupon Mr. Moucell, of course, said what was proper in the most genial manner possible, and chat ran on very easily and com-



fortably till they reached South Lambeth, where Mr. Moucell bade the traveller heartily welcome to his home.

“What a pretty neighbourhood!” remarked Mr. Mallow; though, indeed, the neighbourhood was looking its very worst, which can be very bad.

“Yes, I think so too,” was the answer—“and most convenient. Good people lived about here at one time, but it is unfashionable now.”

The pair had breakfast *tête-à-tête*. The society of his children at meals was never a blessing Mr. Moucell appreciated, so by some unwritten law it had come to pass that save on Sundays, when he was seldom at home, he generally ate in solitary state.

“It is a most convenient arrangement,” Mrs. Howley often remarked; and it was. There were two spare rooms in the basement where the young Moucells fed, and played, and argued, and quarrelled, while Mrs. Howley serenely darned socks and performed other good works in the midst of a din which might have driven another woman mad; consequently the head of the house did not see much of his family, and on the morning when Mr. Mallow arrived he was able to skilfully interview him without interruption.

It was not long before the host knew almost all there was to know about his guest's antecedents.

He had been curate at Kilbrannon for nearly five years; before that in Dublin for two. He was just nine and twenty. Every acre belonging to his people had been sold in the “Encumbered Estates Court.” Fortunately his father held a post under Government, “which makes matters pretty comfortable,” explained Mr. Mallow, who evidently

had nothing to conceal. "My two sisters are married; one brother is in Canada, another in Brazil, and a third in China; I am the only stay-at-home."

"And your hat covers your family, I presume?" hazarded Mr. Moucell, with a smile.

For a moment Mr. Mallow looked puzzled. Evidently he had never met that phrase running loose about Kilbrannon parish; then he understood, and answered:

"You mean that I am unmarried: yes, of course."

"Happy man!" Mr. Moucell would have exclaimed, had not his thoughts taken quite an opposite direction. From the time when he offered the hospitality of South Lambeth to a total stranger till he was driving home with him through those narrow and devious streets cabmen, for some occult reason, love, he had thought of no one in the matter save Messrs. Gerant and such pecuniary small advantages as might arise to himself.

As the cabman crossed Waterloo Bridge, however, the busy brain, which never knew any rest, began to consider that beside him sat a young man with his future to make, while at home there was his daughter, who might help to render that future a great success. There were fat livings in the Fenland gift; there was patronage the Fenlands could influence. The Marquis, now growing old, was well disposed towards a person who had written many things pleasing to the right party—his lordship could not be supposed to know the same person had written almost as many on the other side of the question, which, though an expedient proceeding

from Mr. Moucell's point of view, was perhaps a pity.

Of the latter circumstances, however, as has been said, Lord Fenland was not aware, and his old liking had quite returned for a man whose presence reminded him of the pleasant days when elections were differently managed, and peers could almost ensure the return of their own nominees. Viscount Reedpont also, and Lady Patricia, not to speak of Lady Patricia's husband, Mr. Clifton Jones, thought well of one who had shown—the noble marquis considered conclusively—what he might have achieved under happier circumstances.

They were a family, as Mr. Moucell quite understood, who, though they hated to be asked, were willing enough to give anything except money, or what meant money's worth to their august selves; and—who could tell?—it might be on the cards that Joscelyne would yet be wife to a Bishop!

Mr. Mallow's book was written on lines sure to find favour in Lord Fenland's eyes. He had evidently mixed with good people—as the word is generally understood among worldly people—and, in brief, the thing seemed quite possible, and was well worth trying.

True, the young man was nearly twelve years Joscelyne's senior, but what of that. Nothing at all; the disparity was on the right side—the match suitable in every respect.

For this reason Mr. Moucell asked that question which puzzled his visitor, and also was the cause why he did not make the cynical comment, "Happy man," but rather held his peace.



## CHAPTER IX.

“Now, what is the first thing you would like to do?” asked Mr. Moucell, after he had run through a list of sights worth seeing and places worth going to, long enough to daunt the most courageous.

But Mr. Mallow was not daunted; rather, with all his wits about him, he answered, promptly:

“Call on the Messrs. Gerant,” greatly to the amusement of his host, who exclaimed:

“There is nothing in this world so sweet as love’s young dream—except an author’s first book.”

The fresh aspirant for literary honours did not reply, only coloured and laughed, while Mr. Moucell went on:

“Yes; the first book contains, in imagination, everything a man can wish for—love, greatness, happiness. At the beginning all authors see the great possibilities lying within a manuscript as certainties, and even at the end—”

“Even at the end,” repeated Mr. Mallow, suggestively.

If Mr. Moucell had spoken his mind he would have said: “Even at the end they still hope, poor fools, though they know they are worse paid and get less thanks than any other class in the community,” but his *rôle* just then was not to depress, but encourage,



the rising light, therefore with that fatal readiness habit had taught him, he shifted the gloomy slide and substituted :

“When the play is over I think most writers would say they have had their pennyworth. Few amass fortunes, but all things are comparative ; and the amount of capital a man requires to start what may grow into a big affair is really infinitesimal. A quart of ink, a ream of foolscap, and a box of pens suffice to write a long novel.”

“Well, hardly ; the author contributes time, brains, labour.”

“So, after a fashion, does the earth into which some grudging farmer casts, for the most part ungratefully, God’s good seed, and afterwards never even thanks Mother Earth for all the trouble she has given her useful old self, only takes the crop under some agricultural law of Divine right. It is a nice question, and one you had better thresh out on some future day with your then publisher.”

Mr. Mallow did not understand what the speaker meant, and Mr. Moucell did not exactly know himself ; but the talk served.

“If you wish to go to Old Bond Street to-day, I think we might as well start soon,” said Mr. Moucell, after a brief pause.

“I am ready, but pray do not let my small business interfere with your more important engagements.”

“As it happens, your business fits in exactly with mine. I want to call at a place in Piccadilly close to Messrs. Gerants’ office.”

They took boat at Nine Elms Pier, and proceeded

no further than Westminster Bridge, having passed in that short run, however, St. Mary's Church, Lambeth Palace, St. Thomas's Hospital, and the Houses of Parliament. Far as the eye could see down river there were buildings piled on buildings, spire rising above spire. Mr. Mallow stood on the noble Embankment, looking about him with an expression of puzzled enchantment delightful to behold, and Mr. Moucell read the thoughts that chased each other through his mind, like print.

This was London—modern London, historical London—the London of romance, the London he had heard of, read of, thought of, wished to see—which was far mightier and more imposing than the London of his dreams. Vanished were the narrow thoroughfares of Bloomsbury, forgotten the mean streets their cabman had threaded on his way to Waterloo Bridge, obliterated the first disappointing impression of London the Great.

This, this was London, seated proudly on the banks of its world-famed river—not the most beautiful capital of present times, but the most interesting and wonderful.

There are points from which one could wish strangers might obtain their earliest impression of London—the top of Highgate Archway, for instance ; or Charing Cross Railway Bridge, just where the pedestrian seems to be standing above the gardens that stretch under Adelphi Terrace ; or the ornamental water in St. James's Park ; or from the Albert Embankment on a night when the moon is playing at hide-and-seek with brooding shadows over the Houses of Parliament, casting strange streaks of light

across the water, and touching with tender silvery gleams blackened stone and terrace walk, blankly staring windows, Clock Tower and darkly flowing river.

“ I am sorry you have not a better morning on which to make the acquaintance of our little village,” said Mr. Moucell, with a throb of gratified pride,—he had adopted the great metropolis, “ though for London in November it is not so bad a day now the mist has cleared off somewhat.”

“ In my opinion this slight haze adds to the effect,” answered Mr. Mallow.

“ Gives to the whole scene an air of mystery ? ”

“ Exactly. Now, where is the Abbey ? ”

“ We shall see it presently ; but we will not go inside to-day, because my young people are promising themselves the pleasure of showing you the finest building London contains.”

“ Finer than St. Paul’s—or the Tower ? ”

“ Yes, I fancy you will say so.”

They walked up the incline to Bridge Street, and in another moment Mr. Moucell said : “ That building across the way is Westminster Hall.”

“ Westminster Hall,” repeated the man, new to all these sights, with such eagerness that some who were passing first looked at him with surprise, and then turned to glance at the ancient pile they had seen so often, it seemed to them quite a common thing. But before Mr. Mallow’s eyes a whole series of pictures swept with the speed of a hurrying procession. Without order or sequence he saw Charles the First, Warren Hastings, Lambert, More, Balmerino, Norfolk, Strafford, Russell stand upon their trial. He beheld the awful scene when prelates and abbots



threw their tapers on the ground and, as with one voice, pronounced that fearful curse—which need not be repeated here. He heard Henry III. swearing to keep the charters inviolate—"as I am a man, as I am a Christian, as I am a Knight, as I am a King, crowned and anointed"—ere returning to his former evil ways, and, as usual, breaking every promise he had made. And then there recurred the episode of that French king who in captivity, being entreated to cast aside his melancholy, made answer in those words which have floated down to us through the ages and were over two thousand years old when quoted by the unhappy prisoner more than six centuries ago: "How shall we sing in a strange land?"

It is the plaintive notes of life that continue to sound soft and clear when the trumpet tones of war and triumph are forgotten, and as at Mr. Moucell's bidding he tore his gaze from the largest hall in Europe, unsupported by pillars, the young clergyman came back at the same time—not from London or Ireland, but from the slopes of Palestine, where he had for a moment seemed to be listening to the pathetic question of that sweet singer who knew how to awaken every chord in the human heart.

What a corner that was to which Mr. Moucell directed the stranger's attention! St. Margaret's, the Abbey, the grand entrance to St. Stephen's—all clustered together close beside Westminster Hall, Palace Yard, and the Clock Tower. Mr. Mallow drew a long breath. He felt he would need leisure to think over all these things. What a stately place London was! No description he had read did the slightest justice to it.



They went along Parliament Street towards Trafalgar Square, Mr. Moucell indicating in the distance the Nelson monument, the Admiralty, Horse Guards, Whitehall, ere, turning suddenly to the left, he said with a smile : " This is Downing Street, which doubtless you have heard of. We are going across St. James's Park." As he spoke they were in it, while a few minutes' walk brought them close to the Duke of York's column.

" How lofty ! " said Mr. Mallow, looking up at the figure on the top, while they ascended those broad steps which lead out of the Mall into Waterloo Place.

" Yes," agreed Mr. Moucell. " It was said by the wits of that day the gentleman was put there to be out of reach of his creditors."

" Did he owe so much ? "

" I believe he did. It was a way great people had then—and which many have now, for that matter."

It was not long ere they reached Old Bond Street, where Mr. Moucell went in just for a moment in order to introduce his captive.

The Gerants, father and son, were very pleasant ; yet anyone who understood the junior partner might have guessed he was not quite content.

If the idea of a middle-aged, depressed, down-trodden curate had failed to find favour in his eyes, how should the reality of this cheerful, pleasant-looking, easy-spoken, clever young fellow recommend its undesirable personality to his jealous suspicion ?

Here was precisely the individual to take a girl's fancy : that frank laugh, that melodious voice, that

winning manner, to the charm of which Mr. Isaac Gerant yielded himself a thrall forthwith.

Nothing could have been more unfortunate, and in his heart the junior partner wished Mr. Moucell forty fathoms deep for so officiously offering his hospitality to such an undesirable inmate.

“I hope you will not be put to any inconvenience at South Lambeth,” he said, when the literary adviser had taken his departure—though, indeed, he could have wished the young clergyman put to such inconvenience as to desire to remove forthwith—“but in a house with so many children it must be difficult, if not impossible, for anyone to have much quiet. I often wonder how Moucell manages to get through his work.”

“The place seems wonderfully still to me,” was the answer. “No one would imagine there were children on the premises. I never heard a sound, and have not seen any person except Mr. Moucell and a servant.”

Mr. Thomas Gerant brightened up a little after that. “Really,” he thought, “Moucell has a great deal of good sense. Evidently he is keeping his daughter in the background; and she—well, she is not at all a pushing girl; just a nice, natural, unaffected—”

“We shall be able to send you a good supply of proof this afternoon,” Mr. Gerant, senior, was saying. “Perhaps you will kindly let us have it back as soon as you can. We are hurrying the printers, so as to get the book out before the end of this month.”

Mr. Mallow was delighted, and promised to lose no time in returning such sheets as he might receive.

Then they drifted into purely business talk, and Mr. Thomas Gerant, by way of raising the author's spirits, observed,—

“Of course, it is impossible to tell how any book by an absolutely unknown writer will ‘go.’ It may take, it may fail; but whether it fail or take, one thing is certain—it will require a lot of advertising. We mean to advertise it well; not to let your work sink for want of money to float it.”

## CHAPTER X.

MR. MOUCELL returned while the point Mr. Thomas Gerant's remark was meant to raise chanced to be the subject of conversation.

Understanding exactly what it might mean hereafter, he took part in the discussion—if the word can be applied to a statement made by one side, and accepted without question by the other.

Mr. Mallow expressed his willingness to meet the publishers in every possible way.

He had already written he was not in a position to take the expenses on himself, though more than ready, as also previously stated, to let the question of payment remain in abeyance till after "The Offences of His Forefathers" had stood at the bar of public opinion.

"No, no, no!" exclaimed Mr. Thomas Gerant; "our offer was made after due consideration, and whether the book prove a financial success or not can make no difference as regards that matter. What we should like you to give us, however, is the refusal of your next novel."

"Why, of course!" agreed Mr. Mallow, astonished the firm should be thinking of another work before the first had escaped from the printers.

"Messrs. Gerants' request is perfectly natural, as



well as absolutely fair," put in Mr. Moucell. "If the great work fall dead—why, they lose their money, and bear the loss with equanimity. If, on the other hand, it should make a *coup*, they only ask you to give them the chance of reaping another harvest. They are not so unreasonable as to wish you to say you will sell them your next book, but simply to be allowed to try whether they cannot do as well for you as Brown, Jones, Robinson, and others of that ilk who are always lurking round corners in the hope of securing some honest publisher's pet lamb."

Hearing which, Mr. Mallow uprose in wrath. "They would find it a difficult matter to steal this lamb!" he declared. "Please at once give me pen, ink and paper, that I may write a letter or sign an agreement, or do something to make you absolutely safe, though I hope—I do hope—you know I could never be so mean as to close with any other offer, after the kindness you have shown throughout the whole of this affair," and he turned with a sort of passionate appeal to Mr. Isaac Gerant, whom he evidently regarded as a present help in time of trouble.

"Gently, gently!" suggested Mr. Moucell. "No one, I am sure, thought you would act otherwise than straightforwardly."

"No need for any writing," added Mr. Thomas Gerant; "your word is more than sufficient. Is it not, father?"

"Far more," declared Mr. Gerant, senior.

"I would rather put the matter in black and white," persisted Mr. Mallow. "The very idea of

throwing over a house which has acted fairly by me seems so monstrous that I should like to do any and every thing in my power to make you safe."

"Very well: then we will send a little memo. with our cheque, to the effect that we may count on being offered the refusal of your next work of fiction. Probably you have one on the stocks?"

"I have one partly built," confessed the young author.

"That is capital! I hope we shall be able to publish it also."

"And I hope," said Mr. Mallow gracefully, "you may think it worth publishing."

"Now that business is satisfactorily settled," edged in Mr. Moucell, who could always be depended on to come forward when a fresh appearance was desirable on any stage he adorned, "I wish to remark that as I am devoting this day to personally conducting Mr. Mallow 'around the surroundings'—the phrase is not mine or copyright—I think we must say farewell for the present."

"Where are you going to take Mr. Mallow?" asked the elder partner.

"Oh, just 'around' a little first; later on to Mrs. Eldon-Gannox's 'at home'; then—"

"Indeed!" interrupted Mr. Thomas Gerant, surprised. "That will be a gathering worth seeing."

"Are you going?" asked Mr. Moucell innocently.

"No; only wish I were. Hadn't the chance—"

"What a pity I did not know! I could have got you a card quite easily. I wish, when there is anything in progress at which you would care to be present, you would just drop me a line; I can

generally manage an invitation. Trouble! Not a bit of it; only too happy."

"Thank you; I may ask you at some future time. Are you acquainted with Mrs. Gannox, Mr. Mallow?"

"No; but my mother saw her act in Dublin, I won't say how many years ago."

"Best keep on the safe side. Remember, women and music should never be dated."

"I thought she was dead."

"Oh, dear no! very much alive; married her third husband about a couple of months since. Charming woman, I believe—but I cut across your sentence just now, Mr. Moucell; you were going to add—"

"That I proposed to wind up a quiet day by dining in Portman Square with the Clifton Jones. Mr. Jones married one of the Fenland family, as no doubt you are aware. The Fenlands are old friends of mine. If you remember, I went abroad with the son, to whom I dedicated that little account of travel you were good enough to like, Mr. Gerant."

"Why do you not go abroad again, and give us another book as full of charm?"

"Ah! I was young then, and free, as this fortunate gentleman," replied Mr. Moucell, indicating his *protégé*; "a father of a family has something else to do than travel for pleasure. I have often wished, however, some enterprising editor would make it worth my while to go to a little known country. I should greatly enjoy packing up."

"Who can tell what may be in store?" which was one of those maddening questions people are so fond



of putting by way of consolation to poor wretches who believe they know only too well what is likely to be in store.

“Ay, who can tell—either of good or evil?” returned Mr. Moucell, with an involuntary sigh. “But we really must be off!” and the man who had marred his future went away with the man who had his future still to make.

They went here and there, constantly coming across something which seemed very wonderful and interesting to the stranger from a strange land.

No one need have desired a better companion in such a ramble than Mr. Moucell. His stock of information seemed inexhaustible, while his memory was marvellous. Anyone might have imagined he was out for a happy holiday, and yet he carried within his breast a sadly anxious heart. Things were not going well. They had not been going well for some time; and as he walked and talked he felt like one doing his turn on a treadmill, to which he is doomed for life.

There is no greater mistake than that of imagining trouble can be exorcised by change of scene, or left at home when a man goes out among his fellows. People who are quite easy in their worldly and domestic affairs particularly affect this theory, not comprehending movement is as likely to knit a broken bone as mixing in society to pay pressing debts, or lessen the weight and fret of a heavy burden.

But they are wrong. Care has a free pass on every railway in the kingdom. It jumps into omnibuses and tramcars, and no inspector demands a ticket. It enters the finest houses with a companion who would



fain be rid of the haunting presence, and yet has received no card of invitation. It is tireless, and to all save the man afflicted by its company, bodiless ; the footmen who stood in Mrs. Eldon-Gannox's hall did not perceive even the shadow of a shade as his trouble stalked into the house with Mr. John Moucell.

Who was there not at that gathering? Actors, artists, musicians, editors, authors, filled the rooms, in order to welcome back to London a bride of nearly seventy, whose voice was still sweet, whose manner had not lost its fascination, who could remember the rejoicings when Waterloo was won, and yet was as much occupied with the doings and sayings of to-day as Mr. Moucell himself.

A wonderful woman—a beautiful old woman with a soft, gracious expression, delicate hands, and the indefinable charm which had half a century previously won for her wealth, friends, fame, love.

She accorded a specially warm greeting to Mr. Moucell, who had since they first met been her most loyal and respectful admirer, and took Mr. Mallow, as his friend, into favour at once.

“ Ah ! ” she said, “ tell me about Dublin. ‘ Dear—’ How does the phrase run ? ”

“ ‘ Dear dirty Dublin,’ I believe.”

“ Yes, of course ; though it is difficult to say why, except because people like alliteration. Whether dirty or not, however, Dublin will always be dear to me. I never had such encores in any other town, nor such audiences.”

“ How I wish I had been among them ! ”

“ Why, you were not born when I was last on Irish

soil ; and yet how short a while it seems since I saw Sackville Street ! ‘ Time gathered looks so small.’ Horace, will you look after Mr. Mallow ? ” she went on, speaking to a gentleman standing near. “ Probably he would like to be introduced to some of our guests,” and smiling she thus dismissed one who felt her to be the individual best worth knowing among all present.

There were lots of celebrities, however—men whose names were familiar as household words—who, though lions, looked very tame, who talked in the most natural way possible, and did not seem in the least spoilt by their greatness, or uplifted because of it. Mr. Mallow thought he had never met a simpler, more friendly set of people, and made some remark to this effect when he and Mr. Moucell left the house.

“ It is the tenth-rate author,” answered his companion, “ the artist who can only daub, the comedian who is not funny, the musician who has missed the mark, that gives himself airs—the imitators, the shams, the pretenders are the affected folk. Clever men and women do not, as a rule, trouble themselves to paint the lily.”

“ One lady present certainly painted, though I should scarcely say the lily.”

“ Mrs. Wilbraim—yes. I saw how she fastened on to you. Isn’t she dreadful ? ”

“ I thought so. What is her particular line ? ”

“ Lying and lion-hunting. No one likes her, yet everyone goes to her parties ; not for the sake of the hostess, but that of the company to be met there. I used to go to her ‘ at homes ’ once upon a time, but I got tired of the business.”

Mr. Mallow laughed. He was thinking of how the lady had told Mr. Moucell to go away—go away far—a bad deceitful man, who flattered shamefully; she only hoped he would not spoil Mr. Mallow. “Pray do not let yourself be led by him,” she said to her new captive, as she waved Mr. Moucell from her side. “I assure you he cannot speak without paying me a compliment. Dreadful, is it not? Shows such shocking taste—not gentlemanly!”

“You can scarcely expect me to agree with you there!” answered Mr. Mallow, feeling he ought not to let the latter part of the remark, at all events, pass without protest.

“Dear me! I did expect better things from you; but men are all alike,” with a little giggle and tap of her fan; “they were deceivers ever.”

“Does she imagine I meant to flatter her?” was the thought which passed through the young clergyman’s mind. “I would as soon try to get up a flirtation with the witch of Endor!” And he looked at the old raddled face where powder lay thick in the wrinkles, where there was a smear of colour on each sunken cheek, and little patches of real white obtruded from under the dark hair, which looked so ghastly when contrasted with her yellow furrowed skin.

“And how did you leave dear Ireland?” she asked in her tenderest tones—somewhat to Mr. Mallow’s discomfiture, for he had not told her he hailed from the Isle of Saints, and fondly imagined his accent was imperceptible.

“Much as usual,” he answered. “She was weeping bitterly when I left Dublin last night.”

“Did you really cross last night?”

"Yes, really."

"Dear me, how strange! That accounts for it."

He had not courage to ask what "it" required to be accounted for. The process of reasoning which might be going on in her mind seemed as mysterious and erratic to him as the course of a comet.



## CHAPTER XI.

“MRS. WILBRAIM asked you, of course, to call and see her?” said Mr. Moucell.

“Indeed she did. ‘At home’ on Tuesday and Sunday afternoons, or she would be only too glad to receive me at any other time if I felt lonely and wanted to talk over my ‘plans and projects, hopes and fears, with a sympathizing friend.’”

“No, surely?”

“Yes, certainly! When I told her my stay in London would be brief, and that I desired to see as much as possible in the limited time at my disposal, she nodded sagely and replied: ‘You will return to us ere long. London is a magnet that draws everyone towards it; and when you do return, remember you have always a friend in me.’”

“You must have produced a profound impression!” sarcastically.

“Wait a little; that was only the introduction. I said I did not think I should return, ‘it might be for years, and it might be for ever,’ and then she clutched my wrist with her poor skinny fingers and gasped out: ‘I have a presentiment! I feel you will be again among us in a very short time. You will come back soon to London and not leave it again—unless’—with a dreamy, far-away look—‘it may be—for the far East.’”

“The old simpleton! She is always raving about some vague East; perhaps she means Whitechapel!”

“‘Your book,’ Mrs. Wilbraim went on,” continued Mr. Mallow, “‘will be A Great Success!’—by-the-bye, how did she know I had written a book?”

“From Mrs. Eldon-Gannox, no doubt. Of course, when I asked for a second card, I was bound to say why and for whom I wanted it,” returned Mr. Moucell, who felt rather uncomfortably on his defence.

“Thank you so much for asking at all. I was only wondering how my insignificant personality came to be discussed in London.”

“I did not discuss it. I only told Mrs. Gannox that a friend of mine, who was going to set the Thames and every other river in the kingdom on fire, had promised to come and stay at South Lambeth, and that I should feel grateful if she would allow me to bring him to her reception. No doubt she of her kindness—for she is the kindest woman living—repeated my utterance. *Voilà tout.*”

“It was good both of you and her. I now quite understand, though I confess I did feel amazed at the knowing way in which Mrs. Wilbraim talked about a book not yet published.”

“But about which there have been cunning paragraphs in the papers,” returned Mr. Moucell triumphantly. “My dear fellow, do you suppose Messrs. Gerant are not up to their business—that the firm was born yesterday? Set your mind quite at ease. Everything has been done for you that could be done; you have been announced, heralded, puffed. If you fail to win your spurs, it will not be for lack of prophets foretelling victory.”

“What you say is really most gratifying,” replied the man fresh to all such experiences; “but are these preliminary flourishes necessary?”

“Absolutely. The time has gone by when ‘good wine needed no bush.’ In our days the better the wine the more bush it requires, and I only hope your publishers may receive the reward they deserve, because they have striven their best to make your ‘Forefathers’ Offences’ known.”

“And you think everyone we met at Mrs. Gannox’s was aware I write?”

“I can’t answer for everyone, but if there were anyone ignorant he will be enlightened shortly.”

“How strange!” remarked Mr. Mallow humbly; and it did seem strange to him—very strange. Twenty-four hours previously he had been but a curate—an Irish curate after Disestablishment—in a remote part of the country, where he had found it hard work to get forty of the congregation to listen to the best sermon he ever wrote; and now in the hub of the universe he was a great man—at least, a man great enough to be thought about, talked to, conciliated, made much of.

He was the same, but his position had changed, and he could not understand how such a sudden transformation was effected.

“To return to Mrs. Wilbraim,” he said at last, awkwardly enough. “When I reappear in London—which, according to her statement, I am to do almost immediately—she kindly gave me a standing invitation to her house, situated somewhere near Regent’s Park, I gathered.”

“She does hang out in those parts,” answered Mr.

Moucell, "and receives constantly. A lot of people go to her parties, not because she is very rich—which she is not—or grand, or clever, or amiable, or beautiful, but just because she catches every fresh celebrity and keeps him on view till he breaks away. She is the most arrant humbug in London, and the most barefaced flatterer living, so long as flattery can serve her turn. Please yourself; but if I were you I would have nothing to do with her."

"She is very anxious to know Mr. Thomas Gerant."

"That she may get him to publish those beautiful lines she wrote on a dead sparrow, doubtless. Oh, yes; I know them—and her."

"And she told me," continued Mr. Mallow, with the air of a man who wanted to get something off his mind, "that if I ever wished to portray a guileless, natural heroine, strong to bear, love and suffer, a true child of nature, I was at perfect liberty to study her for that purpose. She could a tale unfold, and would unfold it for me, because she felt we were alike pure and noble. When she first looked in my face the thought flashed across her mind—'That is my twin soul; at last I have seen a man I could *trust*.'"

"And you?"

"I need not say I was deeply touched by such confidence, and could scarcely refrain from weeping; but I managed to answer without shedding tears that I did not require a perfect heroine for my next book at all events, but should most gratefully remember her kind permission. 'Mind you do,' she returned; 'such a link as binds us together is not easily broken. I shall not change. I never have changed. I am



the same to-day that I was when fourteen. As my poor dear father used to say—' but I never heard what that gentleman observed, because, just when I was getting terribly frightened and feeling webs of fate were being woven around and about me, young Mr. Gannox took possession of the lady and spirited her away from my view. Is he step-son or step-grandson to the bride ? ”

“ Neither,” replied Mr. Moucell, drily.

“ Oh! I thought he might be a close relative.”

“ Well, so he is in a way—the happy husband ! ”

“ No ! ” It would be impossible to describe the tone in which Mr. Mallow uttered this monosyllable.

“ Fact, I assure you.”

“ Impossible ! monstrous ! incredible ! ”

“ But true. That is Mr. Eldon-Gannox—Horace Eldon-Gannox—the lord and master of that gracious lady you saw to-day, and whom your mother also saw before you were born, on the boards in fair Dublin City.”

“ Such a marriage ought not to have been permitted ! ” exclaimed Mr. Mallow with conviction.

“ How could you have prevented it ? They are both of full age.”

“ Not a doubt of that.”

“ And in the next place, why should anyone have prevented it ? They are perfectly happy.”

“ Still, it is a complete travesty. A man may not marry his grandmother.”

“ She is not his grandmother.”

“ But she might be.”

“ Ah ! that is quite another matter.”

“ What was the inducement—the temptation ? Is she rich ? ”

“No. It is he who has the money.”

“Well, then, why—why did he do such a thing?”

“I suspect, much for the same reason that a man will move heaven and earth to secure a rare coin, a first proof, an auk’s egg, a black-letter folio. There was only one Maggie Tressily in the world. Whether you consider her valuable or not is quite beside the question. He did, and was prepared to pay any price—himself included—for the unique article.”

“Awful! awful!”

“But why awful? Is not Mrs. Gannox a charming woman?”

“Undoubtedly; but she is not a charming wife for a young man.”

“Who was going straight away to perdition when he met her. He had the bit between his teeth, and was galloping fast to that place whence there is no return when she stopped him. Yes, she alone did it—at Monte Carlo. She took him in hand like a second Rarey, tamed and made him gentle and docile as a lamb. See what a position they hold, consider the people you saw at their house to-day, and then think of what their lives would have been apart! He sowing wild oats, sure to produce a fearful harvest; she not well off—her last husband made ducks and drakes of their joint fortunes—fretting her heart out, and ending her days in some poor lodging. No, believe me, it is a very suitable match. She will keep him straight; she has given him a taste for better things. After a while you will read of him presiding at missionary meetings and laying the foundation-stones of churches, hospitals, shelters, homes, and so forth. In our imperfect state of society she could not have

adopted him, so she did the next best thing and became his wife."

"Why could she not have adopted him?"

"Because a woman never is too old for the breath of scandal to dim her fair fame. Their home is now so respectable bishops might ask, and have asked, a blessing at table. No bishop dare have done that with Mr. Eldon-Gannox posing as the prodigal son to an actress. After all, there is a great deal more common sense in this world's notions than men of your cloth are willing to believe. I nail my colours to the mast in defence of this 'monstrous' marriage, and so will you after a while."

Mr. Mallow shook his head, but did not speak. It is quite one thing for a man to know he is right and another to convince his neighbour he is wrong, and the young clergyman felt the new ground on which he was standing to be so very strange he dared not enter upon any argument respecting the still stranger ideas that dominated its inhabitants. What he had strongly in his mind were the Garden of Eden and our first mother; but London seemed to differ as much from that fair land watered by four rivers as Mrs. Wilbraim did from his ideal of Eve.

"At all events," said Mr. Moucell, "Mrs. Gannox will make her young man much happier than Mrs. Wilbraim does her old one, whom she hounds into the City to make money, and leads a dog's life at home."

"I should not like to be her husband, I think," replied Mr. Mallow, inwardly wondering why Mr. Moucell spoke so bitterly of one who was "all nature," not being aware the lady, belonging to that sisterhood

who "know everything," had, when rebuffed by Lady Patricia and not assisted by Mr. Moucell, disclosed her acquaintance with facts she would have been prudent to forget ; and our proud Norman, amongst his other virtues, possessed the quality of being a good hater. It is one possessed likewise by many other worthy people, who never so much as heard of the Conqueror.



## CHAPTER XII.

ANYTHING duller than Mr. Clifton Jones' house it would be hard to conceive, but it made up in propriety for what it lacked in mirth. Not in the whole of London was there a more hopelessly respectable establishment. The domestic misfortunes which befell other folk passed on the opposite side, and, as it were, took off their hats to that immaculate mansion. No larky maids, no dashing up-to-date footmen found entrance there. Everything was staid, solemn, stupid. If any gay young girl found her way into the depressing rooms, where she looked as much out of place as a sunbeam in a November fog, her spirits were speedily reduced to a state more in keeping with the heavy atmosphere. It was a perfectly safe house, to which doubtful guests were never invited. Mr. Clifton Jones was heavy as lead. Being very new himself, his talk naturally ran on the good old Tory rails laid down a century and more ago. The Fenlands were all of the same way of thinking. Progress, in their dictionary, meant retrogression. That the world should grow wiser, better, happier, seemed to them appalling; the world had done very well when they, the Salwoods, were created, and though Nature had then broken that beautiful mould, it never occurred to them as

otherwise than a grievance she should attempt to make another.

Mr. Moucell could remember a time when the Fenland manners, though not their convictions, were very different, but that was ere they realized that others were marching quicker than they, and leaving them hopelessly in the rear. Now they said they liked to be in the rear—would not be in the van for any consideration. Conscientiously they believed, if everyone could only be persuaded—or made—to think as they thought and feel as they felt, rents would not drop, bad seasons would be unknown, insecure investments cease from troubling, the poor go back to Maypoles and garlands instead of Hyde Park demonstrations, the old rotten boroughs again be tolerated, and life grow once more liveable. Mr. Moucell never contradicted them ; perhaps his opinions, if he really had any, coincided with theirs. The world—his world—went very well while he dwelt within the Tory strongholds, and he saw no reason to doubt that it would still have gone very well with him had he stayed there.

A man may be clever and quick both in seeing and understanding many things, but there is one thing he rarely comprehends, namely—that the companion who travels with him from cradle to grave, and seduces him into the paths of sin and folly, is himself.

It is he who moulds circumstances, not circumstances which mould him ; consequently Mr. Moucell may have made a mistake in imagining his road would have been bordered with flowers had he never seen his pretty wife.

The Fenlands were well affected towards Mr. Clifton Jones, spite of their predilection for "blue blood." Nothing succeeds like success, and his success had been remarkable. He was wealthy, and spent his wealth in a proper manner. He was a model husband and excellent father. No fear of his going off at a tangent, or losing all his money by putting too many eggs in one speculative basket.

To Mr. Jones's select residence Mr. Moucell had secured an invitation for Mr. Mallow, simply by saying he could not accept one on his own account, because an Irish clergyman was coming to stay with him.

Now, Lady Patricia's husband had his own reasons for desiring Mr. Moucell's presence at his dinner, and they were sufficient with him, wherefore he answered,—

"Bring the gentleman with you. Any friend of yours must be welcome."

"But he is *not* a friend of mine; I never saw him in my life—I never heard his name till last September, and only asked him to my house to oblige Messrs. Gerant, the big publishers, who are bringing out a book for him."

Mr. Jones paused. This was a check; but he did not like to be beaten, so asked,—

"Is he a clergyman of the Church of England?"

"Church of Ireland," corrected Mr. Moucell.

"All the same. He isn't a Home Ruler, I suppose?"

"I should say certainly not."

"Then bring him."

"Many thanks, I will; but remember, I know nothing about him, except that Messrs. Gerant con-

sider his book very clever. Whether he is young or old, rich or poor, of good family or destitute of a grandfather, are matters concerning which I am in complete ignorance."

"We will risk all that," said the man, who knew too well what his own grandfather had been; and so the matter was apparently settled. Only Mr. Moucell secretly made up his mind he would risk nothing; that if Mr. Mallow were common-looking, deficient in manner, threadbare in apparel, possessed of an undesirable excess of accent, or objectionable in any way, he would simply telegraph he could not be present on the festive occasion—he would, though it cost him the Portman Square favour. It was one thing to have the Irishman at his house, but quite another to make a "holy show" of him and himself among the aristocracy. Truly, Mr. Moucell was a "very safe person"—that was what the Fenlands said of him in the former days.

"And how such a prudent fellow ever came to contract such a marriage is a mystery to me," wrote his male parent, wild with fury, for the land agent was unaware safe people sometimes fall into more serious errors than they who are accounted the world's fools.

Except, perhaps, a tall hat, there is nothing external which tests a man's breeding so much as evening dress; but out of that ordeal Mr. Mallow emerged triumphant, and Mr. Moucell felt more than satisfied when they stepped into the hansom he had chartered for the occasion.

He was in the company of a man who would do him credit, whom he could push on, who was worth



pushing on, and who should be pushed on if he married Joscelyne, as Mr. Moucell fully intended. So far the bridegroom-elect had not seen his wife that was to be ; he had, indeed, seen no member of his host's family ; only a middle-aged and extremely respectable-looking servant—the very pattern of a thorough good servant.

She was not always got up in similar fashion, but Mr. Mallow fondly imagined she might be.

As for Joscelyne, Mr. Moucell considered the best time for effecting an introduction would be at the breakfast table next morning. The girl's was such a fresh, rich, natural style of beauty that she looked as well in a simple gown as if dressed out for a ball. Yes, the morning would be best ; Joscelyne should then be on view, and afterwards her seven brothers and solitary sister, not to mention her aunt, might be cautiously brought under the young curate's notice.

Sometimes, however, "the best laid plans o' mice and men" are frustrated, and it proved so in this case. When morning came Mr. Moucell was unable to be present at breakfast, and the first member of his family Mr. Mallow had the privilege of beholding certainly proved a great surprise. This was the sort of thing, doubtless, Mr. Robert Burns had in his mind when he wrote of such matters going "agley."

Meantime, however, it was night, and the hansom holding a northerly course for Portman Square.

Mr. Moucell did not say much about Mr. Jones, only sufficient to show his companion "the lie of the land." He even omitted to mention the family politics, thinking he would leave Mr. Mallow a clear

field, and let him conduct his own campaign unwarned. There are some men who never shock the proprieties. Mr. Mallow, he felt sure, was one of them.

The dinner could not have been better, or the talk more safely conventional.

Mr. Mallow had no fault to find with it. He had sat at great men's feasts before, and heard the same kind of conversation rippling smoothly on. Irresistibly the whole thing reminded him of "Shakspeare and the musical glasses" in "The Vicar of Wakefield," only with the fun of Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Skegg's subsequent observation judiciously omitted. Strange thoughts, like love, will venture in where they "daurna weel be seen." Certainly Mr. Jones's party was not the time or place to mention Miss C.W.S.

Mr. Mallow produced a very favourable impression. "He is so quiet," said Lady Patricia, in the safe shelter of her own drawing-room. "He is so lively," declared the matron who had sat next to him. "He chatted away to me quite gaily. He knows some people I stayed with when a young girl. They had then a house which would have contained a regiment, and an estate a man could not ride round in a day. Now Mr. Mallow tells me Sir Maurice has not a rood of land, and the last time he saw the dear old man was in narrow Dublin lodgings, where he manages to exist on the pittance his daughters—governesses—contrive to send him."

"No uncommon case, alas!" This from Lady Patricia, who spoke with the air of an oracle.

"That does not make it any the easier for poor Sir

Maurice, who was extravagant, doubtless, but the kindest, most generous creature in the world."

"How sad!" "How terrible!" "I confess I am unable to conceive how people endure such reverses." "It would kill me I know," and so the little murmuring conversational brook trickled on its way through that fashionable assembly, singing a song which, though it had no meaning and little melody, served to pass time and fill up gaps till the gentlemen should appear.

The gentlemen were rather longer in appearing than usual; the fact being that a member of Parliament, who was for ever asking questions in the hope of obtaining information he had not brains to make use of when he got it, after the ladies' departure fired this conundrum at Mr. Mallow,—

"Now, can you tell me what your countrymen want?"

"I cannot," answered Mr. Mallow. "I don't believe they know themselves."

"Just what I have said over and over again," as indeed he had, to the great weariness of many persons. "Have not I?"

"That you have," returned Lord Fenland for his son-in-law, who was slow of speech.

"They want, of course, the land free," observed Mr. Mallow, harking back to the original question; "but if that were granted to-morrow, they would at once demand to be paid for paying no rent."

"Paid for paying no rent! Ha, ha, ha! very good indeed!"

"It is not original," confessed Mr. Mallow.

"I thought I had heard it before somewhere," which was a delusion, "but it is an excellent idea for



all that"—so excellent that the M.P. intended to trot it out for the benefit of his luckless constituents on the occasion of their next merry meeting.

"And what, Mr. Mallow, if I may venture to ask, is your panacea for all the ills of Ireland?" asked the Marquis in dulcet accents.

"I have none," was the prompt reply. "I am hopeless."

"Surely not!"

"Indeed it is too true. I have read the tale of the centuries handed down in Irish history, and find it all through disfigured with the same record that is being written to-day. What can be done with a country in which patriotism means party, and Christianity orange or green?"

"But that to a certain extent is the case in every country, I imagine," put in Mr. Moucell.

"Perhaps; but not to such an extent. No; the Irish are just the same to-day as they were when it was said they were always

Fighting like devils for Conciliation,  
And hating each other for the love of God."

Involuntarily Mr. Moucell glanced round the room, in which probably such words had never before been spoken; yet the walls showed no signs of falling in and crushing those assembled.

"A very remarkable statement," observed the M.P., feeling he had opened a mine of quotation. "I will ask you to write it down for me."

"Where did you chance upon those lines, Mallow?" asked Mr. Moucell, who breathed again.

"I forget; in some old ballad I believe."



"I wish the author would give us a 'No Rent' ballad in the same style," said the M.P.

"We are fast coming to 'No Rent' in England." This of course from the Most Noble.

"Let us hope, however, the demand may not be italicized with a bullet from behind a hedge," exclaimed Mr. Moucell cheerfully.

He who was not a landlord could contemplate the possibility of blank quarter-days with equanimity.

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE Clifton Jones were early people, yet it was close on midnight ere two of their guests arrived at South Lambeth. West End cabmen do not generally jump at the prospect of driving "a late fare to the Surrey side" of Thames, and consequently anyone unaccustomed to such matters might have marvelled to hear how many horses were just returning to their stables, and how many men had appointments to take up "partys" close at hand, when Mr. Moucell expressed his desire to proceed to "about a hundred yards beyond Vauxhall Station."

For this reason the pair had to wait for the lingering 'bus and the tardy tram, loth to start without a fair number of passengers; and as a finish walked over Vauxhall Bridge, and so home.

Though he showed no outward sign of weariness, Mr. Mallow felt more tired than he ever remembered to have been before.

The first day in London always proves trying to a stranger, unaccustomed to its continual movement, its ceaseless roar of traffic.

Further, a boring talk about Ireland, Disestablishment, Ulster *versus* the other three Provinces, Home Rule, Old Grievances, New Demands, had tried the young clergyman's patience and politeness sorely.

Mr. Moucell intended his little shaft to end the discussion, but it only served as the beginning of more folly.

After many pangs Mr. Clifton Jones successfully delivered himself of the not new suggestion that putting the Gem of the Sea under water for twenty-four hours would settle all her troubles.

"If I could have my will, that is what I should do," he said, putting forward the remark as if it were his dearly-loved first-born.

In a man's own house, no one had the discourtesy to tell him the cynical bantling belonged to another, but Mr. Mallow was courageous enough to observe,—

"Very like cutting off a fellow's head to cure his toothache."

"So it is, really," said Lord Fenland, struck with amazement the similarity had not occurred to him before.

Then it entered into Mr. Clifton Jones's mind that the Irish parson was not so desirable an acquaintance as he at first imagined, consequently when, after all their guests had departed, Lady Patricia began to sing his praises, he remarked,—

"I am not quite sure ; there is something about him—eh—?"

"Well, perhaps you are right," agreed her ladyship, who, though she had not the faintest idea of what he meant, knew from long experience it was true wisdom to seem to understand.

Following on the under-water solution of Erin's never-ending, always-beginning woes, there ensued a long discussion as to why Ireland did not prosper, and Mr. Mallow was once again appealed to.

“It is difficult to say,” he answered. “The land is as good, or as bad, as ever, the climate is no worse, wages are not much higher, and if they were it would make little difference when a farmer’s family are, as a rule, his more or less unskilled labourers. I know nothing, I can tell you nothing about the matter. Away from their own land, the Irish are able to push themselves to the front as well as other people, but somehow they fail at home. Whether it is the air, or the soil, or the melancholy ocean, one thing only is certain—that they do not get on.”

“And yet, see what we have given them! We have thrown our most cherished convictions over for their benefit like—”

“Children to the wolves,” supplied the M.P. “And what has been the result?”

“That we have done them more harm than good.”

And so the woeful refrain was continued for a good half hour, till Mr. Mallow wished he dared leave the party to sing their Jeremiad in his absence.

Because, when a man honestly believes a case is past cure, or at least that nothing save a miracle can aid the patient’s recovery, it is trying to hear his symptoms repeated over and over again, and the opinions of various doctors quoted to the same unsatisfactory effect.

He knew there were righteous men in Ireland, as there have ever been, but he also knew whatever good they might try to effect would be neutralized by outside interferers, who, being apt to forget theories are not facts, do more damage in an hour than hard practical labour can repair in a month.

It had never occurred to him that on the first night



of his London holiday the Irish question would be produced, in its most aggravated and irritating form ; nevertheless he could but possess his soul with patience, conscious he ought to have enjoyed himself, though he failed to do so.

The dining-room at South Lambeth looked home-like and cheerful when they returned. A bright fire blazed on the hearth, supper was laid, a brass kettle murmured a low song of welcome ; everything seemed to promise an hour or two of pleasant chat, not unaided by material assistance.

“ Now we can be comfortable,” said Mr. Moucell, flinging himself with a sigh of content into an easy chair, after ensconcing his guest in one exactly similar. “ I never think ‘ there is no place like home ’ so certainly as after having spent the evening at some great house.

Mr. Mallow laughed.

“ Dressing-gown and pipe business, I suppose ? ”

“ Exactly. By-the-bye, here are some cigars I should like you to try after supper.”

“ You do not expect me to eat any supper ? ”

“ Certainly I do ! One never gets anything to eat when one dines out ! ”

“ I did, at all events, and can take no more food, thank you.”

“ Then what will you have—some claret, or your national beverage, hot, strong and sweet, for a night-cap ? ”

“ Dare I say what I should like best ? ”

“ By all means ; this is Liberty Hall. I wish you to have and do exactly what you please.”

“ Then may I go to bed ? Don't be shocked : I

feel as if about six months had passed since I left Kingstown. It is a shameful confession, but I am tired to death, and was actually afraid of falling asleep in Lady Patricia's drawing-room."

"How stupid of me to forget you had been travelling all night! I feel sorry—pray forgive me. Come upstairs at once. Is there anything I can get for you? Sure you have what you want? Give me a call if you need anything. You do look fagged out. Good-night and pleasant dreams—or rather, no dreams," with which kindly wish, prompted, doubtless, by long personal experience, Mr. Moucell shut his guest in and betook himself to supper. Then he went into the study, read his letters, put on a loose serge coat, lit a cigar, and sitting down to write, wrote for hours, the while Mr. Mallow, blissfully forgetful of the Irish, and indeed all other, questions, slept the sleep of the just.

It was past eight o'clock next morning when he awoke and looked at his watch. The hours seemed to have gone like a moment. It really did not appear five minutes since, weary and heavy, he lay down to rest, and now it was daylight, and the world's business begun.

How still the house, however! No sound of busy maid, or clattering pail, or swishing broom, of children running up and down stairs, of elder folk talking, or bells ringing—all inside quiet as death. It was very odd when contrasted with the external din caused by the South Western Railway. Shrieking engines warning signalmen with fiendish clamour of their approach, shook the windows and rattled the glass; long trains bound for far-off termini rushed along

the line as if determined to destroy everything by the way ; while inside Mr. Moucell's home those who moved—if anyone moved—seemed shod with velvet.

Evidently Mr. Mallow had not been called. Doubtless Mr. Moucell, remembering his over-night's weariness, desired that he should have his sleep out. Still, drowsy as he felt, he could not lie there all day. He must be up and doing ; having arrived at which conclusion, he rose and dressed, pausing every now and then to wonder at the thunder of the trains—the quiet of the house.

Not a footfall disturbed the stillness. There might have been no soul in the dwelling save himself. He began to feel as if he were in some enchanted castle, and was about to sally forth in search of such adventures as enchanted castles hold, when the long silence was unexpectedly broken by a wailing, angry, frightened yell, just outside his own door.

“Jo ! Jo ! Jo ! Jo !” screamed a child, and the scream was followed by a sort of secular comminatory service compared with which the denunciations hurled at a sinful world from Mount Ebal would have sounded tame.

For a moment Mr. Mallow stood aghast. He did not belong to the “straitest sect” ; it had been his lot to hear the familiarly profane way in which Irish urchins use as common oaths, names held most sacred ; but what his experience lacked was a knowledge of the rich variety of expletive possessed by the London gutter boy, who, on the smallest pretext—often on none at all—flings to the four winds of heaven curses rich and rare with a prodigality which amounts to extravagance.



“Set of blasted fools!” After this fashion ran the South Lambeth excommunication. “I only wish I had the —— idiots here, and I’d soon knock their two —— eyes into one, —— if I wouldn’t! Oh! Jo! Jo! Jo! where the —— have you got to?”

As the last words sounded strangled, as though suffocation were imminent, Mr. Mallow thought it was time to intervene. Walking out on to the landing, he saw standing about half-way up the next flight of stairs a skinny little lad, save for a pair of long stockings, and a flannel vest he was vainly struggling to pull over his head, naked as the day he was born, and quite as cross.

“Hillo, old man, what is wrong? What do you want?” asked Mr. Mallow.

“Ain’t an old man!” came from amid the confused folds of that demoniac garment; “and this —— thing is choking me, and I want Jo.”

“Who is Jo?”

“Just Jo—who else should she be?”

“Oh! Jo is a she, then!”

“Of course! You wouldn’t have a girl a he, would you? I say, is she in your room?”

Here was a suggestion to be hurled at an unoffending stranger—and a clergyman! Mr. Mallow, however, did not repel it with scorn; he only said, “No, she is not; but I can help you on with your vest, if that is what you want her for. You have got it twisted! Take that left arm out—quiet, quiet, boy! or you will tear the thing to bits!”

“I wish I could—into ten thousand—tatters!” said



the piping voice in tones of fury, while a little flushed face, surmounted by a mass of tumbled light hair, emerged from the offending vest, which Mr. Mallow pulled down over his lean body.

## CHAPTER XIV.

“Jo,” said someone downstairs, who stood in the passage leading to a conservatory, “the Apostle is at the drawing-room door, cursing hard enough to blow the roof off!”

There was a clatter, as if a watering-can had been dropped, then,—

“Oh, dear! that child will break my heart! I can't go up as I am; run like a good boy and get him away. Promise him anything if he will only be good and quiet.”

Mr. Mallow heard distinctly, and so apparently did the young gentleman who had, through the stranger's kind offices, been rescued from the perils of his own raiment; for, only imperfectly clothed though he was, he sat down on the first stair and calmly awaited the coming footsteps, that were beside him in an instant.

The new arrival was a lad of over fifteen, who looked wofully disconcerted when he saw Mr. Mallow advancing to meet him with a pleasant smile and outstretched hand.

“You are another of Mr. Moucell's sons, I suppose?” he said.

“I am so sorry, sir—” began the poor boy,

glancing at the sketchily-attired figure sprawling close beside.

“That I was able to save your brother from strangulation,” finished Mr. Mallow.

“That you should see him in such a plight. He was told to stay quietly in bed till someone came to dress him. Paul, you *are* naughty !”

“It is you who are naughty—to leave me all alone by my own self.”

“You don’t like being left alone ?” questioned Mr. Mallow.

“No more does any of them. And they leave me alone for ever so long—for hours sometimes. They did this morning.”

“Oh, Paul, what a story ! It is not twenty minutes since Jo asked you to lie still till she came up again.”

The model for a lean cherub did not answer this accusation, only picked bits of worsted out of the carpet.

“May I inquire why you call him the Apostle ? I heard you doing so just now, did I not ?”

“Because he uses such dreadful language.”

“But surely you do not imagine St. Paul ever—”

“If you remember, sir, Paul in his unregenerate days breathed out threatenings,” said Edgar with calm confidence, as Mr. Mallow paused, rather at a loss how to end his sentence. “Our Paul is always threatening somebody ; only yesterday he said he would stick a knife into my sister !”

“She’s my sister, too, and I will stick a knife into her if she doesn’t behave herself !”

“Meantime, don’t you think it might be as well to

put on some clothes? You will catch your death of cold if you stay much longer where you are, as you are."

The Apostle picked more bits of worsted out of the carpet.

"Had not you better take him back to where he came from?" suggested Mr. Mallow, speaking to Edgar.

"Yes," rather doubtfully. "Come along, Paul."

But Paul sat as one who, having ears, hears not.

"Don't make a donkey of yourself!" remonstrated his brother; "get up and come with me, and you'll see what Jo will give you."

"I know what I will give her for leaving me while she goes off amusing herself—one on the side of the head—that'll make her see stars!"

"Where do you want him to go?" asked Mr. Moucell's guest, as though merely anxious for general information.

"Upstairs," answered Edgar, a little hopelessly.

"Lead the way, then," said Mr. Mallow, taking the unregenerate Apostle in his arms, where he held him so tight that though Paul struggled and screamed he failed to make his escape.

"He will wake father! he will wake father!" exclaimed Edgar in a tone of deep anxiety.

"Make haste!" was Mr. Mallow's only answer, as he hurriedly followed up the last flight across the top landing, into a spacious, though low room, containing five small beds, on one of which he laid Paul, and pulled the coverings over him, at the same time saying, "He will be all right now."

"Shan't!" declared Paul, kicking the clothes off again.



“Very well, then ; be all wrong, if more pleasant to you.”

“’Tisn’t pleasant ! it is all horrid ! I want Jo ! I’m going to shout till she comes !” and forthwith he recommenced his “recital.”

“Paul, you wretched boy, you’ll wake father !” repeated his brother.

“Then everybody will catch it for neglecting me,” which remark threw light on what had seemed to Mr. Mallow a very dark mystery, and induced him to close the door, a proceeding which so aroused Paul’s curiosity that he stinted his wail for a moment in order to see what would happen next.

“Is Mr. Moucell ill ?” asked Mr. Mallow, having in his mind the probable effect of a hearty supper at South Lambeth after that dinner in Portman Square, the former most likely topped up with punch.

It was a natural bit of Pharisaism, for which the young clergyman almost immediately felt properly ashamed when Edgar said,—

“No, he is not ill ; only he sat up all night.”

“Sat up all night ?” astonished.

“Yes, writing ; he often has to do that,” explained the boy proudly.

“Oh ! if he had work to finish, why did he go out with me ?” cried Mr. Mallow impulsively. “I am sorry !”

“The order did not come till after you had gone. It was something wanted all in a hurry. He did not finish till nearly six this morning, and now he is asleep—if Paul’s yelling has not disturbed him. Paul always gets into these tantrums when we want the house kept quiet.”

Hearing which accusation, the culprit, who had raised himself on his elbow the better to listen, let his head drop on the pillow, and began hammering the mattress with his heels—a very bad sign.

“Your father must have his sleep out in peace,” said Mr. Mallow. “I think this young gentleman will be good if I stay with him—which I shall be delighted to do. Tell your sister not to be anxious. You can let me know when she is at leisure.”

“You *are* kind”—gratefully—“but—”

“You had better leave us ; I feel sure your brother will do what I ask him,” and Mr. Mallow nodded encouragingly to Edgar as he went downstairs, then shutting the door, the curate drew a chair beside Paul, who by this time was humming a wordless tune of defiance, and looking out of the corners of his eyes at his new antagonist as if measuring strength with him.

Mr. Mallow took no notice and made no remark.

For a time the wordless tune went on, increasing in speed and noise, and still Mr. Mallow held his peace.

Suddenly the lad flung himself on the floor, and commenced kicking with might and main, while the cry, “Jo! Jo! Jo!” echoed like a shrill pibroch through the room.

“I would not shout in that way if I were you,” was the calm comment ; “no one can hear you.”

Paul did not answer ; but, evidently inspired with the idea that somebody soon should, gathered up his little self and rushed to the door, which, however, Mr. Mallow reached before him and locked, when, finding himself foiled, the small sinner threw himself once

more to the ground, where he kicked and yelled and sobbed, and gave vent to strange imprecations, till, perfectly exhausted, he turned on his side, and lay like one dead, his fury well-nigh spent, the hour of his evil possession almost ended.

Then Mr. Mallow gently lifted and once more placed him on the bed.

"I am so sorry for you, child," he said tenderly, kissing the face stained with tears, distorted by passion. Paul's sole reply to the caress was an impatient jerk, and when his new friend once again drew some covering over him, he made a frantic plunge which restored matters to their original condition.

It was a weary and apparently profitless game, and Mr. Mallow resumed his seat, wondering whether there were any single thing he could say or do likely to exorcise the demons that dwelt within the unhappy Paul, who, now perfectly still and silent, was breathing in little low gasps, after the manner of one tired out.

"It was not the distance but the pace" which had told on him; and, worn out by his fit of wild rage, he at last lay as completely "done" as a man might have felt after running for a wager.

Suddenly he shivered and moved as if seeking for warmth. Then Mr. Mallow wrapped him up, and once again placed his head more comfortably on the pillow. Shortly he became conscious that the boy was stretching out a stealthy hand towards him; nearer and nearer that hand approached till it lay like a tiny lump of ice in his.

That was the first sign of grace Paul had shown, and one which caused Mr. Mallow's heart to rejoice. Just then there came a knock at the door.

It was Edgar, who returned to say, "My sister is very grateful, sir, and she will be here directly, and would you please go down to breakfast in the room where you breakfasted yesterday morning? Aunt is waiting for you."

He gave this message evidently direct from headquarters, straight off, as a parrot might; and Mr. Mallow felt he had no choice save to comply with the request it contained, though he would rather have stayed where he was.

"Yes, I will find my way," he answered; "I think your brother is asleep," and he would have added an entreaty that Paul might not be scolded, but, remembering in time silence is golden, left the words unsaid.



## CHAPTER XV.

WHEN Mr. Mallow entered the dining-room he was received by an elderly lady of homely but pleasant appearance, who hoped he had slept well and not been disturbed by the trains.

Reassured on both points, she apologized for Mr. Moucell's non-appearance, and explained that gentleman often made what he jestingly called "a night of it," which she should have thought must be very bad for anyone's health, but that seemed to agree with him.

After some wise and weighty remarks concerning the eccentricities of literary people, which Mr. Mallow, though by no means hypercritical, could not avoid noticing she pronounced "exontricies," she proceeded at great length to explain her precise relationship to one author.

She told him how her dear niece had married Mr. Moucell—a love match, if ever there was one!—and how she had resided with the happy pair from, she might say, "the first days of their married life" till the sad morning when Mrs. Moucell died, just about three months after her last child was born.

"I think you have seen the dear little fellow," she went on; "a sadly delicate boy—I do hope he will get stronger as he grows up; different from all the rest of the family—in appearance, temperament, constitution.

Poor darling ! he is a mere bundle of nerves. Do help yourself to ham, Mr. Mallow ; or perhaps you prefer beef. Mr. Moucell, if it were possible, would keep the wind of heaven from blowing on poor Paul—thinks we do not consider him sufficiently ; yet I am sure my niece—oh, here you are Joscelyne ! I thought you never were coming,” as there entered, to the visitor’s surprise, what he mentally called “ a slip of a girl,” young, pretty, slight—the very antithesis of the guardian angel he had pictured keeping watch and ward over the inmates of Mr. Moucell’s abode. That angel was sallow, pensive—not to say melancholy—dull-eyed ; wore her drab-coloured hair smoothly banded in front, and after a carefully arranged lattice-work fashion at the back. An excellent woman, though dispiriting ; and her proper name was Josephine, shortened by light-hearted boys irreverently to Jo.

But in a trice all this changed, and there appeared a strangely different reality—bright as morning, fresh as spring—lithe, graceful, active—who could no doubt tread a measure or dance a sailor’s hornpipe—ay, and it might be whistle one, too.

On her cheeks roses bloomed amid white lilies ; blue were her eyes—a blue so deep they looked at times almost black ; dimples played about her mouth ; altogether a winsome maid, with her wealth of dark-brown hair hanging down her back, loose, save for a ridiculous bow of red ribbon, which was supposed to keep the streaming tresses in place. It did not, though, as Mr. Mallow found out to his sorrow subsequently ; but at the moment the girl burst upon his sight he was not disposed to be captious.

She looked such a perfect Jo—such a delightful sister, such a natural, unaffected, contented, willing, capable young comrade—that Mr. Mallow's heart went straight out to her, and he took the hand she frankly offered with a strange feeling, as though he had known her for years.

“Good morning,” she said, without the smallest embarrassment. “I hope you feel rested. Father said you were so tired with yesterday's doings, you ought to sleep as long as possible. I do hope Paul did not wake you.”

“On the contrary, I was dressed when his invocation began. Consequently we had quite a pleasant interview on the stairs before your ill-judged bribe reached his ears.”

“What bribe?”

“You said—promise him anything if he will only be good and quiet.”

“So I did—I had forgotten. I was in despair.”

“But he evidently knew you could be depended on to perform. I never before saw any child take a front seat more keenly conscious he was master of the position.”

“Why, what was he doing!” asked Mrs. Howley, who had been kept in ignorance of all particulars save that “Mr. Mallow had made friends with the Apostle”—a cheering bit of intelligence imparted to her by Edgar.

“When I first saw him he was rending the air with yells for some absent Jo, who I at first thought must be a man; but he soon set me right on that point. You are Jo, Miss Moucell, I presume?”

“Yes, I am Jo.”

"He then allowed me the privilege of assisting at his toilet, and between us we managed to get a flannel vest over his head."

"It was the usual trouble, aunt," explained Joscelyne, helping herself to a piece of toast. "He will try to dress himself unless I am near, the instant he wants to get up, and he always comes to grief with his vest."

"I trust he did not—?" in a tone of real anxiety.

"Express himself strongly," finished Mr. Mallow, as the lady paused. "Truth compels me to say he did. Perhaps, however, his indignation was natural. It is not pleasant to feel one is being throttled. Many a hard wrestle I had with a similar piece of iniquity in the days of my youth, and I am bound to say I did not like the experience."

"You did not talk in the way he does, I am very sure," said Mrs. Howley.

"His vocabulary is certainly a copious one. I never before heard so many words employed to convey the same meaning. I did not know there were so many, in fact."

"Ah! it all comes of Southend," sighed Mrs. Howley.

"Of—?" suggested Mr. Mallow, who failed to understand.

"When the poor child was barely six years old," proceeded Mrs. Howley didactically, "he fell into such a sad state of health—I told you he had always been ailing—that we were glad to put him under the care of an old invalid lady residing at Southend. He stayed there eight months, and this"—very solemnly—"is the result."

"But surely," exclaimed Mr. Mallow, surprised, as



well he might be, "your invalid friend did not indulge in such superfluities of speech as those with which Master Paul adorns his artless discourse?"

"No, no! that is not what my aunt means," said Joscelyne, laughing, moved to mirth by the sight of Mrs. Howley's horror-stricken face.

"Mrs. Casedale is most correct in all ways; a true Christian, a perfect lady in every respect," went on Mrs. Howley. Joscelyne did not look at anyone while Mrs. Casedale's merits were being recited, only straight out at The Lawn. "Paul never could have heard a doubtful word in her house; but, unhappily, she hired a little maid to attend on him."

"And was the little maid given to swearing?" asked Mrs. Mallow, greatly interested.

"No; but, as it turned out afterwards, she fell into a dreadful habit of leaving our dear one alone on the beach, while she went down the pier with her friends—just imagine!—and Paul, always afraid of being alone, was only too well pleased to play among a number of rough boys; and you hear what they taught him. When Mrs. Casedale used to ask the child where they had been, he answered, 'On the beach, gathering shells,' but never said a word about his companions. So readily do the young acquire habits of deceit."

Mr. Mallow listened to this story with rapt attention, regarding Mrs. Howley the while intently.

"And did the invalid lady ever discover what was going on?" he asked after a pause.

"She did, quite by accident, of course; then she telegraphed for me. Happily Mr. Moucell was from home, or he must have been told the worst. As it is, we live in dread of his learning the terrible things

Paul says when angry. I do hope, Mr. Mallow"—very earnestly—"you will not betray us, or the consequences may be dreadful!"

"You may rely on my discretion," he answered, vaguely considering what would happen if he were not discreet. "But—pardon me for asking—do you think it is well to keep Mr. Moucell in ignorance of his son's remarkable acquirements?"

"He would never forgive me if he knew—he would never forgive any of us."

"I trust you are mistaken. Still, whatever the result, I feel strongly of opinion he should be told. I am speaking quite seriously," he went on. "His son has fallen into a bad habit, which ought to be checked at once. Of course, the child means no harm; but it *is* harm, and his father is the proper person to decide how so undesirable a propensity can best be cured."

"You are quite right, Mr. Mallow," interposed Joscelyne, before her aunt could make any reply; "father ought to know. It is shocking to hear a child making use of such expressions, as if they were only common, every-day words. I have said so for a long time; and as for Southend, the trouble began long before he ever went there."

"My dear, how can you say so?" mildly expostulated Mrs. Howley.

"It is the truth, aunt. Jane was the cause of all Paul's dreadful language."

"A better servant than Jane I would never desire, I *was* grieved when she went," a little acrimoniously.

Joscelyne made no reply, and Mr. Mallow said,—

"The thing to do now is to try and break your

nephew of a very bad habit. In mercy to him, you should grapple with the difficulty at once."

"You are eating nothing," said Mrs. Howley, who did not wish for advice if she were expected to follow it. "Try this quince jelly; Mr. Moucell is very partial to quince, whether as jelly or preserve."

"Thank you, not any."

"Dear, dear! I wish I knew what you liked."

"I like everything—even an east wind!"

"Then you cannot be very delicate," returned Mrs. Howley, who was apt to take such remarks very literally.

"Not at all delicate, I am thankful to say."

"You have cause to be thankful. There are some that never know what it is to feel well."

"My father desired me to tell you, Mr. Mallow," interposed Joscelyne, aware from weary experience for how long a time her aunt could keep up the shuttlecock of small talk, "that a parcel looking suspiciously like proof came from Messrs. Gerant last night. I thought you would like to be quiet while correcting it, and so have left everything you are likely to require in the drawing-room. When you are ready, however, I will go upstairs with you, and you can then tell me if there should chance to be any little matter I have forgotten."

Most thankfully Mr. Mallow rose, and begging Mrs. Howley to excuse him, followed Joscelyne into a prettily-furnished apartment, where, on a table placed conveniently for writing purposes, he saw a package containing his "first proof."

## CHAPTER XVI.

WHAT pen might dare attempt to describe the rapture of that meeting when Desmond Mallow, cutting open the envelope, saw his own work in type? No one witnessed that rapture, for Joscelyne, scarcely entering the room, left it immediately, shutting the author and his exultation in securely.

If ever there were a happy man, it was Desmond Mallow as he unrolled the sheets, and, spreading them flat on the table, tried to read. But he could not read at first, for a mist of joy hung between him and the printed page, which caused many letters to perform strange antics and appear to be gyrating instead of remaining quietly in their proper places. After a short time, however, his excitement subsided, and he settled to work with a curious feeling that he had suddenly changed into somebody else—somebody who had actually written a book! How unreal it all seemed!

Talk of a woman's first child! Pshaw! a first child is nothing when compared with a man's first book. Print is what does it; print did it that morning in South Lambeth, when the old trees loomed black across the road, their bare branches looking lonely and forlorn as seen through a grey, depressing mist which enwrapped the South of London.



But the gloom did not touch Desmond Mallow's heart ; it was bright with the sunshine of unalloyed content. Correcting proof is not as a rule an exhilarating occupation ; many more entrancing modes of passing time might readily present themselves to the imagination of those who have been correcting for so long a period they may be excused for forgetting that they too once viewed with ecstasy sheets on which thoughts no man dictated unto them were printed—thoughts so wise, tender, and holy as to seem strange even in their own eyes ; but to Mr. Mallow the work was a pleasure.

It is generally thus at the beginning, when a young author is apt to think what he has written all too good for a bad world, which, however, he may help to make better.

Let him be still as modest as God created him, he will yet think *The Thing* produced too rare and beautiful for common use. Afterwards, the very same man correcting his own proofs will in his sad moments consider what on earth anybody can see in his books ; how it chanced he ever earned a reputation !

On that November morning, however, such depressing ideas were as foreign as coming death to the mind of Desmond Mallow. The sunshine in his heart made summer out of winter, clothed the bare trees with green, and strewed the sodden earth with flowers.

One of those leaflets issued occasionally by printers to instruct ignorant persons how to use the cabalistic signs needful in correcting had been laid on the table, and the young Irishman so quickly assimilated this, to

him, new language that before three hours had passed his proof was a sight which might well have appalled any compositor. He played with that leaflet, indeed, as a child plays with a new toy, employing it for the consternation of all and sundry who might have to do with his book, in the same manner that a healthy infant exercises its lungs on a penny whistle, to the terror of adults.

Trouble was nothing to him ; he revelled in his self-imposed task ; he corrected freely, he inserted, and then amended his insertions ; he scored out, only in order to replace ; and was just considering how capitally the duplicate proof would enable him to make a fair copy when, turning his head, he beheld Mr. Moucell standing on the hearthrug, looking at him with a somewhat enigmatical smile.

“ How does your book read ? ” asked that gentleman, dispensing with all formal greeting, and going at once to the root of the matter.

“ Better than I expected,” answered Mr. Mallow, with an affectation of indifference which did not deceive the elder man.

“ A good book always does read better in print, and a bad in manuscript,” he observed oracularly. “ Many errors ? ”

“ There are,” replied the author, who was unaware the mistakes of that “ arch humorist,” the compositor, were those referred to.

“ Indeed ! ” exclaimed Mr. Moucell ; “ I am surprised ! Gerants employ the best men. I wonder how it happens. May I look ? ” and he held out his hand for the sheets, which, unconscious of sin, Mr. Mallow gave him.

Mr. Moucell had seen many things in his time, but nothing like unto "The Offences of His Forefathers," as amended by its author, ever before or after came under his observation.

There was little of the original left. From top to bottom the margin was black with marks and words substituted for those scored out. The literary man gazed at the result of nearly three hours' work with amazement, not to say horror, but held his peace as he glanced over page after page so profusely corrected as to be almost undecipherable.

At last he broke silence with : "You are not going to return this to Messrs. Gerant, are you ?"

"Oh, no ; duplicate sheets have been sent, and I shall make a fair copy on them."

"Of this ?" and Mr. Moucell tapped the paper he held.

"Yes," said Mr. Mallow, surprised his host should not apprehend more quickly.

"But, my good sir, a proof is not provided for a man to re-write his book on !"

"What is it provided for, then ?"

"To enable the author to correct the printer's errors, and to set right any slip of his own."

"That is just what I have done."

"What you have done would practically involve resetting the whole thing !"

"Re—?" suggested Mr. Mallow, who did not understand.

"Re-printing, in other words. It would more than double the expense. Besides, this is not the book Messrs. Gerant bought, but quite a spurious bantling you would foist upon them."

“Then what am I to do ? ”

“Give me the other proof, and I will soon show you. Here, you get up and let me have your chair for a minute. Now ! ” and Mr. Moucell’s eyes flew over the page, his quick pen made a couple of slight corrections, and so he went on till the last sheet that had arrived was finished, when he said,—

“The next time, Mr. Mallow, you wish to chop and change your book, do it in manuscript—or, rather, do not do it at all. All works read better if left as they were written, straight from the heart ; what they gain in style they lose in force by over-correction. I feel very glad I happened to be at home this morning ; old Mr. Gerant would have gone out and hung himself if that terrible proof had been returned to the office ; and the compositors—well, perhaps the less we speculate concerning their action the better.”

Mr. Mallow looked ruefully at his lost labour ere he asked,—

“Do you really think the book will be readable if left as it is ? ”

“Assuredly. It might not have been readable if left as corrected by you. In fact, I do not believe any firm of printers could have been induced to set it up ! ”

“You know best, I suppose,” said Mr. Mallow, in the tone of one who felt very doubtful on that point.

“Know ? To be sure I do ! I ought, at any rate, after nearly twenty years’ experience.”

“Why was not the manuscript sent with the proof ? ”



“Oh, they never trouble about that now,” answered Mr. Moucell, who had his own good reasons for not wishing the author to look again on what evidently was very dear to him.

“Don’t they?” in a feeble sort of manner, as though all spirit were dying out of him.

“No. It was a silly, useless practice. Did you wish yours returned?”

“I should like to have kept it,” colouring a little.

“Hoping that in a few hundred years the original manuscript of ‘The Offences of His Forefathers’ would be worth—we won’t say how much?”

“No; only for my own satisfaction. Besides, I should like to have seen if the printing were quite accurate. Some sentences struck me as not being exactly—”

“You may set your mind quite at rest about that. Printers make wonderful mistakes occasionally, but they have not yet set up as authors, or as assistants to authors. And now will you come down and have some luncheon? I have not had any breakfast yet, so thought we might take the two meals under one—”

“How you burn the candle at both ends, Mr. Moucell!”

“Well, what am I to do? The work had to be got in, and I could only accomplish that by sitting up.”

“Are you not afraid of injuring your health?”

“Do I look like a man whose health is being injured?”

“Well, no; but still, if you remember, the pitcher went once too often to the well.”

“Yes; and if the pitcher had stayed at home it would have got broken all the same. Now let us

have something to eat. The days are short, and my young people want to take you to the Abbey."

"Is there not afternoon service there?"

"Yes, daily."

"And can we stay for it?"

"Undoubtedly; there is no just cause or impediment why you should not. And that reminds me, as you have done us the kindness to come here, will you do us the further favour of always saying what you would like best in all things? Everyone in the house will be only too glad to fall in with your wishes."

The words were heartily spoken, and touched Mr. Mallow deeply. No hospitality could have been more cordial, no welcome more genial. Thirty hours had not passed since he entered Mr. Moucell's home, yet already he felt one of the family.

If for a moment that matter of the proof vexed him, he knew his host could not be accused of wilfully causing annoyance; indeed, his common sense speedily told him Mr. Moucell's interference was warranted.

Nevertheless, he thought lovingly of those despised corrections!

## CHAPTER XVII.

No man could make himself more agreeable than Mr. Moucell when he tried, and certainly no man ever did try to make himself more agreeable to the "coming author" than he, over their *tête-à-tête* luncheon.

He had lived for so many years perforce outside the pressure of his own affairs that he could appear gay and cheerful even when racked with anxiety, and aware that he must have seemed a little peremptory concerning Mr. Mallow's proposed amendments, though not one whit more so than his secret relations with the Gerants necessitated, he put on "an extra spurt" in order to set affairs right.

Well he knew that to a young author there is no subject so interesting as "shop," especially his own shop; and therefore talk ran in the most natural way possible on "The Offences of His Forefathers," which Mr. Moucell had more than once, in a very access of exasperation, mentally termed that "confounded book."

It must be borne in mind that Messrs. Gerants' literary counsel was half-mad with worry, and consequently failed to look at many matters quite dispassionately.

He had "pulled himself together" though before he suggested luncheon, and discoursed at that meal quite

pleasantly concerning Mr. Mallow's novel, which, from what "he had seen of it, he ventured to say ought to be a great success."

Praise is ever sweet to an author, yet Mr. Mallow felt sceptical when Mr. Moucell honestly stated that from what he had seen of "The Offences of His Forefathers" he believed it would attract attention.

How, the author thought, could anyone, galloping through a book, judge of its merits or demerits? Ah! how indeed—but he knew nothing of the many bad half hours Mr. Moucell had spent in turning that terrible Hibernian novel into English.

To him had fallen the weary task. To hard workers such tasks invariably do fall. He had toiled over the book, he had anathematized it, and yet now across the luncheon-table he spoke charming words concerning it to the young man he wanted to use.

He asked Mr. Mallow how he came to write it; how he heard the tragedy in which he was told it ended. He was appreciative, sympathetic, encouraging at one and the same time. It seemed delightful to be able to talk freely to such an individual. Who was there he had not known, or met, or heard? The buzz of great men's names was in Mr. Mallow's ears as he partook of soup and rejoiced over excellent cutlets.

The meal was as plain as a meal could be, but well cooked, well served, and the table daintily laid.

More and more Mr. Mallow wondered at his new friend's *ménage*; but then, to be sure, it was English, which to an Irish person accounted for much—one wonders why.

"When I was young," he said, in answer to ques-



tions, as though he were then a hundred years old, "I spent a lot of time with relations who lived in the wilder parts of Ireland; how wild those parts are no one on this side of the Channel can conceive. There and then I heard the story, which burnt itself into my heart. I talked with the descendants of those who laughed to scorn all the poor fellow's efforts—who hated him and derided what they called his 'foreign ways'—who had no good or kind thought for him living, and danced over his grave when dead. It was all more real to me than my own life, and when I felt strong enough to write any long thing, I could not choose but write the true story of Fincarrow Castle. I can see the place now as I talk to you—see the Keep rising among desolate walls—see the lone, forsaken stables and courtyards—see the poor, desolate woman praying God to forgive those who had so persecuted her lover that his reason gave way and he took his own life. Ah! Heaven—" And the remainder of Mr. Mallow's sentence seemed uttered to the bare branches swaying in The Lawn.

"Yes," answered Mr. Moucell, diplomatically, "I heard of that scene, and was much impressed."

"Part of my life is woven into the book," said Mr. Mallow, hoarsely.

"As a rule, publishers have a holy horror of an author's favourite."

"I beg your pardon; I do not understand."

"Of a book that its author loves. Publishers are often wrong, however—more often wrong than right," added Mr. Moucell, as a cheerful afterthought.

"But I am not in love with my novel now—not as it is; I see faults innumerable. If they had only not

begun to print! If I could but have the manuscript back again, what improvements I could make!"

Mr. Moucell laughed. "You may be thankful it has passed beyond your reach—you would be sure to spoil the whole thing."

"You think it readable, then—pray, answer candidly." The greediness of children for sweets is moderation when compared with the thirst of a young author for refreshing draughts of flattery!

"I consider the style excellent, and the matter, so far as the proof carried me, original and interesting. That is my honest opinion."

"Thank you heartily; you cannot imagine what success will mean to me."

"To everyone it means the difference between success and failure; but, in any event, I do not believe your novel will fall dead. Supposing now," after a moment's pause, "it should make a hit—I am, of course, only putting a hypothetical case—should you think of abandoning the Church" ("chucking up" was the phrase that first rose to Mr. Moucell's lips, but he altered it in time) "and devoting yourself to literature?"

"Certainly not. Once a clergyman, always a clergyman. I took orders after much thought and due consideration, and would never even wish to undo what I have done. 'No man, having put his hand to the plough,' you remember."

"Good heavens," thought Mr. Moucell, "does he imagine parsons are so scarce that one less or more can make any difference?"

Almost as though he guessed what was passing through his host's mind, the young Irishman went on:

“I know I am only a most humble servant among a great number ; but even the lowest can be of some use if he strive to do his work honestly ; and I trust, in my poor way, I try.”

“I quite see what you mean,” answered Mr. Moucell, who considered the other was talking arrant folly. “I merely put the question because any advice I might be able to give you hereafter must be influenced by your reply. There are no prizes in the Irish Church now, I presume ? ”

“None, at all events, likely to come my way ; but it is not for loaves and fishes a man goes into the Church.”

The only motive for going into any profession was, according to Mr. Moucell’s ideas, those loaves and fishes of which his new friend spoke so disparagingly, but he did not say so.

He was cautiously trying his ground, and had no intention of risking anything by premature argument. Stronger and better people than Mr. Mallow had by mere process of time, not to speak of temptation, changed their views, and no doubt the young curate would change his in good season ; meanwhile, he felt getting nearer and nearer to the real author of “The Offences of His Forefathers,” to his “Calvinism,” his bigotry, his uncomfortable theology.

Never mind ; other men, once as straitlaced, as narrow, as old-fashioned in their views, had, when brought into the strong light of worldly wisdom, seen the error of their ways, and there could be no reason why Desmond Gerald Mallow should prove harder to convert than they.

“Has disestablishment done much harm ? ” Mr.



Moucell asked, more to say something than because he cared in the least whether it had or not.

“It was a blow, of course, but by no means the blow that was hoped and expected.”

“The Church goes on just the same as ever?”

“It would not be the Church if it failed to do so; no matter how wild the tempest or rough the sea, Our Ship holds a steady course. It cannot founder, let bad and foolish men do what they will.”

“I suppose not.” Mr. Moucell was so heartily sick of the whole subject, he would have conceded anything almost. “In the event of your rector dying or retiring,” he went on—“his health is bad, I think I gathered—is there a likelihood that you would slip into his place?”

“No, and it is scarcely a preferment I should care to have offered. In my opinion, it is better for a man not to be rector where he has been curate. Eventually, I may get a living near Dublin or some other large town. I should like a wider field, but I would take whatever presented itself, believing that there lay the work I was intended to perform.”

“Come,” considered Mr. Moucell, relieved, “there may be good in the Finger of Fate, after all. If necessary, we can as easily persuade him it is beckoning to England as to Dublin.”

Having settled which question to his own satisfaction, he suggested, if Mr. Mallow wished to see the Abbey that afternoon, they would do well to make a start.

“Phil can’t get off to-day,” he added, “so you will have to make shift with Edgar and Joscelyne, both of whom, however, know their Westminster pretty



thoroughly. I have tickets for the theatre for to-night. You don't object to plays, I hope ? ”

“ Not at all. I believe they may be made the means of effecting much good.”

“ Confound it all, are we never to get rid of the language of the Conventicle ? ” said Mr. Moucell, quite in confidence to himself, as he took his hat and called out,—

“ Now, youngsters, are you ready ? ” hearing which trumpet-call, the youngsters, who had been ready for some time, at once put in an appearance, and, obedient to a gesture from their father, preceded him and Mr. Mallow to the gate, and turned their steps in the direction of Miles Street.

If Joscelyne had looked a mere slip of a girl in the dining-room, she looked still less like a grown-up young lady out of doors. Her dress was short, her dark hair hung loose, her boots were stout, there was not even a spice of coquetry in the way she had put on her hat—a plain black straw, with a band of navy-blue ribbon. Just a nice, unaffected young girl, not yet come to where “the brook and river meet.” “A very nice girl,” thought Mr. Mallow, following her figure with approving eyes ; “one who will be a very good-looking woman.” Yes, and it was she who had almost broken her young heart over “The Offences of His Forefathers.” But Mr. Mallow did not know that !

## CHAPTER XVIII.

“ JOSCELYNE ! ” It was Mr. Moucell who spoke, as his advance guard neared the Wandsworth Road, at sound of which word of command “ Jo ” stopped obediently, and turning with a pleasant smile, answered, “ Yes, father, ” while she waited for him to come up.

Certainly she made a very pretty picture !

“ You had better only give Mr. Mallow a general idea of the Abbey this afternoon. In any case, you will not have time to see much before service, and Philip, I know, would like to be with him when going over Henry the VIIth’s Chapel and other places of special interest. ”

“ Very well, ” agreed the girl.

“ Fact is, ” went on Mr. Moucell, addressing his companion, “ Phil thinks he knows more about Westminster than anybody living. He is mistaken, of course, but I don’t believe in snubbing young people. ”

Mr. Mallow said, very truthfully, he did not believe in snubbing people, whether young or old.

“ Nor I, indeed, and that is the reason I let him act the part of showman when possible. ”

“ How many children have you, Mr. Moucell ? ”

“ Seven besides the two you already know. ”

Mr. Mallow bethought him that he knew a third, but held his peace while Mr. Moucell continued,—

"It is a large family, a very large family, but no parent was ever more blessed than I in his children. Excepting that the youngest has always been a little delicate, I have never had a moment's anxiety about one of them."

Mr. Mallow said that must be very satisfactory, but wondered secretly whether Mr. Moucell's opinion might not undergo a change if he heard the Apostle in full cry.

It was quite a pleasant family party which embarked at Nine Elms and went down the river to Westminster Pier, where Mr. Moucell saw his companions off the boat, and proceeded alone to the Temple.

Hard by Westminster Hall, Edgar caught sight of a friend loafing on the other side of the road, which he felt it necessary to cross in order to exchange greetings. From that time his proceedings grew a little erratic : he was to be seen behind pillars deep in conversation, he would suddenly leave the sacred building for no explained reason, and as suddenly return, to make some unexpected, though not original, remark about this monument or that epitaph, ere once more disappearing.

Matters culminated in a sharp and short encounter between his sister and himself. Mr. Mallow did not hear a word of the conversation, but by many signs and tokens he knew it referred to the dislike unregenerate boys entertain to "services," probably because they feel they are too bad to be benefited thereby. Anyhow, the smart skirmish ended in Edgar's apparent defeat, for he knelt with all the other sinners through both Confession and Absolution.

When the congregation rose, however, he was gone. Like the Arab, he had silently stolen away, and his place knew him no more. Mr. Mallow felt quite interested. Really, there was a vast amount of human nature running loose about South Lambeth.

No word, good or bad, did Joscelyne say concerning her brother's desertion. As a mere matter of politeness Mr. Mallow would have inquired concerning the youth, but he had already discovered a discreet silence was much esteemed in Mr. Moucell's establishment.

"Shall we walk home?" asked the girl, when they emerged into the open air.

"As you please," he answered.

"There are both trams and 'buses," she said, simply; "but I love walking along the Embankment at this hour, listening to the Thames lap-lapping against the stones as if it were a living thing."

"Then let us walk, by all means."

They paused half-way over Westminster Bridge to look both up and down the Thames—at the Houses of Parliament, brooding darkly beside the water; at St. Thomas' ablaze with light, at the river flowing solemnly, silently onward to the far-off sea, "just like mortal life."

A slight wind had arisen, which met them as they went down the steps leading to the Albert Embankment, and passed under the Hospital Terrace, where, in fine weather, convalescent patients sit sunning themselves.

"Are you not afraid of catching cold, Miss Moucell?" asked Mr. Mallow, when, having got beyond Lambeth Suspension Bridge, they reached the wider pavement where shelter ceases.



“ Oh, no ! ” she laughed ; “ I am as hardy as a Shetland pony.”

They did not talk much ; the hour and the scene favoured meditation, and Mr. Mallow, who had been deeply impressed by the Abbey and the service, felt glad his companion was able to dispense with conversation. There are times when speech jars, when the sound of a human voice, let it be sweet as it may, strikes painfully like a discord. No discord, however, marred on that evening the strange music made by the water rippling in its eternal unrest, sobbing now and then as if in pain, fretting because of the gigantic barriers raised against its freedom, just as man laments the limitations of his own free will. Joscelyne said never a word. All her young life she had lived among those who either from absolute incapacity did not understand her, or were too busy to try to do so, and thus she learnt early to hold her tongue.

In winter, about that hour, the Albert Embankment is often almost deserted, and as the young curate and Mr. Moucell's daughter walked along, the trouble of the water could be distinctly heard.

To a man who had trodden mountain fastnesses, and kept vigil beside lonely lakes, and knew the sorrowful moan of the sea sweeping over a desolate shore, there seemed something so weird about this lament, heard in the heart of a great city, that it affected him like the bitter cry of humanity, which, being confined to no creed, nation, or language, is universal.

It appeared a fitting accompaniment to the story of the Abbey, borne down the stream of time from the period that Westminster was built on a then wild island, which an old writer called “ terrible ” overrun

with thorns, separated from the Middlesex side by a small branch of the Thames, styled, no doubt appropriately, "The Long Ditch"; for through the centuries, through increasing civilization, through weal and woe, the sorrow of the sea, the fret of water, has never ceased its plaint.

Vaguely the young clergyman was beginning to understand the meaning of that strange moan which had been sounding in his ears ever since he set foot in London.

As Mr. Moucell would have put the matter: "One person cannot make a procession; the grief, however bitter, of a single man or woman amounts to little; but multiply that unit by tens and hundreds of thousands, and you become aware of a sorrow and hear a shout that shall yet lay low the walls of some modern Jericho."

Yes, perhaps even here; but however that might be, through all the grief, and all the cries, one Eternal Truth, which Mr. Mallow had seen that day typified in enduring stone, remained to comfort those who mourned, those who wept!

Only vaguely could he formulate the ideas Westminster had suggested to him.

Everything seemed so vast, strange, unreal, that it was small wonder he felt grateful for a few minutes' mental pause, for breathing-time in which to think things over.

It was not until they left High Street, Lambeth, and Vauxhall Cross behind, and were proceeding down South Lambeth Road, Joscelyne spoke, which she would not have done even then, but that her heart was hungering and thirsting for some word of sympathy.

"Are you glad we walked home, Mr. Mallow?"

This was the apparently simple question she asked though it filled her whole soul.

"Indeed I am! An omnibus or tram would have broken the spell."

"That is just what I feel after service at the Abbey."

"How very strange!" exclaimed her companion.

He did not think it necessary to say why he thought her remark strange, and she of course did not like to inquire; but it was because of one of those notions which dominate and must always separate Irish people from their Saxon kindred, till the former learn men and women are the same in England as across St. George's Channel.

Considering his age, Mr. Mallow knew many things, but he did not know that, and thought it must only be through some "freak" the young London girl could feel with Desmond Gerald Mallow, of Kilbrannon, on a single point!

And yet he himself was already at one with the family domiciled in South Lambeth Road.

When will those never intended by God to be separated learn to understand each other? Not till the millennium, one is sometimes tempted to think.

"Westminster did not disappoint you?" Joscelyne added, softly, when her companion's hand was on her father's gate.

"Disappoint me!" he repeated. "I would have travelled ten times the distance, had my means permitted, to see what I have seen to-day."

"I am so pleased," she said, "for I love the Abbey," and they walked without further speech up to the hall door, which she opened with a latch-key.



Once inside, they were greeted by a perfect clamour of tongues. If there were one thing more certain than another, it was that the master of the house was absent, and that the young fry knew the fact.

Children rushed upon them by scores, as it seemed to Mr. Mallow, and yet there were but five, all told. Nevertheless, history has proved five may be equal to fifty, or five hundred, for that matter.

All and severally, they were introduced to Mr. Mallow, whom Mr. Moucell had intended to become acquainted with his progeny by degrees—as, indeed, he had himself.

Guy, Francis, Randal, Cecil, and “dear little Beaty” hurled themselves with the fullest conviction of welcome upon the unfortunate visitor’s notice ere he could cross the hall, into which they swarmed from all sorts of unexpected places.

“You may as well get the whole thing over at once,” said Joscelyne, in accents of despair; “we are so many, but I am thankful to say we are no more.”

Mr. Mallow did what was necessary under the circumstances. With a fair amount of success, he had interviewed five children, and made some pretty little remarks to each, when, from the first landing, there came a shrill,—

“So you are back at last, you young —— cat,” the cat being prefaced by a wonderfully effective and, to the clergyman, quite new adjective.

“If you are strong, be merciful, my dear boy,” he exclaimed. “Pray remember we are not accustomed to hear such vigorous language.”

“’Tisn’t ’gorous language,” was the prompt reply. “She is a nasty young —— cat, going out and amusing herself, and leaving me behind.”



“Dear, dear, were there ever such naughty children!” exclaimed Mrs. Howley, who at that moment made her appearance on the scene, looking as if she had been just aroused from slumber—which, indeed, was the case. “One can’t leave you for a moment but you get into some mischief. Run off this moment, or I will tell your father. Paul, if you don’t go downstairs at once you sha’n’t have a morsel of the beautiful cake Mary made this afternoon.”

Whereupon a change came over the Apostle, who was greedy as profane, and he descended, though very slowly, into the basement.

## CHAPTER XIX.

“My eldest son.”

No words could describe the proud self-satisfaction with which Mr. Moucell made this statement when he introduced yet another of his offspring to Mr. Mallow, blissfully ignorant that gentleman was now acquainted with the whole family.

Philip, an extremely good-looking youth, was to be one of the theatre party, and felt that neither the *Times* nor any other critic would be so able as he to pronounce a verdict on the play.

Not about Westminster alone did he know more than anyone else. He would have walked boldly in anywhere, and delivered his opinion without the slightest hesitation. It was all very well to talk concerning angels fearing to tread, but angels were a stationary order of creation, not, like man, progressive. Things had gone on a long way since they first began to sing, and if human beings did not step in wherever and whenever they could, they would be soon left far in the rear. Those were Mr. Philip Moucell's sentiments, which he was in the habit of expressing quite freely.

His strength lay in opposition ; that is the direction in which a vast amount of modern strength does lie. He would have argued against his own convictions rather than not argue at all. To Mr. Mallow his

manner could only be described as politely condescending. He had views concerning Ireland, as, indeed, he had concerning many other matters, and felt sure little really good could come out of that country. It, like the angels, was not progressive. It had been beaten in all the world's great races. Its population was scarcely larger than that of London. Its accent could but be accounted appalling. There were families doomed to extinction, there were nationalities destined to decay. He could not exactly forecast the people who would in after-centuries reign over Erin, but that a people would land on her shores, and bring civilization with them, he felt no doubt.

Before Mr. Mallow's visit ended he spoke of him kindly as a "good fellow," and in after years was glad often to mention the fact that he had spent some time with them ; but on the first night they met he did not feel inclined to commit himself, and held the clergyman, whom he "could scarcely call a clergyman," rather at arm's length.

For the rest, he was somewhat languid both in speech and movement, having an idea that "true blue blood" always appears indolent till some necessity for exertion arises, when "breed tells."

"You see the same thing in thoroughbred horses," he was wont to remark, he who, likely, had never been close to such an animal in his life "They seem half asleep till the supreme moment arrives, when they show what they can do."

On the whole, he greatly amused Mr. Mallow, who wondered how he managed to live in the same house with Paul and yet refrain from doing that erratic young Moucell an injury, till he bethought him

perhaps some of those Norman ancestors Philip was so fond of mentioning might have sworn even more terribly than the Apostle, which, of course, would account for and excuse all peculiarities of expression.

In this Mr. Mallow was mistaken, however, Paul's oaths being so unmistakably low and modern that even a Norman bowman would have been ashamed of them. Therefore, Philip felt his shining young brother to be a disgrace, and refused to go to church with him, which, as Mrs. Howley truly said, "was not Christian."

There is so much, however, which is not Christian in most families that Philip's action might well be excused.

Mr. Moucell having tickets only for four, the theatre party comprised Joscelyne, Philip, and the two elder men.

In her simple evening dress "Jo" looked charming—girlish, sweet, and innocent. She sat between her father and Philip, and Mr. Mallow noticed how all the pathetic parts of the play seemed to touch her, while at the same time she thoroughly appreciated everything humorous.

"A very nice girl," he told himself for the twentieth time—"frank, modest, pleasant." Ah! yes, poor Jo was all that, and more—the making of a noble, loving woman.

It was a pretty, bright piece, and everyone except Philip seemed to enjoy it very much.

Mr. Mallow did thoroughly, although--and it was a strange thing--whenever a pause or break occurred, the Abbey arches and flying buttresses and discoloured monuments rose before his eyes, while the ceaseless plaint of water never really left his ears.



In the theatre, as everywhere else, Mr. Moucell was an excellent companion, alert and ready as if a bachelor instead of the father of so large a family, as if without a care in the world ; and yet once, when directing Mr. Mallow's attention to something on the other side of the house, his eyes seemed arrested on their way back ; he stopped in the middle of a sentence, and did not finish it for a second.

The whole thing was over in an instant, but Mr. Mallow had time to follow his fascinated gaze, which was fixed on a dark, heavy-looking man seated beside a richly-dressed lady ; that they knew each other, and unpleasantly, was impossible to doubt ; yet even while this idea was flashing through the clergyman's mind Mr. Moucell regained his composure, and completed what he had been about to say.

When the performance was over, they passed on their way out the same gentleman and lady, the former of whom nodded to Mr. Moucell, not familiarly. His face struck Mr. Mallow as disagreeable, and his smile was so cynical it might have made a wicked person long to strike him.

Mr. Moucell returned the salutation coldly.

The lady and gentleman were waiting for their carriage. Mr. Moucell's party, intending to proceed home by the convenient, if humble, omnibus, went out into the night, and arrived in due time at Vauxhall Cross.

Ever hospitable, Mr. Moucell pressed his guest to have wine, or something stronger, but Mr. Mallow declined.

"Not even a smoke?" persisted the host.

"Not even a smoke, thank you," and they separated.

Left alone, Mr. Moucell had no wine or "anything stronger," neither did he solace himself with a smoke. Instead, he walked into his study, looked at the evening's letters, and finding nothing which necessitated another vigil, went to bed.

There he did not go to sleep for hours. It was a rare thing for him to lie awake, no matter what his anxieties might be, but his anxiety that night was very pressing. He did not know where to find fifty pounds within a week.

"It is never what we expect that troubles us so much ; it is what we do not expect," said an individual who got out of one difficulty in his own experience by opportunely dying, to the present writer, and Mr. Moucell could have endorsed that statement as absolutely true.

It is the unexpected that knocks over those who have fought fortune bravely and long.

It was the unexpected which threatened to crush him.

The blow had fallen quite a month before, but he did not realize the fact.

In that paper Mr. Isaac Gerant so much admired there occurred a passage extolling "the good old-fashioned shopkeeper, who considered having money on his books almost as good as having it in the bank," and stating that such a man prospered much better than his neighbour, who sold for cash at a mere margin of profit, and, after winning no one's good word, not even that of the wholesale houses, usually ended by being sold up at the expiration of one, two, or three years. He contrasted the cold mechanism of modern stores with the homely friendliness of him who,

being personally acquainted with all his customers, could afford, and felt willing, to wait their time for payment.

In the article, "cash" was represented as a dead failure. But circumstances alter cases, and the want of cash was producing a disastrous effect on poor Mr. Moucell, who had dealt for years with a shopkeeper, "less tradesman than saint," who took his customers' orders as readily as he did payment on account.

With this individual also the unexpected, which is always happening, occurred. He did not fail, but he died, and within a very short period the solicitors acting for his executors were on the war-path collecting his assets.

He had been liberal all his days, to himself and his family as well as to his customers ; for which reason the "estate" did not promise to prove very valuable, wherefore it seemed desirable to scrape in all the money outstanding rapidly. Messrs. Gabriel, Michael, and Co. were just the men to let no grass grow under their feet. They entertained exalted ideas of a solicitor's standing, and believed the first duty—indeed, the only duty—of any legal firm was to look after their clients' interests and their own. A pound of flesh they asked from all the debtors, with six-and-eightpence in addition, and a pound of flesh *plus* six-and-eightpence they were determined to have, or they would know the reason why.

At first Mr. Moucell treated their letters as mere matters of form, but when he found the applications grew more peremptory, and the six and eightpences totted up, he went and interviewed the gentleman who had the conduct of matters.



Though a member of the firm, he was not what Mr. Moucell, with a ghastly sort of humour, called one of the heavenly host ; instead, a Mr. Shusan, who knew what he was about as well as any man in London.

He laughed to scorn the idea of accepting the debt (and costs) by instalments. He pointed out that for many years Mr. Moucell had by means of slight payments been practically carrying the account over. He said the executors insisted on the estate being closed ; that the matter having been placed in their (Messrs. Gabriel, Michael, and Co.'s) hands, they were bound either to collect the money or return the amount as a bad debt ; that he had ever found delay on such occasions meant ultimate loss, and that, in short, unless Mr. Moucell paid them before a certain (very short) date the sum of ninety-two pounds thirteen and fivepence halfpenny, together with the costs which had accrued, they must issue a writ.

Now, imagine what this must have been to a man only just paying his way, with a visitor coming, and Christmas, with its bills, its boxes, its never-ending expenses, looming in the near future !

After well-nigh superhuman efforts, the debtor managed to scrape together forty pounds, which he would have offered as a sort of oblation on the legal shrine, but that Messrs. Gabriel, Michael, and Co., refused it utterly. They knew more about Mr. Moucell than he did himself, and were aware, if they only applied sufficient torture, he would somehow, so remarked the managing clerk, "stump up." Therefore they said : "The whole amount and costs, or a writ."



Never in his life had Mr. Moucell been in the habit of using bad language, but the language he thought, after leaving the angelic host, might have surprised even the Prince of Darkness.

He could not find the money, so a writ was served on the morning of the day when Mr. Shusan, with his gorgeously-attired wife, went to see that pretty piece which was just then the talk of the town.

## CHAPTER XX.

ON the next morning, which was somewhat stormy, Mr. Mallow continued his studies of Westminster Abbey, this time with Philip Moucell as instructor.

The amount of useless information that young gentleman was good enough to impart seemed wonderful to the coming author, who was ungrateful enough to feel he would have enjoyed his meditations among the Abbey tombs much more had Philip and his sister been absent.

Already the fact was dawning upon his understanding that a man's most genial guide through London is himself, and that the best way to enjoy sightseeing is to drop on the sights by chance.

From Westminster they proceeded, well-nigh in total darkness, by the so-called "Daylight Route" to the City, where they had a "snap-glance" at the Monument, Royal Exchange, Bank of England, Mansion House, Guildhall, General Post Office, Christ's Hospital, and Newgate, when Philip intimated that as the day was far spent it would be necessary to defer any detailed inspection of St. Paul's to some future period.

"We can turn in for afternoon service now, however," he kindly added; "they do it rather well."

This lordly commendation struck Mr. Mallow as odd, but his brain was reeling, and he felt just then more anxious to turn in anywhere out of the hurly-burly than to engage in argument concerning the proprieties of language.

Palaces, bridges, churches, shops, piers, statues, prisons, seemed chasing each other like living things through his tired head at top speed.

London certainly was a wonderful place, but a little of it went a long way—with him, at all events.

He had come into it less than sixty hours previously strong, hale, and hearty, and already he felt quite an old man, willing to sit down and rest, or drop off to sleep at a moment's notice—a truly awful experience the like of which he had never passed through before.

And yet, once out of the noise of ever and ever and ever-passing feet, and the racket of never-ceasing traffic, which surged and sobbed round St. Paul's just as the Thames had lapped and fretted against the Albert Embankment, he enjoyed the service immensely—all the more, perhaps, because a very Babel of sound had preceded that service.

Once again, however, he felt that one of his companions struck a discordant note, for the sight of Philip listening with an expression of satirical amusement to clergyman, organist, and choir, disturbed him to an extent of which he felt ashamed.

"God forgive me," was the prayer, not to be found in any appointed service, which involuntarily he offered up, and which doubtless found merciful acceptance. "How do I know what is in the lad's heart?"

Ay, how indeed !

Whatever might have been in Mr. Philip Moucell's heart, it is quite certain there was only on his tongue while they walked to Blackfriars Station the curse of Modern Criticism, which would say if it dared, and in effect does say, that the sun gives no heat by day or the moon light by night, which tries to take all beauty and pleasure and zest out of life, and substitutes its own poor "no good in anything" doctrine in lieu of all old beliefs.

"Really, Phil, you *are* hateful!" said his sister at last. "I thought the whole service lovely."

"Oh, I daresay it might seem so to a girl."

"May I venture to observe that it seemed beautiful to me?" said Mr. Mallow; "but then, no doubt, I am as uninstructed in such matters as your sister."

"Not at all," replied Philip, quite unabashed; "but you are new to London, and have not yet been to the Temple," which rebuke the curate accepted meekly, and wished he had not spoken, feeling the latter-day knowledge of young people exceeds the best wisdom of their elders.

"I am afraid you are sadly tired?" It was Joscelyne who made this remark, as they walked over Westminster Bridge.

"Only pleasantly," was Mr. Mallow's mendacious reply. He knew he was telling a fib, but the old Adam was so rampant within him he could not confess he felt fit to drop in Mr. Philip Moucell's presence.

That evening they took tram home; any high thoughts in which they may have indulged had been routed utterly before they reached Westminster, and



no thoughts were left, anyone could have deemed it desirable to encourage.

For utterly commonplace mortals, filled with everyday ideas, a tram was obviously the proper mode of locomotion—such, at least, was Mr. Mallow's idea, as he took his seat inside, while young Moucell climbed to the roof with the manner of one who believed he did everything better than anybody else.

Possibly this was only the result of "Norman blood"; after all, a "man's ancestors" did not come over with the Conqueror for nothing.

On the wanderers' return they were enthusiastically greeted by five young people, who, having been sedulously engaged in "keeping the dining-room fire warm," rushed into the hall and well-nigh overwhelmed Mr. Mallow with the exuberance of their welcome. From the first floor came the sound of "The Rakes of Mallow," joyfully thumped on the piano by someone evidently meaning the air as a sort of "See the Conquering Hero Comes" compliment for their guest.

"Come, clear off," said the male representative of many defunct Moucells, while there came a plaintive little,—

"Dear, dear, dear, where is aunt?" from the female branch of that great family.

"Aunty's gone out," explained one of the younger fry, who was embracing Mr. Mallow's knees, "and we've had our teas, and comed up here so that we might know when you got home."

"Then you will kindly go downstairs again at once," said Joscelyne, with well-feigned severity.

"Might the little ones not remain for a while?"

interposed Mr. Mallow, dreading a *tête-à-tête* with Philip. "I love children."

Which, indeed, he did, also young men and maidens, also the middle-aged and grey-headed.

There was nothing the good God had made but seemed in some way beautiful and interesting to this Irish curate, save the curious modern cynic, who sits in judgment on and finds fault with all the Creator's work.

"I am afraid they will worry you sadly," Joscelyne hesitated.

"Quite the contrary; as I said just now, I love children."

"Will you be very good if I let you stay?" asked Joscelyne, in answer to which question the juvenile Moucells folded their small hands, as if in prayer, and declared with one accord,—

"We will."

Meanwhile, "The Rakes of Mallow" was in mad progress overhead. To much shrill laughter and a joyous tin-kettle sort of accompaniment, the merry measure held on its wild career.

"Oh! I must stop that," cried Joscelyne, impulsively, only just realizing what the lively strain was, and she rushed upstairs to interrupt the flow of Guy's charming melody.

"Who were 'The Rakes of Mallow,' Mr. Mallow?" asked Edgar, only, of course, desirous to "know all about it."

"No relations of mine, I assure you," was the laughing reply.

"But what were they?"

"A very racketsy lot, I should imagine."

“That statement,” observed Philip sententiously, “does not add much to our stock of information. I have long greatly wished to know what a ‘rake’ was in the old days besides an agricultural implement.”

“My dear boy,” answered Mr. Mallow—which phrase Philip secretly resented, because no man under forty likes to be called a “dear boy,” and then only by someone he considers his superior—“my dear boy, if you look in any dictionary you will find one definition of ‘rake,’ which, I think, ought to be sufficient for you. ‘The Rakes of Mallow,’ however, I should imagine to have been a foolish set of young fellows, as silly, but by no means so wicked, as the Mohawks, who were long ago the curse of London.”

Which was “one between the eyes” for Mr. Philip Moucell, who, spite of his craze for arguing, had sense enough to recognize and respect a capable adversary when he met him.

“Yes, I had not thought of that,” he answered, after just a second’s pause. “Probably you are quite right,” after which admission exit Mr. Philip Moucell, who said “he had work to do,” likewise Master Edgar of the same ilk.

On their way through the hall they met Joscelyne, Guy the pianist, and Paul, who had accompanied with a poker on the coal-scuttle that joyous “Rakes of Mallow,” the latter young gentleman being in the best of good tempers.

“Now, then,” said their sister, addressing her elder brothers, “are *you* going to stay quietly downstairs without quarrelling?”

“We are,” was the answer.



"That will be a mercy," Joscelyne returned, a reply proving the home life of South Lambeth Road was not always so calm as Mr. Mallow in his ignorance had imagined.

While the curate was having his tea a suspicious silence reigned, broken only once by the Apostle, who, making a frightful grimace when he heard his new friend did not take sugar, caused a titter.

Mr. Mallow looked somewhat surprised, till Joscelyne explained the source of amusement by saying, "If everyone had as sweet a tooth as you, Paul, there would not be enough to go round."

If for a too brief period, however, an unnatural quiet prevailed, it was more than counterbalanced by the pandemonium which succeeded to that short calm. No games of any sort were attempted. The tiny Moucells' idea of enjoyment was simply to make a rush at the too-confiding stranger, hurling themselves upon him from all corners of the room, and shrieking with delight when he caught one up in his arms and made believe very much that he meant to keep him prisoner. Looking at the bright fire, hearing the shouts of merry laughter, seeing the happy faces on which the gaslight shone, no one would ever have imagined that over that home hung suspended a sword of Damocles, which might, and very surely would, fall any day after Mr. Moucell failed in answering Queen Victoria's pressing invitation to meet the legal luminary appointed as her representative.

No one would have thought it ; yet Mrs. Howley was even then out trying whether no effort of hers could avert such a catastrophe, and Mr. Moucell had since morning been knocking around from post to



pillar in the hope that "something would turn up," that, in plain words, a fresh miracle would be wrought in his favour.

And still in blissful ignorance the children played on, yelling, shouting, madly uproarious, and Mr. Mallow played with them, happy as a boy himself, and delighted at being able to give the little people pleasure.

The fun was at its height, the merry youngsters were in a full tide of enjoyment, when Joscelyne, who had been absent for some time, opened the door and said, "Children! *father!*"

Though not a long sentence, it proved sufficient.

In an instant Mr. Mallow found himself alone. Without a word, almost without a sound, his small companions slunk away, vanishing as swiftly and silently as did the unholy crew assembled in Alloway Kirk when Tam O'Shanter pronounced his famous eulogium on Cutty Sark.

## CHAPTER XXI.

THE surprised guest had barely time to smooth his own ruffled plumage, when a sound of footsteps was heard coming up the walk, followed by the slight noise of a latch-key turning gently in the lock. All Mr. Moucell's movements were quiet.

Immediately it crossed Mr. Mallow's mind Joscelyne had been listening for the opening of the outer gate, ere rushing like a scout to give warning of approaching danger. This, then, was how that strange stillness which had at first so greatly puzzled him, was secured. It seemed a long price to pay, but he had not time to think the matter out, for Mr. Moucell, after only a brief pause in the hall, entered and bade him "Good morning," as if there were some excellent joke in this form of greeting hidden away from common understanding.

Mr. Mallow accepted the "chaff" as intended, and observed, apologetically, that if he lived in London he would seldom rise with the lark.

"Of my own free will I never should, no matter where I lived," returned Mr. Moucell, with conviction. "Well, and how have you been getting on to-day?"

"Capitally, thank you. I feel I am growing in knowledge and wisdom hourly."

“And what about proof?”

“I had totally forgotten it!” exclaimed Mr. Mallow, in accents of unfeigned regret, “but,” brightening up, “that does not much matter; I can correct the sheets now.”

“Quite impossible, if we are to get to Bedford Square by eight,” said Mr. Moucell. “Why, you look bewildered! Had you also forgotten to remember—the lovely phrase is your own—that Mrs. Alston and her brother expect to see us in about an hour?”

“I had indeed; forgive me. And we really must turn out again?”

“Well, yes; having promised to go, I think we ought to keep faith. It is not like an ‘At Home,’ where the absence of one or two, or twenty, for that matter, would seem of small consequence. A gap at a dinner-table is a different affair.”

“Of course it is, and I beg your pardon. My head has got a little addled with sight-seeing, but I will try to brush some sense into it. I really feel extremely sorry to have been so stupid. I shall be ready in ten minutes,” and he hurried off to dress.

“There goes a thoroughly good fellow, or I am much mistaken,” thought Mr. Moucell, out of the fulness of his better self. His worse was perfectly conscious that some gulf yawned between him and this clever, easily-tired, over-conscientious Irish parson—a gulf which time would widen instead of narrow—but he did not care to inquire too curiously what that gulf might be; rather, with a very heavy heart, he crossed to his room, from which he very shortly reappeared, looking, as Joscelyne said, “quite smart.”

“A bonnie bride is soon buskit,” she went on.  
“Father, you *are* handsome!”

It would have been impossible for any man not to feel pleased with so spontaneous a tribute to his personal attractions, and Mr. Moucell’s face expressed gratification, though he answered, reproachfully,—

“I know of old my girl is a sad flatterer.”

“And I know your girl loves her dad; better than anybody in the wide world.” Was it the shadow of a coming event that made her add that last clause?

“Yes, my dear, I am sure you do now; but when Mr. Right comes this way, how will it be?”

“Neither Mr. Right nor Mr. Wrong, nor Mr. Anybody Else will ever separate me from my father,” returned Joscelyne, putting her arms round his neck, and her fresh young lips up to his; lips that since early childhood had never kissed a man not related to her, and that never, never, never kissed the one man she really loved.

“My darling!” and Mr. Moucell pressed his daughter to his heart. Nature for a moment had its way, and he felt she was indeed the blessing he often averred; then, other considerations presenting themselves, he said,—

“By-the-bye, Joscelyne, I think we are rather over-doing Mr. Mallow with London.”

“I am sure we are,” returned the girl; “the merciless distances Phil dragged him to-day were enough to kill anybody.”

“I told Philip our guest had only a fortnight, or at most three weeks, in which to see everything, therefore he was endeavouring to do as much as possible;



but I see Mr. Mallow is not so strong as I supposed, and that we must go more slowly. It amazes me to find any man knock up as he does."

"He says it is the noise here which tries him."

"His nerves must be very weak, then. However, they shall not be overtaxed while he is with us if I can help it, for good people are not too numerous, and it strikes me he is very good."

"Indeed, indeed, he is as good as his book ; how I wish it were out, that I could talk to him about it ! " she exclaimed, quickly guessing the reason why her father's brow clouded. " But perhaps he may come to us again in the spring ? "

"If we are not sold up in the meantime," was the thought which swept through Mr. Moucell's mind, but he only answered,—

"It is quite likely he may ; he has another book on the stocks. What I wish to say now, however, is that I put him entirely under your care for the future. Find out what he wants most to see, and let him see it in the easiest way possible, you understand. Now, next Sunday, for instance ? "

"Oh, Phil has settled that—the Temple."

"Then I will take Mr. Mallow there myself," declared Mr. Moucell, adding mentally, "What a nuisance !" for he loved to have one day in the week free. "I shall have a talk with your brother, and explain matters to him. Meanwhile, the best thing I can do, as it seems to me, is sketch out a little programme, and leave my wise daughter to fill in the details. You are in sympathy with the budding author, therefore will be careful not to overtax his strength,"

and he caressingly touched the girl's cheek, which for some reason flamed red.

"There he is," she said, hurriedly. "I will remember, father."

At that moment, as if he had really brushed a lot of cobwebs off his brain, Mr. Mallow came running downstairs, eager and active as a boy, exclaiming,—

"You must have thought me very long, but I could not find my ties. It was the hunt for them that kept me."

"We are in excellent time," was the answer, and then Joscelyne heard the door bang behind them.

Poor girl, she sat down in her own domain, feeling very happy, strangely happy.

Luckily, she did not know in the least that she loved the man. All she did know was that, like the vague, faint perfume of early spring after a long winter, his presence made life more pleasant to her.

On the way to Bloomsbury Square Mr. Moucell tried to make Mr. Mallow acquainted with the position of his friends who dwelt there.

"We always speak as if the parties were given by Mrs. Alston, but more correctly it is she and her brother, who entertain a good deal. Mr. Blackshaw is a very worthy gentleman who returned from India with ample means, but, unfortunately, with no liver, which fact depresses him greatly. Mrs. Alston finds all the sweetness and light."

"And Mr. Blackshaw the money?" suggested Mr. Mallow.

"To a great extent," agreed Mr. Moucell, who thought it unnecessary to state that the widow was well dowered.

The Bedford Square house was quite as large as that inhabited by Mr. Clifford Jones, and the butler as well up to his business. He would have done credit to a Guildhall banquet ; indeed, it was from some such stronghold of unimpeachable respectability that he had been enticed to take service with a City man, Mr. Blackshaw's father.

Simmons was the unworthy name which appertained to a worthy individual, who regarded with evident pity his master, compelled by circumstances to drink strange waters instead of generous wine, and whose heart therefore could never be made glad.

Mr. Blackshaw was indeed a most unhappy gentleman, but he liked to see friends around him and enjoying themselves.

The guests were admirably selected, diverse, as can be well imagined, but agreeable and interesting exceedingly.

Weary though he was, Mr. Mallow felt he had never been at a pleasanter party. Everyone talked naturally and easily, all seemed to have something to say worth hearing, good stories were told, laughter rang out freely, and when afterwards, in the drawing-room, a well-known artiste discoursed sweet music, the curate's cup of innocent happiness almost overflowed, for he loved music. Ah ! what did that simple, honest heart not love which was pure and holy and of good repute ?

He talked to the vocalist about her ballad, sung as only she could sing it, and afterwards Mrs. Alston found an opportunity of saying a few friendly words to him, that made his pulses throb a little quicker, for she spoke of success as of a thing assured.



“I shall send to Mudie’s the moment your book is advertised, and read it with greater interest now that I have seen the author.”

The words might have meant nothing, of course, but something in her kind face and earnest voice appeared to mean a great deal, and sent Mr. Mallow away feeling almost triumphant.

By reason of Mr. Blackshaw lacking that organ so necessary to everyone’s well-being, the party broke up about eleven, and a few minutes later Mr. Moucell and his *protégé* were quietly walking past the British Museum.

“I wish I had a guinea for every hour I have spent in the library there,” said the literary man. “I could live at ease for ever after.”

“How hard you must have worked!” observed Mr. Mallow, sympathetically.

“Yes, a man situated as I am does not eat the bread of idleness. What is the use of complaining, though?—it is all in the day’s work.”

“But your day is such a tremendously long one.”

“And at the end of a year nothing to show for all the days and all the labour!”

There was a bitterness in Mr. Moucell’s tone that his companion had not noticed previously, and he hesitated a little before he said,—

“I want to read some of your books very much. Where can I—”

“You cannot get them anywhere,” interrupted the man who had been writing so long. “Except a couple of volumes of trash, I never published any book in my life. There is a lily that grows in many cottage gardens which poor people call ‘The Life of Man.’



The flower just lives one day. My writing has a much shorter existence. It blooms but to die. Lighter than thistledown, there is no permanence in it. Once, it may be, I could have done as good work as my neighbours, but that time is gone and past."

"Surely, however—"

"Do not let us talk about it, please. What can't be cured—you know. If young men could realize that they have only one life to make or spoil, we should see, I fancy, not so many futures senselessly wrecked. You have your chance now; take care of it. As for me, don't attach any importance to what I have been saying. Spite of Mr. Blackshaw's old vintages, I am a cup too low to-night; that is all."

It was enough. The sight of the glittering plate, of a house where money was writ large at every turn, seemed more than he could bear, with one sentence beating ever upon his brain: "Another day gone and nothing done—another day nearer to ruin."

It had been hard for any man to sit and talk, and listen and laugh, with such a refrain going on, and now, when he was in the night air, mentally alone with his pressing anxiety, past troubles came and shook hands with the present calamity, and cried with gibing tongues, "It was for this he worked so indefatigably, rose so early, and so late took rest. He thought to conquer us, but we have won; another day gone, and nothing has turned up," and so *ad libitum*.

They had got by this time to that spot where Tottenham Court Road pours its volume of traffic into New Oxford Street. The noise, glare, and confusion made Mr. Mallow feel as if the ground were slipping from under his feet, as if his head were reeling.

“ How and when Londoners ever are able to think, if ever they do think, I cannot imagine,” he said to Mr. Moucell, as they stood waiting for an omnibus.

“ Why should they not be able to think ? ”

“ Because of the ceaseless noise and the endless confusion.”

“ If you lived in London, my dear fellow, you would soon find the trouble is *not* to think,” and Mr. Moucell laughed bitterly.

## CHAPTER XXII.

CONSERVATIVE as he could but be considered, Mr. Moucell had many feelings in common with Modern Socialism—a fact the less surprising when it is remembered the only difference between that new light and any old one seems to be that while a high and dry Tory of former days was honestly determined to keep all the property he owned, the latest development of democratic ideas wants to get and keep all the property he can, owned by other people.

Most things move in circles; therefore this apparent retrogression is probably merely the result of some natural law people at present fail to understand.

Perhaps, however, it was only because he was, as he said, a “cup too low” that the sight of Mr. Blackshaw’s house, and guests, and plate, and assured prosperity, had proved almost more than Mr. Moucell could bear. On another’s hearth were warmth and brightness; beside his own couched the spectre of coming ruin. Was it any marvel, then, that as he walked past the building where he had for so many a long year done such yeoman’s work his heart burnt within him, and, against his will, he spake?

“Ay, certainly,” thus ran his thoughts, while the omnibus jogged onward to Charing Cross, “the race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong. Why

should Blackshaw, who, I'll be bound, never did much save take his salary, sit at ease, while I, who have laboured like a galley-slave, am to be sold up?"

"Another day gone, and nothing done," came in the sickening refrain. There were but six more, and one of those six, Sunday, in which anything could be done, for he had not taken, and did not intend to take, steps towards securing the other four our law graciously allows to individuals willing and able to pay for such indulgence.

He made up his mind not to spend sixpence more in costs than was unavoidable. If Messrs. Gabriel, Michael, and Co. refused to give him time and sent in a man—why, then he, Mr. Moucell, would go to his landlord and ask him to clear the decks. What was to happen after that he did not know.

A nice future for anyone to see looming ahead; a delightful little story to have hidden away in his heart, the while he forced himself to speak on indifferent subjects to the guest he trusted would be gone before affairs came to a crisis.

Even Mr. Shusan might have pitied Mr. Moucell had he known of his anxiety, but it is extremely unlikely that he would, for he was a gentleman who took judicial views of legal matters, and thought no person ought to incur debts and costs he was unable to pay, or that his friends were unwilling to pay for him.

Altogether it was a pretty tangle! Mrs. Howley's income had under the pressure of another necessity been forestalled for nearly a year, and her outing to try to borrow proved utterly disappointing. Mr. Moucell knew that, for she returned immediately after he so unconsciously ended the merry orgie his children



were holding, and a few words served to explain all her downcast expression left unsaid.

After such a day's experiences the dinner party did not go far towards improving Mr. Moucell's spirits, for to know that another has money and to spare, while you have none, may be gratifying in a philanthropic sense, but fails to line any empty pocket.

And how this man with empty pockets had slaved, toiled, and denied himself, "none save the Almighty," to quote his own words, "would ever know." He was right; he had kept no record of days and nights full of work, full of harass; no diary of feelings, regrets, rebuffs. Like a soldier on the battle-field, he had no time for the indulgence of such self-pity, but that night, when he seemed beaten, his heart felt full of sorrow for himself. It was the contrast which opened a well long sealed, the contrast between Bedford Square and South Lambeth, between Desmond Gerald Mallow and John Moucell, that let loose all the bitter waters which filled his soul.

And yet, curiously enough, he knew he had but to ask and have, only to tell Mrs. Alston, and receive fifty, or five times fifty, pounds at once.

This was more than he could do, however. He was Socialist enough to desire Mr. Blackshaw's money as a right, but he would not take his sister's as a favour.

No doubt the burglar's feeling is often identical. He will not burden the rates; instead, he annexes another man's goods.

Mr. Moucell had no thought of forcibly annexing Mr. Blackshaw's balance at that gentleman's bank—he only wished he had it—which merely proves that

though the wish may be parent to the thought, the relationship of thought to deed is more remote than the majority of people imagine.

"I should not touch that proof to-night, if I were you," he said to Mr. Mallow, after that gentleman had, as usual, declined any further refreshment. "Better leave it till morning. I shall not be going out early, so can help if needful."

"I will leave it, then, thank you greatly. What I should do without your kind assistance I cannot imagine."

Mr. Moucell could not imagine either, but refrained from saying so.

"Good night, and sound sleep," was the only remark he made, and then, when he found himself alone, the smile died on his lips, and he turned into his study with a weary sigh.

Nothing of importance had come by the last post ; no money, or promise of any ; various inquiries concerning the delivery of sundry articles, but no editor peremptory ; several circulars as usual ; a couple of bills, also of course, for when in Mr. Moucell's long experience had bills not been arriving from someone ?

In her little room across the hall Joscelyne, tired with the day's doings, was sleeping soundly, unconscious that trouble brooded over their home. Mr. Moucell had ever kept knowledge of pecuniary anxieties from his children, and it was not likely he would begin to enlighten any of them in this extremity.

A spell of intense, terrible silence seemed laid upon the house. Save for the blackbeetles down-

stairs, not a living thing was moving on the premises. Mr. Moucell threw himself into a chair, and thought until the sound of that refrain which had been keeping him company all evening grew so loud he felt as though it would drive him mad.

Suddenly he rose and began pacing the room. Afore at dead of night he had found movement inspire ideas ; why should it do not the same now, when he wanted them so badly ?

He walked up and down and about the narrow limits of his study till well-nigh worn out, but nothing came except the dreadful chorus which had been haunting him for hours.

It was merely the trouble of weeks put into words, but there seemed something so weird and prophetic about the constant iteration that he felt as if it were growing to be an actual enemy he must fight against.

He strove to tear away his mind ; to think of Mrs. Alston, Mr. Blackshaw, the lady who sang, any person or thing that might divert the current of his reflections ; and then, in a moment, all unbidden, Great Russell Street, well-nigh deserted, recurred to memory, and he heard again Mr. Mallow's question concerning those books which were not to be had anywhere.

Immediately he stopped and looked about him like one dazed, then, " I think they would do it : I believe they would," burst joyfully from his lips. " Let me see," and unlocking one drawer, rarely opened, he pulled out a bundle of papers, and began to read. Something had turned up at last, and for a brief space sunshine took the place of gloom.



It was only for a brief space, however! He read on for nearly an hour, but as he did so the fashion of his countenance altered, and those clouds hope had dispersed gathered once again, growing darker and darker with each column of printed matter he laid aside. At last he came to the end of what appeared to be, and were, a number of columns and parts of columns cut from newspapers and weekly journals. Sadly with his left hand he placed the final slip on the top of a goodly heap, while he said aloud,—

“And this is the best I could do! Spite of all the worry, of all the incessant harass, was there nothing better in me to come out? ‘Thistledown,’ I said; rather froth, froth, froth; foam on the great river of literature; lighter than vanity. My God!” and his head dropped forward on his outstretched arms, and the unhappy man understood, after years, that though he had lacked riches and ease of mind and leisure much, he had lacked genius more!

That was a dark hour—almost the darkest of Mr. Moucell’s life. Save when the Fenlands politely cast the barque containing his fortunes adrift, he had experienced nothing like it; and then he was nearly twenty years younger, with hope still strong within him, while now—

He had sat in judgment on others, for which reason, when he was, for the first time, forced really to sit in judgment on himself, he could not shut his eyes to facts.

The keen critical faculty of which he was so vain summed up his strength and weakness in one sentence,—

“A light touch, a dash of cynical humour, a



pleasant knack of making much ado about nothing—that is all which can be said in your favour. For the rest, John Moucell, your articles, read dispassionately, are *less than nothing.*”

And it was bitterly true. No one can get out of a man what he has not in him. The greatest chemist who ever lived must have failed to extract one grain of real gold from the mass of glittering rubbish Mr. Moucell had been turning out for years.

His own idea hitherto was that but for a perverse fate he could have digged from his own mines heaps of precious metal ; but he knew better now.

The papers lying at his hand were the best things he ever did, and had been preserved in the hope that some good might be done with them one day, when he could find leisure to work them up into really brilliant articles ; yet now he looked at them with pitying, sorrowful contempt. “ Flat, stale, unprofitable,” he said, contemptuously, “ as bread baked a twelve-month.” Hot out of the oven, they had suited popular taste well enough, but cold, in the silence of night, they were absolutely destitute of flavour.

It was a terrible experience ; somewhat akin to that of a woman who, believing herself good-looking, accidentally sees her face reflected in a too truthful mirror, and learns for the first time she is plain.

The hour, the circumstances, bodily weariness, mental exhaustion, were all against him ; all tended to make the heavy blow harder to bear ; but Mr. Moucell was not a man to sink utterly under any defeat, no matter how crushing. Already common sense was coming to his aid, and presently he heard her clear voice saying,—

“Why are you sitting there instead of seeking needful rest? Though your work may be light as air, it has still been strong enough to keep a roof over your head and maintain your family. Let another, the biggest author you can name, attempt to do that which you have done, and see how he will succeed! What is the beginning and end of the whole matter? You want sixty pounds, and can't get it. Well, sixty pounds has dropped from heaven before now, and if it does not drop you know the worst that can happen. Try to get some sleep.”

“Yes,” thought Mr. Moucell, rousing himself, “I must sleep; and as to the rest, affairs will have to take their chance. Gerants would accept those papers fast enough, I know, but I dare not risk offering them; besides, they would have to be published with my name attached—a thing altogether out of the question. If I had remembered that, I should not have read them.”

Poor Mr. Moucell!

## CHAPTER XXIII.

THE days went by, and sixty pounds did not drop from heaven or come from anywhere else.

When a man is in extremity, he generally finds that it is of no use waiting for something to turn up ; he must turn it up for himself. To do Mr. Moucell justice, he tried hard to accomplish this feat without avail, and yet all the while he was buoyed up by a very shadowy hope which at last took possession of him like an absolute certainty. Drowning men catch at straws ; and this man, drowning in a little sea of debt, caught at one straw and held it tenaciously. Meanwhile, Mr. Mallow, escorted sometimes by Joscelyne and one or other of her brothers—sometimes by Joscelyne alone—saw many sights and many places Londoners—perhaps happily for themselves—never see at all.

He went also with Mr. Moucell to various meetings, where noted men were pointed out to him ; where he heard great men speak. He had been urged to extend his stay for another fortnight at all events, but would only consent to remain a few days longer than the period originally named.

Asking him to remain even for this short period seemed to Mrs. Howley like a tempting of Providence, but Joscelyne's father had grown a little reckless, for,

all unknown to the worthy widow, he was clinging with painful persistence to that hope attached to nothing tangible, of which mention has been made.

Proof-correcting went on apace. Practically it was Mr. Moucell who really did this work, but according to his statement he only ran over it after Mr. Mallow had made his amendments. However that might be, a proof went from South Lambeth Road direct to the printers, and everybody was satisfied except the author, who in many cases sacrificed his own wishes to Mr. Moucell's maturer judgment.

In an incredibly short time Mr. Mallow became one with the family at South Lambeth Road. He was made free of the lower regions, privileged to watch Mrs. Howley darning socks, allowed sometimes to share the children's tea in the little sitting-room which looked out on the conservatory steps and a small square of pavement, was asked questions by the boys set as traps to catch him, escaping from such snares in a way little short of miraculous. He was ere long also allowed to hear the young folks "baiting" their aunt, an amusement which never seemed to pall.

There were some words that presented difficulties as great to poor Mrs. Howley as stiff fences to a bad equestrian, and Phil especially delighted in "putting her at them" and "seeing her come to grief."

"Covetous" was awkward to negotiate; in fact, she never got over it properly, always saying "covechous"; but February appeared to be the leap she signally failed to take, always ill-treating the name of that month with such good-natured innocence of anything being amiss as to cause shouts of laughter.

"Well, aunt," thus Phillip would open the proceed-



ings, "what about 'February fill dyke?' Can you say all that now?"

"Why, of course, I always could as well as you."

"Say it, then."

"'February fill dyke.' That is right."

"No, it is not."

"I am sure it is; I have made no mistake this time. Now, have I, Mr. Mallow?"

"You said it very nicely," answered the gentleman appealed to.

"Blarney, blarney! Oh, you'll not get out of the matter so easily, Mr. Mallow. Come, be honest," many young voices exclaimed.

"I am honest. Mrs. Howley did say the word very nicely."

"The question," declared Philip, "is not whether aunt spoke the word nicely, but whether 'February' be right. You have been appealed to. What is the verdict?"

"I am afraid I must give it against you," said Mr. Mallow, smiling at the lady, who was brought out as regularly as a bear, to make sport for the children. "There are two r's in February."

"But I have heard Mr. Moucell say, time after time, it is of no use taking any notice of spelling," remonstrated the perplexed lady.

"I suppose he meant custom was the only safe guide," answered Mr. Mallow, jumping at her meaning.

"And besides, I do put both r's in February—there now!" triumphantly.

It was irresistible. The young people shrieked; Mr. Mallow himself could not help laughing, while

Mrs. Howley joined in the merriment as heartily as anybody; Joscelyne alone sat apart, silent and ashamed.

"Some people *cannot* pronounce their r's quite distinctly," said the offender, good-humouredly, when order was again restored, "and it may be that I am one of them; but I try my best. Anyhow, I never set a whole congregation tittering, like a clergyman who once at St. Mary's read out: 'Now, Bawabbas, was a wobba'!"

"Bravo, aunt," cried Philip, patting his relative on the back, while the younger fry yelled with delight, and Mr. Mallow gave himself up to unrestrained enjoyment of the joke. "We will condone all your offences against February for the sake of that story. Where did you hear it?"

"Long ago; just after we came here, but I had forgotten till the r's brought it back to mind. It is quite true," she went on, addressing Mr. Mallow. "If I think for a minute, I shall be able to give you the name of the clergyman. He was a noted person."

"Oh, we do not want his name," returned Mr. Mallow; "a good anecdote needs no father, or godfather either."

"How fortunate it was I happened to remember it!" exclaimed the simple soul, with much complacency.

"Indeed, we are all very much indebted to your memory," said the curate, watching Joscelyne, as, moved by some inexplicable feeling, she stole round and kissed her aunt, who seemed quite taken aback by this unwonted tribute of affection. Morning and night she and the girl saluted as a matter of form;

but caresses during the day were so rare between them as to suggest "Something rotten in the State of Denmark."

And in truth such was the case. Unselfishness, if unassociated with strength, is a virtue seldom respected by the young, and those whom the young do not respect they rarely really love. For this reason Joscelyne had never loved her aunt overmuch, or indeed at all; and it was only of late that awakening conscience—the last thing which springs to life in human beings—had begun to prick her, by pointing out many sins of omission and more of commission towards a woman whose strength lay in thinking always of others, and weakness in continually striving to keep unpleasantness from them.

All this Mr. Mallow had guessed long before, and felt he liked the girl better for her impulsive act of repentance. Indeed, there was nothing he did not like about Joscelyne, save her short skirts and her wealth of hair, which latter seemed to him a perfect nuisance out of doors. It was always blowing over her face and hat, and getting entangled in something or someone on the steamboat.

He had asked her two or three times why she did not put it up in some way; but when she replied, "It would be so much trouble," he relinquished the hopeless task of persuading any female creature against her will, and reconciled himself to the flowing mane, as he tried to forgive dresses that showed a pair of pretty ankles without any coquettish disguise.

In these matters and in many more he considered Mrs. Howley—who had no hair worth mentioning, and feet it would have been cruelty to show the world—



wanting. It was her duty to tell the girl she was on the verge of womanhood, and ought to put aside childish things.

He had seen covert smiles exchanged by the Conservancy men he did not quite understand, and that he certainly did not like, while Joscelyne, on good terms with them all, spoke her pleasant greeting and passed across the gangway.

He thought those smiles had reference to the wind-tossed hair, often wet with rain, and the dresses which wanted "letting down," to use a time-honoured phrase; but the truth was, the Thames Conservancy servants had seen both hair and dresses for so long a time, all charm of novelty was utterly gone; and as a distinguished physician<sup>1</sup> remarks, "It is only a new sensation which gives pleasure."

No, the sly, meaning glances meant that Miss Moucell had "got a beau exactly to her mind," one in whom anybody might take an interest, and feel a pride—one of the right sort, in fact, who would probably from henceforth be frequently going up and down the river. Light broke upon him afterwards, but not during the first week of his London experiences, at the end of which Guy Moucell, the "audacious pickle" of that distinguished family, took occasion to ask,—

"Are you in want of a wife, Mr. Mallow?"

"Well, no," answered that gentleman, amused. "If I were, do you know of anyone who would suit me?"

"Down to the ground—suit to a T!" was the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. George Harley, who has, alas! died since the above was written.



reply. "Tuck you snugly up if ill, and let nothing vex you when well. The right sort of wife in all ways."

"Really, that sounds very alluring. Pray proceed, Guy."

"She's a bit older than you, but that is all the better ; young ones often jib ; warranted quiet in double harness ; has some money, which always makes things more comfortable. She is greatly taken with you—says you are *such* a gentleman."

"I am at a loss how to express my obligations. May I ask where and when the lady arrived at so flattering a conclusion ?"

"Ah ! that's my secret ; but if you think well of the matter, you shall hear more shortly. You might take a house in this neighbourhood, so that we could all go and stay with you—by turns, I mean—then you need never feel lonely."

"No, I do not think I should. The fair unknown might object, however."

"No fear of that ; and if she did, we would go all the same. I am glad you like the notion. It is a long time since there has been a wedding in the family—never in our memory—and one is due now, I think. It will be prime !"

"Guy, I am afraid you are a very bad boy."

"Bad ! for trying to settle you comfortably ! If that is all the thanks you are going to give me, I will have nothing more to do with the matter."

"Indeed, I think you would be wise."

"And what are we to do with the disconsolate damsel, who keeps singing your praises morning, noon, and night ? Except the dad, she says she never knew

anybody like you—I mean anybody so nice. As for her first husband, who was a tax-collector, or something of that sort, I don't believe she ever cared two-pence about him, so you need not be afraid of the dear departed being flung at your head."

Which last statement, changing doubt into certainty, Mr. Mallow felt it incumbent on him to read the young gentleman a lecture on bad taste ; but he might as well have spared himself the trouble.

Lectures made not the slightest impression on any of the Moucell boys.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

SEVEN days had raced by, and the evening before that writ was returnable arrived in due course. Looking back, it seemed to Mr. Moucell about a year since he encountered Mr. Shusan's cynical glance at the theatre; but the hours, full of worry, in passing had flown and left no tangible souvenir behind them save ten pounds, the outcome of as hard work as the unfortunate debtor ever accomplished.

Nothing had turned up save disappointment, which may generally be safely reckoned on by persons in a like position.

The suspense had told; Mr. Moucell was looking haggard, though his face still wore the cheerful expression which carried him over so many a difficulty and deceived such a number of people concerning his real position.

Nevertheless, his heart was sick with hope deferred as he walked home on that evening which preceded the legal day when safety would expire. A drizzling rain was falling, but that did not depress him more than circumstances had already done.

What does the weather—what does anything external—signify to a man who, wanting fifty pounds badly, has racked his brains considering how to procure that amount, in vain?

Change the figures, and the same remark applies to

anyone in similar case from duke to costermonger ; be the amount little or great, it is what we cannot get that vexes our souls.

By mutual agreement, dinner at South Lambeth Road had been altered for many days into supper, as so much "more pleasant and convenient," to quote Mr. Mallow ; therefore, it was at that informal meal Mr. Moucell met his guest on the evening in question, when by rare chance they were not "due" anywhere else.

It would be difficult to imagine nicer little suppers than those provided in South Lambeth Road.

Of necessity cold, they lacked no grace of cooking, garnish, or relish. They were, in fact, triumphs of old-fashioned housekeeping, and seemed to Mr. Mallow, who came from a land where cooks no later than his father's time were born, not made, alas ! it is so now, *chef-d'œuvres* in their way.

It was over one of these little meals that on the dismal night when Mr. Moucell stood almost face to face with ruin, Mr. Mallow disburdened himself about half-past nine of the clock. By the last post he had received a cheque from Messrs. Gerant which seemed to him all too large, though only for the amount originally agreed, and also at the same time a letter for him to sign embodying the promise which had been made concerning his next book, of which not much more than half was yet written.

"You see, it is all so new to me," said the young man, half-crazed with delight at handling money sent to him for the first time in his capacity as author. "I cannot think the thing real. How good of Messrs. Gerant to pay me before the book is out !"



No one knew better than Mr. Moucell how hard he had tried to get that cheque forwarded at an earlier date. It was, in fact, the straw he held—the rope attached to nothing which he clutched.

The Gerants were business men, and liberal ; nevertheless, rules bound and prejudice tied them, and they liked to post tens, and fifties, and hundreds of pounds when it suited their convenience to do so, rather than when it suited the convenience of other people to receive them.

In this respect Mr. Thomas Gerant was more modern than his father, and turned a deaf ear to Mr. Moucell's hints that the charming spectacle of a cheque might render Mr. Mallow less restive under the idea liberties had been taken with his manuscript.

"Now and then he seems to miss some accustomed pet phrase, and it is all I can do to quiet him," said the veteran author.

"I put that matter right a few days ago," was Mr. Thomas Gerant's unexpected reply. "I told him frankly we found it necessary to have some curious turns of expression altered. He said of course 'he should have liked to correct them himself.' Most happily, I had kept a list which I laid before him. 'Can you see where those are wrong?' I asked. No, he could not. 'Then it would have been impossible for you to correct them,' I answered ; whereupon he laughed.

"After that I explained ; he is very good-tempered, and there will not be any more trouble. I told him 'when we published a book for English readers they expected us to bring it out in a language which they understood,' at which remark he laughed again.

“ ‘You are very hard on me,’ he said.

“ ‘Cruel but to be kind,’ I answered. ‘Your novel is a good one, and we cannot give it to the world marred by blemishes.’ As for the cheque, he shall have it shortly,” with which assurance Mr. Moucell had to seem satisfied, and left greatly dissatisfied.

Now at the last hour the money was come, and Mr. Mallow, in the seventh heaven of happiness, said he considered it far too much, and thought he should go and see Messrs. Gerant about it.

“Take my advice, and do nothing of the sort,” answered Mr. Moucell. “Send them a receipt and sign the letter they enclose, but say not a word about taking a smaller amount. Beware of placing too low a price on yourself. If you think your work worth little, others will soon begin to consider it worth less than even that little. Messrs. Gerant know what they are about. Remember, they are publishers, not philanthropists ; very honest and liberal-minded, I admit, but certainly most unlikely to pay you a higher price for your book than they believe to be its value. Besides, always bear in mind a publisher is an author’s natural enemy.”

“Why?” asked Mr. Mallow.

“Because, to slightly alter Dr. Watts, ‘God hath made him so.’”

“Now, I should have thought a publisher an author’s natural friend,” ventured the curate.

“Should you? Why, even mice have more sense than to believe cats feel for them real affection.”

“You make me very sad, Mr. Moucell.”

“Then let us talk of something else. Recollect, I do not class all the fraternity together. There are

high-minded, honourable publishers, just as I suppose there are honest lawyers," with a savage recollection of the heavenly host and their pestilent charges. "Still, it is safer in going through life, more especially London life, not to assume that a man is possessed of *all* the virtues. I see Gerants' cheque is crossed. Shall I get it cashed for you ? "

Mr. Moucell found it difficult to steady his voice as he asked the question. This was the trump card he had been intending to play, and it proved hard to throw it out carelessly.

"Oh, no, thank you ; I will pass it through my own bank."

Mr. Moucell felt as if he had dropped from heaven to earth, or even a greater distance, in the space of a second.

"But that will cost something." He could not let the chance slip without an effort to seize it.

"I do not think so ; in any case, the charge will be only a mere trifle, and a cheque is always safer carriage than notes or gold."

"Oh, confound your cleverness !" thought his host, in an access of disappointment ; "but it is just what I might have expected ; all the world over, babes and sucklings now know their way about much better than grey-headed men. I believe it is true wisdom to cash a cheque as soon as possible," he said, aloud, uttering the remark in quite an indifferent tone.

"Indeed, and why ? "

"What a fellow he is for wanting to know," considered Mr. Moucell, even as he answered, jauntily "Only, I suppose, because such things have been known as sudden death—and failure."



Mr. Mallow smiled. "I will take my chance," he said. "It was most kind of you to think about the matter, and I feel greatly obliged. You have been thinking and doing for me ever since I came to London," he added, gracefully. "I wonder when the chance will present itself of paying even part of the debt of gratitude I owe?"

"Why, here, now, this instant," returned Mr. Moucell, in his aggrieved heart, but he only murmured the usual commonplace sentence, that he had been able to do nothing, that he felt too glad to make himself of the slightest use, and so forth, all the time longing to inflict some serious injury on Mr. Mallow in return for his wisdom, prudence, suspicion, folly, in putting that cheque in his pocket-book, instead of consigning it to the custody of a man who might have been safely trusted to "melt it" within twelve hours.

And yet had the author of "The Offences of His Forefathers" only guessed the true state of affairs, he would have handed over any number of cheques, had he possessed them, with delight, and patiently waited his host's convenience to repay.

Mr. Moucell only desired a few days' use of the money—or rather, part of it—and might have compassed his desire by opening his mouth; but just as he would not ask Mrs. Alston, so he could not confess to Mr. Mallow.

It was a sore strait for any man to be placed in, yet there was no need surely for him to regard the curate with bitter animosity merely because that individual did not possess the gift of divination, which, if he had owned it, would have made Mr. Mallow more angry still.



There are states of mind which it is very hard to please.

"If you will be so good as to witness my signature, I think I had better get this letter off my mind to-night," said Mr. Mallow, after a short silence.

"There is no necessity for a witness to such a simple matter," answered Mr. Moucell. "But as you please, of course."

"I should like everything to be as perfectly in order as possible."

"Sign then, by all means."

The words were spoken a little impatiently, and Mr. Mallow looked up surprised, only to meet that smile which was growing stereotyped, and made him feel sure he had been mistaken.

"Now, I will just go across with this to the pillar-box," he said, after he had dashed off a little note of thanks which was to accompany the formal letter.

"Let me take it for you," and Mr. Moucell stretched out his hand for the envelope.

"No, no, no!" cried the fortunate author. "You have been out all day, and must be tired to death. Have you nothing for post? What! nothing! that is a marvel. I will leave the door open. I shall not be gone a moment," and, seizing his hat, he passed gaily out into the night, leaving Mr. Moucell alone with the useless straw at which he had caught dropping from his fingers, and the rope attached to nothing, to which he had been clinging for days lying at his feet.

And the *morrow* was the eighth day!

## CHAPTER XXV.

“SOMETHING *must* be done.”

This was the more promising phrase which, as the sound of Mr. Mallow's footsteps died away, replaced that awful refrain which had long been haunting Mr. Moucell. To feel one must do is often bad enough, but it is not nearly so bad as to know one has not done.

“Something must be done.” Each word dropped down like a separate pebble clear and cold into Mr. Moucell's tired heart. It was of no use fooling with affairs any longer ; if he did not bestir himself, and to some purpose, the waves of trouble would soon be bearing all he valued out to seas unknown. He could hear the sound of their wash as they swept nearer and nearer over the shore which had once seemed to stretch so securely between his pleasant home and the great ocean which now threatened to engulf it. Yes, he must be up and about. It was all very well to talk as he had talked to himself about going to the landlord and letting that gentleman—and rates and taxes—take precedence of Messrs. Michael, Gabriel and Co., but where was he to turn without furniture or any amount of money ; where once again set up his poor household gods, with nine children accustomed to regular meals, who had to be lodged, clothed, and educated beside ?

It was an awful prospect, and all for want of fifty pounds, which amount and more lay warm and snug in Mr. Mallow's breast pocket.

For one wild moment Mr. Moucell thought of throwing himself on his visitor's kindness, but he rejected the idea immediately. If it had been scarcely possible before he offered to get that cheque cashed, it was impossible after.

Something *must* be done, but quite independently of the budding author.

"How white you are!" involuntarily exclaimed Mr. Mallow, when he re-entered the hall where his host was standing, with the gaslight streaming across his pale face and dark hair, growing thin in front. "You must be sadly fagged, I am afraid."

"A little—nothing worth speaking of; and now I feel sure you will excuse me if I say good-night. I have some work which must be finished."

"Ah! how I wish I could help you as you have helped me!" in a tone of warm and unaffected sympathy. "Is there nothing I could do—copy—or—"

Mr. Moucell laughed. "Copy!" he said; "I never think of such a thing. As a rule, my manuscript goes wet to the printer; and in any case it is sent bearing all its original sins on its devoted head."

"Dear me! I should not like that."

"Judging from what I have seen, I do not imagine you would; but busy men have no leisure to read and re-read their work. Talking of busy men, the one thing I never have understood, and suppose I never shall, is how leaders are written. Take any first-rate paper, and consider the three or four columns of really

brilliant matter that appear every working day throughout twelve months. Have you ever thought about the men who write them? I knew one fellow who turned out fully three hundred a year! He had got so into the knack of his business that I believe if you had wakened him out of his first sleep and said 'leader,' he could have got up then and there and written something most delightful on any given subject you chose to select. Now, that I can't understand. I should like to have a few hours for thought and preparation."

Mr. Mallow did not understand it either. He said he "fancied there could not be much pleasure in writing under such conditions."

"We poor hacks never think of pleasure—only of pay," returned Mr. Moucell, after which concise statement the pair separated, Mr. Mallow to dream waking dreams and see charming visions, and the father of nine to exorcise memory for a brief period while finishing a telling little paper on "People Who Never Borrow," which was the complementary article to one on "People Who Never Lend" he had written a few days before in his very best and bitterest style. Though it would have been difficult to say exactly why, Mr. Blackshaw's dinner had supplied him with materials for both, as well as several others that, evanescent as the flower of the Gum Cistus, duly bloomed their short day and died and were forgotten.

But before their leaves fluttered to earth they brought grist to the mill, though not enough to satisfy Mr. Shusan, to whom Mr. Moucell's thoughts reverted as he laid down his pen.



“I will go to Gerants in the morning,” he said half-aloud. “That is what I ought to have done at first.” And having made up his mind to swallow this bitter pill, he went.

“Mr. Gerant will not be here till the afternoon,” a clerk stated in answer to his inquiries.

“I had forgotten this was his day for Clerkenwell,” returned Mr. Moucell, who had indeed forgotten that important fact. “Mr. Thomas in ?”

“He will be disengaged in a few minutes,” at the end of which time exit from Mr. Thomas’ room a seedy-looking individual whose mission on earth was canvassing for advertisements, and enter Mr. Moucell, who found the junior partner in anything but a “coming on” state of mind.

The cause of his bad temper was not the ill-advised solicitations of that persistent canvasser, but an unfortunate meeting with Mr. Mallow and Josceylne, who were bound for Madame Tussaud’s, of all places in the world, unchaperoned by even a younger brother.

Josceylne’s hair selected that precise moment when the three stopped to exchange greetings in order to fling itself in a state of wild confusion over Mr. Mallow’s shoulder, and Mr. Mallow, while removing the long tresses, felt and showed an amount of embarrassment for which he could scarcely have accounted, though, indeed, had it been his own sister’s locks that clung so persistently to him, he would have felt quite as much annoyed.

Mr. Gerant, however, regarded the whole incident as a confirmation of his worst suspicions, and the fact

that Joscelyne was looking unusually pretty and happy did not tend to allay them.

He considered the whole proceeding most improper ; he thought a clergyman ought to have known better ; he wondered what the inhabitants of Kilbrannon would say if they saw their curate with a girl's hair blowing over his coat in Regent Street ! He could not imagine what Mr. Moucell was thinking about ; he wished the coming author back in his native bogs ; he failed to conceive why he had come to England ; and then on the top of all this Mr. Moucell walked in and asked for the advance of fifty pounds there and then as coolly and confidently as if fifty-pound notes grew in Old Bond Street like gooseberries in cottage gardens.

"I must speak to my father," answered Mr. Gerant, and from his manner Mr. Moucell guessed he should not get what he asked. Perhaps he had preferred his request a little abruptly, but it was very hard to prefer it at all, and something in the publisher's manner puzzled him.

"You should be repaid as soon as possible," he ventured, and his tone was almost humble.

"I don't doubt that," said Mr. Gerant, and then he paused ; there is a great art in keeping an applicant for money on the tenter-hooks, and quite unconsciously the younger man was practising it, "but we have had some heavy drains lately," he went on, "and it is a bad time of the year for getting in accounts."

Mr. Moucell inwardly wondered at what precise season there were not heavy drains, and when debtors rushed to pay accounts ; but he held his peace, and felt sore oppressed.

“By the way, talking of payments,” went on the junior partner, as if they had convened a meeting in order to discuss that matter quite dispassionately, “we sent a cheque to your friend yesterday.”

“So he told me,” returned Mr. Moucell, briefly, perplexed to imagine why all at once Mr. Mallow had become peculiarly *his* friend rather than the friend of Gerant and Co.

“I met him and your daughter about an hour since on their way, I think, to Madame Tussaud’s.”

“Ho, ho! that accounts for the milk in the coconut,” thought Mr. Moucell, sure Mr. Thomas Gerant meant to persist in his refusal, even while he said, aloud,—

“Yes; Mr. Mallow wanted to see Tussaud’s, and as it promised to be a dull sort of day, I thought they might as well go there as anywhere else.”

“Miss Moucell, then, I presume, knows her London as well as your boys.”

“Hardly so well as Phil, or even Edgar; but my sons can’t always get off; they are working for their exams. Besides, I don’t think any of them could be hired to go to the wax show again.”

“Disillusioned; early days!” and Mr. Gerant moved his papers impatiently, as one who felt tempted to ask, “Why, having got your answer, do you not go?”

Mr. Moucell, outwardly calm, but inwardly boiling over, took the hint and rose.

“I am sorry to have troubled you,” he remarked; “had it not been that the affair is of great importance to me, I should never have asked your help.”

“I hope you know we are always willing to do what

we can for you, but it is a large sum you name, and I could not advance it on my own responsibility. I will speak to my father when he comes, and write to you."

"But, you see, I want the money to-day."

"I am really very sorry; it *is* a large amount, though, to hand over in a moment. Why did you not apply to us sooner?"

"Because I hoped not to have to apply at all. However, there is no use in talking about that, so I will not detain you any longer."

"If ten pounds would be any good," hesitated the younger man, "I could write you a cheque at once."

"It would not be of the slightest, thank you," and Mr. Moucell determinedly took his leave, and passed through the outer office, resolved that let who would convey his petition to Mr. Gerant, senior, it should not be "my son Thomas."



## CHAPTER XXVI.

MOST men when pecuniarily embarrassed invest freely in hansoms, but Mr. Moucell knew better than to fling away shillings where pennies would serve his turn ; therefore it was that, after metaphorically shaking the dust of Messrs. Winstone Wire and Wragge's once fashionable establishment from off his feet, he climbed to the top of an omnibus on his first stage to Wilmington Square, hard by which locality Mr. Gerant, senior, had planted his son John, who, though not wicked, was flourishing like a green bay tree.

Behind all the sons was the father and the father's money, and without both they would probably not have done so well.

John had been Mr. Gerant's first venture into the unknown dangers of a sinking business.

The young man had, when a mere lad, been placed with Latterton and Co., printers, then perfectly solvent ; but as the years went by one partner retired and took his capital with him ; soon after another died, and the executors withdrew his share likewise, which was enough to tax the resources of any business, even had no other trouble arisen.

A still worse trouble did arise, however, in the shape of an extravagant and unruly young fellow, the principal's nephew, who brought matters to the verge of ruin.

It was then Mr. Gerant's aid was invoked, not vainly, for he had known the Lattertons long and intimately.

He found money to tide over many difficulties, and when the senior partner, vanquished by a hard fight against adverse circumstances, said the struggle must be abandoned, took the whole business over as a going concern, retaining such of the Lattertons as wished to remain at good salaries, and installing John Gerant, a most capable man, head over all.

"My son John" proved more than equal to the position. No Gerant was a simpleton, but John turned out the cleverest of any.

It is generally either the eldest or the youngest of a family who makes a success, and so far the record of Thomas, last born, did not promise any effective display of fireworks; rather the contrary, indeed.

He had been intended for a doctor, but sickened over his first post-mortem. He then went in for law, and did not like it; after that a friend suggested California, but his mother could not bear the idea of parting with her favourite.

In fact, Mr. Thomas Gerant was a home bird, and the business of a publisher, if it only could be pushed, seemed likely to suit his wild ambitions perfectly.

Though a most honest, affectionate, good fellow, the Apostle's eloquent language would only mildly have represented Mr. Moucell's opinion concerning the unhappy man as he journeyed first to Oxford Circus and thence to Clerkenwell.

"I, who have saved them hundreds, nay thousands, of pounds"—thus ran his soliloquy—"to be refused

a poor fifty. Just wait awhile, Mr. Thomas Gerant, and you will find you have made a mistake. I will pay you out, never fear." And then he thought, with a grim satisfaction, that Joscelyne and Mr. Mallow had already begun the paying out process for him. He felt confident that business was in a good way. Mrs. Howley had remarked how much "taken" their visitor seemed with the girl, and what a "suitable match" it would be, and Mr. Moucell had begged her not to speak of such a thing, "for she is still but a child," he said; nevertheless, his own heart was set on the project, which he believed could be carried through if only an execution did not come to spoil everything, whereupon the old misery once again overwhelmed him, his very soul sickened as he pictured the "man in possession," and his spirit burnt with rage when he recalled how he had asked only for fifty pounds and been refused.

He was not in a nice frame of mind to go begging; but when he arrived at his destination, a cordial "Why, Mr. Moucell, what pleasant wind has blown you here?" seemed to cheer his fainting heart, and enable him to go straight to the point. Without break or pause he told how he had owed a man ninety odd pounds, and then how the man, who never pressed him, died, and a very wolf took up the running; how he had offered that wolf, who would take nothing but the whole, part of the debt; how he had tried to raise the money and failed; how the last day was come; how he had gone to Old Bond Street, where Mr. Thomas had said the matter must wait his father's arrival; how, in very despair, he determined to get on to Clerkenwell, state his case, and appeal



for aid ; “ And if you can and will help me, Mr. Gerant,” he finished, “ you shall be paid the moment I am able to scrape the amount together. If not, there may be an execution in to-morrow, and that young Irishman staying with us, and—”

His voice trailed off ; he had no more to say, and even if there had been anything he could not have said it. Weariness and anxiety had told, and he was quite hoarse before speech failed him.

“ I am so sorry,” answered Mr. Gerant ; “ yes, of course you shall have what you want. I will be back in a minute.”

A lump rose in Mr. Moucell’s throat. He knew at last what women feel when they want a good cry and cannot have one. The tension had been so great, he could scarcely realize that it was over even when he held Latterton’s crossed cheque for sixty pounds, and saw “ pay cash ” written under the line and initialed by the firm.

“ I thought there might be further expenses, and it was as well to be on the safe side,” explained Mr. Gerant, senior, referring to the amount.

“ Shall we get the money for you ? ” he went on, seeing Mr. Moucell did not look very fit to get it for himself, but that gentleman answered, “ No, thank you,” in a low tone, and rose and wrung Mr. Gerant’s hand.

“ I can’t say what I should like,” he went on, “ but I feel. You will never know what this means to me and to my children. Good-bye for the present ; I will see you again shortly,” and he went out of the office with a heavy, dragging step, as if very tired, and Mr. Gerant remarked afterwards to his son John,—



“I am sorry I had not a glass of wine to offer him”; and John, even while sympathizing, answered,—

“The cheque will be more of a ‘pick up’ than champagne, I fancy!” for that capable individual was given to speak plain truths without the slightest thought of sarcasm. “You think he will repay you?” he added.

“Certain—either in meal or in malt.”

In Exmouth Street Mr. Moucell hailed a cab, for he had no strength left; with the necessity for exertion gone, all vigour seemed to have departed. He realized what he had passed through; realized also there are some victories which partake of the nature of defeats.

“I’d rather have paid a hundred per cent. for the money than got it this way,” he thought; but then he could not have got it by paying a hundred per cent., so that little speech was only a bit of poor salve to his pride.

When they reached Princes Street Mr. Moucell indicated with his umbrella that he wished to stop at the Joint Stock Bank.

“Wait,” he said to the driver, and passed through the swing door, and straight on to the counter, where he handed Messrs. Latterton’s cheque to a cashier, who looked at it, turned it over, examined the endorsement, and then looked at the initialed “pay cash” again as if he did not approve of such doings.

“How will you have it?” he asked at last.

“Short,” answered Mr. Moucell; and in another minute he had placed two notes in his pocket-book,

buttoned up his top coat securely, and was bowling away to Lincoln's Inn Fields, where Messrs. Michael and Co. held court.

He may have been wrong, but he thought Mr. Shusan looked disappointed when he told the latter he had come to discharge his liability; though he remarked, graciously,—

“I am very glad you have been able to manage this.”

“Thank you,” said Mr. Moucell, whose thoughts just then were too big for words.

“We never know what we can do till we try, do we?” went on the lawyer.

“We never know what we have to do till we are tried,” amended Mr. Moucell.

“Ha! ha! Very good!” exclaimed Mr. Shusan, after which burst of applause, conversation languished till the entrance of a clerk with particulars, brought relief.

“What a delightful profession yours must be!” observed Mr. Shusan, undeterred by previous experience. “Nothing to do but sit down and write and receive large cheques.”

“Yours must be more delightful still,” retorted Mr. Moucell; “nothing to do but order other people to write and rake in costs *ad lib*,” after which “straight one” Mr. Shusan said, with suspicious humility,—

“Ah! I see it is of no use for a dull dog like myself to try conclusions with a clever author,” and then the two, with hatred rankling at their hearts, bade each other “good afternoon,” and that matter was settled.

“I must have something to eat,” decided Mr. Moucell, as he passed into Carey Street; and he

went to a place he wot of near at hand, and had a chop and glass of bitter before interviewing any of his business connections. Save a meagre breakfast, he had fasted all day, and the chop did not set him up as he hoped it might.

The fact is, after forty a man cannot take great sensations out of himself without suffering for it, and that day Mr. Moucell realized for the first time youth was past. The knowledge proved horrible to him, but he could not shut his eyes to facts. He must be more careful for the future. Perhaps, after all, Mr. Mallow was right, and he had been burning the candle too freely at both ends.

Half-past seven had struck when he reached home; out into the night floated the melody of an old air sung by Joscelyne. Looking up, her father saw shadows on the blind, which showed Mr. Mallow was standing close by the piano.

"It all works to a marvel," passed through his mind. "The path is quite clear now."

Joscelyne's voice was clear and young. She had a tender taste in music, and the same sympathy which made her lie awake weeping over Mr. Mallow's heroes and heroines enabled her to sing with feeling some Irish melodies the curate had bought for her to try; over-rated melodies they may be, but yet there is a subtle charm in them which affected Mr. Moucell as he stood in the hall listening.

"There is not in this wide world a valley so sweet  
As that vale in whose bosom the wide waters meet."

Yes, that was the burden of her song.

Where had he heard it last?

Twenty long years before, when "Time one day

was gathering roses." He had life all before him then ; he had a good part of life behind him now, and he was feeling worn out, and a party still loomed before him that night.

"To which I feel sure you are much too tired to go," said Mr. Mallow, over their pleasant supper. "Let us give it up—do."

"No," answered Mr. Moucell ; "I am tired, but that is nothing. I would not have you miss this gathering for any consideration."

Which gathering was to be in Sloane Street, where up the wide staircase and through the spacious old-fashioned rooms, "love, wit, and valour wandered" ; lovely women, brilliant speakers, the coming wonders of this old world ; those who had made history, and others who were making it ; all, all were there.

"A truly remarkable party !" said Mr. Mallow, as they drove home about two o'clock in the morning, wondering as he spoke not merely how Londoners ever found time to think, but when they ever had time to sleep.

And yet there is probably no place in the world where so much sound sleeping is got through as in England's great metropolis.



## CHAPTER XXVII.

It was the Friday week after Mr. Mallow's arrival in London when, about eight o'clock in the evening, he and his host and Philip walked down the South Lambeth Road on their way home.

The three had been over the General Post Office, beheld many of its inner mysteries the outside public does not as a rule wot of, and were returning, each laden with his own little cargo of ideas.

Of course, Mr. Moucell meant his ideas to take the form of an article, but the two others were happily innocent of any such evil intention.

Phil was unusually silent. Before he and Mr. Mallow started to meet his father, that self-sufficient young gentleman had got the worst of a "heckling," which he proposed inflicting on the clergyman.

Fortunately during the previous day Mr. Mallow had seen the three elder lads sniggering over D'Israeli's "Curiosities of Literature," and therefore, though he could not tell what was coming, felt prepared for the worst.

"Do you think it a sin to kill anything, Mr. Mallow?" was Mr. Phil's first shot.

"Perhaps you will kindly condescend to particulars."

"I cannot in a general proposition."

“May I help you ?” asked Mr. Mallow, who guessed what the boys had been reading. “Shall we say rats ?”

“I had not rats in my mind.”

“Waterton,” pursued the clergyman, “who loved almost all God’s creatures, drew the line at the Hanoverian rat.”

“I was not thinking of rats,” repeated Phil, with some acerbity.

“D’Israeli,” continued the other, relentlessly, “tells of a fanatic who went out into the wilderness for seven years because he killed a small animal not usually mentioned in polite society. In the same paper, if my memory serves me rightly, he mentions a saint whose nether garments, being adorned with some extraordinary number of patches, were after his death preserved as an example to the faithful. Are these the sort of crazes you wish to imitate ?”

“I believe I only asked whether you thought it a sin to kill anything,” said young Moucell, loftily.

“To which I must reply by another question : Do you eat meat ?”

“Yes, but I do not feel sure that I am right.”

“Then why do you eat it ?”

“Because I am not certain that I am wrong.”

“Suppose, then, you abandon the practice till you have settled your mind concerning it. For myself, Scripture and common sense are sufficient; but if you need a newer Scripture and a higher common sense than God has seen fit to give me, you must apply, not to a mere curate, but to some great dignitary of the Church—the Archbishop of Canterbury, for instance ; he lives quite near.”

"I see you cannot, or will not, understand," returned Philip, nettled by the answer, at which Edgar and Guy laughed.

"I think I understand perfectly," said Mr. Mallow, with an amused significance there was no mistaking.

Phil took this little check so much to heart that he felt no inclination to criticize postal arrangements severely, as he otherwise might have done ; in fact, owing to his whole mind being occupied with the idea of reprisal, St. Martin's-le-Grand seemed to him a thing of nought.

Ignorant of the great projects absorbing his son's attention, Mr. Moucell imagined the sight of such a vast amount of human machinery working with automatic regularity was enthralling the youth. Little did he suspect that Philip was screwing up his impertinence to ask Mr. Mallow, at the first convenient opportunity, the proper mode of pronouncing "strength" and "eighth," in which words that gentleman had as great a tendency to omit the "g" as Mrs. Howley to drop the first "r" in February.

The young Moucells were nothing if not observant, and very soon they had, as they said, "spotted" every peculiarity of intonation and pronunciation which Mr. Mallow brought with him from the Emerald Isle.

Philip, in especial, had long been yearning to broach this delicate subject, but a not unnatural doubt as to whether his unasked-for hint might be gratefully received had hitherto acted as a deterrent.

Now, however, it was necessary to do something, and while toiling with his elders through the Post Office he quite decided to open fire with the two words

mentioned, which he most assuredly would have done but that something intervened.

The presence of a stranger, as may readily be imagined, had somewhat interfered at South Lambeth Road with the weekly routine of house-cleaning; and it was for this reason Mrs. Howley and the faithful char-woman who acted as domestic sprite seized on that Friday afternoon, when the absence of what the sprite called "three male men" might be depended on, to give the basement sitting-room a "good turn out."

Unhappily, the business occupied a longer time than was anticipated; dirt accumulates and boards take long to dry in the winter; therefore, it came about that seven children partook not merely of an early tea in the dining-room, but also a banquet in honour of dear little Beaty's birthday was there set out.

A gorgeous banquet! Rosy-cheeked apples, mellow pears, cake of two kinds, nuts, a trifle cunningly prepared without wine, negus so weak it never could have got out of any glass without help—all, all were there.

Bonbons likewise, and lovely crackers, which provided headgear and other articles of dress for everybody, besides mottoes provocative of merriment among the little ones.

Mrs. Howley presided, and Joscelyne waited, and everything went so well that the passage of time was forgotten, and it proved quite a shock when Messrs. Moucell, Mallow, and Philip came back quite half an hour before they were expected.

"Hillo! what is all this fuss about?" asked Mr. Moucell, entering in a capital humour, and seeing the



company adorned with caps of more or less hideous design.

"Somebody's birthday, I think," said Mr. Mallow, who had in the forenoon contributed his modest gift to the pile raised on a side table.

"Not yours, surely!" exclaimed Mr. Moucell, as Beaty slipped off her chair and ran across the room to be taken up in her father's arms. "Oh, yes, I remember. And did my little girl like the work-basket I bought for her?"

Moist, clinging kisses were his little girl's only reply, though in her accustomed home circle she could talk as freely as any of the other children—a fact Mr. Mallow knew well.

"There is a good fire in the drawing-room," remarked Mrs. Howley.

"I think we might stay here for a little while," suggested Mr. Moucell, turning towards Mr. Mallow, who answered,—

"I should like to stay very much."

"Those pears look good," said Philip, ever practical when not argumentative; and more plates and etceteras being brought, the wild carouse commenced anew, helped forward by the efficient assistance of three fresh guests.

As for the Apostle, what with the delicious excitement of pulling crackers, the unwonted indulgence in a second small tumbler full of some harmless fluid well sweetened and just tinted with sherry, and above all, the maddening effects of general society, he quite lost his head, and not merely made frantic signs to Joscelyne with a view of explaining what he wanted, but at last stretched his small body half-way across

the festive board in a vain attempt to secure the fruit his soul longed for.

“Do not be rude, Paul!” remonstrated his sister. “What is it—an apple? I will give you one,” which, indeed, she was in the act of doing, when Paul, who had set his greedy little heart on a particularly large and ruddy Wellington—not the smaller specimen his sister thought fit to select—called out in his sharp, eager voice,—

“Not that—not that! This, you cursed young fool—you—”

The effect of this awful sentence can only be described as akin to that produced on a nervous audience when the bullets are being cast in “Der Freyschutz.”

The apple—ever a source of discord—rolled, as if frightened, off the spoon Joscelyne was holding towards her brother; Mrs. Howley gave vent to a smothered shriek; Mr. Mallow looked resolutely at the tablecloth, and Philip said, not altogether sorrowfully, “You’ve done it now,” while Mr. Moucell’s dessert knife dropped on his plate with a great clatter.

Then for a moment there ensued silence—a silence which might be felt.

All at once it was broken.

“Did I hear aright?” Mr. Moucell asked the question. “Is it possible any child of mine used such expressions?”

“Oh, that’s nothing!” exclaimed Philip; “it is as water unto wine compared with what he can do when he gives his whole mind to the business. Every day he hurls the most awful curses at us. Oaths may be said, in fact, to form the staple of his conversation. Mr. Mallow, the first morning after he came, was

treated to a fine specimen of profanity. Honestly, I am very glad he has for once forgotten himself before you, for we have long been sick of the business, and yet were forbidden to complain."

"Yes, he's always telling us we are a —— set of idiots," put in Guy, eagerly ; "and when he is in one of his tantrums, hopes we'll go to —— and be —— well ——"

"Hold your tongue, boy!" said Mr. Moucell, appalled by the string of expletives Guy reeled out in all their original force and beauty. "Do you think this is the New Cut on a Saturday night, that you indulge in such language?"

"It is only what Paul uses constantly. I was but repeating a very small part of his daily litany," declared Guy, with dogged insistence.

Like one dazed, Mr. Moucell looked round the table, at the culprit, Mr. Mallow, the frightened youngsters, Philip, Edgar, Mrs. Howley, and Joscelyne, who sat listening, her hands clasped, her eyes downcast, her lips compressed, her cheeks pale as death. The hour had come. "Is this true?" he asked her.

"Yes, father——"

"And I never knew! Leave the room, sir!" he added, in a terrible voice, addressing the scared sinner, "and do not come downstairs again till I give you leave. Do you hear me? Take care I have not to speak twice."

Mr. Mallow. had heard of people shrinking into themselves, but never before seen the process. At sound of his father's words, however, it seemed to him as if Paul literally got inside his lean body, while he slid from his chair and slunk to the door.



“Poor little chap!” he exclaimed, involuntarily.

“Poor little chap!” repeated Mr. Moucell, almost wild with rage. “Yes, a poor little chap who will have to be taught better, and who shall! Only to think of the deception which has been practised upon me! Stay where you are, Joscelyne! I forbid anyone to go after that wretched child!”

The pause which ensued was awful; not a finger stirred, not an eye wandered. Mrs. Howley sat with her face buried in her handkerchief; no one had ventured on the smallest remark.

“Where he ever heard such expressions baffles me.” It was Mr. Moucell who spoke when the strain had become intense. The remark was addressed to no person in particular, therefore anyone who pleased could appropriate it.

“I can tell you,” said Philip, always anxious to impart disagreeable information. “It was through Jane. You may shake your head, aunt, but it was. She used to take him into low public-houses frequented by dreadful characters. You never would believe a word against the woman, but I have seen her myself standing on the kerb near Vauxhall cabstand, screaming with laughter at the unparliamentary language which is the ordinary discourse of such places, and—”

“That will do,” interrupted his father. “I have heard more than enough. We must try what a strict school can effect in the way of cure. Now you had better attend to whatever you have to do. Joscelyne, take these young people away. Remember, no sympathizing with Paul.”

Very quietly the eight trooped off. Concerning what conversation ensued among themselves when



they got out of earshot, history holds no record ; but the moment they left the room Mr. Moucell rose from his chair and began pacing from window to folding-door in a state of restless excitement.

“No doubt it seems strange to you, Mr. Mallow,” he said at last, suddenly pausing in the middle of his promenade, “that such things could be going on in a man’s house, and he be left in utter ignorance of them, but it seems more strange to me than it can to you.”

“My only feeling is one of sorrow for all concerned,” was the answer. “I am certain any concealment which may have been practised originated in a desire to spare you pain—”

“Ah, yes, indeed,” Mrs. Howley groaned.

“Still, you will admit it is very hard to have such a trouble sprung upon one without the smallest preparation,” observed Mr. Moucell.

“Very hard ; but it was sprung upon you accidentally, and I cannot regret that you have at last been enlightened.”

“It is better to know the worst, of course. Nevertheless, the certainty that a cancer is eating him up proves but poor consolation to a man who flattered himself he had no disease. This cancer shall be cut away, no matter what the pain—it shall.”

Poor Mrs. Howley uttered a little plaintive cry, as if she already felt the knife, while Mr. Mallow said,—

“As I remarked just now, Mr. Moucell, it seems to me well you are at last aware of the unfortunate habit your boy has contracted, but at the same time there is an observation I should like to make, if I may do so without being considered impertinent—namely,

that it is a doctor rather than a schoolmaster the lad needs just now."

"What do you mean?"

"Precisely what I say. I have watched the little fellow very closely—when pleased, when angry, when playing, when quiet—and the conclusion has been forced upon me that—"

"Do not hesitate to speak—that?—"

"His ungovernable and inexplicable fits of rage and terror, his laugh, the fatal facility with which he picks up bad language, all seem to point to—"

"Good heavens, Mr. Mallow! Do you wish me to understand that you think my son—deficient?"

"I wish to imply that whatever may be the matter, you would do wisely to consult some first-rate physician, to whom you should tell the whole truth."

Mr. Moucell tried to look incredulous, and failed.

"Paul is far away the cleverest and sharpest of all my children," he expostulated.

"He is very sharp."

"Therefore you must be mistaken. There is nothing wrong with him mentally. Think of what a bright little fellow he is."

"And has always been," put in Mrs. Howley, tearfully; "a good, sweet child, and the image of his poor mother."

A few seconds elapsed before Mr. Moucell spoke again; then he said, addressing his guest, "I am sure you will excuse my leaving you; this unfortuate affair has rather upset me, and I should like to be alone for a little while before beginning work. Perhaps I had better say good-night at once."

“Good-night,” echoed the Irishman, in a tone of profound sympathy.

“You see how badly he takes it,” observed Mrs. Howley, directly the door closed behind Mr. Moucell. “I knew I was right in keeping the matter from him.”

“He does take it badly,” agreed Mr. Mallow; “but I do not think you were right.”

“But I am certain I was; and whatever made you say you thought the poor child was not all there?”

“Because I feel quite sure he is not, and that he ought to be treated medically.”

“I never could have believed you would speak so unkind.”

“I did not mean to be unkind, but I quite admit that perhaps I had better have held my peace.”

“You have seen how well the dear little fellow mimics people?”

“Yes, and thought it one of the saddest sights I ever beheld.”

“Oh! law! How can you say so? And why?”

There was some more of this purposeless sort of conversation, which Joscelyne at last ended by coming to tell her aunt Mr. Moucell wanted her.

“And I will go upstairs, if I may,” said Mr. Mallow. “No further supper, thank you. I have had abundance to eat. Good-night, good-night.”

Poor Joscelyne's eyes were red with crying at that moment, but they were redder still when, after nearly an hour spent in the library, she wearily sought her own room.

As she stepped over the threshold she saw a slip of

paper which had been pushed under the door. It was a line from Mr. Mallow, and ran as follows:—

“Do not be uneasy concerning Paul. I found him hidden in my room, and will take good care of the child. May God bless and comfort you.—D. G .M.”



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

“I SAY!”

Mr. Mallow had almost finished dressing, and for the moment quite forgotten Master Paul, when these words fell on his ear.

“Yes, little man, what do you say?”

“Come round to this side and I’ll tell you. Closer—stoop lower—whisper—”

Wondering rather concerning the important communication which needed shrouding in such clouds of mystery, the curate sat down beside the boy, and bent his head, through which, an instant after, this rang like a pistol shot:—

“*Are you going to marry our Jo?*”

It was an awful shock—one which took Mr. Mallow utterly aback; nevertheless, so soon as he could speak, he answered,—

“What a silly fellow you are! Why, I am nearly old enough to be your Jo’s father!”

“Are you!” in a tone of sore disappointment.  
“But can’t you marry her?” hope reviving.

“I trust she will meet with a husband more worthy of her than I am,” was the diplomatic reply.

“I do not think so,” piped the shrill, frail voice,  
“though aunt says there is a gentleman who likes

her very, very, very much. I don't know, I'm sure, but I heard Edgar and Guy talking one night, when they thought I was asleep. I wasn't, only lay quite still and pretended, so that I might listen to their secrets."

"You young scamp! What a confession!" thought Mr. Mallow.

"They keep me out of everything they can," went on the child. "Still, I knew it was all about you and Jo. 'Gar said it would be prime, and Guy that it would be stunning, and they were just wondering whether father could do without Jo, when Randal turned over and they went 'H-u-s-s-h!' and I heard no more. But I have been thinking a great deal about it ever since, for I should like you to marry Jo, because then I could go and live with you. Won't you try, Mr. Mallow? Perhaps you could do it if you tried very hard."

Here was an entrancing proposition; one so full of possibilities of bliss, that a man might have been excused for rushing away at headlong speed for a special license in order to secure the Apostle's permanent presence; yet, highly as his sense of humour was tickled, Mr. Mallow felt too sad to even smile.

Instead, he talked very gently to the child, told him how wrong it was to deceive people, how indignant his brothers would feel if they knew he had been eavesdropping, how greatly it would hurt Joscelyne if she heard the many foolish things Paul said concerning her—things that, though mere nonsense, he ought never to have uttered—on which various statements and others the young gentleman

kept up a running commentary of "wasn't," "wouldn't," "didn't," "hadn't," "shouldn't," "couldn't," that as surely prefaced a storm as low claps of thunder.

This Mr. Mallow knew well ; but being determined to have his say out, he held resolutely on, feeling Joscelyne's dignity was to a certain extent entrusted to his keeping, and determined to defend it so far as lay in his power.

"You might marry her if you liked," was the net outcome of his loyal efforts. "She'll be a whole year older next birthday."

"So shall I," answered Mr. Mallow, much perplexed how to get out of the net Master Paul had wound about him.

"You're like the rest of them," declared the boy, flinging himself on his back, and beginning that heel tattoo, which always foreboded ill. "You won't do anything to 'blige me—and as for that hateful young cat—"

"Have you forgotten what happened last night?" interrupted the curate sternly.

"Nothing happened last night," answered Paul mendaciously, suspending the tattoo, however, notwithstanding his affectation of ignorance.

"I should advise you to refresh your memory," said Mr. Mallow. "For your father intends to put a stop to your dreadful language."

"Can't, lanwidge is lovely."

"When I found you in my room, did you not promise me faithfully that if I let you stay you would try to be a good boy? Yes—or no."

"Have been good boy."

To which audacious statement of the unregenerate



Paul, Mr. Mallow replied, "You have been on the very verge of being an exceedingly bad one."

"So have you—why won't you marry our Jo? You could do it quite well; and that is all I want."

"Child, child, you do not know what you are saying!"

"Know very well," was the answer, which ended the conversation; for without speaking another word Mr. Mallow rose, put on his coat, and left the room.

There are times when even a small lad can so exhaust human patience that it is better to possess one's soul in silence, than to continue a profitless controversy. Whether in the enjoyment of his full complement of senses or deficient, Mr. Mallow felt Paul had proved more than a match for him, and determined he would meddle no more in what, after all, was none of his business.

The Apostle raised himself on his elbow and looked after the retreating figure, evidently surprised; but Mr. Mallow took no notice. He had his own affairs to think about, for he felt more disconcerted than he would have cared to confess by the idea Paul, in his frankness, had suggested.

On the next landing he caught sight of Edgar, who was hovering about "in case of need"—to borrow a phrase from the banking world.

He came running downstairs, when Mr. Mallow said "Good morning," and there was a look of anxiety in his face, as though he had been on the look-out for squally weather.

"I think you might as well give your brother a helping hand," remarked the curate. "He is in my room, but has not yet risen."



“Jo told me he was with you, and that I had better stay near lest he should prove troublesome. I do hope he has been a good boy.”

“Yes, on the whole, though he was almost ‘off’ just now.”

“What shall we do if he gets into one of his tantrums this morning?”

“Surely you need not mind that now, when your father knows—”

“Oh, but father is asleep! He worked late and—”

“You will have to face his being awakened one of these days,” finished Mr. Mallow decidedly, though his heart overflowed with pity as he thought of the father always so busy, of the children who had been brought up in but one faith, viz. at all costs to keep annoyance from their parent.

He felt greatly distressed. Was this indeed the literary career he had imagined so ideally beautiful? Where could the happiness be in a life as far removed from cultured ease as from the spasmodic revelry of Bohemia? No pause in that breathless walk with time; always and ever either fishing or mending nets; home a mere office in which to write, and an hotel in which to sleep! Could this possibly be a fair sample of the existence literature demanded from its ordinary followers? No blare of trumpets or music of flutes to relieve the march and speak of rest well won!

It was but the round of a horse in the mill, the lot of a hack harnessed and driven. Of a surety there could be no pleasure, though there might be some pecuniary profit in such an existence.

To one hack, as he called himself, his children

were strangers ; he knew less of them than Mr. Mallow—a fortnight previously unaware of their existence !

“I think I will go down for Phil,” said Edgar, finding their new friend did not offer to assist in Paul’s subjugation, as he had hoped. “Father talked the matter over with him yesterday evening, and he is going to try what can be done.”

Mr. Mallow smiled grimly. Perhaps he was projecting his mind into the future, and picturing the scenes sure to occur ; but again he made no proffer of help. The Apostle had so disenchanted him with the whole business that he went as far as the hall in careful silence, and there, nodding to Edgar, turned into the dining-room.

All that morning he devoted ostensibly to writing letters and correcting proofs, but really to the consideration of how he should get out of what seemed an awkward position. The more he thought it over the less he liked it. No one approves of being given in marriage against his will, and Mr. Mallow had especial reason for objecting to any such disposition of his person.

Mr. Moucell and he were due that afternoon at a semi-political gathering, for which Lady Fenland had contrived to procure them an invitation. Her ladyship had ever privately lamented Mr. Moucell’s mistaken marriage. “He would have been so much more amenable than Mr. Jones,” “and not so rich,” she might have added ; therefore when her liege mentioned the “wonderfully clever young clergyman, the coming genius,” who was staying in leafy Lambeth, her thoughts naturally turned matrimonial-

ward to Joscelyne, and she rested not till cards were sent from the great house—an attention that delighted Mr. Moucell mightily. Over luncheon he told his guest it would be necessary for him to go out of town till Monday, which was a nicer way of putting things than if he had boldly stated he felt so utterly run down he meant to try what Brighton would do in the way of picking him up.

“You will manage to get through to-morrow without me, no doubt,” he finished with an apologetic laugh. “I want you to go to the Foundling in the morning, and the boys I daresay will strike out something for the afternoon and evening.”

Mr. Mallow answered aloud he felt sure they would, and inwardly resolved to tell his host a short tale that afternoon as they wended their way westward.

“You have been so very kind to me ever since I came to London, and interested yourself so warmly in my poor book, that I feel emboldened to speak about a matter which may mean much happiness or—the reverse.” Thus as they drove to Park Lane he began awkwardly enough, for he had never till that morning thought of taking Mr. Moucell into his confidence concerning affairs which were very private indeed.

“I shall feel honoured by any trust you may repose in me,” was Mr. Moucell’s audible answer, while, “Can he be going to ask my consent already?” flashed through his mind. Hope all the time fanning him with her wings like the deceitful jade she ever has been and ever will be.

“It is just this—” but there Mr. Mallow hesitated,



while hope fanned more vigorously than before ; certainly the preliminaries indicated a proposal.

“Anything you desire to consult me about shall go no further,” said Mr. Moucell. “I will give you the best advice I can upon whatever subject may be perplexing you, and, if assistance be needed, help to the extent of my poor ability.”

It was beautifully done ; from the earnest unconsciousness of the speaker’s tone there might have been no such things on earth as love, marriageable daughters, eligible suitors !

Mr. Mallow felt utterly ashamed of the thoughts that had been disturbing him, and found it more difficult than ever to make the final plunge.

“Come,” observed his companion banteringly, “out with it at whatever cost. Have you robbed a church or slain a man to your hurt ?”

“No, I have not robbed, or slain a—man, but I am in love.”

“Then you have only followed an old fashion, and one that will not change while the world lasts—or at least while there are men and women in it,” said Mr. Moucell drily.

“The lady has a father, however.”

“There is nothing new in that either ; all ladies have, or have had fathers—”

“But this father’s ideas are peculiar—”

“Oh !”

“Of course, he knows all about my position—”

“That I take for granted. Suppose you explain what the difficulty is ; then perhaps our joint wisdom may find a way out of it—”

The difficulty proved one out of which Mr. Moucell,



at all events, never found his way, for it laid his card castle level with the dust.

There was a certain Mr. Bellingdon of Moss Abbey, who attached perhaps undue importance to the world's applause. A great general, explorer, inventor, politician—even author—seemed a person to be desired in his estimation; though a country gentleman, a rector, a curate, could but be considered no one! What his whole soul longed for in a son-in-law was celebrity, notoriety. He had married late in life, and did not mean his only daughter to wed any man who could not provide his age with the only condiment that made daily food savoury.

Mr. Mallow loved the daughter, who loved him in return, and he trusted if "The Offences of His Forefathers" were well received that Mr. Bellingdon might smile on his suit.

Joscelyne was not in the programme anywhere. So far as Mr. Moucell could then forecast, she would never be the wife of a bishop, "of a man favoured by the Fenlands," or of anybody in particular.

And the misery he had passed through in the course of less than a fortnight who could tell? He felt he had grown old, weary, hopeless, worn out; that he hated Mr. Mallow—everyone.

How much he enjoyed the gathering in Park Lane, the babble of politicians, and the profound remarks of Lord Fenland about nothing, may therefore be imagined. His pleasure certainly could not be described!

## CHAPTER XXIX.

MR. MOUCELL took away with him the fairly fine weather which had prevailed since his guest's arrival in London. It drizzled as the latter gentleman returned to South Lambeth in company with no one, it poured during the night, and rained heavily through the whole of Sunday.

On that morning the mist on his window was so thick, Mr. Mallow, though he heard the noise of a passing train, could not see it; while downstairs he found only a blurred and imperfect "Lawn" to contemplate.

The young male Moucells were keeping their father's absence as a high festival—in bed.

It was only the knowledge Mr. Moucell was "about," or might be "expected," which kept things going in a regular manner in that house.

The female influence, though kind as kind could be, seemed only productive of evil. For nearly nineteen years Mrs. Howley had virtually held the reins, and driven so very badly, spite of the best intentions, that Mr. Mallow believed a great smash must shortly ensue unless someone with a stronger hand climbed to the box-seat and guided the domestic coach.

Joscelyne was in the dining-room with dear little

Beaty, and shortly Mrs. Howley made her appearance—motherly, hospitable, unselfish as usual.

“What a morning!” she said. “I do hope it is not raining like this at Brighton. I am very sorry, Mr. Mallow, your last Sunday in London should be so wet.”

“I have had two fine Sundays,” answered the young Irishman, thankful for mercies vouchsafed.

“Yes; but what a pity this is bad.”

“I do not dislike rain.”

“Nor I,” interposed Joscelyne; “the air always seems so fresh after it.”

“In summer, perhaps, but scarcely in November,” said Mr. Mallow, accepting the statement as a sort of general proposition, though he had an uneasy feeling it was intended to apply to that especial day and the suggested expedition.

His mind was made up, however, and those determined lines about his mouth had but told Mr. Moucell the bare truth.

He was strong in everything he believed to be right, and never felt tempted to weakness save when influenced by the promptings of a most tender heart.

Breakfast passed over, enlivened by the extremely small talk Mrs. Howley loved. She was a woman who bore no malice, and, as nothing unpleasant had arisen out of the curate’s unflattering estimate of Master Paul’s mental powers, was ready to extend the right hand of fellowship once more.

No one uttered a word concerning the Foundling Hospital, and Mr. Mallow was hoping he should be able to steal out without anybody being a bit the

wiser, when just as he had buttoned up his top-coat and was taking down his hat, Joscelyne made her appearance, equipped at all points—stout, neat boots, short skirts as usual, round hat, waterproof cloak, umbrella, everything.

The curate stood aghast. "Why, Miss Moucell," he said, "you surely do not think of going out in this weather?"

"Why not?" she asked, calmly fastening her right glove.

"It is pouring!" he answered.

"I do not mind rain; I like it—"

"But this is such a downpour!"

"I shall take no harm—and father said I was to go with you to the Foundling."

"Your father, I am sure, never said you were to go anywhere in a second deluge."

"I love rain."

"But there should be reason in all things; and I, for one, will not be an accessory to your committing suicide."

"Oh, nonsense!" exclaimed the girl in a little burst of temper. "I mean to go, and that is all about it."

"Then I shall stay at home."

"Do not be ridiculous! If it be fit for you to venture out, it is fit for me."

"I beg to differ; and to put the matter perfectly plainly—though I feel it is most kind of you to propose accompanying me on such a morning—I do not intend you shall."

"This is really too absurd."

"Absurd! Just look how the rain is coming down,"



and he flung the front door wide that she might see the pitiless torrent which swept dead leaves and bare twigs to the sodden earth.

“Oh, that is nothing ; it will be over directly.”

“Your faith is greater than mine. Be advised, Miss Moucell, and either stay at home or go to a church near at hand.”

“If you can get to the Foundling, I can.”

“I am a man—which makes all the difference,” said Mr. Mallow ; and as he spoke he again walked towards the open door, with the evident intention of marching straight away to his destination without further discussion.

She was as quick as he, however, and reached the threshold just as he stepped across it.

“Mr. Mallow ! ” He was closing the door, but she had grasped the inner handle and held it against him.

“My dear girl,” he said, as if speaking to a child, “be reasonable ! ” But she only pulled the more resolutely.

The whole thing was growing amusing, she looked such a bit of a thing to be trying her strength against his. After all, she was only a young creature, self-willed, like others of her family, but fresh as the dawn, utterly destitute of coquetry, innocent as a little child.

The idea of love and marriage in connection with such a wild, untrained specimen of femininity seemed preposterous, and Mr. Mallow, who felt pleased at carrying his point so easily, began to regard their “tug of war” almost as a piece of fun, and peeped merrily round the door ere really trying to close it.

"Take care," he said, "I am going to give a great bang." And then something quite unexpected happened.

Whether it were the laughing mischief in his face, or a thought born before due time, or a shaft of understanding sent straight from Heaven for her enlightenment, who can say? but in that second Joscelyne, blind before, became as one who saw and knew she loved and was not loved in return.

Instantly her small hands relaxed their grasp, and the door closed with a tremendous noise.

"She did that for a joke," thought Mr. Mallow; and as he passed down the walk he glanced back to see if the girl were at any window gesticulating menacingly, or going through some other pantomime expressive of indignation.

At that moment Joscelyne was standing where he had left her like one stricken. After a while she went slowly to her room and shut herself in.

The rain was pouring down, and she watched it falling with sad, dreamy eyes. Once she had stood "where the brook and river meet"; now she was across the river, and standing on the other side—alone.

In love women require no teacher; nature tells them all—sometimes, indeed, more than all—they need to know; and thus it came to pass that poor Joscelyne, who had so short a time previously put on her war-paint with happy anticipation, was wiser and more sorrowful as she looked out on the dripping cistern, than the united counsels of ten thousand matrons could have made her.

She knew—and that was enough—knew the first

great trouble of her life had come without any seeking—knew before she ever saw Mr. Mallow that she loved him—knew for some sufficient reason he never could love her—knew he never could have loved her because, to use her aunt's graphic, though perhaps uncultured phrase, "she was not his sort."

"What 'sort' would he like?" she wondered in a tired, weary way.

The dear young maiden! Her sorrow seemed very grievous. Three weeks previously she had not even seen the man, and yet now her heart was well-nigh breaking because of him.

She did not give way to any passion of weeping, as she had done when she read "The Offences of His Forefathers," for her wound was too deep for tears, while the shame she felt burnt like a consuming fire. Her only consolation lay in the idea her secret would for ever remain one between her heart and herself.

She sat for a long time mentally wandering through depths of troubled thought; but at last, recollecting she was still wearing her walking garments, rose to make some change in her dress; and as she passed the cheval glass saw herself, probably for the first time, as she usually appeared to Mr. Mallow, when in the street—storm-tossed, dishevelled, too young by far for her years, which had stolen by unawares and left her looking, as far as attire went, much as she had done in her early teens.

With a quick recoil she turned from the too truthful mirror, and, laying aside her hat, cloak, and frock, brushed out her splendid hair, and then gathered it into a great knot at the back of her shapely young head. This she did without the smallest thought of



making herself look more attractive, but just that she might appear older, neater, less like a "wild girl of the woods." Then putting on the longest gown she owned, she left her room to run the gauntlet she knew she would have to brave.

"Why, I thought you were gone to the Foundling!" said Mrs. Howley in accents of amazement.

"Too wet," was the short answer.

"Hillo! What's up?" exclaimed Philip, walking round his sister to study the new effect.

"Docked her mane at last, as I'm a sinner!" declared Edgar.

"Well, you do look a fright!" was Guy's dispassionate criticism.

"Pity the 5th is past!" remarked Randal, drawing upon recent memory for an illustration strong enough to express his scorn.

"No effect can be produced without a cause," said Philip, making a telescope of his closed hand that he might survey the metamorphosis to greater advantage. "May I ask the reason, therefore, for this thusness?"

"Certainly you may," returned his sister with spirit. "I have long been weary of the senseless frivolity you all delight in, and I am determined, by taking my proper position, to try and put an end to it."

"Therefore you have shovelled up your hair and made a guy of yourself?"

"What does it matter how I look? I would even wear caps if my doing so would induce you to talk rationally."

"My dear Jo, you are evidently predestined to be an old maid."

"Better be an old maid than a young simpleton!"



retorted Joscelyne, flouncing out of that lower room where the rain was first splashing down on the pavement and then bespattering the window.

"Takes it badly," observed Philip; "evidently thinks our private chaplain ought to have remained at home to deliver a homily. I should greatly like, by-the-bye, to hear the Reverend Desmond Gerald preach. I'm sure his sermons are very fetching."

"So am I," agreed Mrs. Howley, who did not understand sarcasm in the least, and would not have understood, even had it been fired at her from the cannon's mouth. "I feel they must be beautiful."

"Upon the whole," remarked Philip, addressing his brothers with mock gravity, "it is perhaps fortunate for us that Mr. Mallow seems unlikely to become a member of our family. Strange as the statement may sound, it is possible to have too much of a good thing. There were times when I yearned to greet him as my dear uncle; but now I feel inclined to think things are better ordered."

Edgar and Guy looked at each other, but said nothing. They had never taken Philip into confidence concerning a different alliance, because they well knew he would have thrown cold water on the idea, by observing,—

"A Moucell really could not marry an Irish curate!"

## CHAPTER XXX.

TIME did not stand still, and Wednesday evening arrived—the last of Mr. Mallow's stay at South Lambeth, for he had arranged to leave Euston on the following night.

He and Joscelyne were alone in the pretty drawing-room, Mrs. Howley having, with her usual consideration, left them together for those purposes of love-making she never could get out of her kindly old head.

They were not making love, however, only talking very sensibly concerning many things which the curate had never before given Joscelyne credit for thinking about. She seemed changed in some inscrutable way. He could not define the impression she made on his mind, but he felt there was more in her than he had imagined, and knew he should be her friend for life. He was taking a picture of the girl and the room, to hang on the wall of memory and look at when the sea divided them, and he did not feel so glad at the prospect of departure as he once imagined would be the case. Rather a sudden sadness stole over him, to divert which he at last asked her to sing.

“What shall I sing?” she returned.

“Anything—or rather something I can think of when far away.”

It was a speech he had not intended to make, but one which slipped out unawares, and he was vexed with himself for having uttered it. His words might have served for a preface to a love tale, and he had no tale of that sort to tell.

Many a girl would have returned the remark with a chaffing retort or a conscious look, but Joscelyne took no notice whatever; she only moved to the piano, and he did not see the crimson flush which flew to her cheeks and faded away as suddenly.

“I found the other day an old hymn you may not have heard,” she said, turning a little towards him and speaking quite steadily—poor Jo! “I think you will like it.”

“I am sure I shall,” he answered.

She struck a few wild, rugged chords, and then her young fresh voice began a covenanting hymn which in times of danger and trouble doubtless often in the old days floated across many a lonely moor and down many a desolate hillside.

The air was almost uncouth, yet it suited the deep religious fervour of the words—the strong faith, the passionate trust which enabled men to face persecution and brave death in order to praise their Maker after the fashion they deemed right.

A grand hymn rendered by a mere girl who had assimilated its spirit and poured out verse after verse till she reached the last line :

“Return, O Lord of Hosts, return,”

into which she threw a depth of appeal, a certainty of being answered that was wonderful in one so young.

The final note had scarcely died into silence before the room seemed rent by a frightful noise combining

within itself the shriek of a steam whistle and the appalling din produced by a gong struck furiously.

In an access of terror Joscelyne sprang from the music-stool and half-way across the room, where Mr. Mallow laid his hand reassuringly on her arm.

"There is no harm done," he said; "but what could it have been?"

Even as he spoke Joscelyne, who had caught a stealthy movement, darted to the middle window, threw back the closely drawn curtains, and dragged forth the Apostle, wearing one of his aunt's old caps, a pair of spectacles, and a small red and black check shawl. Anything funnier than he looked, thus decked, it would be difficult to imagine; but the sight did not excite his sister's mirth, quite the contrary.

"You dreadful child!" she said. "You wretched, good-for-nothing little imp! How dare you do such a thing? Go downstairs this moment!" and shaking him as if she meant to pull his arm off, she hustled her brother to the door and pushed him outside.

It was too much. Flesh and blood could not resist the contrast between that covenanting hymn and the Apostle—between Joscelyne's devout earnestness and her swift lapse from grace—therefore Mr. Mallow laughed unrestrainedly, while Paul on the landing produced another ear-splitting note out of the fiendish instrument he carried.

"You will think there is a great deal of human nature in this house," said Joscelyne at last.

"I like human nature," answered the curate, trying to speak gravely.

"I am very sorry," went on the girl, "but I could not help it; I was so frightened."



"Sit down," said Mr. Mallow, drawing a chair towards her. "Why, you are still trembling. What can I get for you?"

"I shall be better in a minute, thank you. It was only—only—Oh, I wish I had not shaken Paul as I did."

"And I wish your father had been here to shake him instead."

"It is not his fault ; it is the boys ; they get him to do all sorts of things, and then they laugh. They are so silly."

"I laughed, and I am afraid if similarly tried I should laugh again. It was such a sudden drop from the stern grandeur of that hymn to Paul's buffoonery. By-the-bye, where did you get such a noble psalm of prayer and praise?"

"From a young Scotch doctor who is now dead. He did not like to hear it sung to Mornington's chant, so sat down one evening and wrote an air that suited the words better."

There ensued an awkward pause. Perhaps both were thinking of the old-world hymn ; more probably of something quite different.

"Miss Moucell, when will you and your father be coming to Ireland?" inquired Mr. Mallow at last, breaking the spell and bringing Joscelyne back with a start to every-day life and the doings thereof.

"Never," she answered. "Father cannot make time to go anywhere."

"But when he takes his holiday."

"He does not take holiday, except just now and again, when he goes to Brighton or some other such place for a night or two. Even then he always combines business with pleasure."

“Surely you do not mean me to understand that statement literally?”

“I do indeed; no one can imagine how hard he works.”

“I can, and for that very reason should have supposed at least a month’s change each year necessary even for health.”

Joscelyne shook her head. “Father never gives himself any real holiday; says he finds rest and recreation in change of work. Besides, he likes being in London when other people are out of it.”

“I think I should be of the same mind; nevertheless I am sure he would like a run through Ireland also, in fact, he told me long ago he should enjoy seeing Donegal and Killarney, the Causeway and Wicklow immensely.”

“I have no doubt of that—just as he would enjoy having ten thousand a year, and nothing to do, or any other trifle which can be had for the wishing.”

Mr. Mallow had previously noticed the girl’s knack of occasionally repeating her father’s ideas, so this little spurt of cynical impatience did not disconcert him.

“Pending the arrival of that ten thousand a year, and period of elegant leisure which, with all my heart, I hope may come to him ere long,” he said, “could not you manage a visit? My mother, I know, would be delighted to make your personal acquaintance; and Dublin, though not like London, is well worth seeing.”

Again Joscelyne shook her head. “I never go anywhere,” she said—“that is, for more than part of a day.”

“Not on visits to friends?” astonished.

“No ; it is years and years since I have been out of town. The last time I went was when I was quite a little girl to Hastings with my mother. I have never forgotten the sea, nor how sad it seemed. I dream of it sometimes still.”

“My mother must persuade you to visit her,” said Mr. Mallow, after a slight pause. “I do not think you would find Dublin or Rosstrevor Bay, sad, or anything but bright in the sunshine and grand in the storm. Ireland really is most beautiful ; not about Kilbrannon, perhaps, but all round the coast. Selfishly, I do wish you would come, for I want you and the dearest friend I have in the world to know each other.”

“Who is she ?” asked Joscelyne.

A week previously the question would have been “Who is he ?” but ah ! what had the girl not learned within the space of four days ?

“Her name is Grace Bellingdon,” was the answer. “I have told her about your goodness to me, and in a letter I received this morning she says she hopes to meet you some happy day. I am sure you would like her ; she is the sweetest creature imaginable.”

“I should love to see her,” said Joscelyne quite steadily.

“It would be pleasant for you to have a young woman friend,” went on Mr. Mallow, unconscious how his words stabbed.

There was one secret which no woman friend might ever have confided to her by the girl, who inquired,—

“Is she <sup>7</sup>/<sub>1</sub> older than I am ?”



“Yes, nearly nine years ; and I have known her since she was sixteen.”

Known her ever since Joscelyne was between seven and eight !

“And—” said the girl softly, with a meaning smile.

“Your guess is right, Miss Moucell, I have loved her all that time. You will forgive me for telling you this, for troubling you with my affairs, but I do so want you and Grace to be friends.”

“I shall be her friend,” was the reply, though Joscelyne felt as though something were crushing her.

This was the love-making for which Mrs. Howley had left the way clear, and through it there seemed ringing some lines of that covenanting hymn, the end of which Paul had greeted with such a din of rejoicing.

What a tangle life appeared at that moment to one of the twain.

And save for his book they would never have met. Had they not met, she could never have loved him so much. It was but the burden of an old ballad repeated, for the sorrows of to-day are only the sorrows of past centuries played by fresh actors new to the boards, as the former actors were once.

Then Mr. Mallow, finding the girl so sweetly sympathetic, told her the whole story, which, after all was not exciting, and Joscelyne listened like one in a dream.

No. She never could have been anything to him ; she felt that very certainly. Each word he spoke separated them further and further ; and when at last he produced a little case and asked if she would



care to look at the photograph it contained, she was able to stretch out a hand which did not tremble, and gaze with eyes undimmed by tears at the likeness of the woman Desmond Mallow loved best on earth.

“ Oh ! what a lovely face ! ” she exclaimed involuntarily.

“ It is not more lovely than her nature, ” he said, deeply gratified.

For a few minutes Joscelyne sat dumb, lost in thought. Before her was the heroine of Mr. Mallow's book, the woman who, when from afar she beheld the torch-lit pandemonium, that assemblage of fiends deprecated by Mr. Moucell, sank on her knees and prayed for those who had hounded Woyle of Fin-carrow to his death.

She could not doubt for a moment. She understood the book and its author better than she had ever done, though the knowledge set them still wider apart. There was a gulf fixed between the sunshiny land in which her pleasure-loving temperament would have liked to dwell, and the gloomy regions where he searched after those sources of evil, man is not permitted to discover here ; a gulf on the verge of which she stood peering across the deep waters dividing her from him.

“ That is not the likeness of a woman, surely, ” she at last said, gently closing the case and giving it back into his keeping, “ but of some sweet saint in heaven ? ”

“ Thank you. ” Mr. Mallow made no longer answer, for he could not. Joscelyne's impulsive remark was, he thought, the prettiest compliment ever paid by one woman to another ; but it filled him with a

strange emotion, and struck some deep chord in his nature, from which he had never thought the girl's light touch could evoke a sound.

At that very moment Mr. Moucell, having let himself in quietly as usual, was standing at the foot of the stairs, where his progress had been arrested by Mrs. Howley.

"Don't go into the drawing-room just yet," she said.

"Why not?" asked Mr. Moucell.

"Because Mr. Mallow and Joscelyne are there."

"And what then?"

The lady answered nothing, but looked wise, which so provoked her "dear niece's husband," that he broke out in a quite unusual manner.

"What rubbish! I do wish you could realize that struggling men have something else to think about than love and marriage; and as for Joscelyne, I do hope that no daughter of mine will ever throw herself away on a poor curate."

His tone was so irate that Mrs. Howley instantly collapsed, and retreated into the dining-room.

What could have happened? A week previously she knew her hints had been differently received—not with absolute approval, perhaps, but certainly with indulgence. It was very odd!

Meantime Mr. Moucell went upstairs, opened the drawing-room door, and found Joscelyne seated on a low chair near one of the windows, and Mr. Mallow standing beside the hearth.

"Oh, there you are!" he exclaimed. "Just as I was coming in I met a lad with a parcel for you. Gerants told me this afternoon they hoped to send

you the finish by mid-day to-morrow, and trust you will be able to let them have all proofs back before you leave. No doubt you would like to get to work at once," and so saying he laid a good-sized package on the table, which Mr. Mallow at once proceeded to open.

How many things and persons he had seen since in that very room he, a proud and happy author, sat down to correct the first sheets of "The Offences of His Forefathers"!

## CHAPTER XXXI.

TWENTY-FOUR hours later Mr. Mallow was on his way to Holyhead, all proofs having long previously been despatched to the printers.

Courteous at the end as at the beginning, Mr. Moucell sped the parting guest.

He accompanied him to Euston, saw him safely ensconced in a comfortable compartment, corner seat, back to the engine, listened with a deprecating smile to his heart-felt thanks, said farewell as if he had been the dearest friend earth held, observed all the ceremonial usual on such occasions—handshaking, head-nodding, hat-raising, hand-waving, &c.—and then, as the train bore the traveller out of sight, murmured “Thank Heaven,” very strongly worded, and left the station with a keen sense of relief.

No one, indeed, save John Moucell himself, knew the amount of discomfort that gentleman had experienced during the past eighteen days.

For years accustomed to utter domestic liberty, the mere fact of having to accommodate his habits in any way to the requirements of another person must under the most favourable circumstances have proved irksome, and when it is remembered that all the circumstances had been especially unfavourable, the result produced may be vaguely imagined.



“Never again,” he decided ; “never, will I ask man or woman to my house on a visit. The thing might be tolerable enough for a day, but to go to bed at night with the knowledge that the nuisance must again be faced on the morrow—indeed on many morrows—is more than working flesh and blood can stand,” and feeling very sorry for himself, Mr. Moucell hurried on in a rare bad temper, till suddenly remembering that Bloomsbury Square was not far distant, he decided to call on Mr. Blackshaw, who by reason of his recalcitrant liver, seldom dined out, and could therefore generally be seen of an evening.

He warmly welcomed Mr. Moucell, who, he said, had lately been “quite a stranger.”

“Well, I have been somewhat tied,” explained the other ; “but Mr. Mallow has gone now—went by the mail train to-night. I have just come from the station, and thought I would look in.”

“Mallow,” repeated Mr. Blackshaw, “that is the young clergyman you brought here to dinner. Clara tells me he is sure to make a great success.”

“So the Messrs. Gerant say.”

“And what do you say ? ”

“Never prophesy unless you know,” returned Mr. Moucell with a laugh. “I think he ought ; he is very clever.”

“How sorry I am Clara is not at home ; she does so enjoy a talk with you,” which was quite true. Clara did enjoy a talk with Mr. Moucell immensely !

“I shall be in the neighbourhood again some afternoon ere long, and will then venture to ask her for a cup of tea.”

“Do—and let her know, if possible, when she may expect you. It would grieve her very much to be out,” after which pleasant preliminaries the pair settled down to an exhaustive discussion on the well-worn theme of Mr. Blackshaw’s digestion, in the course of which Mr. Moucell covered himself with glory by starting the theory that doctors were totally wrong in their mode of treating that refractory organ.

“I scarcely follow you,” said Mr. Blackshaw.

“In other words, they seem to regard the stomach as a master instead of a servant.”

“Mine has long been my master,” groaned the invalid.

“No one can doubt that fact ; and it will continue to dictate terms so long as you concede them.”

“But what am I to do? Unless I diet myself strictly, I suffer agonies—”

“Exactly ; and so you have given up one pleasant food after another. May I ask whether you feel any the better for all your sacrifices ? ”

“No ; but my doctor tells me I should have felt much worse had I eaten and drunk like happier mortals.”

“H—m—that is as it may be ; meanwhile you are getting down to the straw a day. When the straw is reached, what will happen ? ”

“God knows,” in a tone of blank despair.

“Yes, God knows—and the doctor ought to know ; but still he persists in his absurd idea that a weak stomach can be made strong by fasting, whereas it needs to be brought back to health by judicious feeding.”

Mr. Blackshaw seemed greatly impressed by this utterance. In truth the man was longing for food which he feared to take.

“What I should do in your place,” continued Mr. Moucell, pushing his advantage, “would be to try whether I could not, by proper management, induce that poor digestion to at least make an attempt to perform its work. I would begin with even a teaspoonful—half a teaspoonful—fifteen drops—of wine a day, and see what happened. If nothing happened, the dose might be gradually increased. The same with food. I should try some turtle soup, and take it in very small quantities. Of course, I am not a doctor, and know little or nothing about man’s internal economy ; but common sense is common sense ; and there is neither rhyme nor reason in humouring the fads of any organ till it becomes unable to do the work it was intended to perform.”

“Upon my word, I think I will follow your advice. I wonder why no one ever suggested turtle soup before.”

“Most probably because it is the obvious thing in cases of extreme debility. Many persons can see objects at a distance much more clearly than those close at hand. Now I really must run away.”

“Not yet,” pleaded Mr. Blackshaw ; “we see so little of you.”

But Mr. Moucell was as adamant. He had work to do, letters to write—matters had perforce been somewhat neglected of late ; he must try and make up for lost time. “I shall endeavour to call again next week, all being well,” he added, however, “if only to hear whether you have taken my prescription.”



“That I certainly shall,” answered Mr. Blackshaw, in the tone of a man who meant what he said.

“Don’t overdo it, though ; at first very, very small doses,” and Mr. Moucell left, thinking even as the front door closed behind him,—

“What a world it is, in which some are miserable because they cannot digest their food, and some are at their wit’s end because they cannot get food to digest.”

The conceit pleased him, and he walked on in better spirits, though anxious enough, and with sufficient cause to be anxious, for the worst time of the whole year in which to run short of money was within measurable distance, and Mr. Moucell knew no source from whence a glut could possibly arrive.

In the first thankfulness at being delivered out of the hands of Messrs. Michael, Gabriel, and Co., Christmas, with bills and boxes, and many outgoings and tardy incomings, had seemed a long way off, and now publishing London was in the thick of it.

Time skims by on lightsome wing when many could wish the old enemy to saunter slowly, as though shod with lead, and consequently all of a sudden towards the close of that, to him, memorable November, Mr. Moucell, whose pecuniary battle was never an easy one, found it necessary to consider much more than he liked, how it would be possible to make up the deficit caused by Her Majesty’s peremptory summons to a formal reception, not held at Windsor, or Buckingham Palace either !

It was not merely the fifty pounds scraped so hardly together that he had to make up, but the doors in Old



Bond Street were closed for the time being by Mr. Isaac Gerant's cheque, and he could scarcely ask for them to be reopened.

He had, moreover, lost valuable time, which meant money, and taken a great deal out of himself while searching and waiting for sufficient to satisfy those "bloodhounds called solicitors," therefore, after only a very few days' respite, he found it necessary to put his shoulder to the pecuniary wheel once more.

"Bad luck came with that fellow," he said. "I hope it has gone with him," which really was unjust towards Mr. Mallow, since he did not bring a sheaf of misfortunes for Mr. Moucell among his personal luggage.

Nevertheless, he had disappointed him bitterly ; kept that cheque in his pocket instead of entrusting it to very careful hands ; rendered vain all his plans of conquering the world with a new ally ; turned the invitations obtained for an ulterior purpose into the most useless of useless civilities.

The Apostle could have lent him words sufficient to give expression to the feelings which boiled within Mr. Moucell's breast when he recalled how he had striven, what he had compassed, and the result ; but bad language never having found a place in his vocabulary, he failed to give audible expression to his anger—which perhaps was a pity.

All he said when entering his gate at South Lambeth was merely a repetition of his thanksgiving while leaving Euston, "Thank God, my time is my own again," thus signifying it had been temporarily in possession of Mr. Mallow.

Though that gentleman had certainly not been boisterous, the house seemed strangely quiet without him, and a pang shot through Mr. Moucell's heart as he considered for the thousandth time what they might have compassed together, he with his connection, Mr. Mallow with youth, talent, respectable lineage—things now all wasted, Irish-like, on some vague "she" in the Isle of Saints.

Mr. Moucell felt just in the mood for writing a little paper on "The Disappointments of Life," after completing which he went to bed very tired—so tired that he did not dream a dream the whole night long.

It was fortunate he had that sound night's rest, for the next day did not open well. The post brought no pleasant letter—quite the contrary—no cheque, no order—nothing but disagreeable reminders and a rejected manuscript. Now, this last was a misfortune which had not befallen him for long years. "I was an idiot to send it there," he muttered; "to send anything anywhere on chance—" and he unfolded the despised essay and looked at it ruefully.

Lady Fenland had once likened him to Lamb, and the paper in question resembled Elia as much as a poor copy can a brilliant original. From his bookshelves he took down a volume, read a page, and then glanced at his own article. What was there in Lamb he lacked? By what alchemy had that man transmuted the meanest thing into gold? Ever since the night when Mr. Moucell appraised the value of his own wares as he might those of another, he had entertained no illusions, still this rejection gave him a shock, for it is one matter to know the goods you offer are

but shoddy, and another to find that belief shared by those who hold the purse.

There was yet a further letter from an editor who had always been his friend, which, feeling sure its contents could not be but pleasant, Mr. Moucell kept as a *bonne bouche*. When he opened it, however, he found the worst news of all.

The kindly, old-fashioned creature who always took such contributions as Mr. Moucell cared to send was leaving, and another man who "knew not Joseph," and did not want to know him, was succeeding to his place.

Verily that morning all things seemed awry !

Though certainly far from being a Christian, Mr. Moucell was not irreligious ; but in times of trouble his faith took the form of fear.

"Ill luck," he decided, "had come with Mr. Mallow and meant to stay ;" and even as he arrived at this conclusion Philip entered the room.

"I have to tell you, sir," he said, "that I can do nothing with Paul. Either he can't be taught or he won't learn—"

"Nonsense !" exclaimed the Apostle's father.

"It is a fact," was the reply. "I don't believe he has his full complement of brains ; and as for bad language, I doubt if it could ever be thrashed out of the brat. I have tried to teach him the multiplication table, and we are just as far forward as we were the first day. In my opinion, it is of no use wasting any more time over the matter."

"And in my opinion you are tired of the task you were so anxious to undertake. Go away now, or I may say something unpleasant. I should like to know

what was the use of giving you an expensive education, if it cannot help you to instruct that poor delicate child"—who at the identical minute was kicking the heels out of his shoes!



## CHAPTER XXXII.

CIRCUMSTANCES over which Messrs. Gerant had no control delayed the publication of Mr. Mallow's book till early in the second week in December, but then hindered by a mass of Christmas literature, almost swamped by gift books, magazines, and special numbers, "The Offences of His Forefathers" began its slow voyage across the uncertain sea of public opinion to success.

On the day it appeared Lady Fenland sent her footman, Mr. Blackshaw his butler, and Mrs. Eldon Gannox her husband to buy a copy.

Lady Patricia, who had a frugal mind, as befitted the wife of a very rich man, felt she did her duty by requesting Mudie to let her have the work at once. With an eye to quotations the M.P. did likewise, and to a certain extent more humble folk followed suit. Still it was not a "reading" time of the year, even for novels by well-known authors, and the subscription proved small.

Mr. Moucell knew this, and inwardly rejoiced, the while he professed to be sorry.

"Why you elected to bring the book out just before the festive season baffles me," he said to Mr. Thomas Gerant. "You have not given the thing a fair chance. But there—no doubt you know your own business best."

"I think I do," returned the managing partner quietly. He was very nasty in those days, Mr. Moucell considered; so nasty, that gentleman longed to do him an injury.

Of course, the cause was jealousy, and one word from Joscelyne's father would have put matters right; but Mr. Moucell declined to speak that word; rather, he enjoyed Mr. Gerant's discomfiture; for although a "mere curate with possibilities" had not seemed a match to despise, his Norman blood revolted against the suit of a "mere tradesman," which was a hard phrase to use concerning anyone who came of such an old and honourable business stock as the Gerants.

Fact was, his doubtful intimacy with great folk had turned Mr. Moucell's head.

In youth family pride—particularly if there be nothing to feel especially proud of—is something to smile at; but in middle age it is apt to become a mania, and poor Mr. Moucell, after years of work and disappointment, had gone crazy on the subject of his ancestors, who might have been French peasants for all he knew about them.

Ordinary individuals—nay, Lady Fenland herself—would have thought well-to-do Mr. Gerant rather a "catch" for Joscelyne; but her father's ideas were different, therefore he said nothing about Miss Bellingdon; rather he nursed fury in his soul against Mr. Mallow and the unhappy publisher who was trying to push "The Offences of His Forefathers"—yes, and intended that the book should be a success.

Meanwhile, true to the traditions of his craft, Mr. Gerant was depressing the author. He wrote him the exact truth; but truth seems quite a different thing

when read in cold blood far away from the scene of action, than when heard spoken by a kindly voice in the midst of bustle and excitement.

Mr. Gerant stated that he had printed a very small first edition ; that so far the reviews were guarded, though not unfavourable ; that as yet the novel had not produced *an impression*.

Nevertheless, he intended pushing it, but should not do so till after the beginning of the New Year ; at the worst he hoped to recoup the loss, if loss ensued, out of Mr. Mallow's next work, which he trusted would have a brighter ending. People complained of the gloom which pervaded the story of Woyle of Fin-carrow.

All of which, scanned by a man living in a lonely rectory in a damp, depressing part of Ireland, did not serve to raise Mr. Mallow's spirits, although he knew the printed book had done a good deal for him.

Mr. Bellingdon thought well of it. The reviews, such as they were, gratified that gentleman immensely, and, as Miss Bellingdon wrote to Joscelyne, things were going happily. Quite a brisk correspondence between the two girls had begun after Mr. Mallow's return to Ireland.

The letters which came to South Lambeth were such as a loving elder sister might have written to a younger. Sweet Grace Bellingdon had "taken" to Joscelyne, and sent her really charming epistles, possibly because she delighted to speak of Desmond Mallow, possibly because her kindly heart went out to the young thing who she felt must be very lonely.

"I want so much to meet you face to face," she wrote in one letter, to which Joscelyne replied in good faith : "And I so much want to meet *you*."

It was Miss Bellingdon who sent to the girl a copy of Mr. Mallow's novel, with some graceful words written in it by the author. No one in her home ever saw that book save Joscelyne ; it was too sacred ; but she poured out her very soul in admiration of it to the woman greatly beloved.

Poor child ; her affection for the man had never been a grand passion ; she was too guilelessly innocent for that ; so she could write concerning him to the woman he hoped one day to call wife, without a thought the angels might not have approved.

She was all the more glad just then to have this new pleasure in her life, because there was but little pleasure in her home.

Never before had anyone known Mr. Moucell so hard to satisfy. Nothing anyone did was right ; money was conspicuous by its absence ; duns well in evidence ; Mrs. Howley often in tears ; household matters anyhow ; the younger children told they must content themselves with such fare as was placed before them, and the elder informed matters were "difficult." That was a bad Christmas for the family. They had the orthodox dinner, of course—turkeys and game, sent by Mr. Mallow, the roast beef of old England, and pudding well alight—but merriment there was none. "Just like a wet Sunday," said Philip. Mr. Moucell carved the festive dinner with a face like an undertaker. He had never been so short of petty cash, for years at all events ; and the establishment generally felt as if a very wet blanket hung over it.



“I have never seen your dear father so utterly cast down before,” Mrs. Howley told Joscelyne, for with creditors coming to the house and insisting on payment, it was impossible to keep the girl in ignorance of what they wanted. “He had to make up a large sum in November, and that of course keeps us short now.”

“We must not spend a penny we can help, then,” answered Joscelyne, and forthwith she relinquished such small luxuries as sugar and butter, which certainly did not effect any enormous saving, but proved her intentions were good.

Also she took to sewing very diligently, and kept her father’s study in order more sedulously than ever; with the New Year things got slightly easier, but Mr. Moucell’s spirits did not rebound as they had been wont to do.

His recent experiences seemed terrible to him—a warning of what might come and remain.

After such a check a man could not well go on living from hand to mouth without asking himself: “If the hand stopped, what would happen?” Hitherto the hand had not stopped; but late events showed exactly how suddenly a catastrophe might occur. No disaster, no loss of income, brings the conviction of impending trouble so home to a man as the want of ready money in his pocket; and for weeks previously the drain had been so constant and the supplies so intermittent, that Mr. Moucell found himself at times almost without sixpence—a state of affairs which compelled reflection.

If it be difficult to rejoice with those who rejoice when our world is going smoothly, it is more difficult

still when affairs are out of gear ; and Mr. Moucell certainly felt no pleasure when Joscelyne asked him one morning if he had seen a second edition announced of Mr. Mallow's book.

"No. Is it really ?" he answered, but he could not make his tone as genial as he wished.

The girl, however, was so full of what she thought very good news, that his constraint passed unnoticed.

"Here is the advertisement," she went on, her face bright with happiness ; "there are several capital Press notices quoted also. I suppose that means the novel is selling well."

"We must hope so. It did not at first. The time was unfavourable."

"Ah ; that does not much matter. It is evidently going now. I am so glad !"

Mr. Moucell said he was very glad too. He had quite regained his self-possession, and felt able to speak of another man's success as if it had been his own ; nevertheless, no one could have measured the extent of his anger and mortification when he found that detested book by that hateful curate was really making its way, while he stood outside in the cold.

He had on the previous day met Mr. Thomas Gerant, who said nothing about the second edition. And it was Mr. John Moucell who had boomed the wretched thing, gone over it in manuscript, read it in proof, corrected and revised it ! Among the notices lurked one Joscelyne had overlooked, viz. an extract from a speech of Seymour Hardisty, Esq., M.P. for Great Thundersley, who seemed to have quoted at length from the novel, which he advised all interested in the Irish question to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest.

“And it was I who introduced Seymour Hardisty, Esq., to our clever young friend! Wait a little, Mr. Thomas Gerant; wait a little, Mr. Mallow, and perhaps you may both wish you had considered *me!*” This and much more to the same effect passed through Mr. Moucell’s mind. He could have written many essays on Ingratitude had anyone wanted them, for he felt the matter very strongly; but as it was impossible to compose his mind in that way, he went out, and when he returned he felt a happier, though not a better man.

A few evenings later there was an irritable cry for Joscelyne.

“Who has been meddling with my books?” Mr. Moucell asked when his daughter appeared.

“I have not, father,” answered the girl. “What is it you want?”

“‘The Offences of His Forefathers,’ which I left on the shelf, and—”

“Perhaps Philip has been reading it. I heard him say he would like to do so.”

“And I should like him to know I will not have any volume taken without my permission.”

“What’s wrong with the governor now?” asked Phil, when his sister went in quest of the required book. “Oh! Mallow’s treatise, is it? I can guess what he wants that for. Crade, the Radical, has been answering Hardisty’s speech by saying ‘The Offences’ is the most shameless and cruel indictment ever brought against a warmhearted, grateful people. No doubt our dad will soon be in the thick of the fray.”

That he was about to do something very kind and



clever his daughter felt certain. Coffee was taken into the library, and he wrote for a long time uninterrupted; then he had a light supper and went to bed. No packet, however, lay on the table according to custom; instead, when Joscelyne went in next morning to arrange matters before the servant began her spiriting, she was greeted by the smell of burnt paper—a most unusual odour in that house.

As a rule Mr. Moucell did not burn or tear up. When he told Mr. Mallow his copy went wet to the printer, he only employed a pardonable exaggeration. He never could have got through his work had he fussed over it; had he written an article seven times, for instance, or spent hours in considering the turn of a sentence.

Heaven had given him a certain knack, which served well enough so long as he did not try to improve upon it. Evidently, however, he had been trying to do great things on that night when he destroyed side after side of copy.

Joscelyne was surprised; it must have been a very important article which failed to satisfy her father.

In the grate she could see a mass of charred paper, but from the fender she only picked up a scrap of torn manuscript, whereon five words were distinguishable, "the obscurity it deserves, but—" She could not help seeing this little portion of a sentence which, however, conveyed no meaning to her. It was just a bit of copy, like everything else her father wrote, and she tossed it behind the bars. "Dear father!" she considered, "how hard he does work. I wish I could do something to help."



She had not much thought of love that morning, save for the parent who slaved so continuously. Poor Joscelyne !

And yet a happy Joscelyne as she walked back on the following Friday from the Westminster Bridge Road, where she had been to make some purchases for her aunt. Lately Mr. Moucell seemed brighter, and his eldest child basked in the sunshine of his greater cheerfulness.

She loved the river, and making a trifling detour in order to walk beside it, went down the steps leading from Westminster Bridge, just as she had done one evening—when not alone. It all came back to her—the memory of the Abbey service, the sound of the lapping water, Mr. Mallow's thoughtful silence, the unaccountable joy that filled her heart, the cold rush of the evening wind ; and she stood for a minute looking across at the Houses of Parliament with a strange feeling that years and years had passed since then.

Still she was not unhappy. The hopes and fears of others were now her own, and no human being is ever wretched who can utterly crush self. Her thoughts were full of Mr. Mallow's book, and the success it must be making, when looking up she saw Guy sauntering along towards her, his overcoat pockets stuffed with newspapers and his mouth full of bun, which he was surreptitiously devouring.

“ And where do you think you are off to ? ” she asked.

“ That's my business ! ”

“ And mine, if I choose to make it so. What are you going to do with all those papers ? ”

“ Post them ! ” very sulkily.

“ Then why did you not drop them in at Vauxhall ? ”

“ Because I was told to take them to Charing Cross.”

“ What are they ?—oh, *Impartials*,” said Joscelyne, taking three out of his pocket. “ Who directed these ? ” she went on.

“ I don’t know—”

“ Who told you to post them ? ”

“ Father—and he said I was to make haste.”

“ You looked like making haste when I met you, guzzling the money you were given for the boat ! ”

“ Everybody is not in such a tearing hurry as you, miss ; and you are just wrong about the money. Father gave me sixpence, and said I could keep the change. I knew I could get to Charing Cross as fast as if I took the boat, so thought I might as well walk.”

“ Get along now, then,” said Joscelyne ; “ I won’t tell tales,” and she went away feeling very much pleased.

How good of her father—how thoughtful ! “ But he is always good and thoughtful ! ”

The *Impartial Review* was so called, declared prejudiced people, because it never spoke a good word about anybody except a few favourites, of whom only a limited number of persons had ever heard.

Those favourites it represented as shining lights in a naughty world, and held out as examples for authors to follow. The *Impartial* was a very close borough ; no one knew who wrote for it, who was able to influence it, anything about it in fact.

Perhaps for these very reasons it had grown to be a

power in literature ; and Joscelyne, as she resumed her progress, felt a thrill of pride at the idea Mr. Mallow had obtained immortality through its columns. She walked on very slowly, thinking how delighted the curate would be when he received the copy Guy had gone on to post. Mr. Bellingdon also ; likewise Mr. Hardisty ; likewise others whose names she had not seen.

Then a great longing came over her to read the splendid notice she felt sure it contained. She lamented not having asked Guy to buy her one ; many papers found their way to South Lambeth, but the *Impartial* rarely, for Mr. Moucell did not believe in buying anything he could help, or the *Impartial* in giving anything it could avoid.

Every step she took towards Vauxhall increased her longing. Without betraying the erring Guy she could not learn particulars from her father, who was laid up with a bad pain in his foot. "Gout," said the doctor. "Anxiety," believed the patient. Whether gout or anxiety, the pain prevented walking ; but Mr. Moucell bore this fresh trial without a murmur, his patience presenting a strong contrast to Joscelyne's inability to brook delay. The *Impartial* she felt she must see at once, therefore ere the end of High Street, Lambeth, was reached, she turned, and running back to the first pier, took a ticket for Westminster.

Arrived there, not an *Impartial* was to be had till she reached the Strand.

"Only just in," said a stationer, handing her a damp copy.

She went down Villiers Street and sought the

peaceful seclusion of the Embankment Gardens. Her hands trembled so much she could scarcely open the paper, which had to be cut with a hairpin. Joscelyne's eyes galloped over the review, but as she read heaven and earth seemed to crash together. If the ground had opened at her feet she could not have felt more dismayed.

It was a scathing notice ; a bitter, biting, contemptuous review, which opened with the words :

“ We should have left this book in the obscurity from which it ought never to have emerged, but—”

Part of the sentence seemed familiar to her, and all at once—she remembered. Was it possible? Was it credible? Alas! scores of little things crowded in an instant on her recollection—trifles light as air—motes in the sunbeams—mere ripples on the water, which, apparently of no importance at the time, assumed a terrible significance in the lurid light that sentence threw across them. Sick and faint she dropped on one of the benches, still holding the paper in her hand.

People who passed looked at her ; passed, repassed, and gazed curiously. She did not see them. One elderly lady asked kindly :

“ Are you ill, my dear ? ” which question the girl answered with a start and : “ Yes—no ; I think I will go home.”

“ The very best place for you, child, I am sure. May I go with you ? ”

Then the “ child ” vaguely understood.

“ No, thank you,” she said ; “ I am not ill. I have only had a shock. I shall be better presently,” and she got up and walked on to the Embankment,



knowing there was something she ought to do, and wondering what it could be.

After a while she comprehended ; and out of her aunt's money despatched two telegrams—one to Miss Bellingdon :

“ If the *Impartial Review* have been sent to you, let no one see it till you receive a letter from me.”

While the other to Mr. Mallow ran thus :

“ Attach no importance whatever to notice in *Impartial*. It is well known to be the most spiteful review in London. Letter by post.”

After which she walked sadly to South Lambeth, and accounted as best she could for the length of her absence and the deficit in her change.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE following afternoon Mr. Thomas Gerant appeared at South Lambeth in a state of high indignation.

"Have you seen the *Impartial*?" he asked, scarcely allowing himself time to inquire after the mysterious pain of which he had been duly informed by letter.

"I have," answered Mr. Moucell, ostentatiously nursing his afflicted foot.

"And what do you think of it?"

Mr. Moucell shrugged his shoulders after a not bad French fashion, considering the length of time which had elapsed since the Conquest.

"Never before," said Mr Gerant, "has any book published by our firm been so slated as in that notice."

Mr. Moucell hazarded the pleasant observation that probably the *Impartial* had never hitherto thought any book brought out by Messrs. Gerant worthy its steel—a compliment so ambiguous the junior partner could only reply :

"I do not know about that."

"On the whole I regard the review as a compliment," went on Mr. Moucell.

"Well, if you do, I don't," was the answer ; "and I would cheerfully give fifty pounds to know who wrote it."

Again Mr. Moucell shrugged his shoulders.

“If you made that bid hundreds, I don't think you could get at the man.”

“I have been to our solicitors, but they say it would be useless to bring an action.”

“Perfectly; this is a free country. The best course for you to pursue would be to hoist the *Impartial* with its own petard.”

“How do you mean?”

“Pick out a few words, such as ‘A remarkable book,’ ‘An original plot,’ and quote them without the context.”

“Oh! we could not possibly—”

“Why not? It is perfectly legal—”

“It may be; but we could not condescend to such trickery. I'd like to find out who wrote that article. Come, can't you help us?”

Mr. Moucell shook his head. “Set me some easier task,” he said; “making bricks without straw, for instance. Though, if I were you, I should not trouble myself further concerning the matter. Next week some other book will be served upon toast for the delectation of readers, and to-day's tid-bit forgotten. If, meantime, anyone chance to mention the matter, laugh and say the notice may be amusing fault-finding, but it is not criticism.”

And with this Mr. Gerant had to rest content. He stayed for a little while longer in the hope of seeing Joscelyne, but at length departed, accompanied to the hall door by Mr. Moucell, limping. Altogether the visit proved unsatisfactory and the house seemed dull.

There was one person in it very dull at heart, who

started at the sound of every knock, who was waiting for a message which did not come.

Why she expected a telegram would be impossible to say. During the whole of Monday and many hours of Tuesday, however, she looked for a letter which arrived by the last post—one from Miss Bellingdon.

“Owing to your thoughtfulness, dear Joscelyne,” thus the opening sentence ran, “that terrible review has wrought no evil. How can we ever express our thanks for your kindness? Desmond will write to you when he is a little better. He caught a chill in some way last Saturday, which two services on Sunday did not improve, but I trust he will be well ere long. Meantime he desires his best and most grateful remembrance to you.

“With true affection, ever yours,

“GRACE.”

And then there was a postscript.

“Would you believe that it was only by dint of almost agonized entreaty I could persuade D. not to show the *Impartial* to my father. He said he did not consider he was acting honourably in keeping it back. So far there is no harm done; but I fear I shall have trouble yet about the matter. Dear D. is so conscientious. Might he not be Woyle of Fincarrow himself?”

Joscelyne shivered as if someone had walked over her grave.

The days went by, and still Mr. Mallow did not write. Instead, there came a letter from Miss Bellingdon. “D. does not shake off his cold. Doctor says he must remain in bed. Am writing for his mother. You shall hear again on Thursday.”



What did the writer mean? How long the hours seemed. How tardily time moved. Nevertheless it passed somehow, and the letter so anxiously looked for came at last.

“It is fever. We know now he remained almost without food during the whole of that Saturday when the *Review* arrived. It was a damp, wretched morning, and poured in the afternoon. Kilbrannon is a very scattered parish, and he walked much further than he ought, returning home utterly worn out. Everything is being done that can be done, but naturally we feel very anxious. Fever has been and still is rife here.”

Yes—and he had gone out without breakfast on that Saturday, and after walking along sodden roads which ran between meadows literally steaming with damp, called at a cottage where the husband was down with fever, got home wet through, chilled to his marrow, to find that scathing *Review* waiting for him—a review which called his book “tawdry melodrama,” and stigmatized his religious utterances as “goody cant.”

The blow struck home, but he feebly fought against its effects, till, completely prostrated, he lay powerless, while the fever ran its course.

Love he had, and skilful and good nursing; but the fever raged, and defied all efforts to mitigate its severity. Mr. Bellingdon telegraphed to Dublin for a physician, who could suggest—nothing. “We can but pray and hope,” wrote Miss Bellingdon, who wrote three times a week to Joscelyne; and Joscelyne prayed also; though hundreds of miles stretched between, it was as if one voice ascended to heaven.

The suspense was killing; but it ended suddenly.

One Wednesday night, more than four weeks after the *Impartial* notice appeared, a letter arrived at South Lambeth from Kilbrannon.

With trembling fingers Joscelyne tore open the envelope, took out the enclosure, and read, "All is over. My dear one died last night." That was all. The curtain had dropped on the last act of the tragedy. As Mr. Moucell would have said, "Prophecy often works out its own fulfilment." How she got across the hall to her room and flung herself on the floor Joscelyne never knew. Madly she wrestled with her misery. Dead! No, it could not be—yet it was!

Down which of the thousand corridors leading from time might she call on him to return? Ah, none—for he had passed through the final barrier into the "far for evermore," where blame could not hurt or praise rejoice, where the voice of earthly friend or enemy might never reach.

In the delirium of her grief, it seemed to Joscelyne she was standing on a lone seashore, with night approaching, and a cold wind blowing keen, watching the vessel which bore away something dearer than all the world.

Dim and more shadowy each moment grew the outline of that barque which had for captain Death, for crew mutes, and for solitary passenger Desmond Mallow.

With straining eyes she followed its progress towards the unknown land, till all at once a mist arose which shrouded everything from her. Then she gave a shriek there was none to hear!

Towards morning, utterly exhausted, she fell asleep, only to wake ere day dawned to the knowledge *he* was dead—that no matter how long she lived, she could never see his face, or touch his hand, or hear his voice again.

She shrank within herself as she realized what had happened—as she thought of him lying straight and quiet, coffined, buried—never, never, never to speak to man or talk to woman or fondle child more ; never again to see the sun, or feel the rain, or brave the blast on earth, for ever.

And in some ways she was so young, even for her years, she only vaguely grasped there might be a brighter sun, a more genial rain, a more invigorating blast in that distant land beyond the skies.

“ Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard.” It was all very well, but the poor girl turned on her face and moaned.

Her sight could not follow him. Her ear could catch no sound from out that far-off country.

Only those who have passed through such agony know its full bitterness. And she still “ sweet seventeen.” Think of it !

When she lay in her father’s arms that September night, sobbing over an imaginary grief, premonition did not err. The future knew what was in store for her, and sent that advance guard to warn her of the enemy’s approach.

How did she meet the enemy when the evil hour came ? Bravely, poor soul, according to her lights.

The former trouble was nothing to this. Then she knew he could never be lover, or aught save friend to her. That had been bitter enough ; still



she felt she could live it down, and be happy in his happiness.

But now he was dead she could only picture him in his shroud. Her feeble faith failed to scale the walls of heaven and behold him in the glory which awaits the faithful; not even in imagination had she seen the things that "shall come to pass"; nevertheless, she girt herself up to bear the sorrow appointed.

Unless we choose that it shall do so, grief does not, as a rule, trace on our faces a tale that those who run may read; and spite of the trouble gnawing at her heart, Joscelyne, when she left her room, did not look very different from her usual self.

She could not eat, feeling as though food would choke her; but in that busy household want of appetite was not greatly noticed. If a person were not hungry at one meal, he was pretty sure to make up for his abstinence at the next; and as Joscelyne took her coffee as usual, and made a feint of enjoying it, no one imagined there was anything the matter with her.

When the postman knocked she, according to custom, emptied the box and sorted the letters. Yes, there it was, a deep black-bordered missive from Kilbrannon, to tell her father doubtless what had happened.

How would he take it—he who— But she put that thought swiftly aside, and laid the mourning envelope among a number of others on the library table.

Was her father likely to mention the matter? She thought not—and her idea proved correct.



Mr. Moucell made no reference to any news the letter might have contained ; only asked if she could go on making some extracts he wanted, as he was anxious to finish an article.

“ Shall I be in your way if I write here ? ” she inquired.

“ You are never in my way,” was his reply ; and then they got to work.

One hour, two hours, passed quickly, and Joscelyne had just taken down another mighty volume and looked out the chapters she wanted, when a loud double knock woke all the echoes of that quiet house, and immediately after Mr. Gerant, junior, entered.

“ I do not think, Miss Moucell,” he said, turning immediately from the father to the daughter, “ I ever before had the pleasure of seeing you ‘ at home,’ if I may use the expression, in this literary sanctuary.”

“ She is doing some copying for me,” explained Mr. Moucell.

“ Like a little busy bee,” suggested the other.

“ I am not gathering much honey, I fear,” said Joscelyne, trying to speak as usual, though the sight of Mr. Gerant and the conviction he was still ignorant of what had happened made her tremble like a sapling shaken by a strong wind, and long to scream hysterically, as she had done on the previous night when there was no one to hear.

Mr. Gerant, however, noticing nothing save that the girl was looking rather pale, remarked he thought it would be difficult even for her to find any sweetness in such weighty tomes, after which observation he plunged into business.

“As you have not been to see us lately, I thought I would call round and see you,” he began, addressing Mr. Moucell.

“I fully intended writing to you,” was the answer ; “but when work is very heavy, time slips by, and one forgets. You need not go, Joscelyne ; we have no State secrets to discuss.”

“And if we had, Miss Moucell, I for one should be only too glad to take you into counsel,” said Mr. Gerant gallantly.

Joscelyne could not answer. She fancied he had come to talk about a number of unread manuscripts, and her thoughts flew back to that never-to-be forgotten morning when she told her father : “The young man has come”—the young man who was now gone !

The deep waters of grief were rising again, and she had made that move to go lest their rush should overwhelm her.

Mr. Moucell promised faithfully the manuscripts should receive immediate and careful attention.

Mr. Gerant, in a capital temper, was easily satisfied, and did not attempt to stir. It was so pleasant to be in the room with Joscelyne, so nice to see her at what he mentally called “literary work,” that he felt like a cat who is being stroked, inclined to purr.

“Mallow’s book is really going now,” he said at last ; and the words pierced two in the room like a sword.

“Better late than never,” answered Mr. Moucell.

“It was the *Times* review started it ; and upon my word, I believe that ill-natured *Impartial* did us more good than harm !”

"The next best thing to a very good notice is a very bad one," was the sententious comment.

"I have heard that said before, but never believed it till now. Yes, the book is making a great success. By-the-bye, I wonder how it is I do not hear from Kilbrannon. I have written three times, and received no reply."

Mr. Moucell hazarded no explanation of the mystery ; Joscelyne felt suffocating.

"If he were away, I should have thought someone would forward his letters."

"Ah ! who could do that to a land so very far off !" swept over a torrent of unshed tears through the girl's mind. Perhaps the same idea occurred to her father, for he sat as one dumb.

"When next you write to him—I suppose you do write occasionally—I wish you would say I have an offer for a serial which might be worth his attention. We could run it through in six months and publish in four."

"Indeed— ? "

"Yes ; the *Universal* people seem disposed to take a novel by the author of 'The Offences of His Forefathers.' It would be a fine opening for Mr. Mallow. The pay is about the best in London, and the paper goes all over the world. I cannot understand why he does not answer my letters. You do not think anybody is tampering with him ? " a little anxiously, for in that question lay the real purpose of Mr. Gerant's visit.

"Quite impossible," Mr. Moucell forced himself to say.

"That is my father's opinion. Still, one never



knows. And I should feel really obliged if you would drop him a line soon. You might repeat what I have already written. I have no doubt but that we could place his new book advantageously, and want to know when he will finish it."

"He will never finish it," broke in Joscelyne, unable to contain herself longer.

"Never finish it, my dear Miss Moucell!" repeated Mr. Gerant in a tone of amazed incredulity. "Why?"

"Because he is *dead!*" answered the girl, bursting into such a passion of tears as she had not shed since early childhood, when some toy she desired was denied to her. And now that God had taken away the toy dearer than all, which never could have been hers, and yet that she could not bear to hear mentioned, the anguish of her soul broke bounds, and she wept as Mr. Gerant had never seen any one weep before.

It was indeed like the unexpected rush of many waters, and shocked him so greatly that at first he could not speak, while Mr. Moucell, astonished at his daughter's knowledge of what had occurred, and sorely annoyed by such a whirlwind of grief and absence of self-control, remained silent also.

"Is it true?" Mr. Gerant asked after a pause, during which one might have counted ten slowly.

"Unfortunately, yes," answered Mr. Moucell. "He died on Monday last of fever."

"He did not!" gasped Joscelyne. "He died of that review in the *Impartial.*"

"And you loved him," said Mr. Gerant in accents of deepest pity, uttering the words involuntarily.



She did not answer, only sobbed on convulsively ; but she heard, and never afterwards forgot, that in the supreme agony of her life, when his own heart must have been wrung, he was sorry for her.

“ Shall we go into the next room ? My daughter will be better alone,” suggested Mr. Moucell, who disliked all scenes, and thought all great emotions bad form.

“ Certainly,” said Mr. Gerant, moving towards the door, though he longed to stay behind.

“ The sad news only reached me this morning,” went on Mr. Moucell, when the two men stood together looking with grave faces across at The Lawn, “ and I had made no mention of the death to anyone ; therefore how my daughter was aware of it is a mystery to me.”

“ Love always knows,” observed Mr. Gerant gloomily.

“ I had not the faintest suspicion of that either.”

“ Yet the course you adopted was the very one to make them fall in love. They were never separate, it seemed to me,” with a jealous ring in his voice.

“ With all respect to your larger experience, I should have thought that the way to render them indifferent. The more obstacles you intervene, the more anxious young people are to jump them.”

Surely Mr. Moucell was not speaking out of the fulness of his own knowledge, for not an obstacle had been placed between him and Nannie Gray.

“ Propinquity is dangerous,” answered Mr. Gerant.

“ I have never been of that opinion ; in any case, if my daughter had the slightest feeling of that sort, it

could only have been a mere fancy, which will soon pass."

Mr. Gerant made no reply.

"What did Miss Moucell mean about the *Impartial*?" he asked suddenly.

"I have not a notion."

"Evidently her information is greater than yours."

"Evidently," agreed Mr. Moucell.

"Anyhow, it is a very bad business," said Mr. Gerant presently. "I think I will go straight back to the office and tell my father. I should not like him to hear of the matter suddenly; and as the poor fellow died three days ago, some of the papers may have a paragraph."

And having so spoken, the junior partner put on his hat and departed, though he had still a feeling strong upon him that he would have liked to remain in order to sympathize with Joscelyne, even if he could not comfort her.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

THOUGH the pain no one quite understood had long been almost well, Mr. Moucell did not that day accompany his visitor to the gate.

Instead, he stood looking at the leafless trees over the way, as if he had never seen them before.

Probably he never had with the same eyes. He was not troubled by an over-sensitive conscience, yet that he possessed was pricking him sorely, and over and over again he mentally repeated Mr. Gerant's question, "What did Miss Moucell mean about the *Impartial*?"

What had the girl meant? How did she know anything concerning it? Who had informed her of the death? Why did she not mention it to him, and then, after keeping silence for so long, break in so vehemently at the most inopportune moment she could have selected?

Too well he understood. Once upon a time—a quite recent time—Joscelyne would have brought her sorrow to him; but something had come between them, and that something was the bit of spite he could not deny himself—and for which he received a cheque!

Looking back, he could remember when the Joscelyne of old left the home she had made so bright

never to return, and a strange Joscelyne came and took her place. At the time he imagined it was love for the man since dead that caused the transformation ; but now some subtle intuition told him it was loss of respect for her living father.

He could not question, dare not utter a rebuke for the undignified outbreak which told her secret to Mr. Gerant. He could do nothing.

For the first time Mr. Moucell felt he had been weighed in the balance by one of his own children, and found wanting.

When at last he returned to his study Joscelyne had disappeared. This was an intense relief ; and with a comparatively light heart he put aside the work interrupted by Mr. Gerant's entrance, and devoted himself to writing a few sympathetic paragraphs concerning the author " Whose sun had gone down while it was yet day."

" If Moucell could make a guinea out of the misfortune of his dearest friend, he would do it," once said an astute enemy ; and the remark was true.

Business is business, and guineas are guineas. Nothing could bring Mr. Mallow back to life, and if anything could be got out of his death, Mr. Moucell felt he might as well pocket it as anyone else.

Living, Mr. Mallow had been of no use to him ; dead he could be " worked." Projecting his mind into the near future, Mr. Moucell saw an appreciative biography of the young author, written by him, John Moucell, and paid for by Messrs. Gerant, sent out as a preface to the new book.

According to his convictions, any man who cherished fads concerning a higher, better, and altogether im-



possible life which ought to be carried into practice here, was a mistake, at so late a period of the world's history ; but still such an individual might make good and profitable "copy."

Mr. Mallow's death did not in the least surprise Mr. Moucell. A person unable to stand the pleasant racket of London life, must, the latter felt satisfied, be wanting in some essential particular ; nevertheless, the literary hack who had a facile pen wrote several charming paragraphs concerning the gifted author, "cut off in his prime," which were read with tears both in Dublin and at Kilbrannon, though in London Mrs. Howley had to stint hers, for Mr. Moucell would have none of them.

"The young man was nothing to us," he said. "He made himself pleasant and agreeable enough while here, but it is absurd to mourn for him as if he were a near kinsman. Anyone might imagine he had been Joscelyne's favourite brother. I feel quite vexed about the way his death has upset the poor girl. But leave her alone ; she will get over the trouble presently."

Wherein he proved to a certain extent right, for life has to be lived, whether men or women are glad or sorry ; but it was very long before Joscelyne felt happy again. The death of the man to whom she had guilelessly given her love, of the man who would have been a brother, friend, comforter, in times both of joy and grief, was much ; but it seemed as nothing when compared with the wreck of all confidence in, and respect for, her father.

The loss of an ideal is always harder to bear than that of anything real, simply because the former, like

an imaginary fortune, knows no limitations. It grows with our growth, expands with our mental enlargement ; and when its feeble roots finally refuse to bear the strain such enormous faith puts upon them, great is the fall thereof.

Before that wretched week came to an end Mr. Thomas Gerant called again. He could have adopted no wiser course ; though, indeed, policy had nothing to do with his visit. He came simply for the reason that he could not stay away—that Joscelyne's tears, Joscelyne's broken accents, Joscelyne's misery were haunting him.

According to custom, he was shown into the library, where, with no trace of the tempest that had swept over her, calm, "clothed and in her right mind," the girl sat alone, completing those extracts she had left unfinished after the hurricane broke.

"My father is not at home," she said in her usual manner, thinking the servant had made a mistake.

"I called to see you," he answered. "I could not bear to go on thinking you were in such trouble without trying to speak a word of comfort. We feel Mr. Mallow's death most deeply. I don't know that I ever saw my father so much upset as when I told him what happened. We are *so* sorry."

Never, surely, before did "word," however beautifully expressed, seem more grateful or genuine. It dropped like oil on a wound, and Joscelyne had much ado to refrain from tears, though a minute before she had thought hers were all shed.

"Thank you very much," she answered, beginning her sentence after the fashion of a modern Miss.

“When you went the other day I felt greatly grieved to think I had behaved so foolishly, but I could not help crying. You see, I knew he was dead all the time you and father were talking of him as a living man, and at last something forced me to speak.”

“I quite understand”—which he did not in the least. “You may be sure I had no idea of what had happened ; even now I know very little. Perhaps, if not too painful, you would tell me some of the details. My father and I feel sadly grieved, for we liked Mr. Mallow immensely. He was so honourable, charming and straightforward. May I ask from whom you heard of his death ? ”

A question Mr. Gerant had been hungering to ask, since there were times when to his jealous fancy it seemed as though the girl must have received her information direct from spirit land !

Not sorry to avail herself of the opportunity offered, Joscelyne replied,—

“From Miss Bellingdon, the lady to whom he was engaged,” which answer so astounded Mr. Gerant that he did not speak immediately. At last, however, he managed to get out,—

“*Was* he engaged ? Poor fellow ! ” in a tone of such real feeling that Joscelyne felt a big lump rising in her throat, because of the pity of it all.

There ensued another pause, which this time she ended by beginning tremulously to explain for how long a time the attachment had lasted, how beautiful and good Miss Bellingdon was, how much had depended, according to human judgment, on whether “The Offences of His Forefathers” proved a success or not, how well everything seemed going till that un-



favourable review appeared, how greatly it had troubled the author, who could hardly be restrained from showing it to Mr. Bellingdon, even at the risk of shattering all his hopes.

"Just like him," interposed Mr. Gerant warmly. "He was the soul of honour. But pray proceed, Miss Moucell ; the story you are telling might be a chapter taken from Mr. Mallow's own book."

"Yes—might it not ?" said Joscelyne earnestly ; but then, remembering the author would never write any more chapters, she stopped all of a sudden, and Mr. Gerant, with love and good feeling for efficient teachers, took up the sorrowful tale.

"A book about which everyone is now talking, which will be, which is, a great success, which must take a high place in literature—all too late, since the author can never know."

"Miss Bellingdon's heart is broken, but she says she feels all has been—I heard from her this morning. She is so—" faltered Joscelyne.

"Yes," said Mr. Gerant, who comprehended the girl's utterances, and he said no more ; and it was not till he was walking back along the Horseferry Road that he remembered he had spoken but one of the many consolatory sentences he intended to utter.

Yet it was best so. The few words he spoke straight from his heart touched Joscelyne more than the best essay on "The Worthlessness of Fame" could have done. She had always hated his compliments, but on that day, when he came and talked to her naturally and kindly, she saw him as he was—a man to be greatly esteemed, to be enormously liked, true and unaffected.



Though he could boast no Norman blood, whether of peer or peasant, honest English flowed through his veins, which would never permit him to do a mean or dishonest action ; and if not like Mr. Moucell, "in society," he was a straightforward gentleman, to whom any girl might have safely entrusted her future.

Mr. Gerant, however, did not appraise himself at his full worth, and consequently lamented as he walked officeward those unspoken sentences he had fondly hoped would carry such an amount of consolation with them.

Before that year was much older, however, he found ample opportunity for repairing any real or fancied omission of which he might have been guilty, for April showers were scarcely over—certainly May flowers had not come—ere Mr. Moucell was brought home one day in a cab, and for some days it seemed doubtful whether he would ever leave South Lambeth again—save in a hearse.

All at once, as in the twinkling of an eye, that unintelligible pain, which had left Mr. Moucell's foot, reinforced by seven times seven other demons as bad as itself, took possession of Mr. Moucell's head and held high revel there. What the man suffered in mere physical pain it would be hard to tell, while his mental anguish was greater still.

For weeks he lay conscious, yet incompetent. Had millions been offered to him, he could not have written a paper on any subject. He was as one dead, yet living ; one who wanted for nothing, and still whom it taxed all the household resources to keep in existence.

The crisis had come. Like death, it was bound to

come some day, but also like death, the man had never realized that it would.

Through the mouth of Mr. Mallow good old Mother Nature had first spoken ; afterwards she sent that mysterious pain as a warning ; then, finding all hints disregarded, she advanced more boldly, and took his brain citadel by storm.

The great trouble had come. Nineteen years of incessant work must tell, and as it seemed in a moment, Mr. Moucell found himself and family brought to the verge of ruin. Ever and always he had lived from hand to mouth, but when taken ill the hand was closer to the mouth than usual.

And afterwards? Well, how do people live who have nothing ?

At first the shopkeepers were very good. They had been paid promptly while cash was plentiful, and they were willing to wait when told of Mr. Moucell's illness ; they had waited aforetime ; their bills had been honourably settled ; but South Lambeth cannot be considered a district where cash is ever well in evidence ; therefore, after a brief period, the shortness became acute. No matter how economically a household may be managed, some money is required to maintain twelve human beings and pay rent, rates, taxes, and the many sundries civilization involves.

Friends were very kind and attentive after their usual incompetent fashion. What the Radical shopkeeper before honourably mentioned, called "coro-knighted carriages" and "crested footmen" called at intervals "to inquire" ; Lady Fenland was good enough to send grapes forced at Marsh Hall to a man

who could not eat them, when there was not a shilling in the house wherewith to buy bread. Mr. Clifton Jones very liberally forwarded a case of "extraordinarily sound" Marsala—dear at any price—with compliments; Mrs. Eldon Gannor presented flowers frequently; while Mr. Blackshaw actually crossed the river in order to suggest turtle and Madeira!

"Which have done me ever so much good," he said. "Just to show you, now, what doctors are, when I told mine I had been taking turtle soup and a little wine with advantage, he asked: 'Why I had not tried both long before?'"

"'Because you told me to be *most* careful in my diet,' I answered.

"'Of course I did,' he replied; 'but I never told you to starve!' and the man actually laughed!"

Some friends were cast in a different mould, however; one, for example, who sent a hundred pound note anonymously to Mrs. Howley. Mr. Thomas Gerant also posted a cheque regularly, which kept matters moving; while one morning both partners called to know how Mr. Moucell was.

Very low indeed he felt; nevertheless they saw him. While they were uttering the few cheerful words which occurred to them, Joscelyne appeared with a parcel, and was introduced to the elder visitor. Then she bent over the sick man and said softly,—

"A messenger from Lanfords, dear father, who have sent a drawing to know whether you could write something up to it. He would not accept my answer, so I am forced to trouble you."

"Take it away," he answered feebly. "Tell him I am ill."

“Mr. Moucell is very bad I am afraid,” remarked Mr. Thomas Gerant, as he and his father wended their way to Vauxhall.

“Yes ; but I do not think he is in danger. I judge by the look in his eyes. What a sweet pretty girl the daughter is ! Eh ! Master Tom ? In all your comings and goings you never mentioned her. Sly dog, sly dog !” added the old gentleman, so pleased that he made a feint of poking his son in the ribs, for Joscelyne had completely won his heart, and it was high time “Master Tom” thought of settling.



## CHAPTER XXXV.

AUTUMN leaves had once more fallen ; the trees in The Lawn had again stood black and gaunt under wintry skies ; another Christmas had gone to keep its predecessors company, and a fresh year was more than two months old one morning when Mr. Moucell sat in his library thinking.

Any person looking at him might have judged him the same man ; but during the previous twelvemonth he had passed through a time that engraved bitter truths on his understanding, which showed him as in a glass *not* darkly what would certainly come to pass some day, unless he bestirred himself to avert coming doom.

He had shamed ruin once by a miracle, but he could not expect miracles to be constantly performed for his behoof. During that bad illness, the curse of literary life, its instability, was brought home to him in a practical manner.

“Had I been a merchant,” he thought, “my partners, manager, and clerks, would have carried on the business during my absence. Had I been a tradesman my shopmen and family might have made shift to keep things going ; but when an author, artist, or actor is laid by the heels, who is to take up the running ? Authors are not even members of a club, like other

workpeople ; we cannot claim our sick allowance, but have to trust to *charity*. It is very hard."

And it was for John Moucell, who had never any right to be a professional author at all, and who never would have been, save for his own vanity and the accident of meeting Nannie Gray.

The compensations of literature were not for him. The comfort she gives her poorest children he had never known. When sickness came upon him he could only lie through the long nights thinking of his troubles, of impending ruin, of children left without any provisions, of a life spent in furnishing "copy," no line of which would ever be remembered. A literary man, no ; a literary hack—nay, rather as an enemy once said—a *literary mercenary* !

Where, during that awful time of compulsory idleness, had been the staunch allies, the faithful comrades, other men boasted ? Conspicuous by their absence.

Not one, save perhaps a few editors who knew he was dependable, thought about him at all. No man said, "Poor Moucell ! he gave me the first shove from shore," or " a leg up," or " helped me when I needed help," or even " he was a kind fellow."

No, all through he had thought solely of himself and for himself ; and therefore, when the inevitable harvest grew ripe for the sickle, he was left to reap it alone.

Of all this he had thought bitterly—not, be it well understood, that he desired the friendship of his kind, but simply because straws show how the wind blows ; and he felt very certainly another and slightly stronger gale would bear him to ruin. New men

would rush in and take his place ; new editors would not be told John Moucell had done yeoman's work for years. Among his own craft he *was not liked*—a bitter thought, though he had never made a bid for favour.

Amidst great people he desired to dwell, and now he knew exactly what they would do for him—a little fruit, costless inquiries, a case of very inferior wine—alas ! alas ! and he who might have—

“ Father, are you very busy ? ” It was Joscelyne who cut across his meditations at this point. Not the bright, short-skirted Joscelyne that had greeted Messrs. Gerant and Moucell eighteen months previously, but quite another damsel.

The damask roses had faded to faintest pink ; lilies were more in evidence than ever ; her wealth of hair strayed wild no longer for the winds of Heaven to play with ; and yet the new Joscelyne, now well on in her nineteenth year, looked fairer by far than the girl who had wept such bitter tears over imaginary griefs in the days before she knew what real trouble meant.

Since then she had left the stream and crossed the river ; she had learned to know what struggle and sorrow were, and what endurance was likewise ; a good girl and a lovely—with lustrous dark eyes ; in the depths of which lurked the shadow of a great trouble she had faced bravely and lived down.

Mr. Moucell looked at her with the expression of a person expecting something, and answered,—

“ Not very busy. Why do you ask ? ”

“ Because I want to speak to you.”

He rose, and almost ceremoniously placed a chair for her. “ Now,” he said, “ what is it ? ”

There was that he felt lying between them which might never be mentioned, and yet which might have to be spoken any day, any minute.

“Dear father,” she exclaimed, as if hurt, “could I not have got a chair for myself!”

“I liked to get a chair for my daughter,” he answered, and waited.

She did not keep him on the tenter-hooks, but went straight to the point.

“Mr. Gerant was here last evening—”

“Yes?”

“He came to ask if I would marry him.”

“And you—”

“Said I would.”

There ensued utter silence. As a matter of course Mr. Moucell had always known whither Mr. Gerant's wishes were tending, but it seemed odd to him that his daughter should have encouraged such a lover. It was inconceivable, in fact. The old Joscelyne would not, he felt assured; but this new creature, who was his child, and yet seemed a stranger, said calmly and apparently without the smallest care for what his opinion might be, that she had accepted her unlikely suitor.

“You have thought it all out, I suppose,” he remarked at last.

“I think so,” she answered, without even a shade of embarrassment.

“You clearly understand you will be marrying out of *our* rank?”

“Any woman, I fancy, can pretty nearly make her own rank; besides, what is our rank—I do not mean yours, but ours—mine, for instance?”



A question so difficult to answer that Mr. Moucell temporized.

“I always expected,” he said loftily, “that if matters went well, Lady Clifton Jones would introduce you.”

Joscelyne laughed. “She might if I had a ‘very great fortune in silver and gold’—not otherwise.”

“How can you speak in that way of people who have been consistently kind? Remember how constant were their inquiries while I was laid up.”

Joscelyne knew whose thoughtfulness had been untiring, but she only said,—

“Lady Clifton Jones has never been very kind to me; besides, I do not want to be patronized. I should not care to visit at any house where I felt my absence would be preferred to my company.”

“If you have really accepted Mr. Gerant, I suppose no good purpose can be served by my raising any objection,” went on Mr. Moucell, irritated by the girl’s slighting references to Lady Patricia, who, as she could on occasion be as calmly insolent as her grand-aunt, Nannie Gray’s benefactress, had no doubt often vexed Joscelyne’s fiery spirit, “but duty compels me to make one remark, namely,—that it is a dangerous experiment to marry without love.”

“I do love Mr. Gerant as much as I could love anyone,” was the reply.

“Perhaps, at present,” commented Mr. Moucell coolly. “Still, consider, my poor child, the many, many years that stretch in all probability before you, during the course of which you may meet too late with some person you could love infinitely better.”

The banished colour returned to her face and blazed for a moment in each cheek.

“Surely,” she said, “you do not imagine I should ever grow to be like one of those women we read about in novels, that always seem to me foolish as wicked.”

“Yet who no doubt were once as innocent as you are now.”

“I do not believe it,” she replied ; “I do not believe they were ever innocent ; and, at all events, that has nothing to do with the matter. I expressed myself badly. What I intended to say was that I love Mr. Gerant so much, I could not possibly love him any more. You understand ? ”

“Well, it is difficult, for there was certainly a time when you did not love him at all—when the only feeling he inspired was a little aversion.”

“That is true,” she confessed ; “once I did not know him well. I do know him now, though. I could never tell you how good and patient and tender and kind he has been—how nice in every way.”

“Indeed ! At last I quite understand. Mr. Right is come, and I am nowhere.”

“Dear father, do not be so cruel. Nothing and no one could ever step between you and me. Do you think when I watched beside you during those weary nights I did not remember the years you had worked for us and never given yourself needful rest ? of how you had always considered your children, who were able to do nothing for you in return—nothing ? ”

“It was my duty to work for and consider my children, and I tried to do it—that is all. Illusions lead but to disappointment, and it would be madness for me to cherish any. I did not think our

parting would take place so soon, but some such ending is scarcely a surprise. For long I have noticed a change in you—a great change—though I failed to guess the cause.”

“Father, father, father! oh, how can you?” she cried. “What have I done? How have I changed? For a time I was not very happy, but surely that is not a sin. All through, my love for you never altered. Nothing could put division between us. Pray, pray believe me! If you were to turn me out of your heart I would try to creep in again somehow; if you were to commit”—a murder, she was going to say, but really what he had done trenched so closely on such an act, she could not speak the words, and substituted—“some crime, and all men turned from you in your trouble, I should not; I should love you just the same, only more—only more; and I would try to shield you—I would!”

She was clinging to him as she ended; her arms were twined round his neck; her kisses fell warm on his lips. The Joscelyne of old had indeed gone, but a fonder, sweeter, dearer, more womanly Joscelyne was come.

“Speak to me!” she entreated; “say something, father!”

He was greatly affected; everything best in him answered to this unexpected outburst.

“What shall I say?” he asked, trying to speak lightly—“that I am glad to lose my daughter?”

“No, no! you know what I mean.”

He did. He took her to his heart, and laid her face close to his. “May Heaven bless you, dear,” he said, “and your husband! I hope you will make a very



honest gentleman as happy as I know he will try to make you. I am not jealous, Joscelyne ; I was only jesting. After all, it is a wrench to part with a child, and I—”

He stopped, just because he could not go on. She put up her hand and gently stroked his cheek, which was wet, and thus the shadow which had for so long lain between them passed away. Not a word more was spoken, then or ever ; but he knew she knew, and felt she would be loyal.

It was not a match he liked, yet his common sense told him it would be for her happiness ; and he welcomed Mr. Gerant when he came that evening with a cordiality which seemed very pleasant. The next day Joscelyne went to make the acquaintance of her future mother-in-law, who received the girl with open arms.

Though a “dowerless lass,” the Gerants one and all were pleased Thomas had chosen such a pretty and charming bride, while Mr. Moucell’s friends were immensely gratified to learn “he was getting his daughter settled so quickly and well.”

“A most sensible match,” said Lady Fenland to the Marquis. “It will be most advantageous to her father.”

“And push on the boys,” capped his lordship.

“And make things smoother all round,” added her ladyship. Indeed, there seemed to be a general impression that the Moucells had found a sort of lucky bag, into which each member of the family might dip with a certainty of extracting a prize.

“I had an idea that poor Mr. Mallow would be the



fortunate individual," remarked Mrs. Alston, after offering her hearty congratulations; "but this is much better; so secure in every way."

"Much better," agreed Mr. Moucell—"even had Mr. Mallow not been engaged for years before he came to us."

"I did not know he was engaged. I thought him particularly nice; but of course an author's position is never secure. I do feel thankful Joscelyne will have no pecuniary anxieties. My brother's solicitor knows a great deal about the Gerants, of whom he speaks in the highest terms. Old Mr. Gerant he considers a type of what a City merchant ought to be. I am so very glad to think this happiness has come to you, after your long struggle and illness."

"Yes," agreed Mr. Moucell. "Fortune owed me a kindness, for she has been somewhat chary of her favours of late. I feel quite easy about my girl." And he did. It had come to that. He felt much more easy about her than about himself.

His illness had told. He was, so he said himself, "quite well again," but he knew he could never be the same strong, tireless fellow who used to sit up of nights and work all day, and go long without food, and walk miles and miles whether the weather were good or bad.

His doctor told him he must take care of himself—"as if," thought Mr. Moucell, with great contempt for that gentleman's common sense, "an author, if he have to live, *could* take care of himself! as if he had not to be at everybody's beck and call—to do his work fit, or unfit, or else drop out of the ranks, beaten!

And after all," he finished, "an author is only flesh and blood—not cast iron, as some imagine. Being flesh and blood, what is he to do when the inevitable time of sickness and languor sweeps down upon him like a destroying host?"

A very pertinent question—one he had considered in the night watches and could not answer. Supposing such an illness as he had passed through struck him down again, how should he ever be able to pull through the many difficulties enforced idleness brings in its train?

Since he began work on the literary treadmill he had never been able to put money by. He had never, indeed, really found it possible to meet annual expenses without great trouble, or, indeed, with great trouble. Hitherto Hope had kept him up, but there comes a time when sense tells men hope is a delusion and a snare. His outgoings and anxieties were steadily increasing, and not likely to diminish for years. Joscelyne certainly would soon be, as Lady Clifton Jones put the matter, "off his hands," but what was she among so many? Money had undoubtedly come, as if from Heaven, during his illness; but Heaven has a way often of withholding such benefactions at some supreme moment; besides, enough had not come to relieve him from former duns—many of whom were extremely disagreeable. He often thought concerning that hundred pounds, and considered what it meant. He knew well enough who had dropped it from above, though Mrs. Howley spent herself in maundering conjectures as to what former lover could have been prompted by Providence to send such a gift, and finally fixed upon an old miser who would

not have given his mother sixpence to keep her out of the union.

“He is very rich now,” she said ; “he has got on wonderfully ; and thoughts of former days are put into hearts sometimes in the strangest way. Yes, I am sure that note must have come from Leonard Thompson. My father gave him his first recommendation, and people don’t forget. It was wonderfully kind ; I know I had a good cry the night I opened that envelope. The next day, I remember, Mrs. Alston called and asked if she could not send some little thing, and I contrasted—” But Mr. Moucell had vanished. Illness often causes impatience, and the convalescent in those first days of recovery found a little of good Mrs. Howley go a long way.

When he was getting better, also, he got to know more of his son, the Apostle, than he had ever thought to learn.

While Mr. Moucell lay at his worst, it is scarcely too much to say that had Paul expressed a desire for the top brick off the chimney, his aunt would have sent a man up to get it ; for which reason he soon grew worse than ever, and, as Philip declined to interfere, storms became frequent and violent. He would even lie down in the hall and begin his sinful service of song, when Mrs. Howley at once gave him whatever he wanted on the sole condition that he would hold his tongue.

Of all these things poor Mr. Moucell bethought himself as he sat and looked at the pleasant woman who said she was glad the happiness of Joscelyne’s engagement had come to cheer him—and the old



jingle : "He who will not when he may, When he will he shall have nay," recurred at the same time to his memory unpleasantly. Somehow he had got a great shake. He did not feel as if he were the same man, as if he stood in the old position. Perhaps it was the knowledge that the old position could but be regarded as a delusion which caused the change. Let the cause be what it might, he, however, seemed to have but shifting sand under his feet.

Once upon a time he believed he had only to ask and have Mrs. Alston ; now he experienced doubts. She was very friendly, very charming, but—he did not feel sure. As he walked back from Bloomsbury he asked himself why he failed to put his fortune to the test while the certainty was still his, and he could only say : Because the idea of matrimony held no charm. He had been free for so long—free as the winds of heaven to come and go—that the prospect of having to conform to rules, and consider hours, appalled him. And yet—though liberty was sweet, poverty was bitter. It would be hard to live in the house with a wife, and harder by far to live with Mr. Blackshaw's digestion, or rather, want of one ; still it might be that hereafter he would repent in sackcloth and ashes if he let such an opportunity slip. Life was changing—had changed. Such a marriage would free him from all pecuniary difficulty ; yet how could he propose to a rich woman—he who had nothing ? Besides, what would Mr. Blackshaw say ? Pshaw ! that would be all right. The more obstacles Mr. Moucell saw in the way, the more wishful he grew to overcome them. He would put the question—when, must be determined by the chapter of accidents. Meantime he grew eager



for Joscelyne's marriage. Unknown almost to himself, he had ever felt her a stumbling-block on his matrimonial road.

It was August, however, when, with no flourish of trumpets or beating of drums, the wedding took place—a very quiet wedding, as was only fitting under the circumstances, for Joscelyne's father had no money, and Mr. Gerant's mother no health !

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

ALL in the fine August weather, when London was "stuffy" exceedingly, when most of the streets were up, and but few persons were left in town save four millions or thereabouts who could not go abroad, or anywhere in fact save to the daily grind—Mr. Moucell, in response to a kindly-worded note, wended his way Bloomsburyward, in a somewhat doubtful frame of mind.

It was the question which had been perplexing him for years that troubled him on the summer afternoon when he walked across Long Acre and thence to Mr. Black-haw's house—the question he had thought over and negatived, reconsidered, and left in abeyance—decided to put, and then deferred—he was still thinking over, reconsidering, and inclined to leave in abeyance, only he felt it would not be wise putting it off much longer.

Should he, or should he not?

Before leaving South Lambeth he had answered that question in the affirmative. No longer would he stand halting between two opinions. The idea of matrimony—particularly matrimony with an subordinate liver attached—was odious; but the reality of poverty seemed more odious still.

He had never thoroughly regained health since the inexplicable illness about the real nature of which his

doctor seemed as ignorant as himself; the only statement he could extract from that gentleman being: "You *must* take complete rest," as if a man with no income and twelve mouths to fill could lie idle on the sunny sands of life! To outward view he was well and strong as ever, for to use one of Mr. Ma'low's phrases, "His looks did not pity him," but Mr. Moucell felt too surely a screw had loosened somewhere.

No one save the wearer knows how a shoe can pinch, and no one except the man who had worked so long and bravely could have told the extent to which the effects of that grievous illness were still crippling his bodily and mental energies.

There were days when it took him longer to write a sentence than it had aforesaid to turn out many sides of copy; when he sat with the pen in his hand waiting for something which refused to come. On such occasions ideas were as disobedient to his command as though they had been "spirits from the vasty deep." Thoughts such as they were had hitherto never failed him, but now even when they chose to put in an appearance he had to delay sending them out into the world for lack of suitable words in which to clothe them.

He was unable to walk also, either so far or fast as formerly, and altogether, though "quite well again," so he assured those who inquired concerning his health, he had feelings and symptoms about which he did not care to speak even to the doctor, who, when they met, was wont to shake his head and gravely repeat that old formula,—

"You ought to take a long rest, as a mere matter of prudence."

All these things, and many more, had caused him to mentally answer, "I will," to "Shall I, or shall I not?" but did not make his determination any the pleasanter. Difficulties hitherto unthought of presented themselves at every step: What about his children? What about his own position? How could he speak—he who had not spoken through the years?

Still, he must speak, and one way or other end the present uncertainty, which was, as he phrased the matter to himself, "death to work." Therefore only chance, accident, opportunity, could settle the how—and when.

Mrs. Alston had by her note given him a good opening. "I am longing," she said, "to hear all about the wedding. Harry and I are only in town for a short time. We returned from Scotland yesterday, and leave for Switzerland in a week. Do, pray, come, therefore, and tell me your news," which was very friendly and nothing more. Still, he might make it more; he might begin to lay a foundation whereon to build after that Swiss trip. Meantime he must not think too much about the impending interview, and accordingly shook his mental kaleidoscope, and considered the one agreeable circumstance which of late had broken the weary monotony of matters going steadily from bad to worse.

Curiously enough, that one bit of sunshine burst upon him quite unexpectedly from Mr. Mallow's mother, who, having come to London to meet her sister, had taken lodgings in Cecil Street—a street at one time greatly affected by Irish people of moderate means and fair position.

There Mr. Moucell went to see her; there he was



thanked, with many tears, for all his kindness that "would never be forgotten"—and there also he heard, for the first time, of his dear daughter's extraordinary thoughtfulness in telegraphing "both to Grace and Desmond," which proved news indeed, since for obvious reasons Joscelyne had kept silence concerning her part in the little drama.

Much too old a campaigner to betray his ignorance, Mr. Moucell sat and listened, never interrupting the maternal flow of narrative save by a word of sympathy or interjection of grief, which could only be considered in the light of a "Hear, hear," or "Bray—vo ; go it !" delicately spoken.

In this way he learned, or rather, by putting two and two together, he soon gathered that it was not the *Impartial's* scathing review, but rather his daughter's telegram, which sent Mr. Mallow out breakfastless through a country so damp it might with advantage have been well wrung, and hung up to dry like a wet rag, and caused him to fall an easy victim to infection, or to put the matter shortly, was the beginning of the whole trouble.

Had she refrained from meddling in a matter which was no concern of hers, Mr. Mallow might still have been alive, preaching and writing about free-will, predestination, election, and other kindred subjects, and Joscelyne probably Miss Moucell as heretofore.

The *Impartial* had no hand in the young author's death. It was the agony of apprehension caused by Joscelyne herself, the weary imagining what shocking things the review to which her telegram referred could contain that drove him forth fasting into the

green wilderness watered too abundantly by Shannon's silvery river!

Mr. Moucell's mind at last felt quite at ease. His daughter's loyalty he never doubted: what he had dreaded were her impetuosity and her temper. All women had one weak point. Given a time of deep depression or of marital or friendly confidence, and they would say in a moment that which never could be unsaid. Joscelyne would have gone to death for him he felt sure, nevertheless he had not known a really easy hour since.

"It was that review in the *Impartial* killed him," smote upon his ear.

Now, however, as "in a twinkling," all was changed, Joscelyne herself could alone be considered responsible for Mr. Mallow's death, and should need arise Mr. Moucell meant to tell her as much.

He hoped he would never require to do so, still, knowledge is always power!

Poor Mrs. Thomas Gerant! Happy in her first experience of foreign or, indeed, any travel, had she dreamed even a dream concerning the pebble her father had picked out of a clear Irish rivulet of talk and placed in his pocket ready to sling at her should occasion arrive, she might not have felt quite so content. The notion had never occurred to her, or indeed to anyone else living, except astute Mr. Moucell, and yet that gentleman's conclusion was perfectly correct—though Joscelyne never heard a word about it. The necessity for speech did not arise, for she remained loyal to the last.

Meantime, however, Mr. Moucell felt all the happier because of that little boon Mrs. Mallow had

unconsciously bestowed upon him, and told "all his news" well and cheerily.

Joscelyne was safely married to "a very good fellow" whose "people were delighted with her." Mr. Isaac Gerant had bought a house next door to his own for the young couple, as the poor invalid mother wished them to live close at hand.

"And does your daughter like such an arrangement?" asked Mrs. Alston.

"Very much," was the reply.

"You will miss her sadly."

"More than I can say. She has been my very right hand," a statement Mrs. Alston had heard before often. "But though her marriage leaves me lonely exceedingly," went on Mr. Moucell, "I must not repine. She has gone where she will be loved and appreciated and taken good care of. Candidly, there was a time when the match did not recommend itself to me, but I feel now she was right and I wrong."

"Yes, I think so," and there ensued a short silence which was broken by Mr. Moucell.

"I had almost forgotten to tell you the Gerants are thinking of starting a magazine."

"No! Really?"

"Yes, really. The project, however, is not public property yet, so I must beg you to keep silence concerning it for the present."

"You may rely upon that. And so Messrs. Gerant think of bringing out a magazine. Under what name?"

"They cannot decide. Two have been suggested, *The Old Bond Street* and *The Lounger*, neither of which I like."



"Surely there has been *The Lounger* ?"

"I think not as the title of a periodical."

"Perhaps I am mixing up *The Old Bond Street Lounger* with such publications as *The Tattler* and so forth," she said.

"Very likely, in any case it does not recommend itself to me. '*Gerant's Journal*, a monthly magazine,' was also proposed, but that sounds no better."

"Why not call the new enterprise *Gerant's Weekly* ?" asked Mrs. Alston eagerly, "which is an easier name to say than any you have mentioned, and would be a better speculation also, because Messrs. Gerant must have a serial story, of course, and people do not like waiting a whole month for the next instalment."

"I believe you are right," returned Mr. Moucell, as if struck by the brilliancy of her idea. "I will mention the matter at once. There is a very good ring about *Gerant's Weekly*, it runs smoothly off the tongue."

This was a felicitous remark. Most women like to be thought clever, and Mrs. Alston could not be considered an exception to this general rule.

"I suppose Messrs. Gerant will want you to edit their magazine ?"

"Very likely ; in fact, I might say certainly, but—"

"But ?" questioned Mrs. Alston, smiling archly.

"I do not know why I stopped, since I have no reserves with you. Where the hitch comes in is that I do not know whether the salary Messrs. Gerant might feel disposed to offer would repay me for the time and trouble editing necessarily involves. They are liberal men, and have been most kind to me, but



after all this is a business question, one which must be dealt with in a business spirit."

"Exactly, and you could make the proposed journal such a success. You could make anything a success."

"Thank you," he answered, flattered in his turn. "If the Gerants find they can afford to meet me, no effort shall be wanting on my part. I hope they may deal generously, though it is always hard for a poor man to secure such terms as his richer fellow can command."

"It pains me to hear you speak in that way."

"Truth is not often agreeable. I hope, however, things will come right after all, and then I will do my part towards making the magazine pay. Such an appointment at a fair salary would prove a great relief to me, and bring more ease than I have known since I took up literature as a profession."

"Oh! you are sure to get the editorship, quite sure, and at your own salary."

"It is possible. The Gerants are, as I said just now, liberal people, and will perhaps see their way to treating me even generously if the thing went as I hope. Still—pray do not think that 'still' ungrateful—I only wish I had money sufficient to start, not a magazine, but a review on my own account; that is a speculation which I know would prove remunerative. It does seem hard to go on and on, working ever and always for others, and never really to get a chance for oneself!"

"You need not let the want of money keep you back, surely," she exclaimed. "My brother would lend you whatever may be needed at once, or I—"

believe me, I should only feel too much pleased if I could be of some little help."

"The idea of borrowing money for such a purpose never occurred to me, never once. The amount such an undertaking would require is far too large to ask any friend to risk."

"How much would be required?"

Mr. Moucell named a sum which seemed to him prohibitory, but to his astonishment—"Is that all?" cried Mrs. Alston, joyfully, "I can let you have it within a week without troubling Henry. I am so glad you happened to mention the matter."

"Thank you a thousand times, but I cannot accept your offer; I cannot, indeed!"

"And for what reason?"

The chance had come in a moment quite unexpectedly, and if he did not avail himself of it then might never be repeated; nevertheless, he could only stammer out,—

"I could not accept such a loan."

"Ah! Mr. Moucell, are you too proud to accept a trifling loan even from an old friend?"

"No; it is only that experience has changed any pride I ever had to deepest humility."

"Or rather to the pride that apes humility," and her tone was not playful, though she tried to make it so.

He could not answer—speech seemed as difficult at that moment as words in later days were hard to find when most urgently needed. Not so had his love tale lagged when he was young, and the hearer blue-eyed, foolish Nannie Gray. Glibly enough it had flowed from

his lips when they were both taking the path which led Nannie to her grave and the passionate suitor through such straits of poverty as had almost drowned his once well-nigh indomitable spirit.

Mrs. Alston was the first to regain composure.

“I entreat of you, Mr. Moucell,” she said in a matter-of-fact tone, and yet with a touch of deep feeling, “not to refuse the slight help I offer. If it will give you peace and enable your children to take their proper place in the world, I shall be more than repaid. Take the money which is of no use to me—none—and make an old friend happy.” She held out her hands with a pretty pleading gesture; and as he took them the string of his tongue was loosed, and somehow he asked her to marry him! Never afterwards could he remember the form of words he employed. He had never before felt so much embarrassed, so humiliated and utterly ashamed. And yet this very confusion helped him.

It would have been difficult for any woman to refuse a man who confessed he was unfit to mate with wealth and goodness; he who was penniless; who had let the cares of this world smother all the noble ambitions, the high aspirations of his youth, and it was impossible for Mrs. Alston, who had long given up all expectation of winning the man she loved, and had no thought in the generous offer she made save of serving a friend and giving him the opportunity he yearned for.

“I can never leave Henry,” she said—“never while he wishes me to remain with him.”

“I could not ask you to do such a thing,” answered Mr. Moucell, truthfully, for he was quite prepared to live with and bear and suffer that troublesome digestion.

The pair talked matters out to such good purpose, that when Mr. Moucell took his leave he felt dizzy with happiness, and thought as he walked through dingy Soho that he was treading a new earth—flooded with the glory of a happiness he never in his struggling middle age hoped to experience.

It was indeed, he thought, a case of virtue being rewarded. He had put the momentous question against his will—and lo! he found the lady richer than he supposed, more generous than he dare have imagined. His future seemed secure, and the future of his children also if money could make them prosperous!

And yet Mr. Moucell had injured a man to his hurt—and not helped many a man when he might!



## CONCLUSION.

LATE in September they were married at Brighton, and went for the honeymoon to Worthing, where Mr. Blackshaw, who stuck to his sister like a limpet to a rock, found such healthful and amusing occupation in sending out cards and wedges of cake that sometimes for hours together digestion was never so much as mentioned.

“The man is lost for want of something to do,” thought Mr. Moucell, and Abernethy’s advice to a patient, “Live on sixpence a day and earn it,” recurred to memory, but he said nothing—already he knew silence was his true policy.

He sent but few cards. “I will write to my friends,” he said—and he did.

“Now I do call this sensible,” remarked Lady Fenland, as she passed Mr. Moucell’s letter to her noble spouse, “but he had always the most perfect tact.”

“Always,” agreed the Marquis, “knew his station and kept to it.”

“Yes,” returned her ladyship, “and what was of even more importance, knew the station of others and let them keep to it ;” which sentence, if slightly involved, was quite clear to her husband’s understanding.

“What shall you do, my dear ?” asked her liege lord.

“Call, of course—I have no doubt she is quite presentable.”

Lady Patricia did not make up her mind quite so speedily, for no once-eligible woman really likes to hear any man has married another than herself, but when Mr. Clifton Jones, taking the visit for granted, said he would call at the same time, she made a virtue of necessity.

“I don’t know any man for whom I have a greater respect,” added Mr. Clifton Jones. “Just think how he has supported and educated that large family on nothing, as one may say, and never asked his friends for a halfpenny.”

“No; he would not do such a thing. He was always too proud.”

“You call that pride? I consider it simple honesty.”

“No doubt you are right,” agreed Lady Patricia meekly.

Mrs. Eldon Gannox wrote all manner of kind things, and Mrs. Wilbraim murmured plaintively,—

“When we are far from the lips that we love,” into the relevancy of which quotation Mr. Wilbraim did not make any inquiry.

So Mr. Moucell’s connection took the views of the marriage each after his and her kind. Some were envious, some surprised, some indignant, but as a rule people were pleased, and a general chorus resounded in praise of the good taste and good sense which dictated that quiet out-of-town wedding; which was really Mr. Blackshaw’s doing, because, as he said, “His health would not permit of a lot of fuss,” which observation showed how the wind in Bloomsbury Square was likely to blow after marriage.

His desire, however, fitted in to a nicety with that of the bridegroom—who did not wish to ask anyone to the ceremony, even had there at that season been a single desirable person in town to ask.

What he wanted was to feel his way ; which he did so well that not an acquaintance of any importance was absent from Mrs. Moucell's first day at home.

Lady Fenland came quite early and left before the rush began. Lady Patricia tried to follow suit, but could not by reason of her husband's perversity ; consequently she and Mr. Clifton Jones, Viscount Reedpont, Samuel Hardisty, M.P., and several other notabilities, found themselves mixed up in the strangest manner with bankers, stockbrokers, lawyers, publishers, authors, editors, singers and actors.

"There was enough money in that room to wipe off the National debt," said Mr. Clifton Jones, with a little pardonable exaggeration. "I always thought Moucell a clever fellow, but he must be a deuced deal cleverer even than I supposed ;" which of course capped the matter and stuck a final feather, or rather a plume, in the "literary hack's" cap.

Joscelyne, who by quite a strategical move managed to get her father apart and give him a good "hug"—almost like the hugs of her impulsive girlhood—was there, and many of the Gerants ; in fact, no one who could be commercially or socially useful seemed absent ; therefore the motley gathering impressed Mr. Isaac Gerant pleasantly, and influenced a remark he made to his son the same evening,—

"I wonder if your father-in-law would care to join us as partner ?"

"Doubtless," said Mr. Thomas Gerant, a little

bitterly, "no man likes to be dependent on his wife."

"Shall we make the proposal?"

"I do not mind;" and accordingly the proposal was made and accepted, an advance from Mr. Blackshaw providing the necessary funds.

"Cream" was really the proximate cause of this loan. In the very nick of time Mr. Moucell, who seldom forgot anything, remembered that a once celebrated physician, unkindly called by some ungrateful patients a "quack," prescribed "cream" in cases of obstinate liver disease. The remedy had proved so efficacious, as new remedies generally do, that Mr. Blackshaw, anxious to prove his gratitude, willingly transferred the sum needful from his own deposit to Mr. Moucell's banking account, which sum, it is only fair to state, was duly repaid with proper interest years after.

Probably no person had ever a finer chance afforded of proving how widely practice may differ from theory than that granted to Mr. Moucell, a chance he utilized to the utmost.

Conductor of *Gerant's Weekly*; proprietor of *The Independent Review*; partner in the house of Gerant and Co., rapidly striding to the front—what man could have desired a better vantage ground from which to stroke the fur of coming genius?

No one; but alack and alack-a-day! Mr. Moucell did not see it.

Instead, when he saw a poor devil with a manuscript he merely saw someone to snub, and forthwith snubbed him to such purpose that the P.D., though, perhaps, a capable and honest enough sort of individual,



felt afraid of taking an article, tale, or essay anywhere else for a long time.

At first the Messrs. Gerant lookēd on surprised, but at last Mr. Thomas ventured,—

“I thought you once said when you met rising talent, you would pat it on the back and make much of it ? ”

“So I will when I meet it; pat it all over.”

“But surely you do not mean to imply there are no good men pushing at present to the front ? ”

“There may be, but I never meet them.”

“You talk very differently now from what you did a few years back.”

“Things have changed ; besides, when I spoke was a struggling writer myself instead of a—”

“Bloated capitalist,” suggested his son-in-law.

“If you like to put it that way ; but the truth is I then talked without sufficient knowledge. I had seen and felt but one side of authorship ; now I see and feel another. Buyer and seller can never look at things from the same point of view.”

“That is true ; still I confess such an utter alteration in opinion strikes me as very curious.”

“A man may change his mind, I suppose ? ”

“Apparently one man has, at all events,” laughed the other.

“I am gradually coming to the belief,” remarked Mr. Moucell gravely, “that authorship is a luxury in which poor men ought not to indulge.”

“Any inclination that way should be severely repressed, in fact ? ”

“I think so,”—which statement so astounded Mr. Thomas Gerant that he retired from the controversy silenced if not convinced.

“ It seems to me Mr. Moucell is not nearly so genial a man in prosperity as he was in adversity,” remarked Mr. Gerant to his son a few days afterwards. But the speaker was mistaken ; Mr. Moucell was never genial. Hard work kept him low like a weaned child, but the demon of dissatisfaction was always lying in wait to rend the likely victim.

He was never so content in the days of ease as he had been in the days of poverty, and it is not too much to say that at the last, as at the beginning, he was a disappointed man.

That book he at one time “ only required leisure to finish,” remained conspicuous by its absence. He did not achieve fame ; he did not like taking rank as a “ mere publisher ; ” indeed, it was nearly ten years after his marriage ere he publicly acknowledged himself one of the Old Bond Street firm.

For many a long day he figured rather as editor of the *Independent Review* and conductor of *Gerant's Weekly*, but when the time became ripe for forming a company his name appeared in a goodly list, among those of a number of directors with the needful star attached—and “ will join the board after allotment ” appended.

No one save himself ever probably suspected what a special providence that company proved to Mr. Moucell, because he took very good care not to let the world know that his wife's money was so tightly tied up—she could never leave him anything but the little she might be able to save out of income. In default of children, her fortune was to pass to a distant Blackshaw Mr. Moucell had never seen and never wanted to see.

“ What a lot of first-rate people Gerants have got ! ”

exclaimed one man when the subscription list was advertised.

“Lot of first-rate guinea-pigs,” was the answer. “Marquis of Fenland, Viscount Reedpont, Clifton Jones, H. Eldon Gannox, Samuel Hardisty, M.P., Henry Blackshaw,” he sniffed. “All decoy ducks, warranted to fleece the British public and bring Gerants, Limited, to ruin! The next announcement will be a winding-up order.”

But the speaker was mistaken. No winding-up order has yet been made, and it seems unlikely one ever will be made.

Through calm and tempest, through sunshine and storm, Gerants have held on a steady course. Their journal has outlived, and promises to outlive, many a more ambitious publication; while Mr. Moucell still retains the *Independent* as his own property, which he intends to go on working for any son of Joscelyne who may develop a talent for writing.

His own sons he candidly admits have no special talent at all, but they are for the most part doing well—Phil in the Indian Civil Service, Edgar at the English Bar, Guy in the Army, and three others in “foreign parts.”

As for Paul, at the school Mr. Moucell selected for his benefit he soon lost all taste for profanity, martyrdom not being in his line.

It is one matter, however, to take something out of a lad and quite another to put anything in; and after a time he was returned on his father's hands as half-witted.

Then Mr. Moucell confided him to the care of a clergyman, whose sermons and manner he mimicked



till that divine lost patience, and declaring he more resembled a monkey than a lad, cleared his house of such an undesirable pupil.

At the present time he has not quite made up his mind whether he will be a missionary or an actor ; but as no manager or society has expressed a desire for his services, in all probability he will continue, as heretofore, drifting from house to house and making himself a nuisance in each. He is fond of going to Kilbrannon, where the inhabitants say he is a "natural," and like him very much.

Mrs. Howley, by this time almost a "natural" herself, still feels assured he is clever, and "will surprise them all yet,"—which indeed is possible!

Save on board days Mr. Moucell rarely puts in an appearance at "Gerants, Limited." He is not wanted there indeed—writers always preferred doing business with the present managing director than with the individual who once said he would take them to his heart and utter pleasant things wherewith to tickle their ears.

Ever since he had the opportunity of helping any one along the rough road that sometimes leads to fame, but more frequently to failure, he severely left "budding genius" to toddle alone. Struggling, he declares, strengthens it, and he honestly believes there is no such plague on earth as the person who has a manuscript in his pocket. The society of great men is still pleasant to him ; rank, despite his experience of its tender mercies, is the object of his worship ; he enjoys cultured ease ; he feels more weary than ever of Mr. Blackshaw's digestion—or non-digestion—but under difficult circumstances he comports himself



admirably—he was always careful, and he has grown rich. He can scarcely be called mean, though he lets his left hand and all other left hands know what he gives, but he never bestows a penny or shows a kindness in secret.

All that “nonsense” he leaves to Gerant and his wife, the latter of whom especially he considers crazy on the subject of unappreciated talent.

As for Joscelyne, she is a happy wife, a devoted mother, a good kind sister and thoughtful niece; she has been truer than fine steel to her father, but who—ah! who—shall ever give her back that lost ideal which was shattered to bits in the Embankment Gardens, and over the memory of which she has wept such bitter tears as a woman can only shed—in secret?

Her home is one of the pleasantest houses imaginable at which to visit. So thinks a sad-eyed, sweet-faced woman who crosses the Channel every year to see a friend who will not go to Ireland—for Joscelyne has no desire to behold the desolate graveyard where long grass waves in the summer breeze and Desmond Mallow sleeps peacefully!

Grace Bellingdon has never married, but devotes her fortune, time and thoughts to the advancement of her country people.

So far the harvest has not been great, but “who can tell,” as Mr. Moucell wrote, “what time will effect?”

Miss Bellingdon is extremely fond of one she will always regard as her dead lover’s best friend, and at her invitation Mr. Moucell visited Kilbrannon and other places where various industries have been established, and wrote several pleasing papers concerning hand-

loom weaving, the reclamation of land, poultry rearing, re-afforesting, and other subjects of a like nature.

Mr. Moucell was just the man to turn out a number of chatty articles on matters about which he knew nothing, therefore his little descriptions attracted a good deal of attention.

Amongst other hopeful ventures he particularly mentioned the Moss Abbey Dairy Farm, expressing a hope that "the good seed so liberally scattered with such faith would when least expected spring up and bring forth a hundredfold."

THE END.









